

Approval for Estimated Conference Spending in Excess of \$500,000 for a Single Conference in Accordance with Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-08, “Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations”

As Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I hereby approve potential expenditure in excess of \$500,000 for the 2022 Regulatory Information Conference (RIC). The NRC is planning to hold the next annual RIC in March 2022.

For the reasons detailed below, I have determined that exceptional circumstances exist and that spending more than \$500,000 on hosting the 2022 RIC is the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose.

The NRC’s mission is to license and regulate the Nation’s civilian use of byproduct, source, and special nuclear materials to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment. The RIC supports this mission, as well as the NRC’s commitment to conduct work openly and transparently, by providing a unique forum that brings together diverse groups of stakeholders to inform them of significant and timely policy decisions and regulatory oversight activities, as well as ways that the NRC is transforming to continue to become a more modern, risk-informed regulator.

Since its inception in 1987, the RIC has become one of the premier nuclear conferences in the world. It is widely attended, typically bringing together nearly 2,300 attendees representing over 33 countries when held onsite at the local conference facility. Due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE), the NRC hosted our first virtual RIC in 2021, with participation from nearly 3,500 attendees representing 45 countries. RIC attendees typically include members of the public; Federal, State, and local government officials; nuclear safety regulators from other nations; experts from the national laboratories; advocacy groups; media representatives; licensees; vendors; and other interested stakeholders. The technical program features nuclear experts from across the agency, as well as external speakers from industry, academia, public interest groups, and the international community.

The RIC is highly valued by both the agency and external stakeholders for its technical and educational content. This conference also provides a unique opportunity for attendees to hear firsthand the views of each member of the Commission on emerging regulatory issues and policy matters affecting the agency. In addition, the RIC offers an environment for influencing nuclear safety on a global scale, building new partnerships, and strengthening connections, both domestically and internationally. The NRC staff and stakeholders use the RIC to share relevant information, exchange views and perspectives, discuss challenging policy issues facing the agency, and promote safety and security best practices in the nuclear arena. As the agency continues to learn from recent events in the nuclear community, this forum is crucial to the agency’s mission.

Successfully executing such a large and complex conference requires extensive coordination and the effective management of resources. The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) and the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research co-sponsor the RIC. Both offices are dedicated to the NRC’s commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship. The NRC is continually identifying ways to reduce conference costs. As the lead office, NRR diligently scrutinizes and monitors the planning, logistics, and implementation of the RIC to ensure that the agency spends appropriate funds in the most cost-effective, efficient manner.

Enclosure

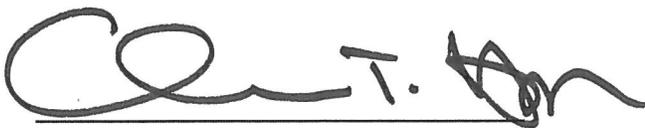
The objectives and work requirements of the RIC cannot be accomplished successfully under any of the other existing NRC contracts exclusively. Therefore, the NRC has two additional contracts in place to assist in executing the RIC: (1) a planning and logistical support contract, and (2) a conference facility contract. These contracts cover Web development, registration, audiovisual support, onsite logistics, and conference meeting space. For the 2021 RIC, the costs associated with these two contracts were estimated to be approximately \$964,000. However, due to the COVID-19 PHE and resultant need to host the RIC virtually, the total amount expended was approximately \$646,000.

In addition to these two contracts, when possible, the NRC uses existing contracts in support offices for RIC assistance and services, including registration system security, Web hosting, Web streaming, captioning, videography, photography, transcription, video teleconferencing, onsite physical security, limited English proficiency services, reasonable accommodations, and shipping and delivery activities. The costs for these services to support the 2021 RIC was approximately \$153,000.

Although NRC cannot predict the outcome or pace of recovery from the COVID-19 PHE, the staff recognizes that the landscape for large meetings and conferences has changed and are planning accordingly. The agency is proactively monitoring guidance from the Office of Management and Budget, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and other organizations and will adjust where necessary while maintaining fiscal responsibility. In addition, the staff continues to proactively seek best practices from other conferences that are taking place around the world, and to consult with NRC stakeholders and with the planning and logistical support contractor to identify ways to reduce contract risk for both the NRC and the contractor. Given this uncertainty, NRC may need to adapt the program format, and this may result in incurring unplanned costs.

The NRC remains committed to using innovative methods, including new and emerging technologies, to ensure that the agency continues to provide attendees with a valuable opportunity for engagement and participation, as well as a rewarding conference experience. At this time, the agency plans to host an in-person RIC and to build on the successes of the 2021 virtual RIC by also offering the virtual platform used during RIC 2021 to facilitate remote participation. A preliminary cost estimate for an in-person RIC with virtual participation capability is \$1.4M for planning, logistics, audiovisual support and information technology support.

I have determined that exceptional circumstances exist and that spending more than \$500,000 on hosting the 2022 RIC is the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose. Therefore, in accordance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-17-08, "Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," dated November 25, 2016, I hereby approve the NRC to incur expenses exceeding \$500,000 on a single conference for the 2022 RIC.



Christopher T. Hanson, Chairman

7/22/21
Date