

Idaho Advanced Nuclear Energy Task Force

May 21, 2026 Meeting Summary

Idaho Falls, Idaho

Modernizations in Federal Nuclear Energy Policy

Seth Cohen, Chief Counsel for Nuclear Policy, U.S. Department of Energy

Mr. Cohen described how Idaho's nuclear legacy and workforce are strong factors the DOE is considering for Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus designation. Mr. Cohen confirmed that the DOE is considering three NLIC locations for colocation purposes. Twenty-seven states submitted NLIC responses. States will be selected through a three-step process. The first is confirming state interest and answering questions. The second is negotiating an MOU to set expectations and high-level agreements. The third is an operating agreement that sets definitive terms for 100-year site management. DOE hopes to execute the third step this summer. DOE also wants to leverage this opportunity to support workforce development.

In response to how the ISA will continue to protect Idaho's interests, support the DOE/Navy agreements, and emphasize the NLIC project benefits, DOE sees the ISA as a barrier that must be negotiated if Idaho wants to move forward. DOE aims to turn existing liabilities into future assets. DOE aims to use the NLICs to turn spent fuel into usable assets and close the fuel cycle. DOE is still committed to protecting public health and safety, natural resources, and the environment.

Regarding the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, Mr. Cohen saw the best opportunity at congressional reform coming from a multi-state approach in alignment with the President's and Secretary's vision.

Mr. Cohen emphasized the need for state legislatures to be armed with accurate nuclear information to bring back to their constituencies. Regarding increasing AI development, Mr. Cohen noted the gap between power required and power available. The public has recently mobilized against data center development. The affirmative story that needs to be told is how data centers are a core part of the story of human flourishing. Data centers produce more durable jobs per megawatt. Without the large demand presented by AI data centers, the nuclear development conversation wouldn't be possible.

Mr. Cohen also highlighted the history of collaboration between the DOE and NRC. While each agency performs fundamentally different functions, continued coordination across interagency project operations will be needed to reduce the lead time to licensing.

Mr. Cohen stated that DOE has had many conversations with DOW and what to do with spent fuel. DOE released an RFA in April 2026 to garner interest from companies to recycle this

fuel. The President also directed the creation of a HALEU stockpile for launchpad demonstrations. That is all the information he can share at this point.

In conclusion, Mr. Cohen stated DOE is weighing several criteria for NLIC selection. These criteria will be shared with states soon. Colocation of all the NLIC functions is key. The single most important factor from Mr. Cohen's perspective is the feasibility of actually building things within state and its legislative framework.

Economic and Financial Development Potential

Yasir Arafat, President and Chief Technology Officer, Aalo Atomics

Idaho has a rich nuclear history. The historical model of building large nuclear reactors that leveraged economies of scale does not work today due to how long the process takes. Today's largest load growth is coming from data centers that can be completed within two to three years. To meet this load, the second atomic age must focus on economies of numbers.

Aalo has an established pilot nuclear facility in Austin, Texas. Before going commercial, Aalo needs to build a "gigawatt" factory that can produce about one hundred reactors per year and employ about five hundred to one thousand employees. Ideally, a single factory could produce one or more gigawatts of generation per year. Aalo have a robust supply chain of more than one hundred thirty suppliers across thirty-five states and six counties. The gigawatt factories can play a role in the Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus vision.

Aalo Atomics has strong roots at INL where I used to work on the MARVEL Program. Aalo are a 2.5 year old company headquartered in Austin. The company raised a lot of money and has about 170 people and is getting to 500 very soon.

Last September, Aalo didn't have a reactor concept. They put together a team to figure this out. The entire design and system is vertically integrated. The current reactor is being authorized under DOE, not NRC. Aalo built a reactor in four weeks and the entire facility in thirty-six days. They installed the reactor in seven days without sacrificing safety or quality. Aalo are leveraging the entire fuel market to create our fuel.

The company is very close to reaching DOE's readiness review, after which they can test for criticality. By the end of the year, Aalo will finish the Aalo X with 10 MW output. They want to add a data center to demonstrate how nuclear and AI data centers can be collocated. The company's goal is to deploy the first commercial Aalo Pod which will have five reactors.

Cristina Paredes, Executive Director, South Carolina NEXUS

Ms. Paredes's presentation highlighted how Tech Hubs support the US Department of Commerce, support growth in targeted sectors, and strengthen the US's competitiveness. SC NEXUS is focused on grid reliability and stability. SC NEXUS is the only statewide Tech Hub.

SC NEXUS is energy-first focused and anchored around energy security to meet growing demand needs. Everything is done in accordance with administration priorities and aligned with private sector partners. SC NEXUS covers everything from nuclear, smart grids, distributed energy resources, and energy storage. In the two years since launch, SC NEXUS has created \$1.77 from every \$1 of US DOC funding.

Across the program, SC NEXUS is focused on having the private sector's voice in the room and leading the charge on the issues. We are building out large-scale storage systems and grid emulation, which will be the largest grid emulation facility in the world once complete. We are also working on cybersecurity projects with the Savannah River National Laboratory. To support all this, Ms. Paredes notes the large workforce and innovation ecosystems.

SC NEXUS has attracted businesses to the state, support business development teams, and create many new jobs. SC NEXUS provides a structured engagement process to ensure every opportunity follows a consistent pathway from identification to support. One piece of advice given was to ensure open lines of communication between DOC and the Tech Hubs to leverage any opportunities that arise.

Ms. Paredes noted how important workforce development is to commerce. All of South Carolina's universities are working with SRNL on core issues. DOE expects the nuclear workforce to triple by 2050. About 40% of the nuclear workforce is expected to retire in the next decade. Delays in nuclear staffing could have cascading effects across the industry. SC NEXUS is closely working with the technical college system to scale these efforts. South Carolina is not only aiming for criticality but also the workforce to support it.

Rick Youngblood, Idaho State Director, USDA Rural Development

USDA Rural Development has over eighty programs for rural community support across grants and other financial instruments. While Michael Pape and Chris McLean with the USDA Rural Utilities Service could not make it due to flight cancellations, they passed along this message:

"We are working hard to fulfill President Trump's agenda for unleashing American energy. The efforts by the Governor's Task Force on Advanced Energy align well with our initiative to fund nuclear power purchase agreements by electrical cooperatives. The Palisades Nuclear Power Plant in Covert, MI, that is coming back online this summer is a perfect example. RUS is helping with the power purchase agreement for Wolverine Electric Cooperative to have a long-term PPA

with the Palisades. RUS provides the financial tools and toolbox for our customers, namely electric cooperatives, to serve their customers with low cost, reliable electricity. We are celebrating the 90th anniversary of the passage of the Rural Electrification Act this month which set the groundwork for the work we do today with our electric, water, and telecommunications programs.”

Reactor and Fuel Line Pilot Updates

Dr. Jess Gehin, Associate Laboratory Director for Nuclear Science and Technology, Idaho National Laboratory

The reactor pilot program multiple companies working towards the goal of three reactors reaching criticality by July 4, 2026. As projects increase, the timeline continues to be updated. Following criticality, projects will continue to prototype, then move to licensing and deployment. The pilot program selected ten companies and eleven projects. Several other reactors are reaching criticality.

The program needs acceleration on fuels. Some companies have made development decisions based on what fuel is already available. Others are developing new supply chains for new fuels. The two primary projects are Oklo’s Aurora Fuel Fabrication project and Standard Nuclear’s TRISO project at Oak Ridge.

The DOME project is now open for business. Construction was finished in March, and the crane was installed in April. INL currently has an open RFA for developers to use DOME for about one year. DOME will first support Radiant Nuclear’s Kaleidos project beginning in June.

Oklo is currently developing their reactor site with a planned 2028 startup date using recycled EBR-II fuel.

The pilot project has been very successful. The Nuclear Energy Launch Pad will use about 2,000 acres near existing electrical equipment. Four projects were selected: General Matter, Radiant R50, NuCube/Idaho State University, and Deployable Energy.