

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Instruction Memorandum No. 2006-112
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To: All Field Officials
Attention: DSD's, Planning and Environmental Coordinators
Washington Office 170, 200 and 300 GMs

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Minimum Qualifications for Socio-economic Contractors

Program Areas: Land Use Planning; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum identifies minimum qualifications for contractors preparing socio-economic assessments for environmental impact statements (EISs), including those EISs associated with resource management plans (RMPs). In preparing *economic* assessments, contractors shall utilize staff having at minimum a masters degree in economics; in preparing *social* assessments contractors shall utilize staff having at minimum a masters degree in a non-economic social science (sociology, anthropology, or geography). In both cases contractors' staff shall have at least two years' relevant experience. Contractors shall also have familiarity with the geographic region relevant to the proposed contract. Reporting requirements are also described.

Timeframe: Effective upon receipt.

Background: Both the National Environmental Policy Act (Section 102(2) (A)) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (Section 202(c) (2))

require the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to utilize social science in the preparation of informed, sustainable land use planning decisions. The Council on Environmental Quality's regulations require agencies to "insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses in environmental impact statements" (40 CFR 1502.24) and to identify the qualifications (including expertise, experience, and professional disciplines) of personnel responsible for their preparation (40 CFR 1502.17).

Today the BLM is challenged to an unprecedented degree to integrate natural resource management objectives with social and economic values and constraints. Because of the very limited number of social science staff in the BLM, most socio-economic assessments for RMPs and other EISs are prepared by contractors. In response the Washington Office has taken several measures to strengthen the BLM's social science capabilities. These include working with the National Training Center to prepare additional social science training, providing guidance to assist field offices to manage contracted socio-economic studies more effectively, and expanding the Economic Profile System tools to make economic and demographic data more readily available to BLM staff. The standard described here is another response to this challenge. In developing this requirement the Washington Office social science staff consulted with State Office planning and environmental coordinators, the National Business Center, the Bureau's Privacy Officer, and relevant programs (WO-171, WO-172, WO-220, WO-240, WO-250, WO-310, WO-320, WO-350, and FA-600). The proposed requirement was circulated for State Office comment under IB 2006-024 (issued November 15, 2005).

Policy / Action: Effective with the issuance of this Instruction Memorandum, the following requirements shall apply to the preparation of all EISs, including those associated with RMPs, for which the BLM will serve as the lead agency or a joint lead agency.

I. Qualifications requirement

All scopes of work or other contracting documents that include the preparation of social and/or economic assessments (including descriptions of baseline conditions and/or estimates of potential impacts) shall incorporate the following requirements.

1. Education. (1a) Contractors' personnel preparing economic assessments shall possess at minimum a masters degree in economics. (1b) Contractors'

personnel preparing social assessments shall possess at minimum a masters degree in a non-economic social science: specifically sociology, cultural anthropology, or cultural geography.

2. Experience. Contractors' personnel preparing social and/or economic assessments shall possess a minimum of two years' experience of preparing and/or supervising the preparation of such assessments or similar studies for purposes of resource or environmental management.

3. Regional knowledge. Contractors' personnel shall possess knowledge of the economic and social conditions of the geographic region relevant to the proposed contract. This shall be demonstrated by (a) completing the major qualifying research (M.A. thesis or doctoral dissertation) for an advanced degree meeting requirement 1a or 1b on a topic concerning this region; and/or (b) having conducted at least six months of the two years' work meeting requirement 2 in the specified region. See Note, below.

4. Applicability. Requirements 1, 2, and 3 shall apply to contractors' personnel (including subcontractors) tasked with preparing social and/or economic assessments, not to personnel merely supervising or reviewing such work.

Note on regional knowledge. The region specified for purposes of requirement 3 may follow state boundaries, may overlap two or more states (the Great Basin), or may define an area within a state (eastern Oregon, northern New Mexico). In all cases, there should be a reasonable relationship between the region defined and the knowledge needed to accomplish the objectives of the contract. The region shall not be defined so narrowly as to unnecessarily restrict competition. In addition to using regional knowledge as a threshold qualification, as provided above, the extent of the contractors' regional knowledge may be used as an assessment factor in ranking proposals.

II. Reporting requirement

The Washington Office will compile information on the qualifications of contractors' social science personnel, to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of these requirements. All offices contracting for socio-economic assessments to which the above requirements apply should forward information to the Washington Office on the qualifications of the contractor's social science personnel within 45 days of initiating the

contract. An optional reporting form is available on the Planning and Science Support internal web site (<http://web.blm.gov/internal/wo-200/wo-210/index.html>). The following information should be provided:

1. The title of the EIS or RMP/EIS, the office contracting for its preparation, and the BLM staff contact with technical responsibility for the contracted work (normally the contracting officer's representative [COR] or inspector);
2. The name of the contractor and the firm's contact information;
3. The names, education, and qualifying experience of the contractor's personnel preparing the social and/or economic assessments under this contract. Submitting a copy of relevant information from the contractor's proposal is sufficient documentation.

The information requested should be submitted by confidential (blue envelope) interagency mail, addressed to Rob Winthrop, Senior Social Scientist, WO-210 (see Contact, below). The Washington Office will compile this information and make it available to BLM staff to facilitate the exchange of information on contractors preparing socio-economic assessments for the BLM.

Budget Impact: Depending on a Field Office's past contracting practices, these requirements may result in a small increase in the cost of contracting for the preparation of EISs and RMPs.

Manual/Handbook Section Affected: Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1); NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1).

Coordination: This guidance has been coordinated with the National Business Center, WO-171, WO-172, WO-220, WO-240, WO-250, WO-310, WO-320, WO-350, FA-600, and the Bureau's Privacy Officer.

Contact: For further information contact Rob Winthrop, Senior Social Scientist, Planning and Science Support (WO-210), phone: 202-785-6597; e-mail: robert_winthrop@blm.gov.

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