Project Aim 2020

U.S.NRC
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Protecting People and the Environment

PROJECT
AIM
2020

Appendix C - Project Plan, Gap Analysis, and Approach

In the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014, the senior leadership meetings created awareness among the leaders about necessary improvements in planning, budgeting, and performance management, to address workload changes and future expectations. As these concerns arose within the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff in the spring of 2014, the NRC's Executive Director for Operations (EDO) directed the staff to establish a small project team led by a Deputy Executive Director for Operations (DEDO) and a process to build upon the results of the two senior leadership meetings and develop specific improvements, deliverables, and recommendations to prepare the NRC for the future.

Team

Project Aim 2020 involved senior staff leaders from across the NRC under the auspices of the EDO and the Chief Financial Officer. A team of staff members from the Office of the Executive Director for Operations (OEDO) and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) led the project. A Guiding Coalition comprised of senior leaders and managers representing headquarters and regional offices, including regulatory, corporate, and other offices, advised the team. The team met approximately monthly with the Office Directors and Regional Administrators and every other month with the Commission throughout the course of the project.

Approach
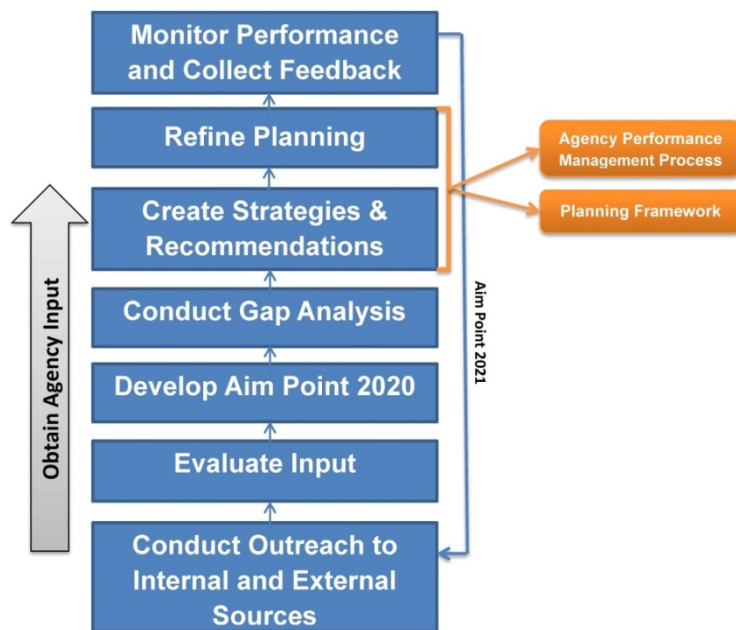The flow chart in Figure 1 shows the Project Aim 2020 activities.

Figure 1 – Project Aim 2020 Activities

Conduct Outreach to Internal and External Sources: The project team received input from a broad array of internal and external stakeholders to obtain perspectives, opinions, best practices, and information to support the project. Formal interviews took place with external stakeholders and a complete list of those groups interviewed is contained in Appendix G – Outreach Meetings. The team consulted many published books, articles, and papers to assist in the planning and execution of the project. The project team coordinated and received perspectives from the Project Aim Guiding Coalition, as well as from the Office Directors, Regional Administrators, and Business Line owners.

Evaluate Input: The information gathered as part of the outreach efforts was analyzed and evaluated to form the foundation for developing the scenarios, understanding the current state of the agency, and identify some of the challenges that exist.

Develop/Refine the Aim Point: The project team developed Aim Point 2020, a set of scenarios for the projected agency workload and operating environment over the next five years. The team followed the approach described in Building Higher Performance Government through Lean Six Sigma – A Leader's Guide to Creating Speed, Agility, and Efficiency, 2011, by Price, Mores, and Elliotte as a guide. A variety of leading private and public sector organizations use this approach as a key element of planning and enhancing operational excellence, agility, and efficiency. The basic premise of scenario analysis is that it is better to get the future imprecisely right in our planning than precisely wrong. Therefore, rather than choosing one definitive future scenario and planning for that future, scenario analysis considers multiple futures. The scenario analysis helps the NRC anticipate and prepare for change, rather than reactively responding to unexpected changes when they occur. The scenarios described in Appendix E – Alternative Scenarios and Landscape Assessment are hypothetical and may not actually occur as described. However, some combination of the elements of these scenarios will likely occur. Because the future is dynamic and changing, the probability of occurrence of these elements has not been established. This approach builds on the experience of the past and the strengths of the present, to deliver future success.

Conduct Gap Analysis: The team conducted a gap analysis to compare the current state to the Aim Point 2020 scenarios to identify the gaps, obstacles, and opportunities for improvement.

Current State formulation: The project team collected and evaluated information from interviews, assessments, research, and trend analysis to understand the current state (FY 2014) of the agency's business lines and product lines.

Figure 2 - Information collection and analysis
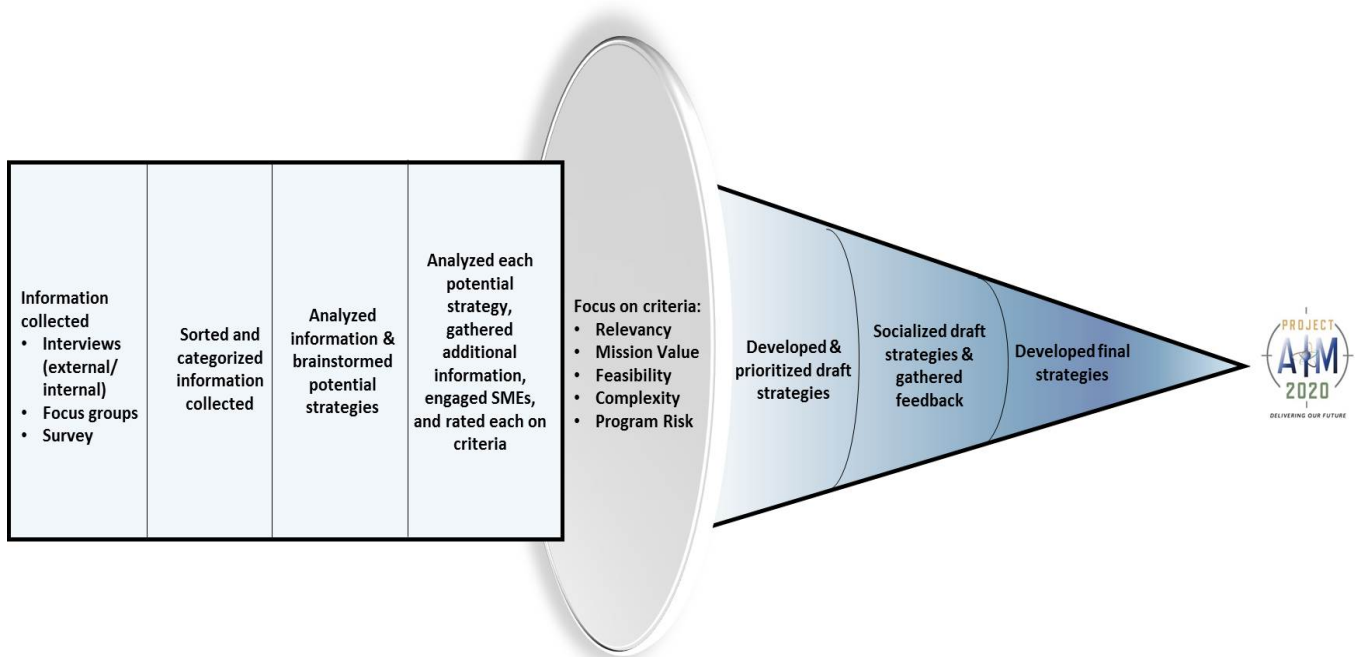
Information Collection:

Interviews: All senior managers, Office Directors, and Regional Administrators were interviewed using the elements of the focus group facilitator guide to ensure the interviews consistently asked a standard set of questions.

Focus Groups: Participants received the Aim Point 2020 scenarios as pre-work to prepare for a focus group session. Each focus group was facilitated by a member of the NRC's Facilitator Corps and followed a facilitator guide with a standard script, set of questions, and data collection methodology. A total of 23 sessions with 232 participants were conducted, including two sessions in each regional office, and one session at the Technical Training Center.

Survey: The team developed an open-ended set of questions as a survey to act as a virtual focus group to provide an opportunity for individuals who were not able to participate in a focus group to comment. Approximately 100 people participated in the survey.

**Project Aim 2020
Participation in Focus Groups and Survey**
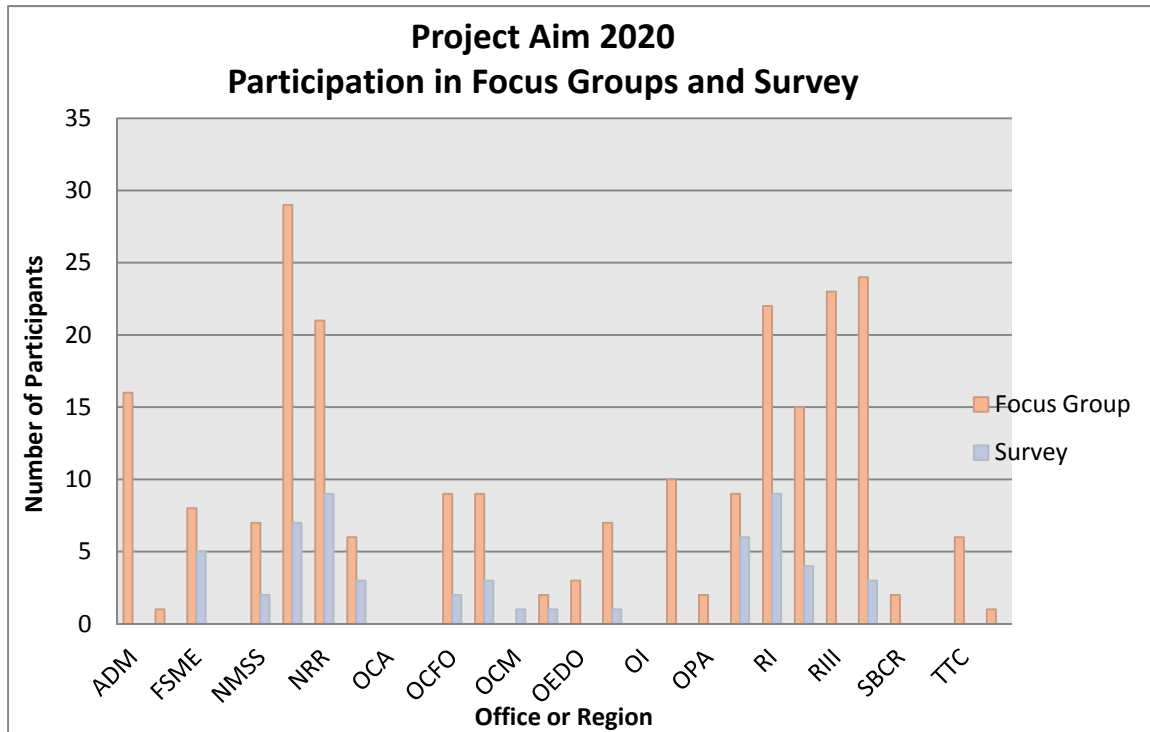
External Stakeholders: The team identified a list of external stakeholders representing a range of perspectives relevant to the current and projected work of the NRC. The team met with the stakeholders individually, reviewed the purpose and approach of Project Aim 2020, and posed questions related to the projected environment, workload, performance of the NRC, and suggested best practices. The team collected and reviewed literature provided by the stakeholders, which was generally publicly available. The team also participated in the Federal Foresight Community of Interest to exchange information on scenario analysis and foresight methods and relevant Federal agency experience and best practices.

Literature: The team identified, reviewed, and assessed a large variety of literature related to improving effectiveness, efficiency, performance, agility; trends and drivers affecting agencies and society; scenario analysis and foresight methods; and other relevant topics.

Information Sorted, Categorized, and Analyzed: The team received over 2,000 comments and organized them to assist in the team analysis. The team met as a group to review each comment and brainstormed a preliminary set of 140 recommendations. Each team member conducted additional research into each recommendation using the following factors:

1. Relevancy – pertained to how well the strategy or suggested improvement contributes to making the NRC a more effective, efficient, agile, proactive, and higher performing organization.

2. Mission Value – specifically referred to how much the suggestion or strategy, if implemented successfully, would help the agency in accomplishing our safety and security mission. (Note that this rating was double weighted)

3. Feasibility – pertained to how easily, pragmatically, and readily the suggestion could be implemented.

4. Complexity – pertained to the breadth, scope, and interconnectedness of the strategy to other elements of NRC's regulatory framework and infrastructure.

5. Program Risk – pertained to the risk of failure of implementation of the recommendation with respect to the mission.

6. Timing – Timing is not a criterion that was used for rating strategies. Instead, timing was used to group the strategies based on the projected time required to successfully implement the strategy following Commission review. Quick Wins are strategies that can be readily and directly implemented with minimal approval and commitment of agency resources (e.g. less than four weeks). Short-term strategies can be successfully implemented within a few months (e.g., one to three). Elements of the strategy may be implemented after this initial period (e.g., training, monitoring, collecting input), but the core elements of the strategy would be completed. Long-term strategies require more than three months of elapsed time to successfully implement. This would include strategies that require additional analysis, process improvements, and related elements to support successful implementation or a decision to launch or further refine the strategy.

The team regrouped to review each recommended strategy, validated the rating, and determined the strategies that would be part of the roadmap or be deferred. Using the relevancy factor for priority and the mission value factor for value, the team forced rankings based on a Priority/Value analysis and created the draft the roadmap.

Create Strategies and Recommendations: The team conducted a series of reviews, research, and sought feedback to identify the strategies that would be recommended. The team members used guidance mentioned above to ensure consistent application of the factors in evaluating the strategies. The final list of strategies in Appendix H – Ranking and Scoring of strategies is mapped to the recommended strategies listed in the report and Appendix A – Recommendations. The following is a brief description of how the team refined the set of recommended strategies:

1. After the team completed their initial review and ranking of the recommended strategies, the team regrouped to review each recommended strategy, validate the rating, and determine if it would become part of the roadmap or be deferred based on its relative merit.

2. The team presented the remaining recommended strategies to the Guiding Coalition and senior leadership for feedback. The team also conducted additional research and interviews to determine the strategies to be pursued, refined, or deferred.

3. The team presented the refined set of strategies to the Guiding Coalition and senior leadership to form the final set of recommended strategies.

Based on feedback and additional information received, the team developed the final set of strategies, recommendations, and roadmap included in the report sent to the Commission for their comment and direction.

Refine Planning: The current planning and budget formulation process will be adjusted based on the approved recommendations.

Monitor Performance and Collect Feedback: Measures will be added to the Quarterly Performance Reviews to monitor progress towards achieving Project Aim 2020 recommendations.

Aim Point 2021: The Project Aim 2020 activities represented in Figure 1, were developed to be sequential and to provide an annual repeatable process to revise the initial projected Aim Point 2020 and to develop additional recommendations for Aim Point 2021. An annual review of a lessons learned assessment of performance will provide feedback to refine the planning processes and deliver additional near-term actions and long-term recommendations.