



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY**

## NEWS RELEASE



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### NEW MEDIA CONTACTS:

Laura Scheele, 208-526-0442, [laura.scheele@inl.gov](mailto:laura.scheele@inl.gov)  
Sarah Neumann, 208-526-0490, [sarah.neumann@inl.gov](mailto:sarah.neumann@inl.gov)

*Editor's note: Photos of [Finan](#) and [Smith](#) are attached and their bios can be found at this link: <https://inl.gov/nric-bios/>*

### **Ashley Finan named director and Nicholas Smith, deputy director, of National Reactor Innovation Center** *NRIC will enable testing and demonstration of advanced reactor concepts*

IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO - Dr. John Wagner, associate laboratory director of Idaho National Laboratory's Nuclear Science & Technology Directorate, has announced the selection of Dr. Ashley Finan to serve as director, and Nicholas Smith to serve as deputy director of the INL-based National Reactor Innovation Center. As NRIC directors, Finan and Smith will lead efforts to accelerate the testing, demonstration and commercialization of innovative reactor technologies in the United States.

"Building and operating advanced reactors is essential to U.S. leadership in nuclear energy, and these roles are essential to achieving that goal," said Wagner. "Ashley has played a key role in the formation of the policy that made NRIC possible. She and Nicholas are ideally suited to develop and implement the NRIC vision."

Authorized by the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act (NEICA), NRIC will provide resources to test, demonstrate, and assess performance of new nuclear technologies, critical steps that must be completed before they are available commercially. Through NRIC, developers will gain access to the strategic infrastructure and assets of the national laboratories. These capabilities will support a timely and cost-effective path to licensing and commercializing new nuclear systems, which will generate carbon-free electricity and contribute to the decarbonization of major economic sectors.

Finan served most recently as executive director of the Nuclear Innovation Alliance, a nonprofit think tank working to enable nuclear power as a global solution to mitigate climate change. Prior to her work with NIA, Finan led nuclear innovation programs at Clean Air Task Force. She holds bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in nuclear science and engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"NRIC will play a pivotal role in decarbonization by empowering trailblazing companies to demonstrate and commercialize the next generation of nuclear technologies," Finan said. "I'm inspired by our innovators, labs, and policymakers and their commitment to tackling global challenges. I'm dedicated to leading NRIC to enable demonstration of advanced technology that will achieve our energy, security, and environmental goals, while sustaining the U.S. nuclear fleet's tradition of excellence."

Smith has worked with the research and development organization of Atlanta-based Southern Company since 2010, most recently as principal engineer. In this role, he oversaw a Generation IV nuclear reactor R&D program and was responsible for collaboration with reactor designers, national labs and policymakers, and early engagement with regulators. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from San Diego State University, a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and a master's degree in nuclear engineering from North Carolina State University.

"NRIC will provide on-the-ground capabilities to accelerate nuclear technology readiness from proof-of-concept through proof-of-operations," said Wagner. "Ashley and Nicholas are the right team to lead NRIC and make advanced reactor demonstrations a reality."

*INL is one of the U.S. Department of Energy's national laboratories. INL is the nation's center for nuclear energy research and development. The laboratory performs work in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and environment. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.*

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