

Enhancing Strategic Workforce Planning Communication Plan

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Communication Plan is to facilitate the successful implementation of enhancements to strategic workforce planning at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

COMMUNICATION TEAM

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KEY MESSAGES

- The NRC is enhancing how it plans and maintains its workforce to better accomplish its nuclear safety and security mission.
- On January 19, 2017, the Executive Director for Operations tasked a multi-office working group to enhance NRC's existing Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) process by better integrating the agency's workload projection, skills identification, human capital management, individual and organizational development, and workforce management.
- Successful SWP is essential for the NRC to accomplish its mission in an effective and efficient manner; in addition, it is required by Federal regulations and used by leading public and private sector organizations
- The NRC plans to accomplish these enhancements in a phased approach, refining based on an early pilot, and adjusting in response to internal and external changes.

SUMMARY

In accordance with the EDO's tasking memorandum of 19 January 2017, a small interoffice Working Group developed a description of an enhanced strategic workforce planning process, and developed an implementation and a communication plan by April 19, 2017. The working group began by reviewing best practices used by private and public sector organizations and assessing the current state of workforce planning within the NRC. The working group conducted outreach to NRC managers and employees within the NRC at all levels of the organization, as well as to a limited number of external entities. The working group also closely collaborated with representatives of Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) in the development of this plan. The Project Aim Steering Committee provided oversight of the development of this plan. In addition, during the development of the enhanced process description and implementation plan, the Working Group promoted awareness of its

work and shared weekly highlights of the progress of initiative with the NRC senior leadership team and NTEU.

The primary audience for the communications described in this plan are NRC employees, managers and supervisors, senior leadership, and the Commission. Some communication with external stakeholders is also included in the plan, such as keeping informed NRC's Congressional oversight and appropriations committees. Additional external communications will be coordinated with other ongoing NRC activities. The Working Group also recognized that the plan, messages, media, and messengers would be adjusted as the implementation of the enhancements proceeds, to optimize communications with different audiences and in different phases of implementation.

Once the EDO completes review of the implementation and communication plan, this plan will be revised in accordance with the EDO's decision. Leadership for communications about specific enhancements and strategies contained in this plan be performed by the line organization responsible. Some strategies, such as strategic planning, strategic direction, and environmental scanning, by their very nature, require and benefit from continued external communications and coordination. Specific communications plans are expected to be developed for such projects.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

External Stakeholders

- Press release announcing the agency's plans and approach for enhancing Strategic Workforce Planning.
- Post updates via agency social media platforms.
- The SWP SharePoint site will provide links to the final documents at <http://fusion.nrc.gov/edo/team/Enhancements%20to%20Strategic%20Workforce%20Planning/default.aspx>
- NRC will inform appropriations and authorizing committees in Congress and will provide briefings, as requested.
- Additional social media communications, meeting notifications, and press releases will be issued as appropriate to communicate significant progress related to the implementation of the improvements.

Internal Stakeholders

- Status Updates, which were e-mailed weekly to Commission Offices, senior managers, and NTEU, will be discontinued upon transmittal of the recommended enhancements to the EDO in April 2017. Routine communications will be resumed following a decision by the EDO.
- Information posted on the SWP SharePoint site, including the project plan, project charter, meeting summaries, archived status updates, and other pertinent information, will be transferred to ADAMS (records) and discontinued after six months following completion of the implementation plan (expected in 2019).
- This Communication Plan, including Q's & A's, will remain on the EDO's Communication Plan SharePoint site until two years after the EDO's decision on the SWP Enhancements implementation plan.

- Biweekly meetings with National Treasury Employees Union on SWP will be discontinued; pre-decisional consultation and partnership on implementation will occur through the Agency Labor Management Partnership Committee meetings on a monthly basis and office partnerships, as appropriate.
- Periodic EDO Updates and Reporter Articles will be used to keep the staff informed on significant progress on implementation and on opportunities to contribute to the implementation.
- Performance in implementing the enhancements will be discussed as part of the Quarterly Performance Reviews; performance information related to implementation will be posted on the agency's SharePoint site on performance.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The schedule for major communication activities related to the SWP process enhancements is presented below. A more detailed schedule for implementation of the enhancements to SWP, along with recommended lead responsibilities, can be found in the "Strategic Workforce Planning Process Implementation Plan" document.

Activity	Planned	Actual
Communications Supporting the EDO's Decision-making (April 2017 – July 2017)		
Briefing for the Project Aim Steering Committee on the recommendations	4/4/2017	
Briefing for the Senior Leadership Team on the recommendations at the Quarterly Strategic Alignment Meeting	4/13/2017	
Deliver Implementation and Communications Plan, along with recommendations and a description of the recommended SWP process	4/19/2017	
Follow up Discussion with the Senior Leadership Team on the recommendations	5/3/2017	
Transmit the Implementation and Communications Plan to the Commission for information	5/24/2017	
Briefing for Commission on the recommendations	6/13/2017	
Circulate a draft decision memorandum on the Implementation and Communication plan to senior leadership team	6/14/2017	
Issue decision on the Implementation and Communications Plan	6/30/2017	
Provide a copy of the EDO decision and updated implementation plan and SWP process document to GAO	w/in 10 days of EDO decision	
Provide a copy of the EDO decision and updated implementation plan and SWP process document to Congressional Stakeholders	w/in 10 days of EDO decision	
Issue the updated implementation and communication plan	w/in 10 days of EDO decision	

Issue an EDO update reflecting the decision on the implementation and communication plan	w/in 10 days of EDO decision	
Transfer communications lead for specific initiatives to line organization	w/in 1 weeks of issuance of imp/com plan	
Develop an article for the NRC Reporter reflecting the decision on the implementation and communication plan	7/2017	
Conduct an All Supervisors meeting to discuss the implementation plan	7/2017	
Communications Supporting Phase 1 Activities (July 2017 – November 2017)		
Meeting with NTEU to discuss Phase 1 activities	10/2017	
Kickoff meeting with Office Senior Leadership Teams participating in Phase 1	11/2017	
Kickoff meeting with Office Leadership Teams participating in Phase 1	11/2017	
Conduct an All Hands meeting with offices participating in Phase 1	11/2017	
Conduct training for managers, supervisors, staff, and labor partners for those offices involved in Phase 1	11/2017	
Communications Supporting Phase 2 Activities - Agency Roll Out (November 2017 – November 2018)		
Discussion with Senior Leadership Team on lessons learned from Phase 1	3 rd Qtr. FY 2018	
Meeting with NTEU to discuss agency roll out	3 rd Qtr. FY 2018	
Issue an EDO update	3 rd Qtr. FY 2018	
Conduct an All Supervisors Meeting	4 th Qtr. FY 2018	
Conduct Town Hall Meetings with the staff	4 th Qtr. FY 2018	

Q's & A's

1. What is Strategic Workforce Planning?

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) is a process for identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities employees must possess to perform activities and deliver products and services to support current and future strategic goals. The ultimate goal of an SWP is to facilitate achieving the right number of people with the right skills doing the right work at the right time.

2. Why is Strategic Workforce Planning necessary at the NRC?

The ultimate goal of SWP is to ensure that NRC has the right number of people with the right skills doing the right work at the right time. Given the current dynamic environment the NRC faces (e.g., declining budgets, changes in industry demands, increased congressional oversight,

hiring freezes), we must learn to be more agile. SWP facilitates the NRC's ability to be agile and efficiently address future workforce needs.

3. *If successful, will SWP avoid the future needs for involuntary actions, like Reductions in Force, at the NRC?*

It will help minimize the need for taking such actions. No process will be able to eliminate the potential for future involuntary actions, like reductions in force (RIF). Effective SWP should help to identify future workload trends and take actions well in advance to reshape the NRC and reduce the potential for RIFs.

4. *What is the overall approach for implementing these enhancements?*

Following a decision from the Executive Director for Operations, OCHCO would implement phase 1 (pilot initiative) to test the agency process with the participation of several offices. This pilot will test implementation of the full process. Following the pilot, the agency will refine the process by implementing lessons learned as the process is applied for the entire agency.

5. *Why does it take so long?*

First, it is important to recognize that we are already doing strategic workforce planning. The proposed enhancements are intended to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, agility, consistency, and standardization of the process. Second, while it may appear two years for full-scale implementation is a long time, we are implementing the enhancements in a phased manner over only two cycles. Following completion of the pilot in 2018, the working group expects that this new process would be implemented across the entire agency.

6. *Is this the "flavor of the month/year"?*

Strategic workforce planning has been used by leading organizations for the last three decades. The current enhancements grew out of the Commission's decision approving the strategies associated with Project Aim in June 2015 and the contraction of the agency due to decreased workload beginning in 2011.

7. *Didn't we try to do this and failed before when staff and supervisors were required to provide annual updates to a large data base ("SWP")?*

Yes, the agency began tracking and assessing employee skills in the late 1990s, however the initiative was not guided by an overall process for strategic workforce planning. NRC staff who were on board between 2000 and 2008 may recall annual requirements for updating a skills database. NRC's current enhancements to strategic workforce planning leverage the lessons learned from our previous use of the database, other existing practices within the NRC, and best practices across the federal government and in the private sector.

8. *Didn't TABS already do this? Is this TABS 2?*

No. This project focused on developing broad, long-term strategies to accomplish NRC's mission long into the future, and make the agency more adaptive and resilient to a dynamic external environment. This project incorporated lessons learned from the TABS project to improve planning, feedback, communication, and implementation.

9. *Can we afford to take so long to implement these enhancements? What are we doing in the interim to ensure that we maintain the workforce needed?*

Although we seek to implement the enhancements as soon as practical, we are making these changes in a step-wise manner, so we can check and adjust as we proceed forward. In the interim, we will continue to use existing practices for workforce planning.

10. *How will this project affect me?*

Once the agency begins to adopt this enhanced SWP process, the results will allow the staff a greater understanding of how their work aligns with the NRC's mission and workload needs. This process will also encourage managers to focus on staff development and will highlight potential career opportunities.

11. *Where can I get more information about the project?*

For additional information please visit the NRC's Enhancements to Strategic Workforce Planning SharePoint site located on OEDO's SharePoint site,

<http://fusion.nrc.gov/edo/team/Enhancements%20to%20Strategic%20Workforce%20Planning/default.aspx>

12. *How does the approach leverage the work that we are already doing?*

The enhancements leverage several existing practices. For example, the results of the environmental scan completed for the NRC's strategic plan will provide insights for the business lines to perform their independent environmental scans. In addition, the scanning being performed by the business lines should leverage existing practices such as regulatory issue summaries, drop in meetings, public meetings, conferences, and should consider historical data to the extent practical. While the supply and demand steps are additional steps not currently being performed, they serve to develop the gap closure plans. In essence, these gap closure plans are a documentation of the efforts already being performed by the offices but will be completed more consistently and informed by what other offices are doing.

13. *With the agency decreasing in size and resources, how can NRC afford to devote additional effort to support Strategic Workforce Planning?*

SWP will ensure that as we decrease in size we continue to maintain the workforce necessary to accomplish the mission. One of the main goals of SWP is to identify the future work of the agency and the workforce needed to support this future work. Therefore, the enhanced SWP facilitates early planning and engagement to ensure that the agency retains and/or develops the skills it needs to support the mission. By accomplishing this work in a more standardized, consistent, and systematic manner, these enhancements should also boost the efficiency and agility of the agency.

14. How did the working group take into account the input that you received from employees, supervisors, senior leaders, and the union?

The working group considered each comment and suggestion that we received and decided by consensus whether and how the enhanced process and the implementation and communication plans needed to be revised. We informed these decisions by considering current agency practices, external reviews of the agency's existing practices, and good practices from other Federal agencies and the private sector.

15. What was the Commission's role in supervising this project?

The Commission approved as part of Project Aim improvements to the agency's strategic workforce planning in June 2015. The EDO coordinated his tasking memo on the enhancements with the Commission before he issued it in January 2017. During the last three months, the Commission has continued to monitor the progress of the enhancements and is considering including strategic workforce planning as a topic for discussion at the June 2017 meeting on human capital management.

16. What is meant by agility or an agile organization?

We are using the term "agility" as the capability of NRC to adapt rapidly in response to internal and external changes that are significant with respect to NRC's mission and regulatory programs.

17. Why did it take so long for NRC to enhance Strategic Workforce Planning?

The NRC began implementing strategic workforce planning following the Commission's issuance of the first strategic plan in 1997. The current enhancements build on the work conducted as part of Project Aim. The working group has developed enhancements that will leverage existing practices and ensure the agency positioned for success in accomplishing our mission.

18. What is the projected costs of these enhancements?

While it is expected that the projected costs will be low taking into account the work that the staff is already doing, the working group expects to leverage the pilot effort to provide a more realistic estimate of the total cost to the agency annually.

19. What work will be shed in order to fund the enhancements? Will any staff be shed (RIF'd) to afford these enhancements?

The Working Group does not expect any work will be shed to conduct the enhancements. No NRC employees will be involuntarily separated to afford the enhancements. The general intent is to use the same amount of resources that we are currently devoting to workforce planning to accomplish the enhancements and achieve the benefits.

20. With these changes, will the NRC now be in compliance with OPM regulations that required SWP years ago?

OPM recently issued a revision to the requirements related to strategic workforce planning (5 CFR Part 250 Subpart B). These new requirements specify the need for agencies to develop human capital operating plans, which are expected to be developed from each agency's implementation of SWP. The enhancements will help NRC comply with these requirements.

21. In 1997, RES identified and the Commission approved core capabilities. What happened to this project, and why was it not conducted for the remainder of the agency?

Ever since the Commission approved these core capabilities, the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research has maintained these core capabilities. In the late 1990s, the Commission directed that similar efforts be conducted across the agency and the SWP database represented one element of this work. However, following the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001, the agency focused its attention on enhancing security and safeguards requirements while maintaining protection of the public and the environment. After the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the agency also devoted substantial focus on preparations for increases in licensing and other regulatory work associated with new nuclear power plants and other nuclear facilities. Consequently, the resources that would have been devoted to extending the core capabilities were used to accomplish higher agency priorities in support of NRC's mission.