



Strategic Plan

The Regulatory Cooperation Forum (RCF)

2024 – 2028

June 2024

Foreword

I am honoured to present to you the Regulatory Cooperation Forum's (RCF) Strategic Plan, which sets out a new four-year vision for our member-driven organization.

As the world seeks a better future to address climate change and provide greater energy security and sustainability, the nuclear sector is experiencing a time of growth. This growth is observed both in countries with established nuclear infrastructure and policy frameworks and in those that are newly embarking on nuclear energy.

The RCF is vital for member states. Working together within the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) framework, the RCF provides access to the knowledge and experience of trusted and established regulators as embarking countries pursue the structuring and building of core regulatory functions for their own independent regulatory bodies. This sharing of knowledge and experience extends to all aspects of the role of a regulator, from attracting and retaining staff and, legal affairs, managing technical support to fostering a culture of safety.

Furthermore, newly embarking nuclear countries are looking for help from the RCF's experienced membership to identify and fill gaps, establish guidelines to direct industry, assess and license facilities, and develop methods to inspect those facilities to ensure compliance, all of which will result in more focused outcomes.

Close working relationships among recipients and providers directly contribute to safer nuclear facilities. Through the new Strategic Plan, the RCF will lead to results that benefit both providers and recipient member states.

By enhancing its coordination functions through transparent bilateral and international assistance to recipient countries, the RCF can help improve nuclear safety and strengthen cooperation, leading to a high level of confidence in the deployment of nuclear technologies such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) or large nuclear power plants.

It will also create synergies within multiple international networks resulting in efficiencies and a reduction in duplication.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Canada, the European Commission and to Japan, for their steadfast financial support towards RCF activities; I urge other member countries to provide financial or in-kind contributions.

To keep pace with emerging global technological advancements, I am committed to ensuring that the RCF will be able to provide better-coordinated assistance, better coordination of resources, and a maximization of information-sharing.

These are the hallmarks of the RCF that I envision as we move forward together.

Mr. Ramzi Jammal, Chair of the Regulatory Cooperation Forum
Acting Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

The Strategic Plan for 2024-2028 is developed to reflect the commitment of RCF to build and enhance the capacity of IAEA member states to meet current and future challenges arising from emerging technologies.

Keeping in view the vision and mission of RCF, I foresee enhanced cooperation among RCF members. I urge RCF members to evaluate their regulatory practices against the “common characteristics of a competent and effective regulatory body” set in the strategic plan for 2024-2028 and identify areas of strength and improvement. Accordingly, share the experiences among RCF members to support each other in strengthening capabilities in line with the common characteristics, thus ensuring its vision and mission. I wish to call for effective and robust cooperation amongst nuclear regulators and with all stakeholders to achieve a high level of nuclear safety commensurate with IAEA safety standards.

Mr. Faizan Mansoor, Vice Chair of Regulatory Cooperation Forum
Chairman of Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority

Executive Summary

The Regulatory Cooperation Forum (RCF) is a member-driven forum of nuclear safety regulators established in June 2010. Many embarking and expanding countries have now benefited from RCF support activities and successfully developed competent regulatory organizations and have effective regulatory frameworks.

The RCF's first Strategic Plan (2020-2024) was developed to provide direction and focus for future activities to ensure continued effectiveness and sustainability in a changing nuclear power sector environment. A comprehensive survey of the effectiveness of the RCF Programme was conducted, and the Evaluation Report that summarized the survey results and provided suggestions for future actions was published in 2023. It is also noted that there has been a significant development within the global nuclear sector towards the deployment of nuclear technologies. For example, Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and steady progress of embarking countries developing their regulatory infrastructure for nuclear power.

This new Strategic Plan (2024-2028) sets the vision for the next 4 years period, builds on the successes of the previous plan, and confirms the background to the RCF's activities, vision, mission, and values, as described in the table below. It also identifies a set of new strategic priorities including, benefiting from different perspectives through the Steering Committee and Plenary meeting, as well as explicitly captured in the Evaluation Report.

1. Improve facilitation and coordination of assistance among RCF members through systematic planning and implementation of Support Meetings (meetings between a recipient country and multiple potential provider countries).
2. Improve RCF Coordination, optimization of resources, and the effectiveness of meetings by refining the scope of information exchanged among RCF members.
3. Enhance RCF participation and membership contributions by clarifying RCF members' roles and responsibilities, together with a systematic process to confirm members' willingness to satisfy them.
4. Maximize RCF information sharing as reflected in this Strategic Plan, through cooperation and coordination with other external groups and organizations or other Forums (e.g., SMR Regulators Forum, TSO Forum, FNRBA).
5. Enhance RCF communication arrangements and activities.

This strategic plan also includes for the first time a Foreword from the RCF Chair and Vice Chair providing a personalised vision and commitment to the future work of the RCF. An RCF Operating Plan will be developed, containing, time-bound actions with Key Performance Indicators in order to deliver the Strategic Priorities and enable the RCF to monitor and evaluate its progress toward achieving its vision.

The RCF will continue to consider the issues of funding and resources to assure the effectiveness and sustainability of the RCF in achieving its mission.

RCF Vision, Mission, and Values

<i>Vision</i>	<i>Dedicated to enabling effective, robust cooperation amongst nuclear regulators</i>
<i>Mission</i>	<i>To assist RCF members in the development of effectively independent and robust nuclear regulators by</i> <i>• Supporting regulatory infrastructure development</i> <i>• Optimizing resources by eliminating duplication through improved coordination</i> <i>• Promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation</i> <i>• Applying IAEA standards and guidance consistently</i> <i>• Responding to the needs of embarking countries at different stages of development</i>
<i>Values</i>	<i>Openness, Responsiveness, Excellence, Commitment, Respect, Inclusiveness</i>

Background to RCF

The Regulatory Cooperation Forum (RCF) is a member-driven forum of nuclear safety regulators established in June 2010.

The Forum promotes the sharing of regulatory knowledge and experience through international cooperation (Appendix 1) with the goal of achieving a high standard of nuclear safety that is consistent with the IAEA safety standards.

The RCF comprises countries with advanced nuclear power programmes and countries that are planning to expand or introduce the use of nuclear power. RCF members are regulatory bodies for nuclear safety and therefore the primary focus of the RCF is nuclear safety whilst taking into consideration Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards interface issues.

The importance of the RCF and its activities is reflected in Member States' request for assistance from the RCF and provider country involvement. The IAEA's continuing support of the RCF activities is stated in its most recent Nuclear Safety Review. The IAEA works as the RCF Secretariat to implement and facilitate the RCF activities.

Many embarking and expanding countries have now benefited from RCF support activities and successfully developed competent regulatory organizations and effective regulatory frameworks. Indeed some recipient member states are now contributing to the work of the RCF in a provider capacity.

The RCF's first Strategic Plan (2020-2024) provided direction and focus for its activities during the period in order to ensure its continued effectiveness and sustainability in a changing nuclear power sector environment. It is noted that during this period there has been a significant development within the global nuclear sector towards the deployment of new nuclear technologies and notably Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). Whilst recognizing this change the RCF will continue to provide support to embarking countries on a technology-neutral basis but recognizing the need to coordinate its activities with other forums and networks that are dealing with new technologies and SMRs.

In June 2022, the RCF Steering Committee evaluated the RCF's progress and achievements based on the results of the comprehensive survey provided to all the RCF members. This Strategic Plan reflects the key conclusions and outcomes of the evaluation report.

Additional information about the RCF including the Terms of Reference, Membership, and other documents can be found on the RCF website.

Purpose of New Strategic Plan

The purpose of this document is to set out the new strategic priorities for the RCF covering the period 2024-2028 and to recognize the RCF's achievements to date. The new strategic plan builds on the previous RCF Strategy (2020-2024) and confirms the background to the RCF's activities, vision, mission, and values. It is intended to be used by RCF members, the RCF secretariat, and external stakeholders.

Objectives of RCF

The **purpose** of the RCF is to promote the sharing of regulatory knowledge and experience between RCF Members with the goal of achieving a high level of nuclear safety that is consistent with the IAEA safety standards.

The **objectives** of the RCF are to:

- Promote collaboration and cooperation among RCF members to improve coordination of IAEA and other international support for regulatory infrastructure development.
- Contribute to achieving and sustaining a high level of nuclear safety that is consistent with the IAEA safety standards; and
- Optimize resources among RCF members and improve coordination of IAEA and other international support to ensure that it is complementary.

To complement the above objectives, the RCF has identified common characteristics of a competent and effective Nuclear Regulatory Body as described within the IAEA Safety Standards and Guides. The characteristics identified below comprise the high-level areas of the Regulatory Infrastructure where RCF support to recipient countries could be provided to the greatest effect.

- **Independent** – supported by legislation and the government.
- **Competent** – through effective
 - Human resources development including attracting and retaining staff
 - Management of **Technical Support Organization**
 - Development and maintenance of an **Integrated Management System** while fostering a strong Culture of Safety
 - **Developing and maintaining the Regulatory infrastructure and legal framework**
- Well-Developed Core **Regulatory Functions**
 - Regulations and guides
 - Review and Assessment and Authorization
 - Regulatory Inspection and Enforcement
 - Emergency Preparedness and Response
 - Communication and Consultation with Interested Parties
- Fostering **international cooperation**
- **Agile**, for example, has the ability to engage with and embrace new and emerging technologies.

RCF Vision

Dedicated to enabling effective, robust **cooperation** amongst nuclear regulators.

RCF Mission Statement

To assist RCF members in the development of effectively independent and robust nuclear regulators by

- Supporting regulatory infrastructure development
- Optimizing resources by eliminating duplication through improved coordination
- Promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation
- Applying IAEA standards and guidance consistently
- Responding to the needs of embarking countries at different stages of development

RCF Values Statement

- Openness – promoting trust among members, and sharing information and knowledge in an open and transparent manner
- Responsiveness – flexibility in adding value to member countries through targeted interventions
- Excellence – striving for continuous improvement and for ensuring the application of lessons learned
- Commitment – demonstrating a results-based service through active participation
- Respect – showing appreciation and understanding of diverse points of view
- Inclusiveness - providing equal access to opportunities and resources

Strategic Priorities

The Strategic Priorities have been derived from the review and evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan and are focused on the enhancement of RCF functionality and support. The outcome of the review consolidates the RCF activities that are working well and identifies areas for further development. Continuous improvement and response to a changing nuclear environment are important to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the RCF and the quality of its support to Member States.

An RCF Operating Plan will be developed, containing, time-bound actions with Key Performance Indicators to deliver the Strategic Priorities and enable the RCF to monitor and evaluate its progress toward achieving its Vision.

The following Strategic Priorities have been identified for delivery by the RCF during the next 4-year period:

- 1. Improve facilitation and coordination of assistance among RCF members through the systematic planning and implementation of Support Meetings (meetings between recipient countries and multiple potential provider countries).**

Process for the implementation of bilateral/ multilateral (e.g., regional) support through Support Meetings

- Active Recipient sends “Table of Action Plan and Request for the Support” (Master List) to RCF Secretariat, 2 months in advance of Support Meeting
- RCF Secretariat distributes the submitted Master List to members
- Conduct Support Meeting – meeting between selected Active Recipient and multiple Providers, where Recipient gives overview and justification on requested support, and Providers give a response which supports activities they have intention to support – organized during SC Meeting (usually once a year)
- Active Recipient enters bilateral interactions with Providers that declared intent to support during Support Meeting – to finalize and agree a plan for implementation of selected activities (to be done within 6 months after Support Meeting)
- Active Recipient provides Secretariat with agreed Master List
- Prior to each Steering Committee (SC) meeting, Active Recipient provides an update on implementation through Master List – distributed 2 weeks before the SC Meeting
- Bilateral Meetings with RCF Leadership and Secretariat are utilized to review and supplement the Master List, as needed.

2. Improve RCF coordination, optimization of resources, and the effectiveness of the meetings through refining the scope of information exchanged among RCF members.

- Continue the practice of the recipient country's annual progress reporting on support activities (bilateral, multi-lateral, regional) and identification of future regulatory infrastructure support needs.

Recipient countries' reporting should **not be limited to activities initiated through RCF** but instead should include all the activities supporting the development of their regulatory infrastructure

Identify and report on simple and representative **Key Performance Indicators** including the evaluation of the utilization and added value of support activities.

- **Providers should clearly identify and report** on areas in which they are most qualified to assist actively and which add the most value in bilateral/ multilateral support
- **Identification of other coordination exchanges and support mechanisms** for the purpose of supporting recipient countries with an enhanced and tailored approach to their support needs.

3. Enhance RCF participation and membership contributions by clarifying RCF members' roles and responsibilities together with a systematic process to confirm members' willingness to satisfy them.

Membership (*)	Major expected roles and responsibilities (see 1., 2.)	Measures to confirm the willingness of members
Active recipients	Report on the development of regulatory infrastructure and support needs to be addressed through RCF. (see 1., 2.)	Steering Committee, annually
Providers	Share their knowledge and experience. Provide assistance to active recipients if applicable.	Participation in RCF Steering Committee. Providers' participation in Support Meetings (in person or virtually) Report on its willingness together with identification of support areas and plans to assist.
Recipients (Not currently satisfying active recipient status)	Share their knowledge and experience, with a clear intention to introduce or expand the nuclear power programme	Provide justification to retain recipient status every two years,
Observers	Expected to eventually become RCF members or have other justification for attendance e.g., share their knowledge and experience.	Provide justification every two years, e.g., transition to become RCF members, willingness to share knowledge and experience

(*) One member can have two types, e.g., provider/ recipient

4. Maximize RCF information sharing as reflected in this Strategic Plan, through cooperation and coordination with other external groups and organizations or other Forums (e.g., SMR Regulators Forum, TSO Forum, FNRBA).

- Develop an implementation plan to coordinate with other external groups, organizations, and Forums in a systematic way, e.g.,
 - Awareness raising of activities of other Forums in RCF meetings and vice versa.
 - Identifying the activities where RCF members will benefit from other Forums whilst avoiding duplication, e.g., Educational Workshops by other Forums for embarking countries
 - Seeking the possibilities to have joint activities that can be of benefit to the RCF and the other forums

- As many active recipients are considering the deployment of SMR technology, specifically establish activities with the SMR Regulators' Forum to enable those active recipients to benefit from current International regulatory thinking and experience in this area.

5. Enhance RCF Communication Arrangements and Activities

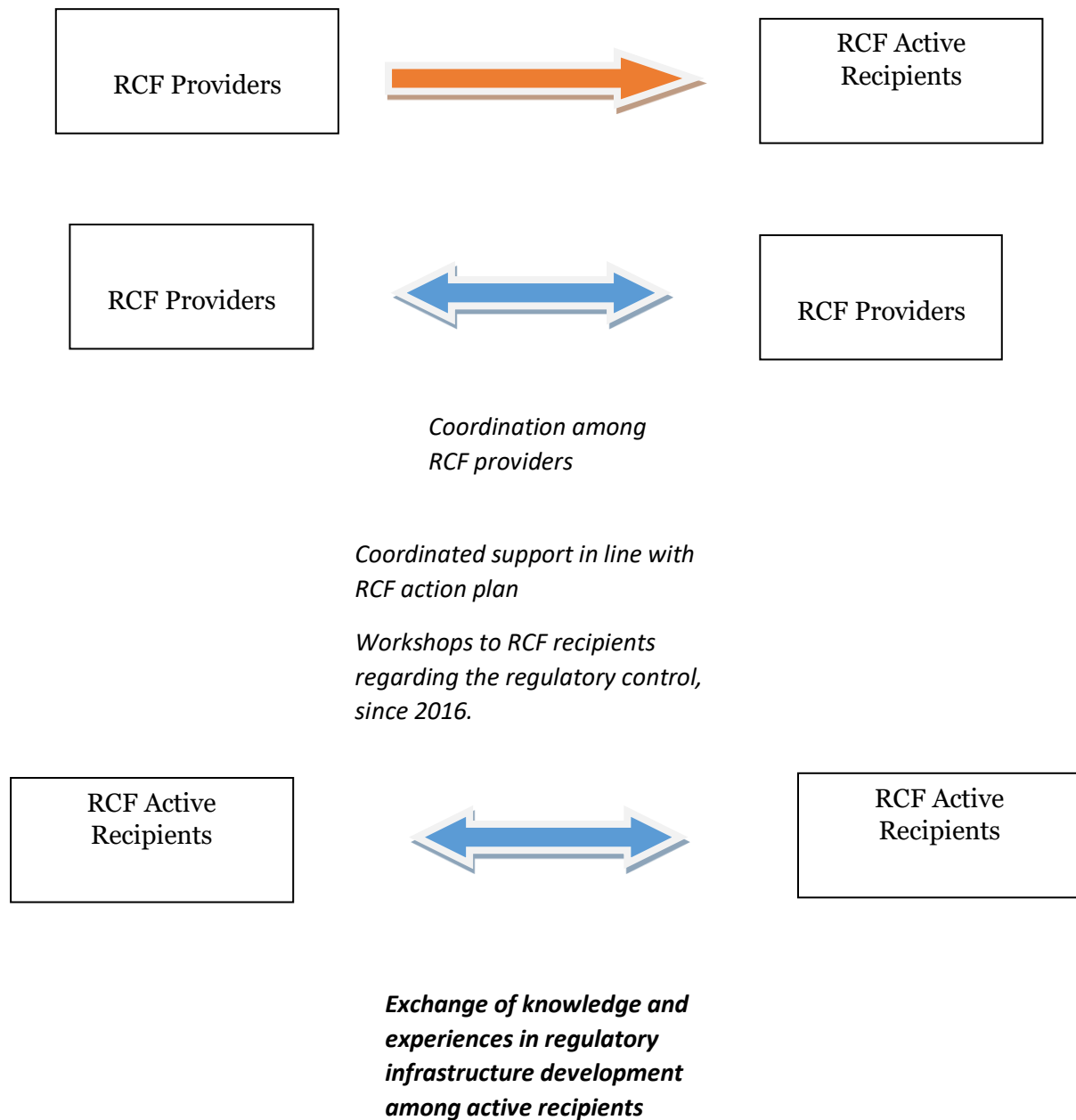
- Accountability and Information exchange through the RCF website, including revamping the current structure and regular updating of contents
- Systematic communication among RCF members following RCF activities
- Develop new modalities for communication with non-members

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategic plan an ongoing evaluation mechanism with clear measurable criteria, including key performance indicators (KPI) will be developed to monitor the progress of actions and the delivery of the strategic priorities. In addition, a review of the strategy itself towards the end of its period, and at mid-way point as necessary, will be completed considering progress and to determine any necessary changes.

The funding resources necessary to deliver the strategic objectives within this strategic plan in an effective and sustainable manner will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Steering Committee. A more rigorous status review of the funding and resources will be conducted as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan.

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The IAEA works as RCF Secretariat to implement and facilitate the above activities