Although coffee refills and pajama pants may have been abundant in the NEXT Virtual Session on January 27th and 28th, these were not your typical zoom meetings. This amazing cross section of the nuclear industry’s leaders in attendance were immersed in tools they’ll need to make substantial impacts on society and the future of our planet as the nuclear industry leaders of tomorrow. The women of U.S. WIN Nuclear Executives of Tomorrow (NEXT), show that diversity in rooms of decision-making provides a holistic, encompassing perspective when advocating for nuclear energy.

Through NEI-hosted, immersive workshops, the cohort had the chance to meet with government officials in a virtual trip to D.C. for real-world practice. Former Department of Energy Office of Nuclear Energy Assistant Secretary, Dr. Rita Baranwal, U.S. Women in Nuclear Chair, Jhansi Kandasamy, and Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear Director, Christine King are just a few examples of the direct exposure to today’s executives this cohort of tomorrow’s leaders has experienced. The NEXT Cohort is now using what they’ve learned regarding the policymaking process, the roles of building relationships, and how to advocate for nuclear with a wide range of perspectives in mind to focus on crafting their capstones where they will fully embrace the passion for nuclear technology they share while effectively lending their voices into the public sphere.

Meet the women of U.S. WIN NEXT Leadership Program 2020-2021

* [**Denise Brandon**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/denise-brandon-05495b26/) is the Design Engineering Manager at Energy Northwest.
* [**Bonnie Bryant**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bonnie-bryant-844b7018/) is the General Manager of Plant Operations at Entergy.
* [**Deborah McBreen**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborah-mcbreen-85b8801/)is the Director of Organizational Performance and Regulatory at Exelon Nuclear.
* [**Anna Krause**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/krause-anna-e/) is the Senior Manager of Maintenance Preparation at Exelon.
* [**Leah Crider**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/leah-crider-6a4b362/) is the Product Management Operations Leader at GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy.
* [**Renee Meeks**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/renee-meeks-sphr-shrm-scp-b9340a7/) is the Director of Talent for the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations.
* [**Mary Pietrzyk**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mary-pietrzyk-8b403019/) serves the Nuclear Energy Institute as the Director of Stakeholder Strategy and Engagement.
* [**Jean Fleming**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jean-fleming-b8639363/) is the Director of Site Regulatory Compliance at Public Service Electric and Gas - Nuclear.
* [**Melissia Driscoll**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/melissa-driscoll-296b8387/) is the Director of Nuclear Fuels at Public Service Electric and Gas Nuclear.
* [**Fatma Yilmaz**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/fatma-yilmaz-323a464/)is the Nuclear Fuel and Analysis Manager at South Texas Project Nuclear Operating Company.
* [**Susan Baier**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/susan-baier-89593a1ba/) is the Director of Engineering Services at Westinghouse Electric Company.
* [**Heather Winn**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/heather-winn-pe-616440a9/) is the Senior Manager of Strategic Engineering at Luminant.

U.S. WIN seeks nominations each winter for NEXT cohorts. The NEXT program is a 12-month blended learning experience with five executive coaching sessions, 3-4 in-person experiences, 7 virtual sessions, and a culminating capstone project. The NEXT Leadership program is geared toward women who are in the succession plan for assuming an executive level position within 1-3 years, and the program’s success can already be quantified as 58% of the first ever cohort, reported having received promotions or increased responsibilities following completion of the program. Contact Susan Leemhuis (susan.leemhuis@ge.org) for additional information.