



U.S. NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD

**FISCAL YEAR 2026
BUDGET REQUEST**

MAY 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (Board) is an independent agency in the Executive Branch of the federal government. The Board performs ongoing and objective peer review of the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the Secretary of Energy under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) (Public Law 97-425), as amended, including the packaging, transportation, and disposal of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLW). The Board provides a source of independent expert advice to the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Congress on technical issues and reviews DOE's efforts to implement the nuclear waste program.

The Board's budget request for FY 2026 is \$4,000,000. The Board's FY 2026 request reflects its continued strong commitment to sound budgeting and cost-effective management practices and the focus of the Board's leadership on maximizing program performance and efficiency through evidence-based decision making and ongoing evaluation of the agency's performance. The Board's Performance Plan for FY 2026 and the Board's evaluation of its FY 2024 performance are provided in a separate document.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Board is to provide independent expert evaluation of the technical and scientific validity of U.S. Department of Energy activities related to the packaging, storing, transporting, and disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

ABOUT THE BOARD

The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board is an independent agency in the executive branch of the federal government. The Board is comprised of eminent scientists and engineers nominated by the National Academy of Sciences and appointed by the President. It is supported by highly qualified professional staff.

The Board was established in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 (NWPAA) to "...evaluate the technical and scientific validity of activities [related to managing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste] undertaken by the Secretary [of Energy], including

- (1) site characterization activities; and
- (2) activities relating to the packaging or transportation of high-level radioactive waste or spent nuclear fuel."

According to the legislative history of the NWPAA, the purpose of the Board is to provide a source of independent expert advice to DOE and Congress on technical issues and to review DOE's efforts to implement the nuclear waste program. In order to provide timely feedback, the Board is expected to review DOE's activities as they occur, rather than after the fact. As the Administration and Congress decide on a path forward for the disposition of nuclear waste, DOE continues to have responsibility under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act for

managing and disposing of nuclear waste, and the Board's statutory responsibility for evaluating DOE's implementation of those activities remains unchanged. By performing unbiased and ongoing technical and scientific peer review of DOE's nuclear waste management activities, the Board makes an essential contribution to increasing confidence in the scientific process and to informing, from a technical and scientific perspective, decisions on the nuclear waste program. The Board reports its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and Congress.

BOARD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR FYS 2022 THROUGH 2026

The Board established three Strategic Objectives in its Strategic Plan for FY 2022 through 2026. The Strategic Objectives reflect the Board's continuing commitment to its mission established in the NWPA, including (1) conducting an ongoing, independent technical and scientific evaluation of DOE activities related to the NWPA and (2) advising Congress and the Secretary.

During FYS 2022 through 2026, the Board will:

- 1) continue its evaluation of DOE activities related to implementation of the NWPA and relevant amendments to that Act. Based on its evaluation, the Board will report its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to Congress and the Secretary.
- 2) develop objective technical and scientific information that will be useful to policy makers in Congress and the Administration on issues related to SNF and HLW management and disposal. The Board will communicate such information to Congress and the Secretary in letters, reports, and testimony.
- 3) compile information and report to Congress and the Secretary on its findings, conclusions, and recommendations from experience gained during 35 years of reviewing the U.S. nuclear waste management and disposal program and from observing waste management efforts in other countries.

ACHIEVING THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT. On an annual basis, in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act, as amended, the Board's leadership identifies Performance Goals (PGs) and Management Goals (MGs) for the current year and identifies Goals for the subsequent year that will lead to the accomplishment of the Strategic Objectives. The PGs and MGs are included in the Board's Performance Plan.

LEARNING AGENDA APPROACH. The Board's Performance Plan for a given year includes its *Strategic Objectives*, its *PGs*, its *MGs*, and a description of Board attributes, activities, and practices supporting achievement of the Goals. An evaluation of Board performance for the preceding FY is included in the Board's budget request and used as input in updating the Performance Plan and developing the Board's budget request for the subsequent FY. In

updating and implementing the plan, the Board's leadership is committed to using a learning agenda approach by consistently building and using evidence to:

- 1) proactively evaluate the agency's performance to determine what works well and where performance can be improved;
- 2) maximize results by strategically focusing resources and attention where the needs are greatest;
- 3) reinforce the strategic direction, timeliness, and relevance of the Board's technical evaluations of DOE activities;
- 4) adapt agency direction as evidence and context shifts; and
- 5) ensure effective communications with DOE and Congress and ensure other stakeholders are informed of the Board's activities.

Adopting a learning agenda approach ensures that the Board's Performance Goals and Strategic Objectives are prioritized to meet the agency's mission.

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH. To ensure the effective and efficient execution of its mission, as noted above, the Board employs a learning agenda and evidence-based approach to set priorities that guide its decision making, operational planning, and development of its budget. Additionally, in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-19-23, *Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*, the Board has appointed a Chief Data Officer and Data Governance Body.

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE

U.S. NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD SALARIES AND EXPENSES (INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

“For necessary expenses of the U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, as authorized by Public Law 100-203, § 5051, \$4,000,000 to be derived from the Nuclear Waste Fund and to remain available until September 30, 2027.”

FY 2026 BUDGET REQUEST BY OBJECT CLASS

U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board

Budget Request by Object Class

(Figures Rounded in Thousands of Dollars)

Object Class Code	Object Class Title	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
		Enacted	(Full-year CR)	Request
11	Salaries	\$2,473	\$2,522	\$2,522
12	Benefits	\$637	\$650	\$650
21	Travel and Transportation	\$85	\$65	\$40
23.1	Rent	\$384	\$386	\$390
23.3	Communications and Utilities	\$45	\$40	\$39
24	Printing and Reproduction	\$10	\$8	\$6
25	Consultants	\$95	\$75	\$41
25.1/2	Contractual Services - Other	\$120	\$105	\$100
25.3	Contractual Services - Federal	\$180	\$185	\$190
26	Supplies and Materials	\$20	\$16	\$9
31	Equipment	\$15	\$12	\$13
Total Budgetary Resources		\$4,064	\$4,064	\$4,000
<i>Total Full Time Equivalent Employees</i>		<i>16</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>16</i>

DETAILS OF BUDGET REQUEST BY OBJECT CLASS

To fulfill its statutory mandate for reviewing the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the Secretary of Energy related to nuclear waste management and for providing independent technical and scientific information and advice to Congress and the Secretary, the Board requests \$4,000,000 for FY 2026. The Board's request reflects its continuing commitment to efficient and cost-effective budgeting and management practices.

A detailed explanation of the Board's request by object class follows.

OBJECT CLASS 11.0, SALARIES: \$2,522,000

The estimate for this object class includes funding for 11 part-time Board members, one senior executive, professional staff, and General Schedule (GS) administration staff, and includes within-grade increases. The Board members are Special Government Employees and, in accordance with the Board's enabling legislation, each member is compensated at the rate of pay of Executive Schedule Level III. The senior executive acts as the chief operating officer for the Board, and the professional staff members support the Board members in evaluating the technical and scientific validity of DOE activities related to the management and disposal of SNF and HLW. GS staff members perform administrative activities related to the Board's ongoing technical and scientific evaluation and the operation of the organization. Administrative support activities include budget preparation and fiscal management, dissemination of Board publications, information technology activities, facilities management, travel planning, management of meeting logistics, and preparation and implementation of Board responses to federal directives.

The request reflects a pay freeze in civilian salaries for FY 2026 (as directed by OMB) and accounts for Federal Employee Retirement System contributions and supplemental funds for a performance award pool. In accordance with OMB memo M-19-24, *Guidance on Awards for Employees and Agency Workforce Fund Plan*, the Board has identified strategic spending for award funds. The Board has allotted four percent of its projected employee salaries for performance awards for staff members to incentivize continued high-level performance. As a result, the Board's projected awards spending level is \$76,165.

OBJECT CLASS 12.0, CIVILIAN PERSONNEL BENEFITS: \$650,000

The estimate for this object class represents the government's contribution to the government employee fringe benefits for Board members and staff as required by OMB memo M-08-13, *Update to Civilian Position Full Fringe Benefit Cost Factor*.

OBJECT CLASS 21.0, TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION: \$40,000

The estimate for this object class reflects reduced travels costs as the Board plans to host both virtual and in-person meetings as a cost savings measure. The Board expanded its leased office space during the pandemic to increase in-person meeting space and to reduce future travel costs. Travel costs may consist of trips for Board members, staff, and consultants for fact-finding meetings, professional meetings, conferences, orientation activities, national laboratory visits, and

other events, briefings, and venues related to accomplishing the Board's Strategic Objectives and Performance Goals, as detailed in the Board's Performance Plan for FY 2026.

OBJECT CLASS 23.1, RENTAL PAYMENTS TO THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (GSA): \$390,000

The amount requested in this object class category is to cover the expense of rental payments to GSA Public Building Services (PBS) under an Occupancy Agreement for leased office space in Arlington, Virginia. The amount reflected includes the estimated tax assessment, tax escalation fee, and GSA PBS fee for the FY 2026 lease year period.

OBJECT CLASS 23.3, COMMUNICATION, UTILITIES, MISCELLANEOUS: \$39,000

The estimate for this object class represents costs for telephone service, postage, local courier services, video teleconferencing, webcasting support, internet, and mailing services. Furthermore, this amount includes the cost of services under GSA's Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) telecommunications contract.

OBJECT CLASS 24.0, PRINTING AND REPRODUCTION: \$6,000

The estimate for this object class is for costs associated with creating and publishing Board reports that are required by statute to be sent to Congress and the Secretary of Energy, and the Board sends them to other interested parties that request them. The estimate also includes the costs associated with the publication of additional copies of earlier reports and technical materials, as well as such other costs as those associated with publishing meeting notices in the *Federal Register*. In keeping with the federal government's efforts to increase efficiency, the Board makes all of its reports, publications, and correspondence available for download from its website to reduce the number of hard copies it needs to produce.

OBJECT CLASS 25.0, CONSULTANTS: \$41,000

The estimate for this object class includes funding for consultants to support and supplement Board and staff analyses of specific technical and scientific issues as authorized by the Board's enabling statute. Requested funding for this object class also includes estimates for expert consultants to assist the Board in developing and implementing methods that will increase public on-line access to its publications, informational resources, and other Board matters.

OBJECT CLASS 25.1/2, CONTRACTUAL SERVICES – OTHER: \$100,000

The estimate for this object class includes the cost of such items as meeting-room rentals, stenography and audio-visual support services, webcasting services for hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings, and video recording equipment rentals for public meetings; facility maintenance agreements; and professional development for Board supervisors and staff. Other program support contracts include services for report editing and production, as well as provision of an offsite data center to allow Continuity of Operations in the event of loss of power or an incident in the Board's offices, along with contracted commercial information technology (IT)

support in compliance with the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) of 2014. Support includes information security protections to prevent unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction of information and information systems on the Board's network. Furthermore, the Board's network is monitored to timely detect and report cyber incidents and ensure necessary resources are maintained for cybersecurity needs at the Board's offsite data center. This budget estimate also includes funding to ensure the Board complies with Executive Order (E.O.) 13556, *Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)*, E.O. 14028, *Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity*, policies issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 32 CFR Part 2002, *Controlled Unclassified Information*, along with OMB memo M-19-21, *Transition to Electronic Records*. This estimate also includes continued funding to support the Board's requirement to maintain an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program as required in E.O. 12067, *Providing for Coordination of Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Programs*.

OBJECT CLASS 25.3, CONTRACTUAL SERVICES - FEDERAL: \$190,000

The estimate for this object class includes funding for administrative support services provided by other federal agencies, including payroll and accounting services received from GSA Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) as well as human resource (HR) services related to managing electronic official personnel folders, conducting personnel actions, and initiating personnel clearances, and legal support services received from GSA Commissions and Boards Services (CABS). The estimate also includes security background investigations performed by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA), USAJOBS recruitment assistance received through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and other support provided through interagency agreements. The Board's enabling legislation authorizes the procurement of necessary administrative services from GSA on a reimbursable basis. This estimate includes an increase in the costs of payroll and financial reporting and services and approx. \$10K in building security fees levied by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Protective Service (FPS). Furthermore, this estimate encompasses the support received from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Federal Occupational Health Service (FOH) to provide occupational and/or environmental health services as well as personal identity verification (PIV) card support from GSA's Managed Service Office (MSO) for all Board personnel.

OBJECT CLASS 26.0, SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS: \$9,000

This estimate includes anticipated expenses for office supplies; subscriptions to technical publications, on-line academic journals, and research databases; meeting supplies; and off-the-shelf technical reports and studies.

OBJECT CLASS 31.0, EQUIPMENT: \$13,000

This object class includes costs to maintain IT and other electronic equipment, including computer hardware and software. The object class includes funding for the continuation of ongoing maintenance of the Board's IT and physical security equipment, Continuity of Operations, and technical support for the management and ongoing maintenance and upgrades of the Board's cybersecurity initiatives. Funding in this object class also supports

the agency’s initiatives for scaling and securing IT systems to meet Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) and Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) goals, consistent with OMB memo M-24-15, *Modernizing the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP)*.