

**Approval for Estimated Conference Spending in Excess of \$500,000 for a Single
Conference in Accordance with Office of Management and Budget
Memorandum M-17-08, “Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient
Spending to Support Agency Operations”**

As Chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I hereby approve potential expenditure in excess of \$500,000 for the 2024 Regulatory Information Conference (RIC). The NRC is planning to hold the next annual RIC in March 2024.

For the reasons detailed below, I have determined that exceptional circumstances exist and that spending more than \$500,000 on hosting the 2024 RIC is the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose.

The NRC’s mission is to license and regulate the Nation’s civilian use of byproduct, source, and special nuclear materials to ensure adequate protection of public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment. The RIC aligns with the NRC’s Strategic Plan¹ goal to inspire stakeholder confidence by (1) fostering open dialogue among interested parties, including industry, government, the international nuclear community, and the public, on the safety and security of new, operating, and decommissioned reactors and materials licensees, (2) providing open and transparent communication about NRC actions planned or in progress related to emergent issues, (3) offering a valuable and unique forum to share different perspectives on technical process and procedure issues and other matters facing the nuclear industry, and (4) promoting in-depth discussions of safety and security issues being addressed through NRC-sponsored research. The RIC demonstrates the NRC’s commitment to conduct work openly and transparently. It provides a unique forum that brings together diverse groups of stakeholders to inform them of significant and timely policy decisions and regulatory oversight activities, as well as ways that the NRC is transforming to continue to become a more modern, risk-informed regulator.

Since its inception in 1987, the RIC has become one of the premier nuclear conferences in the world. It is widely attended, and by using modern technology, the RIC typically brings together over 3,000 attendees representing more than 40 countries. RIC attendees include members of the public; Federal, State, and local government officials; nuclear safety regulators from other nations; experts from the national laboratories; advocacy groups; media representatives; licensees; vendors; and other interested stakeholders. The technical program features nuclear experts from across the NRC, as well as external speakers from other government agencies, industry, academia, public interest groups, and the international community. Similar to the 2023 RIC, the NRC plans for the 2024 RIC to be conducted as a hybrid event. The 2023 hybrid RIC reached over 3,100 attendees representing 43 countries, with approximately 50 percent attending virtually, 24 percent attending in-person, and 26 percent attending both in-person and virtually.

Both the agency and external stakeholders highly value the RIC for its technical and educational content. This conference also provides a unique opportunity for attendees to hear firsthand the views of each member of the Commission on emerging regulatory issues and policy matters affecting the agency. In addition, the RIC offers an environment for influencing nuclear safety on a global scale, building new partnerships, and strengthening connections, both domestically and

¹ NUREG-1614, Volume 8, “Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022–2026,” issued April 2022 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System Accession No. ML22067A170).

internationally. The NRC staff and stakeholders use the RIC to share relevant information, exchange views and perspectives, discuss challenging policy issues facing the agency, and promote safety and security best practices in the nuclear arena.

As the agency continues to learn from recent events in the nuclear community, this forum is crucial to its mission.

Successfully executing such a large and complex conference requires extensive coordination and the effective management of resources. The Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) and the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research co-sponsor the RIC. Both offices are dedicated to achieving the NRC's commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship and are continually identifying ways to reduce conference costs. As the lead office, NRR diligently scrutinizes and monitors the planning, logistics, and implementation of the RIC to ensure that the agency spends appropriated funds in the most cost-effective, efficient manner.

The objectives and work requirements of the RIC cannot be accomplished successfully under any one of the NRC's other existing contracts. Therefore, NRR leverages two contracts to assist in executing the RIC: (1) one for planning and logistical support, covering web development, registration, audiovisual support, and onsite logistics, and (2) one for meeting space. Both the planning and logistical support, and the meeting space contracts are currently in place through 2025. The total amount expended for these two contracts in support of the 2023 hybrid RIC was approximately \$1.145 million.

In addition to these two contracts, the NRC uses existing contracts, when possible, in support offices for RIC assistance and services such as registration system security, web hosting, and web streaming (Office of the Chief Information Officer); captioning, videography, photography, technical editing, onsite physical security, and shipping and delivery activities (Office of Administration); transcription services (Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel); reasonable accommodations (Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer); and limited English proficiency services (Office of Small Business and Civil Rights). The total costs for these services to support the 2023 hybrid RIC were approximately \$0.225 million.


Currently, the NRC is planning for the 36th annual RIC to be a hybrid event, consisting of a program that supports in-person attendance as well as a virtual conference platform allowing remote participation. In addition, the staff continues to proactively seek best practices from other conferences taking place around the world and consult with NRC stakeholders on contract support for planning and logistics to identify ways to reduce contract risk for both the NRC and the contractor in the event that the NRC needs to adjust the program format in a way that would result in unexpected costs.

The NRC remains committed to using innovative and cost-effective methods, including leveraging new and emerging technologies, to ensure that the agency continues to provide attendees with a valuable opportunity for engagement and participation, as well as a rewarding conference experience. A preliminary cost estimate for future hybrid RICs (in-person with virtual participation capability) is projected to be \$1.5 million for planning, logistics, audiovisual, and information technology support.

Based on the reasons provided above, in accordance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-17-08, "Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," dated November 25, 2016, I hereby approve NRC expenditures exceeding \$500,000 for a single conference for the 2024 RIC.



Christopher T. Hanson, NRC Chair



Date 11/01/2023