



U.S. NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD

**STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEARS 2026-2030**

APRIL 2026



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

April 2026



It is my pleasure to present the U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board's *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030*. This plan supersedes the Board's *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2026*. This updated plan describes the Board's mission and values that guide the Board's work, and presents the Board's Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives.

As a federal agency in the Executive Branch, the Board is committed to effectively carrying out its statutory mandate to evaluate the technical and scientific validity of U.S. Department of Energy activities related to the packaging, storage, transport, and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The Board's *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030* provides a roadmap to guide the agency in achieving its Strategic Goals and a benchmark against which to evaluate the Board's performance in meeting those goals in the years ahead.

Peter Swift, Ph.D.
Chair

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U.S. NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD

STRATEGIC PLAN

FISCAL YEARS 2026-2030

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board is an agency in the executive branch of the federal government 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 undertaken by the Secretary [of Energy]” related to implementing the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as amended,

“ ... 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 the 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 activities to manage spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, 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.

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, storage, transport, and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

CONSULTATIONS WITH EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

In developing this Strategic Plan, NWTRB considered the views and feedback of the Congress, received during annual briefings to committees and subcommittees on appropriations and during

other ad hoc meetings requested by Congressional staff. NWTRB also receives and considers input regarding the Board’s mission and priorities offered by members of the public, who provide verbal and written comments during NWTRB public meetings.

VALUES

The Board’s technical and scientific peer review reflects its commitment to the following values:

- **Objectivity**. Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations are based on impartial evaluations of the technical and scientific validity of DOE’s activities.
- **Integrity**. Board members have no real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- **Openness**. The Board holds public meetings annually and the bases for Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations are transparent.
- **Technical and Scientific Competence**. Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations are based on expert assessments and the best available technical and scientific information and methodologies.
- **Timeliness**. Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations are communicated clearly and in time to be useful to Congress and DOE.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The Board has established four Strategic Goals for fiscal years (FY) 2026-2030. The Strategic Goals reflect the Board’s continuing commitment to its mission established in the NWPA, which includes (1) conducting an ongoing, independent evaluation of the technical and scientific validity of DOE activities related to the NWPA and (2) advising Congress and the Secretary.

Strategic Goal #1: Perform timely, independent evaluations of key DOE activities to manage and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

Strategic Goal #2: Maintain awareness of experiences and lessons learned from nuclear waste management activities in the U.S. and other countries.

Strategic Goal #3: Effectively communicate Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Strategic Goal #4: Ensure continuing efficient and effective support of the Board’s mission.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The NWTRB has established Strategic Objectives aligned with its Strategic Goals and covering its major functions and operations. These include management-related outcomes which support the agency’s mission. Annually, NWTRB’s Strategic Objectives are tied to a set of Performance Goals and indicators established to help the agency monitor and understand progress against each objective.

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objective
1. Perform timely, independent evaluations of key DOE activities to manage and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste	a. Maintain awareness of DOE activities
	b. Prioritize DOE activities for Board evaluations
	c. Perform timely evaluations of DOE activities
2. Maintain awareness of lessons learned from nuclear waste management activities in the U.S. and other countries	a. Maintain awareness of U.S. nuclear industry activities that may affect DOE’s nuclear waste management program
	b. Maintain awareness of experiences and lessons learned in other countries during site selection processes for nuclear waste management facilities
	c. Maintain awareness of experiences and lessons learned in other countries during licensing, construction, and commencing operations at nuclear waste management facilities
3. Effectively communicate Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations	a. Produce well-targeted review products (letters, reports, etc.) in a timely manner
	b. Maintain awareness of communication channels and adjust Board communications accordingly
	c. Broadly disseminate Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations
	d. Establish and maintain relationships with government officials and other stakeholders
4. Ensure continuing efficient and effective support of the Board’s mission	a. Develop and maintain an outstanding and interdisciplinary staff (engaged, up-to-date, adaptable leaders, or leaders in the making)
	b. Foster a culture of excellence and teamwork
	c. Ensure up-to-date management and IT infrastructure and processes

OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

NWTRB has developed a detailed list of implementation strategies that may be used to achieve the agency’s Strategic Objectives. It is not intended that all implementation strategies be employed at once. Instead, the tables below provide a listing of possible implementation strategies that serve as a “menu” from which to select annual Performance Goals to include in each NWTRB Annual Performance Plan.

The list of implementation strategies was developed through a collaborative process involving an interdisciplinary team of Board members, the Executive Director, and senior staff members during 2024-2025.

Strategic Goal 1	Strategic Objectives	Implementation Strategies (a subset of these strategies will be identified as Performance Goals, with each Annual Performance Plan)
Perform timely, independent evaluations of key DOE activities to manage and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste	Maintain awareness of DOE activities	Develop and maintain map of relevant DOE activities (including disposal R&D, S&T R&D, IWM/CBS, DOE-EM)
		Conduct information collection meetings (staff-to-staff, Board Fact-Finding, and public meetings)
		Attend program review meetings and conferences
		Obtain and review DOE documents
	Prioritize DOE activities for Board evaluations	Update Strategic Plan every 4 years as required or more frequently if needed
		When developing annual Performance Goals, review Board’s plans for ongoing and anticipated activities to ensure focus on key/priority aspects
	Conduct timely evaluations of DOE activities	When developing annual Performance Goals, review Board’s plans for ongoing and anticipated activities to ensure products will be timely
		Complete planned evaluations on expected timelines

Strategic Goal 2	Strategic Objectives	Implementation Strategies (a subset of these strategies will be identified as Performance Goals, with each Annual Performance Plan)
Maintain awareness of lessons learned from nuclear waste management activities in the U.S. and other countries	Maintain awareness of U.S. nuclear industry activities that may affect DOE's nuclear waste management program	Attend, take notes, and disseminate information from technical conferences
		Attend, take notes, and disseminate information from technical working group meetings
		Attend/observe, take notes, and disseminate information from national standards development meetings
	Maintain awareness of experiences and lessons learned in other countries during site selection processes for nuclear waste repositories	Conduct technical information exchanges
		Attend, take notes, and disseminate information from conferences
		Participate in international working groups
		Conduct site visits to other countries and disseminate information
	Maintain awareness of lessons learned in other countries during licensing, construction, and commencing operations at nuclear waste repositories	Conduct technical information exchanges
		Attend, take notes, and disseminate information from conferences
		Participate in international working groups
		Conduct site visits to other countries and disseminate information

Strategic Goal 3	Strategic Objectives	Implementation Strategies (a subset of these strategies will be identified as Performance Goals, with each Annual Performance Plan)
Effectively communicate Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations	Produce well-targeted review products (letters, reports, etc.) in a timely manner	Produce Board letters after public meetings in a timely manner
		Produce Board reports as appropriate
	Maintain awareness of evolving communication channels and adjust Board’s communications accordingly	Director of External Affairs will monitor social media and provide recommendations to update Board communications
		Brief DOE on Board letters and reports
		Brief Congress on Board letters and reports or other matters, when requested
	Broadly disseminate Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations	Present Board findings, conclusions, and recommendations in a variety of professional settings (e.g., meetings, committees, working groups, universities)
		Produce Fact Sheets, when needed
		Update Board’s website, as needed
	Establish and maintain relationships with government officials and other stakeholders	Accommodate public/stakeholder engagement in Board public meetings, including the posting to the Board’s website the public comments submitted for the record during Board’s public meetings
		Proactively communicate, in person and virtually, with government officials and other stakeholders who have demonstrated interest in the Board’s meetings and ongoing work

Strategic Goal 4	Strategic Objectives	Implementation Strategies (a subset of these strategies will be identified as Performance Goals, with each Annual Performance Plan)
Ensure continuing efficient and effective support of the Board’s mission	Develop and maintain an outstanding and interdisciplinary staff (engaged, up-to-date, adaptable leaders, or leaders in the making)	Support staff attendance and involvement at professional conferences and meetings
		Offer staff training and enrollment in professional development programs, including those that advance their efficiency through application of artificial intelligence
		Align staff recruitment efforts, including position descriptions, with the current and anticipated workforce needs of the Board, adjusting for expertise in particular academic disciplines and cross-disciplinary professional skills, such as artificial intelligence
	Encourage staff to maintain awareness of technological developments, and support staff building subject matter expertise in new technologies, especially those that increase efficiency	
	Foster a culture of excellence and teamwork	Recognize outstanding work, with an emphasis on increasing efficiency, via performance awards and special act or service awards
		Emphasize staff-to-staff teamwork through supervisory input and individual Performance Plans that advances efficiency
	Encourage and support staff member collaboration with Board members on reports, journal papers, etc.	
Ensure up-to-date management and IT infrastructure and processes	[refer to formal Management Goals in the Annual Performance Plan]	

MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES – Factors that are outside the Board’s control could affect the Board’s ability to achieve its Strategic Objectives or Performance Goals. The Board will continue to evaluate the status of the challenges discussed below, identify any new factors, and, if necessary, update its Strategic Objectives and Performance Goals, as appropriate.

- 1) *The Board has no statutory authority to implement, or to require DOE to implement, its recommendations.* The Board is a technical and scientific peer-review body that makes findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The Board’s enabling statute does not obligate DOE to comply with Board recommendations. However, according to the legislative history of the NWPA, in creating the Board, Congress expected that DOE would accept Board recommendations or “...clearly state its reasons for disagreeing.” If DOE does not accept a Board recommendation, the Board can reiterate its recommendation, advise Congress, or both.
- 2) *Operational constraints may impede the Board’s ability to fully meet its Performance Goals on the timetable planned.* Operational and funding constraints may affect the Board’s ability to complete its review of DOE activities and to provide its technical and scientific findings, conclusions, and recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of Energy in accordance with its annual Performance Goals. Funding levels and allocation decisions may also affect the nature and extent of DOE activities that are subject to the Board’s review.
- 3) *Administrative, judicial, or legislative actions may alter nuclear waste policy.* Changes to the national nuclear waste management program or the NWPA made by Congress may also affect the nature or extent of the Board’s technical and scientific review. Since passage of the NWPA in 1987, several administrative or judicial actions have affected the direction of DOE’s nuclear waste management program, and these actions have, on occasion, affected the Board’s work.

CONTRIBUTING PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT 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 and Management Goals that will lead to the accomplishment of the Strategic Objectives. The Performance Goals and Management Goals are included in the Board’s Annual Performance Plan.

ONGOING EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE – Members of the Board’s senior supervisory/executive staff (Director of Administration and Executive Director) continuously monitor and evaluate performance in support of the Board’s mission. As a very small agency (12 FTEs as of September 2025), this evaluation is accomplished by direct observation of personnel work activities. Periodically, the Executive Director briefs the Chair and other Board members on the progress of the agency in meeting its annual Performance Goals and makes adjustments to work activities as needed and as directed by the Chair.

EVIDENCE BASED EVALUATION AND LEARNING AGENDA – The Board’s Performance Plan for a given year includes its *Strategic Objectives*, its *Performance Goals*, its *Management Goals*, and a description of Board activities and practices supporting the achievement of the Goals. The Board’s Performance Plan is updated annually. 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) focus on where the needs are greatest to effectively, efficiently, and accountably fulfill the agency's mission; and
- 3) ascertain how the agency can achieve better results.

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