

Supporting Statement B
Evaluating Connections: BOEM’s Environmental Studies and Assessments
OMB Control Number 1010-NEW
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Interior

Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

The agency should be prepared to justify its decision not to use statistical methods in any case where such methods might reduce burden or improve accuracy of results. When the question “Does this ICR contain surveys, censuses, or employ statistical methods?” is checked "Yes," the following documentation should be included in Supporting Statement B to the extent that it applies to the methods proposed:

- 1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.**

The survey will be sent to all of the approximately 300 external contacts that BOEM personnel who work on environmental studies and/or assessments identified. The external contacts were identified in 2021 through an internal survey sent to all BOEM employees who work on studies and/or assessments. Each respondent was asked to identify the five most important external organizations that they interacted with in the development or implementation of studies, the development of analyses for environmental assessments, or the dissemination of information about studies or assessments within the last 12 months. For each external organization that respondents identified, they were asked to provide the first and last name and the business email address for the most important individual they interact with from the organization. The evaluation team plans to survey all the external contacts identified through the survey effort, unless the respondent checked a box indicating that they have concerns about contacting the external contact.

Taking a census approach to the external survey is justified because the results will be used to conduct a network analysis, with the goal of comprehensively mapping and measuring BOEM’s network of external program partners for studies and assessments work. Sampling only a subset of the external contacts that BOEM identified as important could distort the results of the network analysis if critical nodes (organizations) and their ties (connections) are not represented in the network map and metrics.

It is anticipated that 70% of external contacts will provide responses to the survey questions. Those who receive the survey are likely to be interested in the survey subject matter since

they will more than likely be directly involved in the activities associated with the survey (BOEM studies, BOEM assessments, or both). In addition, the survey uses skip logic, drop-down menus, and categorical response options whenever possible to minimize survey burden and encourage completion. However, the evaluation team will not attempt to extrapolate from the survey responses to the population as a whole when developing the network map and metrics.

Approximately 70 interviews will be conducted, including 50 interviews with state agencies and potentially tribal members, and 20 interviews with academics, consultants, and potentially industry representatives and environmental non-governmental organizations. Conducting 50 state agency interviews will allow for 2-3 interviews in each state that borders BOEM regions. Similarly, 20 interviews with academics/consultants will provide good coverage of the universities that are most actively involved with BOEM research. These interviews will complement the external network analysis and increase the usefulness of the evaluation by ensuring that the most relevant entities in the states and in consulting/academia are interviewed.

The external interviews will be selected using a purposive sample to provide a cross-section of states in which BOEM operates and key academics/consultants identified by BOEM. As this is not a statistical sampling approach, the interview findings will not be extrapolated to the broader population of BOEM's external partners. This approach is justified to account for the important differences across multiple states and other external partners, who each have different contexts and objectives for participating in BOEM studies and assessments work, and who use studies and assessments differently in their respective decision-making processes. Interviewing multiple state agencies in each region prioritizes capturing differing perspectives over the most frequent or common interactions between BOEM staff and external partners. Interviewing 20 academics/consultants will capture the most influential members of these groups as identified by BOEM's environmental studies and assessments programs. Because these academics and consultants are important and frequent collaborators in BOEM's studies work, and they bring a range of perspectives based on their individual experiences and subject matter expertise, ensuring their representation in the interviews is important for providing a comprehensive understanding of their interactions with BOEM.

It is anticipated that 75% of external contacts will participate in the interviews. Those who receive the interview request are likely to be very interested in the subject matter since they will more than likely be directly involved in the activities associated with the interview (BOEM studies, BOEM assessments, or both), collaborate frequently with BOEM on these topics, and/or make decisions based on the results of BOEM studies and assessments. Also, the interview guides will be tailored to each respondent to ensure that respondents only answer questions that are relevant to them. However, the evaluation team will not attempt to extrapolate from the interview responses to the general population.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:

2a. Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection.

As discussed in response to Question 1, the evaluation team is not proposing to conduct statistical sampling or stratification.

2b. Estimation procedure.

Not applicable.

2c. Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification.

Not applicable.

2d. Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.

There are no unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.

2e. Any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

This will be a one-time collection.

3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

Participation in the survey and interviews is completely voluntary. External contacts who are invited to participate in the survey or an interview will likely be motivated to share their feedback with BOEM, because they are most likely directly involved in the topics that the project covers – i.e., connections between BOEM and external partners on studies and/or assessments. These external contacts will likely value the opportunity to render opinions affecting future management of BOEM's Environmental Studies Program, particularly as it impacts interactions with external partners including themselves. Therefore, the evaluation team anticipates that voluntary compliance will be high while non-response rates will be low.

BOEM will send advance notification emails and up to two follow-up emails for the interviews and survey. Sending these communications directly from BOEM, rather than the independent contractor who will administer the interviews and survey, will increase the likelihood that respondents read the invitation and agree to participate. Furthermore, careful consideration will be given to the interview and survey questions to minimize response burden. As stated above, the survey uses skip logic, drop-down menus, and categorical response options whenever possible to minimize survey burden and encourage completion. The interview guides will be tailored to each respondent to ensure that respondents only answer questions that are relevant to them.

The evaluation team expects non-responsiveness to be a minor issue. If a respondent is not willing to participate in the survey, BOEM will not assume a zero value for those

respondents to prevent a non-response bias to be integrated into the survey results. Instead, BOEM will track the total number of surveys distributed against the number of completed surveys. The final report will describe the non-response bias as the number of surveys that were not completed or returned. If certain questions within the survey are not answered, professional judgment will be used to explain why an answer to a specific question was left blank. For the interviews, in addition to tracking the number of refusals, the evaluation team will also attempt to ask the respondent why he/she refused to participate. If the respondent provides a reason for not participating in the information collection, the evaluation team will record the responses and review the totality of responses for any evidence of non-response bias. Any information obtained on responses for refusals will be summarized in the final report.

- 4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.**

Tests of procedures or methods for the external survey and interviews will not be used because the process for soliciting responses is not likely to cause confusion, waste, inefficient use of time, or an undue burden upon the public. However, a similar process was used earlier in 2021 to conduct an internal survey and interviews of BOEM staff who work on studies and/or assessments. As part of the internal project, the evaluation team pre-tested the survey instrument and refined the questions to minimize burden and improve utility.

- 5. Provide the names and telephone numbers of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.**

Megan Davidson and Jacob Levenson in BOEM were consulted on the design of the project, including the survey and interviews:

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The survey and interviews will be administered and analyzed by a team led by Daniel Kaufman and Maura Flight from contractor Industrial Economics, Inc. (IEc):

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