

RESPONSE SHEET

TO: Brooke P. Clark, Secretary
FROM: Commissioner Baran
SUBJECT: COMAXC-23-0001: Enabling the Mission – A Measured Approach to the Future of Work

Approved X Disapproved X Abstain Not Participating

COMMENTS: Below Attached X None

Entered in STARS

Yes

No X

Jeffery M. Baran
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Jeffery M. Baran
Date: 2023.05.18
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Signature

5/18/23

Date

**Commissioner Baran's Comments on COMAXC-23-0001,
"Enabling the Mission – A Measured Approach to the Future of Work"**

This is an important time for NRC. With more applications for advanced reactors, small modular reactors, subsequent license renewal, new fuel designs, power uprates, and risk-informed programs expected, NRC's overall workload is increasing. To be ready for this new work, the agency will need to nurture and sustain its top-notch workforce.

It must do so while facing a significant hiring challenge. We have a large number of employees who are eligible for retirement. With higher employee attrition, the agency's efforts on external hiring are crucial. Significant external hiring is necessary for the agency to do the work we have in front of us now and to be prepared for the work ahead of us in the near future. Last fiscal year, NRC recruited and brought over 200 external hires into the agency's pipeline. The aspirational hiring goal for this fiscal year is 400 external hires. Compared to the last several years, that is a substantial amount of hiring.

Telework – and the future of work, more broadly – are key aspects of the agency's recruitment and retention environment. Finding the right balance is not easy. On the one hand, we have a major staffing challenge and many of our employees want a significant amount of telework. The reality is that there are many opportunities for them to get full-time telework at other organizations. To retain our existing talented employees and to recruit new employees, it is important for the agency to offer telework flexibilities. Without that, our staffing numbers would likely drop significantly and morale would continue to decline. On the other hand, telework must be done the right way because we need to maintain our productivity and our organizational health, including the ability to mentor and train new hires. The staff is sensibly developing metrics to track results, as well as guidance to ensure that we are maximizing the value of the time in the office. Meetings with applicants and stakeholders are activities that would be done in person.

I appreciate Commissioner Caputo's COM, which makes many of these same points. I agree with her that "[a] well developed and documented plan based on data is critical for the success of the agency." Shortly after Commissioner Caputo shared her COM, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released guidance that outlined steps agencies "will take to ensure that agency decisions regarding work environments continue to improve organizational health and organizational performance." The staff is now working to provide OMB with several deliverables, including a plan for NRC's work environment and key performance indicators. On May 15, the staff submitted its initial Work Environment Plan to OMB for review and feedback. This OMB process provides us an opportunity to make sure that NRC's future-of-work plans address the reasonable concerns discussed in Commissioner Caputo's COM.

The staff should provide to the Commission no later than 10 business days before NRC is expected to reach a final agency decision on its Work Environment Plan, an information paper discussing (1) the staff's proposed decision; (2) anticipated guidance for implementing Presence with Purpose norms and behaviors; (3) key performance indicators for monitoring accomplishment of our mission, organizational health, and public confidence; (4) expected changes to policies, management directives, the collective bargaining agreement, and other governing documents; (5) data relied upon to reach its proposed decision, and (6) an internal strategic communication plan. The information paper should include a summary of all formal and informal feedback received from OMB and discuss how the staff responded to feedback, including highlighting any feedback that was not incorporated into the NRC plan. The paper

should also include a narrative and relevant data on how NRC's plan for the work environment compares to other agencies of similar size and function. As the staff meets with OMB and the President's Management Council, the EDO should regularly update the Commission.