Trip Report, Energy Communities Alliance
New Nuclear Forum
The Business of Nuclear: Communities & Industry Working Together
April 21-26, 2026, Augusta, GA

Council attendees: Vice Chair Herrmann, Chair Ryti

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This is the fourth New Nuclear Forum with this installment focused on the business of nuclear. The two-day forum provided lots of information on private and Federal initiatives to move toward quadrupling the amount of power by 2050 [100 GW to 400 GW].

Here are the Major Takeaways from Day 1:

1. Communities need to understand what resources they bring to the table: transmission, demand for electrons, land, water, and interconnection.
2. Five factors to consider when determining how well a project is planned: fuel, financing, supply chain, workforce, and size.
3. Community initiatives build momentum for deployment in ways that reflect unique relationships in each location.

Here are the Major Takeaways from Day 2:

1. The nuclear industry needs to work together to produce a secure and uniform supply chain that allows for order books to be filled reliably and predictably.
2. Successful project developers will identify who the community leaders are and will cooperate with them to address local needs and provide project updates.
3. Progress moves at the pace of trust.

Other highlights

Back in January 2026 the DOE issued an RFI inviting states to express interest in hosting Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses (NLIC's) - a new federal initiative aimed at modernizing the nation's full nuclear fuel cycle and strengthening advanced nuclear energy leadership [https://www.energy.gov/articles/department-energy-seeks-hosts-nuclear-lifecycle-innovation-campuses].
These campuses would:

- Support activities across the full nuclear fuel lifecycle: fuel fabrication, enrichment, reprocessing used nuclear fuel, and waste disposition.
- Potentially host advanced reactor deployment, power generation, advanced manufacturing, and co-located data centers.

- Foster regional economic growth, enhance national energy security, and build a coherent, end-to-end nuclear energy strategy.
- Tim Walsh, Asst Sec DOE-EM emphasized that the initiative is part of a "next American nuclear renaissance" to drive innovation, create good-paying jobs, and deliver affordable, reliable, and secure energy.

They received 28 responses to the RFI & will scale this number down in next few weeks. Looking for total of 3-5 centers across country.

—Focus on reprocessing "used" fuel [new way to refer to spent nuclear fuel] to get more energy out of it. Lots of talk about recycling/reprocessing, not storage.

—Focus on back-end of fuel cycle, which refers to the series of processes that occur after nuclear fuel has been used in a reactor to generate electricity.

—Genesis Mission - National AI initiative to build the world's most powerful scientific platform to accelerate discovery science, strengthen national security, and drive energy innovation. [https://genesis.energy.gov/]

—Toured Savannah River Site on Friday April 24.
Overview of K Area operations, walking tour of Manufacturing Technology Center, walking tour of Defense Waste Processing Facility and working lunch.

—This meeting will be held in Oak Ridge in 2027 and in New Mexico in 2028!

Agenda

Tuesday, April 21
Understanding Nuclear Opportunities: What to Know
-Roundtable discussions: Waste Management, Community Engagement Practices, Fusion
-Welcome Reception

Wednesday, April 22
-Nuclear Initiatives Across the Federal Government
Tim Walsh, Asst Sec DOE-EM - Nuclear renaissance. Remanufacturing. Reindustrialization. Power new data centers & fuel AI. The Manhattan Project of our era. New name for EM: Office of Nuclear Restoration and Remediation.
Marla Morales, Acting Depty Asst Secty DOE-NE - Back-end of the fuel cycle. Fed responsibility for reprocessing & redisposition, not repository. So much energy left in used fuel. Close the fuel cycle.
Jim McConnell, Associate Principal Deputy Admin NNSA - SRS is only place that makes Tritium. Novel energy production co-located w AI data centers possibly at SRS. NNSA committed to Partnering w communities and environmental safety.

Kristin Ellis, Associate Principal Deputy Undersecty DOE - Works for UnderSecty for Science. Workforce initiatives. Bring in comm colleges, 4 yr colleges and unions. Genesis Mission ("Manhattan Project 2.0"), from executive order in Nov 2025. Will need 100k AI literate scientists. Not restricted to DOE. Harnessing AI as next energy challenge. Lots of interesting PPPs being formed to work on this. New workforce ideas. Grants in SRS to create workers they need in SC & GA. Workforce and partnerships. Creates economic opportunities for locations that can have AI. Check Genesis Mission website for opportunities. 26 teams of research locations, thinking they could get 10k apps.

Setting the Stage for Nuclear

This session discussed the impact of the Presidential Executive Orders, Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses, Genesis Mission, and other programs spurring private sector participation in nuclear development today. The Utility Power Reactor Incremental Scaling Effort (UPRISE) is a new initiative attempting to get more power from existing reactors [https://www.energy.gov/ne/utility-power-reactor-incremental-scaling-effort-uprise]. At INL there is an effort to accelerate nuclear technology from demonstration to deployment [https://nric.inl.gov/nuclear-energy-launch-pad-at-idaho-national-laboratory/]. Russia and China are building and exporting technology very rapidly; the USA needs a design once and build many approach. Needs efforts across states by involving the National Governors Association and building on regional efforts like among UT, WY, ID.

Introduction: John Williams, Senior VP, Technical Services & External Affairs, Southern Nuclear - Plant Vogtle 3 & 4.

Facilitator: Steve Comello - Executive Director, Nuclear Scaling Initiative [https://www.nuclearscaling.org/].

David Gattie- Senior Fellow, The University of Georgia

Brad Williams – Senior Policy Advisor and Lead for Energy Policy and Strategic Analysis, INL

Community Initiatives Building Momentum for Deployment

This panel featured public officials who have worked together to align multiple jurisdictional levels, public utility commissions & communities to develop & pursue new nuclear initiatives. Panelists will discuss challenges nuclear programs face, & how these programs acquire funding sources, aggregate resources, & incentivize participation. Cost remains an obstacle. Scarcity is really a transient condition.

Facilitator: Kirt Marlow, President, Idaho advanced Energy Consortium

Kristen Gottschalk - Board President, Advanced Nuclear Coalition - Nebraska

Jack Ladyman – State Representative, State of Arkansas

Cristina Paredes – Executive Director, SC Nexus

Luke Wilson – Chief Policy Officer, Indiana Office of Energy Development

Finding Partners & Building Community Support

Panelists offered case studies & proven practices in building community support for nuclear projects & fostering collaboration among relevant parties. Also cover insights on how local governments engage & build support for private projects in collaboration with

the nuclear industry & regional electricity markets. Open for business is a good slogan but need action not just talk.
Facilitator: Sean O'Brien, Executive Director, Energy Forward Alliance - Tri-cities, WA
Gard Clark – Defense & Govt Solutions Lead, Natura Resources
Shay Lundvall – Mayor, City of Gillette, WY

Working Lunch: Leveraging International Successes to Sustain American Nuclear
Leadership What can be learned from & shared with our international partners? Panelists in this session discussed how partnerships with the international community can drive nuclear successes in American energy communities & empower robust domestic industries. Example in Belgium where the engagement was intentionally intergenerational and people were compensated to get educated and stay engaged with the project.
Phil Matthews – Executive Director, Nuleaf & Vice-President, GMF Europe
Stefan Mayer – Team Leader – Radioactive Waste Disposal, IAEA

Picking the Right Project – Timelines, Technology, and Policy
This session explored how to evaluate nuclear technologies including small modular reactors (SMRs), advanced reactor designs, reprocessing facilities, & more. Panelists discussed novel applications coming to market & consider how energy communities can support the success of new deployments & the sources of financing for the projects. Right now, there are too many options. Perhaps find a construction partner if you want to be successful. Is the public aware of the basic investments needed in roads, ports, etc.?
Facilitator: Kelle Barfield– Commissioner, Warren County, MS
Kevin Charlton– CEO, NewHold Investment Corp.
Rowen Price– Senior Policy Advisor for Nuclear Energy, Third Way - Crowded field.
Erich Sherer– Director of Strategy NYSERDA

The Forces and Users Driving Nuclear
Hear from energy off takers - AI data center companies & developers, large scale manufacturers, & utilities, to explore why nuclear fits into the business plans of large energy users. Panelists will talk about nuclear market potential, where utilities will fit in, & how hyperscalers & AI are influencing traditional utilities & electricity markets. A study on data centers was mentioned; data centers now have closed loop systems for cooling [reducing water needs].
Facilitator: Jack Craig, Senior Vice President, AtkinsRéalis
Dan Holmes - CoFounder & Pres of N American Ops, Atlas Agro
[https://www.atlasagro.ag/projects/pacific-green-fertilizer/]
Craig Stover - Sr Dir of New Nuclear Deployment, Dominion Engineering
Jeff Uphues– CEO, DC BLOX
Aditi Verma – Asst Professor, U of MI

Snapshot: Regulatory
Patrick White, Fusion & Fission Tech & Reg Expert, Clean Air Task Force. Effective, efficient, predictable regulations are needed.

Commercializing Nuclear: Next-to-Market Technologies
Companies are racing to market with a wide range of technologies. This session provides an opportunity to hear what to expect in terms of the speed of deployment & how economies of scale can be achieved. SRNL is working on the back end of the fuel cycle including packaging and shipping. Also reprocessing of Triso is possible. The Nuclear Scaling Initiative has a reactor selection tool [https://www.nuclearscaling.org/reactors/].
Facilitator: Sandra Wilson– Mayor Pro Tem, Paducah, KY
Bill Bates– Deputy Associate Laboratory Director, Savannah River National Laboratory.
Sophia Brown - Program Officer, Nuclear Materials Security, Nuclear Threat Initiative
Lucas Keesee – TRISO Project Manager, BWXT. What opportunity does that company bring to your community?
Leigh Martin – Head – Integrated Fuel Cycle Section, Oak Ridge National Laboratory.
Gareth Vaughn - Group Director, Energy Programs Ametum. Supply chain is an opportunity, not a bottleneck.

Thursday, April 24

Creating the Right Business Environment for Nuclear Facilities
This panel focused on the economic developer perspective of new nuclear development. Panelists discussed the opportunities that new nuclear can bring to the community, how they cultivate new projects, and what local officials can do to align their community with economic development goals and promising partnerships. Colorado defined nuclear as clean energy. Discuss the environmental advantages of nuclear power, smaller footprint, less mining, and provides baseload power. Opposition to data center based on water, power, and noise.
Facilitator: Karl Dye – Executive Director, Carlsbad Department of Development
Tracy Boatner – President & CEO, East Tennessee Economic Council
Kristen Gamboa – Executive Director, Carlsbad Department of Development
Matt Salomon– Executive Director, Club 20 [https://www.club20.org/]
Adrienne Schweer– Head of Government Affairs, Oklo
Chris Stearns – Representative (District 47-Position 2), Washington State Legislature

Snapshot: How Licensing Works — And Where Your Community Fits In
Now a senior fellow at the Nuclear Innovation Alliance, Peter Hastings shares his experience guiding Kairos Power through the process to obtain the NRC's first advanced reactor license. Learn why not all nuclear is regulated the same way, how local officials can understand the frameworks that apply to their projects, and what construction permit versus operational license means in practical terms.

Developing the Nuclear Supply Chain — Needs and Opportunities
Nuclear is more than just reactors. Panelists discuss existing manufacturing supply chains, & how DOE's push to establish campuses can support building out supply chains — including needs & new opportunities in manufacturing, enrichment, & more. Workforce

is needed – between 85000 and 350000 people in four years. We are currently 1.2 million people short in the trades. Need to boost public support to more than 90%.
Facilitator: Thomas Roddey, VP of Business Development — Energy, Atkins Réalis
Madeline Cohen, Project Manager, EFI Foundation.
Dan Coughlin, Head of Special Projects, Oklo
Nikki Sizemore, Government Affairs Manager, Kairos
Jonathon "JD" Dowell, VP of Nuclear & Environmental Operations, Fluor
Dale Vines, Senior VP of Growth and Development, Studsvik

Managing High-Level Waste and Used Nuclear Fuel to Drive Nuclear Deployment
Panelists discuss the streams produced by nuclear technologies & the prospect of reprocessing, recycling, & other practical uses for nuclear material. Biggest improvement is to clarify the definition of high-level waste based its constituents not the program [weapons or defense versus non-defense]. Orano was cited as being an integrated firm doing mining, fabrication, operations, and waste management. We should look to learn from successful international projects.
Facilitator: Kara Colton, Director of Nuclear Policy, ECA.
Rod Baltzer, CEO, Deep Isolation
Betsy Forinash, TRU Waste Program Director, Navarro.
Harsh Desai, Chief Commercialization Officer, Zeno Power.
Khalil Ghaleb, Advisory Engineer, Orano USA
Bob Miklos, Executive Vice President of Program Assurance, Veolia

Working Lunch: How Are Nuclear Projects Financed?
Nuclear & Georgia Power
Facilitator: Seth Kirshenberg, Executive Director, ECA
Barbara Gutierrez, Managing Director, Global Natural Resources Team, AON
Carl Kress, Regional Director, Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Eurasia, USTDA [https://www.ustda.gov/]

Building National, State, & Local Workforce
Panelists provide an understanding of proven practices in workforce development, changing national workforce needs, & what can be done to address talent attraction & retention. Piketon is looking to hire about 35000 workers in an area that has a population of 220000 total. This will be a challenge, and the unions are working to help with providing training for current needs and uptraining for the future. Need training that can help workers pivot to the next project. Idaho has "nuclear informed" trades program. Best case is where the community colleges work together and not competitively.
Facilitator: Robbie Bennett, President/CEO, SRSCRO
Jennifer Chandler, Council Member, Village of Piketon
Matt Griffin, Head of Nuclear & Regulatory Affairs, Antares
Hope Morrow, Manager of Workforce and Economic Programs, Idaho National Laboratory
Jim Rodgers, Financial Secretary Rapid Response Coordinator, United Steel Workers
April Wade, Executive Director, Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium