



**Community
Power
Accelerator**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



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Community Power Accelerator Prize Round 3 Rules: Accessing Capital To Deploy Equitable Solar

THESE RULES ARE EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 2024

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1. Executive Summary

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is a **\$10 million, three-phase prize** designed to fast-track the efforts of new, emerging, and expanding solar developers and co-developers to learn, participate in, and grow multiple successful community-benefiting distributed solar¹ (distributed solar) projects. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is launching Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize Round 3.

Through this prize, DOE seeks to increase the number of equitable distributed solar projects by providing:

- **Tools and resources** to connect developers with both public- and private-sector project capital to build distributed solar projects using a standardized process.
- **Training** to build understanding of the full cycle of distributed solar development, including site acquisition, community relations, customer acquisition, financing, costs, and the unique challenges and benefits of a distributed solar model.
- **Free consulting** services for competitors on the steps necessary to secure the capital to build a portfolio of distributed solar projects.
- **Coaching for solar developers interested in expanding customer markets** to include low- and moderate-income populations and disadvantaged communities.

By the end of the prize, competitors will be ready to engage with the Community Power Accelerator online marketplace,² which provides a platform for developers (including prize competitors) to shop their credit-ready projects around to verified capital providers (including lenders, equity investors, and philanthropies).

1.1 Who Can Participate?

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is open to U.S. solar developers, including new developers and experienced developers who are expanding their solar operations.

The prize also welcomes solar co-developers, organizations that are partnering with a project developer, and other non-developer organizations to apply. Examples of new developers include (but are not limited to):

- Community-based organizations, such as local community health organizations, community action agencies, houses of worship, and community and economic development organizations, that have real estate portfolios
- Multifamily affordable housing providers
- State, local, and Tribal governments and their agencies, including schools and school districts
- Intermediary organizations such as community development institutions
- General contractors with roofing and/or electrical experience
- Other large real estate holders that may be available for solar deployment.

¹ Community-benefiting distributed solar includes distributed energy resources (DERs) that provide meaningful benefits to the communities they serve. See more details on what constitutes community-benefiting solar projects in [Section 2.1](#).

² The Community Power Accelerator brings together lenders, investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition. This online marketplace will create a pipeline of credit-ready distributed solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connect them with mission-aligned lenders, investors, and philanthropic organizations to get funding. More information about the accelerator can be found in [Appendix 2](#) or on the [accelerator website](#).

Organizations without solar developer experience that wish to participate in the prize should partner with one or more experienced solar developers to strengthen their submission. See examples of previous Community Power Accelerator Prize winners here: [Round 1](#) and [Round 2](#).

Financial organizations, including lenders, investors, and philanthropies, are not eligible for this prize. However, these organizations are encouraged to support teams, join the [Community Power Accelerator Marketplace](#), or email community.solar@ee.doe.gov for more information.

For additional information on eligibility, see [Section 4](#).

1.2 Qualifying Portfolios

The prize is seeking organizations that have the desire and ambition to develop and finance a portfolio³ of two or more projects that, in aggregate, total at least 1 MW_{AC} of distributed solar generation. To be eligible, no single portfolio project may exceed 5 MW_{AC}. Distributed solar projects may include community solar, behind-the-meter virtual power plants (VPPs), distributed energy resource (DER) aggregations, microgrids, commercial and industrial (C&I) solar, multifamily projects, or some combination of these models. Teams that plan to develop only a single solar project are not eligible for this prize. The nameplate capacity of any single project's energy storage cannot exceed the nameplate capacity of the project's solar generation.

Successful competitors must demonstrate their ambition and capacity to continue scaling their solar portfolios beyond the proposed prize portfolio.

All eligible competitors must commit to developing portfolios that incorporate equitable access and consumer protections, and meaningful household savings.

All eligible portfolios must also include **at least one of the following meaningful benefits**:

- Resilience, storage and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

For more information on meaningful benefit requirements, please see [Section 2.2](#).

1.3 Prize Phases and Prizes To Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize has three phases (Ready!, Set!, and Grow!), which are designed to build capacity and guide developers through the steps required for successful distributed solar project development and financing.

Phase 1 (Ready! Contest)

Cash Prize: \$50,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 winning teams will be selected for a cash award of \$50,000 each. Winning teams will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize.

In Phase 1, teams will be asked to propose a portfolio of potential distributed solar projects to be developed and financed during Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the prize (February 2025–August 2026). Eligible teams must submit a portfolio of at least two solar projects that total a minimum of 1 MW_{AC} of solar generation in nameplate capacity. No individual project may exceed 5 MW_{AC}. Competitors may propose to

³ A portfolio is defined as a collection of one or more projects.

develop and seek financing for more than two projects and more than 1 MW_{AC} during the course of the prize (January 2025–July 2026). However, competitors must, in Phase 2 and Phase 3, deliver at least 1 MW_{AC} of solar generation.

Phase 2 (Set! Contest)

Cash Prize: \$200,000 per winning competitor

Teams must win Phase 1 of the prize to compete in Phase 2. Up to 25 Phase 2 winners will be selected. Each winning team will receive a cash award of \$200,000 and will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 3 of the prize. Phase 2 teams will participate in a Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course, a live, remote course designed to educate developers on distributed solar in low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDACs). See [Section 2.3](#) for more information on this course.

Additionally, Phase 2 teams will have the opportunity to work directly with technical assistance coaches for free. Phase 2 teams may use this support to prepare their projects for investment via the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#), which includes a list of rigorous project requirements that investors look for before they are willing to fund a project, including information about system size, site control and zoning, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs. Technical assistance does not include assistance with the Phase 2 submission and is only intended to support projects to prepare for investment. Teams will use the Credit-Ready Checklist to create and refine digital project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace. Teams may also work with coaches to create an investor pitch deck (detailed in [Section 6.5](#)) to prepare for Phase 3.

DOE anticipates that completing the Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course and the Credit-Ready Checklist will require significant time and effort. The \$200,000 prize awarded to each winning competitor is intended to help defray the expenditure of resources required to complete the Credit-Ready Checklist and to ensure that a staff member can participate in the Foundations course.

Phase 3 (Grow! Contest)

Cash Prize: \$150,000 per winning competitor

Teams must win Phase 2 to participate in Phase 3.

Up to 25 teams will be selected as Phase 3 winners, and each will receive a cash prize of \$150,000. Winning teams will be required to participate in an in-person and/or online pitch event to pitch their community-benefiting distributed solar project portfolios to a panel of capital providers. All Phase 3 teams to must attend at least one Community Power Accelerator pitch event to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.

In addition to the pitch event, Phase 3 teams will also engage fully on the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace—an online platform for solar developers and capital providers. Using the Marketplace, competitors will secure investment commitments from capital providers for their proposed distributed solar portfolio. To be eligible for a Phase 3 award, competitors must secure commitments⁴ for 100% funding for their whole portfolio via the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace or other sources.

⁴ A commitment must include a signed document between the competitor and a capital provider with recognition of a future payment obligation to fund part or all of the competitor's portfolio.

1.4 Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	September 10, 2024
Informational Webinars	October 1 and November 13, 2024
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	December 17, 2024, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	February 2025
Phase 2 Opens	February 2025
Phase 2 Foundations Course	February 2025
Phase 2 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	<p>Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than December 2, 2025, at 5 p.m. ET.</p> <p>Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 16, 2025, by 5 p.m. ET • December 2, 2025, by 5 p.m. ET. <p>If a team submits by the July 16 deadline and their submission is <u>not</u> selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the December 2 submission deadline.</p> <p>The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision approximately 2 months following the Phase 2 submission deadline to which they responded.</p>
Phase 2 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	September 2025 – January 2026 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Opens	September 2025 (anticipated)
Investor Pitch/Networking Event (Virtual or In-Person)	March 2026 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Submission Deadline	August 12, 2026 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Final Winner Announcement	October 2026 (anticipated)

2. Background

The White House has set a goal to achieve a decarbonized electricity system by 2035 and a decarbonized energy sector by 2050. To ensure an equitable clean energy transition, the White House also announced the [Justice40 Initiative](#),⁵ which directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including clean energy investments—to flow to [disadvantaged communities](#).⁶ Distributed solar will play a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

Recently, the U.S. government passed into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which is aimed at increasing energy production and accelerating energy innovation domestically. It is expected that some projects developed by participants in the Community Power Accelerator Prize may be able to take advantage of IRA tax credits and other project funding.⁷

2.1 What Is Community-Benefiting Distributed Solar?

For the purposes of this prize competition, the following definitions apply (DOE is making no assertions that these definitions are in any way binding standards outside of this prize competition). Projects can include:

Community solar projects - [Community solar](#)⁸ is defined by DOE as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area. The community solar model can uniquely allow the benefits of the development to go toward communities that have traditionally been left out of the transition to solar energy.

There are many different models for community solar, including community solar projects that are:

- Developed, owned, and administered by a utility
- Developed and administered by private, third-party developers
- Led, owned, and managed directly by subscribers, nonprofits, and community members.

Behind-the-meter virtual power plant (VPP) projects – A VPP is defined as a co-located (with defined geographic boundaries) collection of residential and/or commercial solar and storage systems with the capacity to be remotely operated, in part or in total, for deliberate purposes.

Distributed energy resource (DER) aggregation projects – A DER aggregation is defined as a co-located (with defined geographic boundaries) collection of distributed solar (or solar-plus-storage) systems typically situated on residential and/or commercial rooftops, parking canopies, or ground-mount.

Microgrid projects – A microgrid is defined as a co-located, interconnected collection of solar and storage systems with the capacity to be centrally operated in part or in total. They can be islanded from the grid.

⁵ To learn more, visit the [White House Justice40 Initiative website](#). See also Section 223 of [Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#).

⁶ The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as a census tract) or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for disadvantaged communities has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2), energy burden (5), environmental and climate hazards (10), vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).

⁷ To learn more about the IRA, visit: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/inflation-reduction-act-guidebook/>.

⁸ To learn more about community solar, visit: [Community Solar Basics | Department of Energy](#).

Commercial and industrial projects – C&I solar energy systems are systems >50 kW used by many types of buildings, including schools, offices, manufacturing facilities, warehouses, farms, and even retail stores, to cover power needs. They are typically connected to the grid.

2.2 Meaningful Benefits

One of the key goals of the Community Power Accelerator Prize is to support and grow a robust ecosystem of solar developers that incorporate meaningful benefits into projects across the United States. These benefits include equitable access and consumer protections; meaningful household savings; resilience, storage, and grid benefits; community-led economic development; and solar workforce development.

These Five Meaningful Benefits that may be included in distributed solar projects can help build consumer trust and ensure that all U.S. households have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the clean energy transition.

Through the Community Power Accelerator Prize, DOE seeks to encourage distributed solar portfolios that provide equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings to consumers.

Each eligible portfolio must also include at least one of the following meaningful benefits to subscribers or beneficiaries and their communities:

- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

In Phase 2, teams must include documentation of meaningful benefits both in the proforma and narrative appendix (See [Section 6.5](#) for more information).

The Five Meaningful Benefits	
Equitable Access and Consumer Protections <i>(Formerly LMI Household Access⁹)</i>	50% of the benefits or value of the electricity produced must be reserved for low- to moderate- income (LMI) beneficiaries. Where appropriate, contract terms support strong consumer protections, including no upfront fees or deposits, no termination fees, and/or no late fees. Portfolios also support inclusive community outreach and education.
Meaningful Household Savings <i>(Formerly Greater Household Savings)</i>	Portfolios reduce electricity bills a minimum of 20% and/or provide equivalent financial or in-kind benefits for all residential subscribers or beneficiaries (e.g., individuals or households residing within the same or an adjacent census tract to the project location that receive electricity bill savings or financial or other in-kind benefits) of each project. Where relevant, subscription or other fees should not exceed the savings received. Portfolios include clear documentation that outlines these savings, credits, and/or benefits.
Resilience, Storage, and Grid Benefits <i>(Formerly Resilience and Grid Benefits)</i>	Portfolios include battery energy storage systems (BESSs) and provide system details, including sizing, critical load capacity,

⁹ See [Key Terms](#) for a definition of LMI household access.

	<p>time served during potential outage, and VPP-ready technologies.</p> <p>Portfolios include the capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage and/or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions.</p>
<p>Community-Led Economic Development <i>(Formerly Community Ownership)</i></p>	<p>Portfolios demonstrate innovative community ownership models or governance structures. Portfolios include additional wealth-building opportunities and/or establishment of community benefits agreements and/or other economic value to the community.</p>
<p>Solar Workforce Development <i>(Formerly Equitable Workforce Development)</i></p>	<p>Portfolios support community workforce development by advancing high-wage opportunities and entrepreneurship, reducing income disparities across demographic groups, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment and pathways to union membership. Portfolios also build trust and strengthen relationships with minority- and women-owned businesses.</p> <p>Portfolios provide estimated costs, economic benefits, hiring strategies, training programs, and potential employment rates in operating and building projects listed in the portfolio.</p>

2.3 Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar and Credit-Ready Checklist

In Phase 2, winning teams will have the opportunity to participate in a no-cost Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course, or another similar course, hosted by the University of New Hampshire’s Carsey School Center for Impact Finance. The course will deliver practical information on how to develop distributed solar projects that serve low-income communities. This intensive, live, remote course is instructor-led and features guest lecturers and expert speakers. To win Phase 2, Phase 1 winners will be required to participate in and pass this course starting **February 2025**.

Throughout the Foundations course, Phase 2 teams will work to complete the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#). The checklist includes a list of rigorous project requirements that investors look for as they are assessing project risk, including information about system size, site control and zoning, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs. The checklist was developed in collaboration with over 40 financial institutions familiar with solar lending and tax equity, including commercial banks, community development financial institutions (CDFIs), green banks, credit unions, private investors, and developers.

Investors that participate in the [Community Power Accelerator Marketplace](#) are specifically interested in funding distributed solar projects and have agreed to consider funding projects that use the Credit-Ready Checklist.

Once participants have completed all the assignments in the Foundations course, they will be prepared to present a portfolio to investors for underwriting.

3. Prizes To Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize will award up to \$10 million in cash prizes to winning teams in the time frame shown below. In addition, teams may also receive nonmonetary recognition. DOE reserves the right to increase cash awards pending available funds.

Prize Phase	Duration	Anticipated Number of Awards	Dollar Amounts
Phase 1: Ready!	4 months	Up to 25	\$50,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: \$1,250,000)
Phase 2: Set!	6-10 months (anticipated)	Up to 25	\$200,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: \$5,000,000)
Phase 3: Grow!	6-10 months (anticipated)	Up to 25	\$150,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: \$3,750,000)

4. Eligibility Requirements

Competitors in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, competitors certify that they are in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification during a screening process and could result in an eligibility determination before awards are announced and payments are disbursed.

Competitors are defined as individual entities (private, public, nonprofit, community-based, etc.) that are new solar project developers, co-developers, or existing developers. Competitors must be expanding operations and have concrete plans to develop a portfolio of equitable distributed solar projects that deliver equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings.

Each portfolio must also include at least one of the following benefits:

- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

Find more information on the Five Meaningful Benefits in [Section 2.2](#).

DOE may conduct a review, using government resources, of the competitor and project personnel for foreign interference. The risk review may result in the submission being deemed ineligible for the prize competition. This risk review, and the potential determination of ineligibility, can occur at any time during the prize competition. The results of a risk review are not appealable.

4.1 Competitor Eligibility Requirements

Competitors participating in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must meet the following requirements:

1. An individual prize competitor (who is not competing as a member of a group) must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
2. A group of individuals competing as one team may win, provided that the online account holder of the submission is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Individuals competing as part of a team are eligible to participate if they are legally authorized to work in the United States.
3. Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States.
4. Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
5. Competitors must be a U.S. legal entity and are responsible for complying with all the rules of this prize challenge, including working with DOE and its prize administrator, submitting all required materials, and complying with all guidance and restrictions.
6. Projects must be based in the United States or in U.S. territories.
7. Entities must be able to receive payments that are legally made from the U.S. government in U.S. dollars.
8. Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in Federal programs are not eligible to compete.

9. Individuals participating in a foreign government talent recruitment program¹⁰ sponsored by a country of risk¹¹ and teams that include such individuals are not eligible to compete.
10. Entities owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of a government of a country of risk are not eligible to compete.
11. Competitors that plan to develop only a single solar project are not eligible for this prize.
12. To be eligible, an individual authorized to represent the competitor must agree to and sign the following statement upon registration with HeroX:

I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this awards program. I understand that in providing this submission to the Federal Government, I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this awards program and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the Federal Government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287 and 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733 and 3801-3812.

13. Organizations that have already completed and received a certificate for the [Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course](#) are eligible to compete in Phase 1, and, if selected for Phase 2, they will not be required to retake the course.
14. Organizations that have already completed and passed the [Introduction to Community Solar course](#) within the past 2 years will not be required to retake the course for Phase 1. All teams will be required to provide the email used to register for the course as well as the date of completion.
15. Organizations that have previously won Round 1, Phase 1 or Round 2, Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize are eligible to compete, but must include a new portfolio of projects. Organizations that have previously won Round 1, Phase 2 or Round 2, Phase 2 are not eligible to compete.
16. Although participation in this prize does not require competitors to have any competition-specific insurance, developers may be required to prove appropriate insurance coverage to receive financing.
17. Additional eligibility requirements can be found in [Section A.13](#).

4.2 Number of Submission Packages Allowed

Only one submission per lead entity is allowed. If multiple organizations apply as a team, monetary prizes will be delivered only to the lead entity identified in the team's submission. Organizations may act as a lead entity only for a single submission but may also support multiple submissions as non-lead entities, if

¹⁰ Foreign Government-Sponsored Talent Recruitment Program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government, or a foreign government instrumentality or entity, to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, or whether having a full-time or part-time position). Some foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs operate with the intent to import or otherwise acquire from abroad, sometimes through illicit means, proprietary technology or software, unpublished data and methods, and intellectual property to further the military modernization goals and/or economic goals of a foreign government. Many, but not all, programs aim to incentivize the targeted individual to relocate physically to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at United States research facilities or receipt of federal research funds while concurrently working at and/or receiving compensation from a foreign institution, and some direct participants not to disclose their participation to U.S. entities. Compensation could take many forms including cash, research funding, complimentary foreign travel, honorific titles, career advancement opportunities, promised future compensation, or other types of remuneration or consideration, including in-kind compensation.

¹¹ DOE has designated the following countries as foreign countries of risk: Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China. This list is subject to change.

desired. In addition, only one individual from each winning Phase 1 submission will be allowed to participate in the Phase 2 course.

All submissions must have a unique set of projects that make up their proposed portfolio of distributed solar projects. A single proposed project cannot be counted by multiple teams and may only appear once in any of the proposed portfolios of all teams.

4.3 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The prize administrator must conclude that all the following statements are **true** when applied to your submission. If any of the following are not true for your submission, your submission will not be reviewed and will not be awarded.

1. The competitor submission represents a portfolio of a minimum of two solar projects with the intent to develop a minimum of 1 MW_{AC} (between 50 kW_{AC} and 5 MW_{AC} for a single project) of distributed solar projects¹² in the United States or in U.S. territories.
2. The competitor must describe how it will include **three**¹³ of the Five Meaningful Benefits in the submitted portfolio, two of which are required (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings).
3. The proposed projects must serve at least 40% of the value of the power generated and/or equivalent benefits to community members.
4. At the time of Phase 2 awards, the projects must be in a preconstruction state to ensure that three meaningful benefits, two of which are required (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), are incorporated into the final project before construction begins.
5. The benefits realized by the project are not dependent on pending legislation or regulation.

5. Phase 1: Ready! Contest Rules

5.1 Introduction

The Phase 1: Ready! contest is the first in this three-contest series and has a total of \$1,250,000 in cash prizes.

Below are the rules for the Phase 1: Ready! contest. Phase 1 is open to all eligible teams (see [Section 4](#)).

5.2 Phase 1: Ready! Goal

Phase 1 is seeking new or expanding solar developers with a high potential of developing a portfolio of two or more solar projects totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{AC} of distributed solar (not exceeding 5 MW_{AC} for a single project) that include

Ready! Contest Prize

- Up to 25 awards
- Each Phase 1 winner will receive a \$50,000 cash prize
- Phase 1 winners must designate a single individual to participate in the Community Power Accelerator Foundations course (required for Phase 2: Set! award)
- All Phase 1 winners will receive direct technical assistance mentorship and coaching.

¹² Refer to [Section 2.1](#) on qualifying distributed solar projects.

¹³ Individual projects within a portfolio do not all need to offer the same meaningful benefits. For example, Project A may provide equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings, and Project B may provide increased resilience, storage, and grid benefits, community-led economic development and solar workforce development.

the [Five Meaningful Benefits](#). The portfolio must include these two meaningful benefits:

- Equitable access and consumer protections
- Meaningful household savings.

The portfolio must also include at least one of the following meaningful benefits:

- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

The goal of Phase 1: Ready! is to recognize successful new and expanding solar project developers as they prepare and begin to execute distributed solar project development (e.g., predevelopment activities and project financing). Successful teams will demonstrate scalable distributed solar that does not depend primarily on philanthropic funding or require federal predevelopment prize funding in the future.

5.3 Phase 1: Ready! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	September 10, 2024
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	December 17, 2024, 5 p.m. E.T.
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	February 2025 (anticipated)

5.4 Phase 1 Prize Process

1. **Preparation, Activation, and Submission:** Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 1: Ready! contest.

To compete in Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize, teams must complete the [Introduction to Community Solar](#) self-paced course (including all required videos, readings, quizzes, and the final self-assessment exercise) and upload to HeroX the required [Phase 1 submission materials](#), including a written narrative describing the proposed portfolio (minimum 1 MW_{AC}), the organization and team, plans for community engagement and diversity and inclusion, how the portfolio will incorporate three of the [Five Meaningful Benefits](#), two of which are required for the portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), and the competitor's plan to grow as a solar developer and scale their portfolio.

All submission materials must be uploaded to the [Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page](#) before the Phase 1 contest closing date.

2. **Assessment:** The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns subject matter expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The judging criteria assess the following:
 - **Organization and Team** – Describe your organization, past experience, and team, and how your team would benefit from participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.
 - **Disadvantaged Community Engagement** – What is your plan to engage and work with the communities in which you plan to develop distributed solar projects?

The subject matter expert advisory reviewers may be composed of federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas. These advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the prize administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners will take reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

3. **Announcement:** After the Phase 1: Ready! winners are publicly announced, the prize administrator will notify them and request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. Winners will then be eligible to compete in Phase 2 and participate in the Foundations course starting in February 2025.
4. **Financial and Tax Requirements:** Winning teams will be required to submit an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [W-9 form](#) and automated clearing house (ACH) forms as well as signing a prize acceptance form in order for payment to be issued.

5.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize should include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover page (selected questions public*) • Portfolio narrative (3-page max) • PowerPoint summary slide (public*) • Evidence of completion of Introduction to Community Solar course • Phase 1 narrative (3,500 words max) • Letters of support (optional).
<p>*Note: Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such, and DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public. See Appendix 1 for additional details.</p>	

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

Expert reviewers will evaluate the submission materials by agreeing or disagreeing with assigned statements on a 1–6 scale. Each statement will be evaluated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), as shown:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

Cover Page: List basic information about your submission. *To be completed via the HeroX submission form. Selected elements will be made public.*

- Submission title (*will be made public*)
- Organization name (*will be made public*)
- Organization city and state (*will be made public*)
- Organization address
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL (*will be made public*)
- Point of contact information (name, email, phone)
- Name, title, and experience level of proposed Phase 2 Foundations course participant.
- Describe in two sentences how your model is delivering savings or in-kind benefits to LMI households and/or LIDACs.

Portfolio Narrative: Describe basic information about your expected community-benefiting distributed solar portfolio to be developed over the course of the prize.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1991>

3-page maximum

Planned Prize Portfolio – What specific projects would you be seeking to develop and finance during the course of the prize? What is your plan to develop a portfolio of at least 1 MW_{AC} of distributed solar projects over the course of the prize? Please include as much information as possible, even if the information is tentative or anticipated. Teams are allowed to make changes to their planned projects in subsequent phases as needed.

1. Please describe the portfolio of distributed solar projects (minimum two, totaling at least 1 MW_{AC}) that you are planning to develop during the course of the prize. For each project, please include the following information:
 - Describe and provide context for your project, including information on why it was selected and what the potential impact is.
 - Current stage of development (initial idea, scoping, pre-financing, post-financing,¹⁴ etc.) for each project within your proposed portfolio
 - Project location, including whether the project is located in a disadvantaged community or Justice40 census tract¹⁵
 - Describe the communities where your projects will be located.
 - Total planned project size (kW, MW)
 - Number of planned offtakers/subscribers or beneficiaries
 - Current status of site control
 - Developer, co-developers, and other partnerships
 - Describe their role in supporting your portfolio.
 - Planned location of the project
 - Planned location of the project beneficiaries
 - Planned project ownership structure (third-party owned, utility owned, community owned)
 - Planned meaningful benefits
 - Describe how the planned projects will deliver access and consumer protection and meaningful household savings to community members.
 - Describe any other meaningful benefits that your planned projects will provide.
 - Provide detail on how you envision implementing them in the portfolio.
 - Describe how you plan to lock into your organizational or project bylaws guarantees of the long-term continuation of your proposed meaningful benefits and other high standards of business ethics beyond the completion of this prize.
 - Describe any experience with providing meaningful benefits (or similar) in past projects and how you can leverage this experience for your planned prize portfolio.
 - Describe any current challenges or barriers that are impeding your organization from developing solar with the Five Meaningful Benefits.

¹⁴ If a project has already received financing, please provide an explanation of why the current funding does not incorporate the Five Meaningful Benefits.

¹⁵ For information regarding disadvantaged communities and Justice40 census tracts, please see the DOE Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/about>.

2. Describe your vision for your organization's long-term growth as a solar developer. Outline your organization's long-term growth strategy as a solar developer. Elaborate on the following aspects:
- Prospective markets: Detail potential new markets or geographies that your organization would like to expand to in the future.
 - Beneficiary/subscriber expansion: Describe your plans and strategies to broaden your subscriber or beneficiary base, ensuring increased and equitable participation in distributed solar initiatives.
 - Expanded benefits: Explain how your organization intends to provide and/or expand the Five Meaningful Benefits within your future projects. Illustrate your approach to incorporating additional advantages that positively impact the communities you plan to serve.
 - Financial growth: Beyond philanthropic grants, what is your plan to increase or leverage funds from private capital to ensure long-term scalability?

Competitors may propose to develop and seek financing for more than two projects and 1 MW_{AC} during the course of the prize (February 2025–August 2026).

PowerPoint Summary Slide (to be made public): One slide maximum.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1993>

Competitors must create a single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains specific technical details about the submission that can be understood by a nontechnical audience. No specific template is required, but text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

Introduction to Community Solar Course: The Introduction to Community Solar course is intended to help teams understand how solar developers can build projects that include the Five Meaningful Benefits. The course is approximately 3–4 hours (including videos, reading assignments, quizzes, and self-assessment). You can go at your own pace and start and stop as you wish.

Organizations that have already completed and passed the Introduction to Community Solar course within the past 2 years will not be required to retake the course for Phase 1. However, they will be required to provide the email used to register for the course as well as the date of completion.

Important: To get access to the course, please register online at: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0wcwN1z6Jy8KHmS. You will receive an email with a unique course access link within **2–3 business days**.

At least one member of the lead organization must complete the **Introduction to Community Solar course** and submit to HeroX the email they used to register for the course as well as the date of completion as evidence. The prize administrator will verify completion of both the course and the self-assessment using the email and date of completion provided via HeroX. This self-paced, single-module course is for organizations that wish to understand distributed solar or partner with solar developers to develop equitable distributed solar projects. The course takes approximately 3–4 hours to complete.

To complete the course, teams must do the following:

1. Watch all course videos and view additional resources
2. Complete required readings
3. Complete and pass all three quizzes
4. Complete the “Assessing Your Organization’s Potential Fit in Solar Development” assignment (Part 1: complete self-assessment of your organization’s capabilities and potential role(s) in solar development; Part 2: submit assessment scores and written response)
5. Complete “Community Solar Development Statement” assignment.

Phase 1 Narrative: You should answer each of the questions in the two areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these two areas must not exceed 3,500 words, not including captions, images, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission (see template for details). You may also include up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1992>

1. **Organization and Team** – Describe your organization, past experience, and team, and how your team would benefit from participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

24 points possible

Teams can provide:

- **Organization and Mission:** A description of your organization’s mission and goals and how they align with the overall prize goal of developing a (minimum) 1 MW_{AC} distributed solar portfolio with the Five Meaningful Benefits.
- **Experience With Solar Development:** A description of your current level of experience as a solar developer and additional information on past projects you have led or supported. Alternatively, you can explain that you are new to solar development or that you are an established developer seeking to expand.

Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):

- **Organization and Mission:** The description demonstrates a strong alignment between the organization’s mission and goals and the overall prize goal of developing a (minimum) 1 MW_{AC} distributed solar portfolio with the Five Meaningful Benefits, highlighting how they are mutually supportive and complementary.
- **Experience With Solar Development and the Five Meaningful Benefits:** The team demonstrates a high level of previous experience in and/or outside of solar that can be successfully leveraged for solar development with meaningful benefits.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide information regarding any solar projects you have developed or helped develop to date that have been commissioned and are still in operation today. ○ Include information on the total number of communities and total number of solar projects for which you led development and for which you supported but did not lead development. ○ Include information on the total capacity (MW) of solar projects that are still in operation, total capacity of solar projects for which you led development, and total capacity of solar projects for which you supported but did not lead development. ○ Include the states where the operational solar projects are located. <p>Note: If you have not developed any community or other renewable energy projects previously, include any relevant development experience that indicates your capacity to become a solar developer, and include potential examples (economic development, rehab, multifamily affordable housing, etc.).</p> <p>Not having previous experience is not automatically a disqualifier. However, it is strongly recommended that such a competitor seek out partners with significant solar experience to collaborate with on their application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prize Participation and Benefit: A description of how the specific activities¹⁶ and benefits¹⁷ of the prize would help you overcome your identified barriers to either become a solar project developer or build on existing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges and Barriers/Prize Benefit: The team has identified specific barriers that participation in the prize would help them overcome and has a clear and actionable vision for how the prize activities and benefits will strategically position the team to either become solar project developers or build on existing experience to expand solar development with the Five Meaningful Benefits. ● Team: The team and organization have adequate capabilities and resources to dedicate to learning skills and acquiring knowledge related to the unique challenges and attributes of distributed solar, enabling them to successfully secure financing for their proposed solar portfolio.
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¹⁶ Prize activities include participation in the Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course (Phase 2, one individual per team), working with technical assistance providers (Phases 2 and 3) to complete the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#) (Phase 2), and meeting with financiers (Phase 3). For more information, see [Section 1.3](#).

¹⁷ Specific benefits of the prize include increased organizational knowledge of distributed solar and the Five Meaningful Benefits via the Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course, increased confidence and skills from technical assistance, the ability to leverage cash awards to seek additional funding for planned projects, and access to the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace to identify and work with potential investors. For more information, see [Section 1](#).

<p>experience to expand development with the Five Meaningful Benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe your team that will participate in prize activities, including a description of each team member’s relevant expertise and ability to participate in the prize. ○ Describe your team’s efforts to ensure that perspectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion are incorporated into your team. 	
<p>Disadvantaged Community Engagement – What is your plan to engage and work with the underserved and disadvantaged communities in which you plan to develop your community-benefiting distributed solar portfolio?</p> <p><i>24 points possible</i></p>	
<p>Suggested Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Connection: Describe how your team is connected or will be connected to the communities in which you plan to develop projects. Are you located within these communities, or do you have existing partnerships? • LIDAC Engagement: Describe the specific activities and partnerships that would build trust and strengthen relationships with LIDACs and support minority- and women-owned businesses as you work to develop your portfolio. • Community Concerns and Priorities: Describe your community’s current disposition toward distributed solar. What are their top concerns and priorities? What barriers do you expect you might encounter? What factors might support your future success? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you do not currently have specific communities identified, you may describe the attitudes, concerns, priorities, etc. that you might expect to commonly encounter within a community. • LIDAC Benefits and Ownership: What are some strategies you will employ to benefit LIDAC members or owners with your envisioned 	<p>Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Connection: The description illustrates how the team is currently connected with or will proactively cultivate relationships with the communities in which they plan to develop projects. The team has a clear commitment to inclusive and participatory community development. • LIDAC Engagement: The description outlines specific activities and partnerships that the team will undertake to build trust and strengthen relationships with LIDACs as they work to develop their portfolio, showcasing an inclusive approach that empowers minority- and women-owned businesses. • Community Concerns and Priorities: The description provides insights into the community’s current disposition toward distributed solar, including their attitudes, concerns, and priorities, showcasing a thorough understanding of the local context and community dynamics. • LIDAC Benefits and Ownership: The team includes strategies to encourage and enable LIDAC members to become subscribers/ beneficiaries or owners of the envisioned distributed solar projects, emphasizing inclusive participation and access to the Five

community-benefiting distributed solar projects? Include your community benefits agreements to demonstrate that the benefits will be implemented in your projects.	Meaningful Benefits of distributed solar. The team includes their community benefits agreements that demonstrate that the benefits will be implemented.
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Letters of Support (Optional)
Submit one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., community members, utilities, partner organizations) to provide context for your projects. Letters of support from partners or others who are critical to the success of your proposed portfolio will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your portfolio will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters. Individual letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

5.6 How We Score

The prize administrator will first ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

1. **Screening:** The Community Power Accelerator Prize administrator and DOE will screen each application for [overall eligibility](#) and completeness. Each submission must have the five main elements requested as part of the submission package:
 - Cover page
 - Portfolio narrative
 - PowerPoint summary slide
 - Completed Community Power Accelerator Introduction to Community Solar course, including the self-assessment
 - Phase 1 narrative, including answers to all areas.

Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all elements will pass the Phase 1 screening for eligibility. Ineligible submissions will not be reviewed by the advisory reviewer panel and will not be considered for an award.
2. **Scoring:** A panel of expert reviewers will read, score, and comment on each submission. There are four main categories of questions, each with a number of subcategories. Each subcategory of the review criteria will receive a score from 1 to 6. The final score from an individual reviewer¹⁸ for a submission package equals the sum of the scores for all the categories. Category points are cumulative. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final review process considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the awards.
3. **Reviewer Comments:** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to teams after the winners are announced for each

¹⁸ Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.

phase. These comments are intended to help teams continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

4. **Interviews:** The prize administrator may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the teams. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the prize administrator may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

6. Phase 2: Set! Contest Rules

6.1 Introduction

The Phase 2: Set! contest is the second in this three-phase series. A total of \$5 million in cash prizes is available in Phase 2. Below are the rules for the Phase 2: Set! contest. Phase 2 is only open to winners of Phase 1.

6.2 Phase 2: Set! Goal

The goal of Phase 2 is to build the capacity of new, emerging, and expanding solar developers and co-developers and provide them with the tools and resources they need to develop a Phase 2 portfolio of two or more solar projects totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{AC} of solar generation (not to exceed 5 MW_{AC} at a single project), which must include equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings.

Each portfolio must also include at least one of the following meaningful benefits:

- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

By the end of Phase 2: Set!, successful teams must have:

- Completed the instructor-led [Foundations course](#) and received a digital badge
- Worked with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Checklist and used that information to create and refine Phase 2 project profile(s) for a minimum of 1 MW_{AC} (two or more projects) on the [Community Power Accelerator Marketplace](#)
- Documented site control
- Demonstrated financial scalability by planning to leverage private and public sources of capital beyond philanthropic funding
- Created an investor pitch deck.

By the end of Phase 2, teams will be ready to fully engage in the Community Power Accelerator and begin to meet with potential investors to seek funding for their distributed solar projects. Additionally, by Phase 2 awards, the projects must be in a preconstruction state to ensure that at least three meaningful benefits, two of which are required to be included in each portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), are incorporated into the final project before construction begins.

Phase 2: Set! Benefits
All Phase 2 teams (i.e., those that won Phase 1 awards) are eligible to receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An opportunity to designate a single individual to participate for free in the Community Power Accelerator Foundations course• Free direct technical assistance in developing their project portfolio• A cash award of \$200,000 for completing the Phase 2 submission requirements• An opportunity to receive pitch coaching and participate in an investor pitch/networking event to showcase their Phase 2 portfolio.

6.3 Phase 2: Set! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 2 Opens	February 2025
Phase 2 Foundations Course	February 2025
Phase 2 Submission Deadline	<p>Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than December 2, 2025, at 5 p.m. ET.</p> <p>Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 16, 2025, by 5 p.m. ET • December 2, 2025, by 5 p.m. ET. <p>If a team submits to the July 16 deadline and their submission is <u>not</u> selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the December 2 submission deadline.</p> <p>The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision approximately 2 months following the submission deadline.</p>
Phase 2 Winner Announcement	September 2025–January 2026 (anticipated)

6.4 Phase 2 Prize Process

- 1. Preparation, Activation, and Submission:** Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 2: Set! contest.

To compete for a Community Power Accelerator Phase 2 prize, teams must complete and submit—via the HeroX portal—documentation for the following requirements:

- Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
- Updated PowerPoint summary slide (public; updated from Phase 1)
- Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course digital badge
- Community Power Accelerator project profiles—minimum 1 MW_{AC} (at least two projects)
- Investor pitch deck representing all projects within the portfolio
- Full project financial model and proforma (in Excel format) for each project included in the portfolio
- Phase 2 narrative
- Site control documentation
- Letters of support (optional).

All submission materials must be uploaded to the [Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page](#) before the final Phase 2 submission deadline: December 2, 2025 at 5 p.m. ET.

- 2. Assessment:** The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns advisory expert reviewers to independently evaluate the content of each submission. The advisory reviewers may include federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas.

Advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the prize administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners will take reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

3. **Announcement:** Approximately 2 months following the submission deadline, the prize administrator will publicly announce the winners and will send email notifications to both winners and non-winners. At this time, the prize administrator will request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. Winners will then be eligible to compete in Phase 3.
4. **Financial and Tax Requirements:** Winning teams will be required to submit an IRS [W-9 form](#) and ACH forms as well as signing a prize acceptance form in order for payment to be issued.

6.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for the Community Power Accelerator Prize Phase 2: Set! contest should include the following items:

Item Number	Content	Scored Item?
1	Cover page (will be made public)	All Phase 2 submission items are pass/fail. Please see Section 6.6: "How We Score" for more information.
2	Updated PowerPoint summary slide (will be made public)	
3	Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course digital badge	
4	Community Power Accelerator project profiles (one per project; minimum two projects that total, in aggregate, 1 MW _{AC})	
5	Investor portfolio pitch deck (not public)	
6	Project financial model and proforma (not public)	
7	Phase 2 narrative (not public)	
8	Site control documentation (not public)	
9	Letters of support (optional)	
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such. DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public. <p>See Appendix 1 for additional details.</p>		

1. Cover Page (selected elements will be made public)

Complete the basic information below about your organization and project portfolio.

(To be completed via the HeroX submission form.)

- Submission (project) title *(will be made public)*
- Submission picture (.jpeg file format, *will be made public*)
- Organization name *(will be made public)*
- Organization city and state *(will be made public)*
- Organization address
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL *(will be made public)*
- Point of contact information (name, job title, email, phone)
- Team members
- Partner organizations
- Portfolio details for each project: project name, size in MW, city, state
- Describe in two sentences how your model is delivering savings or in-kind benefits to LMI households and/or LIDACs.
- Key portfolio financials and metrics:
 - Number of anticipated LMI households benefiting from the total portfolio
 - Total monetary savings, and financial or in-kind benefits to subscribers or beneficiaries (both LMI and non-LMI) over a 20-year period
 - Cost per watt per project
 - Cost per watt for solar generation aggregated across the portfolio
 - Total portfolio cost
 - If storage or a battery energy storage system (BESS) is included, identify the total cost of the battery or storage system per project
 - Sources
 - Which sources are already secured?
 - Are terms sheets in place with other investors/lenders?
 - Who is the borrower?
 - What collateral is available to secure debt?
 - Is the borrower able to provide guarantees?
 - What is the specific lender/investor request? What are your sources, and what finances are you seeking?
 - What type of debt are you seeking? Are you looking for a concessionary rate?
 - Are you leveraging federal and state incentives? What are your contingency plans if not received?
 - Additional information about scope, sources and uses, and loans.

2. PowerPoint Summary Slide (*will be made public*)

One slide maximum

Optional template available:

<https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1993>

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams must update their single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains an overview of their organization and each of their Phase 2 distributed solar portfolio projects, including each project's size and location. An optional template is available for competitors to use, or they may update their summary slide from Phase 1. Text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

3. Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar Course

The online [Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course](#), hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide teams on how to develop community-benefiting distributed solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. This intensive virtual course is real-time and instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments.

The team member designated to take the Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course must participate in¹⁹ and complete all assignments for the course to receive the Foundations [digital badge](#), which will serve as proof of completion. The Foundations course, as detailed in [Appendix 3](#), is a 10-week course that will be held in February 2025, with weekly live Zoom sessions. Competitors can expect to spend 8–10 hours per week working on assigned course activities, including the weekly 90-minute group Zoom sessions.

The course will consist of regular, online Zoom meetings. The cohort will receive live-streamed instruction, collaborate on homework assignments, and begin development of their distributed solar project(s). By the end of the Foundations cohort course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite
2. Assemble a development team capable of developing and managing a distributed solar project
3. Develop and execute a robust business model and subscriber/beneficiary acquisition strategy that focuses on meaningful benefits
4. Structure a creditworthy distributed solar portfolio and pitch it for financing.

¹⁹ If a participant fails to make a Zoom meeting or fails to complete the required learning activities, they must work with the instructor to develop and execute a make-up plan to ensure that they learn the materials presented during the missed session and/or required learning activities. If a participant misses more than two Zoom sessions, the prize administrator may decide not to award a participant the digital badge for completion of the course. All required learning activities must be completed and approved by the University of New Hampshire instructor by the end of the course.

4. Community Power Accelerator Project Profiles

Upload a PDF printout of your project profiles (at least two) from the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace.

Teams will work with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Checklist and will use the information to create and refine project profile(s) on the Community Power Accelerator website.

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

Teams should upload a PDF copy of each of their project profiles that have been posted to the [Community Power Accelerator Marketplace](#). Please note that some questions may require additional details, depending on the specific project. Any project over 50 kW_{AC} must complete a profile on the marketplace.

5. Investor Pitch Deck²⁰

Create an investor pitch deck highlighting at least two projects (or more) within your portfolio totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{AC}. The pitch deck should describe site details, business strategy, and your organization, team, and financing needs. If you are developing more than two projects, your pitch deck should highlight at least two projects and then provide an overview of the rest of your portfolio.

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams should prepare an investor pitch deck presentation that provides an overview of their organization/team as well as highlighting the portfolio for which they are seeking financing in Phase 2.

Teams are encouraged to use the information from the Foundations course and the Credit-Ready Checklist to inform their presentation. Teams should tailor their pitch decks to an investor audience.

Teams should include the following information for their portfolio:

Model Details

- Installation type
- System size (kW)
- Anticipated annual production (kWh/year)
- Utility power rate (\$/kWh)
- Power value (total \$)
- Major equipment information.

Site Information

- What type of building or land is the project on?
- Who owns the building or land?
- What characteristics make the site a good site?
- What are some of the risks/concerns of the site?
- Utility service provider responsible for interconnection

²⁰ This submission item builds on the investor pitch deck presentation assignment for the Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course (see [Appendix 3](#)) but expands the scope of the presentation to include at least two Phase 2 projects that total 1 MW_{AC}.

- Relevant utility rules/regulations that allow for development and interconnection for your projects
- Utility/state incentives
- Map(s) of planned project sites, including project locations and names.

Portfolio Financials

- Total portfolio cost
- Sources
- Which sources are already secured?
- Are terms sheets in place with other investors/lenders?
- Who is the borrower?
- What collateral is available to secure debt?
- Is the borrower able to provide guarantees?
- What is the specific lender/investor request?
- What type of debt are you seeking? Are you looking for a concessionary rate?
- Are you leveraging federal and state incentives? What are your contingency plans if not received?
- Additional information about scope, sources and uses, and loans.

Development Timeline

- What is the current stage of the project?
- What work has been done to date?
- Provide an anticipated development timeline.

Development Team Members

- Organization chart.

System Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Plans

- Describe your O&M plan.
- What are the ongoing maintenance costs?
- How are you hedging against solar performance risk?
- Has an O&M provider already been identified or contracted?

Subscriber/Beneficiary Management Plan

- Explain your subscriber/beneficiary management plan.
- Explain the process by which the project earns revenue.
- Are any subscribers or beneficiaries already signed up?
- What are the expected upfront and ongoing costs of customer marketing/maintenance?
- How are you hedging against any customer nonpayment risk?

Meaningful Benefits

- What percent of subscribers or beneficiaries qualify as LMI (below 80% area median income)? (Minimum of 50% required.)
- What projected percent discount off the cost of utility power is being provided to LMI subscribers or beneficiaries? (Minimum of 20% required.)
 - What are the total LMI resident savings and/or value of financial or in-kind benefits per year?
- Does the portfolio provide other community benefits beyond discounted power?
 - Job training

- Prevailing wages
- Education on solar technology
- Resident services
- Resilience
- Community/cooperative ownership
- Other in-kind benefits.

Project Replication and Scalability

- What are your plans to scale your distributed solar portfolio and replicate your model for additional/future projects?
- How will executing this work set your team up for long-term success and additional development opportunities?

6. Project Financial Model and Proforma

Teams must include an editable (with formulas included) Excel file financial model and proforma for each project included in the Phase 2 portfolio. Submissions must include separate proformas for each project exceeding 50 kW_{AC} (uploaded as a .zip file) in the portfolio. Teams are **strongly encouraged** to use the proforma template in its entirety linked below. If not using the proforma template linked below, teams should ensure that their proforma includes the same information as the template.

Allowable Upload Format: .zip (.zip file should have Excel files for each project)

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1994>

Competitors should upload a completed proforma, keeping in mind the following guidelines:

- If specific elements of the proforma/financial model do not apply, competitors may enter a “0” for that value.
- Competitors are allowed to add additional tabs as required to fully explain their model.
- Each project proforma(s) must include all applicable details, including:
 - Project scope
 - Project sources and uses
 - Project debt
 - Project loan
 - Project returns
 - Project incentives (e.g., tax credits and other government subsidies)
 - Monetary value of meaningful benefits.

7. Phase 2 Narrative

Answer each of the questions in the two areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these two areas must not exceed 2,500 words, not including captions, images, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. You may also include up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

Competitors may upload up to 15 additional pages of documentation as needed in the appendix.

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .doc, .docx

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1995>

Meaningful Benefits, Community Engagement, and Support to LIDACs

Teams could include:

- A description of how you are incorporating and measuring equitable access and consumer protections, meaningful household savings, and one or more of the following Five Meaningful Benefits: resilience, storage, and grid benefits; community-led economic development; and solar workforce development in your Phase 2 portfolio
 - Why did you select the additional meaningful benefit that you are incorporating?
 - A description of who is benefiting and how many, and how they are benefiting from your Phase 2 portfolio
 - Include documentation (either in the financial model/proforma or as a narrative appendix) to demonstrate the validity and scope of the planned meaningful benefits. Refer to the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#) to see what documentation is required for the Five Meaningful Benefits.
 - Describe documentation, organizational bylaws, or other conditions that ensure the continued provision of the meaningful benefits beyond the awarding of this prize.
 - An update on the specific activities that your team is doing to build trust, strengthen relationships, and provide benefits to LMI households and LIDACs, as well as support minority- and women-owned businesses
 - How did your plan and activities diverge from your initial planning?

Business Model Innovation, Risks and Barriers, and Strategy for Investment

Teams could include:

- A clear articulation of how your team's solar model works
- Any potential project risks, challenges, or barriers that your team is currently encountering or anticipates for your portfolio and how you plan to address or overcome them
- A description of your strategy to get the attention of and meet with potential capital providers
 - How will you leverage the Community Power Accelerator to facilitate your strategy?
 - What other resources and connections do you plan to leverage?
 - What types of capital providers (private capital providers, angel capital providers, philanthropic capital providers) do you anticipate engaging with, and how will you target your investment strategy to the types of capital providers you seek to attract?
- What additional support do you need to be successful in Phase 3?
 - How do you plan to find this additional support in Phase 3?

8. Site Control Documentation

To pass Phase 2, teams are required to have either (1) executed contractual agreement(s), and/or (2) a signed letter of intent for all projects included in their Phase 2 portfolio.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams should upload documentation of site control for all projects included in their Phase 2 portfolios. Refer to the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#) to see what documentation is preferred for site control. This could include:

Executed contractual agreement(s)

- **Minimum information requirements:** Signed contractual agreement that details the parties to the agreement, description of the property (including address and which project it refers to), description of distributed solar system, and general terms of the agreement, including any payments.

Signed letters of intent/memorandum of understanding (MOU)

- **Minimum requirements:** Signed letter of intent or MOU from site owner that details the parties to the agreement, project description, site identification (including address and which project it refers to), clearly stated intent to proceed, and key terms and conditions (such as scope of work, timeline, prerequisites, and budget).

9. Letters of Support (Optional)

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

Submit one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., community members, utilities, partner organizations) to provide context. Letters of support from partners or others who are critical to the success of your proposed portfolio will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your portfolio will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters. Individual letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

6.6 How We Score

All items in the submission package, with the exception of the cover page, will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide whether the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria for each of the required submission elements. Teams must receive a pass on 100% of the scoring criteria to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

The prize administrator will ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The prize administrator reserves the right to remove evidence that contains personally identifiable information. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

1. **Screening.** The Community Power Accelerator Prize administrator and DOE will screen each application for overall eligibility and completeness. Each submission must have the eight main elements requested as part of the submission package:
 - Cover page (*selected questions will be made public*)
 - Updated PowerPoint summary slide (*public*)

- Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course digital badge
- Community Power Accelerator project profiles
- Investor pitch deck
- Full project financial model and proforma for each project included in the portfolio
- Phase 2 narrative
- Site control documentation
- Letters of support (optional).

Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all elements will be deemed as passing the Phase 2 screening.

2. **Scoring.** A panel of expert reviewers will read, score, and comment on each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide whether the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria listed below. Teams must receive a passing score on all required submission elements (in addition to the Phase 2 program goals listed in [Section 6.2](#)) to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

Phase 2 Scoring “Pass” Criteria	
Project Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Details: The information provided by the team includes credible and well-defined information about the system details, timeline, site, development team members, O&M, and risk. The details provided indicate that the team has performed adequate due diligence to be ready for investment. • Site Control: The team has provided affirmative documentation of site control for each project included in their Phase 2 portfolio from the site owner or entity that controls the site. The evidence provided meets minimum requirements (see Section 6.5: “What to Submit”).
Financial and Business Model Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-Benefiting Distributed Solar Model: The team clearly articulates how their model works and what makes their business strategy unique, replicable/scalable, and poised for successful investment with support from the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace. The described model is viable and would be attractive to a capital funding partner in Phase 3. • Financial Detail and Accuracy: The financial and proforma model (year 1–20) is well defined, with proforma figures that add up accurately. Each line item is clearly defined in the proforma, ensuring that all meaningful benefits are accurately reflected in the financials. The described financial and proforma model is aligned with the described community-benefiting distributed solar model and is a viable financial strategy. • Financial Scalability: The planned capital stack includes a mix of financing, including debt and/or equity, that supports future financial scalability. Teams must demonstrate financial scalability by planning to leverage private and public sources of capital beyond philanthropic funding. • Sustainable Meaningful Benefits: The team has a financially sustainable business model that will enable the portfolio to provide

	profit and debt service for debt and equity investors while continuing to provide meaningful benefits to subscribers or beneficiaries.
Investor Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pitch Deck: The pitch deck is tailored for a capital provider audience, presenting relevant and comprehensive information in an attractive manner. It includes credible and well-defined details about the system, timeline, site, team, operations, maintenance, and risks. Additionally, the portfolio is described as replicable and scalable, with a clear plan for long-term success and additional development opportunities. The pitch deck also includes detailed and credible information about how the portfolio will provide meaningful benefits and support LMI households and LIDACs.
Meaningful Benefits and Support to Disadvantaged Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to Disadvantaged Communities: The competitor is actively working to support, encourage subscription from, and provide benefits to LMI households and LIDACs, organizations, individuals, and minority- and women-owned businesses. • Meaningful Benefits: The submission clearly describes how the portfolio will incorporate at least three of the Five Meaningful Benefits, two of which are required to be in the portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), into the portfolio and includes documentation (either in the financial model/proforma or as a narrative appendix) to demonstrate the validity and scope of the planned meaningful benefits. • Community Engagement Excellence: The submission highlights ongoing activities that enhance community trust and benefit LMI households, LIDACs, and minority- and women-owned businesses.

Reviewers are prohibited from having personal or financial interests in, or being an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or having a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered team.

3. **Reviewer comments.** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to teams after the winners are announced for each phase. These comments are intended to help teams continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.
4. **Interviews.** The prize administrator may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the teams. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the prize administrator may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

7. Phase 3: Grow! Contest Rules

7.1 Introduction

The Phase 3: Grow! contest is the third in this three-contest phase series. A total of \$3.75 million in cash prizes is available in Phase 3. Phase 3 is only open to winners of Phase 2.

Phase 3: Grow! Benefits
All Phase 3 teams (i.e., those that won Phase 2 awards) are eligible to receive a cash award of \$150,000 for completing the Phase 3 submission requirements.

7.2 Phase 3: Grow! Goal

The goal of Phase 3 is for new, emerging, and expanding solar developers to secure 100% investment of their distributed solar portfolio of two or more projects that equal in aggregate at least 1 MW_{AC}. The portfolio must include at least three of the Five Meaningful Benefits, two of which are required to be in each portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), as discussed in [Section 2.2](#).

By the end of Phase 3: Grow!, successful teams must have:

- Attended at least one investor pitch/networking event
- Met with capital providers via the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace or another funding source to secure and provide evidence of 100% financing for their community-benefiting distributed solar project portfolio²¹ (must be at least two solar projects that total in aggregate at least 1 MW_{AC})
- Demonstrated and provided evidence that the team will incorporate at least three of the Five Meaningful Benefits, two of which are required to be in the portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings), into the portfolio.
- Completed all required HeroX submission elements (see [Section 7.5](#)).

7.3 Phase 3: Grow! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 3 Opens (Rolling)	September 2025–January 2026 (anticipated)
Investor Pitch/Networking Event (Virtual or In-Person)	March 2026 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	No later than August 12, 2026 (anticipated) ²²
Phase 3 Winner Announcement	October 2026 (anticipated)

²¹ Competitors are strongly encouraged to use the Accelerator marketplace to seek funding for their projects; however, competitors are allowed to use funding external to the Accelerator to meet the Phase 3 funding requirement.

²² Competitors may submit their Phase 3 submission for review any time before August 12, 2026, as soon as submission requirements are met. After submission, if not selected for an award, a team may resubmit their application one additional time (two submissions are allowed per team total) up until the Phase 3 submission deadline.

7.4 Phase 3 Prize Process

- 1. Preparation, Activation, and Submission:** Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 3: Grow! contest.

To compete for a Community Power Accelerator Phase 3 prize, teams must complete and submit—via the HeroX portal—documentation for the following requirements:

- Cover page (*selected questions will be displayed publicly*)
- Updated PowerPoint summary slide (*public*; updated from Phase 2)
- Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheets for each project (minimum of two) with investor reference letters
- Project proforma(s) (minimum of two)
- Phase 3 narrative, providing evidence of the incorporation of meaningful benefits, community engagement, and post-prize replicability and scalability.

All submission materials must be uploaded to the [Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page](#) before the final Phase 3 submission deadline: August 12, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET.

- 2. Assessment:** The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns advisory expert reviewers to independently evaluate the content of each submission. The advisory reviewers may include federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas. Advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the prize administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners will take reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

Phase 3 submissions will be accepted, reviewed, and awarded on a rolling basis as submissions are received. Competitors who submit an application may, if not awarded, resubmit their application once.

- 3. Announcement:** Approximately 2 months following the submission deadline, the prize administrator will publicly announce the winners and send email notifications to both winners and non-winners. At this time, the prize administrator will request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes.
- 4. Financial and Tax Requirements:** Winning teams will be required to submit an IRS [W-9 form](#) and ACH forms as well as signing a prize acceptance form in order for payment to be issued.

7.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for the Community Power Accelerator Prize Phase 3: Grow! contest should include the following items:

Item Number	Content	Scored Item?
1	Cover page (will be made public)	All Phase 3 submission items are pass/fail. Please see Section
2	Updated PowerPoint summary slide (will be made public)	

3	Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet (minimum of two) with investor reference letters	6.7: “How We Score” for more information.
4	Project proforma and cover sheet (minimum of two)	
5	Phase 3 narrative	
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such. DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public. <p>See Appendix 1 for additional details.</p>		

1. Cover Page (selected elements will be made public)

Complete the basic information below about your organization and project portfolio.

(To be completed via the HeroX submission form.)

- Submission (portfolio) title *(will be made public)*
- Submission picture (.jpeg file format, *will be made public*)
- Organization name *(will be made public)*
- Organization city and state *(will be made public)*
- Organization address
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL *(will be made public)*
- Point of contact information (name, job title, email, phone)
- Team members
- Describe in two sentences how your model is delivering savings or in-kind benefits to LMI households and/or LIDACs.
- List each project’s city and state.

2. PowerPoint Summary Slide (will be made public)

One slide maximum

Optional template available:

<https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1993>

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams must update their single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains an overview of their organization and of their Phase 3 community-benefiting distributed solar portfolio, including each project’s size and location. An optional template is available for competitors to use, or they may update their summary slide from Phase 2. Text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

3. Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet

For each project (minimum of two) in their 1 MW_{AC}+ portfolio, teams must provide a completed Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet with detailed information about the type of funding received (debt, equity, philanthropic, etc.), the amount, and the basic financing terms (Tables 1–7).

Additionally, teams must provide signed documentation of project financing from each capital provider or financing organization. Teams may use the template provided in the Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet (Tables 8–11, as applicable) or provide a separate signed letter from each capital provider or financing organization.

As part of the 100% funding requirement, teams are allowed to include funding that is conditional.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1996>

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

Teams should upload a single PDF copy of each of their Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheets along with signed supporting capital provider reference letters.

Competitors are highly encouraged to use the template document, which can be found here for Tables 1–7.

Each documentation sheet must include:

- Table 1: Developer Summary
- Table 2: Project Summary
- Table 3: Project Financing Summary
- Tables 4–7: Financing Summary (as applicable).

Additionally, each documentation sheet requires a signed affirmation from each capital provider (Tables 8–11, as applicable). Alternatively, teams can provide a separate signed letter from each capital provider or financing organization with the following information:

Capital Provider Information:

- Capital provider name
- Address
- Point of contact name
- Point of contact phone number
- Point of contact email
- Total funds invested
- Percentage ownership stake in project
- Key conditions of agreement.

Signed Capital Provider Affirmation/Statement:

- Confirmation that all “capital provider information” above is accurate
- That the capital provider understands the significance of “meaningful benefits” to the project
- That the developer has committed to provide, at minimum, at least three of the following meaningful benefits, two of which are required to be in the portfolio:

- Equitable access and consumer protections (*required*)
- Meaningful household savings (*required*)
- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.
- That the financing is contingent on the project's continued good-faith delivery of the articulated meaningful benefits, for the lifetime of the project.

4. Updated Project Proforma(s) and Summary Cover Sheet

For each project (minimum of two) in their 1 MW_{AC}+ portfolio, teams must include an updated (from Phase 2) proforma including an overview of the financial aspects and projected outcomes of their community-benefiting distributed solar projects, and a one-page word document cover sheet highlighting key details (listed below). Submissions must include separate proformas for each project exceeding 50 kW_{AC} in the portfolio (uploaded as a .zip file). Teams are **strongly encouraged** to use the proforma template linked below in its entirety.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1994>

Allowable Upload Format: .xlsx, .zip

Proforma:

Teams must upload separate proformas for each of their updated projects exceeding 50 kW_{AC} in the Phase 3 portfolio (uploaded as a .zip file). Teams are strongly encouraged to use the proforma template from the Foundations course. Each project proforma(s) must include all applicable details, including:

- Project scope
- Project sources and uses
- Project debt
- Project loan
- Project returns
- Project incentives (e.g., tax credits and other government subsidies)
- Monetary value of each of the meaningful benefits.

Cover sheet:

Teams should include an introductory tab highlighting key financial details of their projects, including any substantial changes from their Phase 2 proforma.

5. Phase 3 Narrative

Answer each of the questions in the two areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these two areas must not exceed 3,500 words, not including captions, images, figure/graphs, tables, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. You may also include up to 20 supporting images, figures, or graphs.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3/resource/1997>

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

Phase 3 Prize Portfolio Information: Construction Planning and Meaningful Benefit Documentation

Teams could include:

Construction Planning:

Discuss your plans for building your prize portfolio, including:

- Utility Interconnections – Do you have approval from the cognizant utility to connect your projects to the grid?
- Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) – Do you have your EPC finalized and approved?
- Any outstanding roadblocks or barriers and your plan to overcome them.

Meaningful Benefits:

A description of the meaningful benefits that your portfolio²³ offers.

- Describe the strategies, initiatives, or programs that will be implemented to achieve these benefits.
- Outline the metrics and indicators that will be used to measure the impact and success of these community benefits.

Provide documentation such as contracts, agreements, or partnership documents to provide evidence that your project, once constructed, will provide the meaningful benefits you identified.

- Competitors must provide supplemental documentation in the appendix and/or point to specific sections of their proforma as documentation.
- Competitors must provide detail and documentation, including the quantitative or monetary value, on how they are implementing three of the Five Meaningful Benefits, including but not limited to:
 - Equitable access and consumer protections (*required*)
 - Meaningful household savings (*required*)
 - Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
 - Community-led economic development
 - Solar workforce development.

Post-Prize: Future Project Portfolio, Organizational Development Growth, Meaningful Benefits

Teams could include:

Future Portfolio:

Describe your plan for your next projects, including a description of siting details, challenges, and support needed to foster future growth. Teams may also discuss the following:

- Project Identification/Selection – Why did you select the new projects? How are you using your new projects to grow strategically (e.g., expand into a geographic region, reach a new demographic, achieve internal organizational growth)?

²³ Minimum of two projects that total, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{ac}.

- Partnerships – What are your plans for new partnerships or collaborations with organizations, utilities, local governments, or other stakeholders?
- Challenges – What are the development challenges you might face in your anticipated project(s)? What are your plans to overcome them or mitigate risks?
- Support from the National Community Solar Partnership+ (NCSP+) – How could NCSP+ provide your team with ongoing support post-prize? (Note: additional support is not guaranteed post-prize.) What are your plans to continue to utilize the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace?

Organizational Growth:

Describe the areas of organizational growth.

- What capacities did your organization acquire during the prize that will enhance your ability to develop future solar projects?

Scaling the Five Meaningful Benefits:

- How will you ensure meaningful benefits associated with future projects are equitable and inclusive for the communities you are serving?

7.6 How We Score

All items in the submission package, with the exception of the cover page and logistical questions, will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide if the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria for each of the required submission elements. Team must receive a pass on 100% of the scoring criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.

The prize administrator will first ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The prize administrator reserves the right to remove evidence that contains personally identifiable information (PII). The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

1. **Screening.** The Community Power Accelerator Prize administrator and DOE will screen each application for overall eligibility and completeness. Each submission must have the five main elements requested as part of the submission package:
 - Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
 - Updated PowerPoint summary slide (will be made public)
 - Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet
 - Updated project proforma(s) and summary cover sheet
 - Phase 3 narrative.

Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all five elements will be deemed as passing the Phase 3 screening.

2. **Scoring.** A panel of expert reviewers will read, score, and comment on each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide whether the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria listed below. Teams must receive a passing score on all the required submission elements (in addition to the Phase 3 program goals listed in [Section 7.2](#)) to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.

Phase 3 Scoring “Pass” Criteria	
Funding Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Funding: The competitor provides completed funding questionnaires that show investment for 100% of total anticipated portfolio costs for a minimum of two solar projects that total, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{AC}. • Funding Documentation: For each project, all capital providers listed in the documentation sheet have a corresponding signed affirmation statement (Tables 8–11, as applicable) or other signed letter confirming financing and basic terms.
Financial Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Detail and Accuracy: The proforma and cover sheet are credible, comprehensive, and include all of the required information as it is applicable to each project included in the portfolio. The proforma numbers match the commitments from financiers.
Meaningful Benefits and Post-Prize Scalability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Planning: The team is ready to begin construction on the described projects and demonstrates a comprehensive plan encompassing various aspects, such as utility connections, engineering procurement and construction (EPC), and construction timeline and anticipated connection date, as well as identification of outstanding roadblocks or barriers and their plan to overcome them. • Meaningful Benefits: The submission clearly describes how the portfolio will incorporate at least three of the Five Meaningful Benefits, two of which are required to be in each portfolio (equitable access and consumer protections and meaningful household savings). The described strategies, initiatives, or programs are practical and feasible, considering the portfolio’s scope, resources, and timeline. The metrics are well defined, measurable, and quantifiable, and will allow for accurate evaluation and comparison of the portfolio’s success. • Community Engagement: The documentation provided in the submission, such as contracts, agreements, or partnership documents, supports the claim that the portfolio will deliver the identified meaningful benefits beyond the project’s construction. • Scaling the Five Meaningful Benefits: The team presents a well-defined framework or approach to ensure that the meaningful benefits associated with replicated or scaled projects are equitable for the communities served. The team demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion. • Future Portfolio: The team clearly demonstrates a comprehensive plan for expanding their distributed solar portfolio after the prize concludes. The plan aligns with the organization’s long-term goals and showcases innovative approaches to growth. • Future Collaboration: The team identifies and outlines potential collaborations with organizations, utilities, or stakeholders for replicating projects in new locations. They demonstrate a strategic approach to building partnerships and leveraging existing networks—including the intention to add new projects to the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace and identifying partners and staff to participate in the marketplace and Foundations course.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizational Growth: The submission highlights the capacities acquired by the organization, showcasing how new skills and resources have enhanced the team’s ability to develop future solar projects. This can include areas such technical expertise, project management capabilities, financial resources, or stakeholder engagement strategies, among other capabilities.
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Reviewers are prohibited from having personal or financial interests in, or being an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or having a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered team.

3. **Reviewer Comments.** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to teams after the winners are announced for each phase. These comments are intended to help teams continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.
4. **Interviews.** The prize administrator may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the teams. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the prize administrator may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The final determination of winners takes reviewers’ scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

8. Key Terms

Community Benefits Agreement: Community benefits agreements are legal agreements between community benefit groups and developers. These agreements stipulate the benefits a developer agrees to fund or furnish in exchange for community support of a project. Benefits can include commitments to hire directly from a community, contributions to economic trust funds, local workforce training guarantees, and more. These agreements can be used as a tool to garner community support.

Community Ownership: Community ownership allows community members, other individuals invested in supporting the community, and/or organizations that reflect the interests of those members to have equity ownership rights in a distributed solar project.¹² Ownership is one method to allow community members to determine how a distributed solar project is developed and how its benefits are distributed. Additional benefits of community ownership can include local job creation, increased property values, and wealth retention within a community.

Where direct ownership of project assets is not possible or desirable, distributed solar may provide other wealth-building opportunities for subscribers or beneficiaries and their communities through community benefits agreements or other innovative approaches to reinvest the monetary benefits of a community solar project back into the local community.

Community ownership has been identified as one strategy to increase energy democracy, which is one of the [eight priorities](#) of DOE's Justice40 Initiative. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, the National Community Solar Partnership+ (NCSP+) is prioritizing, among other program benefits, the inclusion of community ownership and other community wealth-building in community solar projects.

Community Solar: Community solar is defined by DOE as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of the solar project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area.

Community-Benefiting Distributed Solar: Community-benefiting distributed solar includes distributed energy resources (DERs) that provide meaningful benefits to the communities they serve. Please find more information on DERs from DOE here: [Solar Integration: Distributed Energy Resources and Microgrids | Department of Energy](#).

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community (DAC) as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as a census tract) or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for DACs has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2), energy burden (5), environmental and climate hazards (10), and vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).²⁴

Equity: Consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people. Community solar is one method of ensuring equity in the clean energy transition.

Equitable Workforce Development: The grid transformation required to meet the nation's clean energy goals presents substantial workforce development opportunities. Distributed energy projects like

²⁴ <https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative>

community solar can support more local jobs than large-scale, centralized projects. Additionally, clean energy jobs often pay above-average wages, even for low-wage workers.¹⁴

Despite this opportunity, most solar companies have difficulty filling workforce vacancies, often due to lack of experience, training, or technical knowledge in the employment pool. To meet the nation's clean energy goal to decarbonize the electricity grid by 2035, the solar industry will need to grow by an estimated 500,000–1,500,000 jobs. Incorporating local workforce development into community solar projects or programs provides a unique opportunity to expose more people to careers in clean energy and contribute to growing local economies. Equitable and effective workforce development initiatives are industry-driven, employee-centric, and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Workforce initiatives should support broad occupational training that leads to industry-recognized credentials and career-track employment. They should also provide pathways to jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits, devoid of hostility and harassment, where workers are properly classified as employees, and have a free and fair choice to join, form, or assist a union.

Justice40: The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of clean water infrastructure—to flow to disadvantaged communities. To learn more, visit the White House [Justice40 Initiative website](#). See also Section 223 of [Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#).

Low-Income or Disadvantaged Communities (LIDACs): Low-income or disadvantaged communities (LIDACs) are areas where residents face significant economic challenges and often experience disadvantages in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and services.

Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI): Definitions for low- to moderate-income (LMI) vary. This prize seeks projects that serve LMI populations. Submissions must identify the definition used. If the state where the project(s) or program is located has an applicable LMI definition, teams should use that definition. If the state does not have a definition for LMI populations, teams are encouraged to use the federal definition for LMI, which is households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, or households earning 80% or below of the area median income, as defined by the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI) Household Access: The cost of solar energy systems has fallen dramatically over the past decade. As solar electricity has become more affordable, residential solar adoption has increased, with more than 3.3 million solar energy systems operating across the United States at the end of 2021. Despite decreases in system costs, many U.S. households still lack access to affordable solar electricity, especially renters, homeowners who can't access affordable financing, and those without suitable roof conditions or adequate sun exposure. Although rooftop solar adoption has become more equitable relative to income over time, the *Solar Futures Study*⁷ found that only 31% of solar adopters came from households that earned less than the area median income. In addition, census tracts with majority Black and Hispanic populations exhibit 30% and 69% less rooftop solar adoption, respectively, compared to the average census tract.

As of 2021, 65 MW_{AC} of community solar capacity dedicated to serving LMI households was online, with more than 200 MW_{AC} in project queues, representing just over 5% of the 5.2 MW_{AC} of total installed community solar capacity. The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to DACs. Household income is one of 36 indicators used to determine whether a community is considered a DAC. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, NCSP is prioritizing, among other program benefits, the provision of at least 40% of new community solar capacity for LMI households.

National Community Solar Partnership+ (NCSP+): The [National Community Solar Partnership+](#) (NCSP+), a program of DOE’s Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), supports a coalition of stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every U.S. household and to enable communities to realize its meaningful benefits. NCSP+ is working toward a 2025 target to enable community solar to power the equivalent of 5 million households and generate a cumulative \$1 billion in energy bill savings. NCSP+ has over 1,200 partners who leverage peer networks and technical assistance resources to overcome barriers to expanding community solar access.

Although many investors have developed financial products to serve the community solar market, developers—especially new developers, co-developers, or those pursuing community ownership—often struggle to complete the necessary credit application requirements. A lack of expertise, experience, capacity, and predevelopment funds to prepare the required application materials creates a gap in the deployment of community-led, community-focused community solar projects. The Community Power Accelerator Prize is designed to address these gaps and support and grow a strong network of solar project developers and co-developers that will support equitable community solar with meaningful benefits.

Native American and Alaska Native Village Tribal Communities: As defined by the [National Congress of American Indians](#), “there are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) in the United States. Approximately 229 of these ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations are located in Alaska; the other federally recognized tribes are located in 35 other states. Additionally, there are state recognized tribes located throughout the United States recognized by their respective state governments.”

Resilience and Grid Benefits: A resilient power system, as defined by the DOE Grid Modernization Initiative and the National Academy of Sciences,¹⁰ must be capable of lessening the likelihood of long-duration electrical outages occurring over large service areas, limiting the scope and impact of outages when they do occur, and rapidly restoring power after an outage. As extreme weather events become more common and place undue stress on electricity infrastructure, solar and other distributed energy resources can help communities rapidly recover. During extreme weather, the lack of resilient infrastructure to deliver energy can cost human lives as access to essential services is disrupted.¹¹

Community solar projects that are designed with resiliency and reliability in mind can be a decentralized source of energy for a community in the event of a grid outage or emergency. Community solar can enable communities to use solar plus storage or microgrids to prevent disruptions in power caused by extreme weather and other events, and to rapidly restore electricity to critical facilities or “island” segments of the distribution network if the grid goes down. Community solar projects that incorporate virtual power plants or other demand response actions can reduce peak load demand, making the larger grid more resilient. Community solar that is sited strategically may also be able to provide technical grid benefits, including the ability to improve voltages at the end of the feeder, alleviate congestion, and reduce line losses. Community solar projects may offer supplementary resilience benefits when they are co-located with resilience hubs that provide additional services to support community development and growth. Increasing equitable access to reliable sources of energy before, during, and after extreme events is a priority of NCSP+.

9. Additional Requirements

Please read and comply with the additional requirements in [Appendix 1](#).

TEAMS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

Appendix 1: Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Submissions for The Community Power Accelerator Prize are subject to following terms and conditions:

1. The final content of a submission must be posted or uploaded via the form online at <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound3> before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
2. The narrative and portfolio narrative are not intended to be made public; however, see [Section A.8](#) regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
3. All required elements must be included. The awards administrator may disqualify a submission after an initial screening if it fails to provide all required submission elements. Teams may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges.
4. Submissions must be in English. Any attachments must be in a readable and searchable PDF format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
5. Teams will be disqualified if, during any engagement with the Community Power Accelerator Prize, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the awards administrator, or other forms of communication, contain any matter that, in the discretion of DOE, is indecent, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
6. If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for the awards described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. Teams should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the contests described here and no other contests on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
7. The awards administrator, when feasible, may give teams an opportunity to fix non-substantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.
8. As part of your submission to this prize, you will be required to sign the following statement:

I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this prize. I understand that the information contained in this submission will be relied on by the federal government to determine whether to issue a prize to the named competitor. I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this prize competition and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the federal government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287, and 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733 and 3801-3812.

A.2 Submission Rights

The submission materials in this contest must be submitted and released to the public under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the awards administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest, a noncommercial license to display publicly only parts of the submission package designated as “public.” This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the administrator’s or HeroX’s applications, on the contest website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and including the submission in any other media worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the awards administrator, and judges for

purposes of the contests, including, but not limited to, screening and evaluation purposes. The awards administrator and any third parties acting on its behalf will also have the right to publicize the teams' names and, as applicable, the names of the teams' members and organizations that participated in the submission, on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

The competitor is the sole, original author and copyright owner of the submission, or that the competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright, trade secret, trademark, nondisclosure agreement, patent, or any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.3 Copyright

Each competitor represents and warrants that the competitor is the sole author and copyright owner of the submission; that the submission is an original work of the competitor, or that the competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission, as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright or any other third-party rights of which the competitor is aware; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.4 Contest Subject to Applicable Law

All contests are subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations. Participation constitutes each participant's full and unconditional agreement to these Official Contest Rules and administrative decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the contest. This notice is not an obligation of funds; the final awards are contingent upon the availability of appropriations.

A.5 Resolution of Disputes

DOE is solely responsible for administrative decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the contest.

In the event of a dispute, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the competitor. The "authorized account holder" is the natural person or legal entity assigned an email address by an internet access provider, online service provider, or other organization responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted address. Teams and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

The awards administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or any disputes between teams.

A.6 Publicity

The winners of these awards (collectively, "Winners") will be featured on DOE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, marketing, social media, and/or audio websites.

Except where prohibited, participation in the contest constitutes each winner's consent to DOE's and its agents' use of each winner's name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions, and/or hometown and state information for promotional purposes through any form of media worldwide, without further permission, payment, or consideration.

A.7 Liability

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume and, thereby, have assumed any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest or development of any submission. Upon registration, except in the case of willful misconduct, all participants agree to and, thereby, do waive and release any and all claims or causes of action against the federal government and its officers, employees, and agents for any and all injury and damage of any nature whatsoever (whether existing or thereafter arising; whether direct, indirect, or consequential; and whether foreseeable or not), arising from their participation in the contest, whether the claim or cause of action arises under contract or tort.

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this contest delegated to the Director of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), the Director has determined that no liability insurance will be required of teams to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

A.8 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records. Any confidential commercial information contained in a submission should be designated at the time of submission.

Teams are encouraged to employ protective markings in the following manner:

1. The cover sheet of the submission must be marked as follows and must identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]

2. The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: "May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure."
3. In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

Teams will be notified of any FOIA requests for their submissions in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 70.26. Teams may then have the opportunity to review materials and work with a FOIA representative prior to the release of materials.

A.9 Privacy

Teams that provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website understand that such information will be transmitted to DOE and may be kept in a system of records. Such information will be used only to respond to teams in matters regarding submissions and/or the contest, unless teams choose to receive updates or notifications about other contests or programs from DOE on an opt-in basis. DOE and NREL are not collecting any information for commercial marketing.

A.10 General Conditions

DOE reserves the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the contest, or any part of it, at any time. If any fraud, technical failures, or any other factor beyond DOE's reasonable control impairs the integrity or proper functioning of the contests, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel the contest.

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for each category, DOE reserves the right to only select teams that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no teams are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no teams to be winners.

DOE may conduct a risk review, using Government resources, of the competitor and project personnel for potential risks of foreign interference. The outcomes of the risk review may result in the submission being eliminated from the prize competition. This risk review, and potential elimination, can occur at any time during the prize competition. An elimination based on a risk review is not appealable.

ALL DECISIONS BY DOE ARE FINAL AND BINDING IN ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE CONTEST.

A.11 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the awards administrator to maximize the impact of contest benefits. Some factors outside the control of teams and beyond the independent expert reviewers' scope of review may need to be considered to accomplish this goal. The following is a list of such factors. In addition to the reviewers' scores, the below program policy factors may be considered in determining winners:

- Geographic diversity of potential winners.
- Diversity in project or program type (state program, utility-led program, third-party-developed project, community-owned project, etc.).
- Whether the DOE recognition is nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission.
- Organizations who already have access to capital or know where it is going to come from should not be included or picked as a winner.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate the adoption of best practices to provide meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to distributed solar energy and its benefits among audiences and in areas that are underserved by existing efforts by the U.S. solar market.
- The degree to which the submission supports and complements DOE's existing programs and strategies to achieve DOE goals.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's engagement with new audiences and recipients that have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission highlights a new developer who has unique potential and ability for development without prior development experience.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits team member diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, with participants including, but not limited to, graduates and students of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), and members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities.

A.12 National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

- This prize is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321, et seq.). NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions. For additional background on NEPA, please see DOE's NEPA website at <http://nepa.energy.gov/>.
- While NEPA compliance is a federal agency responsibility and the ultimate decisions remain with the federal agency, all participants in the Community Power Accelerator Prize will be required to assist in the timely and effective completion of the NEPA process in the manner most pertinent to their participation in the prize competition.

A.13 Additional Eligibility Requirements

1. Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any awards contests in this program. Additionally, members of their immediate families (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, or parents) and anyone who lives in their household, regardless of relation, are not eligible to participate in the prize.
2. Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government, such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs, are not eligible to compete.
3. Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Binding Operational Directives (BOD) as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible to compete. See <https://cyber.dhs.gov/directives/>.
4. Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: <https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list>.
5. Federal entities and federal employees are not eligible to participate in any portion of the prize.
6. DOE national laboratory employees cannot compete in the prize.
7. Individuals participating in a foreign government talent recruitment program²⁵ sponsored by a country of risk²⁶ and teams that include such individuals are not eligible to compete.
8. Entities owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of a government of a country of risk are not eligible to compete.

A.14 Return of Funds

As a condition of receiving a prize, teams agree that if the prize was awarded based on fraudulent or inaccurate information provided by the competitor to DOE, DOE has the right to demand that any prize funds or the value of other noncash prizes be returned to the government.

²⁵ A foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government, or a foreign government instrumentality or entity, to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, or whether having a full-time or part-time position). Some foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs operate with the intent to import or otherwise acquire from abroad, sometimes through illicit means, proprietary technology or software, unpublished data and methods, and intellectual property to further the military modernization goals and/or economic goals of a foreign government. Many, but not all, programs aim to incentivize the targeted individual to relocate physically to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at United States research facilities or receipt of federal research funds while concurrently working at and/or receiving compensation from a foreign institution, and some direct participants not to disclose their participation to U.S. entities. Compensation could take many forms, including cash, research funding, complimentary foreign travel, honorific titles, career advancement opportunities, promised future compensation, or other types of remuneration or consideration, including in-kind compensation.

²⁶ DOE has designated the following countries as foreign countries of risk: Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China. This list is subject to change.

Appendix 2: Background on the Community Power Accelerator Program

The Community Power Accelerator is an initiative of [NCSP+](#) that brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition. The [online marketplace](#) is part of the Community Power Accelerator, a program of DOE's NCSP+ that supports the rapid expansion of community solar through increased investment and funding.

This online marketplace will create a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connect them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding.

Equitable access to project funding is one of the most persistent barriers to community solar development, as noted in the DOE Equitable Access to Community Solar Request for Information. To get smaller community solar projects deployed, especially in underserved communities, developers need ways to build expertise, expand capacity, and access predevelopment funds to prepare and meet funding application thresholds.

The goal of the Community Power Accelerator is to facilitate and finance more solar projects that provide the meaningful benefits identified by NCSP+:

- Equitable access and consumer protections
- Meaningful household savings
- Resilience, storage, and grid benefits
- Community-led economic development
- Solar workforce development.

The Community Power Accelerator and its resources are free and are open to all solar developers, philanthropists, and investors, regardless of their participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

Appendix 3: Phase 2 Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar Course

A3.1 Overview

Teams who are selected in Phase 1 will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize and a Community Power Accelerator Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course. Only one staff member from each of the selected Phase 1 teams will be able to attend the Foundations course; however, the prize administration team highly recommends that another staff member attend the massive open online course (MOOC), also hosted by the University of New Hampshire. To win Phase 2, Phase 1 winners will be required to participate in, and graduate from, a seven-module course starting in **February 2025**. Exact dates will be provided to teams before the end of Phase 1 so that they can plan for their participation, should they win Phase 1.

The [Community Power Accelerator](#) Foundations of Community-Benefiting Commercial Scale Solar course, hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide competitors on how to develop distributed solar projects that provide the Five Meaningful Benefits and further [Justice40](#) goals. This intensive virtual course is instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments.

The University of New Hampshire will provide a [digital badge](#) to participants who have satisfied all course expectations as a solar development professional.

Competitors are encouraged to review the [course timeline](#) and make sure they can commit to the dates and coursework (6–8 hours per week, plus a 90-minute Zoom session).

Please note that Foundations course information is subject to change.

A3.2 Foundations Course Objectives

Upon completion of the Foundations course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite
2. Assemble a development team capable of sponsoring, financing, developing, and managing a distributed solar project
3. Complete the Credit-Ready Checklist and individual project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator Marketplace
4. Understand how to incorporate the Five Meaningful Benefits into distributed solar projects
5. Structure a creditworthy distributed solar project and pitch it for financing.

A3.3 Foundations Course Participant Expectations

The expectations of Phase 2 teams who are participating in the course are:

- Be prepared for class by carefully reviewing course materials and readings and completing assignments in advance, taking an estimated 4–5 hours per week.
- Complete the course final projects, as described in the syllabus.

- Attend and participate in all Zoom sessions.
- Engage in the learning content and encourage and support your peers in the Foundations course.
- To build our learning community, we require that you keep your camera on during the Zoom sessions, unless extenuating circumstances make that impossible.

A3.4 Phase 2 Foundations Final Project

To complete the Phase 2 Foundations course, teams will be required to complete a final project.

Example Final Project

Part A: Internal Distributed Solar Pitch

Prepare and present a summary-level PowerPoint and 2–3-page memo pitching the leadership within your organization on the role that it can play in distributed solar. The presentation should describe the niche roles in the distributed solar industry that your organization will seek to play and should justify why you think this choice lines up with your organization's strengths. The presentation should address the strengths and weaknesses of your organization within the context of regulatory and market challenges, site selection, community engagement, specific development roles and skill sets, finances, and ability to operate assets.

Part B: Investor Distributed Solar Project Pitch

Students will prepare and provide a pitch deck presentation selling a specific project to an investor. Students should use the materials they developed during the course to share details about the project. Students should focus on specific points that investors want to know to evaluate their interest in the project and should provide examples of the strengths of the student's organization to educate investors on why the organization can deliver on the project. Students should highlight risks and how they will be managed.

A3.5 Phase 2 Foundations Course Required Participation and Grades

Class Participation

Participation in Zoom sessions is required. Participation in online discussions and group assignments is required where applicable. You are asked to make every effort to attend each Zoom class. If you miss one, please watch the class recording and post to the discussion board with comments and questions.

Grades

Grading will be mostly on a complete/incomplete basis. Quizzes (knowledge checks) with point values are there to assist you in assessing your own knowledge of the materials and may be taken twice. Our instructors are here to work with you throughout the course. Course completion/graduation is based on satisfactory completion of the module activities and participation in Zoom sessions.

This is the end of the rules document. Thank you for reading.