

MISSION ALIGNMENT: UPDATED MISSION STATEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE MISSION

**A Report for the
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce**



**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) actions taken to update its mission statement, develop corresponding implementation guidance and an execution strategy to institute essential agencywide cultural reform to meet the intent of the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024 (ADVANCE Act) and Executive Order (EO) 14300. The cited references and enclosures provide additional documentation supporting the information presented in this report.

Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act of 2024 required the NRC to update its mission statement to emphasize efficient regulation that supports the safe use and deployment of nuclear technologies. In response, the NRC approved a revised mission statement in January 2025 and developed implementation guidance with input from staff and stakeholders, which provides practical steps for aligning agency actions with the updated mission. EO 14300, issued in May 2025, reinforced this direction by urging the NRC to consider the broader benefits of nuclear innovation and reform its internal culture accordingly. These concepts have been strategically integrated into the implementation guidance.

The NRC developed implementation guidance to clarify the meaning of its updated mission statement and provide clear expectations and examples on how staff, at every level, can align their work to achieve it. The guidance is structured around four mission elements, each paired with key concepts—such as safety, risk-informed decision-making, timeliness, and public service motivation—that define expectations for agency culture and performance. Practical examples and explanatory text illustrate how these principles should be applied in daily operations while the appendices provide tailored best practices for various NRC functions, supporting strategic culture reform and improved regulatory efficiency. The guidance also highlights future focus areas, including ambitious goal setting and performance measurements, to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

The NRC's updated mission statement and implementation guidance are driving a cultural transformation that prioritizes safety while promoting efficiency and timeliness. Through practical guidance, staff engagement, and clear accountability measures, the agency is embedding these values into daily operations. These efforts support broader strategic reforms aligned with EO 14300 and the ADVANCE Act, reinforcing a culture of responsibility and continuous improvement across the organization.

The agency's efforts related to ADVANCE Act activities have been openly shared and discussed in various forums. For example, the Commission held a public meeting on ADVANCE Act activities in March 2025. Additionally, Section 501 implementation efforts were widely discussed during the NRC's 2025 Regulatory Information Conference. Lastly, on its public webpage, the NRC created an interactive dashboard to show the status of the NRC's implementation of the ADVANCE Act including corresponding tasks, organizational lead and point of contact, and deliverable dates and milestones, as applicable.

BACKGROUND

Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act¹ requires the Commission to take specific actions related to updating its mission statement and provide a report describing the updated mission statement, the related staff implementation guidance. Specifically, it states,

(a) UPDATE.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall, while remaining consistent with the policies of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) and the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5801 et seq.) (including to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of the public health and safety, to promote the common defense and security, and to protect the environment), update the mission statement of the Commission to include that licensing and regulation of the civilian use of radioactive materials and nuclear energy be conducted in a manner that is efficient and does not unnecessarily limit—

- (1) the civilian use of radioactive materials and deployment of nuclear energy;*
- or*
- (2) the benefits of civilian use of radioactive materials and nuclear energy technology to society.*

(b) REPORT. —On completion of the update to the mission statement required under subsection (a), the Commission shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that describes—

- (1) the updated mission statement; and*
- (2) the guidance that the Commission will provide to staff of the Commission to ensure effective performance of the mission of the Commission.*

Section 3 of Executive Order 14300² cites the ADVANCE Act and then states:

Just as the Congress directed, the NRC's mission shall include facilitating nuclear power while ensuring reactor safety. When carrying out its licensing and related regulatory functions, the NRC shall consider the benefits of increased availability of, and innovation in, nuclear power to our economic and national security in addition to safety, health, and environmental considerations.

The NRC has launched a comprehensive implementation strategy to drive strategic culture reform aligned with EO 14300 and Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act. This includes agencywide communications, new procedures to improve regulatory decision-making, and initiatives like project management modernization and strategic workforce planning. Internal guidance documents are being revised to streamline operations and embed the updated mission and cultural expectations. Performance metrics and revised individual performance plans will enhance accountability and align staff behavior with agency goals. These efforts collectively aim to foster a results-driven, safety-focused culture that supports timely and effective regulation.

¹ Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-67, div. B, § 501, 138 Stat. 1447 (2024).

² SECY-24-0083, "Mission Statement Update Options Pursuant to Subsection 501(a) of the ADVANCE Act of 2024," October 8, 2024 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System Accession No. ML24281A190).

NRC ACTIONS RELATED TO SECTION 501(a) OF THE ADVANCE ACT

In response to Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act, in October 2024, the staff provided recommendations and options to the Commission to update the NRC's mission statement in SECY-24-0083³ The NRC received correspondence and input from external stakeholders related to Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act, including during the Commission's consideration of proposed options for updating the mission statement. The Commission developed new language for the updated mission statement, based in part on internal and external stakeholder input.

On January 24, 2025, the Commission approved the updated mission statement for the NRC in Staff Requirements Memorandum SRM-SECY-24-0083.⁴

The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.

NRC ACTIONS RELATED TO SECTION 501(b)(1) OF THE ADVANCE ACT

In SRM-SECY-24-0083, dated January 24, 2025, the Commission directed the staff to provide staff-level implementation guidance to support effective performance of the mission with direction to include, "specific, practical examples of actions that serve to clarify how to effectively implement and successfully execute the mission." Throughout development of the guidance, staff feedback was solicited regarding the structure, scope and contents, through various mediums including a Town Hall meeting. Additionally, the NRC held a public meeting on March 13, 2025, to discuss the actions underway to develop mission statement implementation guidance and seek input from external stakeholders. Enclosure 1 contains details of external engagements and a list of the incoming correspondence related to Section 501.

On May 2, 2025, the ADVANCE Act Team⁵ provided the implementation guidance to the Commission via SECY-25-0031.⁶ Subsequently, on May 23, 2025, President Trump issued EO 14300, "Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission,"⁷ which referenced the mandate in Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act. The direction provided in EO 14300, with respect to culture reform, was dutifully considered and accounted for in the implementation guidance.

A summary of the implementation guidance document is included below. Enclosure 2 of this report contains the full Mission Statement Implementation Guidance document, which is also

³ Ibid.

⁴ SRM-SECY-24-0083, "Mission Statement Update Options Pursuant to Subsection 501(a) of the ADVANCE Act of 2024," January 24, 2025 (ML25024A040).

⁵ The Executive Director for Operations established a team, including a Special Assistant and project management staff, along with a core team of senior executives, to oversee implementation of the ADVANCE Act across the agency.

⁶ SECY-25-0031, "Mission Statement Implementation Guidance," May 2, 2025 (ML25106A351). See also Enclosure 2 of this report.

⁷ Executive Order 14300, "Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission," 90 FR 22587 (May 29, 2025).

publicly available on the NRC's public website and its Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS).

NRC ACTIONS RELATED TO SECTION 501(b)(2) OF THE ADVANCE ACT: MISSION STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

As directed in SRM-SECY-24-0083, the implementation guidance is intended to serve as a compass to explain what the new mission statement means and how employees, at all levels, can work to embody it in their day-to-day work. The guidance outlines the updated mission statement in four parts, emphasizing the new expectations for agency culture and performance through narrative descriptions. Corresponding to each of the elements are key concepts, which are paired with explanatory text to illustrate how the guidance should be applied in practice. The elements and key concepts featured in the guidance are as follows:

ELEMENT I: *The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security...*

- *North Star: Safety and Security*
Safety and security are the starting points for all decisions and are foundational to achieving the agency mission. They are also the core principles guiding every decision-making process.
- *Risk-Informed Decision-Making*
Use all relevant data and evidence to guide decision-making, ensuring that decisions are well-reasoned, risk-informed, and resources are focused on the most significant areas.
- *Credibility*
Regulatory decisions must be free from outside influence, based on sound technical and risk bases and communicated in a transparent manner.

ELEMENT II: *...by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials...*

- *Timeliness*
Regulatory responsibilities must be conducted in a manner that is responsive to the pace and scale of society's needs and be planned and executed thoughtfully across all phases of technology deployment.
- *Goal-driven*
Maintain a focus on producing high-quality output that drive desired outcomes which contribute to a larger agency strategic goal.
- *Focus on Great Service Among Ourselves and With External Stakeholders*
Approach interactions with each other and external stakeholders with an open mindset, culture of respect, cooperation and helpfulness appreciating the role each person plays.

ELEMENT III: ...through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation...

- *Principles of Good Regulation*
Continue to apply the Principles of Good Regulation (independence, openness, efficiency, clarity and reliability) unflinching across all sectors and activities of the agency.
- *Project Management*
Understand our priorities and adjust them, including reallocating resources commensurate with the safety or security significance of the activity, to achieve specific goals within defined timeframes and costs.
- *Performance Management*
Establish clear and meaningful metrics at every level to measure and analyze performance; identify, mitigate and overcome challenges; promote a culture of accountability; and drive continuous improvement.
- *Organizational Cohesion*
Foster organizational cohesion by optimizing workflows; managing change effectively; promoting cross-boundary collaboration and communication; adopting best practices; and ensuring consistency in regulatory practices.
- *Clarity of Expectations*
Establish and communicate realistic, achievable expectations across the agency, supported by regular touchpoints to evaluate progress and ensure alignment and accountability.

ELEMENT IV: ...for the benefit of society and the environment.

- *Public Service Motivation*
Take pride in our work and our goal of achieving mission excellence as we serve the American People.
- *Setting Ambitious Organizational Goals*
Steward change that leads to achieving new levels of performance while preparing to address new technologies.
- *Consider Both What Can Go Wrong and What Can Go Right in Applying Be riskSMART*
Be deliberate in decision-making and consider what can go right and what can go wrong, commensurate with the benefit or consequence.
- *Meaningful Public Engagement*
Build confidence with external stakeholders by operating with the highest degree of transparency, listening and seeking to understand.
- *We Are All Responsible for Our Culture: Promote Desired Behaviors and Be a Model for Others*
Our mission is the core of our value system, supported by the idea that

the Principles of Good Regulation direct our work and the organizational values should guide our interactions.

- *Courageous and Bold*
Think in a courageous and bold way, champion innovation, encourage forward thinking, and welcome new ideas in seeking tangible results and achieving new levels of performance.
- *Mistake Tolerance; Continuous Learning; From What We Did Well and What We Did with Our Mistakes*
Expect and accept mistakes as part of a continuous improvement mentality; collect and apply lessons learned and apply appropriate preventative measures to prevent failure.
- *Leadership at All Levels*
Achieve lasting change and mission excellence by promoting leadership at all levels.

Throughout the guidance, examples are spotlighted to demonstrate what successful implementation of the mission and particular key concepts look like. The guidance also highlights areas for future attention, such as the development of ambitious organizational goals and use of leading and lagging performance indicators to enhance the accountability of the agency.

The guidance is accompanied by appendices that provide specific, practical examples of best practices to successfully implement the NRC's mission. One appendix applies to all staff while the remaining appendices are each specific to one of the following functional areas: licensing, oversight, mission support, rulemaking, technical experts, project and performance management, legal advice, and external engagements. These appendices were created to assist NRC employees to understand best practices as the agency diligently undertakes strategic culture reform to become a more efficient regulator enabling the safe and secure deployment of civilian nuclear technologies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE NEW MISSION STATEMENT, GUIDANCE, AND CULTURE REFORMS

The NRC has developed a multifaceted implementation strategy to initiate strategic culture reforms that will drive foundational and lasting changes in how the agency operates, engages, and collaborates, to fulfill its mission consistent with the requirements of the ADVANCE Act and EO 14300. Agencywide communications, including an all-supervisors meeting and an agencywide Town Hall, have addressed the need for culture reforms and the urgency associated with this effort. Additional outreach to NRC staff, through various channels and forums, are planned throughout the rollout and implementation of the guidance to ensure consistent understanding and alignment across the agency. The NRC's strategy to advance culture reform includes the following steps:

- **Strategic Direction Initiatives to Unleash Nuclear Technology Deployment.** The NRC is pursuing strategic direction initiatives to drive change expeditiously in key cross-cutting areas. For example, the NRC issued a new procedure on driving regulatory

decisions through more effective communications, which assists the staff in providing guidance and feedback to licensees and potential applicants while avoiding consulting.⁸ This guidance is already being implemented to improve the quality of preapplication engagement and enhance the efficiency of NRC activities. The NRC also launched an Agency Project Management Initiative⁹ to improve its efficiency by adopting practices from the professional project management industry. The tools developed as part of this initiative are intended to prioritize resource use and further streamline operations to make them timelier and more efficient. This initiative is expected to yield significant dividends in identifying where agency resources are being spent and improving agility in redirecting resources to higher priority work. Other strategic direction initiatives are underway to address focus areas including strategic workforce planning and streamlining the processes for managing differing views.

- **Integration in Management Directives, Office Instructions, and Procedures.** The agency has also embarked on a thorough review of its internal guidance documents including Management Directives, Office Instructions, and Standard Operating Procedures. Specifically, the NRC is proactively identifying ways to integrate key elements of the new mission statement and culture reforms into relevant agency guidance documents, further underscoring its commitment to operating effectively and efficiently. Revision efforts are centered on simplifying processes; eliminating redundancies and unnecessary steps; and enabling more timely outcomes—without compromising safety or the appropriate consideration of risk.
- **Meaningful Metrics to Increase Accountability and Progress.** Meaningful metrics, also referred to as performance indicators, have been developed and will be implemented across agency programs in fiscal year 2026. Performance indicators will be developed at the agency, program, and office level, as appropriate, to drive progress, improve timeliness, and manage resource use. The NRC is developing lagging and leading performance indicators to better monitor the timeliness, effectiveness, and efficiency of agency activities.¹⁰ These performance indicators will be used to monitor agency progress toward meeting challenging goals, instituting a coordinated approach to managing agency risks, and reinforcing the expectation to pursue continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

The updated NRC mission statement and its implementation guidance are central to reshaping the agency's culture—anchoring safety and security as its “North Star” while embracing a results-driven mindset focused on efficiency and timeliness. To support this transformation, the NRC has issued comprehensive guidance that includes practical examples, engages staff at all levels, and leverages multiple communication channels to foster feedback and alignment. These principles are being embedded into daily operations through clear accountability measures such as performance management, ambitious goal setting, milestone tracking, and project management practices. This approach promotes a culture of ownership and responsibility, with every employee contributing to the mission. The NRC remains committed to identifying opportunities to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness while advancing strategic

⁸ Office of Executive Director for Operations Procedure-0235, “Driving Regulatory Decisions Through More Effective Communications,” July 2, 2025 (ML25167A039).

⁹ See <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/governing-laws/advance-act/pm-initiative.html>.

¹⁰ “NRC Licensing Efficiency Initiatives Update,” August 18, 2025 (ML25191A155).

cultural reform in alignment with EO 14300, the ADVANCE Act, and related guidance. Additionally, the NRC is dedicated to upholding the Principles of Good Regulation in sharing openly and transparently the progress it is making on implementing the requirements of the ADVANCE Act and EO 14300.

ENCLOSURE 1

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Public Meetings

As part of its efforts to respond to Section 501 of the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024 (ADVANCE Act), the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) solicited input from external stakeholders. The NRC held the following meetings to seek input from external stakeholders related to Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act:

- ADVANCE Act Commission Meeting (March 4, 2025)

The NRC held a public Commission meeting with a panel consisting of NRC staff and external parties to provide an overview of the actions the NRC is taking in response to the ADVANCE Act and how the actions were informed by feedback from internal and external stakeholders (ADAMS Accession No. ML25066A005).

- Mission Statement Implementation Guidance Public Meeting—ADVANCE Act—Section 501 (March 13, 2025)

The NRC held this public meeting to provide an overview of the actions underway at the NRC to develop mission statement implementation guidance and obtain feedback from external stakeholders (ML25084A138). During this meeting, the staff discussed ideas under consideration for (1) the structure of the guidance, (2) general guidance on the elements of the mission statement, (3) functional areas of staff applicability that may be addressed in the guidance, and (4) best practices for some of the functional areas.

Correspondence

The NRC received written input related to Section 501 of the ADVANCE Act from the following groups:

Incoming Correspondence	ADAMS Accession No.
November 26, 2024, email from the Breakthrough Institute to the Commissioners—"Considering Nuclear Energy's Benefits to Society: Update to the Mission Statement of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as Required by the ADVANCE Act"	ML24337A218
December 6, 2024, letter from Nuclear ROSE Consulting, LLC to the Commissioners—"U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Staff Options in SECY-24-0083 re Mission Alignment Provision of the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy (ADVANCE) Act of 2024"	ML24344A271

MISSION STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE



MISSION STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

May 2025

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has a long history of upholding public health and safety and advancing the common defense and security. Through implementation of the NRC's mission, we enable the American people to have access to a stable supply of electricity, diagnostic and therapeutic medical treatments, and sterilization technology for food, cosmetics, and medical devices. The NRC's technical competence, safety culture, and well-established regulatory processes are the key to continuing to make these nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials available for beneficial civilian purposes and in a manner that provides confidence to the public.

In response to the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act of 2024 (ADVANCE Act), the Commission set forth a new mission statement for the agency. The Commission approved¹ the following language to guide the agency forward:

MISSION STATEMENT

The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.

The revision of the NRC mission statement provides an opportunity to reshape the way the NRC operates. The agency has always focused on effectiveness—that is, making the best-informed decisions, providing rigorous oversight, and taking thoughtful and methodical approaches to the development of guidance, rules, and agency policies. As the NRC celebrates its 50th year of independent operation in 2025 and launches its new mission statement, we will continue to have safety and security as our North Star while focusing on effectiveness as the foundation of our agency but with a drive to increase our efficiency and timeliness to enable technology deployment. We must emphasize the difference between doing something effectively versus doing something efficiently: effectiveness is doing things well, whereas efficiency is doing them well while using no more time and resources than necessary. Being efficient means working in a well-organized and competent way by setting challenging goals, building and using resource management plans, monitoring progress actively to drive results, embracing technology that will make operations faster and more reliable, and refusing to compromise our effectiveness.

This guidance is intended to serve as a compass to explain what the new mission statement means and how we can work to achieve it. The guidance provides best practices for all at the NRC to emulate as we implement the NRC's mission. We are **one NRC**. Our success is a product of our mission and our people. This guidance applies to all of us, whether program or mission support, whether first-line contributor or senior manager. Together we can continue to instill confidence in what the NRC does and how it does it.

¹ SRM-SECY-24-0083, "Mission Statement Update Options Pursuant to Subsection 501(a) of the ADVANCE Act of 2024," January 24, 2025 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML25024A040).

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE

In order to explain how to implement the mission statement, this guidance first examines the language in the mission statement by separating it into elements:

- ELEMENT I: *The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security...*
- ELEMENT II: *...by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials...*
- ELEMENT III: *...through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation...*
- ELEMENT IV: *...for the benefit of society and the environment.*

The guidance includes key concepts needed to successfully implement the mission under each element. These appear in bold as headings with explanatory text below. The number of key concepts under each element is not an indication of the element's overall importance. Some concepts may apply to multiple elements, such as listening to understand and making timely decisions, but are highlighted in one place to avoid repetition.

The appendices accompanying the guidance provide best practices identifying actions and behaviors that embody successful implementation of the mission. One appendix applies to all staff. Other appendices are specific to functional areas (e.g., licensing, oversight, and mission support). This guidance is not all-encompassing or prescriptive in nature and does not include performance expectations. Performance expectations for the staff are captured explicitly in individual and organizational performance management documents.

MISSION GUIDANCE

ELEMENT I: *The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security...*

Our North Star: Safety and Security

Start activities with an early assessment of the safety or security significance of the matter, including an analysis of the impact and consequences. This means that safety and security are the starting point for all decisions. Safety and security are the foundation to achieve our mission and should be our core principle in every decision-making process. The agency's product is decisions, and this guidance informs decision-making. By focusing on safety and security as our North Star, we are able to apply the highest level of attention to matters of the greatest significance and tailor our approach to activities commensurate with their importance to safety and security.

Risk-Informed Decision-Making

Use all relevant data and evidence to guide decision-making, rather than relying on subjective ideas or overly conservative principles. Apply every step of the Be riskSMART² framework to

² NUREG/KM-0016, "Be riskSMART - Guidance for Integrating Risk Insights into NRC Decision," March 2021 (ADAMS Accession No. ML21071A238).

make well-reasoned, risk-informed decisions. Specifically:

Be...clear about the problem. Form a clear question and identify applicable requirements or guidance that apply. Acknowledge that requirements must be met, but also use the following steps to consider alternate paths to achieving a suitable regulatory outcome. *For example, see “Meeting the Mission: Hermes 2 Construction Permit” for a success story involving the use of staff-initiated exemptions.*

Spot...apply the risk triplet to assess: what can go right or wrong? what are the consequences? and how likely is it? This step guides you to weigh opportunities and challenges, which is very important in a changing environment.

Manage...what you can. Recognize that action can mitigate the likelihood or impact of negative consequences and be sure to assess the potential impact of actions on desired outcomes as well.

Act...on a decision. Make decisions at the lowest level possible and without delay.

Realize...the result. Take action to implement the decision, monitor effectiveness, and course correct if needed.

MEETING THE MISSION: HERMES 2 CONSTRUCTION PERMIT

Kairos Power LLC submitted its construction permit (CP) application for the Hermes 2 non-power test reactor shortly after the CP for the first Hermes reactor was issued. To streamline the environmental review, the staff initiated exemptions that leveraged information from the first Hermes review to shorten the timeline by 6 months from the original 18-month schedule to only 12 months.

Lead contributors: Peyton Doub and Mary Richmond

Teach...others what you learned. Be a steward of risk-informed decision-making.

Make the most of this tool by gathering the appropriate data and using statistical methods and data visualization tools to identify patterns or performance trends and correlations. Making decisions based on evidence and the best available information can help focus on the areas that matter, allocate resources commensurate with safety and security significance, and promote durable decisions.

Credibility

Credibility is the quality of being trusted or believable, and it is accomplished through a combination of achieving results, having the right capabilities, maintaining a genuine intent, and leading with integrity. As an organization, being an independent, technically competent regulator requires that we make regulatory decisions free from outside influence and based on sound technical and risk bases by being transparent and explaining the why behind our decisions. The actions and behaviors of each staff member, not in isolation but fully informed by the acknowledgment of all perspectives and information received, contribute to our organizational credibility. Because of this interconnectivity, it is crucial to **maintain your skills** at the highest level. This means reviewing fundamental subjects routinely, learning new skills, and networking with others to gain new perspectives. In addition, regardless of subject area, actively read and learn about scientific, technological, and geopolitical developments to stay abreast of the state-of-practice/art in your area and understand how new developments might affect the NRC. Those in leadership positions, whether program or mission support, should demonstrate competence in the areas they lead.

As an NRC employee, your **professional excellence** is a key part of our credibility. This involves demonstrating a consistent, high level of integrity and technical competence, engaging all relevant stakeholders as you conduct your work, making decisions that prioritize safety and security, and explaining the basis for those decisions. Take pride in creating and contributing to **high-quality products**. High-quality products are clear, concise, and technically accurate. Our written products form a durable basis to explain our decisions, transfer knowledge, and maintain transparency in our regulatory processes. *For example, see “Meeting the Mission: Strengthening Decision-making by Sound Technical Research” for a success story involving our organizational credibility.*

MEETING THE MISSION: STRENGTHENING DECISION-MAKING BY SOUND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

The Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research provided a rapid evaluation of loss-of-coolant accident frequencies to inform rulemaking efforts. Leveraging two decades of operating experience and advanced probabilistic risk assessment methods, staff relied on expert modeling capabilities to assess the likelihood of pipe ruptures in nuclear plants. These risk insights enabled a more realistic understanding of safety significance. The rulemaking, if approved, transitions from a highly prescriptive approach under Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Section 50.46 to one that provides greater flexibility, allowing licensees to focus resources on the most safety-significant issues.

Lead contributors: Christopher Nellis and Rob Tregoning

ELEMENT II: ... by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials...

Timeliness

This element of the mission statement highlights our vital role in making nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials available for beneficial uses. By calling attention to an “enabling” role for the agency, this element conveys the importance of conducting our regulatory functions in a manner that is responsive to the pace and scale of society’s needs. It also brings into focus the need to plan and execute our responsibilities thoughtfully across all the phases of technology deployment (e.g., preapplication engagement, licensing, manufacturing, testing, construction, transport, operation, and planning for decommissioning).

Integral to our success is the **timely review of applications, including those with emergent technologies**, such as small modular reactors and micro-reactors, new fuels, and cutting-edge uses of radioactive materials. Regardless of the technology, it is incumbent on the agency to plan and conduct our activities in a manner that achieves high-quality results on a timeline that enables deployment. In doing so, it is important to **actively consider the impact of schedule modifications on both staff and external entities** and seek ways to reprioritize work and shift resources to meet schedule needs and overcome obstacles to the use and deployment of technologies and materials. We will benefit from maintaining a positive safety culture and remembering that timeliness and efficiency are complementary, not synonymous. Rapid completion of an activity is not a success if it causes us to miss something important or results in an inefficient process to address an issue after the fact. Thus, we should establish progressive schedules for our projects, actively monitor progress, and leverage our professional excellence and forward thinking to solve challenging issues and assess the safety and security

of complex technologies. *For an example of the timely review of applications, see “Meeting the Mission: Hitting Key Milestones Ahead of Schedule.”*

To meet the needs of a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape and improve our efficiency, it is paramount to keep up to date with the technological advancements and **embrace new technologies, tools, and methods (e.g., data analytics or artificial intelligence)**. The NRC has made positive steps in this area—improving the functionality and availability of electronic licensing and oversight tools, identifying use cases for artificial intelligence, and launching a greatly improved Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) interface. Continuing this trend will require **adaptability, flexibility, and agility in updating our processes and approaches**. By encouraging creativity and bold new ideas, we can drive the agency forward at an accelerated pace.

Goal-driven

Being goal-driven as an agency means identifying the desired results and maintaining **a focus on output and outcome** to accomplish those results. Spend time working to produce a high-quality output (e.g., safety evaluation reports, budget analyses, or training materials) that drive desired outcomes (e.g., licensing decisions, budget proposals, or staff qualifications).

MEETING THE MISSION: IMPROVING LICENSE RENEWAL REVIEW PERFORMANCE THROUGH GOAL SETTING

NRR has implemented strategic changes to enhance the efficiency of license renewal reviews, including both initial and subsequent license renewals, by adopting a graded approach and introducing efficiencies in the environmental review process. For example, NRR established a graded approach to tailor the level of review to the safety and risk significance of the specific area of aging management. By implementing a tiered safety review as well as efficiencies in the environmental review process, NRR is on track to meet the new targets for license renewal reviews.

Lead contributors: Angela Wu and John Wise

MEETING THE MISSION: HITTING KEY MILESTONES AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Recently, the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) completed a draft safety evaluation (SE) with open items for the Kemmerer Power Station Unit 1 construction permit application 1 month ahead of schedule. The use of a core team and productive engagements with the applicant facilitated completion of this milestone ahead of schedule. From the outset, NRR set an aggressive schedule, targeting a 27-month review schedule instead of the 36-month generic milestone schedule. NRR is now targeting completion of the final SE by June 2026, which would further reduce the original timeline from 27 months to 25 months.

Lead contributors: Mallecia Sutton and Reed Anzalone

Adopt a mentality of routinely looking beyond the immediate task to recognize how an outcome contributes to a larger goal. These goals should be consistent with the agency’s mission and the NRC’s Strategic Plan, which **set strategic direction** to guide the agency’s priorities, operations, and behaviors. As stewards of these policies, each employee is empowered to guide the agency toward its goals and be part of implementing a shared vision for success. *For an example of using goal setting to drive new levels of performance, see “Meeting the Mission: Improving License Renewal Review Performance Through Goal Setting.”*

Over the agency’s 50 years of operations as an independent regulator, the NRC has been renowned as a global leader in nuclear regulation. This reputation does not demand

perfection from the staff or absolute assurance from regulated entities. Instead, we are empowered to recognize that **perfection is the enemy of the good**. If we expect perfection from ourselves or regulated entities, we risk hindering progress and becoming a barrier. As such, we will continue to apply a reasonable assurance threshold in our regulatory approaches. In doing so, we will continue to foster a culture that is able to **accept an appropriate amount of risk**. This occurs when an individual acknowledges that the potential consequence or impact from a risk is not high enough, or the likelihood great enough, to warrant spending significant time or resources on it. Risk acceptance is a valuable and necessary behavior in planning, prioritization, and decision-making.

A constructive and supportive environment with capable and decisive leaders³ is critical to foster an enabling and outcome-oriented mindset across the agency. Those in **leadership positions need to make decisions and engage the staff**. The role of a leader is one that involves setting a direction or vision and guiding and motivating people to achieve that end state. When trying to enable change, leaders play a pivotal role; they communicate goals, gather needed information, explain the reason behind a decision or desired change, support and empower staff, remove obstacles, generate positive morale, and lead by example.

Focus on Great Service Among Ourselves and with External Stakeholders

A focus on great service refers to a positive mindset and a can-do attitude that we should embrace in our interactions with each other and with external stakeholders. Some of these interactions include developing a technical position on review, exchanging information on a regulatory issue, and conducting safety and environmental reviews for an application. Providing great service involves creating an environment where everyone feels valued and understood, and objectives are clearly identified and met.

Having a great service mindset means we also **help each other**. Each regulatory action we complete involves an extensive web of direct and indirect components. For example, to carry out an inspection, we rely on inspection procedures, engagement between inspectors and risk analysts to inform planning, and the Reactor Planning System to capture inspection records. We need laptops, administrative support to publish completed reports, and a system to account for time and labor. We also need to train and qualify inspectors and hire additional inspectors as new needs arise. By recognizing and appreciating the role each person plays in the agency's mission, we can maintain a culture of respect, cooperation, and helpfulness.

The NRC has a highly skilled and dedicated workforce. Staff are encouraged to **be proactive and anticipate needs** in order to best support one another and carry out the mission. By noticing a potential operational, compliance, or administrative challenge and seeking viable solutions, the needs of the NRC, the public, and the regulated community are addressed with a high level of efficiency. If we **have a mindset to start with “yes” and look for solutions to problems**, we are empowered to open our mindset to all viable success pathways. This way of thinking steers our focus toward what can be done to achieve the objectives. Achieving the objectives does not mean always ending with a “yes.” This mindset recognizes that when we can't get to “yes,” it is important to make a timely decision, communicate the rationale clearly, and provide great service focusing on the next steps.

³ See NUREG/BR-0529, “The NRC Leadership Model,” June 2018 (ADAMS Accession No. ML18169A118).

For an example of great service, see “Meeting the Mission: Homestake Mining Company.”

As regulators we provide services to the public, applicants, licensees, and other external stakeholders. We maintain a suite of tools to communicate with the public, including websites, social media, and meetings designed to share information and request feedback. By focusing on how best to use these tools, we can enhance transparency, educate external stakeholders about risk and how that factors in our decision-making, and strengthen public confidence.

When it comes to applicants and licensees, the NRC provides discrete services such as application reviews and inspections and carries out necessary activities in support of these services. We develop guidance, engage in preapplication meetings to understand technical aspects of designs and discuss the regulatory framework, and share operating experience. We maintain an independent and objective perspective in executing these duties and search for solutions while avoiding consulting. It is important to **understand the difference between consulting and providing guidance.**

MEETING THE MISSION: STRENGTHENING TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT

The NRC builds trust relationships with Tribes by providing accessible information and engaging meaningfully through public and one-on-one meetings to hear their perspectives and answer questions. For example, during the environmental Red Rock project, the staff reached out to Tribal leaders early to better understand how to effectively communicate with this community. Based on this information, the staff used newspaper notices, radio announcements in Navajo, and public meetings with translators to ensure information was accessible and increase participation. The Tribe provided positive feedback on these engagements, and the relationships built highlight the value of face-to-face interactions. These activities resulted in stronger working relationships and earlier resolution of project concerns.

Lead contributors: Caylee Kenny and Jill Caverly

MEETING THE MISSION: HOMESTAKE MINING COMPANY

The Office of Enforcement recently partnered with the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards and the Office of the General Counsel to issue a staff-initiated relaxation on multiple conditions on a Confirmatory Order for the Homestake Mining Company (HMC), recognizing HMC’s sustained improved safety performance. The staff-initiated approach offered a timelier and more efficient alternative to the manner with which such relaxations have traditionally been sought, while assuring the decision was consistent with safety and the Principles of Good Regulation.

Lead contributors: Ron Linton and Sue Woods

Clearly describing the regulations and what is needed to meet them, sharing publicly available information from previous regulatory reviews, and discussing possible options under the regulatory framework are all acceptable ways of providing guidance and great service. The act of consulting involves providing a specific solution to an applicant or licensee or taking action that would give one applicant or licensee an undue advantage over others.

A great service mindset will also contribute to the agency’s credibility by demonstrating a high level of technical expertise, decisiveness, and predictability. To achieve these outcomes successfully, it is key to **consider your audience** in planning your interactions and determining your approach. It also necessitates that we **listen to understand** and fully consider the feedback and questions we receive, which will also foster trust. *For an example of considering your audience in planning your interactions and determining your approach, see “Meeting the Mission: Strengthening Tribal Engagement.”*

ELEMENT III: ... through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation...

Principles of Good Regulation

These principles, established in 1991, are independence, openness, efficiency, clarity, and reliability; they serve as a timeless compass to guide us on how to perform our mission. Staff should **apply the Principles of Good Regulation unflinchingly in discussing options and recommending the path forward** in activities across the agency.

These principles complement the NRC's organizational values of integrity, service, openness, commitment, cooperation, excellence, and respect. They guide our decision-making and interactions, from decisions on safety and security to our interactions with external stakeholders and each other.

Project Management

Project management involves planning, organizing, and managing resources to successfully achieve specific goals within defined timeframes and costs. A high-functioning organization is able to identify its workstreams, define the specific tasks that need to be completed to achieve desired results, and track milestones to keep projects on schedule. In managing work, **allocate**

MEETING THE MISSION: VERY LOW SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE ISSUE RESOLUTION (VLSSIR) PROCESS

During an engineering inspection at Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, an inspector identified a potential licensing basis issue related to the licensee's assumption that non-safety-related instrument air would close a shield door credited for dose mitigation. The inspector concluded that resolving this very low safety significance issue would require significant resources without a clear safety benefit and used the VLSSIR process to discontinue further evaluation.

Lead contributor: Megan Gangewere

resources commensurate with the safety or security significance of the activity. It may be appropriate to stop working on an issue whose basis is not clear and whose cost-benefit or risk-significance is very low even if significant resources have already been spent. This allows more time to be spent on other more risk-significant or impactful issues. In both planned work and emergent issues, the time spent should be appropriate to obtain necessary information, engage relevant parties/experts, and yield a decision. *For an example of risk-informed decision-making behaviors in the oversight program, see "Meeting the Mission: Very Low Safety Significance Issue Resolution (VLSSIR) Process."*

Factor the urgency of an activity or decision into planning—a routine license amendment request might take the same number of hours as a reactive inspection, but the importance of completing the reactive inspection might drive it to be handled in a more expeditious manner. Similarly, we should **promptly assess and resolve differing views**. Different perspectives are valued. To maintain a positive safety culture, issues should be promptly identified, fully evaluated, swiftly addressed, and corrected commensurate with their safety and security significance and with resources that support our schedule and efficiency goals. Through this, we balance challenges and risks while keeping safety and security in the forefront.

Project management is a dynamic activity. Because focus areas will change based on the external environment, to achieve efficient operations, it is important that we **understand our priorities and adjust them** as needed. Use the NRC Strategic Plan, organizational goals and metrics, and agency prioritization processes to maintain a working knowledge of how your actions and performance contribute to agency focus areas. Scanning the external environment can also provide valuable information to drive proactive changes to priorities. This might mean redirecting resources from one project to another to tackle challenging issues or using the add/shed/defer process to manage work across the agency. Successful project management requires that we **account for interdependencies** to identify pinch points in schedules and plan mitigation measures. Understanding the connections between parts of the same project and among different projects allows for more informed decision-making, better resource allocation, and improved coordination to achieve goals.

Performance Management

Performance management is a systematic approach to measure progress toward individual and organizational goals. Performance management can take the shape of metrics, appraisals, and award systems. These processes serve to align individual efforts with organizational goals, foster a culture of accountability, and drive continuous improvement.

Performance management helps us measure our progress and success. **Success is being effective, efficient, and timely.** Because performance management is intended to drive the desired outcomes, it is critical to recognize that **we can only manage what we measure, and we should only measure what is important.** Establishing **meaningful metrics at every level** enables performance management toward individual and organizational goals, and it entails having consistent, purposeful, and clear metrics at the agency, program, office, and individual level. Metrics, also referred to as *performance indicators*, are a quantifiable measurement of performance intended to drive progress toward established goals. While we may not always distinguish between the different types of indicators in our performance planning and monitoring systems, two subsets of performance indicators are worth highlighting. Leading indicators are used to proactively identify potential issues or opportunities before they arise. Lagging indicators are used to routinely measure the results of our performance against established targets. *For examples of how the NRC uses these performance indicators, see “Forward Focus: Leading Performance Indicators” and “Forward Focus: Lagging Performance Indicators.”*

Meaningful metrics are a powerful tool that must be used **not just to measure but also to analyze** performance. The data obtained from monitoring performance provides a foundation to assess individual progress, identify trends among similar processes, quantify efficiency gains, pinpoint successful approaches to achieving challenging goals, and see risks to meeting project milestones or broader goals.

For those risks of great significance to agency performance, we should **use enterprise risk management to mitigate and overcome challenges.** Enterprise risk management involves collaboration across all agency mission and mission-support functions to identify and prioritize risks, improve mission delivery, and strategize corrective actions that can mitigate or resolve issues. Those in leadership positions need to continuously scan the enterprise, identifying and mitigating any new risks as soon as possible, rather than waiting for the quarterly performance review.

FORWARD FOCUS: LEADING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Leading performance indicators are predictive in nature and are used to identify trends that might challenge the success of a project. These indicators are designed to increase management attention on an issue to mitigate its impacts. Illustrative examples include measuring time and resources spent to complete a specific milestone for a project, such as completing:

- Preparation and documentation portions of an inspection.
- Draft safety evaluation report with open items as one milestone in a license application review.

FORWARD FOCUS: LAGGING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Lagging performance indicators are used to assess how well the agency meets established standards, helping to drive efficiency and reliability. These indicators compare actual performance against expected targets, such as to measure timeliness and resource use. Illustrative examples include:

- Resources for completion of a particular type of licensing review (e.g., license amendment request).
- Average inspection resources per baseline inspection.
- Time to hire (e.g., days from issuance of an offer to onboarding).

Agency and organizational success cannot be achieved without our individual contributions. Individual performance management supports organizational performance by providing a structure for providing regular feedback to staff on how their productivity and behaviors contribute to broader objectives. Each employee should understand how their performance impacts metrics and be invested in achieving organizational goals. By setting clear goals and expectations, we are able to focus on those activities most important to the agency. Performance management also offers opportunities to **reward desired behavior** and celebrate accomplishments. The NRC is setting challenging goals for agency activities to keep pace with technology deployment. By offering positive feedback, celebrating successes, and rewarding special accomplishments, we will encourage successful individual and organizational performance.

Organizational Cohesion

To thrive in an environment of change, organizational cohesion—unifying staff across the agency—is crucial. The accomplishments of the agency are the result of our collective expertise, motivation, problem-solving skills, resilience, and cooperation. We rely on each one of you to give your best effort every day and expect those in **leadership positions to remove barriers that impede your team's success**. We are a learning organization, where continuous improvement is encouraged. Just as we perform routine assessments of the Reactor Oversight Process, management directives, and other agency procedures, we continue to grow when we seek opportunities to improve our agency on an organizational scale. To provide transparency, the work done by individual organizations should **align with the budget structure**. When undertaking other operational enhancements, apply change management techniques to optimize workflows, improve the planning and execution of projects, and use resources efficiently. It is imperative to learn from past initiatives and efforts to improve the results of any desired change.

We can **work across organizational boundaries** by breaking down silos and partnering with subject matter experts from relevant offices to accomplish objectives. This means holding alignment meetings early with key partners, agreeing on reasonable deadlines, and keeping the lines of communication open. For example, when designing new information technology tools or applications, staff can use cross-office coordination to identify the full suite of possible users and desired functions and to test features.

Collaboration between program offices and the regions is foundational to ensure synergy between procedure development and implementation, and to facilitate a common understanding of the licensing basis for facilities. Coordination with the Office of the General Counsel is also key to identifying legal risks swiftly for decision-makers and providing interpretations of laws, regulations, and other sources of authority. *For an example of the NRC leveraging collective expertise, see “Meeting the Mission: Palisades Restart Panel” to read about the use of core teams to navigate a first-of-a-kind reactor restart review.*

MEETING THE MISSION: PALISADES RESTART PANEL

The NRC formed a panel of experts across headquarters and Region III to proactively address licensing, regulatory and oversight challenges associated with the first-of-a-kind request to restart a reactor to return it to commercial operations. The panel included technical staff, project managers, inspectors, legal staff, and senior executives who collaborated to identify critical issues early, guide decision-making, and provide meaningful updates to the public. The team is using an entrepreneurial approach to navigate complex and new regulatory challenges.

Lead contributors: Justin Poole and April Nguyen

Working across organizational boundaries can also take the form of **adopting good practices across business lines**. Benchmarking with other offices and business lines is a great way to share process efficiencies for licensing and oversight; best practices for public meetings and other forms of external engagement; lessons learned from allegations, enforcement, rulemaking, and other agency processes; and ideas for how to improve organizational culture.

It is particularly important to communicate and coordinate to achieve **consistency among the regions** in how duties are carried out because the regions perform similar functions. This provides regulatory predictability for licensees and consistency in regulatory practices.

Clarity of Expectations

Expectations are key to making goals a reality, whether that means meeting metrics, changing culture, or fulfilling the new mission statement of the agency. Expectations are most effective when clear, realistic, and attainable. Of the greatest importance is achieving alignment between parties involved in setting and meeting expectations. Clarity of expectations is a shared responsibility and not the responsibility solely of the expectation-setter. Open communication and collaboration will yield greater clarity and ownership for expectations. **Whether giving or receiving direction**, mutual understanding of, and agreement on, expectations is the foundation for performance management. When communicating expectations, provide a full explanation, document responsibilities and deliverables, set schedules, and establish regular touchpoints to facilitate progress and ensure continued alignment. When receiving direction, listen carefully, ask questions, and recap what you heard to ensure understanding. Lastly, **presume positive intent**. With open dialogue, patience, and a supportive environment, we are best suited to achieve desired results and mitigate obstacles that might arise along the way.

ELEMENT IV: ... for the benefit of society and the environment.

Public Service Motivation

Our service to the American public motivates us to achieve mission excellence. As civil servants, we work for the betterment of society. Take pride not only in our work but also in the contributions we make to energy security, health care, industrial applications, and the protection of people and the environment from hazards associated with our regulated activities.

Setting Ambitious Organizational Goals

In order to provide the greatest benefit to society and the environment, embracing change is foundational. The world is evolving rapidly, and it is incumbent upon us to forecast future demands and set strategies to address them. By **continuously challenging ourselves to improve**, we proactively welcome reform that leads us to achieve new levels of performance while preparing to address new technologies, including fusion, artificial intelligence, floating nuclear power plants, and commercial deployment of non-light-water reactors. See *“Forward Focus: Ambitious Goals”* for an example of how ambitious goals can be used to improve our performance and organizational agility.

FORWARD FOCUS: AMBITIOUS GOALS

An example of an ambitious organizational goal is for the NRC to have 80% of its workload project-managed. This will enhance accountability in work planning and schedule execution to enhance the agency's ability to identify workload trending, allowing resources to be pivoted to where they are most needed.

Consider Both What Can Go Wrong and What Can Go Right in Applying Be riskSMART

As regulators, we have a natural tendency to identify risks and search for issues. It is part of our safety culture and regulatory process to validate that an adequate level of safety and security will be maintained. This culture is complemented by also fully considering what can go right in our decisions. This is built into the Be riskSMART framework but is worth highlighting as an area of focus. The staff should be deliberate in assessing the benefits of each course of action and how those benefits contribute to desired outcomes. In decision-making, consider what can go right and what can go wrong, and the commensurate magnitude of the benefit or consequence.

Meaningful Public Engagement

To build confidence with external stakeholders, we **operate with the highest degree of transparency**. As part of the Federal Government, we owe the taxpayers as much visibility into our operations and decisions as possible. Transparency improves awareness, demonstrates objectivity, and engenders trust. In addition to making agency documents available to the public in ADAMS, the agency has an extensive array of communication tools and methods used to engage stakeholders. Be thoughtful in choosing among these to ensure that we **leverage tools and methods appropriate for the audience**. A tailored approach to communication ensures that information is reaching the right stakeholders and that we obtain feedback from a wide

range of stakeholders to support agency decision-making. Meaningful public engagement involves listening and seeking to understand. *For an example of a success story demonstrating meaning public engagement, see “Meeting the Mission: ADAMS Public Search Tool.”*

We Are All Responsible for Our Culture: Promote Desired Behaviors and Be a Model for Others

Our culture is based on the set of values, systems, and rules that guide our behaviors. It drives our sense of organizational identity and purpose. Our mission is the core of our value system, supported by the idea that the

Principles of Good Regulation should direct our work, and the organizational **values should guide our interactions**. We recognize desired behaviors that promote a culture of trust, engagement, mutual support, and belonging. These include encouraging others, helping others to grow and develop, considering the well-being of others, being open and honest, and taking appropriate risks. All employees are encouraged to demonstrate these behaviors and foster their further adoption by others. Those in leadership positions have a particular responsibility to take these actions.

Courageous and Bold

Every employee can be courageous and bold in their thinking by championing creativity and innovation, encouraging forward thinking, and welcoming new ideas. Support each other to explore new approaches and share big ideas that can drive efficiency and timeliness, and to **seek tangible results from bold ideas**. We will achieve new levels of performance and greater benefits to society and the environment by challenging ourselves to be stewards of change.

Mistake Tolerance; Continuous Learning; From What We Did Well and What We Did with Our Mistakes

With new dimensions in our updated mission statement, success will be achieved by embracing a new concept of operations for the NRC. We will need to pair courageous and bold behaviors with **resilience**. Mistakes are an expected and acceptable part of continuous improvement. When we try a new approach and it pays dividends, we should look for opportunities to use that approach in other areas. When we try a new approach and it fails, take the learnings and use them to adjust course. While risk acceptance is a healthy behavior, it must be acknowledged that in situations where mistakes cannot be tolerated, appropriate preventive measures should be employed to prevent failure.

Leadership at All Levels

We can all be leaders in moving the agency toward mission excellence. Strong leadership supports a more adaptable and efficient agency. While senior leaders will set strategies and goals, lasting change is achieved by having leaders at all levels.

MEETING THE MISSION: ADAMS PUBLIC SEARCH TOOL

The NRC launched the ADAMS Public Search tool on NRC.gov to improve transparency and accessibility of publicly available documents. The staff used input from public meetings and focus group meetings to inform its development efforts. As a result, the agency launched a modern, user-friendly, and efficient ADAMS that makes the NRC's public data easy to find.

Lead contributor: Arathi Dommeti

MEETING THE MISSION: RESIDENT INSPECTOR COVERAGE

As part of the Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network (NRAN), the NRC's new hires complete a series of apprenticeships to explore different career paths. One NRAN participant chose Seabrook Station in Region I as his first-round apprenticeship and focused with his regional leadership team to complete his Inspection Manual Chapter 1245 Appendix A qualifications during the apprenticeship, which he quickly completed. When a coverage gap occurred at the site, he volunteered to return to Seabrook and provide site coverage instead of starting his next scheduled apprenticeship. After completing the NRAN program, he became the full-time resident inspector at Seabrook.

Lead contributor: Seamus Flanagan

When each employee has a strong sense of **ownership, personal responsibility, and accountability**, we can meet challenging goals and operate as a high performing organization. Only then can decisions be made at the lowest level necessary for success. *For an example of leadership at all levels, see "Meeting the Mission: Resident Inspector Coverage."*

Having leaders at all levels also means that **staff are empowered to identify new approaches**, and we celebrate them for doing so. **Maintaining a questioning attitude** is fundamental to driving us forward to **break the cycle of "we have always done it that way."** Instead of accepting the status quo, we can benefit from asking questions such as "why are we doing it this way?" and "is there a better way to do this?". This approach will keep us moving forward and achieving new levels of performance as one NRC.

APPENDICES

MISSION: The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.

Element I – *The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security...*

- North Star: Safety and Security
- Risk-Inform Decision-Making
- Credibility

Element II - ... *by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials...*

- Timeliness
- Goal-driven
- Focus on Great Service Among Ourselves and With External Stakeholders

Element III - ... *through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation...*

- Principles of Good Regulation
- Project Management
- Performance Management
- Organizational Cohesion
- Clarity of Expectations

Element IV - ... *for the benefit of society and the environment.*

- Public Service Motivation
- Setting Ambitious Organizational Goals
- Consider Both What Can Go Wrong and What Can Go Right in Applying Be riskSMART
- Meaningful Public Engagement
- We Are All Responsible for Our Culture: Promote Desired Behaviors and Be a Model for Others
- Courageous and Bold
- Leadership at All Levels
- Mistake Tolerance; Continuous Learning; From What We Did Well and What We Did with Our Mistakes

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR ALL NRC EMPLOYEES

- Uphold safety and security as the North Star in all you do.
 - Start conversations with a discussion of safety and security significance or impact.
 - Make sure the time you spend on an activity is consistent with its benefit to safety and security or to the agency's operations.
- Apply the Principles of Good Regulation unfailingly.
- Build credibility with every action.
- Use the NRC values to guide how you execute your duties. Demonstrate constructive behaviors that support a healthy organizational culture. We are One NRC.
- Make timely decisions based on the best available information. Accept an appropriate amount of risk.
- Where appropriate, use risk to inform decisions.
 - Apply every step in Be riskSMART.
 - Identify what can go right.
 - Use the best available information, data, and evidence.
- Adopt a great service mindset with your colleagues and external stakeholders. Focus on anticipating challenges, finding solutions, and making decisions at the lowest level possible.
- Regularly seek opportunities to improve yourself and agency processes.
- Develop your skills so that you can produce high-quality products, make credible decisions, and demonstrate professional excellence.
- Continue to focus on reasonable assurance, not absolute assurance, in carrying out the mission.
- Embrace technology to increase efficiency. Use new techniques, tools, and methods (e.g., data analytics and artificial intelligence) to improve the quality and timeliness of services.
- Maintain a questioning attitude to support a healthy safety culture.
- Promptly resolve differing views. Rely on the expertise of partner offices on matters that fall within their primary duties.
- Use knowledge management strategies to capture or transfer key information.
- Focus on how outputs serve as the building blocks to achieve outcomes. Make sure that your time is spent on activities that achieve desired results.
- Know how your work products and contributions affect agency performance.
- Adopt change management practices to enable the successful execution of ideas and processes.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR LICENSING ACTIVITIES

- Ensure safety and security through compliance with the regulatory framework, which includes Commission Orders and regulations.
- Apply risk-informed principles to reviews, particularly when strict, prescriptive application of deterministic criteria is unnecessary to provide for reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety.
- Enable deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through expeditious licensing reviews.
- Treat all applicants on a level playing field, regardless of how novel the technology is.
- Increase the use of audits, clarification calls, and requests for confirmatory information to improve the timeliness of licensing reviews.
- Take the initiative to use alternate paths when the normal approach does not provide a benefit commensurate with the resource investment. Examples include discussions with applicants about submitted or staff-initiated exemptions on a case-by-case basis.
- Use preapplication engagement to understand unique technical issues, align on regulatory paths, and identify efficiencies for the licensing review.
- Explain the licensing process to applicants to enable high-quality applications that can be efficiently reviewed.
- Share publicly available guidance, websites, and examples of high-quality, approved applications to enable an efficient licensing process.
- During meetings with applicants and licensees, openly express questions and concerns, clearly communicate the safety or security basis, and discuss options under the regulatory framework.
- Engage the public in a meaningful way at appropriate stages of the licensing process. Use methods well-suited for the audience.
- Complete draft safety evaluation reports with open items before requesting additional information.
- Limit requests for additional information to only what is needed to make regulatory findings (guidance is one way to meet the requirements; be open to other ways).
- Enhance consistency in review activities by applying criteria based on agencywide positions and not individual reviewer positions.
- Streamline safety evaluation content to focus on information necessary to describe the basis for the staff decision.
- Include observations in the acceptance review letter to enable the applicant or licensee to address issues early and minimize requests for additional information.
- Plan resources and timelines and track execution to ensure completion of reviews on or ahead of schedule and within resource estimates.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

- Focus the selection of inspection samples on those areas providing the best assessment of safety and security. Use risk-informed thinking, considering any design features, past performance issues, and expert insights in choosing samples.
- Adopt an outcome-oriented mindset: a successful inspection is one where objectives have been met, and the inspector completed a risk-informed inspection, regardless of whether an issue or violation is identified.
- Strive to complete inspection activities on schedule and within allotted resources.
 - Focus should be on identifying risk-significant value-added inspection issues, prompt resolution, and effective communication on the safety and security impact.
 - Additional reviews beyond the planned inspection resources should only be used if the licensee has not provided key information by the end of the inspection and there is a possible risk-significant issue.
- Use the Very Low Safety Significance Issue Resolution process or consider whether further follow-up is not needed for an issue of concern if it can reasonably be determined to be of very low safety/security significance, particularly if it would take a significant amount of time to resolve.
- Maintain awareness of past recently completed inspection samples to minimize overlap across inspection procedures.
- Build stakeholder confidence by being approachable and responsive in the allegation, enforcement, and other oversight processes.
- Foster an outcome-focused culture in considering inspection findings and enforcement. Be empowered to ask: is this path setting the stage for performance improvement?
- Engage in a discussion with the licensee when a noncompliance is identified to share approaches that have been successful in the past or potentially could be successful in addressing the issue.
- Work together to ensure safety and security through compliance with the applicable requirements. Seek, provide, and trust in others' expertise (e.g., technical, legal, and enforcement) with the objective of identifying the best path to issue resolution.
- Continuously assess licensee performance to recognize trends that may challenge safety and security.
- Focus inspection on performance demonstration rather than on detailed regulation and plan reviews.
- Use available tools to periodically review and trend results of inspection and enforcement activities to identify best practices; improve inspection screening tools; promote consistency in decision-making; and inform potential changes to NRC regulations, policies, and processes.
- Obtain licensing basis information from NRC documentation systems or colleagues, not from the licensee.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR MISSION SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

- Adopt a business mentality; develop clear outcomes supported by return on investment.
- Use state-of-the-art techniques and technologies to modernize both mission and mission-support processes (e.g., data analytics and artificial intelligence).
- Shift to a competency-based qualification program to improve training effectiveness and timeliness and to align with the evolving mission needs in this dynamic nuclear landscape.
- Use a human capital management system that includes strategic workforce planning to ensure an adequate number of staff resources for the anticipated workload.
- Leverage modern technology to streamline operations, boost productivity, enhance security, and enable data-driven decision-making for better outcomes.
- Be deliberate in providing training and resources to improve staff understanding and use of technological tools and features.
- Ensure diligent oversight for information technology systems to prevent data breaches and reduce operational impacts and reputational risks. Support mature cyber resilience to maintain business operations and strengthen stakeholder confidence.
- Strategically and innovatively award contracts to acquire the goods and services to most effectively and efficiently execute the mission.
- Develop and maintain a multi-year plan to guide budget priorities consistent with an environmental scan and the agency mission workload.
- Create a robust planning model that spans multiple years (e.g., 3-5 years) to align budgeting decisions with the NRC's long-term strategic priorities, such as expansion, cost reduction, and infrastructure investment.
- Manage information technology and management portfolios proactively to align projects with agency goals, manage costs, and adhere to agency priorities.
- Increase transparency in fees across agency programs to foster trust with stakeholders, to provide clearer financial insights, and to enable more informed decision-making and better forecasting of impacts.
- Ensure that we have quality budget execution data to coordinate across the agency and enhance consistency in the budget formulation process.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR RULEMAKING ACTIVITIES

- Perform high-quality regulatory analyses that clearly set forth and assess the need for and consequences of proposed actions, alternative solutions, and costs and benefits of all regulatory options to determine if rulemaking is the most effective and efficient process.
- Demonstrate agility by selecting the best and most efficient rulemaking pathway for addressing an issue in the rulemaking process.
- Promote active collaboration across the agency to achieve alignment on rulemaking priorities.
- Optimize stakeholder engagement by engaging meaningfully with external stakeholders; lean into listening and understanding to increase confidence in the rulemaking process.
- Focus on transparent and timely resolution of public comments associated with rulemaking activities.
- Streamline documents by communicating clearly and concisely in rulemaking and reference documents in the rulemaking package instead of duplicating discussion from supporting documents in the main document.
- Look for opportunities to achieve cost savings and reduce burden. Scan continuously for rules that may be obsolete.
- Align early with senior management decision-makers and partner offices on the technical aspects, content, and strategy for a rulemaking package, options to be considered, and attributes to be assessed in the regulatory analysis.
- Seek ways to streamline the concurrence process, such as considering parallel concurrence and information sessions and being deliberate when deciding the number of people on concurrence and scope of their concurrence, to facilitate timely review and concurrence on rulemaking packages.
- Actively look for efficiencies, lessons learned, and opportunities to achieve greater consistency in rulemaking activities across all business lines.
- Track rulemaking project schedules and resources and continuously compare projected schedules and resources with actuals to identify areas for improvement and better inform future budget formulation schedules.
- Consider ways to integrate performance-based regulation in rulemaking activities.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR TECHNICAL EXPERTS

- Provide sound technical input to support decision-making in a timely manner.
- Ensure that your technical review is performed in accordance with established milestones, and that the time spent on each activity is commensurate with the safety and security significance.
- Systemically prioritize tasks utilizing the Be riskSMART framework to focus on the most risk-significant aspects.
- Identify any safety- or security-significant issues early in the review process to align on a path forward with agency decision-makers.
- Use all applicable tools and data to inform the technical assessment and decision-making.
- Stay abreast of the state-of-the-art skills and technology in your technical area.
- Leverage evidence based on experience from external stakeholders, including industry, academia, Federal agencies, and international partners, to support decision-making and readiness for nuclear technology deployment.
- Seek to understand each other's views and communicate the why behind our decisions.
- Develop and use a systems mindset to account for technical interdependencies.
- Consider your audience when presenting or conveying complex information. Use plain language to facilitate mutual understanding across the agency and with external stakeholders.
- Be concise when communicating technical positions; focus on the message that you want to deliver.
- Promote timely and prompt resolution of technical challenges by seeking peer review as appropriate.
- Have ownership of your outputs and responsibility for decision-making.
- Routinely coordinate and communicate with your project manager and supervisor to assess workload and review priorities.
- Adequately document the technical information that supports decision-making on licensing and oversight actions to advance transparency and knowledge management.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROJECT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- Create a resource management plan to ensure that each phase of your project is adequately staffed and equipped.
 - Anticipate future workload and staffing needs to make informed decisions, ensuring a particular project or activity has the right resources with the right skills to achieve the objectives.
 - Continually conduct an environmental scan to see if there will likely be challenges that will need to be overcome.
 - Cultivate a culture of agility: Pivot staff resources to be able to meet the specific needs of the project and the mission.
- Ensure that tasks, resources, and priorities are balanced effectively to prevent staff burnout and align efforts with agency strategic goals.
- Work across agency programs, break down silos, and partner with subject matter experts to accomplish your milestones.
- Acknowledge and practice desired behaviors that improve agency performance and stakeholder confidence.
- Manage projects to facilitate technology use and deployment: apply a structured process, with clear objectives and defined timelines to deliver results on time, within scope, and on budget.
- Create metrics to measure progress, such as resource spending, level of effort spent vs. completion percentage, and timeliness. Meaningful metrics will support an overview of your project's performance and enable you to take corrective actions as needed.
 - Identify leading indicators to define pinch points that would impact overall project success.
 - Set stretch goals to steer the organization to optimize resources.
- Use tools and technology (e.g., daily or weekly status reports) to monitor progress and performance, help you stay on top of the project, identify improvement areas, and make changes as needed.
- Be nimble when handling complex projects to adjust quickly to dynamic demands.
- Continually reassess the return on investment of any changes and course correct as necessary.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL ADVISORS

- Deliver clear, candid, and sound legal advice to agency decision-makers.
- Begin projects with “yes” in mind: maintain a mindset of what can be done by working collaboratively with partner offices to develop creative, legally supportable options that meet agency objectives.
- Proactively seek flexibilities and efficiencies to further the agency’s mission when addressing legal issues.
- Partner with other offices early to identify the optimal opportunities in the decision-making process for legal support and help ensure a common understanding of objectives.
- Communicate clearly with partner offices to understand time constraints and prioritization to provide timely legal advice that supports agency decision-making.
- Anticipate challenges as early as possible in the review process, offer potential solutions to agency decision-makers, and encourage timely resolution. Elevate issues when pinch points appear likely to create schedule risks or a need for more resources beyond those initially projected.
- When appropriate, identify a preferred legal option and explain why.
- Ensure agency decision-makers understand the risks and uncertainties related to different options before making a decision.
- Assess new legal requirements promptly and communicate implications and opportunities to agency decision-makers.
- Support knowledge management initiatives to promote consistency in legal advice across the enterprise.
- Support data-driven decision-making across the agency by considering how data factors into the analysis of legally supportable options and supporting the development of agency documents that plainly explain how data informed the decision-making.
- Seek continuous improvements to processes to enhance efficiency, including leveraging new technologies.

APPENDICES

BEST PRACTICES FOR EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENTS

- Increase public awareness and interest in who we are and what we do via social media and the NRC's external webpage.
- Increase stakeholder confidence by making information visually appealing and easily accessible and maintaining it up to date. Seek ways to improve features for sharing information with external stakeholders (e.g., ADAMS public search tool).
- Post notice of public meetings at least 10 days before the meeting. Present meeting materials in plain language and make them available early to encourage broader public involvement.
- Develop informative meeting summaries and issue them in a timely manner to improve knowledge management and transparency for external stakeholders.
- Treat the Agreement States as regulatory partners to ensure open communications around safety and security while collaborating on rulemaking and guidance development.
- Use the National Source Tracking System, Web-Based Licensing System, and License Verification System to improve access to materials licenses and source inventory.
- Coordinate with Federal partners, States, local governments, and Tribes on relevant activities as appropriate to ensure mutual collaboration.
- Ensure all responses to media queries are coordinated through the Office of Public Affairs and with NRC subject matter experts, including the Office of the General Counsel, to ensure consistency, accuracy, plain language responses, and timely turnaround to meet media deadlines.
- Maintain ongoing communication, through the Office of Congressional Affairs, with Congressional committees and members of Congress on matters of interest, such as NRC initiatives that advance regulatory improvements and accelerate licensing reviews.
- Collaborate with international regulatory partners (e.g., Canada and the United Kingdom) to streamline licensing reviews for common technologies and to jointly tackle challenges posed by advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and fusion.
- Identify opportunities for the NRC to demonstrate leadership in multilateral fora (e.g., the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nuclear Energy Agency) to ensure that the NRC stays on the leading edge of worldwide scientific knowledge and that international standards continue to reflect NRC regulatory practices.
- Use bilateral cooperation and technical information exchange arrangements to strengthen relationships with regulatory counterparts and facilitate information and personnel exchanges as appropriate to increase the NRC's impact on global regulatory practices.