



**Community
Power
Accelerator**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



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

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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 solar projects. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is launching Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

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

- **Tools and resources** to connect developers with private sector project financing for community solar projects using a standardized process.
- **Training** to understand the full cycle of community solar development, including site acquisition, community relations, customer acquisition, securing financing, costs, and the unique challenges and benefits of a community solar model.
- **Free consulting** services to competitors on the steps necessary to get a community solar project financed.
- **Coaching on expanding developers' solar customer markets** to include low- and moderate-income populations, disadvantaged communities, and local workforce development, as well as increase resilience to power outages and household savings to make community solar projects attractive to the widest range of customers possible.

By the end of the prize, competitors will be ready to engage with the Community Power Accelerator online platform,¹ which provides a place for competitors to shop their credit-ready projects around to verified project developers, investors, and philanthropic organizations.

1.1 Who Can Participate?

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is open to U.S. community solar developers, including new developers, co-developers (organizations who are partnering with a project developer), and those who are expanding their community solar operations. The prize is seeking developers who have the desire and ambition to develop a project portfolio of at least 1 MW (not exceeding 5 MW for a single facility) of community solar. Competitors must be interested in developing projects that incorporate at least two of the following benefits:

- Low- to moderate-income (LMI) household access
- Greater household savings
- Increased resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership or other wealth-building opportunities
- Equitable workforce development.

¹ The Community Power Accelerator 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. This online platform 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. More information about the accelerator can be found in [Appendix 3](#) or by visiting the accelerator website [here](#).

These five benefits are the “meaningful benefits” of community solar.

Examples of developers who might be interested in this prize include established and new community solar developers, intermediaries, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. The prize encourages organizations who are new to community solar development to apply. Examples of new developers include (but are not limited to) organizations such as:

- Multifamily affordable housing providers
- Community and economic development organizations
- Intermediary organizations such as community development financial institutions (CDFIs)
- Community-based organizations (CBOs) that have real estate portfolios and/or are in construction
- General contractors with roofing and/or electrical experience
- Traditional solar project developers who are looking to expand into the community solar space
- Socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) demographics-related business and women and minority-owned businesses
- Other large real estate holders that could be available for solar deployment.

Non-developer organizations, such as investors and philanthropists, are not eligible for this prize. However, these organizations are sought to [sign-up](#) and support teams. Investor and philanthropy organizations who are interested in learning more about ways they can get involved should visit the [Community Power Accelerator Program website](#) or email Solar.Prize@nrel.gov.

Teams that plan to develop only a single community solar project are not eligible for this prize.

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

1.2 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 community solar project development and financing via the [Community Power Accelerator online platform](#).

Phase 1 (Ready! Contest)

Total 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. This phase invites new or expanding community solar developers and co-developers to compete by completing:

1. The “Introduction to Community Solar,” a self-paced course available by emailing solar.prize@nrel.gov for access
2. The [Phase 1 submission package](#), which includes:
 - A description of the organization and team
 - Details on the proposed community solar project portfolio (minimum 1 MW)
 - Information regarding community engagement and partnerships
 - How the effort will support the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - Identification of at least two of the five meaningful benefits per project.

Phase 2 (Set! Contest)²

Total Cash Prize: \$200,000 per winning competitor

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 the [Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab](#), a live, remote course designed to educate developers on community solar in disadvantaged communities.

Phase 2 competitors will also receive direct coaching and mentorship. Phase 2 is anticipated to last six months and will require teams to complete all the activities and the identify project information described in the [Credit-Ready Checklist](#) (a checklist to prepare developers to receive financing). This phase will support competitors in preparing their project(s) to receive financing.

- [Credit-Ready Checklist](#) – This is a checklist that, once completed, will indicate to investors and funders that a solar development is ready to be financed. The checklist includes a list of 47 rigorous project requirements that investors look for before they are willing to fund a project. This 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 sign up to participate in the [Community Power Accelerator platform](#) are specifically interested in funding community solar projects and have agreed to consider funding projects that use the Credit-Ready Checklist. The checklist includes information about system size, site control and zoning, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs.
- [Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab](#) – This course will deliver practical information on how to develop community solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. 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 graduate from, a seven-module course starting **April 27, 2023**.

DOE anticipates completing the checklist will require significant effort. It is SETO's hope that the \$200,000 prize awarded to each winning competitor will reward their expenditure of resources to complete the checklist and ensure a staff member will participate in the Learning Lab.

Phase 3 (Grow! Contest)²

Total Cash Prize: \$150,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 Phase 3 winners will be selected, and each will receive a cash prize of \$150,000. Phase 3 teams will begin to engage fully in the [Community Power Accelerator platform](#), an online meeting place for community solar developers and investors. Using the Community Power Accelerator platform, competitors will secure investment commitments from investors and/or philanthropic organizations for a community solar portfolio of at least 1 MW.

In Phase 3, teams will work directly with technical assistance coaches to finalize their Credit-Ready Checklist—and create and refine project profile(s)—on the Community Power Accelerator platform; create an investor pitch deck; and engage with potential investors, lenders, and philanthropists.

² Phase 2 and Phase 3 rules will be released prior to the respective contest opening dates.

1.3 Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	January 19, 2023
Phase 1 Informational Webinar	February 1, 2023
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	March 15, 2023, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	April 2023 (Anticipated)
Phase 2 Opens; Learning Lab Trainings Begin	April 27, 2023 ³ (Anticipated)
Phase 2 Submission Deadline	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Phase 2 Winner Announcement	November 2023 (Anticipated)
Phase 3 Opens	December 2023 (Anticipated)
Phase 3 Submission Deadline	January 2024 (Anticipated)
Phase 3 Winner Announcement	February 2024 (Anticipated)

³ Specific dates for the Learning Lab will be released prior to the end of Phase 1. See [HeroX](#) for more information.

2. Background

The White House 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](#),⁴ which directs that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including clean energy investments—to flow to [disadvantaged communities](#).⁵ Community 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 at home. It is expected that some projects developed by competitors participating in the Community Power Accelerator Prize may be able to take advantage of IRA tax credits and other project funding.⁶

2.1 What is Community Solar?

[Community solar](#)⁷ is a form of solar energy development that can allow all community members to access the benefits of renewable energy, particularly those with low to moderate incomes, renters, and those for whom traditional rooftop solar is unavailable. Equity is defined as consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people, and community solar is one method of ensuring equity in the clean energy transition.

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. States or utilities often set guidelines for how community solar projects are developed and how subscriptions are managed, and these guidelines may vary widely across jurisdictions and utility territories.

Community solar is defined by the U.S. Department of Energy (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 for the benefits of the development to go toward communities that have traditionally been left out of the transition to solar energy.

2.2 Community Solar Meaningful Benefits

One of the key goals of the Community Power Accelerator Prize is to support and grow a robust ecosystem of community solar project developers that incorporate meaningful benefits into projects across the United States. These benefits include low- and moderate-income household access, greater household

⁴ 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](#).

⁵ The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as 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 parenthesis 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).

⁶ To learn more about the IRA, visit: https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/IRA-Energy-Summary_web.pdf.

⁷ To learn more about community solar, visit: [Community Solar Basics | Department of Energy](#).

savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development.

These five meaningful benefits provided by community solar subscriptions can 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 community solar projects that can provide **at least two** of the following five meaningful benefits to subscribers and their communities:

LMI Household Access⁸	Projects include subscribers from low- to moderate-income (LMI) households.
Greater Household Savings	Projects provide a reduction in annual electricity bills and/or provide financial credits for all residential subscribers to a project.
Resilience and Grid Benefits	Projects 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.
Community Ownership	Projects include community ownership of, or equity in, project assets, which may include other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements and tax equity investment models.
Equitable Workforce Development	<p>Projects support community workforce development by advancing high-wage opportunities, 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.</p> <p>Projects also build trust and strengthen relationships with businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDis).⁹</p>

⁸ See [Key Terms](#) for a definition of LMI Household Access

⁹ “Socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) demographics-related business” means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see [Key Terms](#).

3. Prizes To Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize will award up to \$10 million in cash prizes to winning teams in the timeframe 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!	2 months	Up to 25, with an expected range of 15–25	\$50,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: \$1,250,000)
Phase 2: Set!	6 months (anticipated)	Up to 25, with an expected range of 15–20	\$200,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: \$5,000,000)
Phase 3: Grow!	6 months (anticipated)	Up to 25, with an expected range of 10–20	\$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.) who are new community solar project developers, co-developers, or existing developers who are expanding operations, and who have concrete plans to develop a portfolio of equitable community solar projects, each with at least two of the five meaningful benefits discussed in [Section 2.2](#).

4.1 Competitor Eligibility Requirements

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

1. 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.
2. Projects must be based in the United States, or in U.S. territories.
3. Entities must be able to receive payments that are legally made from the U.S. government in U.S. dollars.
4. Competitors that plan to develop only a single community solar project are not eligible for this prize.
5. To receive prize money, the competitor must be a member of the National Community Solar Partnership. Register for free to [join the Partnership here](#). [More information can be found here](#).
6. Community solar projects must meet the DOE definition of community solar, which is “a solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.”
7. The proposed projects must provide at least 40% of the power generated to residential customers; none of the projects can exclusively serve a single entity.
8. As part of teams’ submission to this prize, teams will be required to sign the following statement:

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.

9. Organizations who have already completed the [Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab](#) are eligible to compete in Phase 1, and, if selected for Phase 2, they will not be required to retake the course if they can show their Learning Lab Badge as proof of completion and meet the other eligibility criteria.

10. 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.
11. Additional eligibility requirements can be found in [Section A.12](#).

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 to the lead entity identified in the team's submission. Organizations may act as a lead entity for a single submission and may also support multiple submissions as non-lead entities, if desired. In addition, only one individual from each winning Phase 1 submission will be allowed to participate in the Phase 2 Learning Lab.

All submissions must have a unique set of projects that make up their proposed portfolio of existing or planned community 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 awards 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.

- The competitor submission represents a community solar power portfolio of projects with the intent to develop a minimum of 1 MW (not exceeding 5 MW for a single facility) of community solar projects¹⁰ in the United States or in U.S. territories.
- Each project within the portfolio submitted must describe how it will include **at least two**¹¹ of the five meaningful benefits: (1) low- and moderate-income household access, (2) greater household savings, (3) increased resilience and grid benefits, (4) community ownership, and (5) equitable workforce development.
- Eligible projects can be in any stage of pre-financing. Projects that already have financing may be considered eligible, if the team intends to expand the scope of the project to include at least two of the five meaningful benefits.
- The benefits realized by the project are not dependent on pending legislation or regulation.

¹⁰ DOE defines [community solar](#) as any solar project or purchasing program within a geographic area in which the benefits of the project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.

¹¹ Individual projects within a portfolio do not all need to offer the same meaningful benefits. For example, Project A may provide low- to moderate-income (LMI) household access and greater household savings, and Project B may provide increased resilience and grid benefits and community ownership.

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](#)).

Ready! Contest Prizes	
•	Up to 25 awards (expected range 15–25)
•	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 Learning Lab (required for Phase 2: Set! award)
•	All Phase 1 winners will receive direct technical assistance mentorship and coaching

5.2 Phase 1: Ready! Goal

Phase 1 is seeking new or expanding community solar developers and co-developers with a high potential of developing at least 1 MW (not exceeding 5 MW at a single facility) of community solar projects that include at least two of the five [meaningful benefits](#) each.

The goal of Phase 1: Ready! is to recognize successful new and expanding community solar project developers as they prepare and begin to execute community solar project development (e.g., pre-development activities and project financing).

5.3 Phase 1: Ready! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	January 19, 2023
Phase 1 Informational Webinar	February 1, 2023
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	March 15, 2023, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	April 2023 (Anticipated)

5.4 Phase 1 Prize Process

- 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 the self-assessment exercise) and upload to HeroX the required [Phase 1 submission materials](#), including a written narrative describing the proposed project portfolio (minimum 1 MW), the organization and team, plans for community engagement and partnerships, how the portfolio will incorporate at least two of the five [meaningful benefits](#), and how the portfolio will support diversity and inclusion.

All submission materials must be uploaded to the [Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page](#) before the 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.
- **Portfolio Plan and Goals** – What is your plan to implement a portfolio of at least 1 MW of community solar projects?
- **Community Engagement and Partnerships** – What is your plan to engage with and work with the communities in which you plan to develop community solar projects?
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – How will your work provide benefits to and serve disadvantaged communities?

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 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.

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 Learning Lab starting in April 2023 (dates to be announced).

OTHER 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 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 questionnaire • PowerPoint summary slide (public*) • Evidence of completion of Introduction to Community Solar course • Narrative (3,000 words max)
<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. Starred (*) elements will be made public on HeroX.*

- Submission title*
- Organization name*
- Organization city* and state*
- Organization address
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL*
- Point of contact information (name, email, phone)

Portfolio Questionnaire: List basic information about your portfolio.

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1160>

Past and Current Portfolio

1. Please list the community solar and other solar projects you have developed, or have helped develop, to date.
 - The number of projects that are still in operation today
 - The number of projects (to date) for which you led development
 - The number of projects (to date) that you supported, but did not lead development.
2. Please list the total capacity (MW) of the community solar or other solar projects that you have developed, or have helped develop, to date.
 - The total capacity (MW) of community solar or other solar projects that are still in operation today
 - The total capacity of projects for which you led development
 - The total capacity of projects that you supported, but did not lead development.
3. Please list the states where the operational community solar or other solar projects are located.

Planned Portfolio

1. Please list any community solar or other solar projects you are helping develop that are currently in pre-development or planning stages.
 - The number of projects where you are leading the development
 - The number of projects that you are supporting, but are not leading the development.
2. Please list the total capacity (MW) of community solar or other solar projects in pre-development or planning.
 - The total planned capacity of the projects where you are leading the development
 - The total planned capacity of the projects you are supporting, but are not leading the development.
3. Please list the states where the community solar or other solar projects will be located.
4. Please list the current stage of development (initial idea, scoping, pre-financing, post-financing, etc.) for each project within your portfolio.
 - If a project has already received financing, please provide an explanation of why the current funding does not incorporate the five meaningful benefits.

Note: If you have not developed any community or other solar projects, include any relevant development experience that would indicate your capacity to become a solar developer and include potential examples (economic development, rehab, multifamily affordable housing, etc.).

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

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 to become a community solar project developer for projects that include the five meaningful benefits. The course is approximately 3-4 hours (including videos, reading assignments, and the self-assessment). You can go at your own pace and start and stop as you wish.

Important: To get access to the course, please email Solar.Prize@nrel.gov. 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 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 community solar or partner with community solar developers to develop equitable community solar projects. The course takes approximately 3-4 hours to complete.

Narrative: Template:

<https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1161>

You should answer each of the questions in the four 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 four areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these four areas must not exceed 3,000 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 ten supporting images, figures, or graphs. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

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:

Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of your organization’s mission and goals and how they align with the overall prize goal of developing a (minimum) 1-MW community solar portfolio with the five meaningful benefits.¹² • A description of any current challenges or barriers that are preventing your organization from developing community solar with the five meaningful benefits.¹² • A description of how the specific activities¹³ and benefits¹⁴ of the prize would help you overcome your identified barriers to either become a community solar project developer or build upon existing experience to expand development with the five meaningful benefits.¹² • A description of your current level of experience as a solar developer or co-developer. Alternatively, you can explain that you are new to community solar development or that you are an established developer seeking to expand. • Specific examples of previous solar project development experience (or other relevant development experience) in your organization or team. Describe how you led or supported solar development and whether that experience is specific to community solar. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you have no relevant solar development experience, highlight any experience you have that could be leveraged to make you a successful community solar developer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor has identified specific barriers that participation in the prize would help them overcome and has a clear and actionable vision for how the prize activities¹³ and benefits¹² will strategically position the team to either become community solar project developers or build upon existing experience to expand solar development with the five meaningful benefits.¹² • The competitor demonstrates a high level of previous experience that could be leveraged for community solar development. • The competitor demonstrates that they have a strong team with relevant skill sets, expertise, and experience and the dedication to fully participate in all Community Power Accelerator prize activities.¹³ • The team has adequate capabilities and resources available to dedicate to learning the skills and acquiring the knowledge of the unique challenges and attributes of community solar to be able to successfully secure financing for their proposed community solar project portfolio.
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¹² The five meaningful benefits include: low- and moderate-income household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development. For additional details, please see [Section 2.2](#).

¹³ Prize activities include participation in the Learning Lab (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 1.2](#).

¹⁴ Specific benefits of the prize include increasing organizational knowledge of community solar and the five meaningful benefits via the Learning Lab, increased confidence and skills from technical assistance, ability to leverage cash awards to seek additional funding for planned projects, and access to the Community Power Accelerator platform to identify and work with potential investors. For more information, see [Section 1](#).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of your team who would be participating in prize activities,¹³ including a description of each team member’s relevant expertise and ability to participate in the prize. Please also identify any skills or expertise that are currently missing on your team and your plan to fill these gaps, or any additional support your team may need to be successful. 	
<p>2. Portfolio Plan and Goals – What is your plan to implement a portfolio of at least 1 MW of community solar projects in the next three years?</p> <p><i>24 points possible</i></p>	
<p>Teams can describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your current solar portfolio as it is today (number of projects, MW, year built, etc.) and your role in project development (lead, co-lead, supporter, community involvement, etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teams may reference their “Portfolio Questionnaire” document for specific details regarding their current portfolio. ○ If you have no relevant solar development projects, highlight any projects that show you have experience that will make you a successful community solar developer. • Your plans for how you would like to see your community solar portfolio grow over the next three years. What support do you need to get more projects with the five meaningful benefits¹² financed? • Your plans for developing a portfolio of at least 1 MW of community solar projects with the five meaningful benefits.¹² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please identify the town and state for each project. If multiple locations are under consideration and have not been narrowed down, please indicate this and describe 	<p>Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The submission shows that the team is well positioned to develop solar projects with the five meaningful benefits¹² because of their strong history with solar development or other development experience that could be pivoted to solar. • The submission clearly describes how the competitor’s community solar project portfolio is expected to grow over the next three years in a way that indicates success is likely. The competitor has identified the specific support they would need to develop more projects with the five meaningful benefits.¹² • The submission clearly describes how the project portfolio will incorporate at least two of the five meaningful benefits¹² into each project and appears poised for success. • The submission clearly describes how the project portfolio will incorporate any additional meaningful benefits¹² into each project. <p><i>Note: Individual projects within the same portfolio can have different sets of meaningful benefits, as long as each project has at least two.</i></p>

<p>how you plan to identify specific locations in Phase 2 of the prize.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your plan to incorporate at least two of the five meaningful benefits¹² into each project of your portfolio. In addition to describing them in your projected portfolio, explain previous efforts to include similar benefits in your prior development, including barriers and solutions reached. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can you leverage your existing solar or other relevant experience to develop solar that will provide at least two of the five meaningful benefits to subscribers? • Your plan to incorporate any additional meaningful benefits¹² into your portfolio. 	
<p>3. Community Engagement and Partnerships – What is your plan to engage with and work with the communities in which you plan to develop community solar projects?</p> <p><i>24 points possible</i></p>	
<p>Teams can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your team’s past experience with community engagement, including the strategies and lessons learned that will support your future success with community solar development. • Describe your community’s current disposition toward community solar. What are their top concerns and priorities? What barriers do you expect that 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. 	<p>Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor has relevant experience with community engagement and the strategies and lessons learned from previous experiences indicate a high likelihood of future success. • The competitor has a clear understanding of the community’s concerns and priorities as related to community solar. • The competitor has a well-articulated and credible plan to effectively engage communities and gain buy-in and trust from community members as well as to attract community members to become subscribers or owners of the planned projects. • The submission clearly identifies how the planned community solar projects are directly benefitting communities, what metrics are required to measure the success of community-realized benefits, and how the metrics will be

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the specific strategies, events, and activities¹⁵ that you plan to use to engage, gain trust, and obtain buy-in from the communities where your projects will be located. How will you leverage these strategies to ultimately attract community members to become subscribers or owners of your envisioned community solar projects? How are you planning to provide support and direct benefits¹⁶ to the communities where your projects will be located? What metrics will you use to measure success? How will you measure these metrics? How will the benefits and impact of your projects be communicated to communities? 	<p>measured and communicated back to community members.</p>
<p>4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan – How will your work provide benefits to and serve disadvantaged communities?</p> <p><i>24 points possible</i></p>	
<p>Teams can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the disadvantaged communities where your planned community solar projects will be or may be located. Describe how your proposed community solar project portfolio could provide <u>specific, direct benefits¹⁶ to disadvantaged communities</u> and other underrepresented populations.¹⁷ Describe how your planned projects might impact disadvantaged communities. How will your team minimize or address any negative impacts (such as land use, 	<p>Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The competitor has clearly articulated how their planned project portfolio would provide specific benefits to disadvantaged communities and underrepresented populations. The benefits identified are credible and would support disadvantaged communities. The competitor has clearly and credibly identified how their projects would impact disadvantaged communities. The competitor has also described a realistic

¹⁵ Example activities could include door-to-door canvassing, utilizing local online social networks such as Nextdoor, posting signage and communication materials at the proposed sites, collecting feedback from local community members, engaging the local government, and attending city council meetings, providing notice, etc.

¹⁶ Direct benefits could include workforce development, community ownership, economic development, or other [meaningful benefits](#).

¹⁷ Teams may view statistics related to their identified project communities by using the following tools: EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen): <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>
Tribal Energy Atlas: <https://maps.nrel.gov/tribal-energy-atlas/>

Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts (Historically Disadvantaged Communities): <https://usdot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/d6f90dfcc8b44525b04c7ce748a3674a>.

<p>community aesthetic, construction, etc.) on these communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If no project locations have been identified, please describe how you plan to address impacts to disadvantaged communities generally within your proposed portfolio. • Describe the specific activities and partnerships that would build trust and strengthen relationships with disadvantaged communities and support socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEIs)¹⁸ and SEI-owned businesses. • Describe your plan to encourage and support disadvantaged community members specifically (as opposed to communities generally) to become subscribers or owners of your envisioned community solar projects. 	<p>plan to minimize or address any identified negative impact(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor has a well-considered and credible plan to deeply engage and build trust with disadvantaged communities, organizations, and individuals, such as SEIs and SEI-owned businesses. • The competitor has a well-considered and credible plan to attract members to become subscribers or owners of the planned projects.
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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:

- **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:
 1. Cover page
 2. Portfolio questionnaire
 3. PowerPoint summary slide
 4. Completed Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab Introduction to Community Solar Course, including the self-assessment
 5. Narrative, including answers to all four areas.

Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all five 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 award.

¹⁸ “SEI demographics-related business” means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see [Key Terms](#).

- **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 reviewer¹⁹ 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.

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.

- **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.

¹⁹ 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.

6 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 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 community solar project.¹² Ownership is one method to allow community members to determine how a community solar project is developed and how its benefits are distributed. Additional benefits of community ownership can include local job creation, increased property values, and the retention of wealth within a community.

Where direct ownership of project assets is not possible or desirable, community solar may provide other wealth-building opportunities for subscribers and their communities through community benefit 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 the 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 the U.S. Department of Energy (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.

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): 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 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).²⁰

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

²⁰ <https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative>

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 (DACs). 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- 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 are 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 GW_{AC} of total installed community solar capacity. The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to disadvantaged communities (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.

(See [Key Terms](#) for guidance on how to define LMI households).

Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs): MSIs are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations.²¹

National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP): The [National Community Solar Partnership](#) (NCSP), a program of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), supports a coalition of stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every U.S. household and enable communities to realize its meaningful benefits. NCSP is working toward a 2025 target to enable community solar to

²¹ <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program>

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 pre-development 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 Indian 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 utilize 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 the NCSP.

Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual (SEDI)²²: A SEDI demographics-related business means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances, due to their:

- Membership of a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society
- Gender

²² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/10/2022-04843/state-small-business-credit-initiative-demographics-related-reporting-requirements>

- Veteran status
- Limited English proficiency
- Disability
- Long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society
- Membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian tribe
- Long-term residence in a rural community
- Residence in a U.S. territory
- Residence in a community undergoing economic transitions (including communities impacted by the shift toward a net-zero economy or deindustrialization)
- Membership of an underserved community.

7 Additional Requirements

Please read and comply with 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/communitypoweraccelerator> before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
2. The narrative and portfolio questionnaire 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 nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

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.

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.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate the adoption of best practices to provide meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to community 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), members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities, or members from minority business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, or veteran-owned businesses.

A.12 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>.

A.13 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.

Appendix 2: Phase 2 Learning Lab

A2.1 Overview

Teams who are selected in Phase 1 will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize and the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab. To win Phase 2, Phase 1 winners will be required to participate in, and graduate from, a seven-module course starting on **April 27, 2023**. Exact dates will be provided to teams before the end of Phase 1 so that they are able to plan for their participation, should they win Phase 1.

The [Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab](#), hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide competitors on how to develop community 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 community 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 Learning Lab information is subject to change.

A2.2 Learning Lab Objectives

Upon completion of this 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 community solar project.
3. Complete the Credit-Ready Checklist and individual project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator Platform.
4. Understand the how to incorporate the five meaningful benefits into community solar projects.
5. Structure a creditworthy community solar project and pitch it for financing.

A2.3 Learning Lab 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 attend all zoom sessions.
- Engage in the learning content and encourage and support your peers in the Learning Lab.

- To build our learning community, we require that you keep your camera on during the Zoom sessions, unless extenuating circumstances make that impossible.

A2.4 Phase 2 Learning Lab Final Project

To complete the Phase 2 Learning Lab, teams will be required to complete a final project.

Example Final Project

Part A: Internal Community 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 community solar. The presentation should describe the niche roles in the community solar industry that your organization will seek to play and 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, financial strengths or weaknesses, and ability to operate assets.

Part B: Investor Community Solar Project Pitch

Students will prepare and provide a pitch deck presentation selling a specific project to an investor. Students should utilize the materials they developed over the course to share the 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 they should be assured that the organization can deliver on the project. Students should highlight risks and how they will be managed.

A2.5 Phase 2 Learning Lab 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.

Appendix 3: Background on the Community Power Accelerator Program

The Community Power Accelerator is an initiative of the [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. This online platform 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.

The [online platform](#) is part of the Community Power Accelerator, a program of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) that supports the rapid expansion of community solar through increased investment and 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 pre-development funds to prepare and meet funding application thresholds.

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

- Low- to moderate-income (LMI) household access
- Greater household savings
- Increased resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership or other wealth-building opportunities
- Equitable workforce development.

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

Appendix 4: Credit-Ready Checklist

Note: It is anticipated that competitors in Phase 2 will be required to complete the Credit-Ready Checklist as part of their Phase 2 submission package. Competitors will receive technical assistance to support their activities related to the checklist. Below is an example of the Credit-Ready Checklist. Please visit: <https://communitypower.americanmadechallenges.org/docs/Credit-Ready-Checklist.pdf> to view the most up-to-date version.

Credit-Ready Checklist		
System	1	What is the size of the system?
	2	What is the installation type—roof, ground, or canopy?
	3	What type of building or land is the project on?
	4	Who owns the building or land?
	5	What utility territory is the project in?
	6	What stage is the project in? (Pre-development, development, construction, operations)
	7	When are construction milestones set to occur? (NTP, mechanical completion, COD, substantial completion, placed in service)
	8	What, if any, development work has been done to date—design (early, 50%, full), equipment selection, permitting, zoning, interconnection, utility application?
	9	What is the waiting period for interconnection after the utility application has been submitted?
	10	Are there any incentive/customer/regulatory cliff dates?
Roles and Capital Structure	1	Does the counterparty have a pro forma they can share?
	2	What role does the counterparty play—broker/marketer, developer/EPC, owner/operator, subscriber manager? How will they be involved with the project going forward?
	3	In what roles does the co-developer need additional assistance? Lenders? Owner/operator? Tax equity? Subscriber manager?
	4	What is the ownership model? Single sponsor? Co-op? Customer ownership?
	5	Who are the development team members that are involved in this project? (EPC, construction inspector, lawyer)? What experience does each team member have?
	6	Is tax equity secured? If so, is there any preference for front-/back-leverage lending?
	7	Has construction or term debt been secured?
	8	What, if any, capital is needed? When do they need (equity/debt/tax equity) capital to come in? What financing have you secured, if any?
	9	Are any project marketing materials being developed? What is the subscriber acquisition strategy?
	10	Who is the borrower, and what are their financials?
	11	What collateral does this project structuring include?
	12	Does this project have a guarantee? If so, who is the guarantor, and what are their financials?
Revenues and Market Construct	1	How are electricity sales being generated? Upfront purchase? Fixed-rate subscriptions?
	2	What is the forecasted PPA rate for this project? How was this forecast developed (e.g., discount to utility prices, VDER calculator, wholesale energy price forecast)? Is the PPA rate fixed or floating? Does the PPA rate have an escalator or not?
	3	How will the project receive revenues (e.g., PPA directly with customers, sleeved PPA through utility, sale of volumetric/monetary credits)?
	4	Are there RECs in this market? How many years of eligibility? How valuable?

	5	Would RECs from the community solar project be part of the subscriber contract, or would replacement RECs be provided to the subscribers?
	6	Are there any other incentives at the federal, state, utility, and/or local level that are being utilized?
	7	Have any subscribers been secured? Are they on a waiting list or do they have signed contracts in hand? If not yet secured, when would they be secured?
	8	What is the expected subscriber mix? Are there any requirements for commercial/residential or LMI/market rate splits?
	9	What is the contracted term of each revenue and incentive stream?
Costs	1	What is the expected EPC cost? Interconnection cost?
	2	What are the expected financing costs both for construction and during the project term?
	3	What are the expected costs of marketing/customer acquisition?
	4	What are the other working capital costs? Legal, accounting, etc.?
	5	Is there an intended EPC provider? If yes, is that EPC provider contracted?
	6	Have you contracted for subscription management services or have an intended provider? What are the initial cost estimates, and are there any guarantees provided?
	7	Has O&M been contracted for? If so, has a provider been designated?
	8	What are the expected O&M costs?
	9	Are there any site lease or site option costs, and if so, what are they?
	10	Do you expect to incur property tax? Sales tax? How much?
Equity	1	Does the project provide at least a 20% energy bill savings for subscribers?
	2	Does the project support community workforce development by advancing high wages, reducing income disparities across demographic lines, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment?
	3	Does the project include resilience through storage, microgrids, or another means of delivering power during an outage?
	4	Does the project include some form of community ownership or other avenue for building community wealth?
	5	Does the project include at least 40% LMI households among its subscribers?
	6	How much estimated net savings is expected to be delivered to the LMI households? (NCSP prefers 20% by 2025)

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