

Lessons Learned for Sustainable Research Reactor Utilization: From Knowledge Management to Provision of Products and Services

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Although the number of operational research reactors (RRs) is steadily decreasing, more than half of them remain heavily underutilized, and in most cases, underfunded. In order to continue to play a key role in the further development of peaceful uses of nuclear technology, the dwindling and rather old fleet of RRs needs to sustain provision of useful products and services to private, national and regional customers, in some cases with adequate revenue generation for reliable, safe and secure facility management and operation. In a context of declining governmental financial support and new requirements related to the improvement of safety and physical security, many RRs have been challenged to generate income to offset increasing operational, maintenance and refurbishment costs, sustain experienced staff and address ageing management issues.

It is clear that, as part of the considerable efforts that are being undertaken by many countries to achieve a greater self-reliance of their RRs, it is necessary to address and consider such aspects as market surveys, marketing plans, business plans and cost of delivery services. At the same time, the present and future potential end users of RR services should be better informed about the capabilities and products that RR can provide.

The IAEA has been continuously assisting its Member States in their efforts to increase RR utilization, provide technical advice and support for the installation/modernization of diverse RR application capabilities, prepare/revise strategic and business plans, and promote RR products and services to their end users. This presentation will provide an overview of the most recent situation regarding RRs world-wide, their issues and challenges. It will also highlight Agency's efforts to acquire and apply methodology, implementation strategies and good practices necessary for the enhancement of RR reactor utilization and sustainability, including major undertakings for implementing new RR projects. It will also provide lessons learned and concrete examples from well-operated and managed facilities that illustrate the successful development of RR user communities and industrial partnerships. When applicable, direct synergies between RR- and accelerator-based facilities will be discussed.

Presenter: RIDIKAS, Danas (IAEA)

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