

**1SUPPORTING STATEMENT A  
FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION**

**Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI) Competitive Cooperative Agreement  
Program with State Geological Surveys**

**OMB Control Number 1028-0133**

**Terms of Clearance:** None.

**Justification**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.**

The Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI; <https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/earth-mri>) is a component of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Mineral Resources Program and is a national effort to carry out the fundamental resources and mapping mission of the USGS. The goal of Earth MRI is to modernize the surface and subsurface geologic mapping of the United States, with a focus on identifying areas that may have the potential to contain critical mineral resources.

The USGS launched Earth MRI in 2019 and, in 2021, Public Law 117–58, Section 40201, “Earth Mapping Resources Initiative” contained in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) authorized and accelerated the mapping efforts of Earth MRI. The IIJA directed the USGS to accelerate efforts to carry out fundamental integrated topographic, geologic, geochemical, and geophysical mapping and provide interpretation of subsurface- and above-ground (mine waste) critical-mineral resources data at a funding level of \$320,000,000 annually for five years (FY2022-FY2026). Additionally, Executive Order 14154, “Unleashing American Energy” (January 20, 2025), directed the Department in section 9(d) to “accelerate the ongoing, detailed geological mapping of the United States, with a focus on locating previously unknown deposits of critical minerals” through the Earth MRI.

IIJA Section 40201 stipulates that the USGS may enter into cooperative agreements with State geological surveys to carry out the efforts of Earth MRI. In FY 2023, USGS developed a new competitive cooperative agreement program with the State geological surveys to support mine-waste activities authorized by the IIJA. State geological surveys apply for funds through an annual competitive agreement process. Individual State projects last for up to two years.

The IIJA requires the USGS to collect information necessary to ensure that cooperative agreement funds authorized by this legislation are used in accordance with the IIJA and Federal assistance requirements. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved information collection for this program on August 10, 2023, through August 31, 2026. Because the USGS plans to continue use of the collection beyond the time period of the approved clearance, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) requires that the USGS submit a request to OMB to renew the Information Collection Request (ICR) for the Earth MRI Competitive Cooperative Agreement Program.

Authorizing Statute: U.S. Congress, Nov. 15, 2021, “H.R. 3684 – Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act”, Public Law: 117-58, Text - H.R.3684 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

**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. Be specific. If this collection is a form or a questionnaire, every question needs to be justified.**

The USGS developed a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI) Mine Waste Cooperative Agreements with State geological surveys. The Mine Waste NOFO is issued annually, beginning in FY 2023. The Mine Waste NOFO outlines the guidelines and requirements for data acquisition activities by State geological surveys. The NOFO collects information via proposals that the State geological surveys prepare based on the guidance provided in the NOFO, and proposals are submitted to USGS via Grants.gov. The funding opportunity is competitive, and the submitted proposals are reviewed by an expert panel which subsequently recommends funding decisions to the USGS Mineral Resources Program. State geological surveys are eligible to apply to this NOFO. A university may submit a proposal on behalf of a State geological survey if the State geological survey is organized under a state university system.

The proposal package requested from the State geological surveys includes the following information:

- 1) Standard Forms 424, 424A, and 424B,
- 2) Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019) including a description of the purpose of the award, activities to be performed, deliverables and expected outcomes, intended beneficiary(ies), and subrecipient activities,
- 3) A project narrative including the principal investigator's contact information, applicant organization, collaborating organizations, a short description of the project, the project procedures and workflows, the skills and capabilities of the applicant, the commitment to the effort, the organizational and managerial capacity, and a data management plan.
- 4) Proposed Budget information, including detailed information about how the funds will be utilized, detailed budget sheets and justification, and supporting vendor and/or contractor quotes, and
- 5) Optional letters of support that are used to demonstrate the project's viability.

The information above is collected from the principal investigator and applicant for the grant. This segment of the collection ensures that sufficient and relevant information is available to evaluate and select proposals for funding. A panel of technical experts reviews each proposal to assess how well the proposed project addresses the requirements and priorities identified in the program's authorizing legislation and the criteria listed in the NOFO. The information about the institution and the principal investigator is used to contact the recipients and non-recipients of funds; and the USGS Office of Acquisition and Grants and Department of Interior Office of Grants Management uses the information to assist in the preparation of the award paperwork and manage the resulting awards.

**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 of using information technology to reduce burden and specifically how this collection meets GPEA requirements.**

All proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. All application instructions

and forms are available at Grants.gov. Paper submissions are not accepted. Progress and final technical reports are uploaded to Grantsolutions.gov and submitted Program Manager and contracting specialist by electronic mail.

**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.**

There is no duplication. The information requested is site and activity specific, no other Federal agency collects this information.

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

The collection of this information will not impact small businesses or other small entities.

**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 information that we collect enables the Department of the Interior and USGS to meet Congress' intent to provide funds to implement activities and projects associated with Section 40201 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through financial assistance within statutory deadlines and response times. Without this information, the Department of the Interior and USGS would be unable to fulfill responsibilities outlined in the statute and adequately evaluate how the funds are being used to accomplish the program's objectives and goals. This data will assist in establishing this baseline and anticipated performance. In addition, this information collection allows the Department of the Interior and USGS to set proper legal obligations to ensure that we expend Government funds properly and comply with OMB requirements regarding the management of Federal financial assistance.

**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 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.**

There are no circumstances that require the information be collected in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

**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 in response to the PRA statement associated with the collection over the past three years, 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 three 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.**

On March 18, 2026, we published a 60-Day *Federal Register* notice (91 FR 13051). We did not receive any comments in response to that notice.

In addition to the *Federal Register* notice, we consulted with seven (7) individuals identified in Table 1 who are familiar with this collection of information in order to validate our time burden estimates and asked for comments on the questions below:

**Table 1. Individuals Contacted**

| <b>Organization</b>          | <b>Title</b>     |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Oklahoma Geological Survey   | Survey Staff     |
| New York Geological Survey   | Survey Staff     |
| Colorado Geological Survey   | Geologist        |
| Idaho Geological Survey      | Survey Staff     |
| California Geological Survey | Senior Geologist |
| Oregon Geological Survey     | Geologist        |
| Alabama Geological Survey    | Survey Staff     |

***“Whether or not the collection of information is necessary, including whether or not the information will have practical utility; whether there are any questions they felt were unnecessary”***

Comments: Respondents stated that the collection of information was necessary and had practical utility. There were no questions that they felt were unnecessary.

Agency Response/Action Taken: NA

***“The accuracy of our estimate of the burden for this collection of information”***

Comments: The majority of respondents stated that the estimate of the burden for this collection of information is accurate.

Agency Response/Action Taken: Since the majority of respondents concurred that the burden estimate is accurate, the estimate will remain the same.

***“Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected”***

Comments: Respondents suggested improving the quality and utility of the information collected by providing a template for required progress reports.

Agency Response/Action Taken: The program will develop a progress report template for award recipients.

And

***“Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents”***

Comments: Respondents submitted suggestions to improve the readability of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (i.e., condensing sections, summarizing sections more clearly, and eliminating duplicative sections within the Notice) and providing the budget table in multiple formats.

Agency Response/Action Taken: For future opportunities, the program will revise the Notice to improve readability where possible and in alignment with the required Notice template and will provide both Word and Excel format budget tables.

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

Not applicable. We do not provide any payments or gifts 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 is given to respondents.

**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.**

We do not ask 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.**
- \* **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.**

We estimate that there will be approximately **25 respondents** and approximately **125 responses** annually, totaling **2,600 annual burden hours**. We estimate the annual dollar value of the burden hours is **\$169,728**.

We expect to receive approximately 25 applications, each taking approximately 60 hours to complete (25 respondents x 60 hours = 1,500 hours). We anticipate awarding an average of 25 cooperative agreements per year. The award recipients are required to submit 6-month progress reports throughout the duration of the project (3 reports per recipient), and a final technical report. We estimate an additional 8 hours for each 6-month progress report (25 recipients x (3 reports x 8 hours) = 600 hours) and 20 hours for each final technical report (25 recipients x 20 hours = 500 hours). The total estimated number of annual burden hours is 2,600 hours (1,500 + 600 + 500). These estimates are based on interactions with State geological survey staff at the annual Earth MRI workshop about prior years' NOFOs.

We used the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) News Release [USDOL-26-0287](#), February 24, 2026, Employer costs per hour worked for employee compensation, September 2025, to calculate the cost of the total annual burden hours. The table lists the hourly rate for State and local government workers as \$65.28, including benefits. We estimate the annual dollar value of the burden hours is \$169,728 (2,600 burden hours X \$65.28 hourly rate).

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual non-hour cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected in item 12.)**

- \* **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, maintenance, and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information (including filing fees paid for form processing). 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.

There is no non-hour cost burden to applicants under this collection. There is no fee for application, nor any fees associated with application requirements.

**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.**

The estimated total annual cost to the Federal Government to administer this information collection is \$60,223 (rounded). This includes salary and benefits for employees processing and evaluating proposals and reviewing reports as a result of this collection of information. To determine average hourly rates, we used Office of Personnel Management Salary Table [2026-DEN](#) (Denver-Aurora, CO) as an average nationwide rate. We then multiplied the hourly rates by 1.62 in accordance with BLS News Release [USD-26-0287](#).

**Table 2. Annual Cost to the Federal Government**

| Position                                | Grade/Step | Hourly Rate | Hourly Rate incl. benefits (1.62 x hourly pay rate) | Estimated time spent by Federal Employees | Cost per federal staff (Hourly Pay Rate incl. Benefits x Number of Hours) |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Earth MRI Science Coordinator           | GS-15/05   | \$89.58     | \$145.12                                            | 80                                        | \$11,609.57                                                               |
| Earth MRI Associate Science Coordinator | GS-14/05   | \$76.16     | \$123.38                                            | 80                                        | \$9,870.34                                                                |
| Earth MRI Program Analyst               | GS-12/05   | \$54.20     | \$87.80                                             | 120                                       | \$10,536.48                                                               |
| Grants and Acquisitions Specialist      | GS-12/05   | \$54.20     | \$87.80                                             | 120                                       | \$10,536.48                                                               |

|                                  |          |         |          |            |                    |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|------------|--------------------|
| Federal employee Review Panelist | GS-15/05 | \$89.58 | \$145.12 | 40         | \$5,804.78         |
| Federal employee Review Panelist | GS-13/05 | \$64.45 | \$104.41 | 40         | \$4,176.36         |
| Federal employee Review Panelist | GS-13/05 | \$64.45 | \$104.41 | 40         | \$4,176.36         |
| Federal employee Review Panelist | GS-12/05 | \$54.20 | \$87.80  | 40         | \$3,512.16         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                     |          |         |          | <b>560</b> | <b>\$60,222.53</b> |

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments in hour or cost burden.**

We are reporting a net increase of 41 responses and 696 burden hours since the prior information collection clearance approval action. The increased burden is the result of:

- An increased estimated number of respondents (from 20 to 25);
- An increased estimated number of awards (from 16 to 25).

**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 USGS will not publish these information collections.

**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.**

We will display the OMB control number and expiration date.

**18. Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."**

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.