

Regional Nuclear Workforce Development in the Central Savannah River Area

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INTRODUCTION

An expanding role for nuclear energy in the United States has dramatic implications for the nuclear workforce demand in the two-state region of Georgia and South Carolina known as the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). This region is positioned between major expansion projects at two nuclear power plants, Plant Vogtle in Georgia and V.C. Summer in South Carolina. In addition, the Mixed Oxide Fuel Facility and the Salt Waste Processing Facility projects are underway in the heart of the region at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS).

To strategically address regional workforce demand, a program has been established in the greater CSRA by the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO), a private, non-profit organization that serves as the U.S Department of Energy's designated Community Reuse Organization. The program, called the Nuclear Workforce Initiative, was developed based on results from a distinctive nuclear workforce study and is designed to coordinate nuclear workforce development efforts among regional employers, educational institutions, and economic development organizations across a two-state region.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTUAL WORK

During 2009 the SRSCRO commissioned a study of future workforce needs projected by regional nuclear employers to determine credible estimates of the quantity and timing of the demand for new nuclear workers needed in the greater CSRA. Prior nuclear workforce studies were focused on the entire U. S. industry at a relatively high level with the smallest "slice" covering the entire Southeastern U.S. The study, conducted by the international consulting firm of Booz Allen Hamilton, is the first regional analysis focused on filling both new positions created by the construction of nuclear facilities and positions vacated because of normal patterns of retirement and attrition in the greater CSRA nuclear industry.

Eight regional nuclear employers associated with the Savannah River Site and commercial nuclear power generation participated in the workforce survey from

February through May 2009. Each participating company completed a detailed workforce survey document to estimate the number of job losses due to retirements, attrition and new hires needed over the 2010-2020 period. The survey examined only key job classifications (e.g., requires specialized education or training, long lead times to educate and train new workers or a recognized lack of sufficient quantity of new workers). The survey was not intended to identify any immediate new job opportunities. All individual company data from the participating companies was kept confidential by Booz Allen Hamilton and only aggregate data was shared with participants including the SRSCRO.

Official release and analysis of the Booz Allen Hamilton survey results took place at the SRSCRO Nuclear Workforce Summit held June 11-12, 2009. The Summit included a meeting of nuclear-related stakeholders with Dr. Inés Triay, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management, as the key-note speaker. In addition, the Summit included a full-day working session with review of the workforce data and open dialogue to address workforce development issues. Workforce Summit participants included representatives from each nuclear employer involved in the survey, local two and four year colleges and universities from Georgia and South Carolina, and economic development groups from Georgia and South Carolina. Collectively, attendees reviewed and identified workforce skills and education and training initiatives needed to ensure an adequate long-term workforce for the local nuclear industry.

RESULTS

Results of the regional nuclear workforce study indicated that about 9,650 key job classification new hires will be needed by the combined companies over the next decade to fill new positions and replace losses due to attrition and retirements in the greater CSRA. Employment and training needs were identified in four key job classifications including professional, engineering, craft and technical. More than 50 job types were identified within the key job classifications ranging from computer engineers to chemists, plant operators, sheet metal workers, health technicians, heavy equipment operators and laborers. The combined survey results for

the participating companies indicated that the peak staffing level for key job classifications will grow from the current level of 8,930 to a peak level of 12,877 by approximately 2014 and then will level out to 11,847 near 2020.

Recommendations from the Nuclear Workforce Summit review of regional workforce data and current training programs confirmed a gap between local educational training programs and critical career needs. Summit participants recommended that the SRSCRO lead a coordinated community effort to facilitate long-term workforce development that meets regional nuclear industry demand.

A new program, the Nuclear Workforce Initiative, resulted from the regional nuclear workforce study. To coordinate the Initiative, the SRSCRO hired a dedicated

program manager. Currently, a robust vision and realistic implementation plan is emerging to ensure that regional educational and training programs are available and appropriate to address nuclear workforce needs in the greater CSRA. In January 2010, executive managers from the eight survey-participating companies will take part in a forum to finalize the program mission and objectives. The resulting strategic plan will be implemented through newly formed Nuclear Workforce Initiative subcommittees with the SRSCRO serving as the program facilitator. Additionally, local K-12 school district superintendents are participating in an assessment aimed at strengthening student skills needed for emerging nuclear careers. This unified regional approach provides a model for other communities facing nuclear workforce development challenges.