



A STEP ABOVE

An Adaptive Approach to
Community Engagement
for OSW Projects





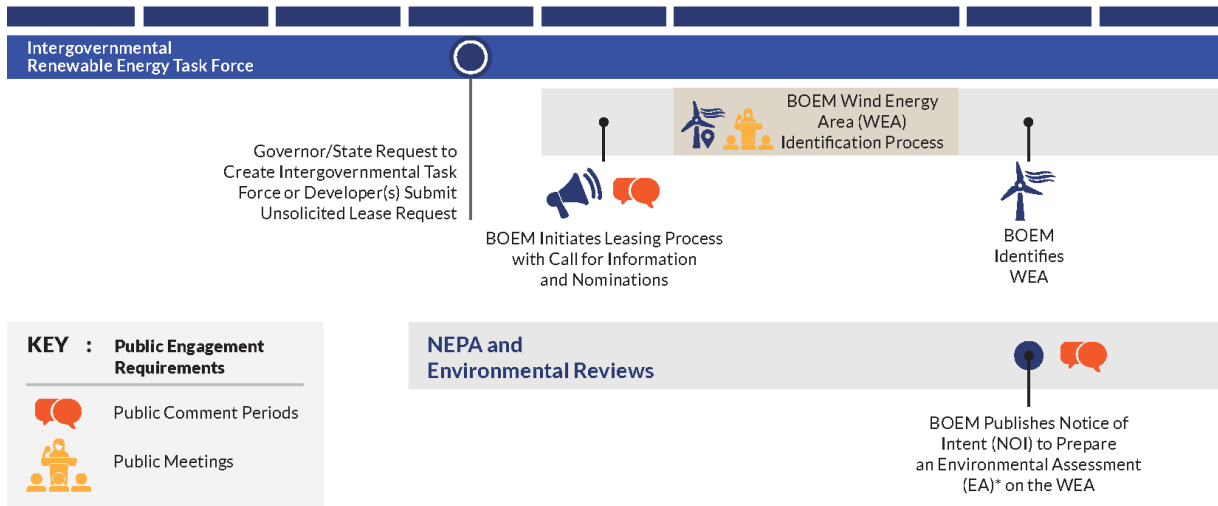
CONGRATULATIONS, YOU JUST WON AN OFFSHORE WIND LEASE AREA. NOW WHAT?

It may sound reductive, but this is a simple question that we have heard from numerous parties. The goal of this checklist is to walk you through what is required, where public input checkpoints have been identified, and to share best practices in maximizing public engagement. There are numerous website links included to pull in as much useful information as possible that will be available in the digital copy of this document.

First, BOEM and various active OSW states have each established their own development schedules. The Special Initiative for Offshore Wind (SIOW) has developed public participation guides for BOEM and many of these states. A timeline from the BOEM guide is included on the following pages,

State guides are available for Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey on the SIOW website (<https://sites.udel.edu/ceoe-siow/publications/osw-guides/>).

[Planning & Analysis]



* **Environmental Assessments ("EAs"):** An EA analyzes the environmental effects of a proposed activity to determine the significance of potential impacts to marine life and ecosystems. Any significant impacts identified in an EA must be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"). An EA also documents the potential environmental impacts of proposals that do not require an EIS and identifies as early as possible mitigation measures that BOEM may require to avoid or minimize adverse effects of a proposal. There are opportunities for public comment and involvement in the EA process.

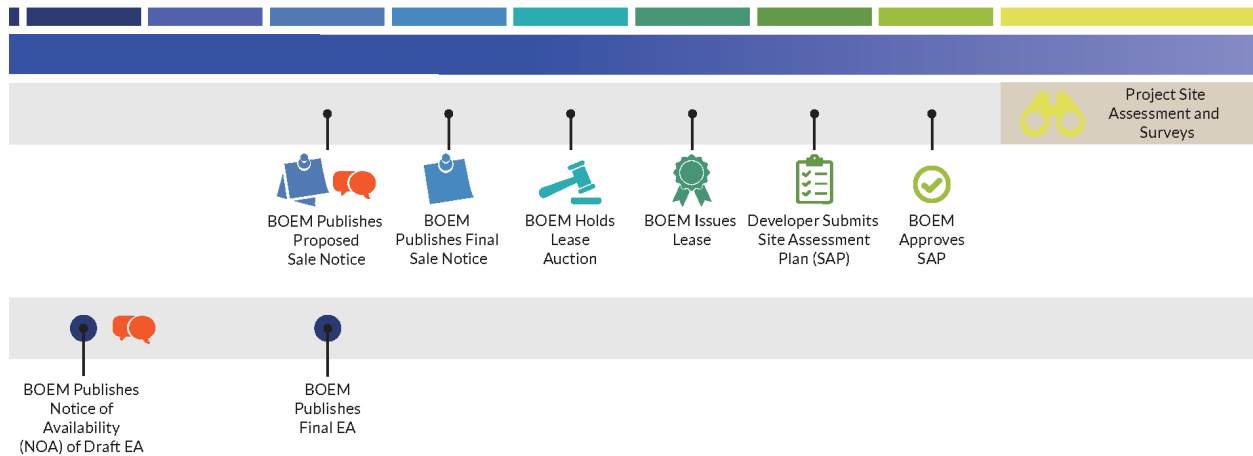
Formal Comment Periods: Allow interested parties, including members of the general public, opportunities to provide formal, written comments on proposed actions published in the Federal Register. Formal comment periods are between 30 and 60 days, and comments must be filed before the specified deadline. Comments filed during formal comment periods will become part of the official public record.

Visit <https://www.boem.gov/submitting-comments/> to see current and upcoming opportunities to comment on BOEM regulatory programs, including offshore wind, oil and gas, and other activities under BOEM's jurisdiction.

AWEA.ORG

[Leasing]

[Site Assessment]

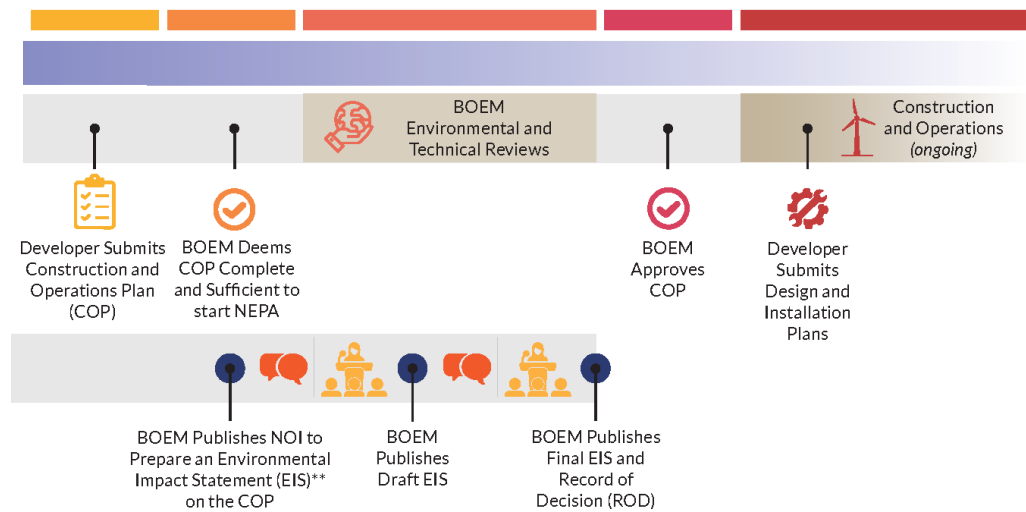


** **Environmental Impact Statements ("EIS"):** Once a wind farm developer submits a formal **Construction & Operations Plan ("COP")**, federal law requires BOEM to conduct a comprehensive, site-specific EIS. To get things started, BOEM publishes a **Notice of Intent ("NOI")** to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register. This action starts the scoping process in which BOEM and the public collaborate to define the range of issues and possible alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. Public participation is critical to this process. To solicit as much public input as possible, BOEM holds at least one public meeting in the communities that might be affected if leasing or development were to occur. Based on the information received during scoping and other information, BOEM identifies alterna-

Public Meetings: Gatherings that allow the public a forum to discuss the issues, share information, and get a fuller understanding of the ongoing community engagement process. BOEM holds public meetings as a part of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") process, but the number will vary depending on the geography and the amount and complexity of other ocean uses in the area. BOEM also regularly participates in public information sessions and Regional Fisheries Management Council meetings, including associated open houses, to communicate BOEM's process and provide an opportunity to submit feedback.

Visit <https://www.boem.gov/Note-to-Stakeholders/> to see postings for all interested parties, including public meeting notices.

[Construction & Operations]



tives to the COP that might reduce possible impacts. In addition, any reasonable measures suggested to mitigate possible impacts are considered for analysis in the EIS. Through this public participation, in addition to environmental and technical reviews of the COP, BOEM decides whether to approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the COP. The EIS process ends when BOEM issues a **Record of Decision ("ROD")**, which explains its decision, describes the alternatives considered, and discusses plans for mitigation and monitoring, if necessary.

Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces: BOEM meets with its Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces, which bring together members of state, local, and tribal governments and federal agencies to discuss issues, exchange data and information, and identify potential conflicts early in the planning and leasing process. These meetings are open to the public, who can provide comment.

Visit <https://boem.gov/Strengthening-the-Task-Forces/> to learn more about the Task Forces.

Visit <http://boem.gov/renewable-energy-state-activities/> to see what's happening in your state.



Now that you have a general idea of the federal and state schedules, we should discuss how to write and implement an **effective community engagement plan**. The overarching goal here should be to develop partnerships with local communities and provide meaningful opportunities for them to learn more about the project and provide feedback. No two communities are identical; their capabilities, socio-economic makeup, and historic environmental conditions will be unique to that area.

GET TO KNOW THE COMMUNITIES YOU WILL BE WORKING IN

✈ What geographic areas of the country are included in my project? Include cultural resources, important natural areas, and local redevelopment initiatives in your screening.

✈ Do we pass through any environmental justice or overburdened areas? The EPA ([EJSCREEN](https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/) - <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>) and many states have dedicated GIS platforms to easily identify these areas. Recent updates to EJSCREEN include demographic information such as broadband capabilities, risk screening indices, and climate impact indicators.

A list of the 12 EJSCREEN indices is available [here](https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/environmental-justice-indexes-ejscreen) (<https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/environmental-justice-indexes-ejscreen>).

- Do those EJ areas have existing state environmental justice programs that require enhanced public participation or regulatory requirements? There are currently 23 states with enacted or proposed EJ regulations, with New Jersey's proposed compliance and permitting program (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/ej/>), often referred to as "The Gold Standard."

✈ Make sure you include elected officials, planning and engineering staff, and local residents and community leaders in your outreach. Don't assume that one group will comprehensively represent the views of the community.

✈ Develop a publicly-facing Frequently Asked Questions document based on community feedback.



BE PREPARED TO ADJUST YOUR OUTREACH PLAN AND DO ADAPTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Tailoring your outreach approach to each community based on their specific demographics and capabilities. Once you begin outreach within the community, have regular internal status meetings to judge progress on each media. If you are not getting responses, consider adjusting your external training schedules or reaching out to local community leadership, including faith or civic groups.

Bloomberg recently presented an example of a community fiercely opposing a large solar project, then switching gears completely to support the project after increased local engagement by supporters of the project and consistent educational outreach. There are also instances of “fake news” (<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1086790531/renewable-energy-projects-wind-energy-solar-energy-climate-change-misinformation>) attempting to sway project outcomes. Proactive engagement with communities helps guard against this.

Are there options for virtual meetings or online public commenting portals? Some companies have even set up virtual meeting rooms for participants to explore on their own. Make sure you also have options that make sense in the communities you are working in and the public engagement opportunities are accessible.

Communities often cite potential employment opportunities as a key benefit of OSW projects. What is your company doing to maximize the percentage of local community members who want these jobs to be ready for them? There are numerous large infrastructure projects in the domestic pipeline. If local communities do not have employees with the necessary skill sets, those jobs will go to other sources. Be proactive in announcing available training opportunities and job requirements so that local communities can make themselves ready to meet the needs.

States can assist this process through their infrastructure coordinators (IJA), workforce development divisions, or their Office of Environmental Justice.

The bulk of any environmental impacts from OSW projects will likely occur during the 2-3 year construction phase. Are there opportunities to choose greener options during this phase and minimize impacts? Developers to date have found innovation in this space through the projected use of electric CTVs or commercial truck charging stations near ports. Can your team project similar uses or growth in the use of these vehicles over time?

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Best Practices for Community Engagement: Groundwork USA - https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWUSA_Best-Practices-for-Meaningful-Community-Engagement-Tip-Sheet.pdf



Community Outreach and Solar Outreach: A Guide for States on Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations - <https://www.cesa.org/wp-content/uploads/Community-Outreach-and-Solar-Equity.pdf>



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

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We need the proactive intervention and engagement of federal, state and local policymakers, companies, NGOs, and community leaders, among others, to ensure that the benefits of this historical transformation are broadly shared across the United States, especially in communities most vulnerable to this change.

American Clean Power's Industry Strategy from the ET4ALL 2022 report.

Make sure you get internal buy-in from your company or client on the goals and expectations for stakeholder engagement. For example, you do not want to over-promise on being able to adjust or modify designs based on community feedback when there is no flexibility. It is also important for internal leadership to understand and value the role of stakeholder participation and put in the resources to do it right. Ultimately, local input is critical to gaining local support.

How can offshore wind developers work together to fund and coordinate public participation activities, especially in overburdened communities? The Business Network for Offshore Wind (BNOW) is discussing an EJ working group and possible ways to facilitate community group participation at greatly reduced rates or through sponsorship. New York and select other states have started to require further EJ considerations in their RFPs. Can developers go further and pay into a joint fund to hire local talent and develop workforce training?



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