

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Response to U.S. Government Accountability Office Report on “Information Technology: Agencies Need to Fully Implement Key Workforce Planning Activities (GAO-20-129)

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC) actions to fully implement the seven key Information Technology (IT) workforce planning activities described as “partially implemented, minimally implemented, or not implemented” in the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on “Information Technology: Agencies Need to Fully Implement Key Workforce Planning Activities” (GAO-20-129) key activities 2-8 are as follows:

Key Activity 2: Develop competency and staffing requirements:

GAO found that the agency had not developed competency requirements for its IT staff.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented the activity of developing the competency requirements for its IT staff and has assessed skill gaps using its annual enhanced Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) process. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, the NRC specified competency requirements for all the IT positions listed in its mission-critical occupations (0080 Cybersecurity and 2210 Information Technology Management), which encompass all agency IT positions. To further strengthen its enterprise expectations for IT competencies, as well as allow individuals to identify career development opportunities, the NRC participated as part of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council effort to build career paths and competency models for 64 IT security roles across the Federal government. The NRC is currently considering which of these models to adopt.

Key Activity 3: Assess competency and staffing needs regularly:

GAO found that the agency did not assess competency needs regularly because, as previously stated, it did not develop competency requirements for its IT staff.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented the activity of assessing staffing needs regularly through its enhanced SWP process, which is conducted annually and assesses competency and staffing needs. The enhanced SWP process helps to ensure that NRC is hiring and training for the skills needed both today and in the future. In FY 2019, the NRC performed this process and assessed competencies and staffing needs for the agency’s IT workforce. The NRC is also participating in a broader governmentwide activity through the CIO Council to strengthen its enterprise expectations for IT competencies.

Key Activity 4: Assess gaps in competencies and staffing:

GAO found that the agency did not assess competency needs regularly because, as previously acknowledged, NRC had not developed competency requirements for its IT staff.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented the activity of assessing gaps in competencies and staffing using its annual enhanced SWP process to update and address new or emerging needs. In FY 2019, NRC conducted a gap analysis to determine both competency and staffing gaps for the agency’s IT positions.

Key Activity 5: Develop strategies and implement activities to address IT skill gaps:

GAO found that the agency did not develop competency requirements for IT staff and that NRC had not developed strategies and plans to address gaps in staffing.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented this activity to address IT skills gaps using its annual enhanced SWP process. In FY 2019, the NRC performed this process and developed strategies and action plans to address position and competency gaps in its IT workforce. The NRC also provided a response to GAO's engagement (Job Code 102588) in March 2018, before implementing the enhanced SWP, which provided Near- and Long-Term IT Competency and Staffing Requirements and gap closure strategies. The NRC will continue to update these strategies and action plans as necessary to ensure that the agency has the IT workforce needed to accomplish its mission.

Key Activity 6: Implement activities that address gaps:

The GAO found that the agency did not develop strategies and plans to address gaps in competencies and staffing, did not provide documentation of efforts to strengthen program management or implement career paths, and had not yet implemented the utilization of special hiring authorities.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented this activity. The NRC has developed strategies and plans to address gaps in staffing as outlined in response to key activity 5. The NRC also has a plan to strengthen program management and implement career paths through the agency's Project Management Improvement Accountability Act Implementation Plan. Through participation in the CIO Council effort, NRC is working to build career paths and competency models for 64 IT security roles across the Federal government.

The NRC is using special hiring authorities and implementing recruiting activities specific to eligible candidates to fill open positions. For example, the NRC recently participated in the Office of Personnel Management "Vets to Feds" initiative to hire veterans into our entry-level positions. The NRC's policies on the use of special appointing authorities, including those affecting hiring of individuals with disabilities and qualifying veterans are described in NRC Management Directive 10.13 "Special Employment Programs," which can be found on the agency's public Web site at <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML0414/ML041490168.pdf>.

Key Activity 7: Monitoring and Reporting Progress on Addressing IT Skill Gaps:

GAO found that the agency did not monitor progress in addressing competency and staffing gaps because the agency did not develop strategies and plans to address gaps.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented this activity using its annual enhanced SWP process. This process was implemented in FY 2019 and requires the monitoring of progress in addressing competency and staffing gaps and identifies new or emerging skill gaps.

Key Activity 8: Report to agency leadership on progress in addressing competency and staffing gaps:

The GAO found that the agency did not report to agency leadership on progress in addressing competency and staffing gaps because the agency did not develop strategies and plans to address gaps.

NRC Response: The NRC has fully implemented this activity using its annual enhanced SWP process. In FY 2019, the NRC implemented this process and developed strategies and action plans to address prioritized skill gaps. These strategies and action plans are presented to agency leadership annually for review and input. These plans were also presented to the NRC's Human Capital Council (Council) in June of 2019 (Enclosure 2). Updates based on 2020 SWP results will be developed and presented to the Council in June 2020.