



NUREG-1614
Volume 8

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2022-2026

Draft Report for Comment

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Strategic Plan

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Draft Report for Comment

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1

ABSTRACT

2 The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or agency) is an independent agency
3 established by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 that began operations in 1975 as a
4 successor to the Atomic Energy Commission. The NRC’s mission is to license and regulate the
5 Nation’s civilian use of radioactive materials; to provide reasonable assurance of adequate
6 protection of public health and safety; to promote the common defense and security; and to
7 protect the environment. This strategic plan, covering the period Fiscal Years 2022–2026,
8 provides the blueprint for the agency to plan, implement and monitor the work needed to
9 achieve its three strategic goals: (1) ensure the safe and secure use of radioactive materials,
10 (2) continue to foster a healthy organization, and (3) inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC.
11 The strategic plan also provides an overview of the NRC’s responsibilities and lays out how the
12 NRC uses data and evidence to inform decisionmaking to accomplish objectives and strategies
13 to achieve the agency’s strategic goals.

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INTRODUCTION

About the NRC

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or agency), created by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, began operations in 1975. The NRC's mission is to license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials; to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety; to promote the common defense and security and to protect the environment.

The NRC is headed by five Commissioners appointed by the President of the United States, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, to serve staggered 5-year terms. The President designates one of the Commissioners to serve as Chairman. The Commission as a whole formulates policies and regulations governing the safety and security of nuclear facilities and radioactive materials, issues orders to licensees, and adjudicates legal matters brought before it.

The NRC's overall responsibility is to protect public health and safety in the civilian uses of radioactive materials. It has the following main regulatory functions:

- Establish standards and regulations.
- Issue licenses, certificates, and permits.
- Ensure compliance with established standards and regulations.
- Issue adjudicatory decisions.
- Conduct research and risk and performance assessments to support regulatory decisions.

The NRC carries out these regulatory functions to regulate nuclear power plants, fuel cycle facilities, and other civilian uses of radioactive materials, such as nuclear medicine programs at hospitals and academic activities at educational and research institutions. The NRC also uses these functions to regulate such industrial applications as gauges, irradiators, and other devices that contain radioactive material. The NRC also licenses the import and export of radioactive materials and works closely with its international counterparts to enhance global nuclear safety and security.

In the course of its regulatory activities, the NRC complies with Federal laws and mandates, including the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws that require the NRC to assess the environmental impacts of proposed NRC licensing and regulatory activities. Specific areas the NRC staff considers include potential human health and socioeconomic impacts; potential impacts to endangered species, air quality, water quality, environmental justice, historic properties; and Tribal cultural resources. As part of the agency's licensing activities, rulemaking, or policy development, the NRC consults with Tribes and interacts with Tribal governments as required by the National Historic Preservation Act and consistent with the Commission's Tribal Policy Statement.

The NRC's regulatory activities have also been impacted in recent years by regulatory reform and licensing modernization required by the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA) (Public Law 115-439) and the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act (NEICA) (Public Law 115-248). Among other things, NEIMA mandates that the NRC develop strategies

1 for the licensing of commercial advanced nuclear reactors within its existing regulatory
2 framework, and to complete a technology-inclusive rulemaking by the end of 2027 for the
3 licensing of such reactors. NEICA directs the NRC to engage in cooperation with the
4 Department of Energy to ensure that the NRC has sufficient technical expertise to assist in the
5 evaluation of applications for licenses, permits, and design certifications and other requests for
6 regulatory approval for advanced nuclear reactors. Both of these laws are intended to ensure
7 that the NRC has the capacity and capabilities to license the new and innovative technologies of
8 the 21st century.

9 **Using Evidence and Evaluation for Strategic Planning**

11 The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (“Evidence Act”) became
12 law on January 14, 2019 (Public Law 115-435), and is intended to enhance evidence-
13 building activities, make data more accessible, and strengthen privacy protections for those
14 who participate in statistical research throughout the Federal Government. The Evidence
15 Act formalized requirements for agencies to utilize evidence, evaluation, and data as a planning
16 tool for policy and decisionmaking. The Evidence Act also requires agencies to develop an
17 evidence-building plan¹ and a capacity assessment² to support agency strategic planning.

18
19 The NRC is an evidence-based organization, with a culture of continuous learning and
20 improvement. Historically, the NRC has relied on high-quality data and evidence obtained from
21 external entities or obtained through its own capacity. The NRC strategically plans for
22 information and data gathering used to generate the evidence needed for decisionmaking. The
23 agency uses evidence-building activities (e.g., analysis, research) to support licensing new or
24 novel nuclear technologies, including advanced, non-light water reactor designs; accident
25 tolerant nuclear fuel; and digital instrumentation and controls. Evidence-building is used to
26 inform agency activities and actions, such as licensing, oversight, budgeting, human capital
27 management, program improvement, accountability, management, rulemaking, guidance
28 development, and policy development. This emphasis on evidence is meant to support
29 innovation, improvement, and learning. Additionally, the NRC has increasingly sought to rely on
30 evidence-based metrics to improve internal agency performance including budgeting and
31 financial management. This approach has strengthened the agency’s oversight of existing uses
32 of nuclear technology, enhanced the agency’s readiness to license and regulate new and novel
33 nuclear technologies, and improved the NRC’s internal processes.

34
35 The NRC will continue enhancing its efforts to assess performance and routinely evaluate
36 strategies against the projected and actual outcomes. The NRC is committed to increasing its
37 capability and capacity to build and use evidence to better inform future decisions and actively
38 promoting a strong culture of achieving results through reliance on data, analysis, evidence-
39 building, and evaluations.

40 **Stakeholder Engagement**

42 The NRC considers stakeholder engagement and transparency in its activities to be
43 cornerstones for effective regulation. Conducting business in a transparent, open, independent
44 manner that supports high-quality and well-informed decisionmaking builds stakeholder
45 confidence and fosters engagement. The NRC recognizes the value of public engagement and

1 The NRC’s Evidence-Building Plan can be found at <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/plans-performance/evidence-building-and-evaluation/learning-agenda.html>.

2 The NRC’s Capacity Assessment can be found at <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/plans-performance/evidence-building-and-evaluation/capacity-assessment.html>.

1 provides multiple ways that members of the public can be informed of and participate in the
2 agency's regulatory activities. For instance, the agency publishes and provides information to
3 stakeholders through its Web site (www.nrc.gov); operates the agency's Public Document
4 Room at its headquarters in Rockville, MD; and holds public meetings virtually and in-person
5 throughout the country.
6

7 The NRC conducted a wide range of outreach activities to solicit input and engage stakeholders
8 to develop this strategic plan. During the months of August and September 2020 the NRC:
9

- 10 • interviewed and surveyed NRC senior leadership,
- 11 • conducted a public meeting with representatives of various stakeholder groups
12 (including licensees, public interest groups, State governments, Federal agencies,
13 congressional staff, the general public, and NRC staff), and
- 14 • issued *Federal Register* notices to gain feedback on the agency's strengths and
15 weaknesses; use of data; evidence and evaluation; and external key factors that may
16 impact the NRC during the upcoming planning period.
17

18 In June 2021, the NRC hosted a second public meeting to receive feedback on the high-level
19 draft strategic plan for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2022-2026 and the annotated outline of the evidence-
20 building plan. The feedback the NRC received highlighted opportunities and identified potential
21 challenges. This strategic plan reflects consideration of stakeholder feedback and provides a
22 path forward for addressing these opportunities and challenges to accomplish the agency's
23 strategic goals.
24

25 **Organization of the Plan**

26 This strategic plan presents the NRC's mission, vision, as well as three strategic goals the
27 agency is working to achieve. Each strategic goal has supporting objectives and strategies that
28 reflect the outcome the agency is trying to achieve and the NRC's role in achieving it. The
29 goals, objectives, and strategies are supported by evidence, as well as contributing programs
30 and activities. Strategic objectives also form the basis for a set of performance goals and
31 indicators established to help the agency monitor and understand progress. Figure 1 provides
32 an overview of the NRC's strategic goals and objectives, including the associated theme that
33 reflects the objectives' major purposes and outcomes. All organizations within the NRC play a
34 significant role in leading the strategic goals, objectives, and strategies. Key external factors
35 that influence the ability of the NRC to achieve its strategic goals and the associated objectives
36 are discussed in Appendix A. Appendix B offers a glossary of terms used throughout this plan.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Safety and Security	Ensure the safe and secure use of radioactive materials.	Provide quality licensing and oversight of nuclear facilities and radioactive materials.
		Ensure regulatory requirements adequately support the safe and secure use of radioactive materials.
		Maintain emergency preparedness and response capabilities for NRC and NRC-licensed facilities.
Organizational Health	Continue to foster a healthy organization.	Foster an organizational culture in which the workforce is engaged, adaptable, receptive to change, and makes high quality and timely decisions.
		Enable the workforce to carry out the agency's mission by leveraging modern technology, innovation, and knowledge management to support data-driven decisions in an evolving regulatory landscape.
		Attract, develop, and maintain a high-performing, diverse, engaged, and flexible workforce with the skills needed to carry out the NRC's mission now and in the future.
Stakeholder Confidence	Inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC.	Engage stakeholders in NRC activities in an effective and transparent manner.
		Use high quality data and information in the NRC decisionmaking process and ensure the information is available and accessible to interested stakeholders.

1 **Figure 1 Overview of the Strategic Themes, Goals, and Objectives**

FULL DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2022-2026

Mission

The NRC licenses and regulates the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety; to promote the common defense and security; and to protect the environment.

Vision

Demonstrate the Principles of Good Regulation³ (independence, openness, efficiency, clarity, and reliability) in performing our mission.

Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The NRC has three strategic goals that represent the results the agency must achieve to carry out its mission successfully. These goals are the foundation for the organization of this plan:

Goal 1: Ensure the safe and secure use of radioactive materials

The Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, is the fundamental U.S. law establishing the development, use, and control of nuclear materials for both civilian and military purposes. The NRC was established by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 for the purpose of licensing and regulating the civilian use of these materials. As such, the NRC is tasked with providing reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety, promoting the common defense and security, and protecting the environment. The NRC accomplishes this through day-to-day activities such as reviewing, issuing, and renewing power reactor licenses and amendments; overseeing the safety and security of power reactor facilities, including the storage and transportation of spent fuel; and licensing and regulating non-power uses of radioactive materials, such as industrial and medical applications of radionuclides. Although licensees and certificate holders have the primary responsibility for the safe and secure use of licensed radioactive material that they possess, the NRC establishes regulatory requirements, develops guidance, maintains continuing regulatory oversight, and, when necessary, enforces compliance with NRC requirements throughout the license term. For this goal, a successful outcome is one in which the civilian use of radioactive materials within the United States is carried out in a manner that protects the health and safety of the public and the environment, and promotes the common defense and security.

Safety and Security Objective 1: Provide quality licensing and oversight of nuclear facilities and radioactive materials.

The NRC maintains technically sound and rigorous licensing and oversight processes commensurate with the risk of the regulated activity using information gained from domestic and international operating experience, changes to the threat environment, climate change impacts, research, and lessons learned. The NRC monitors the performance of licensees to ensure

³ The Commission established the NRC's Principles of Good Regulation in 1991 to focus the agency on its safety and security mission while appropriately considering the interests of the NRC's stakeholders, including the public and licensees. The agency puts these principles into practice with effective, realistic, and timely regulatory actions, consistent with our organizational values and our open, collaborative work environment. The NRC's Principles of Good Regulation and other Values can be found at <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/values.html#principles>.

1 consistency with its safety and security mission. As part of its regulatory responsibilities, the
2 NRC must protect classified and sensitive unclassified information related to U.S. Government
3 programs for the physical protection and safeguarding of nuclear materials and facilities from
4 unauthorized disclosure.

5
6 **Strategies:**

- 7
- 8 - Promote risk-informed decisionmaking to result in effective and efficient oversight,
9 rulemaking, and licensing and certification activities.
 - 10 - Maintain material safety and security through the National Materials Program in
11 partnership with Agreement States.
 - 12 - Uphold high quality standards and technical proficiency.
 - 13 - Ensure that programs for the handling and control of classified and sensitive unclassified
14 information are effectively implemented at the NRC and at licensed facilities.
 - 15 - Ensure that licensees have resiliency measures to address the potential for increased
16 risk due to climate change.
- 17

18 **Evidence**

19
20 The NRC receives information from applicants and licensees to consider in its licensing
21 activities. The NRC relies heavily on its independent analysis of licensee submittals, licensing
22 basis documents, and licensee responses to NRC's requests for information to make its
23 regulatory decisions. The NRC staff uses standard review plans and other guidance where
24 applicable, to efficiently review licensing requests while ensuring that the applicant's
25 assumptions are technically sound and that the proposed activities will provide adequate
26 protection of public health and safety. These guidance review documents leverage operational
27 data and incorporate lessons learned from past reviews.

28
29 The NRC's oversight activities collect data on licensee performance by monitoring daily licensee
30 activities, performing routine inspections, and performing reactive inspections. Monitoring and
31 inspection functions at the agency closely focus on activities having the greatest impact on
32 safety and overall risk.

33
34 Information about licensee performance is used to assess safety significance and provide for an
35 appropriate NRC response when warranted. Such responses can include supplemental
36 inspections for selected issues or enforcement actions on significant inspection findings. These
37 responses aim to keep the licensees at a performance level that ensures the safe and secure
38 use of radioactive materials. Additionally, the NRC performs an annual review of nuclear
39 materials users' inspection and enforcement data, as well as the NRC and Agreement State
40 performance data to identify any adverse trends related to nuclear materials safety or security
41 that warrant regulatory action.

42
43 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

44
45 Inspection Programs, Enforcement Program, Allegation Program, Integrated Materials
46 Performance Evaluation Program, National Materials Program, Operating Experience Program,
47 Research Program, Operator Licensing Program, Decommissioning Program, Nuclear Material
48 Cask/Package Certification, Event Assessment, Accident Sequence Precursor Program,
49 Reactor Oversight Process, and Construction Reactor Oversight Process

1 **Safety and Security Objective 2: Ensure regulatory requirements adequately support the safe**
2 **and secure use of radioactive materials.**

3
4 The NRC continues to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its safety and security
5 regulatory framework by promoting transformation through application of lessons learned,
6 historical and contemporary data, and institutional knowledge. The NRC's regulatory framework
7 will be strengthened as it incorporates risk-informed performance-based approaches and
8 revises regulatory requirements based on insights gained from the use of risk-analysis tools
9 while fulfilling its mission. The agency will develop the regulatory framework to review novel
10 applications and advanced technologies required by NEIMA.

11
12 **Strategies:**

- 13
14 - Maintain and further risk-inform the current regulatory framework using information
15 gained from operating experience, lessons learned, external and internal assessments,
16 technology advances, research activities, and changes in the threat environment.
17 - Proactively identify, assess, and address safety issues, threats, vulnerabilities, and
18 security risks.
19 - Leverage institutional knowledge, including that of Agreement States, to identify key
20 areas of regulatory improvement.
21

22 **Evidence**

23
24 The NRC performs regulatory analyses to build evidence that informs the regulatory framework.
25 Regulatory analyses are formal analyses that accompany proposed agency actions that quantify
26 costs and benefits and consider preferred alternatives. Regulatory analyses are a decision tool,
27 providing a transparent rationale for decisionmaking.
28

29 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

30
31 Rulemaking Process, Generic Communications, Operating Experience Program, Inspection
32 Programs, and National Materials Program
33

34 **Safety and Security Objective 3: Maintain emergency preparedness and response**
35 **capabilities for NRC and NRC-licensed facilities.**

36
37 Readiness to respond to an incident or emergency and reduce the consequences (should one
38 occur) are key elements for achieving the NRC's goal of safe and secure use of radioactive
39 materials. The NRC emphasizes the integration of safety, security, and emergency
40 preparedness as the basis for the NRC's primary mission of adequately protecting public health
41 and safety. The NRC uses risk-informed and performance-based approaches to enhance the
42 effectiveness and efficiency of the regulatory framework that appropriately consider defense-in-
43 depth and risk insights. These approaches ensure that multiple layers of defense protect
44 against accidents and their effects to ensure that the risk to the public is acceptably low. In this
45 approach, the NRC does not rely solely on preventing emergencies, but also recognizes that
46 provisions in approved emergency plans are included to mitigate the effects of emergencies,
47 should they occur. Therefore, the NRC must ensure that all licensees have effective
48 preparedness and response programs in place to address an emergency. The NRC must also
49 ensure that effective programs are in place for the NRC itself to respond to incidents or events
50 at nuclear facilities.

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Strategies:

- Ensure the NRC maintains its readiness to respond to incidents and emergencies involving NRC-licensed facilities and radioactive materials, other events of domestic and international interest, and public health emergencies or other emergencies involving NRC’s facilities and workforce.
- Ensure licensees have programs and plans in place to enable an NRC finding of reasonable assurance that adequate protective measures can and will be taken in the event of a radiological emergency.

Evidence

Evidence-based decisionmaking is used by the NRC to support emergency preparedness and response capabilities for the NRC and NRC-licensed facilities. Emergency preparedness and response data are collected during routine inspections, exercises, and through reporting requirements. Evidence is used to analyze the licensees’ plans and actions to respond to an incident and, to review the licensees’ protective actions to minimize the event’s impact on public health and safety and the environment. During an event, the NRC obtains and analyzes event information to assess an event’s potential impact on public health and safety and the environment. The agency in turn provides expert consultation, support, and assistance to State and local public safety officials responding to the event.

Contributing Programs and Activities

Force-on-Force Program, Incident Response Program, Emergency Preparedness Programs, Inspection Programs, Operating Experience Program, and Reactor Oversight Process

Goal 2: Continue to foster a healthy organization

A focus on organizational health is necessary to foster the agency’s ability to carry out its mission. A healthy organization provides the capacity and capability to enhance the agency’s culture, organizational learning, business practices, and strategic management to prepare for an evolving future. Continual improvement in these areas enables the NRC to enhance stewardship of resources, technology, and the workforce to improve performance in achieving its mission. In addition, this will continue to facilitate the NRC’s transformation vision to be a more modern, risk-informed regulator.

A successful outcome of this goal results in an organization and infrastructure that facilitates continuous learning and innovation, knowledge management, diversity and inclusion, technology adoption, and strategic planning, which in turn inspires our workforce. Positive results include a culture that creates a sense of belonging, promotes and sustains a strong safety culture, fosters creativity and innovation, connects vision with action, and continuously adapts and strives to be a healthy organization.

Organizational Health Objective 1: *Foster an organizational culture in which the workforce is engaged, adaptable, receptive to change, and makes high quality and timely decisions.*

1 As the NRC adapts to new technologies, changes in the industry, workspace changes, and
2 agency transformation and innovation efforts, the agency continues to invest in its staff with a
3 focus on inclusion and excellence. The NRC strives for an environment in which everyone is
4 engaged and accountable for creating a healthy and inclusive culture that embraces diversity
5 and enables everyone to excel. The NRC encourages staff to look for opportunities to
6 implement transformative and innovative ideas and remain agile in its work.
7

8 **Strategies:**

- 9
- 10 - Maintain a high-performing, diverse, engaged, and agile workforce supported by a
11 healthy organizational culture with focus on safety, security, and continuous
12 improvement to meet mission needs.
- 13 - Continue to transform into a more modern, risk-informed regulator that keeps pace with
14 technological innovations.
- 15 - Promote innovation and development of new ideas by the NRC workforce.
- 16 - Promote an organizational culture that embraces inclusion by recognizing the
17 importance of a diverse workforce.
- 18 - Recognize and act to inform the agency's decisions by weighing diverse and competing
19 staff perspectives, having respect for self and for others, being open-minded and
20 inquisitive, and using all available processes to address differences of opinion.
21

22 **Evidence**

23

24 The NRC prioritizes staff input to drive evidence and decisionmaking toward the desired
25 organizational culture. Feedback from surveys, meetings, initiatives, and lessons learned is
26 used to gauge staff engagement and adaptability while promoting innovation and diversity. The
27 NRC uses this data to propose paths that lead to an inclusive and empowered workforce
28 capable of making high-quality, timely, and evidence-based decisions to ensure the safe and
29 secure use of radioactive materials.
30

31 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

32

33 Staff surveys (e.g., Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Office of the Inspector General Safety
34 Culture and Climate Survey, Pulse Survey), all-employee and town hall meetings, employee
35 suggestion programs, Innovate NRC, Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network, Embrace
36 NRC, Affirmative Employment and Diversity Management Program, Culture Initiative, and Work
37 Life Programs
38

39 **Organizational Health Objective 2:** *Enable the workforce to carry out the agency's mission by*
40 *leveraging modern technology, innovation, and knowledge management to support data-driven*
41 *decisions in an evolving regulatory landscape.*
42

43 Modernizing our technology and increasing staff access to information is central to maximizing
44 the capability of the workforce, expanding the agency's ability to attract the best talent, and
45 facilitating timely and high-quality regulatory decisions. Technologies will enhance the NRC's
46 ability to capture critical insights and more effectively transfer important regulatory knowledge.

1 The NRC's approach focuses on modernizing information technology tools and systems,
2 improving business processes, enhancing access to data for more risk-informed
3 decisionmaking, modernizing the NRC's network, and improving stakeholder experience.

4
5 **Strategies:**

- 6
- 7 - Recognize and act on current and future information technology needs to effectively
8 carry out the NRC's mission.
- 9 - Ensure the NRC's data strategy is effective to enhance access and use of internal and
10 external data for decisionmaking.
- 11 - Introduce new technologies to enhance decisionmaking, improve knowledge
12 management, and accelerate innovation in our regulatory activities.

13
14 **Evidence**

15
16 Leveraging technology and innovation to support the agency's decisionmaking is a priority for
17 the NRC. Continuous internal and external feedback related to agency processes, information
18 technology, and knowledge management provides the data used by the staff to analyze the
19 NRC's current and future information technology needs. Specifically, the staff uses the
20 evidence to adjust, update, and enhance the NRC's use of modern technology and innovation
21 by deploying new systems, processes, and software to effectively and efficiently carry out the
22 NRC's mission.

23
24 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

25
26 Information Technology and Information Management Strategic Roadmap, Knowledge
27 Management Program, Continual Service Improvement Plan, Competency Modeling Project,
28 InnovateNRC, Data Strategy, and Information Technology and Information Management
29 Portfolio Executive Council Forum

30
31 **Organizational Health Objective 3:** *Attract, develop, and maintain a high-performing, diverse,*
32 *engaged, and flexible workforce with the skills needed to carry out the NRC's mission now and*
33 *in the future.*

34
35 The NRC realizes that to attract, develop, and maintain highly skilled and educated
36 professionals, the agency must be an employer of choice that provides access to the tools to
37 perform their jobs and a workplace that promotes strong employee engagement. The NRC's
38 approach for this objective focuses on ensuring that the NRC has a highly trained workforce that
39 is knowledgeable of regulatory processes that govern agency actions and the regulatory
40 principles inherent in making the agency a strong and independent regulator.

41
42 **Strategies:**

- 43
- 44 - Ensure the agency is an employer of choice that offers a work culture and workplace
45 environment that attracts and retains highly motivated employees, who are engaged,
46 adaptable, high performing, and receptive to change.
- 47 - Ensure the agency has a workforce with the right skillsets to achieve the agency's goals
48 now and for the future by integrating results of strategic workforce planning into our
49 hiring activities, enhancing recruiting efforts, and streamlining hiring practices.

- 1 - Maintain a high-performing, inclusive, and engaged workforce by rewarding high
2 performers, enhancing career paths, promoting diversity, and creating a continual
3 learning culture with cross-training opportunities for career advancement.
- 4 - Improve knowledge management by identifying and capturing critical information and
5 leveraging the agency's investment in modern information management and technology
6 to enhance information accessibility and searchability.
- 7 - Improve performance and productivity by investing in technical, professional and
8 management training, accountability, and encouraging leadership development.

9 10 **Evidence**

11
12 To attract and sustain a high-performing and diverse workforce the agency continuously
13 assesses its leadership, scientific and technical core competency needs, recruitment activities,
14 applicant data, hiring results, by continuously seeking feedback from the staff at all levels. The
15 agency analyzes this data to design its strategic workforce plan; inform recruitment, hiring, and
16 succession planning decisions; develop a robust knowledge management and transfer system;
17 and continuously provide learning opportunities in support of an inclusive and engaged
18 workforce.

19 20 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

21
22 Human Capital Operating Plan, Strategic Workforce Planning Process, Agency Annual
23 Recruiting Plan, University Champions Program, Civil Rights Program, Affirmative Employment
24 and Diversity Management Program, Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan, student and
25 recent graduate programs (e.g., Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network, Honor Law
26 Graduate Program, etc.), Inclusive Diversity Strategic Plan, Leaders at All Levels Certificate
27 Program, Aspiring Leaders Certificate Program, Senior Executive Service Candidate
28 Development Program, work life programs, Career Mentor Program, Supervisor Development
29 Program, and Employee Journey Initiative

30 31 **Goal 3: Inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC**

32
33 To be successful, the NRC must not only excel in carrying out its mission but must do so in a
34 manner that inspires confidence. The NRC strives to promote transparency in its regulatory
35 activities, provide opportunities for candid and meaningful public participation, and demonstrate
36 that the agency is a capable, independent, trustworthy, and objective regulator. Confidence in
37 the NRC and engagement with stakeholders are enhanced when the agency consistently
38 carries out its mission in an effective, timely, disciplined, and open manner.

39
40 To achieve this goal, the NRC must be viewed as an independent, open, and reliable regulator.
41 This will be accomplished by providing stakeholders with clear and accurate information about,
42 and a meaningful role in, its regulatory processes.

43 44 **Stakeholder Confidence Objective 1: Engage stakeholders in NRC activities in an effective 45 and transparent manner.**

46
47 It is key to public confidence that the NRC engage with diverse stakeholders with a wide range
48 of views and expertise, learn from them, and communicate in clear and accessible ways. The
49 NRC's mission is carried out on behalf of the American people, which makes nuclear regulation

1 the public's business. As such, it should be transacted openly and candidly to maintain the
2 public's confidence.

3
4 **Strategies:**

- 5
- 6 - Foster proactive and meaningful interactions with States, Tribes, other governmental
7 and nongovernmental organizations, the regulated industry, the international regulatory
8 community, and other members of the public.
- 9 - Provide a fair and timely process to allow public involvement in NRC decisionmaking.

10
11 **Evidence**

12
13 Stakeholder engagement is achieved through regular involvement of the affected parties. The
14 NRC engages the media and the public through public meetings, seminars, press releases,
15 NRC-sponsored training, and regulatory communications, among other activities. Stakeholder
16 feedback collected during these interactions is analyzed and used by the NRC to update,
17 enhance, and increase the communication tools and processes used to reach and engage with
18 the public. These measures include reaching a wider pool of stakeholders, increasing
19 opportunities for stakeholder feedback, and enhancing the NRC's information on public
20 websites and presence in social media. This information is also used to develop and provide
21 training to internal and external stakeholders on the NRC's mission, decisionmaking processes,
22 data collection, and accessibility. This ensures an effective and transparent process to allow
23 public involvement in NRC's decisionmaking.

24
25 **Contributing Programs and Activities**

26
27 Public Reactor Oversight Program Annual Assessment Meetings, Customer Feedback Process,
28 Customer Service Plan, Initial Web Improvement Plan, Open Government Plan, Facilitator
29 Corps, Freedom of Information Act Program, Agreement States Program, Federal and State
30 Liaison Program, and Tribal Liaison Program

31
32 **Stakeholder Confidence Objective 2:** *Use high quality data and information in the NRC-*
33 *decisionmaking process and ensure the information is available and accessible to interested*
34 *stakeholders.*

35
36 The agency strives to increase transparency in decisionmaking processes and decisions by
37 increasing the quality, availability, and sharing of information.

38
39 **Strategies:**

- 40
- 41 - Engage stakeholders to ensure awareness and understanding of the NRC's regulatory
42 requirements and decisions.
- 43 - Develop effective communication strategies to explain how risk and uncertainty are
44 addressed and considered in the decisionmaking process.
- 45 - Make information relevant to the NRC's regulatory activities available and accessible to
46 interested stakeholders.
- 47 - Ensure that stakeholders, particularly members of the public that may be
48 disproportionately impacted by the agency's decision, are aware of opportunities for
49 public engagement in the NRC's decisionmaking processes.

- 1 - Ensure that the NRC maintains and publishes accessible and comprehensive
2 information by transforming agency information and siloed databases.
- 3 - Leverage feedback received from a broad range of stakeholders in the agency's
4 decisionmaking processes.
- 5 - Maintain a high standard of quality and clarity in NRC documents to promote confidence
6 in the agency's work.

7
8
9

Evidence

10 As a regulatory agency, the NRC documents the bases for its decisionmaking processes. The
11 NRC has established procedures for the systematic collection, analysis, and management of the
12 data and information associated with carrying out its regulatory responsibilities. These
13 procedures include timeliness goals and metrics to ensure that regulatory decisions and
14 supporting information are made available to stakeholders promptly. The NRC solicits feedback
15 from stakeholders on the timeliness, accessibility, uniformity, relevance, and content of the
16 information contained in its platforms. This feedback is crucial as it provides the agency with
17 the basis for adopting measures to continuously improve the NRC's use of high-quality data and
18 information in our decisionmaking process and to ensure that information is available and
19 accessible to stakeholders. The NRC, as a regulatory agency whose processes and decisions
20 are captured primarily in the form of documents, uses this information to ensure its documents
21 are available in widely used formats for public viewing.

22
23
24

Contributing Programs and Activities

25 Generic Communications Program, Open Government High-Value Dataset Identification and
26 Submission Process, and Common Baseline Plan

APPENDIX A - KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

Many external factors influence the ability of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to achieve its strategic goals and the associated objectives. These factors include industry operating experience, national priorities, climate change impacts, the security and threat environment, legislation, Federal court litigation, market trends, new technologies, public health emergencies, and resource availability. This appendix discusses the most significant of these factors. The NRC will strengthen its ability to manage change and respond promptly to shifts in agency priorities necessitated by these future planning challenges. The agency will also make efforts to influence those factors that enable the achievement of its strategic objectives, where appropriate. The NRC performs an annual environmental scan as part of its capacity assessment to identify key external factors that will influence the agency's workload and workforce over a 5-year period.

Market Forces and Climate Change Mitigation

Many market forces affect the nuclear industry, which may impact the business operations of license applicants and operating facilities subject to NRC jurisdiction. For example, supply and demand fundamentals driven by competition from alternative energy sources (e.g., natural gas) may increase the competitive landscape and reduce operating margins. Financial and insurance markets, Federal and State taxation and regulatory policies, and aging technologies may also affect operating costs. Additionally, the effects of climate change can have an impact on existing energy infrastructure. Efforts to reduce carbon emissions and expand low-carbon electricity generation also can incentivize the development and use of new technologies and facilities. These factors, in turn, can affect NRC operating budgets and priorities. The NRC must be prepared with the regulatory infrastructure to support areas such as decommissioning of older or uneconomic operating plants, changes in exports and imports in an increasingly global economy, and licensing of new technologies and facilities.

Globalization and Development of Nuclear Technology

Technological changes may affect the development of advanced nuclear systems and support infrastructure, resulting in market changes and other impacts on industry activities subject to NRC jurisdiction. Increased globalization effects of nuclear technology, including small modular reactors, could increase competition in the nuclear supply chain and, therefore, affect operating costs across the nuclear industry and increase the complexity of regulatory oversight. In addition to operating and regulatory impacts on the domestic nuclear industry, globalization necessitates enhanced cooperation between the United States and international organizations for licensing activities, training, development and implementation of codes and standards, and conventions and treaties to ensure safe and secure use of nuclear technology.

Security Threats and Significant Incidents

Looking ahead, the U.S. national security landscape is likely to continue to be dynamic, encompassing a full range of threats and incidents, including the identification of and protection against cyber threats and physical security threats such as nuclear proliferation, robotics and unmanned aerial systems, and terrorism. As a result, the regulatory approach needed to ensure the safety and security of nuclear materials and infrastructure is expected to continue to evolve.

1 A significant incident at a nuclear facility, whether caused by adversaries, natural disaster, or
2 other factors, could cause the agency to reassess its safety and security requirements, affect
3 the agency's focus and include extensive interactions with other Federal and State partners.
4 Given the high level of public interest in the safe and secure use of radioactive materials, even
5 events of low safety significance could require a response that involves considerable agency
6 resources. The NRC must anticipate and be prepared for an operational and regulatory
7 response to threats and incidents involving NRC-licensed nuclear infrastructure.

8 9 ***Government and Regulatory Impacts***

10
11 Actions taken by Congress or Executive Branch agencies may affect the NRC, either directly or
12 indirectly by affecting NRC stakeholders. Actions could impact areas such as investment in new
13 technology, operation and oversight of an aging reactor fleet, or other NRC policies and
14 initiatives.

15 16 ***International Treaties and Conventions***

17
18 The ratification by the United States of international instruments related to the safety of nuclear
19 facilities or radioactive materials could potentially impose binding provisions on the Nation and
20 the corresponding governmental agencies, such as the NRC.

21 22 ***Workforce Dynamics***

23
24 The agency's most valuable resource is its staff, and its ability to recruit, hire, train, motivate,
25 and retain qualified staff in a competitive job market is critical to meeting its strategic goals.
26 Workforce changes such as greater diversity, employee expectations for more flexibility in work
27 locations and schedules, and an increased frequency of job changes during careers will require
28 the NRC to better understand its employees and become a more flexible and agile organization.

29 30 ***Information Technology Advances***

31
32 The NRC continues to build a flexible, agile, and innovative information technology and
33 information management environment that is prepared for the rapid development of new
34 technologies and changes in the nuclear industry. Technological advances continue to change
35 the way the agency works and interacts with stakeholders. The increased use of social media,
36 virtual meetings, data analytics, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence will improve
37 efficiency and provide support for the workforce. These activities increase dependency on a
38 robust and resilient network and information technology infrastructure. The NRC will need to
39 gain knowledge and expertise for a wide range of skills and capabilities such as artificial
40 intelligence and data literacy, to continue expanding the use of data for decisionmaking in the
41 agency.

42
43 The NRC continues its efforts to strategically plan, modernize the agency information
44 technology systems, integrate the use of information technology systems and applications
45 throughout the agency, and increase internal capacity to gather, define, evaluate, analyze, link,
46 and present data to support decisionmaking. Maintaining the secure use and protection of
47 sensitive and proprietary information will be a challenge given the increased use of mobile
48 devices, alternative data storage options, new communication technologies, and the increased
49 use of telecommunication. The NRC will remain prepared for the heightened risk that sensitive
50 information held by the agency or its licensees may be lost, misplaced, or intercepted and fall
51 into the hands of unauthorized users. The agency will need to maintain a knowledgeable

- 1 workforce capable of addressing these cybersecurity challenges. Additionally, the agency will
- 2 see an increased demand for cybersecurity external auditing, risk reporting, automated real-time
- 3 risk assessment and mitigation, and a continuation of cybersecurity workforce shortage.

APPENDIX B - GLOSSARY

Agreement State: A U.S. State that has signed an agreement with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), or its predecessor the Atomic Energy Commission, pursuant to Section 274 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, authorizing the State to regulate certain uses of radioactive materials within the State.

Analysis: A examination of a subject or discrete product, in support of the agency's regulatory mission (technical and corporate), in order to gain an understanding of its elements, or parts.

Capacity Assessment: An objective accounting of the NRC's capacity (e.g., the sufficiency of the agency's staffing, funding, infrastructure, and processes) to carry out the evidence-building activities needed to meet agency functions and to disseminate and use evidence.

Classified Information: Information that has been determined pursuant to an Executive Order or the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, to require protection against unauthorized disclosure and is marked to indicate its classified status when in documentary form. The NRC has two types of classified information. The first type, known as National Security Information, is information that is classified by an Executive Order. Its release would damage national security. The second type, known as Restricted Data, would assist individuals or organizations in designing, manufacturing, or using nuclear weapons. Access to both types of information is restricted to authorized persons who have been properly cleared and have a "need to know" the information to accomplish their official duties.

Effectiveness: The degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result.

Efficiency: The degree to which the resources needed to produce an outcome can be minimized without reducing the outcome's effectiveness.

Emergency Preparedness: The programs, plans, training, exercises, and resources used to prepare for and rapidly identify, evaluate, and respond to emergencies, including those arising from terrorism or natural events such as hurricanes. Emergency preparedness strives to ensure that operators of nuclear power plants and certain fuel cycle facilities can implement measures to protect public health and safety in the event of a radiological emergency. Licensees that operate certain nuclear facilities, such as nuclear power plants, must develop and maintain emergency preparedness plans that meet NRC requirements.

Evaluation: As defined by 5 U.S.C. 311(3), "evaluation" means an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.

Evidence: As defined by 44 U.S.C. 3561(6), "evidence" means information produced as a result of statistical activities conducted for a statistical purpose. However, evidence, as applied in the context of the Federal Performance Framework for improving organizational and agency performance, is viewed more broadly as the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid. As such, evidence can be quantitative or qualitative and may come from a variety of sources, including foundational fact finding (e.g., aggregate indicators, exploratory studies, descriptive statistics, and other research),

1 performance measurement, policy analysis, and program evaluation (see OMB Memorandum
2 M-19-23).

3
4 **Evidence-Building Activities:** The planning, implementation, management, and reporting of
5 evidence (e.g., analyses, research, assessments, and program evaluations) performed by the
6 agency for programmatic, operational, regulatory, and policy decisionmaking.

7
8 **Evidence-Building Plan:** A systematic approach for identifying and addressing priority
9 questions relevant to the agency's programs, policies, and regulations. More broadly, it is a
10 coordination tool to engage stakeholders in evidence planning and building to help achieve an
11 agency's mission.

12
13 **Incident Response:** Activities that address the short-term, direct effects of a natural or human-
14 caused event and require an emergency response to protect life or property.

15
16 **National Materials Program:** The broad collective effort within which both the NRC and the
17 Agreement States function in carrying out their respective regulatory programs for radioactive
18 material.

19
20 **Radioactive Material:** As used in this strategic plan, refers to any substance that produces
21 ionizing radiation and is regulated by the NRC. The NRC regulates civilian uses of material
22 producing ionizing radiation, including the use of such substances for nuclear power generation,
23 all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, medical and government uses, and research and industrial
24 applications.

25
26 **Radioisotope (radionuclide):** An unstable isotope of an element that decays or disintegrates
27 spontaneously, thereby emitting radiation. About 5,000 natural and artificial radioisotopes have
28 been identified.

29
30 **Regulatory Framework:** The interrelated elements that form the basis for the NRC's oversight
31 of the use of radioactive materials, including (1) the NRC's mandate from Congress in the form
32 of enabling legislation, (2) the NRC's licenses, orders, and regulations in Title 10 of the Code of
33 Federal Regulations (10 CFR), (3) regulatory guides, review plans, and other documents that
34 clarify and guide the application of NRC requirements and amplify agency regulations, (4) the
35 licensing and inspection procedures used by NRC employees, and (5) the agency's
36 enforcement guidance.

37
38 **Risk Assessment:** A systematic method for addressing three questions as they relate to the
39 performance of a particular system:

- 40 1. What can go wrong?
41 2. How likely is it?
42 3. What are the consequences?

43
44 **Risk-Informed:** An approach that considers risk insights along with other factors such as
45 engineering judgment, safety limits, and redundant or diverse safety systems. Such an
46 approach is used to establish requirements that better focus licensee and regulatory attention
47 on design and operational issues and ensure that such attention is commensurate with the
48 importance of those issues to public health and safety.

1 **Risk-Informed Decisionmaking:** An approach to regulatory decisionmaking that considers
2 risk and engineering insights.

3
4 **Risk Insights:** The results and findings that come from risk assessments. They may include
5 improved understanding of the likelihood of possible outcomes, sensitivity of the results to key
6 assumptions, relative importance of the various system components and their potential
7 interactions, and the areas and magnitude of the uncertainties.

8
9 **Safeguards Information:** A special category of sensitive unclassified information that must be
10 protected. Safeguards information includes control or accounting procedures or security
11 measures for the physical possession of certain quantities of special nuclear material; security
12 measures for the physical protection of certain quantities of source material or byproduct
13 material; and security measures for the physical protection of and the location of plant
14 equipment vital to safety. Broadly speaking, safeguard information concerns the physical
15 protection of operating power reactors, spent fuel shipments, strategic special nuclear material,
16 or other radioactive material.

17
18 **Stakeholders:** Members of the public; public interest groups; Federal, State, Tribal, and local
19 agencies; non-governmental organizations; and license applicants and licensees with an
20 interest in a given NRC topic or activity.

21
22 **Standards:** Technical requirements and recommended practices for any device, apparatus,
23 system, or phenomenon associated with a specific field.

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The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or agency) is an independent agency established by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 that began operations in 1975 as a successor to the Atomic Energy Commission. The NRC's mission is to license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials; to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety; to promote the common defense and security; and to protect the environment. This strategic plan, covering the period Fiscal Years 2022–2026, provides the blueprint for the agency to plan, implement and monitor the work needed to achieve its three strategic goals: (1) ensure the safe and secure use of radioactive materials, (2) continue to foster a healthy organization, and (3) inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC. The strategic plan also provides an overview of the NRC's responsibilities and lays out how the NRC uses data and evidence to inform decisionmaking to accomplish objectives and strategies to achieve the agency's strategic goals.

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