NERC
NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC RELIABILITY CORPORATION

ALIGN

Regional Entity Newsletter
February 2021

RELIABILITY | RESILIENCE | SECURITY

LET'S GET ALIGNED: KEY TAKEAWAYS

ERO Secure Evidence Locker Progresses with Registered Entity Testing

The Align team continues progress with the ERO Enterprise Secure Evidence Locker (ERO SEL), to be implemented in conjunction with Align Release 1. Align and the ERO SEL are key components of NERC's reimagined suite of Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP) work and data management tools. NERC and regional subject matter experts (SMEs) have successfully finished testing the ERO SEL, which is now undergoing testing by 16 registered entities and 50 registered entity testers.

Benefits

The ERO SEL will provide an isolated, on-premise environment for evidence analysis across the ERO Enterprise. In addition to securing the evidence process, the ERO SEL will provide the following benefits:
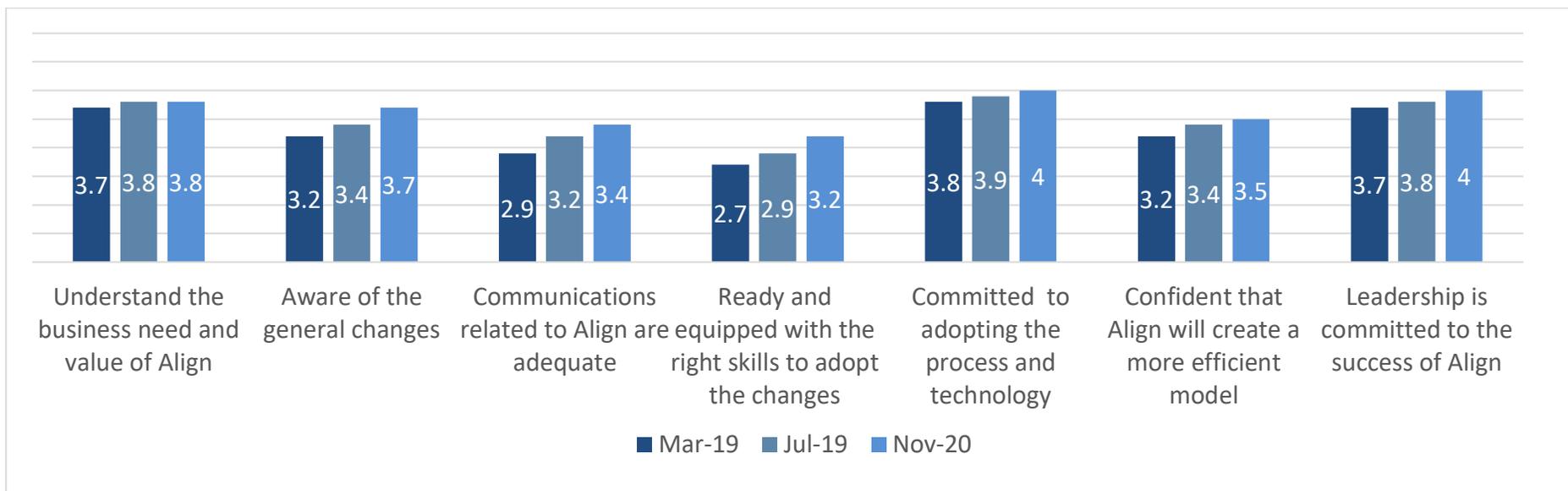
- Ensure proper chain of custody management for registered entity evidence through compartmentalized access provided to select authorized users;
- Monitor and limit the length of time that evidence is within the possession of the ERO Enterprise; and
- Eliminate the creation of evidence copies to limit exposure and destroy evidence in accordance with the approved record retention policy to ensure that evidence is for kept the least amount of time necessary.

For more information on the ERO SEL, visit the "Secure Evidence Locker Functionality" section on the Align FAQs page.

Change Readiness Assessment Pulse Check Survey Results

As part of its efforts to measure change readiness across the ERO Enterprise and registered entities, the Align team conducted a short survey-style change readiness assessment (CRA) in November 2020. The CRA identifies areas where additional training, communication, and stakeholder engagement activities are required to drive change adoption.

The Align team received more than 900 responses to the survey and saw higher weighted average scores across all change readiness dimensions in comparison to previous CRAs conducted in 2019. Significant improvement has been made in stakeholders' perceptions of communications, awareness of general changes, and readiness for upcoming changes associated with Align. The CRA results demonstrate that change management and readiness activities are resonating with ERO Enterprise staff and registered entities as the Align team continues preparations for the upcoming launch of Release 1.

Figure 1.1: CRA Respondent Ratings across Key Change Readiness Areas
(1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree")

The Align team also received several insightful comments (shown below) from survey respondents, which highlight the importance of upcoming training and the need for continued communications leading up to go-live.

"System walkthroughs during adoption workshops and recent training sessions, as well as written communications have been helpful to understand how Align looks, feels, and works. We hope that additional training will be provided soon to give users time to 'play' with the tool and ask questions before going live."

"The magnitude of communication efforts around Align, implementation timelines, upcoming changes, etc. have been great. Over the past year NERC has done an excellent job of soliciting industry participation to remedy issues with the security and effectiveness of Align. It is critical that this level of participation continue through the implementation and operation of the platform."
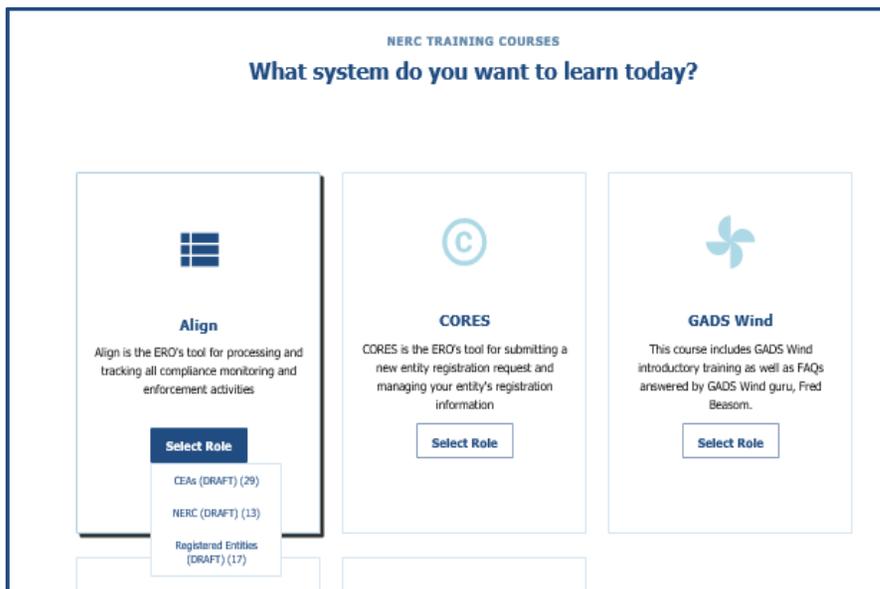
"This investment in standardization facilitated by Align will have learning curves and growing pains along the way but this will be a great thing in the long term. I appreciate that NERC and Regional Entity staff are working to ensure that the product is secure and functional prior to rolling out the new tool."
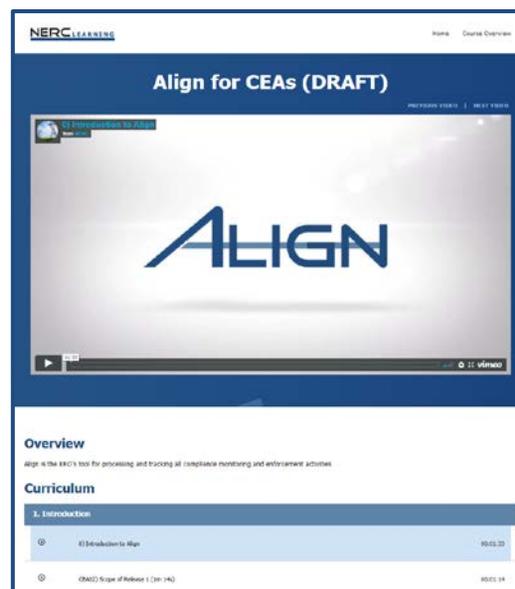
Update on Regional Training

MRO, ReliabilityFirst, and Texas RE are holding regional training sessions, while the remaining Regions will begin training regional staff over the next few months. Note that there will be variations in the training schedule and delivery for different Regions based on their respective training plans. The table below summarizes the most recent regional training schedules and contact details for regional training leads. Please reach out to your regional training leads with any training-related questions.

Regional Training Schedule and Contacts		
Region	**Regional Staff Training Dates**	**Regional Training Leads**
MRO	January 27: Overview & Demo February 10: Compliance February 17: RAM & Enforcement	Michael Spangenberg Ryan McNamara
Texas RE	November 30: Kickoff December 3: Training February 22: Navigating Align Refresher March 22: Refresher for Enforcement March 25: Refresher for CM Analysts March 26: Refresher for Compliance	Machelle Castro Rachel Coyne Rochelle Brown
WECC	March 3: Stakeholder Services March 16 and 17: Enforcement/Mitigation *Other functions to follow*	Angie Shapiro Mailee Cook
NPCC	March 11: Align March 18: ERO SEL	Daniel Kidney Kimberly Griffith
RF	January 5, 8, 15, and 20: Enforcement February 3 and 9: RAM and IT March 22 and 23: Compliance Monitoring March 31 (TBC): ERO SEL	Bob Folt Ron Ross
SERC	March 4: RAM & Enforcement April 8: Monitoring Admin. May 27 and June 3: Monitoring Audit	Janice Carney Rick Dodd Shawna Speer

All training materials can be found on the NERC Training Site, including several new ERO SEL training videos for your role. You can navigate to the training videos relevant for your role as seen in Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3.
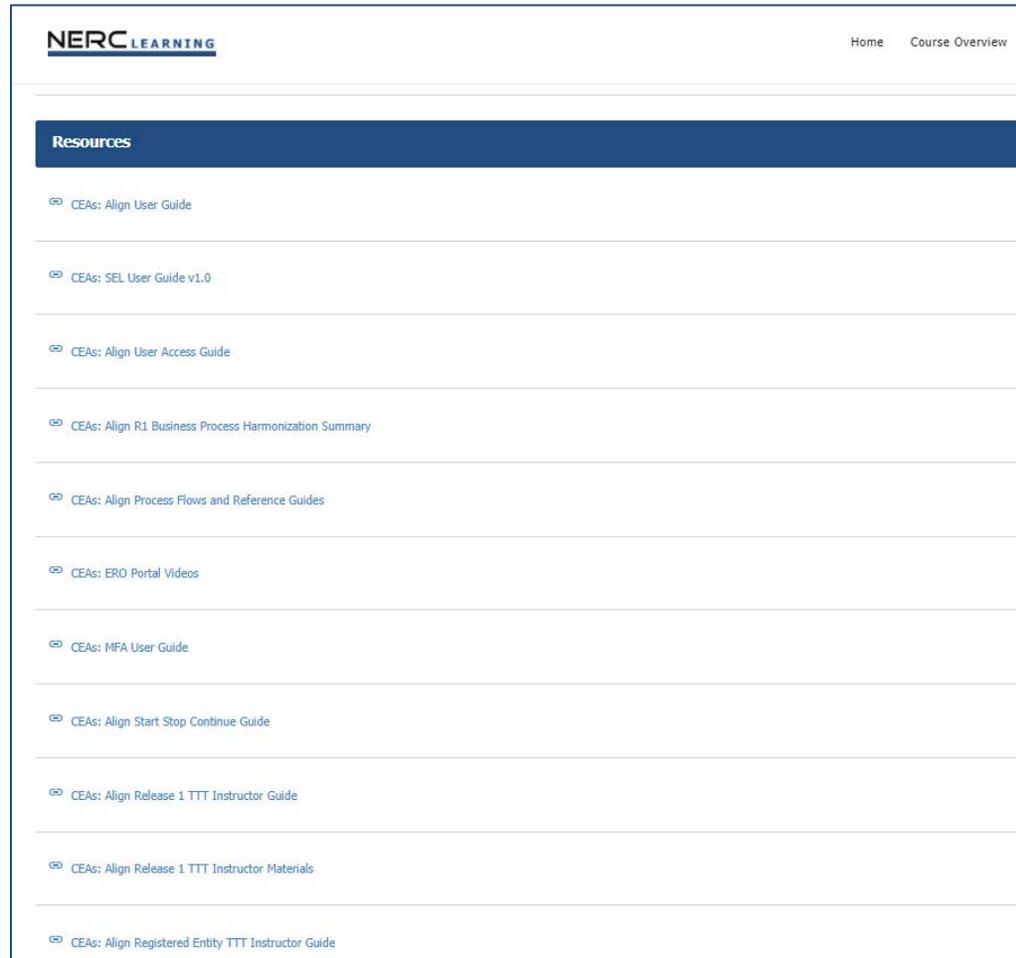

Figure 1.2: NERC Training Site

Figure 1.3: NERC Training Site

In addition to the training videos, the site contains comprehensive End-User and Start/Stop/Continue guides, all of which will be used during training. The End-User guides provide a detailed overview of how to navigate through Align Release 1 functionalities, while the Start/Stop/Continue guides provide detailed guidance on which activities move to Align and which activities stay inside the legacy systems. Each Region will use the same training materials as seen in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: NERC Training Site

The Align project team is also hosting a series of go/no go touchpoints for Regional Change Agents leading up to Align Release 1 to track business and system readiness and identify any barriers to a successful launch. Key outputs from each touchpoint are shared with the regional leadership teams to support go/no go decisions and address issues that may arise during the go/no go process.

Accessing Align: Act Now!

As we continue to get closer to Release 1, it is important that you complete the setup or verification of your ERO Portal Account. You are required to have an active ERO Portal Account prior to accessing Align. **Please follow the instructions below to verify your existing account or set up your new account!** If you cannot remember your username/password, select the "Forgot Password/Username" to reset your password. If you have questions or problems concerning your ERO Portal account, please submit a support ticket [here](#).

All registered entities should also have a primary compliance contact (PCC) set up with an ERO Portal Account and all regions should validate that their PCC list is updated in CORES. Prior to go-live, NERC will ensure all PCCs with ERO Portal Accounts are set up as an Align Registered Entity Submitter and the Entity Administrators responsible for approving access requests.

To Set Up an ERO Portal Account:

1. Navigate to https://eroportal.nerc.net.

2. Select "Register" in the upper left-hand corner.

3. Complete the registration form and click "Submit."

To Verify an ERO Portal Account:

1. Navigate to https://eroportal.nerc.net.

2. Select "Sign In" in the upper left-hand corner.

3. Enter your credentials to confirm access to ERO Portal.

Quick Links for Reference

Here is a list of links to commonly requested project materials for Align and the ERO SEL. Please reach out to your Change Agents for additional materials.

Quick Links
FAQs
Program Business Case (Updated April 2020)
Align Governance Model (Updated February 2021)
Registered Entity SEL Requirements (Updated November 2020)
Project SME Site (Secure Member Access Only)
NERC Training Site

Want to Learn More? Key Contacts and Resources

The next Align Q&A is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 23,** and is open to everyone in the ERO Enterprise. Join this call to get answers to your questions and hear the latest updates from the project team. Please submit your questions in advance to AskAlign@NERC.net. You can also reach out to your Region's Change Agents, who meet on a monthly basis and have the latest project updates. They are another resource available to you for asking questions or sharing comments and feedback on the project.

Align Change Agents	
Organization	**Change Agents**
MRO	Desiree Sawyer, Marissa Falco
NERC	Chris Boyd-Witherspoon, Jamie Calderon, Farzaneh Tafreshi, Sara Minges
NPCC	Jason Wang, Kimberly Griffith
RF	Ray Sefchik
SERC	Andrew Williamson, Janice Carney, Melinda Montgomery, Rick Dodd, Todd Curl
Texas RE	Rochelle Brown
WECC	Ben Aldous, Mailee Cook, Michael Dalebout

This newsletter compiles a list of important Align project updates with actionable deadlines, as well as upcoming events, recently posted resources, and other relevant news and information. Please email AskAlign@nerc.net with feedback on this newsletter. Current and future newsletters and additional project resources, including the regularly updated Align FAQs, can be found on the Align Project Site.