

LOCAL

Governor taps Tennessee Nuclear Network to lead the nation in nuclear innovation

Oak Ridge-based ETEC's Nuclear Working Group designated as Tennessee Nuclear Network

The Oak Ridger

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Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has designated the Oak Ridge-based East Tennessee Economic Council's Nuclear Working Group as the Tennessee Nuclear Network (TN2), the state's official partnership aimed at advancing nuclear innovation, workforce development, and economic growth across the state.

Tennessee's Chief Operating Officer Brandon Gibson announced this designation on July 22 at ETEC's annual Nuclear Opportunities Workshop (NOW).



Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, center, leans against a railing as he listens during a business trip to an Orano facility in France on June 23, 2025. Orano USA is planning a uranium enrichment facility in Oak Ridge. Provided By The Office Of Gov. Bill Lee/Brandon Hupp

The East Tennessee Economic Council's Nuclear Working Group was organized in 2007 and is currently comprised of 93 experts from 50 organizations, according to an ETEC news release. The expansion into the Tennessee Nuclear Network forms an even more diverse coalition of leaders in industry, research, academia, and government, the release stated. They are dedicated to strengthening Tennessee's position as a global hub for advanced nuclear.

In 2023, Lee signed Executive Order 101 to create the Tennessee Nuclear Energy Advisory Council, which worked for more than a year to position Tennessee as a national leader for nuclear energy innovation and advancement. The Tennessee Nuclear Network will incorporate the Council's recommendations and continue the mission of establishing a robust nuclear energy ecosystem in Tennessee.

"Tennessee's legacy of nuclear innovation positions the Volunteer State to lead America's energy independence and drive continued economic growth with safe, clean, and reliable nuclear energy," the governor stated in the news release. "By formalizing the Tennessee Nuclear Network, we are reinforcing our commitment to leading America's energy dominance by creating an ecosystem for nuclear energy companies to invest and thrive, bringing greater opportunity and quality jobs to Tennesseans,

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Key objectives of the Tennessee Nuclear Network are listed below.

- Promote innovation: Support cutting-edge research and development in nuclear technologies across the industry.
- Educate workforce: Partner with workforce entities across the state who are creating and expanding training programs to prepare future generations of nuclear scientists, engineers, technicians, and tradespeople.
- Economic growth: Coordinate with state, regional, and local economic development organizations to attract investment and create job opportunities in Tennessee's nuclear industry.
- Collaboration: Facilitate partnerships between industry, government, and academic stakeholders.
- Advocacy and regulatory support: Advocate for policies that support the nuclear industry while addressing regulatory challenges.

The network will work closely with private industry and key stakeholders such as the state, the Oak Ridge Corridor Development Corporation, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce, Roane Alliance, Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Y-12 National Security Complex, Tennessee Valley Authority, University of Tennessee, Tennessee Board of Regents, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, and United Cleanup Oak Ridge to leverage their combined expertise in 'all-things nuclear'.

Oak Ridge is a cornerstone for nuclear advancements globally, hosting projects such as TVA's Clinch River Small Modular Reactor project, Kairos Power's Hermes Demonstration Reactor projects, Orano USA's Project IKE Uranium Enrichment Facility, TRISO-X's Fuel Fabrication Facility, and Type One Energy's Fusion Energy project among others.

"Leveraging these and future projects to expand across the state is a growth opportunity for the supply chain and other sectors such as information technology, and business services needed to support the nuclear industry," the release stated.

In addition, the network will continue hosting the Nuclear Opportunities Workshop (NOW) bringing 1,000-plus attendees from 34 states to the region annually to learn about Tennessee's nuclear assets and growth opportunities.

For more information about the Tennessee Nuclear Network or its initiatives, visit ETEC's Nuclear Industry Hub or contact the State of Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.



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