



BOEM BUREAU OF OCEAN
ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Programmatic Assessment for Enhancing BOEM's Public Participation Practices

26th Meeting of the Standing
Committee on Offshore Science and Assessment

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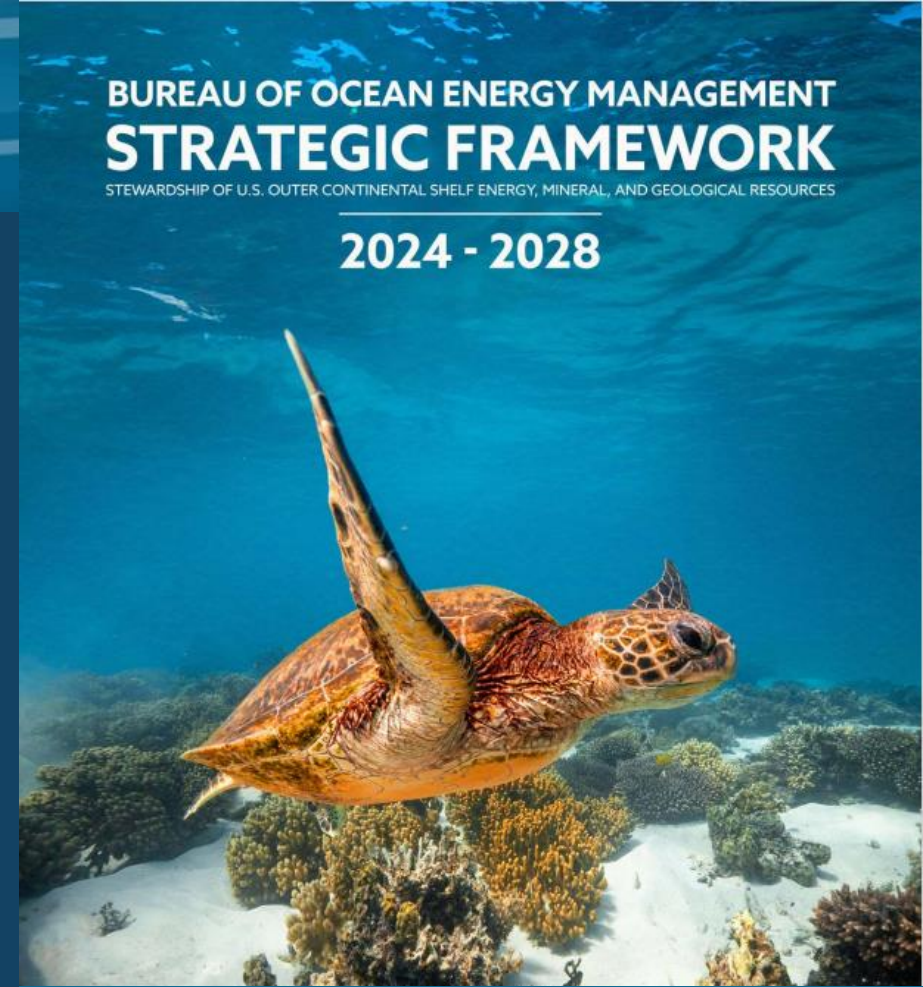
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Background on Public Participation

- Vital to meeting BOEM's mission and operational priorities.
- Expanding geographic and program responsibilities = need to build and maintain public trust in BOEM's processes.
- Evidence-based evaluation of key Bureau activities supports strategic process improvements.
- Planning often occurs on a project-by-project basis without systematic processes for staff to share institutional knowledge of best practices, lessons learned, and common stakeholder concerns.

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
STEWARDSHIP OF U.S. OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF ENERGY, MINERAL, AND GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

2024 - 2028



Operational Priority 6

Develop strategies to enhance transparency of BOEM's decision making processes and facilitate inclusive engagement with ocean users, partners, and key stakeholders.

BOEM Information Need



- Scientific, consistent, and effective approaches to public participation.
- Respond to staff input: Need identified by staff through internal information exchange forum.
- “Look backward to look forward.” Learn from our history and staff to develop strategies to enhance our public participation practices; help inform a potential study on the science of engagement.
- Support evidence-based strategies to advance public participation for all regions and program areas.



Intersection with Bureau Requirements and Environmental Goals

- Evidence Act: requires agencies to plan to develop statistical evidence to support policymaking
- “First-in-Class” Environmental Program: Align BOEM’s public participation efforts with first-in-class attributes:
 -  articulates sphere of influence and partners and collaborates effectively (Cross-cutting)
 -  clearly identifies science needs (Process)
 -  encourages tailored products and synthesizes scientific findings (Outputs)
 -  informs and influences users and influences public understanding (Impact)
 -  adapts to new challenges and implements an innovation strategy (Innovation)

ATTRIBUTES OF A FIRST-IN-CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

**A LETTER REPORT PREPARED
FOR THE BUREAU OF
OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT**

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *Attributes of a First-in-Class Environmental Program: A Letter Report Prepared for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26368>.

Immediate and Long-term Objectives

Vision

Enhance BOEM's public participation processes to increase public confidence in BOEM's decision-making



- Evaluate and learn from our history



- Identify priorities to improve public participation processes
- Identify metrics to help BOEM measure effectiveness and refine science needs
- Recommend and develop tailored products and resources

Deliverables

- Organized database of internal guidance materials, meeting notes, and scoping reports and background materials related to NEPA and other planning and consultation processes
- Summary report of the strengths and areas of improvement of BOEM's public participation processes and activities - identify the sphere of influence, including the opportunities (e.g., partners, collaborators, etc.) and external challenges to effective and meaningful public participation processes
- A next-steps plan that provides BOEM with an outline of existing public participation implementation standards, initial tools and resources, and prioritized actions to help BOEM staff improve near-term and long-term public participation efforts – including potential studies



Research Questions

- What can BOEM learn from over a decade of public outreach and engagement? What have we done well? What has been challenging in participation processes or for specific topics?
- How can BOEM improve upon and help standardize public participation practices and processes by systematically analyzing prior public outreach practices and processes and the public comments and feedback that have been received on them?
- How can BOEM help reduce stakeholder fatigue? For example, by developing and using institutional knowledge as a pre-scoping tool or consolidating engagement processes.
- How can BOEM identify and leverage “joint engagement” potential with other Federal and State agencies?
- What long-term or large-scale advancements to public participation can BOEM consider to better harness BOEM’s operational priority of “enhancing transparency of BOEM’s decision making processes and facilitate inclusive engagement with ocean users, partners, and key stakeholders”?

Methods

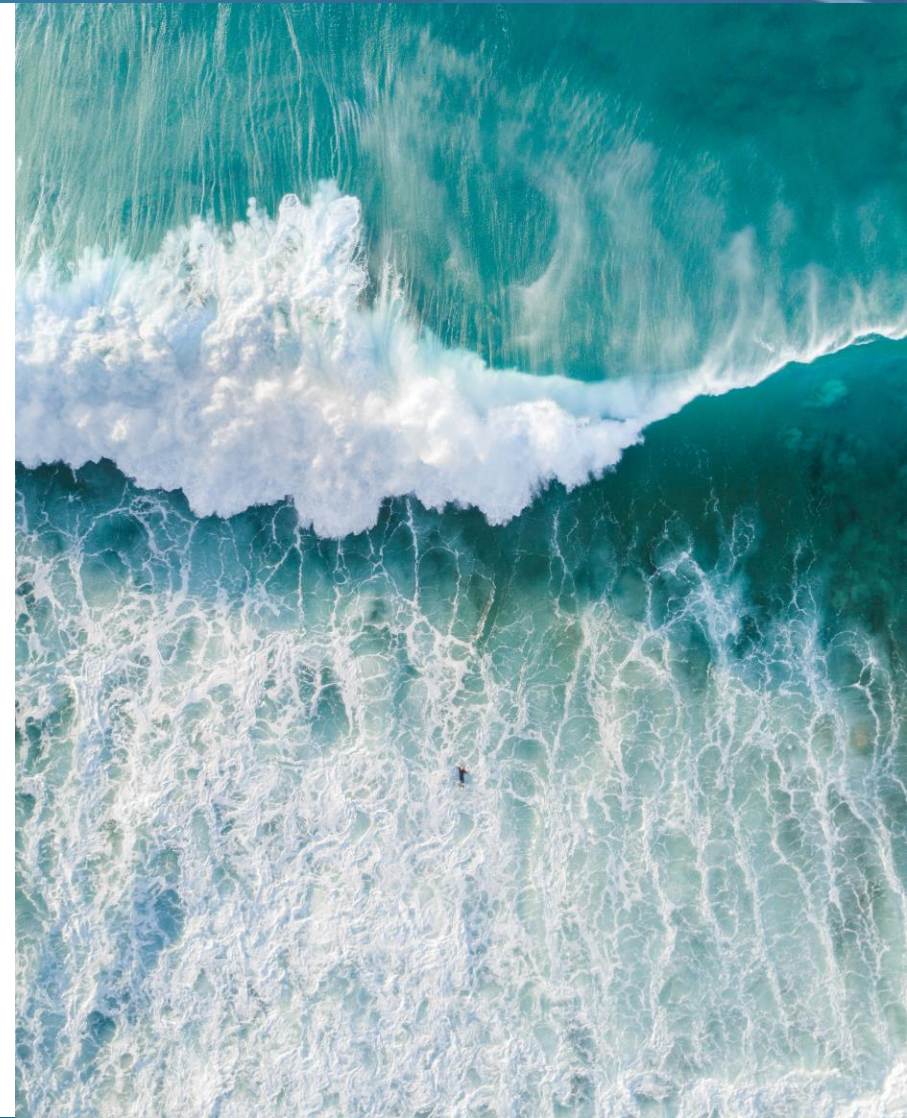
- Retrospective review of public involvement efforts over the past 10 to 15 years with input from internal staff to identify potential lessons, trends, and good public participation practices.
- 1. Create an organized database of internal guidance materials, meeting notes, and scoping reports related to NEPA and other planning and consultation processes.
- 2. Review and synthesize comments from a range of documentation that relate or highlight BOEM's strengths and limitations of conducting public engagement, fostering positive perceptions, and increasing public participation.
- 3. Identify key themes and trends using content analysis software, artificial intelligence tools, or other appropriate tools from materials representing a range of BOEM's public participation efforts (e.g., across time periods, programs, processes, regions, and formats).
- 4. Conduct internal information collection, including focus groups/interviews of relevant staff, representing a range of programs, processes, and regions with experience across time periods and formats. Refine database and synthesis report based on staff input.
- 5. Develop an initial list of potential solutions (e.g., processes, language, or tools) that BOEM could explore more deeply to address the limitations, barriers, and concerns identified through the interviews and content analysis.



Outcomes

- Position BOEM to develop and propose an externally focused social science study on public participation
- Help BOEM meet program assessment requirements related to the Evidence Act
- Support BOEM's aspirations in conducting an environmental program that is "first-in-class"

★ Position BOEM to enhance and improve its public participation processes, and ultimately increase public confidence in BOEM's decision-making



Requested Input from COSA

- This effort is a program evaluation to learn from BOEM's past and current public participation practices.
 - Does COSA have suggestions for a future study on the science of public participation? How can this evaluation help set us up to develop a future study?
- Ideas on potential tools we could apply to review the suite of information BOEM will gather?
- Ideas on key themes and search terms to include in this study?
- Advice on contacts to participate in current or future efforts?



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