

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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WEDNESDAY,
JUNE 6, 2018

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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Hearing Room at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, at 2:00 p.m., Kristine L. Svinicki, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, Chairman

JEFF BARAN, Commissioner

STEPHEN G. BURNS, Commissioner

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

ANNETTE VIETTI-COOK, Secretary of the Commission

MARGARET DOANE, General Counsel

NRC STAFF:

DANIEL DORMAN, Acting Executive Director for
Operations

ANNE BOLAND, Director, Office of Enforcement

MIRIAM COHEN, Chief Human Capital Officer

MELODY FOPMA, Deputy Director, Office of Small
Business and Civil Rights

SUSAN SALTER, Chief, Workforce Management and
Benefits Branch, Office of the Chief Human
Capital Officer

MICHAEL WEBER, Director, Office of Nuclear
Regulatory Research

MAUREEN WYLIE, Chief Financial Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

MARIA SCHWARTZ, Executive Vice President, National
Treasury Employees Union, Local 208

P R O C E E D I N G S

2:02 p.m.

CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, good afternoon, everyone. I call the Commission's meeting to order, and this afternoon we will meet and hear I'm sure very, very enlightening and interesting presentations from an NRC staff panel that will talk to us and provide an update on significant human capital initiatives and the agency's ongoing initiatives and efforts in the area of equal employment opportunities.

So this is a meeting I always look forward to, but today is very special. This is the first time since 2014 that on our side of the table we have had our full complement of NRC commissioners. So I welcome Commissioner Caputo and Commissioner Wright. Welcome to your first NRC meeting. And I think this is a really wonderful topic. I always gain a lot of insights into kind of how we're monitoring the organizational health of our initiatives of how kind of what we've got on our plate, any complexities and challenges that we have in front of us, and we do keep a careful eye on a lot of different trends so that we can be very proactive to try to maintain the very healthy culture and creativity and the atmosphere and the kind of working environment that we strive to have here at NRC.

Before we begin, would any member of the Commission like to make brief opening comments? Commissioner Baran.

COMMISSIONER BARAN: Well, I would just like to join you in welcoming our new colleagues to the Commission and to their first Commission meeting. Annie and I worked together on the

1 Energy and Commerce Committee staff, so it is great to be working
2 together again. I'm excited to do that. I don't know David as well,
3 but I look forward to getting to know you better and working with you.

4 With five Commissioners on this side of the table we
5 have a lot less space than we did, but I think it's going to be worth it to
6 have you here. And I also just want to briefly acknowledge that this is
7 Mike Weber's last Commission meeting I think because he'll be
8 retiring at the end of the month, and Mike remembers everything so he
9 probably knows the exact number of times he's participated in a
10 Commission meeting. There's probably some record somewhere of
11 that. It's probably a very large number. But I just wanted to say to
12 you Mike, that you have contributed to this agency in so many ways
13 over the years from so many different positions, and you, at least in
14 the short time I've known you, have embraced every challenge with
15 just an incredible amount of enthusiasm. You are really one of a
16 kind, and you're going to be so sorely missed. So I wish you all the
17 best as you embark on your new adventures, and I'll be especially
18 kind to you today. That's all I have.

19 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. And I was going
20 to say some things about Mike at the end of the meeting. I'm going to
21 get that little bit more performance metrics out of people.
22 Commissioner Burns, would you like to add any remarks?

23 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Well, I'll echo what my
24 colleague, Commissioner Baran, has said. I do welcome our new
25 colleagues here and congratulate him on his reconfirmation. He gets
26 to collect a lot of those certificates. It's sort of like baseball cards.
27 So he's got a couple from, I think, President Obama. He's got now

1 one from President Trump. But I wish them all well.

2 I also, and I'll wait for the Chairman's remarks to
3 congratulate Mike Weber on a job well done during his career at NRC.

4 Mike and I actually worked together on Chairman Carr's staff some
5 time ago. And the only thing I've ever resented about Mike is that he
6 got to go to the Halden reactor in Norway with Ken Carr that I didn't
7 get to do, and now we're keeping our fingers crossed on that one.
8 So, anyway, thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay. Thank you. And I
10 don't know if our new members would like to make any comment or
11 just plunge right in. Commissioner Caputo, please proceed.

12 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'll add my
13 congratulations and thank you for your service. Obviously, you and I
14 have worked together in my previous capacity. I'm sorry we're
15 overlapping for only such a short time now, but I do wish you the best.

16

17 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you very much.
18 Commissioner Wright.

19 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So thank you for your
20 treatment and your hospitality since I've been here. You all have
21 been very helpful, very nice. And today for me officially was moving
22 in day, so I just left my apartment next door that has everything inside
23 but nothing organized. But I cleaned up and I'm here, and I'm very
24 excited for this meeting, so thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you very much. Well,
26 thank you, everyone. And we will begin by handing off to lead off the
27 staff's presentation to Mr. Dan Dorman, who is acting today in place of

1 Victor McCree as Executive Director for Operations. Dan, please
2 proceed with the staff's presentation.

3 MR. DORMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon,
4 Chairman Svinicki and Commissioners. And on behalf of our EDO,
5 Vic McCree, and the staff, I'd like to add our welcome to
6 Commissioner Caputo and Commissioner Wright.

7 We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide you
8 this afternoon with an overview of the state of NRC's human capital
9 and equal opportunity employment programs. As you know, the
10 knowledge, skill, and expertise of our people have always provided
11 the core capacity that we need to accomplish our safety and security
12 mission. While our strong commitment to diversity and inclusion
13 strengthens our capacity, as well as our resilience and agility in
14 challenging times.

15 In recent years, we have been challenged to sustain
16 the critical skills necessary in key areas, as the agency's workforce
17 has shrunk consistent with our declining workload. We have met this
18 challenge through multiple strategies, including accelerated attrition
19 through early-out and buy-outs, cross-training of the remaining staff to
20 fulfill our work demands, and targeted external hiring as needed. We
21 expect the agency to continue to get smaller as we gain efficiency and
22 as we respond to announce closures of nuclear power plants over the
23 next several years.

24 And as we look to the future, new challenges arise.
25 Our limited external hiring over the last several years has resulted in a
26 shift in our demographics with an increasing portion of our workforce
27 eligible to retire. Our strategies in the coming years will take into

1 account the need to offset that expertise that will be walking out the
2 door.

3 To address our dynamic environment, we are
4 developing a strategic workforce planning capability to anticipate
5 critical skill gaps beyond our current planning horizon and to apply
6 strategies to ensure that we maintain the ability to respond with agility
7 to changes in our work and to new technology developments.

8 Two weeks ago, the Executive Director for
9 Operations, Victor McCree, sent you a Commission paper,
10 SECY-18-0060, with several staff proposals to transform the agency's
11 culture and regulatory framework to enable the agility that we need to
12 demonstrate in the coming years. Achieving the proposed cultural
13 transformation will require ongoing dialogue within the staff and with
14 external stakeholders. Our longstanding NRC values, in concert with
15 the characteristics described in our new leadership model, are
16 essential to the success of these conversations and to that cultural
17 shift. These will be reenforced by effective use of the Franklin Covey
18 Speed of Trust tools on which most managers in the agency and
19 many of our staff have been trained over the past year. Over the next
20 45 minutes, you'll hear more about these important activities.

21 The next slide, please. At the table with me this
22 morning or, excuse me, this afternoon, on my right, Miriam Cohen, the
23 Chief Human Capital Officer, will provide an overview of the state of
24 NRC's human capital program. The next presenter will be Melody
25 Fopma on my far left, Deputy Director in the Office of Small Business
26 and Civil Rights. And Melody will provide an update on NRC's civil
27 rights and diversity and inclusion program. Then Susan Salter, to

1 Miriam's right, our Workforce Management and Benefits Branch Chief
2 in the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, will provide an update
3 on the development and implementation of the Strategic Workforce
4 Planning program. And, finally, Mike Weber, the Director of the
5 Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, will provide perspective on the
6 pilot implementation of strategic workforce planning in his office, as
7 well as integration of that effort with other agency-wide initiatives.

8 So with that, I'll turn it over to Miriam. Next slide,
9 please.

10 MS. COHEN: Good afternoon, Chairman,
11 Commissioners, and fellow NRC staff. We're actually super excited
12 to be here this afternoon with you to provide you an overview of our
13 human capital programs and some reflections about where we're
14 headed into the future.

15 I'd also like to recognize Vic McCree, who is not here,
16 for his efforts during his time as the EDO as he was critical to the
17 advancement of the human capital initiatives we will discuss this
18 afternoon. And I'd also like to acknowledge Mike Weber for his
19 enthusiastic support of our Strategic Workforce Planning initiative, and
20 we're definitely going to miss him.

21 Next slide. Since we last met, the agency has
22 achieved a number of notable accomplishments with respect to our
23 human capital programs. You might recall that it was a very difficult
24 year last year, and we were able to avoid the need to separate any
25 employee as a result of the corporate support office reductions. The
26 agency did everything it could to minimize the impact on our
27 employees, and we do recognize the personal sacrifice that a number

1 of our employees had to make by taking a voluntary change to
2 lower-graded positions. This past year, the agency also successfully
3 placed 35 employees who were impacted by the termination of the
4 construction of the new unit at VC Summer Nuclear Power Plant last
5 year.

6 We also continued to have high employee
7 engagement at the agency. Our employees continue to see the
8 importance of the NRC mission and their role in supporting it. We
9 have continued -- I'm sorry. We have taken steps to foster a culture
10 of innovation throughout the agency through our office-level forums.
11 We've also made strides in fostering greater trust in the organization
12 through our Speed of Trust initiative. Having a high-trust environment
13 is going to enable the agency to continue to be agile and engaged as
14 we move into the future.

15 The Speed of Trust workshops commenced this past
16 April in headquarters and in the regions. There's been a lot of
17 momentum and interest among the staff wanting to participate in these
18 sessions, and this is evidenced by the full employment and wait list in
19 every workshop at headquarters for the remainder of fiscal year '18.
20 If we keep our current pace at two workshops per month at
21 headquarters, we should be able to target at least 50 percent of the
22 general staff within the next 18 months. Most, if not all, of the staff in
23 the regions will be expected to be trained at the regions within the next
24 12 months.

25 Next slide. We usually spend a few minutes at these
26 meetings going over some key workforce demographics. You have
27 some of that in the background binder, but I just wanted to share a

1 couple of thoughts with you this afternoon. To no one's surprise,
2 staffing levels have continued to decrease from 3,245 employees in
3 fiscal year '17 to, roughly, 3,094 employees as of March of '18. And
4 as a reminder, from our peak in 2010, we have seen a reduction of
5 approximately 23 percent in agency staffing.

6 Next slide. Staff-to-first-line supervisor ratio has
7 increased. As you know, it's important that we have the right level of
8 supervisory span of control, and over the years, since 2013, I would
9 note we've had an approximate reduction of 85 supervisors since that
10 time. We've continued to make progress in this area, as our offices
11 are mindful of the need to have the appropriate span of control.

12 Next slide. We get a number of EDO questions
13 about how many SES are in the agency, and I thought it would be
14 good to put this up for people's information. If you look at this chart,
15 you can see that the number of SES positions has decreased to 129
16 this year from 135 last year. And this actually represents a reduction
17 over a ten-year period of 45 positions in 2008 when we had 174, and
18 that's approximately a 25-percent decrease.

19 Next slide. So this chart takes a while to get used to
20 looking at. It's been up here for about, I think, ten years, and I still
21 have trouble discerning what it actually says. But let me sort of
22 provide the Cliff Notes version of that. Essentially, we have a large
23 number of staff who are eligible to retire. In addition, what's not on
24 this slide but it's embedded in the numbers is that 55 percent of
25 agency staff are over the age of 50, so our retirement eligibility
26 numbers are expected to remain high. We're closely watching
27 attrition, which this year is running close to four percent, so we can be

1 prepared to strategically replenish and hire through our pipeline.

2 Of note, and this is not on the slide but just for
3 informational purposes, approximately 50 percent of our technical
4 SESers are retirement eligible, and this is as compared to 21 percent
5 of our supervisors. And as a friendly reminder, retirement eligibility
6 does not mean that employees are necessarily going to exit the
7 agency. We are, however, monitoring trends with respect to federal
8 retirement benefits in terms of changes that may be coming which
9 could potentially accelerate attrition through the elimination of the
10 annuity supplement for our FERS employees and potentially the
11 establishment of a high five as opposed to a high three.

12 Next slide. So I believe that it's important to see the
13 positive. We sort of covered some of the realistic aspects of our
14 workforce, but we are, I think, at a time of opportunity. So where are
15 we now and what are we doing to help the agency move forward?

16 I'd like to highlight that we are going to be rebuilding
17 the capacities within the corporate support offices and strengthening
18 the competencies of our corporate support staff. As many of you
19 know, the corporate support offices lost a significant amount, excuse
20 me, a significant number of agency experts in recent years, and it's
21 going to take some time to rebuild that knowledge base. Part of that
22 strategy will actually be to comply with the president's management
23 agenda where we will be required to have competency-based
24 qualification requirements and certification standards for HR
25 professionals, and this is really in addition to professional
26 requirements that actually exist in some of the other corporate areas
27 with respect to financial management and acquisition where there

1 actually are some positive education requirements. Maintaining a
2 strong technical basis in our corporate staff is going to be critical to us
3 moving forward.

4 We are also supporting NRR and NRO during this
5 time on pre-merger activities to include support on staffing, change
6 management, and competency modeling. More generally, we are
7 supporting the offices as they prepare for future programmatic
8 workload changes, and we will be utilizing the Enhanced Strategic
9 Workforce Planning process, which you're going to hear about shortly,
10 as part of that effort.

11 If we look at the demographic information that I
12 alluded to earlier, one can reasonably conclude that there are going to
13 be opportunities to develop and place future leaders. It's going to be
14 very important that we refocus our leadership development programs
15 in light of the agency's transformation efforts and that we inculcate the
16 attributes of the leadership model, such as innovation and risk
17 tolerance, receptivity to new ideas, collaboration and teamwork, to
18 name a few, into our everyday actions. We will also need to skill up
19 our leaders to become more agile and to be more able to anticipate
20 and adapt to changes in our environment.

21 If we look at best practices with respect to agility, the
22 private sector employs more aggressive and more timely talent
23 management decisions by moving their most capable people to solve
24 the business's most pressing work demands when they're needed.
25 We might want to consider how we can become more agile in this
26 area.

27 To improve our staff's external awareness, we need to

1 continue to support our employees through their participation and
2 development programs, such as the White House Leaders
3 Development Program, the Chief Ex Officers program, our own
4 Aspiring Leaders program, details to other agencies both at the
5 federal and state level, or to the legislative branch.

6 It's going to be also important that we continue to
7 strengthen individual learning and development. An important
8 takeaway I got from attending a recent seminar on organizational
9 productivity was the importance of employees learning something new
10 every day on the job and actually applying that knowledge in the
11 workplace.

12 Our experience at the NRC indicates that employees
13 tend to gravitate toward learning opportunities in their area of
14 expertise. And while it's important to maintain an employee's level of
15 technical competence, it's also important that our employees not get
16 stale in their current positions. We need to continue to encourage
17 movement among our technical disciplines either through formal
18 qualification programs, assessment of current skills against
19 newly-developed competency models, or through formal technical
20 training. The workforce of the present and those that will soon be
21 entering the workforce will demand these agile learning solutions, and
22 we need to be ready to offer that to them.

23 Before I conclude, I wanted to offer the following
24 observation: I feel very optimistic about the future. When we have
25 the opportunity to meet with folks like the Federal Women's Program
26 Advisory Committee, our own Aspiring Leaders, our members of our
27 innovation forum, I feel there's a lot of energy and enthusiasm in the

1 agency right now. We have to capitalize on this momentum and
2 utilize the talents of our highly-capable staff as we chart our course for
3 the future.

4 I now turn the presentation over to Melody Fopma.

5 MS. FOPMA: Thank you, Miriam. And good
6 afternoon, Chairman and Commissioners, and thank you for the
7 opportunity to present to you today trends and developments in the
8 area of equal employment opportunity and diversity inclusion at the
9 NRC.

10 SBCR's office director, Pam Baker, could not be with
11 us today as she is attending the NRC's Small Business Exchange and
12 Matchmaking Event in Texas. This marks the first time we have
13 sponsored an event at one of our regional offices, and it's something
14 we plan to continue.

15 In addition, I'm happy to be able to announce that our
16 small business program has maintained its high level of performance
17 and recently received our second A+ rating from the Small Business
18 Administration for fiscal year 2017.

19 Next slide, please. I want to thank the Commission
20 for your continued commitment and support for the principles of
21 diversity and inclusion and thank you, Chairman Svinicki, for issuing a
22 policy reminder to all employees that diversity, inclusion, and respect
23 for every employee is an essential part of our everyday working
24 relationships. An inclusive environment enables all of our employees
25 to use their skills and talents to more effectively achieve the NRC's
26 safety and security mission.

27 I'd like to share with you some activities the staff has

1 been participating in that served to foster an environment of inclusion
2 that values the unique background and contributions of every
3 employee. Our Dialogue Initiative was launched a little over two
4 years ago to create awareness and a greater understanding of
5 diversity issues among employees. Respect for differing viewpoints
6 is a bedrock of NRC culture and promotes the NRC values.

7 Dialogue provides a forum for conversations across
8 various differences found in the workplace on a full spectrum of
9 diversity topics. Dialogue provides a safe and respectful environment
10 where employees can exchange viewpoints and perspectives and
11 work collaboratively together towards mutual understanding. These
12 facilitated discussions delve into all aspects of diversity and inclusion
13 with the goal of more effective working relationships. Participants
14 develop a greater appreciation for the value and positive impacts
15 made by diverse groups in meeting the mission of the agency.

16 Since its inception, seven Dialogue cohorts have been
17 completed, representing approximately three percent of NRC's
18 workforce. Our target is to have 25 percent of employees complete
19 Dialogue in the next three to five years. We believe this level of
20 participation would achieve a significant influence in engendering an
21 inclusive workplace.

22 We call our Dialogue graduates ambassadors, and
23 their charge is to extend the principles of diversity and inclusion into
24 their individual offices through information sharing and engaging in
25 activities. One activity SBCR and the ambassadors have been
26 sharing with offices and also recently at the senior leadership meeting
27 is the Privilege Walk. Privilege refers to any advantage, opportunity,

1 or general protection from negative societal treatment which persons
2 deemed to be a member of the dominant group will typically enjoy but
3 others will not. Through a series of questions around circumstances
4 individuals may not recognize as privilege based on their upbringing
5 and life choices, participants either take a step forward or backward.
6 A facilitated discussion follows. Participants have expressed that
7 seeing others' life experiences and unique perspectives allowed for
8 greater empathy and compassion for others and drove home the
9 importance of diversity as a value that should be promoted at the
10 NRC.

11 We believe that our increased focus on diversity and
12 inclusion through programs such as the Dialogue and the Privilege
13 Walk will have a positive impact on NRC's culture and will also
14 positively impact complaint activity.

15 Next slide. This bar graph represents the number of
16 informal and formal complaints filed over the past ten fiscal years.
17 The data for fiscal year 2018 is as of March 31st or halfway through
18 the fiscal year. Overall, complaint activity has been trending similar
19 to previous years. Keep in mind this is despite our workforce getting
20 smaller every year, as Miriam indicated earlier.

21 However, our complaint activity is still relatively low,
22 as it represents approximately one-half of one percent of NRC's total
23 workforce. In addition, NRC is ranked among federal agencies with
24 the lowest complainant rates.

25 Next slide. This pie chart shows us that the most
26 frequent basis of alleged discrimination raised in complaints so far this
27 fiscal year are age and gender with race close behind. In fact, over

1 70 percent of our complaint activity alleged these bases. This
2 breakdown is largely consistent with the bases raised in prior years.
3 The chart shown reflects all bases cited in complaints which may
4 include multiple bases, which is why the totals on this slide differ from
5 the previous slide. Another trend to note is that age has been the
6 number-one bases alleged for the past five years.

7 While not depicted in a chart, the most frequent issue
8 raised in discrimination complaints so far this fiscal year is
9 harassment, also referred to as hostile work environment claims.
10 Harassment is still the most commonly alleged issue and has been the
11 number-one issue raised for the past several years at NRC. This is
12 also true across the federal government. I'll examine this further on a
13 subsequent slide.

14 Next slide, please. The NRC has a well-established
15 alternative dispute resolution program to help resolve disputes in the
16 earliest stage in an open-minded and cooperative setting. ADR
17 provides an opportunity to be heard and opens communications
18 between employees and managers. It promotes the repairing of
19 working relationships and allows the parties to resolve complaints
20 themselves without formal legal action. We believe every case has
21 the potential to be resolved if the parties look for common interest,
22 build on those, and are creative and flexible.

23 Once the agency decides to offer ADR, managers
24 have a duty to participate. There are various forms of ADR used in
25 the federal sector, but mediation is NRC's preferred method.
26 Mediation is designed to help resolve disputes by using a neutral third
27 party to facilitate discussions.

1 Next slide. As I indicated earlier, harassment has
2 been the number-one issue alleged by complainants for the past
3 several years at NRC and across the federal government. In 2016,
4 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission select task force
5 issued a report after 14 months of study on workplace harassment in
6 the nation. The task force recommended that, to effectively combat
7 harassment, agencies must take a holistic approach that starts with
8 getting the buy-in of senior leaders. The task force went on to say
9 that it's about changing behaviors and creating a culture of more
10 respectful work environments. The goal is to stop unwelcome
11 conduct before it polarizes parties, disrupts individuals' productivity,
12 and ultimately rises to a level requiring litigation.

13 One of the recommendations for how agencies can
14 help prevent workplace harassment is to implement focused training.
15 The task force said that, to be effective, the training must be live, in
16 person, and tailored to the agency's workplace. So in response,
17 SBCR, OCHCO, and OGC have partnered to conduct this training at
18 the branch level at the agency so that co-workers can interact in small
19 groups. This training is for all employees, not just supervisors and
20 managers, and it's being conducted by staff who understand NRC's
21 culture and the needs of each particular workplace.

22 In addition, the Merit Systems Protection Board's
23 recent update on sexual harassment in the federal workplace said that
24 agencies must improve their education of employees about their rights
25 and responsibilities regarding workplace conduct. While the training
26 we are conducting is not mandatory, we have received requests from
27 several offices to conduct these small group sessions with their

1 employees.

2 I'd like to now bring your attention to a new
3 development in the area of individuals with disabilities. While
4 progress has been made, people with disabilities remain
5 under-represented in the federal government. The employment rate
6 of individuals with targeted disabilities remains particularly low both at
7 the NRC and government-wide.

8 Last year, the EEOC issued a final rule to amend the
9 regulations implementing Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of
10 1973. Agencies have to comply with the new requirements this year.

11 The final rule required federal agencies to develop an affirmative
12 action plan for people with disabilities and to adopt goals in order to
13 achieve employment rates of 12 percent of people with disabilities and
14 2 percent of people with targeted disabilities. SBCR and OCHCO are
15 coordinating efforts to ensure NRC's plan is carried out agency-wide in
16 order to achieve these targets.

17 Thank you. And I will now turn it over to Susan
18 Salter.

19 MS. SALTER: Thank you, Melody. Good afternoon,
20 Chairman and Commissioners. It's my pleasure to brief you on the
21 status of the agency's Strategic Workforce Planning initiatives, and
22 today I'm going to cover four main areas. I'm going to briefly review
23 the time line for enhancing the agency's strategic workforce planning
24 process, remind you of the steps. I know we've briefed you on that
25 before, but we have new commissioners. I also want to share some
26 outcomes we achieved and insights into the process itself and then
27 finish with our plans for the phase two rollout.

1 Next slide, please. In January of 2017, the EDO
2 tasked a multi-office working group to develop recommendations to
3 enhance the agency's existing strategic workforce planning activities.
4 Those recommendations were submitted by the working group four
5 months later in April, and in July the EDO approved a pilot approach
6 with the Offices of Research CFO in Region II and OCHCO and
7 OEDO formed an implementation team to implement the pilot. The
8 staff are currently finalizing their lessons learned report which will
9 include adjustments to be made for the phase two broader agency
10 rollout.

11 Next slide. The enhanced strategic workforce
12 planning process includes six steps which have been outlined before
13 at previous human capital Commission briefings, but I'm going to go
14 over them again briefly. These steps were performed as part of the
15 pilot between November and May.

16 And if we go to the next slide, to prepare for the pilot,
17 OCHCO provided training to managers in the pilot organizations in
18 September. This training included an overview of the benefits and
19 importance of strategic workforce planning, as well as the steps that
20 would be included in the pilot process.

21 The pilot officially began in November with step one
22 setting the strategic direction, and this step included an environmental
23 scan that was led by the Office of the Executive Director for
24 Operations and looked at factors that would affect the NRC workload
25 over the next five years. Using this information that was identified in
26 the environmental scan, the pilot organizations prepared a workload
27 forecast that looked both one year and five years out.

1 For example, is the work expected to increase or decrease or remain
2 the same? Is the nature of the work changing due to external factors
3 but also internal factors, such as efficiencies gained through NRC
4 initiatives like Project AIM? The workload forecast sets the
5 foundation for the future steps in the process.

6 In addition, OCHCO worked with the offices to identify
7 their core positions that would be used for the pilot. Core positions
8 are directly linked to the NRC's strategic goals and represent the
9 majority of our mission critical work performed by the office or the
10 region. So for example, among the core positions in the regional
11 office were reactor engineering inspectors, senior reactor analysts,
12 and fuel facilities inspector, to name a few. The competencies for
13 each of the core positions were identified using a job analyses that
14 would be used in later steps to identify specific skill gaps within those
15 core positions.

16 Next slide. So in January, OCHCO provided a
17 second round of training to the pilot organizations on the remaining
18 steps in the process. And following that training, the offices and
19 regions submitted their workforce demand analysis, and this
20 determined the number of core positions they needed to perform the
21 work that they identified in the workload forecast that was prepared in
22 step one.

23 In March, step three was completed and this was
24 analysis of the current workforce supply that looked at attrition factors
25 and skill levels and the deliverable was an inventory of the anticipated
26 workforce supply at both one and five years out. The workforce
27 supply inventory was compared to the workforce demand and a gap

1 analysis was completed as part of step four. The gap analysis
2 identified gaps and overages for each of the core positions, along with
3 factors related to high-priority gaps that were expected to be
4 experienced within the next one to two years.

5 These analyses were provided to the pilot offices and
6 regions for them to validate and to develop specific strategies to
7 address certain gaps and overages. We held meetings to review the
8 data obtained with each of the pilot offices, and we met individually
9 with most of the divisions to help them formulate their strategies.

10 Next slide. In May, the offices and regions submitted
11 their strategies for addressing the gaps and overages, and this takes
12 us to step six where we are today. And OCHCO will continue to
13 support the agency-wide strategies developed and OEDO will support
14 the offices in monitoring and evaluating these strategies.

15 So I'd like to now give you a flavor for what we found
16 as a result of implementing the process. Next slide, please. As
17 expected, in many areas the workload is expected to decrease and,
18 as such, we anticipated the gap analysis would identify overages.
19 However, when estimated attrition factors were considered, the
20 overages were lower than what we had anticipated we would see and,
21 in some cases, a shortage was actually projected.

22 Another significant finding had to do with skill levels.
23 The gap analysis identified that our current workforce are
24 highly-skilled, experienced employees, but few were identified in the
25 areas in the less experienced skill levels that would be applicable to
26 entry-level employees. This results in more expert-level employees
27 than the agency perhaps needs to perform the work, which isn't

1 necessarily a bad problem to have but the lack of a pipeline for the
2 future is a concern.

3 The human capital council has been discussing
4 strategies for developing a pipeline while we are experiencing limited
5 external hiring opportunities. This would include having a more
6 robust summer hire program to identify potential new permanent
7 entry-level hires for the future when we think we'll have more
8 opportunities for external hiring.

9 We also identify challenges related to retaining the
10 appropriate workforce to perform the work today when staff are seeing
11 that that work is going away or going to be significantly decreasing in
12 the future. And so some of the strategies, particularly in the region,
13 had to do with identifying ways to retain staff to do the work but
14 helping them to prepare for new positions in the future. So proposed
15 strategies included allowing time now for staff to start to cross-train,
16 providing additional time for staff to be able to find jobs when work
17 ends in specific areas, and extending telework opportunities.

18 Finally, despite reductions in workload, there is a
19 need to maintain core capabilities in technical areas. For example,
20 severe accident consequence. The challenge is how to maintain
21 these type of capabilities so that we have them when we need them
22 but also ensure that we have sufficient workload for all employees
23 when they are not performing this type of work in these specialized
24 areas. This is further complicated when contractors are also having
25 difficulty retaining these capabilities. Proposed strategies include
26 combining expertise into one position and using our graduate
27 fellowship program to develop specific additional depth in specific

1 expertise areas.

2 Next slide. So moving on to the process itself, as
3 anticipated, there were a number of things that we thought worked
4 really well and there were a number of challenges we want to address
5 for the phase two rollout. Some highlights of what worked well
6 included the process itself. The six steps provided a sound,
7 repeatable process that was used to prepare an outlook for staff of the
8 anticipated type and amount of work in the pilot organizations.
9 OCHCO provided training at the appropriate stages, and I thought that
10 worked well, both at the beginning to kick off the process and
11 introduce the concepts and then again as the pilot offices embarked
12 on those critical steps of three, four, and five. Guidance and
13 templates were developed in tandem with the pilot steps using input
14 from the pilot offices to adjust and improve as we moved through.

15 To implement the pilot, we also identified points of
16 contact in each of the pilot organizations to work with OCHCO and
17 OEDO. And these points of contacts provided important support
18 during each of the process steps and really provided a hands-on
19 approach to guide their managers through the process and complete
20 each of the deliverables.

21 Next slide. Challenges we encountered during the
22 pilot included forecasting workload beyond the two-year budget cycle
23 specifically related to the level of detail required in creating a
24 workforce forecast around different scenarios and how to treat
25 situations that were identified but were less likely to unlikely to occur.
26 There were also concerns over staff reactions to potential significant
27 workload changes in the offices and regions and when and what to

1 share.

2 Manager engagement was a challenge in some cases
3 due to competing priorities that were occurring around the same time
4 as we were kicking off the process. For example, classroom training
5 was rolled out in the fall and this was difficult for supervisors because
6 of the performance appraisal process.

7 To address these challenges, we are working to
8 improve the guidance documents in support for step one setting the
9 strategic direction, specifically as it relates to conducting the
10 environmental scan and preparing the workload forecast, and our
11 plans for training include earlier offerings and using alternative
12 blended learning strategies rather than exclusively classroom training.

13 Related to the sharing of information, we believe it's
14 really important to share information with employees because it
15 empowers them to make career planning and developmental
16 decisions that are consistent with the agency's long-term needs.
17 However, the timing of when to share is an important consideration we
18 found in the pilot. Sharing the information too early in the process
19 can cause undue angst among staff, but when the workload forecast
20 information is combined with the information from the rest of the steps
21 in the process it reflects a more complete and accurate view of where
22 the office and the agency is going.

23 Next steps. Next slide and next steps. In light of the
24 success of the pilot, we are in the process of planning for a broader
25 agency rollout to include all of the pilot organizations in the major
26 program offices to include NMSS, NRO, NRR, NSIR, the remaining
27 regions, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer. These

1 organizations would represent approximately 79 percent of the NRC
2 workforce, and we believe that OCHCO and OEDO staff can support
3 implementation of the process for these offices.

4 Approaching strategic workforce planning in a phased
5 approach was a best practice identified by the working group in their
6 benchmarking with organizations such as GAO and OPM. And the
7 phased approach helps to build capability to support other offices and
8 help educate them. So the pilot offices are going to help us educate
9 and support the other offices as they go through the process based on
10 their own experiences.

11 So we thank you for this opportunity to update you on
12 the agency's Enhanced Strategic Workforce Planning process. And
13 it's my pleasure to turn it over to Mike Weber, Director of the Office of
14 Nuclear Regulatory Research, to share Research's perspectives on
15 participating in the pilot.

16 MR. WEBER: Thanks, Susan. Good afternoon,
17 Chairman, Commissioners. It's great to have a full commission with
18 us today and thanks so much for your kind remarks that you've
19 already shared. It's been my privilege to serve not on the
20 Commission but with the Commission for many years.

21 And I'd also like to point out not only am I leaving, as
22 well as Vic McCree, the EDO, but Maria Schwartz, one of our leaders
23 in our union, is also leaving, so you'll hear from her later this
24 afternoon. I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank her for her
25 long and diligent cooperation with senior management of the agency
26 to ensure that NRC does remain a best place to work.

27 So Susan described the pilot in general. I'm going to

1 now talk about how do we apply the implementation of strategic
2 workforce planning within the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research.
3 As you heard, and if I could transition to the next slide, please, we did
4 successfully implement the pilot along with Region II and the Office of
5 the Chief Financial Officer, and this provided us with a range of
6 different core positions to apply in different parts of the agency so that
7 we could gain a broader perspective and what some of the challenges
8 and opportunities might be as we move forward with strategic
9 workforce planning.

10 It did provide the Office of Nuclear Regulatory
11 Research with useful insights as we prepare for the future. It did
12 allow us to drive our staffing projections, our needs, our supply based
13 on the projected workload, which is very important to the agency.

14 The pilot also enhanced our understanding of core
15 competencies and capabilities, and this is important for the Office of
16 Nuclear Regulatory Research. You may be familiar with we
17 established with the cooperation of the Commission core capabilities
18 back in 1998, and we're going to use the results of the pilot to update
19 and review those core capabilities to make them more current 20
20 years later after we did that earlier.

21 We also think that our participation will assist in
22 agency-wide implementation of strategic workforce planning by
23 specifically focusing on what worked well in our situation, what is
24 transferrable to other offices, what should work better, and we
25 provided a lot of feedback to our colleagues. And we're already
26 reaching out to peers in the headquarters office, as well as the
27 regions, to share our insights so that they benefit from our

1 participation in the pilot.

2 Next slide, please. One final comment I would point
3 out is that the new approach is very different than the historical
4 approach that NRC has used in the past. You may be familiar in the
5 1999 - early 2000s time frame, we used to have a database which we
6 called Strategic Workforce Planning, and that imposed a certain level
7 of burden on both employees and supervisors to periodically update in
8 all the different skills and review those, as well as project needs.

9 In contrast, we found that this current approach is
10 much less burdensome both for employees and supervisors. It's
11 more integrated with existing agency processes and procedures, so it
12 works well together. It's better linked to the projected workload of the
13 agency, and it's more strategic and far less tactical, although it does
14 enable both tactical decision-making and better-informed strategic
15 decision-making with respect to workforce planning. So it allows us,
16 as an organization, to focus on where we're going rather than where
17 we've been.

18 Next slide, please. As has already been alluded to in
19 Susan's remarks, the environmental scanning is critically important to
20 enable successful strategic workforce planning. So as the
21 Commission might be aware, we were actually participating in the pilot
22 concurrent with the Commission's finalization of the new strategic
23 plan, and we used that same basis to take it down a few notches and
24 guide in terms of providing strategic direction for our workforce
25 planning purposes.

26 We did focus beyond the conventional two-year
27 budget cycle, so we were looking out not only one year into the future,

1 which happened to be 2018, but also out to 2023. And when you
2 look out that far, it really does force you to challenge some of the
3 basic assumptions about what is your workload going to be looking
4 like and who do you need to provide that workload. That was one of
5 the most challenging aspects of the pilot to get our arms around not
6 just what skills and abilities need to be maintained but what new skills
7 and abilities are going to be needed by the agency as we move
8 forward. And that helped us sharpen our understanding of those core
9 competencies, potential gaps, and strategies.

10 For example, within the Office of Research, we
11 identified a number of the engineering positions where we project
12 gaps, as well as in the health physics area. And in fact, in some
13 cases, we identified sub-specialties within the core positions where
14 we're going to need to apply these strategies and ensure that we have
15 people with the right skills to accomplish the agency's mission.

16 And then that allowed us to leverage competency
17 modeling. As the Commission may be aware, we've been working on
18 competency modeling. Research was one of the first offices to
19 partner with OCHCO in developing the competency model for risk and
20 reliability engineers, and we have a number of those in the Office of
21 Nuclear Regulatory Research. So we were able to use that same
22 model in assisting us beyond the job analysis and looking at what kind
23 of skills are going to be needed.

24 Susan highlighted the Just-In Time training for the
25 supervisors. That helped, as well as it allowed the supervisors to
26 participate actively in fine-tuning and refining the process, as well as
27 the guidance, because as we rolled it out to a broader set of

1 supervisors, we identified more issues that we could encounter and
2 we were able to address that as we went forward with the pilot.

3 Next slide, please. In addition, and this is especially
4 significant for the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, the pilot
5 validated the importance of including external resources. Now, the
6 Commission knows this. It goes back to the founding of the Nuclear
7 Regulatory Commission. Congress identified the need for the agency
8 to have access to external sources, such as the national laboratories,
9 universities, other federal agencies, as well as international partners.
10 So we drew on that as part of the pilot, and we examined to what
11 extent would we continue to rely on those external sources. And as
12 you won't be surprised, we expect we will continue to rely on those
13 external sources.

14 So that aids the agency not only in strategic workforce
15 planning but also in strategic acquisition as we look longer term, as we
16 strengthen our partnerships with those external sources, like the
17 national laboratories and other federal agencies. And it's overall
18 consistent with how the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research
19 leverages our external partnerships with the Department of Energy,
20 the Electric Power Research Institute, and, in some cases,
21 international partners. So that all flowed well as part of the pilot.

22 Next slide. As an added benefit to our participation,
23 and it's already been alluded to in Dan's opening remarks, our
24 participation in the pilot also helped to reemphasize that forward focus
25 and how that really assists the agency in integrating with our other
26 NRC processes and initiatives. For example, as I mentioned,
27 concurrent with our participation of the pilot, the Commission was

1 finalizing the strategic plan. That strategic plan provides that
2 strategic direction which then becomes the foundation of workforce
3 planning. The pilot integrated well with the Speed of Trust initiative
4 that we've previously discussed, the application, the behaviors, talk
5 straight, anticipate and confront reality and clarify expectations, as
6 well as the evolving leadership model which you'll see being rolled out
7 over the next month and applying participative rulemaking,
8 collaboration, and teamwork.

9 And, finally, it helped us to focus on the workforce of
10 the future by looking forward, especially over that five-year period, to
11 look at succession planning within the workforce, how do we take that
12 into account, how do we staff for that evolution? Using innovative
13 means such as the Graduate Fellows Program, which is necessary, in
14 some cases three to four years out, to develop the necessary experts
15 that we'll rely on to accomplish the mission. And then integrating with
16 other programs, such as the integrated university program and the
17 minority-serving institutions program.

18 So since this is my last meeting, I just wanted to say a
19 special note of appreciation to the Commission for your leadership, for
20 your oversight, even though sometimes it was a little painful, and for
21 your support, both me personally and for the agency. You clearly
22 walk the talk in accomplishing the agency's security and safety
23 mission, and for that I am indeed grateful.

24 So with that, I'll turn it back to Dan.

25 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Mike. Chairman and
26 Commissioners, we have made significant process through the pilot
27 implementation of our Enhanced Strategic Workforce Program. We

1 look forward to the broader agency rollout during the coming year.
2 This process will help us ensure that the NRC continues to have the
3 right people with the right skills at the right time to accomplish our
4 safety and security mission in challenging and dynamic times.

5 Employee engagement remains high, and we have
6 made strides in fostering greater trust throughout the agency through
7 the Speed of Trust initiative. This high-trust environment is key to
8 sustaining our agility and resilience. And, finally, we continue to
9 maintain a strong focus on equal employment opportunity and
10 diversity and inclusion to ensure that every member of the NRC family
11 is valued and fully engaged.

12 That concludes our presentation. We welcome your
13 questions.

14 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you, Dan, and thank
15 you to each of the presenters. In the question and answer period
16 today, I will begin for our side of the table. And Commissioner Baran
17 and I have previously joked about when this day came we would have
18 to, on our side of the table, watch our clocks which only we can see,
19 and we will have to be much more disciplined. We got into this bad
20 habit or consuming the time of the vacant seats, as well. So I will
21 probably struggle with this more than anyone on this side of the table,
22 so let me try to walk the talk, as Mr. Weber just said.

23 Again, thank you. And I would like to acknowledge
24 that many of the participants and individuals in the audience today are
25 members of and consequently the energy behind our diversity
26 advisory committees in various capacities. Although our diversity and
27 inclusion efforts are not central to the topics we're covering today, we

1 tend to alternate in these meetings. Again, thank you so much for
2 what you all do and, again, you're kind of keeping us with the right
3 ideas in front of us and, again, you do bring through your initiatives so
4 much energy around and enhance so substantially the culture here
5 and kind of not just what we do but how we treat each other and how
6 we think of each other as we go about that. So thank you to all of you
7 and thank you for reminding us of that by your presence here today. I
8 wanted to just mention that.

9 And, Melody, I would like to, I noticed this when it
10 crossed my desk and I'm always very much looking forward to our
11 rating from the Small Business Administration. I think in early years,
12 when I saw an A, I didn't think there was anything beyond that. But
13 the A+ is phenomenal. And so to SBCR, to the team, to the Office of
14 Administration with its many professionals who support us in that goal,
15 it takes extra work and extra effort to achieve even a B. I think an A
16 is phenomenal, and an A+, I don't know an adjective for that. But well
17 done to everyone and to the agency as a whole on that. I think we
18 should be very legitimately proud of our work in that endeavor.

19 We do have a lot of other areas where we continue to
20 push forward, and I look forward to our work on individuals with
21 disabilities and seeing what improvements we can make in having a
22 larger composition in our workforce and of individuals with targeted
23 disabilities under some of the guideposts that have been put forward
24 to us. I know we can rise to that occasion, and I look forward to that.

25 Some of the nuts and bolts here of what we've talked
26 about, strategic workforce planning, we've talked about if you can
27 have the best process in the world, if it's overly burdensome, it's kind

1 of, you know, people want the benefit of the tools, but if it's something
2 that's going to require employees to do a lot of updating, as Mike was
3 mentioning, going in and doing skills inventories.

4 Mike, in the experiences of the Office of Research or
5 maybe just generally from Susan, could you talk about how we really
6 kept that in mind that we want a usable process and what were some
7 examples of how we made sure that we weren't putting, like, the most
8 beautiful process that no one is going to want to actually use?

9 MR. WEBER: Well, I'll start and Susan can chime in.

10 So you recall I've led the working group that developed the
11 recommendations that then I had to implement. So I had a built-in
12 incentive to do it right, including the recommendation that the Office of
13 Nuclear Regulatory Research participate in the pilot.

14 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: We heard what an
15 enthusiastic volunteer you were.

16 MR. WEBER: I have been enthusiastic. So one of
17 the first things we heard when we went outside the agency to talk to
18 other organizations who had implemented it was, above all, keep it
19 simple. And we heard lots of experiences that others had when they
20 tried to make it best thing since sliced bread, and it just got so
21 weighed down, so intractable, so burdensome that it wasn't worth the
22 squeeze, the juice wasn't worth the squeeze. So we started with that
23 concept in mind.

24 I think throughout the development of the process, the
25 working group wrestled with the NRC way, how detailed does it need
26 to be. I know Maureen often talks about special snowflakes, and we
27 all think we're special snowflakes. But if everyone is a special

1 snowflake, you really lose the value of strategic workforce planning at
2 the agency level. So it's got to work at both the agency level and at
3 the individual supervisor and organizational unit level, so that's
4 another element.

5 We do not rely in the current form of the program on
6 the development and maintenance of an employee database where
7 employees are required to enter on an annual basis or some periodic
8 frequency, specific self-assessments of all their capabilities. And
9 along that same line, we don't require supervisors to go in and review
10 all of that self-assessment. So I'll stop there and turn it over to
11 Susan.

12 MS. SALTER: So thanks, Mike. And I would agree
13 keep it simple was something that we just from the beginning said we
14 really have to do. We also automated as much of the process as we
15 could, so we've gotten templates for the workforce demand, we have
16 a database that we use for workforce supply, we can compare the two
17 to kind of just say here's what the data tells us, we have too many
18 here and not enough here. So that was really helpful in keeping the
19 process simple.

20 The scope, keeping it to core positions, was also
21 another way that we kept it manageable. It's not that, as we move
22 forward and as every year the offices participate and go through the
23 process again and they'll get better at it, they may add more than the
24 core positions. But just starting, the first time, we tried to, you know,
25 keep it simple, keep it manageable. We were very flexible. We
26 identified the core positions, but then, as we got into later steps in the
27 process, the pilot organization said, you know, we're re-thinking this,

1 we think we need another core position or we don't think this is a core
2 position. And we were fine with that. So being flexible, I think, was
3 another key consideration.

4 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, thank you for that
5 example. In talking about it, the both of you have mentioned the
6 forecasting and kind of iterating through and that we'll make
7 refinements as we go forward. And I think that's kind of a natural
8 thing in adopting a new process. But forecasts are forecasts, and
9 we're never going to have perfect knowledge about what confronts us.
10 So very much on my mind lately has been agility. Mike Weber and I
11 were talking earlier today about the risk triplet, but now we'll talk about
12 the Project Aim triplet of efficiency, effectiveness, and agility. And as
13 time goes on and NRC has, you know, implemented many of the
14 objectives of Project Aim and we've moved into our innovation forum
15 and kind of a sustainment and we have the transformation initiative,
16 but I'm beginning to think that agility is the thing that really carries you
17 through the uncertainties of life. We see this in America when we're
18 looking at, you know, having resiliency against natural disasters and
19 things like that because you're always going to have things thrown at
20 you that you didn't anticipate.

21 But, yet, we also, you know, there's cause and effect,
22 and these are very much integrated systems. So our workload is
23 declining, as Miriam and others have mentioned. We've had the
24 hiring controls in place, and, as a result, you know, we do have a
25 workforce that has become more senior, more expert, and it's
26 interesting we have to balance all of these factors. We want to be
27 agile. We will attrition over time. We have our forecasts of the core

1 competencies that we think we need.

2 But in terms of our agility and being able to just have
3 the right capabilities in reserve, at the ready, but, again, not
4 excessively so because those individuals need to stay occupied in the
5 time in which their highest specialization might not be called upon,
6 does anyone want to speak generally to how that is kind of a
7 consistent thing that you need to balance through a lot of these
8 initiatives? Dan, it looks like you might want to lead off there.

9 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Chairman. I think today
10 being the 74th anniversary of D-Day, I'll refer to General Eisenhower
11 whose comment regarding the preparation for D-Day was that the plan
12 was nothing, planning is everything. So as we work through strategic
13 workforce planning and we look at the scenario, and it's not a
14 scenario, there are different things that can happen, so we anticipate
15 what other things may change in the environment and how that may
16 impact us and we think about how we might respond to those things,
17 it's that process of thinking through those things that will enable us, as
18 we recognize those changes in our environment occurring, to act
19 strategically, to perhaps take staff that we currently have and help
20 them to re-tool to be prepared for things so that when it actually
21 comes we are ready.

22 Alternatively, it also helps us to take a strategic view
23 of the skill sets that we have so that when something like the
24 termination of the construction project at Summer occurs, we can
25 respond with greater agility to get the people who have just lost the
26 work that was immediately in front of them back engaged in other
27 important work that's on our plate.

1 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I was talking to a business
2 executive in a business that's encountering some headwinds right
3 now, and they wanted to get really, really lean. And I said, you know,
4 is cross-training, you know, a part of that, and he said it's absolutely a
5 foundational enabler because I want to be right-sized but right-sized
6 for what? I have to have some resiliency there against uncertainty.

7 So I appreciate that that's part of your thinking, and
8 I'm being very mindful of the clock, as I said. So I just want to close
9 with a comment, though. I said that our diversity and inclusion efforts
10 weren't really central to the topic today, but that isn't really accurate
11 because, in order to have success on the things that we're talking
12 about, our diversity and inclusion, you know, we embrace that. We
13 don't just do it because it's the right thing to do. It is, of course, the
14 right thing to do. But it makes us better. It makes us better at what
15 we need to achieve, and I think that the expanded aperture allows us
16 to expand our thinking, to expand our creativity, our problem-solving,
17 and all of those things. So I do see it as an enabler to what we're
18 trying to move forward on. So I ask us to remember that, that that
19 isn't just kind of something we do off to the side. It makes us feel
20 good. It does makes us feel good, and there's nothing wrong with
21 feeling good about stuff, but it is also just a key element of what we're
22 trying to achieve. I think organizations of the future that are kind of
23 nimble and ready for whatever kind of innovation and change is going
24 to come, the research shows that, in order to innovate and really
25 tackle the future, you have got to have that kind of diversity of thought,
26 diversity of experience, diversity of people and personalities and life
27 experiences. So I think we won't be successful without that as an

1 undercurrent.

2 And with that, I will now turn it over to Commissioner
3 Baran.

4 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thank you. Thank you
5 for your presentations and all the work you're doing. In the
6 background materials, I was thinking about this pie chart, which you're
7 not going to see, but trust me it's in the background materials. It is
8 staffed by grade level. And it shows that 58 percent of the agency's
9 employees are GG-13s and 14s. And a lot of these folks, as I was
10 thinking about it, are early to middle stages of their careers and they're
11 looking for opportunities to advance over time at the agency. And the
12 exit surveys of employees leaving the agency between April 2017 and
13 March 2018 -- over that kind of year period -- show that the number
14 one stated reason for leaving was a lack of opportunity for career
15 advancement. Twenty percent listed that as their top reason for
16 leaving. Another 19 percent listed it as their second-most important
17 reason for leaving and I worry about this because we are losing a lot
18 of talented, experienced individuals. Given the realities of a declining
19 workforce -- or, declining workload in some areas and the effect that
20 has on the size of the agency and its budget, this is likely to be a
21 continuing challenge. What are we doing to try to manage that?

22 MS. COHEN: I am happy to take that. So, thank
23 you for the question. Last year was an interesting year in terms of
24 the -- the folks who separated out of the agency. We had a higher
25 number of retirements, and that was pretty much fueled in part from
26 the early-out buyout and the corporate support office reduction. So
27 There were quite frankly a lot of folks in the technical -- I mean, the

1 corporate areas that did not see opportunities for advancement. In
2 fact, they found the converse. So if you peel the onion back on -- on
3 the people leaving, that was a number-one driver. And in fact, I
4 looked at the data this morning in preparation for this meeting and
5 actually technical attrition went down in -- in this period. So I was
6 able to look at sort of -- to see where -- where we had some
7 departures. I don't think it's always going to stay that way, but I think
8 the reality is -- in an agency that's downsizing, rightsizing, which -- you
9 know, pick the word that you want -- things aren't going to be the
10 same as they were.

11 I would however point out on a more positive note --
12 and it's not always viewed that way here -- is that we do have a very
13 high average grade compared to other federal agencies. Most of our
14 workforce is at the 14 level and above. We do believe it's important
15 to have individuals with strong technical prowess, and when we do
16 hire, we are able to hire people at the appropriate grades. So I think
17 we still have vestiges of employees that were here during the heydays
18 when people shot up very, very quickly. And I think when you came
19 in the agency at that time and you saw your fellow colleagues moving
20 up, and then when you thought it might be your turn and then this -- it
21 seemed like the spigot was turned off -- we have seen a number of
22 people wanting to leave the agency. I do think, based on the
23 demographic data, that that is going to shift. The question is, is how
24 long do people want to stay in an environment where they've been
25 maybe a 14 for five, six years -- a 13 for five, seven, eight years?

26 It's not necessarily the message that they want to
27 hear, but we also have heard from some individuals who have left for

1 greener pastures who actually come calling back to us because they
2 find that life was actually good at the NRC and people that left for
3 industry now have very, very long hours, shift work, and they want to
4 come back for work-life balance. So I think it's a point in time I want
5 to remain optimistic about the future, given where we are and the data
6 that we have in front of us.

7 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Miriam. And I would
8 add, Commissioner, as I talk to staff I -- first off, talk about what was
9 very difficult to see on that age demographic chart, or years of service
10 demographic chart is -- is -- is we have more people eligible to retire
11 right now than we've had in a long time, and especially in the
12 leadership ranks. There are opportunities over the horizon. And so
13 what would you do now is focus on -- on your development. Focus
14 on opportunities that come. Broaden your skill sets. You know,
15 Miriam just talked about people who were, you know, six, seven, eight
16 years at some of these lower grades -- eight years at 14 back in the
17 '90s when the agency was coming down, the opportunities will be
18 coming, get ready for them -- is where I would encourage people to
19 keep their focus.

20 MR. WEBER: And now you're briefing at the acting
21 EDO level, right? One other thing I would add, and just quickly, is
22 that the EEO advisory committees have also taken this issue to heart.
23 And we've conducted a number of seminars and working lunches that
24 they provided -- panel discussions, insights on what can you do when
25 you don't think your career is moving forward? Well, maybe you
26 want to move it sideways, so you broaden yourself so when those
27 opportunities are presented again, you can compete and be selected

1 for those opportunities.

2 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Well thank you for those
3 thoughts. Another potential challenge for staff retention is an
4 unintended consequence of the recent tax law, which made the
5 agency support for relocation expenses taxable income. It's going to
6 affect our ability to attract and retain resident inspectors, it could
7 impact the willingness or ability of employees to move between the
8 regions -- or, the regions and headquarters. How significant do we
9 think the impacts are going to be? And what options do we have to
10 address them?

11 MS. COHEN: So I know I have a lifeline in Maureen
12 Wylie somewhere. And so you're -- you're absolutely right in terms of
13 what the -- the latest guidance is in terms of the taxable income. But
14 I would want to mention that, in terms of the resident inspectors, which
15 are a critical component of the agency's workforce, the executive
16 director for operations, as you know, commissioned a tasking and a
17 working group to look at this -- and that actually pre-dated all of this
18 new information on the taxable income situation -- because we wanted
19 to figure out a way that we could continue to encourage people to
20 move into the resident inspector program. And among the various
21 things that the Tasking Memo has asked us to do in collaboration with
22 NRR, who has the lead on this, is that we are potentially looking at
23 things like longevity retention incentives for folks who might accept a
24 geographic move to another resident site, revising our safe pay criteria
25 and then looking at options for full-time telework at the end of a
26 resident's tour. So I think these are really important developments
27 with respect to the program. The agency, as you know, puts a

1 premium on having fully capable, qualified resident inspectors. And
2 we want to make sure that -- that we are not doing anything that will
3 disadvantage them.

4 With respect to the broader government issue, we are
5 not alone in this. Maureen can talk to this in terms of what is going
6 on and what she is hearing at CFO Council. So I would encourage
7 her to speak to that point.

8 MS. WYLIE: So, we did in fact get final GSA
9 guidance until they in fact update the federal travel regulation. And
10 that validated our decision to begin amending people's orders and
11 taxing for the entire range of relocation costs that we might spend on
12 them, with the exception of the home sale program. We still have a
13 process by which we give a withholding allowance. And unfortunately
14 it takes about a year-and-a-half to true up and give the final relocation
15 allowance. The program is not intended to hold employees
16 completely harmless because it's to the benefit of the government.
17 But we believe we have the tools over a period to make employees
18 roughly whole. There may be some small out of pocket costs.

19 The other -- the other point that I would make is that
20 there are still some unknown consequences outside the resident
21 program bringing people into the government where they are not
22 immediately eligible for some of the allowances and SESs' statutory
23 last move home, which would occur after they've left the government.
24 So there are still some things to be worked out. The other item is that
25 we have already set up a program so that no one will have an
26 immediate tax impact on one paycheck. We set up a payment plan
27 so people can spread the initial tax challenge over a number of pay

1 periods. So that's what we are able to do.

2 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thank you for that
3 update. I am mindful of the time, but there is one more thing I want to
4 cover, which is safety culture. Back in 2015 the IG issued its safety
5 culture and climate survey for the agency. And some of the results
6 raised concerns about the fear of reprisal or retaliation among NRC
7 employees for raising safety concerns. I think that's a big deal
8 because we can't succeed at our safety and security mission if experts
9 on our staff feel uncomfortable raising concerns.

10 In response to the IG survey and other survey results,
11 the Office of Enforcement led a multi-group -- a multi-office group to
12 study this issue. The resulting report hasn't yet been made public,
13 but having read it, I think it is a valuable effort. Can someone just
14 briefly discuss the next steps to be taken on this report's findings and
15 ideas for strengthening NRC safety culture?

16 MR. DORMAN: Yes, thank you, Commissioner.
17 The report that you referred to was completed at the end of last year
18 and provided to the director of the Office of Enforcement, and
19 provided what will characterize as considerations in nine areas. An
20 inner-office management task force has reviewed that report. Their
21 work product is due in the Office of the EDO in the next week or so
22 with recommendations addressing the considerations that were
23 provided in the report you refer to. And our expectation is that Victor
24 McCree will issue a tasking memorandum to the office to implement
25 the recommendations in the near future. And at that point, we would
26 expect that the report that you refer to, which has been held as a
27 pre-decisional deliberative document, along with the

1 recommendations of the management task force that reviewed it and
2 the Tasking Memo, would be made publicly available -- probably
3 before the end of this month.

4 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Great. Well, I
5 appreciate NRC senior management is taking the issue seriously.
6 We need everyone at NRC to know that it's absolutely essential that
7 they speak up if they have a safety concern. And we need them to
8 know that it's safe for them to do that. So thank you for -- for treating
9 this seriously. That's really a -- a core value, I think at NRC. And it's
10 an important effort.

11 MR. DORMAN: We agree. And I know I speak for
12 Vic on that.

13 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you, Commissioner
14 Baran. Commissioner Burns, please proceed.

15 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Thank you. Thank you,
16 all, for their presentations. I want to extend my congratulations as
17 well to SBCR for the small business score card. As the Chairman -- I
18 didn't really recognize until the Chairman mentioned on the A-plus.
19 And sometimes I think, you know, particularly given us as a smaller
20 agency, you know, that's a challenge. But I know we've -- we've
21 always stepped up into the plate. And again, I think for our diversity
22 and inclusion committees that do a lot of good work, you know, not
23 only the celebrations but as I think Mike just mentioned, some of the --
24 the seminars and, you know, sort of career development and -- and
25 thinking about ideas of what it is to be part of a workforce, not only
26 individually but corporately -- I think those are good initiatives to add to
27 the success of the agency.

1 One of -- let me -- let me go back into the strategic
2 workforce planning. So my question would be is -- you said one of
3 the lessons is keep it simple. How have we kept it simple?

4 MS. SALTER: So -- and Mike can add on, if he has
5 anything. But I think we kept it simple by making the process very
6 concise, by limiting it to core positions and by -- you know, not
7 requiring large documents, or large -- you know, we have templates.
8 It's fill out the template. And so I think that that has really helped to
9 keep it simple. Mike added that they looked at the extramural
10 resources. We had not originally planned for that -- trying to keep it
11 simple the first time around, but it was really important to Research, so
12 they decided to do that. The other offices in the pilot did not in the
13 region.

14 MR. WEBER: Another -- just to build on Susan's
15 response. We focused on core positions and tried not to make the
16 core positions then more finely honed at the sub-core positions. We
17 struggled with that in Research.

18 COMMISSIONER BURNS: So give me an example
19 of a core position. How -- how are we defining --

20 MR. WEBER: Reactor process engineer.

21 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Okay.

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 MR. WEBER: And then what we found --

24 COMMISSIONER BURNS: So resident inspector?

25 MR. WEBER: Resident inspector, yes.

26 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Okay.

27 MR. WEBER: In Research we found, for example, a

1 reactor process engineer -- well, there's three different kinds of reactor
2 process engineers. And you really need to have the skills,
3 competencies, capabilities to do the work that we need you do in one
4 of those three disciplines. Much of what those people bring to the
5 table, 90 percent or so, is the same. But that last 10 percent makes a
6 big difference in terms of their ability to competently and in a quality
7 way perform the work that we call on them to perform.

8 So we did go back and forth as went through the
9 process. And the offices did as well in the Office of Chief Financial
10 Officer in Region 2. At the agency level, the more you can make that
11 consistent, the easier it is to roll up all that information and look for
12 those opportunities. And if we get too specific, that's going to inhibit
13 the ability of the agency to do that. And one other simplification is
14 that our supply analysis focused on people's skills and abilities in their
15 current positions. We did not reach back historically. We've all
16 served in different positions throughout our careers, so we have not
17 just the skills at the current time in our current positions, but we have
18 additional skills, capabilities, et cetera.

19 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Okay.

20 MR. WEBER: But that adds more complexity and
21 burden.

22 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Well it -- part of it strikes
23 me -- is that you have, perhaps for the -- particularly for the technical
24 disciplines, I can see that in some of the other disciplines -- you're
25 actually sort of writing down -- you're dealing with different things.
26 You're dealing about these core -- core positions. You're dealing with
27 competencies. You're dealing with skills, which may be the education

1 background. You're dealing with tasks and all. I am trying to get
2 some sense of what -- how do those -- you know, I don't know if it's a
3 Venn diagram or however you want to describe it -- how do they sort
4 of get together?

5 And let -- before you answer, I will give you an
6 example, having been responsible for hiring in a particular office.
7 General Counsel's Office for years. So at one level, I know all you
8 technical folk just look at us lawyers, you are all just lawyers. Right,
9 okay? But in a way, you are. So I can use -- using the British terms,
10 I can say well there are -- in lawyers, I've got barristers and I have
11 solicitors. Not solicitors like we use it here, but you know, I have
12 litigators and -- and -- or, barristers and solicitors who are advisors.

13 But then I go up and I can see some of my former
14 colleagues up there. And I would say, well, she knows what she is
15 doing in EEO matters and things like that. But am I going to stick her
16 in Reactor Licensing? And so I -- type of thing. So help -- so, you
17 see, then I can get into that sort of complexity. Well, even in
18 something where I see it's fairly simple. All I am looking for -- have
19 they been admitted to the bar? I had trouble with that once with a
20 couple.

21 (Laughter.)

22 COMMISSIONER BURNS: But -- but anyway, so
23 how do -- what I -- what I think is very complex, and I don't say this
24 with any facetiousness, I really -- it's a complex thing, I think
25 particularly as we get into some of the technical disciplines, and some
26 of the things we are expecting the people to do. So how does that --
27 maybe give me a flavor of how you all integrate that.

1 MS. SALTER: So what we did for the pilot was we
2 did a job analysis for each of the core positions. And so, when you
3 looked at the job analysis, you're looking at the functions. What are
4 the functions of this job?

5 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Right.

6 MS. SALTER: What are the knowledge, skills and
7 abilities you need to perform those functions? And then, in a job
8 analysis, you look at what kind of experience would have prepared you
9 for that. So for example, if you looked at Region 2, they had fuel
10 facility inspector. Most of the functions -- many of the functions were
11 the same. But there were some specialties -- whether you were
12 emergency preparedness, you know, fuel facility inspector; or cyber
13 security -- so -- so there were -- within that core position, there were
14 sub-specialties that not everybody had, but certain people had. And
15 what we were looking at is the core positions that you need to do the
16 work. So like Mike said, if I was an electrical engineer, you know, ten
17 years ago, but since then I have been working in OCHCO, you know, I
18 am looking at my skill set for OCHCO. Not that at some point we
19 wouldn't be able to go back and, you know, look at my prior skills.
20 But it's really, what are the positions that we need to do our work?
21 And what are the key knowledge, skills and abilities? What are the
22 key functions and what are the knowledge, skills and abilities we need
23 to that work?

24 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Right, so for example --
25 again, I am not trying to stand in Margie's shoes here, but I were back
26 in OGC area, I would say probably in five years -- well, since, let's say,
27 10 years ago I need far fewer litigators than -- than I do now. I

1 probably still need people -- we're looking at rules. I need the people
2 to deal with the core, you know, administrative support, HR, OCHCO,
3 CFO, things like that. But I probably don't need as many litigators
4 because I don't -- I am not expecting the kind of workload in
5 adjudication, say, like it was when I walked in here four years ago
6 when it was probably 80-percent litigation. So if that's the type of
7 thing you're trying to assess?

8 MS. SALTER: Correct -- I believe so. I am not
9 familiar -- I am not as familiar with OGC's positions. But -- so a core
10 position -- would it be like, a lawyer, and then below that you have
11 sub-specialties? Or, it's a lawyer who does litigation and a lawyer
12 who does, you know -- yes. More subspecialties. So you get to that.

13 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Okay.

14 MS. SALTER: You get to what you really need to do
15 the work that you're projecting you're going to have.

16 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Okay.

17 MR. WEBER: And the broader initiative,
18 Commissioner, that's addressing this is the competency modeling.
19 Because there we are looking across the entire agency and what are
20 those competencies that we seek to achieve that we rely on to
21 accomplish the agency's mission? And then you look at proficiency
22 within the competency models. Not every person in a particular core
23 position is equally proficient, right? And that has -- goes back to the
24 experience that the individual has -- or, the breadth -- the
25 programmatic knowledge that they may have. Maybe they weren't
26 just a litigator in reactors, maybe they've worked in reactors and
27 materials and security and EP and administrative law. So, you know,

1 that gives them greater proficiency to perform their functions.

2 COMMISSIONER BURNS: One of the -- sort of lost
3 my train of thought here. So, one of the things -- so what you decided
4 not to do is have -- and I remember the -- what I think Mike alluded to
5 is that earlier model where you're supposed to go in and say, you
6 know -- you know, this is -- this is how I spent my summer -- at least
7 the last year, or something like that in terms of what my career
8 development was. So you'd -- did that, but the question I had was, in
9 some of your external engagement about doing that, what did you find
10 on the outside about whether they're -- whether those who are trying
11 to do a similar -- similar-type initiatives, whether they're sort of
12 including that kind of employee assessment in. Is it -- my guess is it
13 might be a mixed result.

14 MS. SALTER: Yes, I think for most agencies who
15 would do something like that -- it would be part of their talent
16 management system, similar to what we're doing with competency
17 models. So, when we looked at the job analyses -- and we had the
18 major functions and the knowledge, skills, and abilities -- the idea
19 originally was to put it in some type of database so we could sort it.
20 But when we started getting more involved in the competency
21 modeling and looking at that, the system that they have for that is
22 much more robust. It actually allows you to assess your skill level -- a
23 supervisor and an employee -- so that you can develop IDPs.

24 And so we are looking now at, you know, the agency
25 as we move forward to look at a new talent management system, that
26 would probably be incorporated into that. And so you would have a
27 way to assess the skills of the position today that the employee has.

1 But you are also able to say let's take this position. Let's see how
2 close they are. What percent do they already have of those
3 competencies? And here's where they're missing it and where they
4 need to -- to further develop. And so you can do that, you know, by
5 position and say hey, everybody that is x is 50 percent already ready
6 in y, and here is what they need to do differently.

7 So, because the resources to develop this separate
8 database for this would be taking away from the resources that were
9 doing the competency modeling, we decided we're going to wait and
10 we're going to go with the competency modeling. So for the phase 2
11 rollout, we are going to look at the competency modeling activity
12 instead of the job analysis. And right now we are in the process of
13 identifying the core positions with those -- this is -- and it's a struggle
14 to kind of pare that down to what a core position is. Because
15 everyone wants to say, but this is different. But when they actually
16 start to look at the job functions, they see it really is the same for the
17 most part -- except for with these variances at some point. So -does
18 that answer your questions?

19 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Yes, it does. Thank
20 you. Thank you, Chairman.

21 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you, Commissioner
22 Burns. And I -- because I know the story, I might just -- for the
23 purpose of the record state that when you said not being a member of
24 the bar and that you had a problem with that, I think you were referring
25 to your tenure as General Counsel where some NRC attorneys had
26 failed to maintain their membership on the bar. You did not mean to
27 indicate that you yourself were not accepted in the bar.

1 (Laughter.)

2 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: So I just -- I think the
3 transcript might be a little weird. I've -- I know the story because you
4 told it to me. But I just wanted to clarify that. And I knew --

5 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Thank you, Your Honor,
6 for that clarification.

7 (Laughter.)

8 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. All right, with
9 that please -- I will recognize Commissioner Caputo for any questions
10 she may have.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Well, I am just going to
12 start by saying I am glad this is my first commission meeting because I
13 think -- I think it is very fitting for new commissioners to begin by
14 hearing about the staff and the agency and the workforce and
15 everything that is being done to cultivate that special expertise and
16 knowledge base. It is clearly the primary asset of the agency. It is
17 very unique. It is very valuable. And -- so I think today's meeting is
18 -- is very fitting. I am glad to hear from the staff. I am eager to learn
19 more going forward. I am going to start with a question on diversity.
20 Obviously, valuing diversity I think is crucial to the NRC's success in
21 achieving its safety and security mission. And you talked a fair
22 amount about the dialogue program. How do you assess whether or
23 not you are seeing the results from that program that we'd hope to see
24 in terms of progress and shaping -- shaping the value of diversity in
25 the workforce?

26 MS. FOPMA: I think it is hard to quantify that. But I
27 think just having these different initiatives, the dialogue, our EEO

1 advisory committees and our Veterans Employee Resource Group --
2 and we have a technical women's networking group. All of those
3 initiatives are all about bringing people together and learning more
4 about people's backgrounds and respecting differing views. And I
5 think, you know, one of the ways we assess -- we do have a low level
6 of complaints agency wide. And you know, we've been ranked as a
7 best place to work. So I think our FEV scores are good. So those
8 are some of the ways we quantify. But I think it's just the -- the
9 culture of the agency and how people feel valued and get engaged
10 that -- that really kind of show -- show what -- what progress we've
11 made.

12 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay, thank you.
13 Miriam, with -- given the demographics of the agency and how
14 retirement is an option for so many folks, one program that I have
15 heard about in the past is called phase retirement has the potential to
16 offer folks some work-life balance while still maintaining the ability for
17 knowledge transfer. Is that an option that is attractive to the staff?
18 Has that been useful in the past? Or are there other options for
19 maybe capturing knowledge transfer for folks that may be ready to sort
20 of scale back their workload, but not yet retire completely?

21 MS. COHEN: Thank you for the question. So it
22 hasn't been one of our more popular programs. We were actually
23 one of the first federal agencies to launch a phase retirement program
24 back in 2015. We have one individual in the program now. We have
25 only had three to date. People have asked, like, why would that be?
26 I don't have the actual, you know, factual answer. But I actually think
27 it could be because NRC employees typically work a lot longer than a

1 lot of other employees at other federal agencies. So maybe when
2 they're ready to retire -- like, they're really ready.

3 (Laughter.)

4 MS. COHEN: And that's a good thing, right? And
5 you know, there's -- there's certain considerations with the programs.
6 The time frame are under management discretion. You know, if you
7 elect to terminate your -- your phase employee -- phase retirement,
8 you can't go back in. So someone really has to be really thinking
9 about phasing out of their work. Clearly, they're -- the -- the office
10 would have to have an ability to support someone who is going to
11 disengage and move to more part time. But we've had our lunch and
12 learns. We've had all kinds of seminars. It just hasn't been a
13 popular program.

14 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay. Miriam, you
15 mentioned rebuilding corporate support capabilities. Having just
16 recently completed a right-sizing, what capacities are being rebuilt?
17 And what does that encompass?

18 MS. COHEN: Well, that's -- I don't want to take up all
19 of your time, but -- so over the past -

20 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Good, because I do
21 have another question.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MS. COHEN: Yes, okay, so I will talk fast. So over
24 the past three or four years the corporate support offices have really
25 been in a -- in a downsizing mode. And we've had successive
26 early-out buyouts over the past three or four years, all with the
27 consideration of accelerating the attrition. But we lost some

1 phenomenal people with unbelievable amounts of agency experience
2 in the technical disciplines within the corporate offices. And it also
3 comes on the heels of incorporating some of our employees from
4 other parts of the organization into the corporate support offices that
5 really didn't have those particular backgrounds moving into corporate
6 support, but we were in the process of accelerating attrition. So we
7 brought on a number of people.

8 And so, by rebuilding, what I mean is no, we are not
9 going back to the staffing of, you know, five or ten years ago. But
10 when we -- for example, if my office has an HR specialist position, you
11 know, available, we are going to hire someone with HR specialist
12 background. If in Acquisitions there is a positive education
13 requirement, so they need to have a business degree. They have to
14 get those capacities. So I think that we need to up the expertise in
15 the corporate offices that has just been lost through the erosion of
16 unbelievable amounts of talent over the years.

17 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay.

18 MR. WEBER: One of the things, if I could just add
19 briefly, is that you don't always control who takes the early-out buyout.
20 And so, sometimes, people take it and you weren't expecting them to.
21 But they're entitled to that. So, you know, that adds to the
22 complexity in managing one of those downsizing initiatives.

23 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Miriam, another issue
24 you mentioned is -- was a reference to a private sector trend of more
25 aggressive talent management, moving most capable people to
26 address the most pressing work challenges. Can you just describe
27 some of the options you think we should consider?

1 MS. COHEN: Yes. So, I had a feeling that question
2 might provoke some interest. So the NRC is a wonderful place
3 because we believe in fairness and inclusion and obviously those are
4 very, very important characteristics. But sometimes we can be our
5 own worst enemy by having very, you know, cumbersome processes.
6 And I think if there was a pressing business need and we need to
7 identify top talent to address whatever that may be, we as an agency
8 would tend to solicit employees to profess their interest in that
9 because we want to have a fair and wide-open competition. But
10 those processes sometimes inherently slow things down. And
11 sometimes to be more agile, more quick, more nimble you have to
12 move a little bit more expeditiously.

13 So I am not saying that we should just completely get
14 rid of our solicitation process and those kind of things, but I think
15 depending on the nature of the issue, the agency might have to move
16 more quickly depending on the issue that it is trying to solve. And
17 sometimes that may not always allow for the open solicitations that we
18 do. But we have other mechanisms to bring in people through the
19 merit staffing system and what not, which we would do as we were
20 recruiting people. But I think the biggest characteristic that I have
21 seen is just an ability to -- ability to move a lot more quickly.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay. One last
23 question. With regard to the Speed of Trust initiative -- Miriam or Dan
24 -- how -- how do you measure its success? What results are you
25 looking for? How will you know it when you see it?

26 MR. DORMAN: I think similar to Melody's response
27 on the -- on the dialogue, it's part of a bigger picture, so it's hard to

1 measure that -- you know, what is attributed to that. But I guess I
2 would leverage this opportunity to just say that -- that the Speed of
3 Trust for clarity is not suggesting that trust is something you build
4 quickly. Trust is something you invest in over time, speed is the
5 agility of the organization when the trusting environment exists. And
6 the Speed of Trust focuses on character and competence. And so
7 you get tools to build your own character and competence that gives
8 your credibility.

9 And you also get, and Mike alluded to some of these
10 attributes in his talk, there's 13 sets of cards -- 13 cards that have
11 actions that build trust. And then on the reverse side of the card is
12 the -- is the converse action that degrades trust. And so when you
13 come out of the Speed of Trust workshops, you're enabled to come
14 into staff meetings, project meetings, intentionally looking at, what is
15 the meeting? Who are the people that are in the meeting? What are
16 the issues that we're going to be working with? And say these are the
17 areas of building trust that I am going to focus on going into this
18 meeting.

19 And so, as with anything when you're building a
20 competence, doing it with intent is the first step. And ultimately, it
21 becomes second nature. And so I think what we will -- how we will
22 see that manifest itself is continued high engagement, continued
23 better ability to engage differing views -- because trust, like all of our
24 values, are easy to exhibit in a nice environment like this. But when
25 we start to get into the challenging issues, that's where we really test
26 our core values. And that's really the integrity piece of the trust
27 element -- is the alignment of your actions with your core values. So I

1 think that's where we'll see it is -- is working through the challenging
2 issues in a manner that is more consistent, and routinely, with the
3 values that we profess.

4 MR. WEBER: If I could add, just briefly. We did
5 initiate Speed of Trust in response to the feedback we received -- both
6 from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as well as the OIG
7 Safety Culture and Climate Survey. So if we execute Speed of Trust
8 well and it sticks -- which, our intent is to make it stick -- we would
9 expect to see changes, improvements, in some of the feedback and
10 the questions that are included in those surveys.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: All right, well, so much
12 for making a good first impression by being disciplined and staying
13 within my time.

14 (Laughter.)

15 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I will just say, first of all, that
16 nobody knew that until you ratted yourself out because they can't see
17 our clock.

18 (Laughter.)

19 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: But we appreciate your
20 honesty and transparency. See? So you did set a very good
21 example there. And also, because we are a commission over an
22 expert staff -- that's the type of agency we are -- it is our practice -- we
23 often let people conclude their answers. So I think we are collegial
24 that we don't -- we try to cut ourselves off, but we don't -- we don't like
25 to cut off the good advice and perspectives that we are receiving from
26 the agency staff. So thank you very much. And Commissioner
27 Wright, please proceed.

1 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you very much.
2 And I do share Commissioner Caputo's comments that this is a perfect
3 way to break in. This is an absolute perfect hearing, or meeting --
4 whatever -- however we call it. The -- and I wasn't looking at the
5 clock, so. So, being number five, most everything has been talked
6 about. But I -- I found a couple things I just wanted to kind of focus
7 on a minute. And I will just go down the list as we went. So, Miriam,
8 the -- one of the things that's happening, you know, unfortunately is
9 the unexpected or expected closures of some of the plants around.
10 And it's a -- I know everything as workforce is dynamic and constantly
11 changing, do you foresee any challenges? And what challenges do
12 you see as -- that you might foresee as a result of the closing of some
13 of the plants?

14 MS. COHEN: Well, I think -- so far, I think the
15 agency has actually done fairly well. I mean, obviously the -- the
16 example of last year of placing the 35 employees who were impacted
17 by the closure of Summer last year. I think that over time the agency
18 has demonstrated its ability to move people around. When work
19 declines, we find other things that they could do where we have
20 funded work for employees to engage in. I think that as a result of the
21 Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative we are going to get better at
22 doing that. I think that we have had some criticism about not being
23 nimble and agile enough to know where the workload forecasting is
24 going so that we can move more proactively.

25 But actually, the -- the intersection of all these
26 initiatives are going to give us much better information so that we can
27 actually say to somebody, okay, we see work -- I will make this up -- in

1 this area drying up. But we see based on our workforce
2 demographics that we're going to have a need in these three areas
3 and, by using competency modeling, we can get people skilled up in
4 these new areas. And for some of the commissioners that have been
5 around for a while, when we talked about the Project Aim very early
6 on, the whole selling of the competency modeling was we wanted to
7 get people quicker to competency in new areas. So I think that each
8 year goes by we get better at doing that. And I think that will help
9 alleviate the situation as the workload changes.

10 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you very much
11 for that. Melany, talk to me a little bit about the ADR process and
12 how often it is used and -- and is being used. Just explain to me a
13 little bit about that -- and about that whole process.

14 MS. FOPMA: Okay, well the ADR process we use
15 for -- we can use for both informal and formal complaints. And
16 employees can indicate an interest in ADR. And the agency
17 determines whether or not -- which is in our office -- we determine
18 whether or not we think ADR is appropriate. And as I said earlier, we
19 -- we believe most all cases can be resolved if we can get the parties
20 together. We used, as our mediator we use a program called the
21 Sharing Neutrals Program. And these are certified mediators in the
22 federal government. So they're -- we bring in someone outside of the
23 agency.

24 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

25 MS. FOPMA: And get the two parties in the room --
26 the complainant and a management official -- and just kind of hash it
27 out. And the mediator tries to help look for common interests. And,

1 you know, the goal is, as a result of the meeting there is a -- a
2 resolution of the issue.

3 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So of your -- of the -- I
4 guess of the times that you've had to -- you've had the situation where
5 you've -- you've got a complaint or something like that, do you -- is it,
6 like, half the time? Three-quarters of the time? Is it all the time?

7 MS. FOPMA: That we've resolved complaints?

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: That you use ADR.
9 That you go through ADR.

10 MS. FOPMA: I would say we offer it in almost all
11 cases. We would -- you know, we would want to offer mediation.
12 Cases don't always resolve, although this year we're -- we're resolving
13 more cases right now than we did in all of last year. So -- hopeful.

14 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: All right, thank you for
15 that.

16 MR. WEBER: Commissioner, if I could add -- we
17 also use alternate dispute resolution in our enforcement program, so --
18 of course, that's separate from what we do in our Civil Rights Program.
19 But it also works quite well and we often get remedies through that
20 process which go well beyond what we would otherwise get through
21 the conventional enforcement process.

22 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right. And again, and
23 is that -- is that a majority of the time that that -- really, you go through
24 that before you have to go to some other more nasty procedure or
25 something?

26 MR. WEBER: Dan, do you want to -

27 MR. DORMAN: I think in the context of the

1 enforcement, it is only considered when we are into an escalated
2 enforcement process. So you are already talking about a very small
3 portion of the case load. And then we offer it to licensees when the
4 situation is appropriate. In my experience, they usually take it. But
5 it's -- in single digits per year that we actually go through that process.

6 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I would note, we have the
7 director of the Office of Enforcement who is also willing to chime in.

8 MS. BOLAND: Anne Boland. We offer ADR in -- as
9 Dan indicated -- in escalated cases. But most prominently, when
10 there is a civil penalty involved or when we are contemplating an
11 action against an individual or taking -- maybe contemplating an order.

12 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Okay.

13 MS. BOLAND: So it's the more significant actions.
14 But it is nearer to those categories.

15 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: That is helpful. Thank
16 you, thank you. Susan, the -- how do -- and I was interested,
17 listening to talk and some of the things you were talking about -- how
18 are you -- how do you monitor -- how are you going to monitor the --
19 the pilot? And how are you going to evaluate that information?

20 MS. SALTER: So that is a good question, and that is
21 one that, you know, we have been working with the OEDO on. And --
22 so we have strategies. And there's little action plans that go with
23 them. So this is the gap or overage we need to address. And here
24 is the strategy for doing that. And here's the things that we need to
25 do.

26 So we have talked about using the QPR -- quarterly
27 performance review meeting -- if -- if it's an agency-wide strategy that

1 we think we need more offices involved in. But, for the most part, I
2 think OCHCO is going to work with the offices individually as they
3 implement their strategies to make sure they're not running into
4 barriers or challenges. But, the strategic workforce planning process
5 is designed to be done annually. So there will be a chance to revisit
6 that. Something that was highly likely last year may be less likely the
7 next year. Or, it may be, you know, unlikely last year and more likely
8 this. So there is opportunities to adjust.

9 The process also, however, is not designed that you
10 have to wait for a year. So if something like the -- the closures at
11 Summer were to happen, you can go back and redo -- run through the
12 process again to get better data. So a lot of the strategies are more
13 specific. It is implement training. It's -- you know, in some cases it's
14 hiring. In some cases it's backfilling at a lower grade. And -- so
15 there are more tactical short-term, and then there are much
16 longer-term where we might need to do a graduate fellowship. Or, we
17 might need to cross train people. In the case of Region 2 with the
18 reduction in construction work, they're really looking at strategies for
19 what do they do with those folks? And how do they cross train them
20 now? How do they put them at ease that there will be a plan for them
21 when that work dries up?

22 And so, I think we will monitor it every year as we go
23 through the process again and determine, you know, are these things
24 still relevant? In the shorter-term strategies, how did we do with
25 implementing those and the action plans? And I don't know if Mike
26 has anything else.

27 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So you talked a little bit

1 about the core positions and all that -- how that program was put
2 together. Who determined the core positions?

3 MS. SALTER: The program offices determine -- with
4 support from OCHCO walking through what -- what it means. And
5 like I said, it was a difficult thing to do at first, and that's why we
6 allowed a lot of flexibility and right now we are working with the other
7 offices. And we're telling them don't -- don't -- don't make it so difficult
8 that you can't move forward, because we can fix it later. We can
9 change it later. And by keeping it to a more smaller number of core
10 positions, you can get some experience under your belt of going
11 through the process. And then the following year, when you get it,
12 you can add more positions on.

13 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, did the NRC create
14 their own job analyses? Or was it -- there was some other existing
15 tool out there?

16 MS. SALTER: So, OPM has guidance on how you
17 develop a job analysis. And so we basically followed their --

18 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: All right. And my last
19 question is going to be -- you talked about the competency model.
20 So the lessons learned that you -- you've mentioned one already. Are
21 there any other lessons that you plan to implement going forward?

22 MS. SALTER: So we definitely want to have some
23 more structure around the environmental scan because that office has
24 said they would have liked more detail, more understanding of
25 something we identified in the scan, but it's unlikely to occur. Do we
26 develop a strategy for it? And so we're working with that. Using the
27 competency modeling is another strategy. Doing the training earlier

1 and having more opportunities for different types of training so that we
2 can get all of the offices and managers trained up. I don't know, we
3 actually followed the process pretty much like the working group
4 outlined it. And it worked. And so there weren't a whole lot of major
5 changes to the process itself. Of course, once we roll it out with the
6 rest of the offices, we will continue to identify areas for improvement.

7 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. Thank
8 you, they're very informative. Thank you. I yield back.

9 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well thank you very much.
10 Again, I want to complement our new commissioners and encourage
11 them. You know, a lot of us have been at this for a while. But
12 sometimes that means we are so close to it that -- that we benefit from
13 the fresh eyes and the insights. So thank you for your questions
14 today. And I am -- again, going forward, I know that your
15 perspectives and experiences will bring a lot to the deliberations of our
16 commission. So thank you. Before I recognize the executive vice
17 president of the National Treasury Employee Union, Maria Schwartz,
18 to make remarks that will conclude our meeting today, I -- I did want to
19 recognize Mike Weber.

20 I don't remember the first issue here over ten years
21 ago that we would have worked on, but I have worked closely with you
22 over the course of time. And, you know, similar to my comment about
23 the insights of new people who come and look at what you're doing,
24 Mike has inspired me -- I will just speak very individually here -- that
25 you know, I think Mike approaches his engagement with every single
26 person like there is something they know that he doesn't know that he
27 can benefit from that experience. And the other thing that has

1 inspired me about his approach over the years is -- he -- as much as
2 he knows -- and I agree with Commissioner Baran that he is really
3 kind of a -- I would say repository, but we don't want to use that term.

4 (Laughter.)

5 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: He is a font of knowledge
6 about things. And he has just a -- kind of a deep study of the history.
7 But I have never -- in all the time I have worked with you, you have
8 never been content. There isn't something that would come up that
9 you would say, oh, I think I know all I need to know about that --
10 evenings, weekends, very -- very, very impressive. So I -- I do
11 appreciate the -- you know, that kind of untiring kind of -- this thirst for
12 knowledge, I think, is in this organization -- it resonates with a lot of us.

13 And again, just -- we met as I referenced earlier today. And you're
14 running, you know, full up to -- to your last day here imparting wisdom.

15 You were very patient with me today when I just
16 almost did a little lightening round of firing all kinds of -- like, what does
17 NRC need to do? What do you think are the challenges? But I -- I
18 know that you take a tremendous number of insights with you. But
19 we do -- it is bittersweet always when colleagues are leaving. But we
20 wish you well. I know your future endeavors will be really fulfilling and
21 gratifying, whatever they are. And I wish you well on all of that.

22 So, Maria as well, I thank you for your long services.
23 And your commitment to the -- collectively and individually to the NRC
24 workforce and employees is just impressive. And thank you for that.
25 But with that I do invite you, please, to go to the podium. Again,
26 Maria, on behalf of the National Treasury Employee Union will share
27 some remarks with us in her capacity as executive vice president.

1 Maria, please proceed.

2 MS. SCHWARTZ: Well thank you for your
3 comments. Well, so good afternoon Chairman Svinicki,
4 Commissioner Burns, newly reappointed Commissioner Baran. And
5 a warm welcome to our two new commissioners, Commissioner
6 Caputo and Commissioner Wright. Good afternoon as well to our
7 leadership and managers. And from my perspective as the executive
8 vice president, Chapter 208 of the NTEU -- our most important
9 audience this afternoon, our bargaining unit employees.

10 I am joined here today by our chapter president,
11 Sheryl Burrows, and several of our officers and stewards. In his EDO
12 update of May 9, 2018, Mr. McCree stated that he is proud to be a part
13 of the NRC. Honestly, I am too. And I would like to say that I am
14 always that proud because we have an important mission to
15 accomplish, and we have good leaders, and we have good managers,
16 and we have amazing employees. But as a representative of our
17 bargaining unit employees, I am sometimes tempered in my
18 enthusiasm by my awareness that there are too many instances of
19 harassment of employees, too many instances of discrimination, and
20 too many instance where trust is breeched.

21 So I would always like to say that I am proud, but
22 sometimes I can't. When I was putting together NTEU's comments at
23 this, my last appearance before the commission, I wanted these
24 comments to reflect that NTEU is aware that while the agency does
25 many things very well, there continue to be leaders and managers
26 who fail to live up to the NRC values. There continue to be leaders
27 and managers who do not demonstrate a commitment to integrity,

1 openness, and respect. And there are too many managers supported
2 by our leadership who hide behind FEVS results and supposed action
3 plans instead of embracing the opportunities that nurture a healthier
4 organization.

5 When I was a young girl sitting around the family
6 dinner table -- and I come from a rather large family -- one evening my
7 father commented that there was too much noise dinner and it was
8 hard to have real dinnertime conversations. So to make his point,
9 one evening at dinner, without our knowledge, my father placed a tape
10 recorded under the table. When he played back the tape, it was
11 obvious that we were certainly a noisy lot. However, what we also
12 heard through all the noise was my little brother who quietly and very
13 politely kept asking someone to pass him the butter.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MS. SCHWARTZ: He made a general request --
16 could someone pass me the butter? He made specific requests --
17 Maria, could you pass me the butter? And he made requests for help
18 for his request. Mike, would you ask Maria to pass me the butter?

19 (Laughter.)

20 MS. SCHWARTZ: Throughout the entire dinner, he
21 remained polite in his quest for butter. He never got the butter.
22 When my siblings and I heard the recording, at first, we noticed all the
23 noise my father had mentioned. But then we became aware of
24 Steve's little voice and his request for butter. We thought it was kind
25 of funny. We were kids. We didn't see how really awful it was for
26 Steve to keep politely asking for his own family to help him with a
27 simple task. We didn't empathize, we laughed about it. We loved

1 Steve, and we still do, but we didn't see the harm that he had
2 experienced. We would have just said, suck it up, Steve if he had --
3 where's the harm? If he had asked us what we all thought of it.

4 But now, as I look back on this event, how I regret my
5 behavior. How I wish I had listened to his quiet, polite request. I fear
6 that many of our bargaining unit employees, like my younger brother
7 Steve, don't always seem to have a voice. And having a voice is the
8 first step in the quest for a trusting relationship. And because being
9 heard is affirming, it is also critical to being engaged and being
10 empowered.

11 This forum has given me the opportunity, as a
12 representative for NTEU, to speak the truth as I see it as experienced
13 by many of our bargaining unit employees. While the FEVS and the
14 Culture Survey appear to confirm that NRC gets a lot of things right at
15 this agency, trust in our leadership seems to consistently lag behind.
16 I believe that so much of that is because no matter how politely our
17 employees ask, even though told that they are the agency's most
18 important asset, they know from their experiences -- or that of their
19 colleagues, that quite often no one is really listening.

20 Our leaders and managers now talk a lot about
21 empowerment. What does it mean? I think we all know that one of
22 the primary ways that you empower your employees is by listening to
23 them. The agency seems to finally get it -- that it is important to get
24 out in front of an issue instead of running to catch up. It is apparent in
25 some of the most recent initiatives -- and there are good examples of
26 this over the last year, such as the transformation initiative, the
27 leadership initiative and the NRO/NRR merger working groups -- all of

1 which NTEU was able to participate in. The agency is beginning to
2 really embrace the value of getting out in front of an initiative, and the
3 important role it plays in avoiding the churn that a company is lagging
4 behind.

5 However, it is clear that it is more important than ever
6 to stay out in front of cultural changes that accompany initiatives.
7 Unfortunately, some of our leaders and managers really do appear to
8 understand how important this is, because without a clear roadmap
9 that defines roles and responsibilities, it won't matter if we talk about
10 where we're headed. If employees don't feel empowered or don't feel
11 that they're getting the training they need because it doesn't square
12 with the metrics that are being used, it won't matter if our leadership
13 and managers think they are providing appropriate resources.
14 Employees will get lost in your details if you don't listen to what they're
15 telling you. And they are trying to talk to you.

16 The open door policy which is getting a lot of attention
17 at the present moment is a good start. But you, as our leaders and
18 our managers, have to go to your employees. They should not
19 always be expected to come to you. About a year ago I went with a
20 very smart, dedicated and earnest employee to speak with someone
21 in a leadership role about that employee's concerns about how things
22 were being done in his division. He took advantage of the open door
23 policy. The employee asked me to attend with him. I was so
24 impressed with his preparation and how earnest he was. The
25 employee brought manuals. He brought examples. He brought
26 ideas. But at the end of a long discussion, he was told that he had
27 many great ideas, but they were not ideas the NRC could use

1 because they had been developed in a different culture.

2 That employee left feeling anything but empowered.
3 And trust was certainly off the table because the employee knew that
4 the outcome wasn't just a disagreement on approaches. He knew he
5 had spent his time talking to the wind. In this, my final appearance
6 before the commissioners, our leadership, and our managers, I ask
7 you -- I urge your, and actually, I implore you in the name of your
8 employees, to reflect on your behaviors that really do matter. And the
9 negative impact those behaviors can have on your employees. And I
10 would call to your attention that this impact is often compounded by
11 the employees' membership in a protected class.

12 As any number of older employees in our agency
13 about the way they feel that they are being marginalized every day.
14 Ask any number of employees from other protected classes whether it
15 doesn't seem crystal clear to them why they are being treated
16 differently than their coworkers. Listen to what your employees are
17 telling you. I guarantee that you will find this very enlightening.

18 So as I say goodbye, I would also like to say that I
19 care deeply about the NRC and its employees. And most of the time
20 I can also say, I am proud that I have worked here for 27 years. I do
21 want the very best outcomes for our agency in all of its endeavors.
22 And so my parting with and NTEU Chapter 208's ongoing wish, is that
23 our agency is successful and that underlying that success is your
24 commitment to actively listen to your employees -- that you work with
25 your employees to engage them in the agency's mission by providing
26 the tools that they need to be successful and to be empowered, that
27 you truly value your employees and you resolve to treat them with

1 dignity and respect. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you very much, Maria.

3 I appreciate those remarks. And again, thank you to the presenters
4 and all attendees for your participation here today. And with that, we
5 are adjourned.

6 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the
7 record at 3:59 p.m.)