

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT 1995:
ANNUAL REPORT FOR MULTIPLE EMPLOYER WELFARE ARRANGEMENTS
(FORM M-1 (Report for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs)
and Certain Entities Claiming Exception (ECEs))**

This ICR seeks approval of an extension of an existing control number.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), codified as Part 7 of Title I of the Employee Retirement Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), was enacted to improve the portability and continuity of health care coverage for participants and beneficiaries of group health plans. HIPAA also added section 101(g) to ERISA, providing the Secretary of Labor (Secretary) with authority to require, by regulation, multiple employer welfare arrangements (MEWAs) as defined in section 3(40) of ERISA, that offer or provide coverage for medical benefits but which are not group health plans (non-plan MEWAs), to report annually for the purpose of determining compliance with Part 7 requirements. While the statutory authority was directed at non-plan MEWAs, based on the authority in ERISA sections 101(g), 505, and 734, the Department of Labor (Department) in 2003 promulgated a regulation at 29 CFR §2520.101-2 that required the administrators of both plan MEWAs and non-plan MEWAs that offer or provide coverage for medical benefits, as well certain entities that claim not to be a MEWA solely due to the exception in section 3(40)(A)(i) of ERISA (referred to as “Entities Claiming Exception” or “ECEs”), to file the Form M-1 on an annual basis (Form M-1 annual report).

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 (these are collectively known as the “Affordable Care Act” or “ACA”) amended section 101(g) of ERISA to require non-plan MEWAs that provide benefits consisting of medical care to register with the Secretary before operating in a State. In 2011, the Department amended the Form M-1 reporting requirement regulations pursuant to the ACA provisions by requiring all MEWAs (plan and non-plan MEWAs) that offer or provide coverage for medical benefits and ECEs to register with the Secretary upon occurrence of certain registration events, such as prior to operating in a State, in addition to continued reporting on an annual basis regarding compliance with part 7 of ERISA.

The final rule's reporting requirement provides a cost-effective means of facilitating compliance with Part 7, as well as with other Federal and State requirements that may apply to MEWAs under ERISA, the Internal Revenue Code (the Code), the Public Health Service Act (PHS Act) and State insurance laws.

The term "multiple employer welfare arrangement" (MEWA) is defined in Section 3(40) of ERISA to mean, in pertinent part:

(A) . . . an employee welfare benefit plan, or any other arrangement, (other than an employee welfare benefit arrangement), which is established or maintained for the purpose of offering or providing [welfare plan benefits] to the employees of two or more employers (including one or more self-employed individuals), or their beneficiaries,

Under Section 514(b)(6) of ERISA, employee welfare benefit plans that are MEWAs are generally subject to state insurance law to different degrees depending on whether the plan is fully insured . However, any such plans that are established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more agreements that the Secretary finds to be collectively bargained are by statute excluded from the definition of MEWA and therefore are not subject to the provisions in ERISA section 514(b)(6) regarding state insurance regulation of plans that are MEWAs (if such a collectively bargained plan uses insurance to provide benefits, the insurance company and insurance policy would, however, be subject to state insurance regulation). Plans maintained by rural electric cooperatives and rural telephone cooperative associations are similarly excluded by statute from the definition of MEWA.

The primary purpose of the information collection contained in the Form M-1 is to provide the Department with a complete and uniform source of information that identifies MEWAs and helps the Secretary and State regulators evaluate Part 7 compliance by MEWAs. The use of the Form M-1 to supply the information and for evaluation purposes is more cost effective for both governmental entities and MEWAs than the alternative of active intervention by governmental compliance examiners or investigators.

In determining how best to obtain this information, the Department concluded that the annual reporting requirement should apply to ECEs as well as plan and non-plan MEWAs. The regulation therefore provides that all MEWAs (plan and non-plan MEWAs) that offer or provide coverage for medical benefits and ECEs must file the Form M-1 annually as well as upon occurrence of certain registration events. A reporting requirement limited to entities that acknowledge that they are non-plan MEWAs would make it difficult for governmental agencies to determine whether MEWAs and ECEs are properly interpreting the scope of the MEWA definition and would reduce the value of

the data collected.

The collection of information regarding compliance with Part 7 is important because, in the Department's experience, compliance with ERISA by MEWAs has been inconsistent. Because MEWA arrangements are an alternative method for small employers to provide affordable health and welfare benefits to their employees, the Department needs an adequate means for determining the level of compliance of MEWAs with the requirements of Part 7.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted on March 23, 2010; the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (the Reconciliation Act), Public Law 111-152, 124 Stat. 1029, was enacted on March 30, 2010. The ACA amended section 101(g) of ERISA to require MEWAs that provide benefits consisting of medical care (within the meaning of ERISA section 733(a)(2)) which are not group health plans to register with the Secretary before operating in a State, in addition to reporting annually regarding their compliance with Part 7 of ERISA. The final regulations, implemented ERISA section 101(g) which mandates MEWA registration. Thus, paragraph (a) of the final rule sets forth how section 101(g) of ERISA requires MEWAs that provide benefits consisting of medical care (within the meaning of section 733(a)(2) of ERISA) to register with the Secretary prior to operating in a State, and to report annually regarding compliance with Part 7 of ERISA.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Pursuant to section 101(g) of ERISA, the Form M-1 information is used by governmental oversight entities to determine the extent of compliance with the requirements of Part 7 of ERISA by MEWAs and ECEs under section 3(40) of ERISA and to take appropriate compliance assistance and enforcement actions.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration for using information technology to reduce burden.

The Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) requires agencies to allow customers the option to submit information or transact with the government electronically, when practicable. Where feasible, and subject to resource availability and resolution of legal issues, EBSA has implemented the electronic acceptance of information submitted by customers to the federal government.

The Form M-1, similar to the Form 5500 Annual Report filings (Office of Management and Budget or OMB Control Number 1210-0110)) and consistent with the goals of E-government as recognized by the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and the E-Government Act of 2002, must be filed electronically. A mandate of electronic filing of benefit plan information, among other program strategies, facilitates EBSA's achievement of its goal to assure the security of the retirement, health and other workplace related benefits of American workers and their families. A cornerstone of EBSA's enforcement program is the collection, analysis, and disclosure of employee benefit plan information. Requiring electronic filing minimizes errors and provides faster access to reported data, assisting EBSA in its enforcement, oversight, and disclosure roles and ultimately enhancing the security of employee benefit plans. Electronic filing of the Form M-1 also reduces the administrative paperwork burden and costs related to printing and mailing forms. In addition, with the use of secure account access, electronic filing allows for updating of previously reported information to facilitate simplified future reporting. Finally, electronic filing of the Form M-1 could provide almost immediate availability of the information for reference by participants, beneficiaries, and participating employers.

- 4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.**

Other than basic identifying information, the information provided on the Form M-1 is generally not available from other sources.

- 5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

The Department's implementing regulations regarding furnishing the Form M-1 do not distinguish between small and large entities, inasmuch as the Department believes that participants and beneficiaries need the same quality and quantity of information regardless of entity size. Electronic filing of the Form M-1 should reduce some of the administrative burdens on small entities when compared with the historic burden associated with filing the Form M-1.

- 6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

The ACA authorizes the Secretary to require certain multiple employer welfare

arrangements to report annually in a manner determined by the Secretary for the purpose of determining the extent of compliance with Part 7 of ERISA. Annual reporting is necessary to ensure that participants and beneficiaries of these arrangements are afforded the protections intended under the provisions of Part 7 of ERISA. Determining whether an entity is in compliance with Part 7 hinges in part on its structure and whether state law may be applied. The interplay of state and federal requirements for MEWAs, group health plans, and health insurance issuers necessitates the collection of information concerning the states in which MEWAs and other entities operate, state licensure, and insurance status. If this data collection were not conducted or if it were conducted less frequently, the Department would not be as effective in protecting the benefits of the MEWA's participants and beneficiaries.

7. **Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**
- **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**
 - **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
 - **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
 - **requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;**
 - **in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**
 - **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
 - **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
 - **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

There are no special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

8. **If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d),**

soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years -- even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

The Department's notice required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d) soliciting comments on the information collection was published in the Federal Register on January 6, 2025 (90 FR 671) and provided the public 60 days to comment on the submission.

On March 7, 2025, the Department received a comment regarding the information collection.

Barrier: MEWAs have historically been prone to fraud and compliance failures, yet plan participants and small employers struggle to verify whether a MEWA is in good standing.

Proposed Improvements:

- Require MEWAs to provide a publicly accessible compliance status report in a centralized Department of Labor database, allowing employers and employees to confirm whether a MEWA is compliant with ERISA and state regulations.
- Automated compliance alerts: Establish a voluntary fiduciary self-correction mechanism allowing MEWAs to receive real-time feedback on missing or incomplete filings rather than waiting for audits.
- Direct email compliance inquiries: Ensure MEWAs provide a designated compliance contact email, not just a general customer service number.

These changes decrease reliance on post-enforcement penalties by making it easier for MEWAs to self-monitor and self-correct and for stakeholders to verify compliance proactively.

Response to the comment: The Form M-1 filings are publicly available allowing

employers and employees to inspect the form. The filings do contain question of compliance with applicable statutes and regulations. The Form M-1 does collect the e-mail address of persons involved in the administration of the MEWA or ECE, including the administrator of the MEWA or ECE.

The Form M-1 Online Search tool (www.askebsa.dol.gov/epds/home)_allows users to find reports for Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and Association Health Plans (AHPs) filed with the Department of Labor. Copies of the Form M-1 filings are also available from EBSA's Public Disclosure Room at 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room N-1515, Washington, DC 20210, or by calling (202) 693-8673.

On-line filing is required, and the filing system does have flags and checks to help ensure the accuracy and completeness of the filing. Plans are also able to amend filings when errors are found.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts will be made to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality has been provided. All Forms M-1 submitted to the government are available for public inspection.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a**

sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.

- **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13.**
- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included in Item 14.**

In the 2023 calendar year, an estimated 791 entities filed the Form M-1 with the Department, of which 487 were single-State filers and 304 were multi-State filers. For MEWAs (which for the purposes of this discussion include ECEs as previously discussed in the response to question 1) to file the Form M-1, the Department estimates that Part I of the Form M-1 (which contains the identifying information) would require five minutes to complete. The time required to complete Part II would vary based on the number of States in which the entity provides coverage, and the Department estimates that this would require on average 60 minutes for single-State filers and on average 120 minutes for multi-State filers. The Department anticipates that the time required to complete Part III would be 15 minutes. Table 1 below summarizes the estimates of time required to complete each part of the form. The Department expects that the time required to identify each participating employer in the MEWA by name and employer identification number (EIN) as an attachment to the Form M-1 would require 30 minutes. The Department estimates the hours burden to be 1,536 in total and the calculations are presented below in Table 1.

TABLE 1.—*Estimated Hours Burden to Prepare Form M-1*

	Time to Complete (hours)			Number of Filers			Hours Burden		
	One State	Multi State	All Filers	One State	Multi State	Newly Created Accounts	One State	Multi State	All Filers
	(A1)	(A2)	(A3)	(B1)	(B2)	(C)	(A1)x(B1)	(A2)x(B2)	(A3) x (B3)
New Filer Familiarization	2	2		40	25		81	51	-
Account Creation	0	0	5/60			160	-	-	13

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Part I	5/60	5/60	487	304	41	25	-
Part II	1	2	487	304	487	608	-
Part III	15/60	15/60	487	304	122	76	-
Participating Employers Filing	30/60	30/60	40	25	20	13	-
Total			487	304	751	772	13
Grand Totals				791		1,536	

The Department assumes that a compensation and benefits manager with an overhead cost of \$189.35 will complete all the tasks outlined.¹ The hours burden developed in Table 1 is carried over to Table 2 where the estimated annual cost equivalent of \$290,907 is calculated and presented.

TABLE 2.—Estimated Cost Equivalent to Prepare Form M-1

	Hours Burden				Cost Equivalent			
	One State	Multi State	All Filers	Labor Rate	One State	Multi State	All Filers	Grand Totals
	(D)	(D)		(F)	(D) x (F)	(D) x (F)	(D) x (F)	
New Filer Familiarization	81	51	-	\$189.35	\$15,327	\$9,568	\$-	\$24,895
Account Creation	-	-	13	\$189.35	\$-	\$-	\$2,525	\$2,525
Part I	41	25	-	\$189.35	\$7,684	\$4,797	\$-	\$12,481
Part II	487	608	-	\$189.35	\$92,213	\$115,125	\$-	\$207,338
Part III	122	76	-	\$189.35	\$23,053	\$14,391	\$-	\$37,444
Participating Employers Filing	20	13	-	\$189.35	\$3,832	\$2,392	\$-	\$6,224
Total	751	772	13		\$142,111	\$146,272	\$2,525	\$290,907

Table 3. Estimated Annualized Respondent Cost and Hour Burden

Activity	Number of Respondents	Responses per Respondent	Total Responses	Average Burden (Hours)	Total Burden (Hours)	Hourly Wage Rate	Equivalent Cost
Single State Filers- New Filings (In-house)	40	1	40	2	81	\$189.35	\$15,327
Multi-State Filers- New Filings (In-house)	25	1	25	2	51	\$189.35	\$9,568
Single-State Filers-	487	1	487	5/60	41	\$189.35	\$7,684

¹ Internal DOL calculation based on 2025 labor cost data. For a description of the Department's methodology for calculating wage rates, see <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/EBSA/laws-and-regulations/rules-and-regulations/technical-appendices/labor-cost-inputs-used-in-ebsa-opr-ria-and-pra-burden-calculations-june-2019.pdf>

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Prepare Part I							
Single-State Filers-Prepare Part II	487	1	487	1	487	\$189.35	\$92,213
Single-State Filers-Prepare Part III	487	1	487	15/60	122	\$189.35	\$23,053
Multi-State Filers-Prepare Part I	304	1	304	5/60	25	\$189.35	\$4,797
Multi-State Filers-Prepare Part II	304	1	304	2	608	\$189.35	\$115,125
Multi-State Filers-Prepare Part III	304	1	304	15/60	76	\$189.35	\$14,391
Account Creation	160	1	160	5/60	13	\$189.35	\$2,525
Participating Employers Attachment	66	1	66	30/60	33	\$189.35	\$6,224
Total	791	-	791	-	1,536	-	\$290,907

*Note that the total value may not equal the sum of the parts due to rounding.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 or 14).

- The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life); and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of service component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.
- If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of

purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.

- **Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.**

OMB guidance is that burden incurred by service providers be reported as hour burden instead of cost burden. Therefore, service provider burden is discussed in the response to question 12.

- 14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.**

The Department estimates that the cost to the Federal government to process Form M-1s is approximately \$2,500. This includes the cost to process online submissions and maintain the processing system and was estimated by the offices within EBSA that are responsible for overseeing these activities.

- 15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reporting in Items 13 or 14.**

There are no program changes for this submission. This submission reflects updated data on the number of annual Form M-1 filings and new Form M-1 filings based on data from the most recent year of submission (2023) and reflects updated labor costs. A process familiarization cost used in the prior three-year period was removed. As a result, the number of responses has increased by 72 responses, and the hour burden has decreased by 303 hours.

- 16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation, and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be**

used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

The Form M-1 is not intended to be a collection of information for statistical use. Once collected, however, the information is available to the Department and the public, and may be used for purposes other than enforcement and disclosure, to include research publications.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

OMB previously granted approval for the Department to omit the expiration date from the Form M-1. The Department requests continued approval to omit the expiration date.

The Department will publish a notice notifying the public of the expiration date after OMB approves renewal of the ICR.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Not applicable.