The Department of Energy’s (DOE) Wind Energy program targets innovations in onshore, offshore, and distributed wind power to capture the kinetic energy in wind and turn it into electricity via spinning generators. The program also works to integrate wind generation more effectively into the bulk power system to enable wind farms to provide more reliable power output and essential reliability services to the grid.1

Figure 1: The FY 2020 Budget Request Would Cut Wind Energy R&D by 74 Percent.2

What’s At Risk
DOE’s Wind Energy program has already achieved substantial cost reductions and technology improvements that have enabled the rapid expansion of land-based wind power. The cost of energy from land-based wind power has decreased from more than 55 cents per kilowatt-hour ($0.55/kWh) in 1980 to a national average of $0.046/kWh in 2015, thus enabling the expansion of wind power to 41 states.3 DOE should build on this success to improve performance and reduce costs much further until unsubsidized wind power becomes competitive across more parts of the country. DOE’s “Wind Vision” report provides a path to reducing the cost of energy from unsubsidized land-based wind to $0.023/kWh and achieving a 50 percent reduction in the cost of energy from offshore and distributed wind by 2030. Achieving these goals could enable up to 200 gigawatts (GW) of total wind capacity by 2030, thereby contributing to energy affordability and security while also reducing carbon emissions.4
The nascent offshore wind industry is beginning to take off, with 25,500 megawatts (MW) of new offshore wind capacity in development, of which 2,000 MW are expected to be operational by 2023. Offshore wind could present a low-carbon energy alternative for the 28 coastal and Great Lake states, although additional cost reductions will be needed to make it cost competitive with other sources of electricity—as it already is in parts of Europe. Validation and demonstration of new offshore wind technologies will also provide investors with greater confidence in the growing array of energy projects in U.S. waters.

**Wind Energy R&D Subprograms**

R&D in the Wind Energy program is divided into four subprograms:

- **Technology Research, Development, & Testing (RD&T) and Resource Characterization**: focuses on turbine technology innovations; systems-level optimization of multi-turbine wind power plants; soft costs for distributed wind; and other innovations to reduce the cost and enhance the value of wind energy. The subprogram also manages wind-specific test facilities that enable validation and testing of public- and private- R&D.

- **Technology Validation and Market Transformation**: conducts high-risk testing and validation of new technologies, including innovative offshore wind pilot projects, and collect and produces public performance and environmental data sets.

- **Mitigate Market Barriers R&D**: identifies research needs; evaluates technology solutions to address wind-turbine radar interference, wildlife impacts, and community impacts; supports STEM and workforce programs; and funds R&D to develop and refine the ability of wind turbines to provide frequency, voltage, and ramping support to the grid.

- **Modeling and Analysis**: identifies and evaluates opportunities to reduce the cost and improve the value of land and offshore wind technologies in order to inform and prioritize R&D activities.

**Key Elements of the FY 2020 Budget Proposal**

- **Elimination of the Technology Validation and Market Transformation subprogram**, which has supported demonstration of first-of-a-kind offshore wind technologies at two sites: the first freshwater offshore wind project in North America, the Lake Erie Icebreaker Project off the coast of Cleveland, Ohio; and a floating offshore wind farm in the deep waters off the coast of Maine, where fixed-bottom installations are not feasible.

- **A 69-percent reduction in the Technology RD&T and Resource Characterization subprogram**, which houses the Atmosphere to Electrons (A2e) initiative and the Big Adaptive Rotor (BAR) initiative, and provides support to Sandia’s Scaled Wind Farm Technology (SWiFT) / National Rotor Testbed (NRT) facility in Texas and National Renewable Energy Laboratory’s National
Wind Technology Center (NWTC) in Colorado, which hosts testing facilities for industry and academia to test and validate their innovations. The proposal would reduce funding in atmospheric wind science, wind plant reliability and optimization, tall wind, advanced manufacturing, and materials for wind energy, and includes no new competitive funding opportunities.

- **An 83-percent reduction to the Modeling and Analysis subprogram**, with no new funding for a project to identify the turbine, substructure, and balance-of-plant R&D pathways to achieve deep cost reductions for floating offshore wind systems; reduced funding for systems engineering and other analysis to identify opportunities to reduce the cost of wind and enhance wind’s value to the electricity system, e.g., through the provision of essential reliability services; and no new competitive funding opportunities.

- **A 72-percent reduction in the Mitigate Market Barriers subprogram**, including reduced funding for workforce development programs; research to address regulatory restrictions associated with radar interference and environmental impacts of offshore wind; research to enhance the ability of wind to provide essential reliability services, including inertia, frequency response, and voltage control; and research into dynamic line rating forecasting for transmission lines.

**ENDNOTES**


8. Ibid.

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