

# Special Anniversary Edition

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*2006-2021 Anniversary*

Forward Together



**ReliabilityFirst**

# Welcome Message



**Simon Whitelocke**  
**Chair Board of Directors**

Dear Stakeholders,

I am grateful to be a part of this Industry, and proud to serve ReliabilityFirst as the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The thoughts of many former ReliabilityFirst Board Chairs are sprinkled throughout this issue as they opine on the tremendous growth and achievements of the past 15 years. They help tell the story of the meaningful, risk-based regulatory oversight and outreach that I've been a part of during my tenure on the Board.

I continue to be impressed by the caliber of the leadership and staff at ReliabilityFirst, as well as the individuals and organizations with whom ReliabilityFirst works, including FERC, NERC, our regional partners and our valued stakeholders.

I hope you enjoy reading about how far we've come. I look forward to our continued growth and collaboration as we continue to advance reliability.

Sincerely,

Simon Whitelocke

**Our purpose at RF is to serve the public good by protecting, improving, and ensuring the availability of electricity for all, to sustain health and safety, safeguard the economy, and preserve our way of life.**



**Tim Gallagher**  
**President and CEO**

Dear Stakeholders,

I hope you enjoy the special issue we've compiled to honor our 15-year anniversary. I have been with RF since its inception and feel fortunate to have experienced the evolution and maturation of RF and the ERO over the last 15 years. I've personally witnessed incredible growth, success, and an unwavering commitment to our mission of preserving and enhancing the reliability and security of the bulk power system.

We asked our current and former directors, board chairs, and others in RF and our industry to help us reminisce and this issue highlights our progress under the following four accomplishments:

1. Risk-focused;
2. Increased collaboration with the ERO;
3. Better dialogue with and among entities; and,
4. Becoming more proactive.

I ask that you pause to recognize this milestone and appreciate our collaborative strength and progress. I hope that you do so with confidence in our continued commitment to growth and diligence as we serve our stakeholders in their efforts to keep the lights on. We will also highlight one of these themes in each of our newsletters this year.

We know that some of the biggest challenges to our industry are on the horizon as the grid rapidly transforms through decarbonization, decentralization and digitization. The risks and threats to our industry will continue evolving, and we will keep rising to meet the challenges we face in our role as stewards of reliability.

Forward Together,

Tim Gallagher



# Celebrating the First 15 Years

RELIABILITY FIRST

## 2006

RF is created from three legacy regions.



FERC certifies NERC as the ERO in the US.

**NERC**  
NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC  
RELIABILITY CORPORATION

RF performs its first regional long-term resource assessment to ensure the generating capacity in its footprint is sufficient to supply the load connected to its members' systems.

## 2007

RF is approved by FERC as one of the eight Regional Entities in North America.

RF begins monitoring Operations and Planning Reliability Standards for the BES.

RF holds its first workshop to provide compliance information to the industry.

## 2008

RF establishes a Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Committee to promote the physical, cyber and operational security of critical electricity infrastructure and coordinate information sharing between RF and the industry.

RF establishes its first Strategic Plan to establish a vision for how RF will perform its delegation agreement.

## 2009

RF files the first enforcement resolution across the ERO.

RF conducts its first Spot Check for compliance with the NERC Critical Infrastructure Protection Reliability Standards.



## 2010

RF incents continuous improvement through awarding "Above and Beyond" credit for certain actions enhancing reliability.

Comprehensive set of CIP Standards developed pursuant to FERC Order No. 706 becomes effective.

## 2011

RF launches Assist Visit Program, providing voluntary, tailored training and information sharing outside of the monitoring and enforcement space centered on the needs of the entity and key risks they are facing.

FERC approves RF's Regional Reliability Standard (BAL-502-RF-02) addressing resource adequacy for load in the RF footprint.

## 2012

RF transitions to a risk-based enforcement program pursuant to FERC's Order approving the "Find, Fix, and Track" disposition method for minimal risk violations.



RF collaborates and shares data with the Transmission Forum to enhance transmission reliability.



## 2013

In connection with the Reliability Assurance Initiative, RF pilots appraisal of AEP's management practices related to grid reliability and resiliency practices.

RF updates the strategic plan to expressly transition to focus on risk to improving reliability while adding value for stakeholders.

## 2014



RF relocates to Cleveland, OH.

RF launches redesigned logo and new corporate slogan, "Forward Together," to emphasize its commitment to collaborative innovation with its members to ensure grid reliability and resiliency.

RF begins piloting a self-logging program, which rewards qualified entities that have demonstrated an ability to identify, assess, and correct minimal risk noncompliances.

## 2015

RF fully transitions to risk-based compliance monitoring and enforcement pursuant to FERC's Order approving implementation of the Reliability Assurance Initiative.

RF Board Members Lou Oberski and Sue Ivey help lead efforts in developing a Reliability Standard to address physical security risks and vulnerabilities which become effective on October 1, 2015.

## 2016

The popularity of the Assist Visit grows, and RF conducts more than 35 assist visits, the majority covering CIP related topics. The Assist Visit program is a voluntary program pioneered by RF, which provides tailored training centered on the needs of the Entity and key risks they are facing.

## 2017

RF expands its Events Analysis and Situational Awareness functions into a new, standalone department. The team (now called Operational Analysis & Awareness) performs its work following the ERO and RF Events Analysis Processes and works closely on a daily basis with the NERC Situational Awareness team.

## 2018

RF, WECC and SERC work together to issue a joint CIP Themes and Lessons Learned Report.

The report identifies themes and possible resolutions to help drive Entities to continue to assess and strengthen their CIP programs and thus mitigate security risks.



## 2019

RF initiates its Cyber Resiliency Metrics project, which results in the creation of the Cyber Resiliency Assessment tool. The Cyber Resiliency Assessment tool can help Entities assess their strength in industrial control system resilience.

With Regional consolidation resulting in six Regions from eight, RF, along with NERC and the other Regions, work on the "ERO Transformation", where they focus on collaboration, consistency, and knowledge sharing, while honoring the ERO model.

## 2020

RF and the ERO Enterprise work with the industry to ensure continued reliability and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERO grants expanded self-logging for instances of potential noncompliance with minimal or moderate risk related to Entities' coronavirus response efforts.

## 2021

The Align Project officially launches to provide the ERO Enterprise with a common platform developed to support compliance monitoring and enforcement (CMEP) activities and business processes.



# Risk-Focused

The most significant change over the past 15 years is probably the shift to become risk focused. The shift was incremental, starting over a decade ago, and gaining more momentum as the ERO and industry proved they could effectively implement the programs in order to focus more on the highest risk areas and less on low risk and administrative activities.



**Lisa Barton**

Executive VP and Chief  
Operating Officer  
American Electric Power  
Former RF Board Member and  
Chair  
Supplier Sector

**"Perhaps the biggest change is the move from compliance for 'compliance sake' with the recognition that we need to be focused on reliability."**

**Former RF Chief Security Officer Larry Bugh** ranks being a leader in the evolution of the regulatory model from the initial zero-tolerance model to the current risk-based model as RF's biggest accomplishment. "We took some flack for that" Larry said. "But, in the end, it was the correct transition to make. I believe we and our stakeholder Entities are making it work for the betterment of the industry and the service the industry provides."

Former board members, Lisa Barton and Ken DeFontes agreed with the significance of the move to a risk-based approach for compliance monitoring and enforcement ("CMEP"). "Perhaps the biggest change is the move from compliance for 'compliance sake' with the recognition that we need to be focused on reliability," said Lisa, noting the great strides RF has made over the past several years to understand reliability and what the actual impact on the system is or can be. "In this industry," Lisa said, "if utilities fail, Regional Entities fail too."

"RF has demonstrated a clear willingness to roll up their sleeves and understand how we can collectively get better and be

better. Our industry is changing fast and our economy and customers are all counting on us to bring our very best to the table."

Ken recognized that RF "raised the bar in going beyond the standards to assist registered entities achieve high levels of reliability through training, best practices and other creative approaches."

**Several RF Directors shared more detail on what this big change looked like practically in their departments. They spoke to specific changes and improvements.**

**Matt Thomas, RF Director of Compliance** : "In the early days, we had three-year and six-year cycles with scopes that were already dictated. Now, it's more about using the information and data we have while keeping in mind that both we and the Entities have a finite number of resources, so we can focus on the higher risks while still keeping an eye on the lower risks."

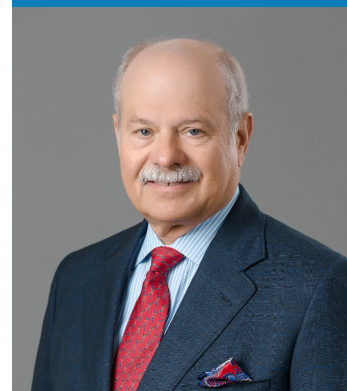
He admits that this approach hasn't made the work easier, but, importantly, it has been more effective. He also highlighted that now RF can offer Entities help in other ways that weren't previously an option, such as Assist Visits, innovative tools, and outreach activities.

"It's important to us that we're always finding new ways to recognize Entities' positive efforts that we've observed. It's not just about finding areas of concern or potential noncompliance; it's also about acknowledging the huge strides we've seen many Entities make in their programs. We now use the audit report as an opportunity to highlight great work, which can also help Entities identify areas in which they're excelling."

Matt noted another significant change is the emphasis on internal controls. "As we advocate for continuous improvement, we're looking beyond compliance to examine their programs to make



**Larry Bugh**  
Retired RF Chief Security  
Officer



**Ken DeFontes**  
NERC Board of Trustees Chair  
Retired from BGE  
Former RF At-Large Board  
Member and Vice Chair:  
2005-2012



# Risk-Focused

**"We've found creative ways to change the way we work to allow the industry and the ERO to focus more on the higher-risk issues facing the grid."**

**-Kristen Senk**

sure they're robust and sustainable" said Matt.

**Kristen Senk, RF Director of Legal and Enforcement:** "The Enforcement team has moved way beyond the earlier years of merely processing violations and has instead used its tools in Enforcement to help Entities improve reliability and security.

This can sometimes be challenging to do within the confines of the Rules," Kristen said, "but we've found creative ways to change the way we work to allow industry and the ERO to

focus more on the higher-risk issues facing the grid." She noted the Coordinated Oversight Program for Entities in multiple Regions as an example. The Program allows these Entities to work through only one Region for CMEP activities, as opposed to working separately with each Region, which significantly reduces the administrative burden for Entities.

She also highlighted the self-logging program for low-risk issues as an example. Since the program's approval in 2015, she noted the ways they've continued to improve risk-based activities, such as by not verifying mitigation completion for low-risk issues that the Entities self-identify in their logs. "We were able to do this after successfully implementing the self-logging program for several years and having assurance through consistent process reviews that the Entities had strong controls in place relating to mitigation" Kristen said. "If we are going to get to a place where we are truly risk-based so that we can focus resources in the riskiest areas, we need to continue to push the boundaries and identify creative ways to fulfill our mission while staying within the bounds of our delegated functions."

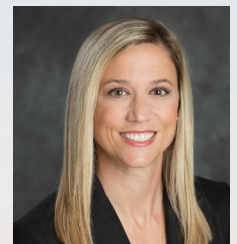
**Erik Johnson, RF Director of Reliability Analysis:** "The Reliability Analysis team's significant contributions to determining Entity risk is a major accomplishment that allows RF to better serve our stakeholders." He highlighted productive internal transitions of work and the incredible increase in the amount of data RF is able to consider. "By the team managing and increasing the amount of data and considerations for determining Entity risk, we've gained a broader, but more accurate view of all the factors that make up an Entity's profile in determining their impact to the BES." He also noted that the increasing use of data led to the creation of the Analytics team to analyze it, coordinate information, and overlay different factors.

**Brian Thiry, RF Director of External Engagement:** "The conversations have changed. Where it used to be centered around 'are you compliant?' and 'tell me how you are compliant,'" he feels the conversations are different now. "We are discussing 'what are the best practices?' and 'how can I continuously improve?' and 'what are the emerging risks you are seeing?' These are important conversations to drive us forward and enhance reliability, resilience, and security."

RF offers a variety of workshops, which instead of focusing strictly on compliance, now focus on everything from internal controls to insider threats and resilience.



**Erik Johnson**  
Director  
Reliability Analysis



**Kristen Senk**  
Director  
Legal and Enforcement



**Brian Thiry**  
Director  
Entity Engagement



**Matt Thomas**  
Director  
Compliance Monitoring

# Increased Collaboration with the ERO

We've truly lived our tagline "forward together" over the past 15 years as there has been an industry-wide commitment to collaborate for the greater good.

Collaboration across the ERO is at an all-time high among the Regional staff. A huge piece of this was the NERC transformation. During this effort, NERC and the Regions reaffirmed their respective roles and committed to working together, actively supporting the ERO while eliminating duplication, sharing information, resources and best practices, and collaborating for clear and consistent guidance and a harmonized message.

It's been wonderful to see the success after working toward this goal for years. One of the many ways this should be evident to our Entities and stakeholders

is through events and outreach. It's more common than not for RF and NERC Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to present at each other's events.

This planning together and combining expertise allows us to bring the industry the absolute best, most valuable and consistent information and resources. Group efforts, such as the NERC podcasts featuring Regional SMEs and the supply chain e-Learning modules RF created with SERC, are just a few examples. We are also collaborating to harness and share our expertise outside of the ERO. We're sharing information now more than ever before, and getting input from people who have faced similar challenges is invaluable.

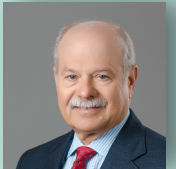


***Jim Robb, President and CEO, NERC***

"I am also very pleased with the highly cooperative, mission-driven relationship that has been forged between NERC and the Regional Entities. Our Board and the Regional Entities have worked together to design governance mechanisms to ensure the independence and credibility of our standards, compliance and enforcement processes, and outcomes."

***Former RF Board Member, Ken Defontes, retired President and CEO, Baltimore Gas and Electric***

"I remembered my concern and frustration at how unconnected RF and the other regions were from NERC. For me, the foundational changes that have produced the new brilliant model across the ERO is the most significant progress the organization has made"



***Current RF Board Lead Independent Director, Brent Greene***

"I feel one of RF's greatest accomplishments is their work towards collaboration. The leadership that RF has shown within the ERO has been impressive in every regard, helping to expand collaboration across the ERO, and injecting new ideas and processes into how the ERO functions to advance reliability."

***Kristen Senk, RF Director of Legal and Enforcement***

"Our team has worked hard to build trust with FERC, NERC, industry, and the public by demonstrating that we can properly assess risk and enforce noncompliance in a fair and consistent manner that actually improves grid reliability and security. We can now build off of this trust and identify new ways to more effectively influence behavior to improve security and reliability."





# Better Dialogue with and among Entities

## Our Directors discussed trust and the mutually beneficial dialogue we have been working on.

**Matt Thomas:** "It comes down to the trust we've developed with Entities over the years. Some of the early audits and oversight could be a bit contentious at times, but we've shifted to be more collaborative. I think that shift allows us to focus even more on the bigger picture of security and reliability – we're all working toward the same mission of keeping the lights on. This trust, plus the addition of more outreach activities, has given engagements a different feel. It's less cut-and-dry now because Entities know that they can ask us questions and get more back than just the language from the standard."

**Kristen Senk:** "The Enforcement case managers, with the help of subject matter experts, work closely with their Entities to help spot issues, identify patterns in root causes, and identify creative mitigation solutions to build more sustainable programs. And they've been even more successful in doing this because of the continued collaboration and trust they've built with Entities over time. One effective way they've helped Entities is through connecting Entities that are struggling or have struggled with similar issues to share best practices. These Entities are able to learn from each other and then often turn around and share lessons learned through industry forums or RF workshops."

**Erik Johnson:** "We've reached a point where we don't have to go ask Entities to engage with us. The trusting partnership we've built with industry now means Entities proactively come to us."



An accomplishment that may not be as obvious in our journey as a regulator is our improved dialogue with our Entities and how RF has helped facilitate better dialogue among Entities in our industry. A key component to this is our commitment to transparency and fostering an atmosphere of trust. We've focused on building trust internally with our goals and through our outreach and worked to build relationships throughout the industry, ERO and with outside organization and experts.

**Mike Bryson**, who previously served on the RF Board, said: "RF has worked at, and succeeded in, becoming a legitimate resource for both NERC compliance and more importantly, reliability. I have been at PJM since 1998 and experienced the transition to NERC mandatory standards along with RF. I believe RF has grown to be a partner in ensuring our reliability responsibilities are fulfilled in both the letter and the spirit of the standards"

Another key way we have improved dialogue is through the tremendous increase in the creation of opportunities for dialogue, through our expanded outreach and training, committee activities, workshops, and other opportunities to share ideas and allow our industry to creatively collaborate around our shared goals.

RF implemented the Assist Visit Program around 2014. Brian Thiry shared how he feels that changed the perception of RF from an auditor to a trusted and credible partner with the shared goal of a reliable

BPS. "Yes, we still do auditing and hold Entities accountable, but we also help build up their programs by examining their controls and business processes, and sharing lessons learned and recommendations. This carries over into our outreach work with our monthly open calls and workshops, as well."

**Matt Paul**, "In the context of my role as a member company leading compliance initiatives at DTE, the way RF partners, collaborates and aligns with Entities to work hand-in-hand on the common goal to protect the security of the grid is remarkable."

RF continues to find new ways to engage including self-assessment tools and expanded workshops. RF also creates many opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement. Our staff enjoy working with the members of the various committees that help us continue to stay informed of the challenges our stakeholders face every day and remember how committed they are to doing the right things to move the industry forward.



**Mike Bryson**  
Senior VP  
PJM  
Former RF Board  
Member, RTO



**Matt Paul**  
Executive VP  
DTE  
Former RF Board  
Member, M-LSE

# Becoming more Proactive

Finally, RF has grown and matured in so many ways over the last 15 years to position itself to be more proactive. A huge component of this has been RF's longstanding focus on promoting innovation and innovative activities and partnerships. RF has more recently celebrated innovation through giving innovation awards and an annual innovation retreat, which encourage staff to promote new ideas and projects and to recognize the exceptional work in this area. Other Regions and NERC have participated and started to expand their innovation programs at the ERO level.

Similarly, RF has committed to continuous improvement. The less visible building blocks to support our efforts to be proactive are just as critical. We are only as good as our people, so RF has focused on building the best team by recruiting experts in an array of fields and aiming to add the best talent and diversity throughout our staff and up through our Board of Directors. We've been fortunate to attract and retain Board members who bring a breadth and depth of experience, and HR has matured both our recruiting and staff support initiatives (Diversity and Inclusion, Wellness initiatives, benefits).

Former CSO Larry Bugh recounted that when RF first started it was a team of 20, all of whom had worked in the industry in some capacity before joining RF. Tim really pushed for talent from outside the industry to get a different perspective, and the change really expanded the way RF is able to view the industry and the actions that can positively affect the industry. It has also allowed RF to really capitalize on continuous improvement that has also been a key ingredient in the success of RF to date, and will continue to contribute to RF's successes in the future.

We've also matured and reorganized internally to ensure we have everything we need for success by ensuring certain groups work together while others have the appropriate level of independence, focusing on culture, adding groups and expertise like resilience and data analytics, and reorganizing departments to strength and build internal support. For example, our IT team implemented technological solutions to improve the staff work environment and also matured to find better ways to secure our infrastructure/computing environment. We know we need the best people, the best data, and the best resources to support our critical mission.

## ***Ray Palmieri, Retired RF Senior Vice President and Treasurer***

"The first 15 years of RF's existence were an exciting ride, finishing with a thriving organization that continues to be an effective, industry leading regulatory body that moves the reliability of the grid and the utility industry to higher levels.

RF realized it can identify problem areas and solutions for Entities and enable Entities to identify areas for improvement. The respect between industry and RF has evolved and attained a level of mutual understanding where we are all in the same arena to ensure the reliability of the grid is maintained at the highest level at any cost.

None of this just happened. The RF Board listened to the leadership team and supported the needs identified and direction we wanted to go in. The leadership team consisted of an exceptional group of people during all of these years. But more importantly, treating the organization as a boutique-type shop, we were able to bring in many amazing people with a broad cross-section of experience and backgrounds. The staff has proven to be extremely capable with outstanding experiences in the power industry, but also many others that dealt with standards, regulation, legal, and effective correction action with a continuous improvement mindset. With a team that grew from 19 to 85 people with diverse backgrounds, the capability to regulate and further advance the performance of the utilities responsible for grid reliability could not be any more effective!"



## ***BethAnn Dowdell, Senior Director Human Resources and Corporate Services***

"I'm excited for us to navigate changing environments together. From both an HR, IT and Finance perspective, we have opportunities to look at things differently and engage our staff in ways we haven't in the past. Especially in the rapidly changing world of cybersecurity, it's exciting to put new tools and techniques into practice that solidify our position as an organization that's well-versed in managing our cybersecurity. While it feels like RF is further along in our cyber initiatives than many other organizations, we're always pushing ourselves to stay ahead of the threats."



# What's Next?

It's been rewarding to pause to look at how far we've come and appreciate our own transformation. We've used the four themes to highlight our growth, knowing that this special issue only skims the surface of our successes and accomplishments. Similarly, we know that even as an organization that produces various forecasting reports and projections, we can't layout everything that is ahead.

Part of what makes us so confident in our ability to tackle future challenges makes it just as challenging to detail our next move; because our commitment to ingenuity through continuous improvement and innovation mean that we operate with an inevitable and essential amount of flexibility.

We know some things will be certain, such as the decarbonization, decentralization and digitization of the grid. We have positioned ourselves to meet these challenges by continuing to be proactive. As we enter year 16, we have already continued to strengthen our bench by dedicating further resources to corporate security.

**Ken DeFontes:** "Now as NERC Board Chair, I know we have a great team at RF to continue the new and expanding work we face as we confront the changes in the resource mix of generation, as we face the impacts of climate change, and as we confront the significant and growing challenges of physical and cyber security."

**Matt Thomas:** "I'm excited by the ongoing transformation of the grid from classic generation to inverter-based resources, and more specifically

about our role in helping ensure that transformation goes smoothly. We're at a significant point of change in our industry, and RF has an important role to play in that. Over the past few years, we've added a wealth of new talent to the team, so the fresh input and ideas will continue to elevate what we do and how we do it as we move forward together."

**Kristen Senk:** "If we are going to get to a place where we are truly risk-based so that we can focus resources in the riskiest areas, we need to continue to push the boundaries and identify creative ways to fulfill our mission while staying within the bounds of our delegated functions."

**Brian Thiry:** "We have such a motivated, highly engaged, innovative staff. I am so excited to see what they continue to come up with to elevate reliability, resilience and security."

We're excited to begin the next 15 by cohosting gridsecon with NERC this year. RF also chairs several ERO working groups and communities of practices. We think that all the work we've done in collaboration has only touched the surface of what we can accomplish together as we continue sharing knowledge, lessons learned, and synergies. But we will also keep focusing on efforts that are working, as our Protection Subcommittee kicks off another round of Misoperations Peer Reviews this month. We look forward to sharing more of the things we have underway in our quarterly newsletters this year, which will each highlight one of the themes.



**Jim Uhrin, RF Director of Engineering and System Performance:** "We are seeing that Entities, as well as FERC and our ERO peers, view us as a valuable resource. The idea of FERC coming to us

for information or resources to address their concerns had not happened in the past – but it's starting to happen more now. As we mature more as an organization and industry gains more confidence in us, I'd love for that open and transparent interaction between us and our stakeholder community to continue improving. Finally, we know where we need to keep pushing ahead. We've made huge strides in our shift to become more risk based, but we recognize we have room to grow."





**Sue Ivey**  
Retired from Exelon  
Former RF Board  
Member, Large LSE  
Sector and former  
Chair: 2005-2017

I've been away from the industry now for almost four years, so my memory of specific events and challenges has faded, but the feeling that remains is one of accomplishment to a shared mission. In the beginning, the task seemed somewhat daunting, but through lots of concerted effort and perseverance, the industry and its oversight process have come a long way.

The threats to the grid have evolved over the years, but there is a shared

understanding of what a secure grid looks like and the need to remain secure. RF has played a critical role in that progress.



**Jim Keller**  
Retired from WEC  
Energy  
Former RF Board  
Member, Medium LSE  
and former  
Chair: 2005-2016

Thank you for keeping the lights on. Successful operation of the bulk electric system is incredibly complex, and the general public has no idea what is involved.

I am surprised at how some industries can have such poor service all because of one failed server or the start-up of a new software version.

I don't see those headlines for the bulk electric system...keep up the good work.



**Ray Sefchik**  
Retired RF Director  
Entity Engagement

The commitment to our mission of BPS reliability, resilience and security from the RF staff, management and our stakeholder personnel is phenomenal. Our regulatory model is very different from others, but it works because of this commitment by the industry as a

whole. Everyone appears to understand that our sector is critical to our way of life, and they act accordingly.

**Thank you to each and every person who has helped  
RF achieve its mission of maintaining the reliability,  
security and resilience of the electric grid!**

**Thank You**