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Regional Organization for Western Energy

RE: Office of Public Participation

The Wyoming Energy Authority (WEA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Office of Public Participation (OPP) within the Regional Organization for Western Energy (ROWE). Active, transparent participation by individuals, entities, and non-governmental interest groups will be essential to ROWE's success. The WEA values ROWE's commitment to robust engagement and OPP's focus on providing neutral information. That being said, there are several considerations that would further strengthen public participation both for the ROWE and for the general public.

It is important to note that many stakeholders such as some states, small utilities, and non governmental organizations lack time, staff, or technical resources. As ROWE and OPP evolve, thoughtful consideration of these capacity limitations will be essential to fostering robust public participation.

A key consideration for ROWE is how the OPP may evolve beyond a purely informational role to one that more actively supports effective engagement. Over time, ROWE should consider empowering the OPP to proactively identify and raise procedural barriers to participation as they arise, and to provide timely recommendations to the Board to improve stakeholder processes. The WEA strongly supports the OPP's core function of developing and disseminating neutral, accessible information; however, pairing that function with real-time feedback to the Board and practical support for participants would significantly enhance the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement. In addition, WEA encourages ROWE to consider a future role for the OPP in facilitating participation by providing procedural guidance such as assisting stakeholders in understanding how to file comments in ROWE proceedings, tracking and communicating key deadlines, and helping participants locate relevant dockets, documents, and decisions. These enhancements would help ensure that stakeholders are not only informed, but also equipped to engage meaningfully in ROWE processes.

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Another important consideration for the ROWE and the OPP is the possible engagement of legislatures, state governments, and congressional offices across the west. Interest in regional electricity market developments is growing among policymakers who often require clear, concise, and policy-relevant information to effectively carry out their oversight and legislative responsibilities. The WEA anticipates that ROWE staff may need to be called upon to provide expert testimony at legislative hearings, participate in briefings, or develop tailored, easily digestible information that translates these complex issues to stakeholders for possible legislative and governmental engagement. As with other work products from the OPP, these engagements and documents should remain neutral and informational in nature.

Finally, while this issue may extend beyond the immediate scope of the OPP as currently contemplated, the WEA urges the ROWE and OPP to better clarify where governmental agencies beyond public utility commissions and consumer advocate offices can engage the ROWE. This includes state energy offices and other agencies that carry distinct statutory mandates and public interest responsibilities related to energy policy, resource planning, and economic development. Even if such efforts are not housed directly within the OPP, establishing clear and predictable avenues for engagement will be critical to ensuring that governmental perspectives are appropriately incorporated into ROWE's work.

These recommendations are intended to ensure that ROWE's OPP not only improves transparency, but also meaningfully expands the ability of states and other stakeholders to engage in and shape regional outcomes. In particular, enhancing the OPP's role to include practical support for participation, clearer pathways for governmental engagement, and stronger feedback mechanisms to ROWE leadership will help ensure that participation is not merely available, but effective. As ROWE continues to evolve, it will be increasingly important that a diverse set of stakeholders are able to engage in a timely, informed, and constructive manner. Thoughtful implementation of the OPP, coupled with a willingness to refine its scope over time, will position ROWE to build credibility, improve decision-making, and better align regional outcomes with the needs and priorities of the communities it serves.

Sincerely,

Rob Creager

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