

UNITED STATES

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, AFFIRMATIVE
EMPLOYMENT, AND SMALL BUSINESS

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THURSDAY,

DECEMBER 14, 2023

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Hearing Room,
at 10:00 a.m. EST, Christopher T. Hanson, Chair, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chair

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

CARRIE SAFFORD, Secretary of the Commission

BERNICE AMMON, Deputy General Counsel for

Licensing, Hearings, and Enforcement

NRC STAFF:

DAN DORMAN, Executive Director for Operations

LAURA DUDES, Regional Administrator, Region II

MARY LAMARY, Chief Human Capital Officer, Office of
the Chief Human Capital Officer

LARNIECE McKOY MOORE, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion,
and Outreach Program Manager, Office of Small
Business & Civil Rights (SBCR)

VONNA ORDAZ, Director, SBCR

CELIMAR VALENTIN-RODRIGUEZ, Chair, Hispanic
Employment Program Advisory Committee

ALSO PARTICIPATING:

SHERYL SANCHEZ, President, National Treasury
Employees Union, Chapter 208

PROCEEDINGS

10:00 a.m.

1 CHAIR HANSON: Good morning everyone, I'll try that
2 again, thanks. I convene the Commission's public meeting on equal
3 employment opportunity, affirmative employment, and small business. Twice
4 a year we get to meet and get an update on the progress and opportunities
5 related to equal employment opportunity, diversity, equity, inclusion and
6 accessibility, and the NRC small business program.

7 Our last meeting was in June of this year. Today we're going
8 to discuss topics that are very important to ensuring NRC employees have a
9 safe working environment where they can pursue their career goals, and help
10 the agency fulfill its mission. On that note, I think this may be the last public
11 Commission meeting before the retirement of Cathy Haney, our Deputy
12 Executive Director for Materials, Waste, Research, State, Tribal, Compliance,
13 Administration, and Human Capital Programs.

14 On your way out, Cathy, I'm going to get it all in there. So,
15 she's going to retire on January 12th, and for her more than three decades of
16 public service, Cathy, it's been a real pleasure to work with you, and I want to
17 thank you sincerely, and wish you a really happy, and healthy, and long
18 retirement. So, thank you very much.

19 Also I'd like to recognize today, Linda Linn from our Region
20 III office, who will retire at the end of the month after 51 years of service. Now,
21 get this, Ms. Linn is the last NRC employee who started when the NRC was
22 still the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. As the last AEC/NRC charter

1 member, Linda, we wish you all the happiness, and a well-deserved
2 retirement. Thank you again.

3 So, with that, before we begin our discussion, I'll ask my
4 colleagues if they have any comments they'd like to make?

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Real quick.

6 CHAIR HANSON: Please.

7 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, Cathy Haney, your
8 business card is getting a little bigger now because you've got to add the word
9 "retired."

10 CHAIR HANSON: All right, with that, I'll hand it over to Dan
11 Dorman, our Executive Director for Operations to provide his opening
12 remarks, followed by the NRC staff. Dan, over to you.

13 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Chair. Good morning Chair
14 Hanson, Commissioners Wright, Caputo, and Crowell. The NRC strategic
15 plan for fiscal years 2022 through '26 outlines three strategic goals that the
16 agency must achieve to carry out our mission successfully. Ensure the safe
17 and secure use of radioactive materials, continue to foster a healthy
18 organization, and inspire stakeholder confidence in the NRC.

19 As dedicated public servants, we are committed to
20 achieving these goals, and accomplishing our safety and security mission with
21 excellence and integrity. Today we will be discussing our efforts to foster a
22 healthy organization by promoting a culture that embraces equity, inclusion,
23 and accessibility, and recognizes the importance of a diverse workforce.

24 We are two years into the strategic plan, and the agency

1 continues to experience some negative trends in this year's Federal Employee
2 Viewpoint Survey, or FEVS, that require focused and sustained attention.
3 The FEVS indices pertaining to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility
4 show a small increase in results for inclusion and accessibility, but a small
5 decrease in diversity and equity.

6 Additionally, results of the 2023 Organizational Culture
7 Inventory indicate that the agency is making less progress than we would like
8 towards achieving our desired culture. We have room for improvement and
9 are committed to taking the necessary actions to address the issues raised in
10 these surveys.

11 For example, we've recently updated the draft agency
12 culture improvement strategy to include implementation of a new culture
13 leader model. Designated senior leaders assigned to each office and region
14 will help drive cultural improvements by engaging with the staff in their work
15 units to identify and address their specific challenges and opportunities.

16 The agency culture team, and diversity, equity, inclusion,
17 and accessibility activities will be integrated to efficiently improve desired
18 culture, and diversity within the offices and regions. In addition, offices and
19 regions will be submitting action plans on the 2023 FEVS and Organizational
20 Culture Inventory results.

21 We are committed to doing business differently to foster a
22 healthy organization that supports diversity and inclusivity, equal opportunity
23 for all employees and job applicants, and an open and collaborative work
24 environment. These values, coupled with our efforts to innovate work

1 processes, improve organizational effectiveness, recruit and retain a highly
2 skilled and engaged workforce, and partner with small businesses, are vital to
3 our progress as a modern risk informed regulator.

4 Now, I'd like to introduce my fellow presenters. Next slide
5 please. First, Vonna Ordaz, the Director of the Office of Small Business and
6 Civil Rights will provide an overview of the Equal Employment Opportunity,
7 Equal Opportunity and Small Business programs. She will be followed by
8 Larniece McKoy Moore, our diversity, equity, inclusion, and outreach program
9 manager in SBCR who will provide an overview of the NRC's diversity, equity,
10 inclusion, and accessibility initiatives, and Minority Serving Institutions Grants
11 Program.

12 Next, Laura Dudes, Regional Administrator for Region II will
13 discuss how diversity, and the region's focus on mission values and its people
14 has been an incubator for innovative and modernized initiatives. Laura will
15 be followed by Mary Lamary, the Chief Human Capital Officer, who will provide
16 an update on our efforts to recruit, retain, and develop a diverse workforce
17 that will help us accomplish our mission now and in the future.

18 And finally we'll hear from Celimar Valentin-Rodriguez,
19 Chair of the NRC's Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee, who
20 will highlight the accomplishments and future focus areas of the Diversity
21 Management Advisory Committee, and the EEO Advisory Committees and
22 Employee Resource Groups. That concludes my introductory remarks, and
23 I'll turn the presentation over to Vonna.

24 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, Dan. Good morning, Chair

1 Hanson, Commissioners, NRC family, and those of you joining us today. As
2 Dan and Cathy's last Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity
3 Commission briefing, I'd like to take a moment to thank them for their years of
4 service and support to our office. I've had the pleasure of working with both
5 Dan and Cathy in NSIR, in NMSS, and now in OEDO, and I greatly appreciate
6 your collaborative leadership, and your kind hearts.

7 And I'd like to congratulate our very own Jeannie Dempsey.
8 Jeannie is unable to be with us today, but she is our Deputy Director in SBCR,
9 and she will be leaving us on January 3rd. So, everybody's leaving me. She
10 has been a true blessing for SBCR, but she's also been a great friend, and
11 leader, and to so many of us at the NRC. So, Jeannie, you will be missed.

12 I also want to thank Erin Deeds, who is in the booth for us
13 today up here. This is her first opportunity to lead this briefing, and she's
14 done a fabulous job. Thank you, Erin. And finally, we have a special guest
15 with us today that some of you have been able to meet already. This is Dr.
16 Stephen Shih, I would ask him to please stand.

17 He is the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
18 Ambassador for NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
19 Steve is one of our most recent partners in establishing a DEIA community of
20 practice across the federal government, which you will hear more during
21 Larniece's presentation. Next slide please.

22 So, why should we consider doing business differently?
23 Organizations with healthy cultures are willing to learn from others, and are
24 open to change, continuous improvement, and new learning. As an agency,

1 we've laid out the NRC's strategic plan with organizational health objectives,
2 which includes fostering a healthy organization, and investing in DEIA.

3 And now it's time to fully execute the plan. Sometimes
4 challenging the status quo simply means proposing a new idea that may be
5 worth exploring, perhaps they are things that are already great, or there could
6 be a way to make it even better. If we collectively start by changing our mindset
7 across the agency, our actions will follow. Leading by example will
8 encourage others to change, enrich our culture, improve our agency results,
9 and make the NRC an even better place to work. It's time to consistently turn
10 our words into actions.

11 Next slide, please. So, one of the hallmark reasons that
12 make the NRC unique is how senior leadership and staff show their
13 commitment to EEO and diversity, which contribute to the NRC being deemed
14 a model EEO employer. In particular, and on behalf of SBCR, we'd like to
15 thank the Commission for reaffirming your commitment to the policy
16 statements, including EEO, alternative dispute resolution, DEIA, and anti-
17 harassment, and your approval of the agency's first strategic plan that includes
18 organizational health objectives.

19 I'd also like to thank, and greatly appreciate, the agency-
20 wide culture awareness influencers. If you can please stand when I mention
21 your group or raise your hand if you're not able to stand. This includes our
22 eight EEO advisory committees who are here with us today and via VTC.
23 Three affinity groups, don't be shy, I know you're out there, stand, come on,
24 you can stand. Okay, three affinity groups, NTWN, BIG, and VERG, and their

1 executive sponsors. Okay, thank you. The collateral duty, keep standing,
2 the collateral duty EEO counselors, our inclusive language ambassadors,
3 there's a lot of you out there, I know.

4 Our dialogue ambassadors from 16 cohorts, our change
5 agents, the newly established culture leaders, and our culture leader himself,
6 Christopher, I saw you back there, and our SBCR team. Let's give them a
7 round of applause. Thank you all. These are our influencers that help us
8 make a difference here at the NRC, and there's many more that couldn't be
9 with us in the room today.

10 Very grateful for my staff in the Office of Small Business and
11 Civil Rights, they are the best, simply the best. We appreciate also our
12 collaborative partnerships with the agency offices and regions for civil rights
13 and DEIA efforts. We work closely with the Office of the Chief Human Capital
14 Officer, and the Office of the General Counsel, and every office in this agency.

15 You will see some of these results in the next slide
16 describing the EEO complaint activities and trends. Next slide please. So,
17 in this chart, our EEO complaint activity remains less than one percent of our
18 total workforce with pre-complaints, and less than one percent of our
19 workforce with formal complaints and remains extremely low in comparison to
20 other federal agencies of similar size.

21 There's been no significant increase in the agency's
22 complaint activity over the past three years. In fact, complaint activity in the
23 NRC's annual 462 reporting for FY23 remains stable for EEO contacts
24 resulting in 34 in FY22 to 31 in FY23. Pre-complaints are known as informal,

1 resulted in 22 in FY22 to 21 in FY23. Informal complaints resulting in 14 in
2 FY22 to 15 in FY23.

3 So, please note that tracking of contacts began in FY20.
4 While this EEO complaint activity may appear to be a low reporting to some,
5 please note that these matters are quite complex, and come with some
6 extenuating circumstances and nuances due to complaints that include
7 multiple bases and/or issues. Next slide please.

8 So, in reviewing the bases raised in our formal complaints
9 covering FY23, reprisal, retaliation, race, sex, disability, and age are currently
10 the most cited, constituting approximately 75 percent of the formal complaint
11 filings. Reprisal and retaliation continues to be the most asserted basis,
12 generally those having prior EEO activity, or opposition to an employment
13 policy or practice over the past few years.

14 Next slide please. So, harassment. Harassment in the
15 workplace remains a persistent problem for the entire federal government as
16 reported by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and it continues
17 to be one of our most cited issues alleged. It's reported that workplace
18 harassment too often goes unaddressed, where employees who experience
19 harassment fail to report the harassing behavior or file a complaint because
20 they fear disbelief of their claim, inaction of their claim, blame, or social or
21 professional retaliation. However, we continue to work with our partners in
22 OCHCO, OGC, and the Office of the Inspector General to cultivate a civil
23 workplace that is free from all forms of harassing behavior and misconduct,
24 discrimination, and reprisal and retaliation.

1 To ensure that all supervisors, managers, and team leaders
2 are well equipped, we, along with our partners conduct mandatory triennial
3 EEO training to educate and/or refresh EEO principles. At the end of each
4 training session, we request feedback from the attendees, which leads me to
5 our next slide on how SBCR is doing business differently through innovation.

6 Next slide please. So, in response to feedback from our
7 training, we've developed and implemented a communications plan to provide
8 a high-level status of complaint activity within offices. Management officials
9 named in EEO complaints will now receive notifications of the complaint status
10 throughout the entire process, without divulging any of the details of the
11 complaint.

12 We've also revitalized the collateral duty EEO counselors
13 program, which now includes a renewable two-year term for counselors
14 versus an open-ended term, midyear and end-of-year appraisal feedback, and
15 counselors will be expected to attend our quarterly SBCR training to maintain
16 their eight hour annual training. Other innovative initiatives include our small
17 business warranty practice.

18 When small business contracts are having performance
19 issues and are beyond repair, SBCR immediately steps in to find alternative
20 approaches and vendors to replace non-performing contractors. This has
21 increased the agency's small business results. We also created a webinar
22 called Chip n Chat to provide information for small business owners, allow
23 interactions with our team, and discuss opportunities and ways we can better
24 support them.

1 Next slide, please. So, SBCR is also doing business
2 differently by strengthening interactions with our internal partners. To name
3 a few, we work closely with OCHCO through NRC Connect, which is a venue
4 for new hires, and participated heavily in the 2023 NRC hiring initiative. We
5 partnered with several NRC offices on the limited English proficiency
6 initiatives, and we also partnered with the agency culture team to develop
7 programs and implement strategies to improve organizational culture.

8 To advance EEO, diversity, and small business efforts, we
9 have expanded our external outreach efforts with the White House Initiatives
10 for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions,
11 the Federal Funding Opportunities Cluster, the Office of Personnel
12 Management, OMB, NASA, the Small Business Administration, Department
13 of Veteran Affairs, and also the National Veterans Small Business Coalition.

14 Next slide, please. SBCR's dedication to doing business
15 differently and taking proactive action has resulted in NRC's inclusive
16 language ambassadors partnering with the Office of Administration to create
17 the inclusive language for acquisitions guidance, and also training to ensure
18 acquisition documents incorporate inclusive language in written in oral
19 communications.

20 After sharing this information with OMB, they requested the
21 guidance to share with their DEIA team. Our partnership with NRC offices
22 allowed us to create the first ever strategic limited English proficiency plan for
23 the NRC, which includes the NRC's efforts to strengthen our commitment to
24 language access, and is consistent with Executive Order 13166, which is

1 Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.

2 So, our small business warranty initiative resulted in an
3 award to a women owned small business for our building operations and
4 maintenance contract while retaining OMB's best in class and category
5 management credit for the agency, so we're real proud of that. And the return
6 on investment for these services has been significant, and small businesses
7 supporting operations throughout the agency.

8 I want to turn now to a brief video that we'll share some of
9 the important work being done by small businesses that help us carry out our
10 mission. Erin, take it away.

11 (Video played.)

12 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, I hope you all enjoyed the
13 wonderful video that was created and narrated by our Co-Op student, Dakota
14 Pitts, who is out in the audience. Stand up, Dakota. During her tenure with
15 the Small Business program. She did an excellent job, and we commend her
16 for her efforts. Thank you. And this concludes my portion of the briefing,
17 and I will now turn it over to Larniece.

18 MS. McKOY MOORE: Thank you, Vonna. Good
19 morning, Chair, Commissioners, colleagues, and friends. As part of being a
20 continual learning organization, SBCR wanted to better define our diversity,
21 equity, inclusion, and accessibility program. As such, a new program
22 manager position and a new program were created.

23 I am happy to be filling the role of the program manager.
24 This program is designed to enhance focus, educational opportunities, and

1 outreach around diversity, equity, and inclusion within the agency as well as
2 with our federal partners. Next slide, please. As part of our deeper dive into
3 the state of DEIA at the NRC, office programs work together to collect,
4 analyze, and assist with action planning to address areas of concern.

5 As noted on the slide, this is the second year that the FEVS
6 has reported out on DEIA, and therefore the first time we have comparative
7 data. As you can see, our overall score remained the same, but this isn't the
8 only thing that we look at. The combined data of the FEVS, Organizational
9 Culture Inventory, the inclusive diversity strategic plan, or IDSP, and other
10 data collections and analysis such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity
11 Commission Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report, also known
12 as the MD715, will continue to produce further insights.

13 And these insights are discussed among SBCR and office
14 leadership twice yearly through periodics that often result in individualized
15 opportunities to influence cultural change and improvement. Next slide,
16 please. Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of culture. We have and
17 will continue to work with our partners to foster our inclusive desired culture.

18 To that end, last year was the first time we participated with
19 the agency culture team to add diversity and inclusion questions to the
20 organizational culture inventory. This information provides additional data
21 points that will show trends for our areas of focus. As you see in the slide,
22 data collected from the inventory is fairly consistent with the FEVS data.

23 We are particularly encouraged by the scores for people I
24 work with are respectful to one another, and the agency promotes cultures of

1 diversity and inclusion. This, along with our high and consistent FEVS
2 participation rate show that as a community we are open and willing to work
3 towards an environment that resonates and reflects the nation we serve.

4 Next slide, please. Among our efforts to build a culture of
5 diversity and inclusion, we not only apply our own best practices, we reach
6 out to external organizations to learn and grow additional best practices. In
7 the area of recruiting, EEO community members and university champions
8 have visited numerous schools and professional society events, including the
9 2023 HBCU conference, the Gallaudet University Career Fair, Blacks in
10 Government Conference, and the NRC's 2023 Recruitment and Hiring Event.
11 SBCR's minority-serving institution program continues to act as a catalyst to
12 develop partnerships by leveraging existing networks and facilitating
13 engagement in educational efforts. We have strengthened our relationship
14 with the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez as a direct diversity pipeline.

15 The Technical Training Center has a training agreement
16 with the university to provide professors with professional development
17 courses. In 2023 we worked diligently to establish intergovernmental
18 personnel act adjunct and assistant adjunct professors with the university.
19 These positions allow qualified NRC employees to gain valuable teaching
20 experience while enriching the lives of students, university programs, and the
21 nuclear industry as a whole.

22 A big thanks to Robert Roche-Rivera and Marcos Rolon
23 Acevedo for your hard work and creativity, and to their home office of
24 Research for their support. We've also received numerous inquiries from

1 other agencies asking about the IPA as an avenue for their minority serving
2 institution programs. Additionally, the Office of Personnel Management has
3 reached out to us regarding our Diversity Inclusion Awareness - Leading
4 Organizational Understanding and Engagement, or DIALOGUE, and the
5 Initiative on Civility Awareness Respect and Engagement, iCARE. They look
6 at these programs as best practices, and the Office of Management and
7 Budget has asked us to sit on an inclusive language community of practice.

8 As Vonna mentioned, we have a very special guest with us,
9 Dr. Stephen Shih from NASA. Several months ago a variety of STEM-related
10 agencies met to discuss the lack of community among DEIA programs. While
11 many of us have met through different EEOC or OPM committees, we've
12 never had a chance to casually discuss programming, common initiatives, and
13 challenges. Steve had a vision for a DEIA community of practice that Vonna
14 and I were eager to join. Since then, our agencies have exchanged
15 information and formed an alliance. Thank you, Steve.

16 Next slide, please. While it has been great to work with
17 others across the federal government, we've spent a lot of time bringing
18 messages home, and applying the previously discussed data, and turning
19 them into actions.

20 On the office level, as well as during the managers and
21 supervisors training, we have focused on providing information and facilitating
22 discussion on topics such as bias, micro-aggression, being an ally, and
23 inclusion in the workplace. When people are encouraged to notice biased
24 thoughts without judgment and without trying to push them away, they are able

1 to make deliberate choices about how they behave towards others instead of
2 going with their first reaction.

3 This, in the end, can lead to less discrimination, and reduce
4 bias over time. As you'll hear more from Celimar, the agency's EEO advisory
5 committees, employee resource groups, and affinity groups hosted lunch and
6 learns on professional topics as well as cultural events, seminars, and
7 discussions on EEO and D&I topics.

8 A topic of continuing interest has been women in STEM.
9 Women in STEM was a particular interest during the Jam, where we had quite
10 an energetic conversation. We followed that up with Women Telling Our
11 Stories event; we thank Commissioner Caputo for being featured in that. And
12 later, a gender parity event for all.

13 Our work on gender equity in STEM continues into FY24 as
14 we work with NTWN, FWPAC, OCHCO, and our gender champion on
15 publishing an agency action plan and holding a crowd sourcing event in the
16 second quarter of the fiscal year. Next slide, please. Of course, we can look
17 at the strategic plan, and the data, and declare that we want better numbers.

18 But I certainly hope, and know that for my program, DEIO,
19 and for SBCR, that numbers for the sake of numbers is not what we want.
20 Lately I have been introducing the concept of cognitive diversity. We've all
21 heard and used the term diversity of thought, and it continues to be an
22 important pursuit. But what we want, what we would like the data to bear out,
23 is a step beyond.

24 Our collective cognitive diversity. Not just recognizing that

1 we all bring different skills and backgrounds to the table but honoring that
2 diversity through inclusion by employing the flexibility to play towards different
3 strengths and learning styles. As we continue to build and integrate this new
4 program into the fabric of the agency, we will continue difficult conversations.

5 The subject matters themselves won't be any easier, but our
6 expectation is that we will be more open to having them. Thank you, and now
7 I'll turn it over to Laura.

8 MS. DUDES: Thank you, Larniece. Good morning,
9 everyone, good morning, Chair, good morning, Commissioners. It is an
10 honor to present the many accomplishments and innovations that come from
11 the agency's field offices with a special focus on Region II. I will note the
12 theme on my cover slide, mission focused, value centered, and people driven.

13 This was a direct response to our Federal Employee
14 Viewpoint Survey data, which indicated that our staff is very much aligned with
15 mission, our values, and our relationships. Therefore, Region II uses MVP
16 as the guiding principles for all that we do to achieve our important mission.
17 And I do want to take a moment to thank Dan, not only for your service, and
18 your leadership, and he's been my supervisor for many, many years now.

19 But also at yesterday's EDO Town Hall, Dan reminded us of
20 the pillars of our mission, of our principles of good regulation, and values.
21 And as we move forward with transformation, or change, or doing business
22 differently, it is really important, and our staff has told us to anchor that in these
23 very important principles of mission, values, and people. Next slide, please.

24 Region II is one of the most diverse offices in the NRC, from

1 our leadership team throughout all levels of our staff. Hiring and cultivating a
2 diverse workforce is only the beginning, or the key ingredient to reap the
3 benefits from diversity, inclusion, equity, and access. Once the key
4 ingredients are present, the environment needs to be optimized, such that the
5 team thrives, feels empowered, and is energized to reach their potential.

6 As I reflect on the past year, it is evident to me that nothing
7 but the healthiest of teams could have achieved and accomplished the
8 workload Region II experienced, which was an unprecedented number of
9 special and supplemental inspections, escalated enforcement, and they did
10 all that, and they continued to be an incubator of innovation for the NRC.

11 Noted on this slide are some of our recent initiatives focused
12 on modernizing the way we do business and executing our mission in the most
13 efficient way. Tools such as the administrative workflow, the regional awards
14 tool, and the facilities management system all serve to leverage technology to
15 perform necessary functions in the region at the lowest cost to the American
16 people.

17 In addition, the regional leadership community program and
18 strategic communications workshop serve to provide continued growth for our
19 leaders and our staff. The regional leadership community program will pay
20 our senior executives in the region with our first line supervisors in a six-month
21 program to enhance cohesion, develop ideal culture, strengthen two way and
22 candid communications, address gaps and challenges facing our work units,
23 and ultimately support and develop our first line supervisors.

24 We plan to launch this program in March of 2024, and as

1 with many of the things that we do in our incubator of innovation, we will get
2 lessons learned, and share that with our regional partners, as well as with the
3 agency. Next slide, please. We started with diversity, equity, inclusion and
4 accessibility. Now, let's talk about the results that actually come from an
5 organization that's truly diverse, empowers differing opinions, and unleashes
6 talent.

7 Our focus is always on how to improve our mission delivery,
8 and our team is encouraged and supported to just do it, borrowing a popular
9 phrase from the athletic company. This slide has several initiatives that were
10 started in Region II and have grown into useful tools and results for all of our
11 regional partners.

12 The inspector opportunity portal leverages information
13 technology to fill temporary vacancies at resident sites across the country, or
14 to staff team inspections with the right skill sets for all of the different regions.
15 The retention of knowledgeable senior residents, and rehired annuitants is an
16 incredible program that is training the next generation of inspectors while
17 minimizing the impacts to those who are currently implementing the baseline
18 inspection program in the region.

19 As part of this program, we monitor specific outputs. For
20 instance, one on one touch points, the number of mock oral boards, the
21 number of site walk downs, and one on one training that happens. But
22 ultimately we monitor the outcome, which is improved time to competency for
23 our new inspectors while maintaining the high level of standards and quality
24 that the NRC has always had for their inspectors.

1 I'm happy to report that our data is telling us that we are
2 having great results from this program and utilizing these resources in the best
3 way possible. I also want to highlight our Friday morning inspector training
4 seminars, which is noted on this slide, as it always makes me smile when I
5 reflect on this grassroots effort started by a couple of branch chiefs in Region
6 II.

7 The first few training sessions were a handful of new hires
8 sitting with these branch chiefs reviewing various technical issues or
9 inspection topics. Today, on any given Friday, there are nearly 100 people
10 across the regions and headquarters coming together for an hour to discuss
11 a myriad of inspection and regulatory topics.

12 I think these grassroots efforts are important, and we need to
13 find ways to continue to foster all of this innovation throughout the agency in
14 this very organic way. The last item on the slide is the regional division of
15 resource management and administrative bench marking effort. This was
16 started by division directors in Region II and IV to identify best practices and
17 efficiencies in a couple of areas in our DRMA organizations.

18 And they actually did identify one or two things that we could
19 share and improve. And that led the regional administrators to then charter
20 a more holistic look across all regions for every function within our DRMA
21 organizations to improve our business operations. The final report has just
22 been delivered to the regional administrators, and we are in process of
23 working out next steps to address the recommendations.

24 Next slide, please. Beyond the field offices, Region II has

1 led initiatives that have improved agency culture and business practices in a
2 lasting and meaningful way. Region II was very successful in hiring in late
3 2021, '22, and continued to be in '23, but I will say that in that time frame, early
4 2022, we realized we had lost some of our muscle memory, and how to on
5 board new employees.

6 And we were challenged, as many people were, with
7 bringing new people on in a hybrid environment. We quickly reintroduced the
8 ambassador program, we updated our guidance documents for onboarding
9 people, but also realize that something more intentional had to occur to get
10 our new people engaged with our culture, and our values.

11 One of our division directors branded the concept of social
12 onboarding and developed a three day headquarters curriculum to introduce
13 our new hires to the broader NRC functions beyond the regional office. This
14 first trip occurred in fall of 2022 and was incredibly successful. So much so
15 that the program, titled Getting You To Headquarters, is now in NRC's Talent
16 Management System as a class you can sign up for.

17 I believe there's a waiting list for that class. And it was the
18 catalyst to inspire NRC Connect, which you'll hear about later on in the
19 presentation. We have also completed several other first of a kind efforts that
20 are now part of the agency's business, including piloting the agency's
21 competency-based qualification program with our Technical Training Center.

22 Leveraging tablets to enhance the effectiveness of the
23 operator licensing exam process and developing a Be RiskSMART application
24 for all staff to be able to quickly perform the RiskSMART analysis, and thereby

1 drive more data driven decisions for all of our work. And the final item I want
2 to share is the development and widespread use of the NRC issue tracking
3 application.

4 This system started out as a plant status tool that Region II
5 used for many years, and it generated weekly reports, and it was a great way,
6 a database for all of our plant status. And at that time it was the Plant Issue
7 Tracking Application, or PITA. As more and more people in the organization
8 found this application useful, we had to change it to the NRC Issue Tracking
9 Application, and I'm proud to say it's deployed in multiple offices across the
10 agency.

11 Next slide, please. In conclusion, and in the spirit of doing
12 business differently, I am incredibly proud of the innovations developed and
13 implemented in the agency's field offices. The partnerships established
14 between the regional offices and the Technical Training Center have allowed
15 us all to leverage different ways of thinking, different strengths, and different
16 approaches all aimed at a single mission.

17 This concludes my remarks, and I will turn it over to Mary
18 Lamary.

19 MS. LAMARY: Thank you, Laura. Good morning, Chair
20 Hanson, Commissioners, NRC workforce, and members of the public joining
21 us today. I'm Mary Lamary, the NRC's Chief Human Capital Officer. I'm
22 pleased to be here today to share how our office is doing business differently
23 to foster a healthy organization.

24 The Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, OCHCO, has

1 worked very hard over the last year to identify opportunities to enhance how
2 we fulfill our mission to provide leadership, guidance, and support to NRC staff
3 and management in attracting, developing, and retaining a high performing,
4 diverse, and agile workforce.

5 We have taken a strategic and thoughtful look at how we
6 work, how we engage, and how we inform our decision making and planning
7 processes. In doing so, OCHCO has embraced the idea of doing business
8 differently, and informed and prioritized our changes by gathering feedback
9 and insights offered by our customers, partner organizations, and our
10 counterparts in the federal government.

11 Next slide, please. Excellent, thank you. First, I'd like to
12 discuss how we've done this in our recruitment and hiring efforts. With
13 respect to recruitment, we have worked to strategically broaden our outreach.
14 We've done this in several ways. First, we've engaged the NRC community
15 to help support our outreach efforts, for example, as you've heard several
16 times, we reinvigorated our University Champions Program to include
17 increasing membership that reflects NRC's diversity.

18 Expanding our engagement to include wider range of
19 academic institutions and setting expectations regarding the need to cultivate
20 long term sustained relationships with colleges and universities. We've
21 coordinated with offices, regions, and in particular, the Office of Small
22 Business and Civil Rights to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy
23 reflective of our commitment to enhanced engagement with target candidate
24 pools, including those at minority serving institutions, historically black

1 colleges and universities, and grant recipients. In doing so, I'm pleased to
2 report that we increased our recruitment activities by 63 percent from 35
3 events in fiscal year 2022 to 55 events in fiscal year 2023. Next slide, please.

4 In terms of hiring, we've also introduced efforts to create a
5 more diverse workforce. For example, we posted recruitment announcement
6 for Schedule A, persons with disabilities, and veterans, which resulted in
7 building standing repositories of potentially viable candidates for hiring
8 managers to consider for direct hire appointments.

9 External hiring data for fiscal '23 shows that the agency has
10 made progress in fostering more diversity within its workforce based on the
11 demographics of age, disability, and ethnicity and race indicators. In other
12 employment categories including veteran status and gender, the numbers
13 remain consistent with the on-board workforce.

14 I want to share a few highlights in our hiring demographics.
15 The average age of our new hires is 37. This demonstrates that the NRC is
16 not just hiring entry level staff but is also bringing in mid-career employees
17 from the private sector and other agencies. We now have 50 percent of our
18 workforce below the age of 50.

19 Prior to this year's hiring effort, 46 percent of the workforce
20 was below the age of 50. The number of employees self-identifying with a
21 disability on board at the end of FY22 was nine percent. In FY23 with our
22 new hires, the disability proportion was 24.5 percent of our new hires self-
23 identified.

24 This resulted in an increase of our on-board disability

1 employees at the end of fiscal year to an increase of 10.4. At the end of FY22,
2 the agency had an ethnicity and race demographic of 37.9 percent minority,
3 and 62.1 percent non-minority. NRC's minority hires in FY23 were 43.4
4 percent, demonstrating that our recruitment efforts are resulting in more
5 diversity, at least certainly in our applicant pools.

6 We obviously cannot make these selections until the folks
7 are in our applicant pool, so clearly our outreach efforts are generating results.
8 Veterans represented 19.3 percent of FY23 hires. The onboard population
9 of veterans at the end of fiscal year '22 was 21.0 percent and was 21.2 percent
10 at the end of fiscal year '23. Next slide, please.

11 With respect to training and development, we have
12 undertaken several initiatives that are innovative, and directly related to
13 enhancing our efforts that are critical to fostering a healthy organization,
14 including engagement, collaboration, and meaningful developmental
15 opportunities and assignments.

16 I'd like to highlight a few of the notable examples of how
17 we're doing business differently to support a healthy organization. To start,
18 we implemented the NRC Connect program, which provides an essential
19 pathway to successful on boarding of new employees in a hybrid work
20 environment. This initiative aims to connect employees to how our
21 organization works together to fulfill our mission, provide information on what
22 the agency offers to support employees, and empower them to understand
23 why it is important to engage with each other to foster a collaborative and
24 inclusive work community.

1 Next slide, please. The NRC Connect program had 170
2 participants. We only launched this this summer. Distributed across five
3 different cohorts, these cohorts were diversified with 70 different positions
4 ranging from a GG-5 grade level staff all the way through to the SES.
5 Employees connected through 16 different offices and regions offering unique
6 perspectives and opportunity for learning about the different roles each
7 organization plays within the agency.

8 The NRC Connect program has been a great success for
9 new employees with an average satisfaction rating by participants of 4.4 out
10 of 5. This program will continue to improve based on feedback from program
11 participants. Next slide, please. The second cohort of the Nuclear
12 Regulator Apprenticeship Network, our NRAN training program, is set to
13 graduate in 2024.

14 The NRC's NRAN program is becoming more and more well
15 known as a gold standard program. For example, for the first time, NRC
16 recruited for the NRAN program through a dedicated job announcement on
17 USAJobs. That job announcement received 188 applications, and of those,
18 at the final rating panel, 66 were rated as A level candidates. Following a
19 rigorous selection process, 24 to 26 of those applicants will be selected for the
20 NRAN program.

21 And we will work diligently to find NRC homes for the
22 remaining candidates who are interested in working for the NRC. We believe
23 these applicants will be highly qualified candidates for entry level positions
24 across the agency and will be shared as a candidate pool with hiring

1 managers. There were significant operational changes implemented into this
2 cohort based on feedback garnered from our first cohort participants.

3 For example, NRAN members are now co-located in the
4 same office space as their assigned branch chief and program manager for
5 the first ten weeks to obtain fundamental, technical, regulatory, and workplace
6 skills before beginning their apprenticeships. Each NRANer is also provided
7 a peer mentor, an SES executive, and technical advisor to help them
8 throughout their NRAN experience by providing support and career pathing
9 advice.

10 As a result of these adjustments, NRAN members have
11 been able to quickly acclimate to the NRC organization, feel more empowered
12 to engage in making meaningful contributions towards supporting agency
13 goals associated with organizational health. For example, some members of
14 the current cohort are working on a project centered around enhancing
15 employee engagement.

16 Next slide, please. In training, I'd like to highlight a
17 collaborative effort OCHCO undertook with the Office of Nuclear Material
18 Safety and Safeguards, NMSS, to enhance the Tribal Science, Technology,
19 Engineering, and Math, or STEM Program. This collaboration and
20 partnership resulted in the technical training center, our TTC, in transferring
21 files for 12 health physics courses to the Navajo Nation Technical University,
22 the Navajo NTU to support further enhancement of STEM course offerings.

23 This transfer culminates in a five-year effort in active support
24 to the Navajo NTU in increasing class offerings related to radiation safety, and

1 will support the Navajo NTU creation of a four year degree using these
2 courses. This partnership with NMSS also boosted a positive relationship
3 with the Navajo Nation and strengthened the education of future generations
4 in the nuclear field, kind of helping to build our own.

5 OCHCO also partnered with NMSS to support the first of its
6 kind Agreement State delivery of the G108 Inspection Procedures course for
7 the state of Oregon in support of the National Materials Program. OCHCO
8 staff worked with the lead state inspector from Oregon who attended the TTC
9 course as an advisor. We ensured that the course was equivalent to the
10 NRC's training course, and included inspection exercises, training materials,
11 and training aids.

12 This directly supports the agency's initiative to increase
13 opportunities for agreement states, and it's an important first step in partnering
14 with the states to share materials training opportunities. These recruiting,
15 employee engagement, and training highlights shared today are only a few of
16 the many examples I could offer to illustrate how OCHCO is committed to
17 doing business differently in support of fostering a healthy organization.

18 Thank you, and I will now turn the presentation over to
19 Celimar Rodriguez.

20 MS. VALENTIN-RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Mary. Good
21 morning, Chair Hanson, Commissioners, Dan, and those here in the room and
22 on the web. Today I am honored to represent the Diversity Management
23 Advisory Committee, DMAC, which represents the collective voice of 11
24 volunteer groups, 8 equal employment opportunity advisory committees, one

1 employee resource group, and two affinity groups.

2 These are: the Advisory Committee for African Americans,
3 ACAA; the Advisory Committee for Employees with Disabilities, ACED; the
4 Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee, APAAC; the Diversity Advisory
5 Committee on Ageism, DACA; the Federal Women's Program Advisory
6 Committee, FWPAC; the Hispanic Employment Advisory Committee, HEPAC;
7 the Native American Advisory Committee, NAAC; the NRC Pride Alliance
8 Advisory Committee, NPAAC; the Veterans Employee Resource Group,
9 VERG; the NRC's Technical Women's Network, NTWN; and the NRC's
10 chapter of Blacks in Government, BIG.

11 That's a long list. The DMAC works with SBCR to support
12 recruitment, professional development, retention, and diversity as stated in the
13 agency's inclusive diversity strategic plan. My remarks today communicate
14 the joint perspective of the DMAC members, and matters of interest to our
15 constituencies, and to the NRC staff at large.

16 Next slide, please. As we continue to navigate a dynamic
17 and changing world, our individual organizations would appreciate the support
18 and continued commitment from our senior leaders as we advance into focus
19 areas.

20 Our groups want to intensify our workforce's energy
21 surrounding special emphasis program activities. We are exploring how to
22 engage our members while providing them more concrete and tangible
23 opportunities for leadership, visibility, and near-term success. We recognize
24 that the issues that motivated our staff to become part of or volunteer for our

1 committees and groups have shifted.

2 However, it's important to leverage our organizations, as
3 they help build communities within the NRC where our staff, new and
4 experienced, can engage with others on both technical and societal issues
5 that matter to them. We encourage our staff, managers, senior leaders to
6 partner with our special emphasis programs when participating in recruitment
7 activities, and when communicating successes to both internal and external
8 audiences.

9 Let's celebrate how our diverse workforce is paramount to
10 meeting our NRC mission of protecting public health and safety. Next slide,
11 please. Our special emphasis programs continue to work together in strong
12 partnership with SBCR to forward our collective missions of implementing
13 strategies to increase the visibility of our constituencies at the staff level and
14 in leadership positions, and eliminating barriers as we move towards equal
15 opportunity in hiring, retention, and career advancement.

16 During the past year we've continued to address common
17 challenges within our constituencies. For example, NPAAC led a group of
18 advisory committees and resource groups in a lunch and learn series about
19 championing others. Several advisory committees and groups partnered on
20 events related to intersectionality, disabilities, and cognitive issues associated
21 with aging.

22 We also collaborated in professional development seminars
23 and panels such as NTWN's seminar on engineer licensures, and sessions by
24 APAAC, and ACAA, and other committees, and other groups as well on IDPs

1 and career paths. Our individual organizations continue to champion
2 diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility by holding cultural awareness
3 activities.

4 For example, for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month,
5 APAAC invited staff from the Freer Smithsonian National Museum of Asian
6 Art, and discussed richness in Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific
7 Islander culture and histories. And HEPAC, during our Hispanic Heritage
8 Month celebration, featured an interactive mask making event and workshop.

9 Next slide, please. The NRC continues to make progress
10 in maintaining a diverse workforce. In the last year, the percentage of the
11 workforce comprised of minorities increased or remained stable across all our
12 constituencies. Minority representation in the senior executive service
13 increased an average of four percentage points in FY23 when compared to
14 FY 2019.

15 We are excited to see a positive trend in the demographics
16 of the newest SES Candidate Development Program class, and we look
17 towards a future with a more diverse representation among our management
18 and senior leaders. However, we should continue to aspire to increase our
19 representation numbers.

20 For example, Hispanic/Latinx representation at the NRC
21 has remained constant over the past few years. Although our fiscal year '23
22 share, 9 percent, is just below the federal government share of 9.4 percent, it
23 is substantially lower than the national share, which stands at 18 percent.
24 Over the last ten years, our national STEM workforce has gradually diversified,

1 and we encourage the NRC to strive to be consistent with this trend.

2 We would also like to highlight that our more diverse
3 workforce, our organizations are more than ever interested in increasing
4 cultural awareness. We'd like to partner with our senior leaders in advertising
5 our cultural awareness activities to create connection, create community, and
6 highlight how our differences are pivotal to bringing new views as we
7 undertake our essential regulatory mission.

8 As we continue to evaluate demographic data to identify
9 trends and gaps, we encourage our senior leaders to supplement existing data
10 with other data sources such as exit interviews. Our individual organizations
11 would be honored to partner with our leaders to develop questions and best
12 practices for exit interviews so we can understand the makeup of our departing
13 workforce, their concerns, their needs, and develop and implement strategies
14 that can specifically target those needs and enhance our retention practices.

15 Next slide, please. Over the last year, many of our
16 constituencies continued to support the agency's recruitment efforts like
17 Larniece and Mary talked about, such as NAAC and ACAA supporting
18 recruitment events at the American Indian Science & Engineering Society,
19 AISES, and at HBCUs. VERG, ACED, and others also participated in
20 recruitment efforts for veterans, military spouses, and individuals with
21 disabilities.

22 We are also partnering with outside organizations to
23 increase staff retention and hiring of individuals from diverse communities.
24 For example, NPAAC partnering with Out & Equal to continue to advance

1 LGBTQ+ advocacy and staff retention. And HEPAC members partnering
2 with the American Nuclear Society Student Chapter at the University of Puerto
3 Rico, Mayaguez to increase interest in nuclear energy and NRC activities.

4 Next slide, please. We feel motivated and encouraged by
5 the progress the NRC is making in becoming a more inclusive workplace.
6 With SBCR and OCHCO support, and most notably with the support of our
7 senior leadership, we want to be active participants and developers of
8 strategies to continue to unmask our constituency's potential.

9 We challenge our senior leaders to increase the NRC's
10 recruitment of members of diverse communities, such as persons with
11 disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and older Americans in
12 addition to those targeted by our grants programs. We also challenge our
13 senior leaders to consider investing in partnerships, and bench marking with
14 outside organizations, other federal agencies, and non-profit institutions on
15 expanding our offerings of awareness and DEIA training.

16 Making a diverse, inclusive, and welcome workplace is a
17 choice that every member and volunteer of our special emphasis programs
18 makes each day. We're excited for new opportunities to do business
19 differently while building an NRC for all of us. Thank you for your attention,
20 and I will now turn it back to Dan.

21 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Celimar, and on behalf of the
22 senior leadership, I accept your challenge. We are committed to taking
23 additional steps to enhance our diversity and inclusion. We will act on your
24 suggestions as we strive to build a workforce that is diverse, valued, and

1 committed to regulatory excellence.

2 We are ready to partner with you to create a work
3 environment that engages the full potential of all our employees, and I would
4 like to close out today's remarks by expressing my gratitude to the staff and
5 management in the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, the regions, the
6 Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, the members of our EEO advisory
7 committees and affinity groups, and staff and management all over the agency
8 who model the NRC organizational values every single day.

9 I'm confident that the measures we are taking now, the
10 initiatives and action plans we will implement over the coming months will
11 continue to enhance our organizational culture and performance. This
12 concludes our presentation, and we look forward to your questions.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Dan. Thanks to all the
14 presenters this morning, and really appreciate getting all of the information
15 and insights that you provided. We're going to begin our questions this
16 morning with Commissioner Crowell.

17 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and
18 thank you to all of our panelists today. Great presentations, and I look at this
19 through the lens of my first Commission meeting on this topic a year ago when
20 I was only a few months into the job, and then hearing from you all now about
21 strides we've made, and successes we've made even in that amount of time,
22 and I certainly understand a little bit better now than I did then how a lot of this
23 fits together.

24 That being said, you all are doing a lot, and there's a lot of

1 programs targeted on similar things, and it's important that we make sure that
2 all that information comes back together and has an impact. And I got the
3 theme of that from the presentations today that we're doing a pretty good job
4 of that. And maybe I'll turn this to Laura first, and I had the good fortune of
5 being down in Region II recently and seeing the kind of culture and
6 camaraderie down there.

7 It was holiday time, and we were having fun playing games
8 too, but that helps, and the participation level shows that people are excited
9 to be there. But Laura, or whomever else wants to jump in here, talk a little
10 bit more about how we integrate best practices amongst the regions and
11 headquarters to make sure we're adopting things that work.

12 And not going down paths that don't work, and that things
13 just aren't getting lost between our regional offices and headquarters in terms
14 of what's working well, and the consistency that's needed for employees to
15 feel like they're part of a bigger mission and organization.

16 MS. DUDES: A great question, and it was fun and games,
17 but that was a pretty serious competition we had going on, Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I've been watching
19 Jeopardy since then.

20 MS. DUDES: But I think it's a great question. And you
21 want to balance having incubators and those grassroots efforts to see what
22 works, and you see what staff is attracted to, and you want that to be like a
23 low resource type of effort to see if there's traction, if there's effectiveness from
24 those, like the training seminar we talked about versus all out full on resources

1 for programs in all the different places.

2 I think it comes down to communication, sharing, and we
3 shared what we did with our Getting You To Headquarters, and then OCHCO,
4 and then I would actually credit Katie McCurry working with Next Gen to say
5 this really works, this was our kind of baby, and then we said let's get it into
6 talent management, let's turn the program over so that we can make it an
7 agency program.

8 So, it's finding something that works, validating that it works
9 before you invest a lot of resources in it, and then once you do, then you put
10 it into one of the agency -- put it into the agency infrastructure so that it can
11 be managed that way. So, I think that's a short answer, we can do better. I
12 mean the regions communicate an awful lot with our DRMA efforts.

13 We're right now all figuring out the sweet spot for how we
14 use administrative assistants. So, I think it's communication, and I think it's
15 also trying to innovate when you're failing, fail fast, grieve, fail fast, move on.
16 But if it's working, and you've got a success like Getting You To Headquarters,
17 put it in the program and let the agency make it part of their culture. I don't
18 know if you want --

19 MR. DORMAN: No, I think that was a great answer. The
20 one thing I would add is that the agency's change agent network is also a
21 opportunity to share best practices and lessons across the agency as we work
22 through various initiatives.

23 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I was pleased to learn
24 a little bit more about the NRC Connect program, and one of the questions I

1 had coming in today is how are we maintaining, or enhancing our culture, and
2 particularly our DEIA efforts in a hybrid work environment, because that's
3 tough to do, and it sounds like the Connect program is kind of the key thing
4 aimed at doing that.

5 Mary, or whomever, can you talk a little bit about why
6 Connect has been, it looks like it's been well attended, but also fairly
7 successful in its short lifetime, can we talk about why it's been gaining traction,
8 and successful?

9 MS. LAMARY: Thank you, I appreciate that. So, I would
10 say that the first thing to know about NRC Connect, it's for our new employees,
11 it's like the next step from onboarding. And so, as I said in my opening
12 remarks, it's from GG-5 to SES, and so they're grouped by cohorts for people
13 who on boarded within a certain period of time.

14 And then if you've onboarded this pay period, or this pay
15 period, or this pay period, you fell in that block of time, you're a part of that
16 cohort, grade level doesn't matter, occupation doesn't matter. So, it's very,
17 very integrated in terms of its participation. To the maximum extent possible,
18 the segments of NRC Connect curriculum are also in person.

19 And so, they're seeing each other face to face, it's kind of
20 like -- it's funny, I was driving in today, I was thinking about this, it's like the
21 first day of high school, and you're walking down the halls, and you're
22 overwhelmed when you come out of grade school, or junior high school, or
23 middle school, whatever they call it these days. And you're looking around,
24 and you're recognizing faces, they're in my home room.

1 And you're looking for the familiar faces from your home
2 room to be in your first period, or your third period, et cetera. And I think that's
3 the value, that kind of networking, that kind of connectivity is a huge part of its
4 success.

5 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I think you just gave me
6 shivers. I haven't thought about that in a long time either, but it hit home. I
7 appreciated hearing a lot about our recruitment efforts, and our numbers, and
8 our increase in applicant pools, and the diversity of those applicant pools.
9 One measure of diversity, I don't know if there's actually a measure of
10 diversity, but it's a kind of measure of perhaps some of the cognitive diversity.

11 Is how are we doing on recruitment efforts geographically?
12 I feel like some of our programs are targeted a little bit to historical institutions
13 east of the Mississippi, how are we doing west of the Mississippi in recruiting
14 and convincing people to work for the NRC? Whoever wants to grab that.

15 MS. LAMARY: I can jump in there, because I have some
16 positive news there as well, sir, thank you. So, we had representation, as I
17 said, we increased the number of outreach events that we had this past year,
18 we doubled them almost. We were at NAYGN in beautiful downtown, in the
19 not so warm weather times in Minnesota.

20 We were at the Indian -- yeah, and California, so we are
21 moving westward. I know that you were at UNLV this past year, shout out to
22 the Rebs, this past month, actually, sir.

23 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: UNR, it's the other
24 University of Nevada, so we're both in trouble now.

1 MS. LAMARY: Reno, okay, sorry, sorry. And I know that
2 we provided you with some materials for outreach there, and we'll continue to
3 do that as part of our university champions program.

4 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thanks. And Mary, we
5 didn't tee this up, but you led nicely into my kind of final question and comment,
6 which is in the past couple weeks I've been able to do a couple university
7 visits. I did one at UNR, University of Nevada, Reno, and I talked to some
8 students at Georgetown recently as well, and I was just impressed by the
9 breadth of knowledge and diversity in those rooms.

10 On both the engineering and science side of the house, as
11 well as the policy and legal side of the house, and I think the -- my comment
12 would be to leverage the Commission as much as possible in those types of
13 initiatives. I wish, going forward, I think we could all think strategically about
14 having one of the ambassadors come along with, for depending on what the
15 focus, or where the opportunity is with a particular university group.

16 But I still struggled a little bit at UNR about trying to capture
17 all of our hiring programs, initiatives, areas, or pointing students into one place
18 where they can go find more information. Those things may exist, but I would
19 just encourage you to arm all of us on this side of the table with easy to re-tell
20 information, and points of contact for students.

21 Because there's appetite out there, and I think part of the
22 big hurdle is particularly for students, is to know where to start, and it's a little
23 overwhelming. So, I appreciate all that you guys do, and please leverage all
24 of us on the Commission side of the table here as a resource, thanks. That's

1 all I have, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Commissioner Crowell, very
3 much. Thank you again, all, for being here, I really enjoyed the presentations.
4 You know, Mary, I know this isn't the Commission meeting that we often kind
5 of focus on the hiring aspects of this, but hiring is really important, and I've
6 noted a few things. I watch the weekly reports, the weekly information report
7 that kind of comes through, I'm interested in who's coming and who's going.

8 And we've even had a few come back kids I noticed in the
9 last couple of months that I was pretty pleased about. Having said all that
10 though, one of the things I've noticed anecdotally in that is a lot of the success
11 that the regions have had in hiring. And certainly, Laura, I think I've noticed
12 that in Region II, but also III, IV.

13 Maybe, and it's quite understandable that people are
14 eschewing the Washington area, but also there may be other things that are
15 going on there. One of the things though that I think kind of struck me is some
16 of the success we've had in hiring health physicists, and as I've gotten to do
17 town halls, and other meetings in the regions and so forth, and the Getting
18 You To HQ, which I completely agree is a great program.

19 Is noting, is seeing the pay off on that kind of really focused
20 effort of filling that strategic skill gap in the agency. And I want to commend
21 you, but I also, Mary, I kind of have this question about how is it going
22 otherwise, and can you provide some more perspective for me on how we're
23 making progress on filling the agency's critical skill gaps?

24 Are there places where we still have more work to do, what

1 are those, what are those critical skill gaps? Did we meet the mark entirely
2 on health physicists? Just by way of an example. Are there other things
3 then? How are we doing?

4 MS. LAMARY: Thank you, I think, sir, for the question. It's
5 a tough question, and that is because it's a small candidate pool for which
6 there is high competition. Private sector, often times we can't compete, but
7 there is, I think, and I see actually it trending upward again, high value and
8 high sense of reward in public service, and folks wanting to come to the federal
9 government.

10 I think that the most immediate indicator of that is our NRAN
11 program. When we posted that job, so just for context we previously filled
12 with our co-ops, and folks that had NRAN, NRC experience, or some sort of
13 engagement. So, whether they were grant recipients, whether they had been
14 one of our co-ops, et cetera. And we incorporated them into the NRAN. The
15 next go around as word got out, we began to publish up on USAJobs, an open
16 announcement.

17 And when I tell you that 188 applications came in, that is
18 very indicative, and they were from across the country, I didn't bring it,
19 Commissioner Crowell, but I have a list of the education institutions from which
20 the NRAN applicants came, and it's quite diverse, and so I was very pleased
21 with that. So, I think that's our more technical side, so I think particularly if
22 we are able to call from the folks that do not quite make the cut to the NRAN
23 program.

24 An additional 20, 30 folks from there, we'll have a nice entry

1 level into the pipeline to continue to build that, but it's a tough go. We were
2 very successful in our hiring initiatives overall, it's just that there are still some
3 problem occupations in terms of attracting a high number of candidates. But
4 we are attracting candidates, we are hiring OKR for FY23 has two more pay
5 periods.

6 But as we sit here today, we've brought in the door, not
7 pending background, in the door, we've brought in over 335 folks this year.
8 So, we're doing pretty good. I also would say that we had a lower than
9 projected attrition for FY23.

10 CHAIR HANSON: Well, thank you, I should have led with
11 that, and really the tremendous amount of success that OCHCO, and the
12 entire agency, right?

13 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIR HANSON: You know, our hiring managers are
15 doing their day jobs, and they're recruiting.

16 MS. LAMARY: All we can do is give you the BQL.

17 CHAIR HANSON: Exactly. And it's a many hands kind of
18 situation, and I think as a number of us acknowledged, it's a set of muscles
19 we haven't had a chance to exercise. So, but I think as we look at the work
20 that's in front of us, and going forward, filling those strategic skill gaps; reactor
21 design, reactor systems analysis, fuel, all of these kinds of key, and yet very
22 niche, and highly competitive as you know, things are going to be really
23 something that we want to stay focused on, so thank you.

24 MS. LAMARY: If I can follow up on that, I'd just like to say

1 that we're in the gym building that muscle today. That is not even a muscle
2 that we have not had the opportunity to flex. And so, we're trying to build the
3 capacity, and the ability to do a more robust position management, position
4 refresh, reclassify our positions.

5 Make sure that we're targeting for the exact right skill sets
6 that we need to meet our mission critical needs, and so, more to come on
7 RSWP efforts, sir.

8 CHAIR HANSON: Well, let me kind of follow up on a
9 question on that too. I think the last time we did this, Eric Dilworth had given
10 the presentation about how --

11 MS. LAMARY: Deputy CHCO.

12 CHAIR HANSON: Yes, Deputy CHCO, thank you, had
13 given the presentation about the number, about the amount of time for
14 onboarding. And I think onboarding is critical in all kinds of ways, it's critical
15 for recruiting, and the yield that we get in terms of folks that actually come on
16 board. I think it's also important for diversity, equity, and inclusion too, right?

17 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIR HANSON: And so, Eric had said that we were
19 running about 120 days, but that the kind of -- I don't know if he was kind of
20 calling it the benchmark, or the best practice, or whatever, was something
21 down around 80 days, and that you all had a plan, I believe, to bring that down.
22 So, where are we on the plan?

23 MS. LAMARY: So, yes, we were running about 120 days.
24 The OPM standard has an 80-day hiring metric. It also has hiring metrics for

1 various steps in the hiring process for how long it takes to post, how long it
2 takes to, once you have a BQL, to do, you, sir, you the hiring official, to do
3 your interviews, make your selection.

4 It has a hiring metric for folks getting through background,
5 et cetera. So, cradle to grave, there are hiring metrics, we're tracking those.
6 We have automated that system, we have a time to hire dashboard, and
7 offices have access to that, they can go in, see where their bottlenecks are for
8 their hiring. So, we've automated that process in terms of data mining so that
9 offices can reduce their own hiring time metrics.

10 As I said, the best we can do is post the job, rack and stack
11 the applicants, and give you a BQL, a best qualified list. And then it's up to
12 the hiring, and everybody's busy, and what's more critical, get this work done,
13 or stop doing that work to interview candidates so that I can hire somebody to
14 do that work? So it's a balancing effort. It's certainly not that folks are not
15 focused on hiring, we very much are.

16 We're also focused on retaining the folks that we have, so.

17 CHAIR HANSON: But where are we on the --

18 MS. LAMARY: Sorry, sorry. So, I would say that across
19 the board, if you do an agency wide average, we probably shaved down about
20 20, I'd like to say more, but I'm comfortable saying 20.

21 CHAIR HANSON: 20 days, so we're about 100 days.

22 MS. LAMARY: 20 days, so we're about at 100 days now.

23 CHAIR HANSON: So, we've gotten about halfway to our
24 goal?

1 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir, sorry.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Okay, and we're still, we're going to
3 keep working that?

4 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir, yes, sir.

5 CHAIR HANSON: Excellent, that's a good answer.

6 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIR HANSON: All right, thank you. Larniece I want to
8 thank you, and the rest of SBCR for all the work you guys have done in the
9 last 18 months really, or even 12 months to reconstitute the Minority Serving
10 Institution Grant Program. I know one of the big challenges is we've got this
11 program again, it's kind of getting the word out to all kinds of institutions about
12 the availability of this funding to support their academic programs, faculty,
13 students, and the whole bit.

14 So, can you just talk a little bit about the efforts that you all
15 have underway to kind of get the word out there?

16 MS. McKOY MOORE: Yes, that has been not an issue, but
17 we've been working to get the word out there more. Of course, we work with
18 the other programs in our office who liaise with the White House initiatives for
19 different educational groups. So, we get the word out there. We did kind of
20 a canvas of all of the minority serving institutions, and pulled some of the
21 department heads, development offices, and we sent an email.

22 We also kind of depend on the relationships of people here,
23 so as we talk to the DMIC, or talk to regions, we say you know, if you have a
24 good relationship with your university, or your department head, talk to them,

1 let them know that we have these grants, and we're giving away money for
2 scholarships for qualified students.

3 So, you know, of course within reason, you have to apply.
4 So, we're doing a lot of things. And then the last thing that we plan on doing
5 is kind of a focus group of those who have been successful in applying for
6 grants, and we'll be using, reaching out to minority serving institutions from
7 both our grant program, as well as the research grant program.

8 And just talking to them about what can we do better, how
9 can we reach your colleagues, and the like. So, we're working it.

10 CHAIR HANSON: That's great, thank you very much.
11 And thanks for the efforts, and again, full ahead.

12 MS. McKOY MOORE: Yes.

13 CHAIR HANSON: So, with that, you mentioned the
14 universities, and the university champions, I'll just take my last 12 seconds,
15 and put in a plug for the University Champions Program. I had the pleasure
16 of speaking with the group, I think we had something like 100 people in
17 attendance and online. And I think it's a lot of fun for everyone on the
18 Commission to be able to go to these places with folks who have been there.

19 Whether it was Shawn Smith down to Alabama A&M, or
20 Katie and Mike to Georgia Tech, or whatever, I think it enhances the
21 experience for Commissioners, but also it builds those really strong
22 relationships. And I think it's critical to our recruiting efforts, but also maybe
23 some of these other grant making, and other kinds of efforts as well.

24 So, if you're not aware of the University Champions

1 Program, everyone, I think there's a web page now, and some other
2 resources, and you can get engaged, and sign up, and I think it's a great way.
3 So much of the recruiting that I've been exposed to, or stories that I've heard
4 from people in the agency is they joined the agency because they knew
5 somebody who worked here.

6 They had that kind of personal connection, and I think the
7 university champions can be a great way to strengthen that. With that, I
8 appreciate the extra minute, and I'll hand it over to Commissioner Wright.

9 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you, Chair. Good
10 morning everyone. Thank you for your presentations. You know, it's kind of
11 we spend a lot of our time talking about plants and other stuff, but it's the
12 people who work here, if we don't have the people, we don't get the work done,
13 right? So, this is why this is such an important meeting, and hearing about
14 the hiring, and the retention, and all the other programs that are out there,
15 getting that update is valuable, and it adds value to what we do as
16 Commissioners.

17 And I had questions I was going to ask, but listening to some
18 of you talk, I was like I think I need to maybe chase that rabbit a second. So,
19 I'm going to chase a rabbit, I guess. So, I heard, Dan, in your comments, and
20 maybe, Vonna, maybe it was in yours too, but y'all kept referring to desired
21 culture.

22 And I was looking through all the data in prep for the meeting
23 too, and I did not see a definition for desired culture, all right? So, I know
24 that, Dan, we have the 2023 organizational culture inventory, and I heard, and

1 we've got all the affinity groups, and all the different advisory groups that are
2 there, and they all have their, I guess their mission statement, or whatever,
3 right? Their purpose.

4 But I did not see anywhere where we have desired culture
5 defined. Is it somewhere?

6 MR. DORMAN: Yes, Commissioner, thanks for the
7 question. So, we talked about the organizational culture inventory, which
8 was something that we adopted in response to the first Jam several years
9 back, and in 2020 we did a survey of the staff on what our current culture is,
10 but there was also a survey of a subgroup on the same questions, where do
11 we want to be?

12 And so, on less defensive behaviors, more openness kind
13 of things. And so as we used that tool going forward, we benchmarked that,
14 our survey results against what that desired culture was. So, we have, if you
15 recall those wheels on the data on those with the green, red, and blue sectors,
16 we have those for where we are. But then we also have those for where we
17 want to be.

18 And that's what I referred to, that we're not making as much
19 progress as we would like toward the where we want to be.

20 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, that's like a moving
21 target, always or continually improving target?

22 MR. DORMAN: It can move, but it doesn't typically move a
23 lot. So, I think we -- I'd have to check with my team, I think we did re-baseline
24 that desired culture in '23, and it didn't move a lot. So, it is something that's

1 what we're identifying, so it's not some external standard that we're imposing
2 on ourselves. But that's --

3 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I guess that's kind of where
4 I'm going, is there a need for that, right? For us to kind of, I mean if you're
5 going to refer to it in briefings like this, it'd be nice to know like here's what
6 we're talking about.

7 MR. DORMAN: Yeah.

8 MS. ORDAZ: And I would offer most definitely, there is a
9 need. One of the reasons for the theme of the briefing was doing business
10 differently, it's a way to change our dynamic, change our thinking so we can
11 move it to the next level in the culture of the agency across the board. One
12 of the reasons why we brought our friend Dr. Shih here today was we went
13 down to his agency downtown just a couple of weeks ago, or was it last week?

14 MR. DORMAN: Monday, it was this week.

15 MS. ORDAZ: Time is flying. But anyway, we went there
16 to witness the NASA culture at headquarters. We got a tour, I met two
17 astronauts, which I will always remember, and also saw one, just so you know,
18 on the International Space Station, working, we saw. So, but we walked
19 around NASA headquarters, and of course when we were number one in the
20 FEVS, we were always -- everybody was calling us, the phones were ringing
21 off the hook, what is NRC doing?

22 What is the special sauce there? And I asked the same
23 question to my friend and colleague here. And it really came down to the
24 people, they care. We walked all around his headquarters with our whole

1 team went, and everybody that we ran into, even the deputy, the second in
2 command at NASA stopped and talked to us in the hallway, they stopped and
3 interacted with us.

4 We went, even toured his gym, the guy in the gym gave us
5 a whole tour, and they had Respect Boulevard, and all these neat little road
6 signs. But they have just everybody stops and shares with us. In the
7 hallway they have models of all different types of things from space, the
8 astronaut uniforms, the space uniforms, the models of the International Space
9 Station, et cetera.

10 And people along the way will just talk and share their
11 excitement about being there, how diversity, equity, and inclusion is every
12 aspect of what they do, even from the standpoint of the space station where
13 everything that Steve was describing to us is all about inclusion, how that's
14 one place in the entire world where everybody comes together, and it's one
15 universe.

16 There is no sides, if you will. There is no, we're all together
17 in this, it's unity at its best. And they even started a program on unity at NASA
18 that's very intriguing, and so we're learning from our partners. And I think that
19 helps us become better individuals and regulator, and that is going to go a
20 long way for us, as well as the incredible programs that most of the people in
21 this room are standing up, the culture team.

22 Our new Christopher Craighead, back row over here, is
23 starting to lead the way by identifying culture leaders across the agency. And
24 we've got -- and I'm one of the executive sponsors for that, as well as a couple

1 of my colleagues. And we are going to be kicking this off in the beginning of
2 2024 to really see where we can take the agency culture to the next level.

3 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right. I mean, I have my
4 own thoughts about what I perceive as being a desired culture, but I'm not
5 sure it's the same as yours, or the same as yours, right?

6 MR. DORMAN: So, I think clearly we can do a better job of
7 laying that out, because the same question came up in my town hall yesterday,
8 so I think we can do a better job of communicating that.

9 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Very good, yeah. All starts
10 with respect and compassion, that's -- all right. So, Vonna, and maybe Dan,
11 you can chip in on this one here, one thing that we used to hear a lot about
12 was a set of habits, FOCSE, remember that? Fair, open, cooperative,
13 supportive, and empowering habits. I mean, I see we still track some of this
14 in our current inclusive diversity strategy plan, right?

15 The keyword for me is empowering, I really love the word
16 empowering, and we want to make sure that people understand how their
17 work matters to our agency, and to the country. So, what are we doing these
18 days to help people feel empowered in their work?

19 MS. ORDAZ: Sure, well -- did you want me to start?

20 MR. DORMAN: Go ahead.

21 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, Dan.

22 MR. DORMAN: Sure.

23 MS. ORDAZ: I would say a lot of things. I will tell you I
24 recently conducted a number of interviews for my deputy position for Jeannie

1 who is leaving. And I was very pleased to see that many of them, when I
2 asked about their management style, offered that it was servant leadership,
3 and that's kind of the model, not the textbook servant leadership, but just the
4 concept of servant leadership.

5 Where having the experts speak for the program areas, and
6 we as leaders above them to remove barriers so they can be successful in
7 implementing their jobs, and their roles. So, I was very pleased that almost
8 everybody answered the question with servant leadership answer. That
9 shows me there's been growth and development of that.

10 So, that is one thing, but it all really starts with trust.
11 Trusting your staff to be able to feel empowered, to carry out your vision, and
12 your mission. I would also say the RiskSMART model. We talk about being
13 risk smart, we're a risk smart regulator, and we have to do that as we lead the
14 staff.

15 There's a quote that I'd love to share that I think Andrea
16 Kock uses this on her little Teams message, but it's we rise by lifting others.
17 And I truly believe in that whole concept, and I see that across the agency.
18 Do we need to do more of it? Yes. And then promoting accountability at all
19 levels. I think that's so important, and we see some of those challenges,
20 perhaps in our FEVS results on Leaders Lead.

21 But promoting that accountability, that each individual has
22 an accountable role in their position, and how we do that through
23 empowerment is so important. And the other thing I would offer is
24 appreciation and recognition programs. They're important in so many ways,

1 and we're learning, even from our colleagues, on new ways of doing that.

2 When they're empowered to take on a briefing such as this,
3 or tasks, the big tasks that come out of the Commission, recognizing our staff
4 and rewarding them for stepping up and leading efforts. The volunteers you
5 see around the room, they are all volunteers in many cases for all the activities
6 that we do, and that we're proud of, and that we speak to, and rewarding and
7 recognizing them is a very important part of what we do.

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah, servant leaders need a
9 leader servant to follow, and that's where I kind of looked at myself to try to
10 model that. Because if I from my position can empower and help these
11 people grow by getting down and helping them, then I am serving them, but
12 I'm doing it from a leadership perspective, and to help grow servant leaders,
13 and to be leader servants.

14 So, I look at it a little differently from where I sit, so don't
15 forget the leader servant side of things.

16 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you.

18 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Wright.
19 Commissioner Caputo?

20 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Good morning. I want to
21 add my thanks to Cathy Haney for her years of service. She and I have
22 worked together in various capacities for both of us over the years, and I've
23 always appreciated our frank, forthright, and candid discussions. So, thank
24 you very much Cathy, for your service. And to Jeannie out there, to both of

1 you, best of luck in your next endeavors.

2 Sorry to see you go but thank you so much for your
3 contributions here. And thanks to everyone who made contributions for this
4 meeting. These are important activities that take place all year. But they
5 can be tough to talk about, but also necessary for the agency to be successful.
6 So, thank you all for the contributions that are being made on diversity and
7 inclusion, and all of the hiring and recruitment, et cetera.

8 Dr. Shih, thank you for coming, glad to hear that our
9 agencies are working together on best practices. I just hope you're not here
10 to do a little reconnaissance to poach our talent. I want to start with a
11 question, I guess about training, a little bit dabbling in strategic workforce
12 planning. Let me just start by thanking Region II. I was out in Region II and
13 had the pleasure of an All Hands meeting, but also a briefing from the
14 management team there.

15 And I was struck by several of the things that Laura has
16 talked about today. Using rehired annuitants to help train resident inspectors,
17 and get them up to speed, and qualified. Being able to retain senior residents
18 after their responsibilities are concluded for the same purpose. I think that
19 really shows a lot of initiative, and creative thinking in trying to address training
20 challenges there, and I really appreciate that.

21 The other one that I thought was great for a number of
22 reasons is using data to track training, and work qualifications. Using data
23 analytics to actually improve the time to competency, and accelerate
24 qualification, and to validate the benefits of all of these efforts by using data.

1 So, I just think this is a really impressive effort on the part of Region II to really
2 tackle knowledge management at the ground level, and really show progress
3 through validation with data, so thank you for that.

4 When it comes to training in general though, I have to say, I
5 feel like there's some feedback from staff that they feel busy enough with their
6 day-to-day responsibilities, that they don't necessarily have adequate time for
7 training. And I think that gives me a little bit of a concern. Given our primary
8 function is really licensing and oversight, we've done significant hiring over the
9 last couple years.

10 So, Dan, I have a question for you, how are you looking at
11 workload, and how to shed lower priority work to give people the time that they
12 need to train, and be adequately staffed, adequately prepared to make timely
13 decisions?

14 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Commissioner. This was one
15 of the main items coming out of the Jam last summer, and we have stood up
16 a team that's being led by Rob Lewis, our Deputy Director of the Office of
17 Nuclear Material Security and Safeguards to look across the agency at how
18 we're managing the work load, prioritizing, and making sure that we are
19 consciously, as you say, identifying the lower priority work, and making sure
20 we're focused on the right things.

21 And a piece of that would be making sure that we're getting
22 the training and development for our staff. But I think it's critically important,
23 not just for the new staff that are coming on board, but that we continue to
24 grow all of our staff.

1 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, I'm going to probe here a
2 little bit more with regard to project managers. So, the latest capacity
3 assessment projected that by 2027 we may have a gap of 114 project
4 managers. And that could be a time when we're really experiencing a
5 significant growth in workload, and licensing reviews.

6 So, this is clearly going to be a significant hiring and training
7 challenge, and yet we've seen some areas where strategic workforce planning
8 has really not been up to the mark, and not positioned as to the way we need
9 it to be. Subsequent license renewal reviews is certainly an example of that.
10 So, how -- what efforts are underway to really look at that, and ensure that we
11 prevent ending up with a gap in project managers?

12 Because that's kind of a, it's a knowledge management
13 issue, it's a strategic workforce planning issue. How are we looking
14 specifically at action items to prevent that crucial gap?

15 MR. DORMAN: Yeah, thank you, Commissioner. So,
16 during this past year, we had a contractor perform an evaluation of our
17 strategic workforce planning process, and we are working with them on the
18 draft report, and so I hope early in '24 we'll have their recommendations. But
19 we will be focusing on strengthening our strategic workforce planning process.

20 I will say on project managers as a specific example, it's
21 been a concerted effort for hiring project managers this year. I think part of it
22 also is our projections, our environmental assessment, that's the first step of
23 our strategic workforce planning process, looking out five years, and the
24 fidelity of that. As you know, that's a period of time where there could be an

1 inflection point in where our needs are.

2 So, that's going to be a key element of it, but let me see if
3 Mary wants to add anything on the SWP aspect.

4 MS. LAMARY: Thank you, I do. Thank you, Dan, and
5 thank you for the question. I would say that the number that you're citing, the
6 120 plus is a reflection -- it's to inform our hiring decisions. In other words,
7 that's our projected attrition, and projected need. If we took no action, that
8 would be the delta, that would be our gap.

9 And so, that sort of is a way to inform where we focus our
10 recruitment efforts going forward to prevent that kind of gap. So, we're
11 looking at that, and that's part of what I was saying about how we're trying to
12 revamp, and properly resource, and be in the gym building these skill sets.
13 To really go back, do a position review, do a proper position management,
14 and make sure that we're placing, focusing our efforts in the right areas for our
15 strategic workforce planning to inform our recruitment.

16 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, I hear you with that, but
17 Dan's looking at a draft report in early '24, right? Then there'll be at some
18 subsequent point in time a final report, then there will be a move to digest the
19 recommendations and decide what the actions are, then there'll be time to
20 implement those actions, right? And hiring takes four months, and of course
21 these people don't, I assume, come to the agency fully trained and ready to
22 be project managers.

23 So, there's a training lead time here. So, while I get it, that
24 2027 is three years ago, the time frame to accomplish all of this makes it seem

1 like it's more or less right around the corner.

2 MS. LAMARY: Well, it's today, it is not around the corner.
3 To quote a former football coach, the future is now, and it's today, and sorry,
4 Dan, if you were at the town hall yesterday, you heard Cathy Haney mention
5 that she's meeting with us today. We're not waiting, we're working on
6 proposals now. We've looked at it, we've seen the draft report, we were
7 actually -- we paused.

8 I was working with EDO's office last year to sort of refocus
9 these efforts internally while the evaluation was going on. So, we're
10 positioned now to meet with the EDO's office, and make some
11 recommendations, and some requests. We're not waiting, ma'am.

12 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Larniece, shifting a bit, I just
13 want to say I really appreciated the nature of your comments on cognitive
14 diversity and inclusion. People really perform best, and get the most job
15 satisfaction when they're appreciated, and feel valued. And making sure that
16 their contributions are appreciated, I think is really key to that. And that's
17 something that I certainly have discussed over the last year.

18 I shared some personal experiences in this meeting last
19 year about observations and behaviors that women are experiencing in the
20 workplace. I'm going to take a moment to just personally thank all of those
21 women who have shared experiences with me over the past year. It certainly
22 takes a fair bit of courage to have that discussion, and I have really
23 appreciated, and learned from everything that's been shared with me.

24 I also want to thank those who have voiced their support and

1 commitment to making a difference here to be allies, and work to make our
2 work environment more welcome for women's contributions. In a lot of ways
3 this is a kind of topic that it's easy to talk about it, and it's harder to do
4 something about it. And I think sometimes it's easy to be frustrated by seeing
5 a strong desire to continue the conversation, but not necessarily see
6 forthcoming actions to make a difference. And so, as Vonna said, it's time to
7 consistently turn our words into action, and to do so with a sense of urgency.
8 So, one idea that Vonna and I have heard over the last year is to take a page
9 from a meeting facilitator's play book and learn techniques to help women
10 constructively insert themselves into discussions in a meeting setting.

11 And this may be a very small step, but I expect this approach
12 may be helpful for other minority and gender non-conforming employees as
13 well. So, Vonna, you and I have discussed the skill building concept with
14 regard to women. I very much want to help you and support this effort in any
15 way that I can. Is this something we can develop and execute in calendar
16 year '24?

17 MS. ORDAZ: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, your charge
18 of last year, it was really a moment for many of us in the room. Your fan club
19 afterwards, and even in some of our venues this past year. I would say that
20 we were happy in April to have our first ICARE session on women telling their
21 stories, featuring you.

22 And it really opened our eyes in many ways for some items
23 that we need to work on in the agency. I know at the Jam in June there was a
24 crowd sourcing event, we collected a lot of data on this area as well. And

1 then in September, our office, NPAAC, FWPAC, and NTWN, the NRC's
2 Technical Women's Network had this event called Working Toward Gender
3 Equality.

4 So, all of these efforts have really helped us move forward.
5 And to identify the issues, put them on the table, and discuss them, however
6 we still need tools in place. We need tools in place for ourselves as
7 individuals, we need tools in place for our allies to help us move forward, and
8 advance. So, with that I would offer that we have an effort underway.

9 I'm calling it The Advancement of Women in the Workplace,
10 and it's open to men as well, and those non-conforming individuals. As we
11 enter 2024 with our leadership, we are focusing and aggregating FWPAC and
12 NTWN's gender equity activities, an action plan from Chair Hanson's
13 International Committee on Gender Neutrals and follow through from the
14 charge that we have from you, Commissioner, on gender civility, I call it, in the
15 workplace.

16 And I think I made that term up, so it's new. But it really is
17 all about civility, right? And so this crowd sourcing event would be in early
18 next year, and we're happy to work with some of your folks on this event. And
19 I think we're calling it a workshop that would follow, and it'll have break out
20 groups and facilitators, and help identify the necessary tools and support we
21 need as an agency.

22 And this is open to all, so I really appreciate your continued
23 interest in this, the Chair's interest, and all the Commissioners', and Dan's as
24 well. And I think with these concerted efforts we will move forward for sure in

1 a more positive way.

2 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Wonderful, I look forward to
3 the progress.

4 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: And let me just conclude by
6 making a remark to Celimar, thank you for being here. Our EEO Advisory
7 Committee's resource groups and affinity groups really are so important for
8 providing forums to have discussions like this, and to advance these issues.
9 So, thank you very much to you, all of the organizations, and all of the
10 volunteers who contribute to just the vibrant discussions in those forums.
11 Thank you very much.

12 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Caputo. And
13 now we'll take a few minutes to hear from, I believe Sheryl Sanchez, yeah?
14 Sheryl, okay, as our union representative for the National Treasury Employees
15 Union. Sheryl? Sheryl, I'm sorry to interrupt, we just want to make sure that
16 that's on.

17 MS. SANCHEZ: Okay. Good morning, better, okay.

18 CHAIR HANSON: Well done.

19 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning, Chair Hanson,
20 Commissioners, managers, and most importantly bargaining unit employees,
21 without which we would not be able to fulfill our mission. I am Sheryl
22 Sanchez, President of NTEU Chapter 208, and I am pleased to be here this
23 morning to provide the union's comments. NTEU Chapter 208 is the
24 exclusive representative of bargaining unit employees at the NRC.

1 I am joined here in the room and virtually by many NTEU
2 team leaders who work every day for bargaining unit employees, such as
3 stewards, labor partners, bargaining team members, and elected officers.
4 Without such a dedicated team, NTEU would not be able to work together to
5 ensure that every NRC employee is treated with dignity and respect.

6 I will first start out with the EEO type stuff, then go onto
7 different topics. So, employees should contact both union stewards and an
8 EEO counselor when they're getting initial information about filing
9 discrimination complaints. There are two separate processes the employee
10 may choose, with each having their own merits.

11 The union has successfully convinced SBCR to revise their
12 complaint procedures and website; it's very well done by the way. The
13 website now identifies the union alternative to processing a case using the
14 negotiated grievance procedures with steward assistance. The processes
15 could involve alternative dispute resolution if the employer requests it.

16 This mandates union involvement. If any SBCR staff
17 initiate settlement discussions to resolve a complaint, this qualifies as a formal
18 meeting, again, requiring union involvement. This is clearly outlined in the
19 collective bargaining agreement, and was recently brought forward to SBCR,
20 resulting in change to their practice.

21 Staff should understand the benefits of having a trained
22 steward collaborating with you to work towards a favorable solution to your
23 discrimination complaint. At the last Commission meeting, I reported to the
24 Commission progress underway for telework changes involving union pre-

1 decisional involvement.

2 Union representatives and agency officials reached
3 agreement on the flexible work model which was submitted to the Commission
4 as an information paper. The Commission changed the information paper to
5 a vote paper, and the flexible work model implementation was suspended due
6 to the Commission vote. After conferring with our NTEU national legal
7 department, the union filed a grievance.

8 The attorneys advised us that a grievance calling out the
9 Commission's violation has a strong chance of prevailing at arbitration since
10 the laws are clear, and what the Commission did was interfere with both the
11 agency and union's right to negotiate. Last Tuesday, Dale Yielding and I
12 presented the Step B union grievance claiming the Commission's intervention
13 stopping implementation of the negotiated telework flexible work model was a
14 violation of labor-management relations statute, and thus an unfair labor
15 practice.

16 The grievance decision is expected by January 12th, 2024.
17 If we do not prevail, you can be assured the union will escalate the matter into
18 arbitration. Implementing the flexible work model will not make all of our
19 current challenges disappear, but it will get us closer from where we are now
20 to actual presence with a purpose.

21 Even though presence with a purpose is now not an agency
22 policy, since it was part of the now stalled flexible work model. Where we are
23 now is in the bottom quartile in FEVS scores for the last two years. 2021 was
24 the first year ever that the agency fell below the median for mid-sized

1 agencies, coming in at 20 of 25. And 2022 was similar, ranking of 21 of 27
2 with a decrease in our engagement and satisfaction score.

3 Only 6 of the 27 agencies saw a decrease in this score.
4 There's been a lot of analysis as to why we had this fall. The FEVS analysis
5 shows that while we have a high degree of trust in our first level managers,
6 the trust in senior management took a very large hit, likely starting with the
7 COVID re-entry, and continuing through today's issues with telework.

8 This lack of trust in our leaders, as well as the current
9 telework situation with no clear path forward is clearly impacting employee
10 morale and our agency culture. This puts the agency at risk because if the
11 trend is not reversed, it will negatively impact our mission. We are hiring, but
12 we are facing serious problems with recruitment, retention, and retirement.

13 If we hire over 300 employees, but we lose 200, we're not
14 doing very well. Many bargaining unit employees who retire are telling the
15 union they would have liked to stay a few years longer, but they're so
16 discouraged that they are retiring earlier than they had originally planned.
17 With so many new employees losing this opportunity for more knowledge
18 transfer and mentoring should scare the agency.

19 Regarding recruiting and retention, if we want to attract the
20 best and most diverse employees, as well as retain experienced staff, we need
21 to have more telework, including full time telework. This would include
22 employees who live in different geographic location than where their job is
23 located. I have fought and will continue to fight to give authority to make all
24 telework decisions, including full time telework to first line supervisors.

1 As I firmly believe they are the best informed and equipped
2 to make this decision. However, I would be negligent if I did not acknowledge
3 that telework has taken a stage in national politics. We are being told that
4 other federal agencies are teleworking less than we are and are in the office
5 more than the NRC.

6 However, a July 13th, 2023, GAO report which reported
7 occupancy rates at 24 D.C. area federal agencies, the NRC headquarters
8 ranked in the highest quartile for building occupancy. As we approach the
9 holiday season, and based on this report, Senator Ernst of Ohio revealed her
10 naughty list of government agencies with low occupancy rates in their
11 buildings.

12 Leading the list were agencies like Social Security with 7
13 percent, GSA, 11, and OPM with 12. Do you know who was one of the
14 highest agencies with recorded occupancy in the D.C. area? It was the NRC
15 with 30 percent. However, we should not sacrifice our employees just to stay
16 off the naughty list. Getting the appropriate amount of telework, including full
17 time telework, which should not be reserved for those we are trying to recruit,
18 or who are a flight risk, is the elephant in the room and why many employees
19 are discouraged and frustrated.

20 It should not be a news flash to the agency based on our
21 retirement and attrition rates that everyone is a flight risk. This is not the
22 military, employees can and do leave when they do not feel valued. No one
23 has an issue with being in the office when they need to be. The frustration is
24 due to the incredibly large amount of presence without a purpose.

1 And being forced to come into the office to satisfy agency
2 policy, and then often sitting there in their cubicles attending hybrid Teams
3 meetings without any real face to face interaction. I'm also concerned about
4 the Commission's direction that SES need to have a much larger presence
5 than they do now. Although I do not represent them, I'm wondering if we are
6 not considering that this inequity will cause dissatisfaction among some SES.

7 My concern is for our bargaining unit employees, but
8 satisfaction at all levels impacts the overall morale of an organization. So,
9 less satisfaction at any level is not in the best interest of the NRC. It is also
10 interesting that according to that GAO report, the federal agencies that have
11 been called out as recently increasing SES presence all have very low building
12 occupancy rates.

13 Is it essential to increase management's required time in the
14 office when most employees won't even be there? I will conclude by saying
15 that telework is work. A lot of employees, including me, are more efficient,
16 and get more done when they telework. It is essential to the mission of the
17 agency that our employees remain at the NRC and remain engaged and
18 dedicated.

19 While I believe that many of our managers are trying to do
20 the right thing to make their employees feel valued, for members of the
21 bargaining unit, NTEU is fighting for you. Please join us in this fight, as there
22 is great strength in numbers. You can join the union at nteu.org. Thank you
23 for your attention.

24 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Sheryl. Thank you again to

1 all of our presenters. Thanks to the colleagues, I think once again we've had
2 a very good discussion, and really covered a wide range of the topics that are
3 really important to building the kind of workforce and culture that we want at
4 this agency, and I appreciate all of your efforts. Congratulations again to
5 Cathy Haney on your retirement, and Jean Dempsey, that was news as well,
6 so congratulations to Jean.

7 And of course Dan, we'll have opportunities yet, we've got a
8 couple Commission meetings to go, so don't worry. Dan's not quite -- I think
9 we've got some upcoming Commission meetings in January where we'll have
10 our opportunity to give Dan his due kudos. So, with that, thank you again,
11 everyone, and we're adjourned.

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record
13 at 11:52 a.m.)