

Congress Should Fund the Earth Mapping Resource Initiative

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The [Earth Mapping Resource Initiative \(Earth MRI\)](#) accelerates the development of domestic critical mineral resources by collecting and providing industry with geologic data. The [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) formally established Earth MRI within the U.S. Geological Survey and provided \$64 million of annual funding through FY26.

As the authorization expiration approaches, Congress should renew and even expand funding to enhance Earth MRI capabilities. The [National Academies](#) estimated that the program will take 15 years to complete its mission of providing national coverage of basic geologic data at current funding levels. Delays will push industry abroad to countries with more sophisticated databases that could also facilitate major innovations from AI integration.

EARTH MRI PAYS FOR ITSELF

Funding for Earth MRI is [an investment—not an expense](#). Mapping programs in competing countries consistently show positive returns on public spending from increased tax revenue. Many of the fiscal benefits materialize in the near term as the geologic data stimulates industry to invest in additional mineral exploration and eventually full-scale mining operations.

Public Mapping Program	Tax Revenue per Dollar Spent	Investment per Dollar Spent
Exploration for the Future (Australia, federal)	\$14	\$53
Exploration Incentive Scheme (W. Australia)	\$9.9	\$10.1
National Geological Program (Chile)	\$11.5	<i>not available</i>
Plan for Accelerating Exploration (S. Australia)	\$48	\$14
Targeted Geoscience Initiative (Canada)	<i>not available</i>	\$4.5

SUBSURFACE DRILLING WOULD ENHANCE EARTH MRI BENEFITS

Congress should expand funding to allow Earth MRI to conduct subsurface drilling which is necessary to verify results from the preliminary techniques the program currently performs. Without this capability, Earth MRI cannot deliver the full benefits of a mapping program which competing countries routinely achieve with drilling.

Drilling seamlessly fits into Earth MRI's structure which already coordinates field work with state surveys and hires contractors for airborne surveys. This avoids purchasing equipment, minimizes staffing, and makes use of industry and state survey expertise. Drilling would be no different.

Earth MRI could maintain robust drilling activity with modest additional funding of \$15 million per year. Such a budget would allow the program to keep pace with results from preliminary surveys, assessing upwards of 5 promising locations a year.

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