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Energy Department Takes First Step to Spur U.S. Manufacturing of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors

New Funding Opportunity Announcement Will Support SMR Design and Licensing for Widespread Commercial Use

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Energy today announced the first step toward manufacturing small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) in the United States, demonstrating the Administration's commitment to advancing U.S. manufacturing leadership in low-carbon, next generation energy technologies and restarting the nation's nuclear industry. Through the draft Funding Opportunity Announcement announced today, the Department will establish cost-shared agreements with private industry to support the design and licensing of SMRs.

"America's choice is clear - we can either develop the next generation of clean energy technologies, which will help create thousands of new jobs and export opportunities here in America, or we can wait for other countries to take the lead," said Energy Secretary Steven Chu. "The funding opportunity announced today is a significant step forward in designing, manufacturing, and exporting U.S. small modular reactors, advancing our competitive edge in the global clean energy race."

Small modular reactors, approximately one-third the size of current nuclear plants, have compact designs that are expected to offer a host of safety, siting, construction and economic benefits. Specifically, they could be made in factories and transported to sites where they would be ready to "plug and play" upon arrival, reducing both capital costs and construction times. The small size also makes SMRs ideal for small electric grids and for locations that cannot support large reactors, providing utilities with the flexibility to scale production as demand changes.

The draft Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) announced today solicits input from industry in advance of a full FOA, which will support first-of-a-kind engineering, design certification and licensing through a cost-shared partnership. The full FOA will fund up to two SMR designs with the goal of deploying these reactors by 2022.

Today's announcement comes on the heels of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's certification of Westinghouse Electric's AP1000 nuclear reactor design, which was supported through a cost-shared agreement with the Energy Department. The Department's efforts, in coordination with the NRC and private industry, have helped American companies lead the way in obtaining certification and licensing approvals for new reactor designs, which will further streamline these processes for future investments in the U.S. nuclear industry.

For more information on SMRs, please visit the Office of Nuclear Energy website.

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By Brad Bugger