



Nuclear 101 for Economic Developers: Tennessee’s Next Big Opportunity
UT Outreach Center – Oak Ridge, TN
March 18-19, 2026

Wednesday, March 18 (ET)

9:30 – 10:00	Registration	
10:00 – 10:30	Welcome & Introductions	Tintin Czach, TCEcD UT CIS
10:30 – 11:00	How Tennessee Became a Nuclear Energy Leader <i>A look at how Tennessee became the epicenter of America’s nuclear industry. The session will cover Oak Ridge’s key role, the roots of nuclear innovation and the foundation of the industry’s transformative growth.</i>	Ray Smith Oak Ridge Historian
11:00 – 12:30	Why Nuclear, Why Tennessee, Why Now <i>This session features nuclear energy leaders sharing why the industry is growing and why Tennessee remains a top destination for investment and innovation. Participants will learn what’s driving renewed interest, how modern technology differs from outdated perceptions and the economic, workforce and community impacts shaping Tennessee’s future.</i>	Moderator: Cortney Piper Piper Communications Panelists: Ken Givens, BWXT Ben Jordan, Centrus Loris Kim, Orano USA
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch & Networking	
1:30 – 3:00	The Nuclear Energy Multiplier Effect: Community Opportunities <i>A panel of industry experts will highlight the many ways communities can participate in the growing nuclear sector—far beyond the power plant itself. From supply chain roles to support services, this session shows how local businesses and communities can connect to economic opportunities.</i>	Moderator: Tracy Boatner ETEC Panelists: Kati Austgen, NEI Jesse Smith, ORNL Joshua Vajda, ANS
3:00 – 3:20	Break/Head to American Museum of Science & Energy	Course Participants
3:25 – 5:00	Field Trip - American Museum of Science and Energy	Course Participants
5:45	Optional Dinner Gathering	



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Thursday, March 19 (ET)

7:00 – 8:00	Full Breakfast	UT Outreach Center
8:00 – 9:00	Community and Site Readiness for Nuclear Energy Projects <i>This session will focus on how communities can better prepare robust nuclear and energy investments.</i>	Phil Schneider Global Location Strategies
9:00 – 10:30	Powering the Future: Workforce Development <i>Hear from local and industry leaders as they discuss workforce development strategies, challenges and opportunities in Tennessee. Learn how the state is building a skilled talent pipeline and how communities and education programs can support a strong, future-ready nuclear workforce.</i>	Moderator: Tyler Asher TDLWD Panelists: Teresa Duncan , Roane State Mary Lin, EdD , ORETTTC – Y-12 Paul Jennings, PhD , UT CIS Brian Wirth, PhD , UT Knoxville
10:30 – 10:45	Break	
10:45 – 11:45	Tennessee Resources & Opportunities <i>This panel will explore Tennessee’s influence in nuclear energy, highlighting key state resources and lessons learned from the state’s primary nuclear energy leaders. Panelists will also share the state’s vision for nuclear energy and what it means for communities, workforce development and future economic opportunities across Tennessee.</i>	Moderator: Victoria Hirschberg UT System Panelists: Callie Cook , TNECD Meryl Harris , TVA Braden Stover , TNECD
11:45 – 12:30	Looking Ahead: Trends Shaping Tennessee’s Future <i>This fireside chat will cover the state’s continued leadership in energy, research, talent development and national security. Learn about what’s ahead, where the industry is headed and how decisions can strategically position Tennessee for future opportunities.</i>	Brandon Gibson State of Tennessee Don Bruce, PhD UT Knoxville
12:30	Wrap Up & Final Comments Evaluation Forms/Adjourn	Tintin Czach UT CIS