
Supporting Statement for the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation's Small Business Impact Evaluation

Part A: Justification

Collection Instruments

DOE CMEI Information Request to Small Business Award Applicants

March 2026

OMB No. 1910-NEW

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Introduction

Provide a brief introduction of the Information Collection Request. Include the purpose of this collection, note the publication of the 60-Day Federal Register Notice, and provide the list of forms within this collection.

This package requests approval for information collection from small businesses that have applied for funding through the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation's (CMEI's) financial assistance offerings, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants and prizes between 2008 and 2024, to collect information that will serve as inputs to a program evaluation study that will evaluate the impacts of CMEI's technology offices' funding on small businesses. The results of this evaluation study will be used by DOE leadership to understand the impact to date and opportunities for improvement in financial awards provided to small businesses. This is planned to be a one-time information collection effort.

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice has been posted for this collection effort as of July 30th, 2025, Volume 90, Number 144, Page Number 35854.

This information collection will include a questionnaire distributed to respondents via email. CMEI will conduct follow-up outreach to collect responses from recipients who do not respond to the email questionnaire.

A.1. Legal Justification

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 information collection.

This collection of information is in support of the financial assistance programs under the Department of Energy's Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation (see 42 U.S.C. 7133), the Small Business Innovation Development Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-219), and consistent with the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-435). This evaluation will develop statistical evidence of the impacts of CMEI's investments on innovative technology development and small business growth and may support CMEI and DOE leadership in developing policy surrounding awards to small businesses.

This evaluation will answer questions identified by CMEI leadership as high priorities to support policymaking, including assessing the extent to which small businesses supported by the technology offices under CMEI's investments have achieved economic and scientific successes. Since some of this information are not possible to measure in any other way besides information collection directly from small business applicants – e.g. sales quantities and revenues of technologies funded through CMEI projects.

A.2. Needs and Uses of Data

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

This information will be used by CMEI leadership to measure and understand the effectiveness of CMEI's financial assistance awards. The results from analysis of this information will enable CMEI leadership to accurately describe CMEI's impact on small businesses and to make decisions about what types of projects and funding opportunities to invest in in the future based on evidence of past impacts on various types of projects.

A.3. Use of Technology

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.

CMEI intends to apply the latest information technology (hardware and software) methods to reduce the information collection burden and improve the timeliness and usefulness of the information collected through this effort. CMEI plans to use email and other electronic submission means to collect responses from respondents, to make it easy for respondents to participate. CMEI anticipates that between 25% and 75% of respondents will choose to submit responses electronically and the remainder of respondents' responses will be collected over the phone.

A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

Describe efforts to identify duplication.

The information describing EERE award applicants' sales is a critically important input to this evaluation since it will be used to measure the extent to which these companies have achieved commercialization, which is understood within CMEI to be among the main goals of EERE funding to this target population. CMEI has identified it has product sales information for a limited number of applicants but CMEI does not generally have product sales. The information collection this Supporting Statement A supports will not include awardees for which we already have sales information. CMEI will also use this information collection effort to validate and update some information previously submitted through funding applicants.

No ongoing information collection effort is currently undertaken whereby CMEI collects information from the small business award applicants targeted by this evaluation and information collection effort, but information and files related to applications are collected through the application process and (for awarded projects) additional information is collected during the course of the project, and this information and these files will serve as inputs to this evaluation. Information that has already been collected during the application and project management processes of evaluated projects, and that does not require validation through this data collection effort, will not be collected from applicants through this data collection effort in order to reduce the burden on recipients of this effort.

A.5. Provisions for Reducing Burden on Small Businesses

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

This collection will seek to collect information directly from small businesses. To minimize burden on recipients, the information requested from these recipients will only include information necessary to

conduct the evaluation this Information Collection effort relates to. Additionally, CMEI plans to compensate recipients for their time submitting the survey in the form of a dollar incentive, e.g. in the form of a gift card in an amount equal to or greater than \$20 per submission. See section Use of Technology above for further detail regarding how CMEI is reducing burden on small business respondents.

A.6. Consequences of Less-Frequent Reporting

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.

This is planned to be a one-time information collection effort. Without this information collection, CMEI could not complete this evaluation project because the evidence collected through this information collection effort are necessary inputs to meeting the objectives of the project.

A.7. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.5

Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines:

- (a) requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**
- (b) requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- (c) requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
- (d) requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;**
- (e) in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to product valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**
- (f) requiring the use of statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
- (g) that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in stature of 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**
- (h) requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, 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.**

Information collections in this package have been reviewed and justified by Department management, contract administration requirements, statutes, regulations, inter-agency reporting requirements,

Departmental orders, or other internal Department requirements. To the best of our knowledge, collections are consistent with OMB guidelines.

A.8. Summary of Consultations Outside of the Agency

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 5CFR 320.8(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 in response to the comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside DOE 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 report.

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice has been posted for this collection effort as of July 30th, 2025 ,Volume 90 , Number 144, Page Number 35854. No comments were received.

A 30-day Federal Register Notice concerning this collection in the Federal Register on December 10th, 2025, Volume 90, Number 235, and Page Number 57192). 1 comment was received. It was irrelevant to the collection.

There was no additional consultation with persons outside of DOE concerning information collection.

A.9. Payments or Gifts to Respondents

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

This information collection may include a dollar incentive that will be delivered to companies that submit a complete response to the associated request for information. Incentives are widely known to have a positive impact on data collection response rates and will reliably contribute to collection of more and higher quality information through this collection effort, which will enable this evaluation to product more complete, more accurate results at a reasonable cost. Evidence of the positive impact of incentives on survey response rates can be found in article “Does usage of monetary incentive impact the involvement in surveys? A systematic review and meta-analysis of 467 randomized controlled trials” by Abdelazeem, Hamdallah, Abdelazim Rizk, Said Abbas, Ahmed El-Shahat, Manasrah, Reda Mostafa and Eltobgy¹. The exact medium and amount of these incentives will be decided with input from a qualified evaluation contractor who will lead the evaluation study this data collection effort relates to, and who has not yet been awarded the contract to lead this evaluation as of March 2025. Anticipated options for incentive delivery include a digital gift card in an amount greater than or equal to \$20 per response.

Please note: Applicants for CMEI funding that will receive and respond to this survey may be paid for providing information by way of dollar incentives distributed to respondents following their submission of the requested information. In this sense, the collection of this information is different from requests for information imposed on the general public for which payment is not made.

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9844858/>

A.10. Provisions for Protection of Information

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

Submission of potentially confidential proprietary information will be done through Box. Information storage and sharing will be conducted consistent with requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. Information will only be represented in an aggregate format so that individual respondents cannot be identified.

A.11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

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 DOE 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.

The information collected does not generate sensitive questions as described above.

A.12A. Estimate of Respondent Burden Hours

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, DOE should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample fewer than 10 potential respondents is desirable.

The estimates below were developed based on the Requester's knowledge of what information must be collected for this project and based on the Requester's past experience with the amount of time respondents typically require to submit this amount of information digitally.

Table A1. Estimated Respondent Hour Burden

Form Number/Title (and/or other Collection Instrument name)	Type of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Annual Number of Responses	Burden Hours Per Response	Annual Burden Hours	Annual Reporting Frequency
2025-2026 DOE EERE Information Request to Small Business Award Applicants	Financial assistance award applicants	9,000	9,000	1.5	13,500	once
TOTAL		9,000	9,000		13,500	

A.12B. Estimate of Annual Cost to Respondent for Burden Hours

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 under 'Annual Cost to Federal Government'.

The annual estimated cost to respondents for this collection is \$809,865.00. This amount was calculated by multiplying the fully burdened national mean wage estimated hourly rate for business operations specialists responsible for providing the responses (\$42.85 x 1.4 = \$59.99) by the total annual number of burden hours (13,500). The national mean wage estimated hourly rate for business operations specialists (\$42.85) is based on the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statics May 2023 Occupational Employment and Wages for 13-1199 Business Operations Specialists², All Other. The standard benefits multiplier applied to the hourly wage rate to convert the hourly wage to a fully-burdened wage (i.e., wage plus benefits) is 1.4 for private employees based on the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statics Employer Costs for Employee Compensation Summary released in March of 2023.

Table A2. Estimated Respondent Cost Burden

Type of Respondents	Total Annual Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Total Respondent Costs
Financial assistance award applicants	13,500	\$59.99	\$809,865
TOTAL	13,500		\$809,865

A.13. Other Estimated Annual Cost to Respondents

Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information.

This information collection will not entail any estimated annual costs to respondents other than those listed in sections A12.A and A.12B above.

A.14. Annual Cost to the Federal Government

Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

Table A3. Estimated Costs to the Federal Government

Cost Category	Labor Hours	Cost/Hour	Cost	Source of Estimate
Cost of federal employee overseeing information collection	20	\$85.12	\$1,702.40	This amount was calculated by multiplying the fully burdened hourly rate for the federal employee who will review summary information about responses collected through this information collection (\$53.20 x 1.6 = \$85.12) by the number of hours required for the federal employee to

² <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes131199.htm#nat>

				review these summary results. Cost per hour (\$85.12) is based on the General schedule GS14 Step 1 hourly rate of \$53.20 for 2026. The standard benefits multiplier applied to the hourly wage rate to convert the hourly wage to a fully-burdened wage (i.e., wage plus benefits) is 1.6 for government employees based on the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statics Employer Costs for Employee Compensation Summary released in March of 2024.
Cost of contract with private sector contractor to administer information collection	2,250	\$200.00	\$450,000	A private sector contractor will be sourced to administer this information collection through a competitive solicitation. The total amount of this contract will be no more than \$700,000 and the contractor's costs for administering this data collection will not exceed this amount, but the government estimates that the cost of this information collection will not exceed \$450,000, assuming the contractor's analysts working at a rate of \$200/hour and require an average of 15 minutes to review each of 9,000 responses.
Dollar incentives for survey completions	n/a	n/a	\$80,000	Calculated assuming 8,000 information collection responses and \$10 incentive for each response submission.
Annualized Cost to Federal Government			\$531,603.80	

A.15. Reasons for Changes in Burden

Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 (or 14) of OMB Form 83-I.

This is a new collection, therefore there are no changes or adjustments reported.

A.16. Collection, Tabulation, and Publication Plans

For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

The information collected in this collection will be summarized, anonymized and tabulated in FY 2026 or FY 2027 in an online location accessible by the general public.

A.17. OMB Number and Expiration Date

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

The Department is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of this information.

A.18. Certification Statement

Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of OMB Form 83-I.

No exceptions have been taken.