

White House Says Advanced Nuclear Can Provide Big GAINs in the Fight to Stop Climate Change



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As the world looks to Paris in the pursuit of a global deal on climate, the United States has taken a major step to promote nuclear energy as a key element of a low-carbon future.

Responding to a surge of private sector advanced nuclear innovation the White House is launching a landmark initiative to help accelerate the commercialization of innovative nuclear reactor designs. Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Nuclear Energy John Kotek made the announcement at the White House Summit on Nuclear Energy earlier this month, to drive nuclear forward as a key tool in the fight against climate change. The new program, titled Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN), will be operated out of Idaho National Lab. It adopts many of the recommendations Third Way has made on how to accelerate development of advanced nuclear, and aims to “provide the nuclear community with access to the technical, regulatory, and financial support necessary to move new or advanced nuclear reactor designs toward commercialization while ensuring the continued safe, reliable, and economic operation of the existing nuclear fleet.”

GAIN will address the challenges faced by the advanced nuclear industry so that they can get across the “valleys of death” facing innovators. Through GAIN, developers will be provided access to much needed federal testing facilities, computational resources, existing information and data on the nuclear industry, and land use information for developing demo facilities. More specifically GAIN will:

- Develop a ‘test-bed’ to help innovators move faster through early stage R&D and demonstration phases and at a reduced cost. This will include access to infrastructure to build units, carry out testing, and access modeling and simulation tools.
- Provide users with access to the Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Database (NEID), a catalogue of existing nuclear energy related infrastructure which will allow developers to identify resources and support for implementation of their technologies.
- Help applicants understand and navigate the regulatory process for licensing new reactor technology. As part of this effort, the DOE is convening workshops to “explore options for increased efficiency, from both a technical and regulatory perspective” for innovative reactor technologies.

In addition to GAIN, The Department of Energy (DOE) also announced it would broaden its \$12.5 billion loan guarantee program to support innovative nuclear technologies. As part of the program, companies will now be able to use DOE loan guarantees to help cover the cost of licensing, including design certification, construction permits, and the necessary licenses—costs that could total in the millions of dollars. On top of that, the DOE is launching a small-business voucher system to enable startups to use national lab facilities to develop technologies. DOE plans to make a total of \$2 million in vouchers available.

Will the initiatives announced by the White House be enough to get advanced nuclear technologies across the finish line?

Most certainly not.

But this most recent action from the White House marks an important step forward for nuclear innovation and the fight against climate change—and Third Way is proud to have played a role in making it happen.

There is more that must be done to clear the path for advanced nuclear development in the U.S., and cooperation between government and industry will be critical at every step of the way. With its announcement of GAIN and other innovation efforts in the nuclear sector, the White House has demonstrated beyond a doubt that America is moving in the right direction.

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