

AMERICAN  
**MADE**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Direct Air Capture  
**Pre-Commercial  
EPIC Prize**



## Official Rules

# Direct Air Capture Pre-Commercial EPIC Prize

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**This document only contains the rules for the DAC EPIC Prize.**

# 1 Direct Air Capture Prizes Overview

In 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).<sup>1</sup> The BIL authorizes and appropriates a total of up to \$115 million for the development and execution of Direct Air Capture (DAC) Prize Competitions which includes up to \$15 million for a Pre-Commercial Prize (BIL Section 41005a) and up to \$100 million for the Commercial Prize (BIL Section 41005b). These prizes will catalyze rapid DAC technology advancement for carbon management while incorporating environmental justice, community benefits, stakeholder engagement, equity and workforce development.

The American-Made Direct Air Capture (DAC) Pre-Commercial Prizes are a suite of prizes that work together in concert to advance DAC technologies. This prize program will bring together start-ups working to commercialize DAC technology and incubators that will support the technology innovation and development process. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management (FECM), the DAC Pre-Commercial Prizes offer up to \$15 million in prizes and support to be split among two competitions: the DAC Energy Program for Innovation Clusters (EPIC) Prize and the DAC Pre-Commercial Technology Prize.

In recognition of the fact that there are numerous steps involved in moving an innovation from idea to marketable product, the DAC prizes each address a different phase of the technology development process. The DAC Technology Prize focuses on developing hard technology DAC innovations, such as novel materials or systems integration. The DAC EPIC Prize will support the surrounding ecosystem to help move technologies from an idea to equitable, commercial impact. This Official Rules Document outlines the structure, objectives, and eligibility requirements of the DAC EPIC Prize.

Together, the DAC Pre-Commercial EPIC Prize and the DAC Pre-Commercial Technology Prize will advance technological innovation, support new businesses, and help achieve emission reduction targets. For brevity, both Pre-Commercial prizes may be referenced as the DAC EPIC Prize and the DAC Technology Prize.

This document contains the rules for the DAC EPIC Prize. Competitors in this prize are incubator organizations. If you are an innovator, refer to the [rules for the DAC Technology Prize](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Reference section 969D(e)(2)(A) and (B) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16298d(e)(2)(A)-(B)), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public L. No. 117-58, 135 Stat. 429 (2021), available at <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ58/PLAW-117publ58.pdf>.

## 2 DAC Pre-Commercial EPIC Prize Background

DOE's FECM is working in collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), which serves as the Prize Administrator, and the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) to issue the DAC EPIC prize. Up to \$3.7 million in cash will be distributed over three phases to incubator teams that submit creative and impactful plans to support DAC innovators and create meaningful mentorship, education, and training opportunities. The DAC EPIC prize aims to support both emerging and established DAC incubators and accelerators in implementing those plans to develop strong clusters, resources, and connections for energy start-ups and entrepreneurs.

The DAC EPIC Prize follows the structure of the original EPIC program, created by DOE's Office of Technology Transitions (OTT), but it is the first EPIC prize to focus on accelerating carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) capture through engineered approaches from substances where CO<sub>2</sub> is found in concentrations less than 1% (dilute media such as ambient air).<sup>2,3</sup> The DAC EPIC Prize also seeks to address inequities in technology innovation and entrepreneurship and establish a more diverse field of DAC developers. Competitors will develop incubation programs tailored specifically to DAC technologies that aim to reduce the commercialization barriers experienced by innovators. Teams will win increasingly large prizes as they progress and have greater impact over the course of three phases: Think It, Move It, and Prove It.

The development of innovative DAC technologies supports the Biden administration's decarbonization goals of a 50%–52% net reduction in greenhouse gases (GHGs) from 2005 level emissions by 2030 and a net-zero GHG emission economy by 2050. DAC technologies capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and will be a critical tool to counterbalance difficult-to-decarbonize sectors (e.g., agriculture, shipping, and aviation) that are vital to the U.S. economy and jobs, in order to achieve net-zero GHG goals. Due to the dilute nature of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, this approach is very technically challenging compared to point-source carbon capture systems that prevent additional emissions from being released, e.g., from power plants or industrial facilities.

The activities to be funded under the DAC EPIC Prize support the broader government-wide effort to provide more options for the United States to achieve a net-zero GHG economy by 2050 in a cost-effective, reliable, and efficient manner. These activities also maximize the benefits of the clean energy transition as the nation works to mitigate the climate crisis, create and maintain good-paying, high-skill jobs, and advance environmental justice.

DOE is aware of and is working to address environmental, climate, and energy justice concerns regarding how DAC projects could impact communities in terms of local environmental quality and economic benefits. To ensure DAC is designed, developed, and commercialized responsibly, this prize competition will include several requirements to maximize success and mitigate risk. These include establishing an inclusive and diverse landscape of entrepreneurs, developing businesses for technologies that optimize environmental co-benefits, and engaging skilled workers by creating good, high-wage jobs within communities. Once commercialized, DAC technologies will require carbon storage infrastructure and other resource intensive inputs, such as energy and building materials. To address these considerations early,

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<sup>2</sup> 42 U.S.C. 16298d(e)(1)(A)

<sup>3</sup> More information on the original EPIC Prize can be found at <https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/epic/index.html>.

pre-commercial incubator competitors should develop a curriculum that enables DAC developers to evaluate and mitigate a full suite of environmental impacts and resource needs.

FECM recognizes that technology start-ups, particularly in the carbon management realm, often require a variety of services over and above capital access, including mentorship, technology validation, business development, and connections to manufacturers. With the help of targeted business assistance—in the form of company incubation—entrepreneurs are better prepared to turn their innovations into successful new ventures that have a greater-than-average chance of success.<sup>4</sup> Innovation-accelerating organizations, which typically self-identify as incubators or accelerators, provide important services to assist start-ups in getting to market, and they play an increasingly important role for companies and entrepreneurs.

Strong business incubation services, including but not limited to mentoring/networking, entrepreneurial training, access to testing, prototyping assistance, and intellectual property management, provide direct support for early-stage start-ups, as well as having the potential to de-risk start-ups for follow-on investors. Incubators can accelerate regional economic development, strengthen national innovation capacity, and expand domestic carbon removal manufacturing and technology development. By screening competitors, helping them prototype, connecting entrepreneurs with manufacturers, and advising start-ups on business strategy, incubators play a critical role in supporting start-ups as they transition into the market. By working to address inequities that inhibit technology and entrepreneurial diversity as well as integrating environmental justice and community benefit considerations from the concept stage, incubators can develop stronger start-ups with broader benefits in shorter timeframes. In addition, incubators can play a foundational role in cultivating quality community benefits plans for DAC innovators and inform how environmental impacts and benefits of the full process will be assessed.<sup>5</sup> However, funding for traditional incubators is not widespread, given a conventional funding focus on individual companies and laboratory research. EPIC represents DOE's effort to engage with and support this community of incubators.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis, David A., Elsie Harper-Anderson, and Lawrence A. Molnar. 2011. *Incubation Best Practices That Lead to Successful New Ventures*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

<sup>5</sup> Community Benefits Plans are based on a set of four core policy priorities: investing in America's workforce; engaging communities and labor; advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and implementing Justice 40. These key principles, when incorporated comprehensively into project proposals and executed upon, will help ensure broadly shared prosperity in the clean energy transition. More information can be found at: <https://www.energy.gov/clean-energy-infrastructure/community-benefits-plan-frequently-asked-questions-faqs>

# 3 DAC EPIC Prize Overview

## 3.1 DAC EPIC Prize Format

The DAC EPIC Prize is a three-phase competition for incubators to propose new programming within incubators to support innovators working on equitable, hard-tech DAC solutions. Cash prizes will be awarded to those teams that make the most progress and impact over the course of the prize competition period.

FECM welcomes incubator organizations and programs that aid in the development of new business ventures, business accelerators, co-working start-up communities, or any other organizations that self-identify as advocates for innovation and entrepreneurship to compete in DAC EPIC prize.

The DAC EPIC Prize offers up to \$3.7 million in prizes to successful incubator competitors:

	Number of Winners	Cash Prize Available for Each Winner	Total
Think It	Up to 12	\$100,000	\$1,200,000
Move It	Up to five	\$300,000	\$1,500,000
Prove It	Two (one Grand Prize, one Runner-Up)	Grand Prize: \$750,000 Runner-Up: \$250,000	\$1,000,000

## 3.2 Program Requirements

All competitors must address the following:

- A. **Create New Programming:** Design and implementation of novel programming, specialized engineering education and training, registered apprenticeship expansion and curriculum development, mentorship opportunities, and technology development frameworks specifically tailored to the challenges of DAC technology innovators. Each competitor’s submission to this prize must propose the development of services that support DAC technology design, development, and commercialization. Proposed capabilities must emphasize DAC technology support, but programing could also support other carbon capture technologies and carbon dioxide removal (CDR) systems.

The proposed activities in response to this prize must be **new and distinct** from services that the incubator is already providing. For incubators that have not previously run any support programing or cohorts focused on CDR technology, proposing programming and services focused specifically on DAC meets the “new and distinct” services requirement. Incubators that have previously or currently run CDR-focused support are encouraged to meet the “new and distinct” services requirement by including a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a part of their CDR and/or DAC offerings.

- B. **Support DAC Technology Development:** Bringing new talent and capabilities into the DAC space supports the development of new technology start-ups and union training programs that may not have pursued DAC technology design or development without incubation support. Incubators should support start-ups that are at any stage of maturity but should focus on engineering and hard-tech. The competitor’s submission must demonstrate a capacity to encourage, facilitate,

and support the establishment and development of new start-ups working to commercialize DAC technologies, as well as the growth and maturation of existing efforts. Competitors in the DAC EPIC Prize are strongly encouraged to recruit and support competitors in the DAC Technology Prize.

Incubator programming, including curriculum and training through registered apprenticeships and other programs, should be tailored to address the unique challenges of DAC technologies. Programming must aim to advance the technology readiness of competitors and establish technology-specific metrics to measure progress toward commercialization success (i.e., efficiency improvements, growth in technology readiness level (TRL), improved manufacturability, etc.). Pre-commercial DAC start-up creation may emphasize any array of technological or engineering solutions that improve the cost-effectiveness, scalability, efficiency, or co-benefits of CO<sub>2</sub> capture from ambient air through engineered processes. Helping start-ups grow could include, but is not limited to, providing meaningful assistance toward fundraising, mentorship, customer discovery, market assessment, workforce development or technology maturation.

- C. **Build Landscape and Field:** Leverage and enhance relationships with a network of commercial operations and established businesses to create comprehensive commercialization, investment, and technology advancement during and beyond the DAC EPIC Prize. These programming and network development aspects may include mentorship, market research and customer discovery, workforce development, identification of skill standards, fundraising assistance, and other business support services. Investing in targeted education of external partners surrounding the carbon removal technology landscape and marketplace ecosystem will aid in de-risking future investments in DAC solutions.

All competitors are encouraged to address criteria D in their submissions. Incubators that have previously provided CDR- or DAC-specific programming are required to address diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a way to create new programming:

- D. **Incorporate Societal Considerations and Impacts:** Address environmental, climate, or workforce justice concerns by prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for start-ups and/or engagement with rural and disadvantaged communities.
  - 1. *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)* – The competitor finds, recruits, and supports underrepresented entrepreneurs and helps start-ups recruit, hire, train, and retain employees from underrepresented backgrounds.
    - a. Please clearly illustrate how your proposed program advances diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility principles. Indicate who will benefit from your proposed program and how they will benefit. If applicable, include baseline metrics for your current participant companies.
  - 2. *Rural and Disadvantaged Communities* – The competitor provides benefits to rural and disadvantaged communities by, for example, helping start-ups deploy demonstration projects in collaboration with members of disadvantaged communities. DOE has developed a definition and tools to locate and identify rural and disadvantaged communities to properly align programs with the President's Justice40 Initiative goal, that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities. These resources are located at <https://energyjustice.egs.anl.gov/>. DOE also recognizes disadvantaged communities



as defined and identified by the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), which is located at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/>. Incubators are encouraged to describe how their curriculum and programming will facilitate accessibility and commercialization support for innovators developing DAC technologies within these communities and quantify the benefits to the degree possible.

3. *Quality Jobs and a Skilled Workforce* - A well-qualified, skilled, and trained workforce is necessary for project success and future commercialization potential. High-quality jobs are critical to attracting and retaining the qualified workforce required. Please describe how your proposed program will secure and engage skilled and trained workers, for example by cooperating with union or other registered apprenticeship programs, entering into project labor agreements that provide assurance of skilled worker availability, or other means. Please also describe the risks and hazards and training standards you will incorporate to ensure worker and public safety.

Competitors must emphasize these program requirements with respect to DAC technologies and projects; however, we understand that carbon management is a diverse and integrated field. Competitors may propose and conduct work to advance additional CO<sub>2</sub> removal approaches or carbon management technologies in a synergistic manner within the prize. However, submissions will be evaluated on the defined program requirements.

### 3.3 DAC EPIC Prize Phases

Competitors in the DAC EPIC Prize will compete in three escalating phases, which are described below.



Refer to [HeroX](#) for the specific dates for each phase.

**Think It** (approximately 3 months)– Competitors design a “minimum viable program” (MVP) that focuses on the program requirements. The plan should address:

- The framework for the competitor’s program, including proposed development and execution timelines
- How the competitor will address the program requirements in their proposed MVP
- How the competitor will implement the MVP during the competition period of the DAC EPIC Prize

- How the competitor will create a strong pipeline to recruit entrepreneurs and innovators into their program
- How the skills and expertise of the competitor's team will enable entrepreneurs and innovators to launch or improve their businesses
- Proposed metrics and leading indicators to evaluate the MVP's success
- The novelty of the curriculum and incubation services being designed and developed in the MVP and the support gap the program will address.

Think It winners will be determined through the online submission package. The competitors that show the most promise will progress to the next phase (Move It). Winners will be considered semifinalists and will receive a cash prize. See the [Think It Phase Rules](#) for more information.

**Move It** (approximately 6 months)– Only winners of Think It are eligible to compete in Move It. Competitors will move their MVP forward by demonstrating momentum and progress toward MVP implementation. Competitors will demonstrate:

- Progress toward MVP implementation, including current project status
- Progress toward recruiting entrepreneurs and/or innovators for their program and for the DAC Technology Prize
- That they have access to the right talent, resources, and networks to be successful
- That they have thoughtfully refined and, where applicable, begun collecting data on the success metrics and leading indicators described in the Think It Phase.

Winners will be determined through a combination of the online submission package and an interview session. The competitors that show the most significant progress will move on to the next phase. Winners will be considered finalists and will receive a cash prize. See the [Move It Phase Rules](#) for more information.

**Prove It** (approximately 7 months) – Only winners of Move It are eligible to compete in Prove It. Competitors will prove that their MVP implementation of the program requirements is successful. Competitors will provide:

- Quantitative and qualitative justification (metrics, measures) to validate the MVP's success
- A plan for driving long-term growth, endurance, and repeatable success of the MVP
- A strategy for sustained commercialization, funding, network development, and program operation
- Documentation, such as legally binding commitments from partners, state sponsorships, etc., that demonstrates both the success of the current MVP and a path to longevity and program sustainability.

Winners will be determined through a combination of the online submission package and an interview session. Winners will receive a cash prize. See the [Prove It Phase Rules](#) for more information.

## 3.4 Important Dates

These rules are applicable to the DAC Pre-Commercial EPIC Prize. Please visit <https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC> to view the key dates.

### Metrics and Leading Indicators

Competitors are required to propose success metrics and leading indicators for their MVP. Success metrics should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and show the extent to which the MVP has achieved its ideal outcomes. Competitors may reference the metric list in [Appendix 2: Impact Tracking Metrics](#).

FECM recognizes that incubation programs may require significant time to show progress toward the identified success metrics. As such, FECM requires competitors to propose leading indicators in addition to success metrics. Leading indicators, whether quantitative or qualitative, should demonstrate how short-term progress will translate into sustainable and long-term success of the MVP.

## 3.5 Eligibility

The competition is open to private entities (for-profits and nonprofits) and academic institutions, subject to the following requirements:

- Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.
- Academic institutions must be based in the United States.

Programming proposed by incubators must have an emphasis on supporting start-ups with an engineering or physical technology focus.

A single entity may only submit one application as the lead, but may be part of the team or otherwise be included in other applications. Previous recipients of EPIC awards are eligible to compete in this DAC EPIC Prize.

Although national laboratories are not eligible to compete, they may support teams in the competition if they are engaging the teams in compliance with lab partnership requirements and any lab capabilities are made available to all competitors.

To be eligible, the team captain 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 I am providing this submission to the Federal Government. 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.

### **Move It Phase Eligibility**

- Only semifinalists (winners of the Think It Phase) are eligible to compete in the Move It Phase.

### **Prove It Phase Eligibility**

- Only finalists (winners of the Move It Phase) are eligible to compete in the Prove It Phase.

### **Ineligible Competitors:**

- DOE employees, employees of sponsoring organizations, members of their immediate families (e.g., spouses, children, siblings, or parents), and persons living in the same household as such persons, whether or not related, are not eligible to participate in the prize.
- 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 prize contests in this program.
- Federal entities and federal employees are not eligible to participate in any portion of the prize.
- Individual DOE national laboratory employees cannot compete in the prize in their official capacity. DOE national laboratory employees may compete on their personal time but may not use any national laboratory resources.
- 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.
- 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](#).
- Individuals participating in foreign government talent recruitment programs of foreign countries of risk are not eligible to compete.<sup>6</sup> Further, teams that include individuals participating in foreign government talent recruitment programs of foreign countries of risk are not eligible to compete. Participation in a foreign government talent recruitment program could conflict with this objective

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<sup>6</sup> A foreign government talent recruitment program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, and regardless of whether they have 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 physically relocate to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at U.S. 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. Currently, the list of countries of risk includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China.

by resulting in unauthorized transfer of scientific and technical information to foreign government entities.

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

# 4 Phase 1: Think It Rules

## 4.1 Goal

Competitors design a “minimum viable program” (MVP) for DAC innovators that focuses on the program requirements (see [Program Requirements](#)). Competitors should demonstrate that they have a plan, access to the right networks, and the skills and expertise to successfully implement their MVP.

## 4.2 Prizes

Up to 12 teams will be awarded \$100,000 each.

## 4.3 How To Enter

Complete a submission package online on [HeroX](#) before the contest closing date.

## 4.4 Think It Phase Process

The Think It Phase consists of three steps:

1. **Preparation, Activation, and Submission** – Competitors incorporate all program requirements into their MVP design. Competitors complete and submit their submission packages online before Think It ends.
2. **Assessment** – The Prize Administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The prize judge will review the relevant submission information and determine the winners. The judging criteria assess the following competitor activities:
  - **Program Capabilities** – Demonstrate the organization’s understanding of the DAC landscape and field and that the organization has capabilities to support DAC innovators.
  - **Program Development** – Form a plan to develop programming that addresses all program requirements. Identify metrics and leading indicators that will be used to evaluate your program’s success. Prove that you have or can develop a strong pipeline to recruit and support DAC start-ups.
  - **Network, Team, and Resources** – Demonstrate that your team has the network and expertise to implement the plan and add value to start-ups.
3. **Announcement** – After the semifinalists are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning Think It, semifinalists will implement their plan, make progress on their plan, and compete in Move It.

## 4.5 What To Submit

**All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.**

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate competitors' submissions by agreeing or disagreeing with a set of assigned statements on a scale. These statement sections, which are the criteria, are weighted as follows:

Narrative Section	Weight
Question 1 - DAC Overview	10%
Question 2 - MVP	30%
Question 3 - Implementation Plan	30%
Question 4 - Team	15%
Reviewer Recommendation	15%

A complete submission package for Think It should include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ninety-second video</li> <li>Cover page content</li> <li>Core narrative that answers four questions (not to exceed 2,500 words)</li> <li>One-slide PowerPoint summary (public)</li> <li>Letters of commitment or support (optional).</li> </ul>

**Note: Portions of the submission package will be 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.

Online Video
<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe your organization and how it is uniquely qualified to address the needs of the entrepreneurs and DAC technologies it serves.</li> <li>Describe your target program requirement(s) and why it is critical that your organization addresses them.</li> <li>Describe your MVP.</li> </ul> <p>Although there is no specific scoring criteria for the video, it will be evaluated as part of the entire submission package. The video serves as a first introduction of your organization and MVP to the reviewers.</p> <p>Post your video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways but remember that time-consuming activities that only improve production values (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques) are not necessary. Please note that upon winner selection, semifinalists' videos may be made publicly available. The Prize Administrator will notify semifinalists prior to videos becoming public.</p>

**Cover Page – List basic information about your submission.**

- Organization name
- Link to your 90-second video online
- Key project members (names, roles, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Program requirements you are addressing and any prior experience with DAC/CDR programming
- Your city, state, and nine-digit zip code
- Relevant partners and affiliates (if applicable).

Each of the following four questions should be addressed in the core narrative deliverable. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 2,500 words at 12-point font size**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission ([see template](#) for details). You may also include **up to five labeled supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

**Core Narrative**

Max 2,500 words and five supporting images or figures (PDF)

**Question 1: DAC Overview**

*Describe the context and the need for the program requirements you are addressing.*

**Suggested content you provide:**

- Describe the context in which your organization operates.
- Identify any regional or systemic challenges or gaps that exist for providing support to DAC innovators and why your organization is positioned to fill them.
- Identify how you are addressing the program requirements and why it is critical that your organization address them now.
- Describe the outcomes you hope to achieve.

**A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:**

- The competitor clearly defines and demonstrates a strong understanding of the regional or national needs for serving DAC innovators.
- The competitor makes a compelling case for why new DAC-focused programming will make a positive impact on their region or network.
- The competitor demonstrates a strong understanding of the program requirement area(s) (including DEIA, especially if they have prior experience with CDR programming).
- The outcomes directly address the problems and program requirement areas identified.

**Question 2: Minimum Viable Program (MVP)**

*Describe your MVP and how it fulfills the DAC EPIC Prize objectives.*

**Suggested content you provide:**

- A description of the MVP and how it adds value to supporting DAC innovators and regional or sectoral partnerships

**A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:**

- The competitor’s proposed program will establish or deepen partnerships and add value to the DAC innovators.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear articulation of how your MVP is new/different from your current programming</li> <li>• Why new programming is needed and why this new programming adds value to your organization</li> <li>• Identification of leading indicators and metrics that will be used to evaluate your MVP's success.</li> <li>• Description of how curriculum and programming will help innovators consider and address the co-benefits and environmental impacts of their technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor clearly demonstrates how this programming is new/different/additive to their current programming.</li> <li>• The competitor has identified appropriate qualitative and quantitative success metrics.</li> <li>• The MVP represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions and lessons learned from other notable efforts in this space.</li> <li>• The competitor clearly addresses the criteria outlined for their selected program requirement area(s).</li> <li>• The competitor's MVP effectively describes programming that would enable precommercial innovators to assess and mitigate environmental impacts.</li> </ul>
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**Question 3: MVP Implementation Plan**  
*Describe how you would implement the MVP and validate its success.*

<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define your goals, implementation plan, and budget for your MVP in Move It and Prove It, including specific milestones.</li> <li>• Describe your team's readiness to implement your MVP.</li> <li>• Provide evidence that after winning Think It, you have the talent, resources, and finances to achieve your Move It goals. If additional resources are necessary, describe your plan for obtaining them.</li> <li>• Describe how you envision sustaining, replicating, or scaling the MVP after the DAC EPIC Prize.</li> <li>• Describe the plan to track identified leading indicators and metrics that will be used to evaluate your MVP's success. (See <a href="#">Appendix 2: Impact Tracking Metrics</a> for additional details.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation plan is ambitious, includes a risk mitigation strategy, and shows a commitment to an accelerated program development cycle.</li> <li>• The stated Move It and Prove It goals represent substantial progress toward developing the MVP.</li> <li>• The competitor has demonstrated access to necessary resources and/or a plan to obtain additional resources needed to execute their proposed plan.</li> <li>• The plan to track identified metrics appears reasonable and useful to evaluate the MVP's success.</li> </ul>
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**Question 4: Organization and Team**  
*Describe your organization, team, and network and why you are qualified to implement the MVP.*

<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the mission and objectives of the organization and how it fulfills the program requirements.</li> <li>• Describe your team members and/or the organization's past performance in assisting entrepreneurs with launching or growing business ventures.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor has described a comprehensive mission and set of objectives that align with the DAC EPIC Prize goals.</li> <li>• The competitor has a successful track record of supporting entrepreneurs in launching or growing business ventures.</li> <li>• The competitor has access to a strong network of individuals and organizations that complement</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your external advisors, advisory board, and/or regional partnerships, as well as how you hope to expand.</li> <li>• Describe what practices you engage in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors.</li> <li>• Describe what makes your team uniquely qualified to support DAC innovators.</li> <li>• Describe how your organization will find and recruit DAC innovators, specifically for the DAC Technology Prize.</li> </ul>	<p>the competitor’s expertise, as well as an awareness of their opportunities to grow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor has engaged in thoughtful and specific practices to advance equity and inclusion among their team, partners, and advisors.</li> <li>• The submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support DAC innovators.</li> </ul>
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<b>Reviewer Recommendation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Statement is scored:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This competitor should be strongly considered for a Think It prize. (yes/no)</li> </ul>

<b>Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide will be made public)</b>
<p>Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains information about your organization, MVP, and plan for implementation. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.</p>

<b>Letters of Commitment or Support (Optional)</b>
<p>Combine and upload as a single file one-page letters from relevant entities (e.g., partners, potential customers) to provide context and show the viability of your MVP. This could include letters from partners or others you believe are critical to the success of your proposal. Any letters of commitment or support must be on letterhead, uploaded as a single file, and readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.</p>

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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

## 4.6 How We Score

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each section of the narrative questions receives a weighted score, based on the bulleted list of statements. The

bullets guide the single overall score for each section. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the weighted sum of the scores for all the sections. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the prize.

- 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.

**Note:** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The Prize Administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- Interviews: The Prize Administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the Think It Phase competitors. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the judge may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The selection committee will take the submission package, reviewers scores, interview findings, and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account when determining winners. 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.

## 4.7 Additional Requirements

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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

# 5 Phase 2: Move It Rules

## 5.1 Goal

Competitors move their MVP forward by demonstrating that the program requirements are being incorporated. Competitors will make significant progress toward recruiting and supporting DAC innovators through the implementation of their MVP.

## 5.2 Prizes

Up to five teams will be awarded \$300,000 each.

## 5.3 How To Enter

Complete a submission package online at [HeroX](#) before the contest closing date.

## 5.4 Move It Phase Process

The Move It Phase consists of three steps:

1. **Progress and Submission** – Competitors will make significant progress in moving their MVP forward and will complete and submit their submission packages online before the Move It Phase ends.
2. **Assessment** – The Prize Administrator will screen submissions for eligibility and completion and assign expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The prize judge will review the relevant submission information and determine the winners. The judging criteria assess the following competitor activities:
  - **Plan Implementation** – Demonstrate significant progress in implementing your MVP and demonstrate how your MVP is supporting DAC innovators. Prove that you have a strong pipeline to access DAC innovators.
  - **Network, Team, and Resources** – Demonstrate that your team has gained expertise in the DAC field and has built the network and expertise necessary to implement the plan and add value to start-ups.
3. **Interview Day** – Participate in an interview session with the panel of reviewers to provide additional details on your MVP implementation.
4. **Announcement** – After the finalists are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator will notify them and request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning the Move It Phase, finalists will make progress on their plan and compete in the Prove It Phase.

## 5.5 What To Submit

**All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.**

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate competitors' submissions by agreeing or disagreeing with a set of assigned statements on a scale. These statement sections, which are the criteria, are weighted as follows:

Narrative Section	Weight
Question 1 – DAC Overview	10%
Question 2 – MVP	30%
Question 3 – Implementation Plan	30%
Question 4 – Team	15%
Reviewer Recommendation	15%

A complete submission package for the Move It Phase should include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120-second video</li> <li>• Cover page content</li> <li>• Narrative that answers four questions (not to exceed 3,000 words)</li> <li>• Start-up reference(s)</li> <li>• One-slide PowerPoint summary (public)</li> <li>• Letters of commitment or support (optional).</li> </ul>
Interview Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the Interview Day Event (mandatory).</li> </ul>

**Note:** Only the PowerPoint slide will be made available to the public. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional details.

**120 Second (2 minute) Online Video**

**Suggested content you provide:**

- Describe your organization and how it is uniquely qualified to address the needs of the entrepreneurs and energy technologies it serves.
- Describe the progress made implementing your MVP.
- Describe how your organization fits into the DAC sectoral landscape.

Although there is no specific scoring criteria for the video, it will be evaluated as part of the entire submission package. The video serves as a first introduction of your organization, MVP, and progress to the reviewers, who may be different for each phase.

Post your video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways but remember that time-consuming activities that only improve production value (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic

techniques) are not necessary. Please note that upon winner selection, videos may be made publicly available.

**Cover Page**

List basic information about your submission

Template<sup>7</sup>: <https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC/resources>

- Organization name
- Link to your 120-second video online
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Your city, state, and nine-digit zip code
- Relevant partners and affiliates (if applicable).

Answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. Individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 3,000 words at 12-point font size**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission (see [template](#) for details). You may include **up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

**Core Narrative**

Max 3,000 words and five supporting images or figures (PDF)

Template<sup>8</sup>: <https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC/resources>

**Question 1: Problem Overview** *Describe the context and the need for the program requirements you are addressing.*

**Suggested content you provide:**

- Briefly provide context and describe the challenges faced in supporting DAC innovators.
- Describe what you have learned about these challenges and DAC during Move It.
- Describe how your learnings reinforce or change the outcomes you hope to achieve.

**A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:**

- The competitor presents a clear understanding of the regional or situational needs for serving DAC innovators and how their programming addresses these needs.
- The competitor significantly advanced their understanding of their program requirement area(s) during Move It.
- The competitor’s lessons learned have informed their outcomes.

**Question 2: Minimum Viable Program (MVP)**

*Describe progress made on the MVP.*

**Suggested content you provide:**

**A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:**

<sup>7</sup> Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

<sup>8</sup> Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describe the MVP and how it addresses the identified challenges and supports DAC innovators.</li> <li>• Describe progress implementing your MVP during Move It and whether you were able to meet (or exceed) your planned goals.</li> <li>• Highlight key activities, relationships, and milestones completed during Move It.</li> <li>• Report on the metrics identified during Think It and describe any early conclusions that the results show.</li> <li>• Describe any feedback you received on your MVP and what changes you already implemented because of that feedback.</li> <li>• Specifically describe your organization’s efforts to recruit and support start-ups for the DAC Pre-Commercial Technology Prize.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor is successfully meeting the goals and outcomes proposed in Think It.</li> <li>• The competitor demonstrates that impressive and convincing progress was made during Move It.</li> <li>• Activities, relationships, and milestones accomplished directly address the program requirement area(s).</li> <li>• The metrics are providing relevant and useful insight into the MVP’s success.</li> <li>• The competitor solicited feedback from relevant stakeholders and made improvements to the MVP based on this feedback.</li> <li>• The competitor leveraged their program to support DAC innovators competing in the DAC Pre-Commercial Technology Prize.</li> </ul>
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**Question 3: MVP Implementation Plan**  
*Describe your short-term and long-term plan for implementing and validating the MVP.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define your goals, implementation plan, and budget for the Prove It Phase, including specific milestones.</li> <li>• Highlight any changes you are making to your implementation plan as a result of feedback you obtained during Move It.</li> <li>• Provide evidence that after winning Move It, you have the talent, resources, and finances to achieve your Prove It goals. If additional resources are necessary, describe your plan for obtaining them.</li> <li>• Describe how you envision sustaining the MVP beyond the DAC EPIC prize and any plans for replicating or scaling.</li> <li>• Provide updated metrics and leading indicators, as well as a tracking plan for Prove It (see <a href="#">Appendix 2: Impact Tracking Metrics</a> for additional details).</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation plan is ambitious, reduces risks, and shows a commitment to an accelerated program development cycle.</li> <li>• The proposed plan will lead to the completion of MVP implementation during Prove It.</li> <li>• The competitor has demonstrated that they have the resources or a plan to get the resources needed to complete implementation of the MVP.</li> <li>• The competitor has outlined an ambitious but realistic plan for sustaining the MVP and has highlighted opportunities and potential for replication or scaling.</li> <li>• The metrics and leading indicators are providing relevant and useful insight into the MVP’s success.</li> </ul>
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**Question 4: Organization and Team**  
*Describe your organization, team, and network and why you are qualified to implement the MVP.*

<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describe the mission and objectives of your organization and team members' expertise.</li> <li>• How has your team evolved over the prize phase? Please highlight the diversity, knowledge, and skills that make the team uniquely capable of achieving success.</li> <li>• What partnerships, networks, or advisors you have utilized during Move It?</li> <li>• Describe the process your organization used to attract DAC innovators.</li> <li>• Describe what practices you engaged in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor has described a comprehensive mission and set of objectives that align with DOE's portfolio of carbon-removal-related efforts.</li> <li>• The team has the knowledge, experience, and determination to successfully implement the MVP.</li> <li>• The competitor filled expertise gaps with additions to the team or their network.</li> <li>• The submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support DAC innovators.</li> <li>• The competitor has been thoughtful about equity and inclusion as they build out their team and select start-ups.</li> </ul>
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**Reviewer Recommendation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Statement is scored:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This competitor should be strongly considered for a Move It prize. (yes/no)</li> </ul>
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**Start-Up Reference (a PDF listing the start-ups requested to complete the reference form)**

Identify up to three DAC start-ups that your organization supported during the Move It Phase and ask each start-up to fill out the Start-Up Reference Form found on the [Resources tab on HeroX](#). It is your responsibility to make sure start-ups complete the reference form prior to the submission deadline.

Through the form, the start-up will be asked to describe and evaluate the support received from your organization. This feedback will be submitted directly by the start-up through the reference form. You, as the competitor, will not see the feedback given.

As a part of your submission package, provide a list of the start-ups and points of contact you requested to fill out the Start-Up Reference Form. You are required to provide a minimum of one start-up reference and may submit up to three.



### Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide will be made public)

Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains information about your organization, MVP, and plan for implementation. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

### Letters of Commitment or Support (Optional)

Combine and upload as a single file one-page letters from relevant entities (e.g., partners, potential customers) to provide context and show the viability of your MVP. This could include letters from partners or others you believe are critical to the success of your proposal. Any letters of commitment or support must be on letterhead, uploaded as a single file, and readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.

### Interview Day Event

You are required to participate in a virtual Interview Day event with a panel of expert reviewers. Details about the format for the Interview Day will be provided prior to the Move It submission deadline.

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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

## 5.6 How We Score

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each section of the narrative questions receives a weighted score, based on the bulleted list of statements. The bullets guide the single overall score for each section. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the weighted sum of the scores for all the sections. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the prize.
  - 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.

**Note:** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The Prize Administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- Interviews: The Prize Administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the competitors. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners

and would serve to help clarify questions the judge may have. Attending interviews is required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The selection committee will take the submission package, reviewers scores, interview findings, and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account when determining winners. 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.

## 5.7 Additional Requirements

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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

# 6 Phase 3: Prove It Rules

## 6.1 Goal

Competitors prove their MVP was successful and provide documentation that the program can replicate and scale.

## 6.2 Prizes

One team will be awarded a \$750,000 grand prize, and one runner-up team will receive a \$250,000 prize.

## 6.3 How To Enter

Complete a submission package online at [HeroX](#) before the contest closing date.

## 6.4 Prove It Phase Process

The Prove It Phase consists of three steps:

- 1. Progress and Submission** – Competitors have completed or exceeded their original expectations for their MVP and provide documentation that the program will be sustained after the DAC EPIC Prize, in addition to plans for replication or scaling in the future. Competitors complete their submission package by the Prove It deadline.
- 2. Assessment** – The Prize Administrator will screen submissions for eligibility and completion and assign expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The prize judge will review the relevant submission information and determine the winners. The judging criteria assess the following competitor activities:
  - **MVP Completion and Results Documentation** – Complete implementation of your MVP and documentation of the results through quantitative and qualitative feedback and metrics.
  - **DAC Innovator Recruitment and Pipeline** – Prove that you have a strong pipeline to access DAC innovators for your organization.
  - **Future Planning** – Provide the best documentation possible that this program will replicate and scale. Documentation could include a legally binding commitment from partners, state sponsorships, etc.
- 3. Interview Day** – Participate in an interview session with the panel of reviewers to provide additional details on your MVP completion and future plans.
- 4. Announcement** – After the finalists are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator will notify them and request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes.

## 6.5 What To Submit

**All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.**

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate your submission by agreeing or disagreeing with a set of assigned statements on a scale. These statement sections, which are the criteria, are weighted as follows:

Narrative Section	Weight
Question 1 – Problem Overview	10%
Question 2 – MVP Results	30%
Question 3 – Future Plans	30%
Question 4 – Organization and Team	15%
Reviewer Recommendation	15%

A complete submission package for the Prove It Phase should include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 300-second (five-minute) video</li> <li>• Cover page content</li> <li>• Narrative that answers four questions (not to exceed 4,000 words)</li> <li>• Start-up reference(s)</li> <li>• One-slide PowerPoint summary (public)</li> <li>• Replication and continuation documentation (required).</li> </ul>
FECM Workshop Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend and participate in FECM's workshop in August 2024.</li> </ul>
Interview Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the Interview Day Event.</li> </ul>

**Note: Portions of the submission package will be 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.

### 5 Minute Online Video

**Suggested content you provide:**

- Describe your organization.

- Describe your MVP and the need that it addressed.
- Showcase what you have accomplished since the Think It Phase.
- Discuss your future plans to support DAC innovation.

You should update your video from previous phases to illustrate the work you have accomplished over the course of the competition. Although there is no specific scoring criteria for the video, it will be evaluated as part of the entire submission package. The video serves as a first introduction of your organization, MVP, and progress to the reviewers, who may be different for each phase. This video may also be used to share your accomplishments with the public.

Post your video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways, but remember that time-consuming activities that only improve production value (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques) are not necessary. Please note that upon winner selection, videos may be made publicly available.

### Cover Page – List basic information about your submission

Template<sup>9</sup>: <https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC/resources>

- Organization name
- Link to your five-minute video online
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Your city, state, and nine-digit zip code
- Relevant partners and affiliates (if applicable).

You should answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 4,000 words at 12-point font size**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission (see [template](#) for details). You may also include **up to eight supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

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<sup>9</sup> Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

<p><b>Core Narrative</b></p> <p>Max 4,000 words and eight supporting images or figures (PDF)</p> <p>Template <sup>10</sup>: <a href="https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC/resources">https://www.herox.com/DAC-pre-commercial-EPIC/resources</a></p>	
<p><b>Question 1: Problem Overview</b></p> <p><i>Describe the context and the need for the program requirements you're addressing.</i></p>	
<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly provide your context and describe the challenges faced in supporting DAC innovators.</li> <li>• Describe what you have learned about these challenges and program requirement areas during Prove It.</li> <li>• Identify what specific factors led to the success of your MVP in your regional context that other incubators should consider if they were to implement similar programming in a comparable context.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor presents a clear understanding of the regional or fieldwide needs of DAC innovators and how their programming addresses these needs.</li> <li>• The competitor significantly advanced their understanding of the program requirement area(s) during Prove It.</li> <li>• The competitor logically identifies key regional and contextual factors that led to the success of their MVP.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 2: Minimum Viable Program (MVP) Results</b></p> <p><i>Describe the completion of your MVP.</i></p>	
<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describe the MVP.</li> <li>• Describe how you completed the MVP during Prove It and if you were able to meet or exceed your planned goals.</li> <li>• Highlight key activities, relationships, and milestones completed during Prove It.</li> <li>• Report on the metrics and leading indicators identified during Move It and the conclusions you can draw.</li> <li>• Evaluate whether and how your MVP successfully addressed the program requirement areas.</li> <li>• Identify lessons learned from your MVP implementation and what advice you would give another incubator looking to implement a similar program.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The competitor successfully met or exceeded the goals and outcomes proposed in Move It.</li> <li>• The competitor demonstrates that impressive and convincing progress was made to complete MVP implementation during Prove It.</li> <li>• Activities, relationships, and milestones accomplished directly address the program requirement areas.</li> <li>• The competitor provides evidence that their MVP had a positive impact on the program requirement areas.</li> <li>• The metrics and leading indicators provide relevant and useful insight into the MVP's success.</li> </ul>

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<sup>10</sup> Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competitor provides a balanced assessment of both the successes and lessons learned from the MVP implementation.</li> </ul>
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**Question 3: Future Plans**  
*Describe how you will replicate or scale your MVP.*

<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe your plans to sustain, replicate and/or scale the MVP, as well as what changes you will make to the programming moving forward.</li> <li>Provide an explanation of the replication and continuation documentation and why these commitments best illustrate program continuation.</li> <li>Provide evidence that you currently have the commitments, funding, and resources to sustain the MVP or a plan to obtain them.</li> <li>Provide a high-level budget and plan to meet your goals.</li> <li>Identify your short-term (one-year) and long-term (five-year) goals for the impact of your MVP and what metrics will be used to track success.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competitor presents an ambitious but realistic plan to sustain, replicate, and/or scale the MVP.</li> <li>There is a high probability that the competitor will be successful in their plan implementation.</li> <li>The replication and continuation documentation provides relevant and strong evidence of program continuation.</li> <li>The competitor has demonstrated that they have the resources or a plan to get the resources needed to sustain the MVP.</li> <li>If successful, the short-term and long-term goals will have a significant impact on the support available for energy entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>
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**Question 4: Organization and Team**  
*Describe your organization, team, and network and why you can build on the success of your MVP.*

<p><b>Suggested content you provide:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe your organization’s strategic plan and how the lessons learned from the MVP fit into that plan.</li> <li>Describe how your organization has and will continue to build its internal capacity to support the MVP.</li> <li>Describe what practices you engaged in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competitor has taken concrete action to demonstrate that continuation of the MVP is a priority and adds value to the organization.</li> <li>The competitor filled expertise gaps with additions the team or their network.</li> <li>The competitor has been thoughtful about equity and inclusion as they build out their team and select start-ups.</li> </ul>
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**Reviewer Recommendation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Statement is scored:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This competitor should be strongly considered for a Prove It prize. (yes/no)</li> </ul>
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### **Start-Up Reference (a PDF listing the start-ups requested to complete the reference form)**

Identify up to five DAC start-ups that your organization supported during the Prove It Phase and ask each start-up to fill out the Start-Up Reference Form found on the [Resources tab on HeroX](#). It is your responsibility to make sure start-ups complete the reference form prior to the submission deadline.

Through the form, the start-up will be asked to describe and evaluate the support received from your organization. This feedback will be submitted directly by the start-up through the reference form. You, as the competitor, will not see the feedback given.

As a part of your submission package, provide a list of the start-ups and points of contact you requested to fill out the Start-Up Reference Form. You are required to provide a minimum of two start-up references and may submit up to five.

### **Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF will be made public)**

Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains information about your organization, MVP, and accomplishments made during the Prove It Phase. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

### **Replication and Continuation Documentation (Required)**

Competitors must provide the best documentation possible that this program will be sustained, replicated, and/or scaled. Documentation could include a legally binding commitment from partners, state sponsorships, etc.

Combine and upload as a single file one-page letters from relevant entities (e.g., partners, potential customers) to provide context. Any letters of commitment or support must be on letterhead, uploaded as a single file, and readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.

### **2024 Carbon Management Project Review Meeting**

You are required to attend and participate in FECM's August 2024 Carbon Management Project Review Meeting. DAC EPIC Incubator Prize competitors will be asked to participate in or lead a session on supporting technology commercialization. More details will be provided prior to the Project Review Meeting.

### **Interview Day Event**

You are required to participate in a virtual Interview Day event with a panel of expert reviewers. Details about the format for the Interview Day will be provided prior to the Prove It submission deadline.



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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

## 6.6 How We Score

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each section of the narrative questions receives a weighted score, based on the bulleted list of statements. The bullets guide the single overall score for each section. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the weighted sum of the scores for all the sections. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the prize.
  - 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.

**Note:** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The Prize Administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- Interviews: The Prize Administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the contest competitors. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the judge may have. Attending interviews is required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

When making the final determination of winners, the judge will take into account the submission package, reviewer scores, interview findings, contributions to FECM's August 2024 Carbon Management Project Review Meeting, and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#). 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.

## 6.7 Additional Requirements

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

**COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**



# Appendix 1: Additional Terms And Conditions

## A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Your submission for the DAC EPIC Prize is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online at [HeroX](#) before the prize closes. FECM will not accept late submissions or any other form of submission.
- You must mark all submissions that you wish to protect from public disclosure according to the instructions later in this section. Unmarked or improperly marked submissions will be deemed to have been provided with unlimited rights and may be used in any manner and for any purpose whatsoever.
- You must include all the required submission elements. The Prize Administrator may disqualify your submission after an initial screening if you fail to provide all required submission elements. Competitors may be given an opportunity to rectify nonsubstantive submission errors due to technical challenges with the submission platform, including late submissions due to a system glitch.
- Your submission must be in English and in a format readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- DOE or NREL will disqualify submissions if they contain any matter that, in their sole discretion, is indecent, obscene, defamatory, libelous, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- Your clicking “Accept” on the HeroX platform and proceeding to register for the contest described in this document forms a valid and binding agreement between you and the U.S. Department of Energy, and is in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to its contests. You should print and keep a copy of these rules, which apply only to the contest described here and to no other contest on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
- You will be required to sign the following statement as part of your submission to this prize program:

I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this prize. I understand that I am providing this submission to the Federal Government. 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.

## A.2 Verification for Payments

The Prize Administrator will verify the identity and the role of a participant potentially qualified to receive the prizes. Receiving a prize payment is contingent upon fulfilling all requirements contained herein. The Prize Administrator will notify winning competitors using provided email contact information after the date that results are announced. Each competitor (or parent/guardian if under 18 years of age) will be required to sign and return to the Prize Administrator, within 15 days of the date the notice is sent, a completed National Renewable Energy Laboratory Request for ACH Banking Information form and a completed W-9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>). At the sole discretion of the Prize Administrator, a winning competitor will be disqualified from the competition and receive no prize funds if: (i) the person/entity cannot be contacted; (ii) the person/entity fails to sign and return the required documentation within the required time period; (iii) the notification is returned as undeliverable; or (iv) the submission or person/entity is disqualified for any other reason.

## A.3 Teams and Single-Entity Awards

The Prize Administrator will award a single dollar amount to the designated primary Competitor. In this case, the Competitor shall be an incubator, organization, and/or limited liability company (LLC). Prize awards will not be paid to individuals directly. The primary Competitor is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among its team members and/or allocating the funds for operational use. The primary Competitor entity is also responsible for all associated taxes.

## A.4 Submission Rights

The public videos in this contest must be submitted and released to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the Prize Administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest a license to display publicly and use the parts of the submission that are designated as “public” for government purpose. This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the Prize Administrator’s or HeroX’s website, on the contest website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and the inclusion of the submission in any other media, worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the Prize Administrator, and judges for purposes of the contests, including but not limited to screening and evaluation purposes. The Prize Administrator and any third parties acting on their behalf will also have the right to publicize the competitors’ names and, as applicable, the names of competitors’ team 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.5 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 upon any other third-party rights of which the competitor is aware; and that the submission is free of malware.

## A.6 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.7 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. Competitors and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

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

## A.8 Publicity

The winners of these prizes (collectively, "Winners") will be featured on DOE and NREL 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.9 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 Assistant Secretary of FECM, the Assistant Secretary has determined that no liability insurance will be required of competitors to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

## A.10 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.

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

- The cover sheet of the submission must be marked as follows and 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]

- 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.”
- In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

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

## A.11 Privacy

If you choose to provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website, you 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 you in matters regarding your submission and/or the contest unless you 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.12 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 in the Think It, Move It, and Prove It contests that it will select up to several winners for each contest, DOE reserves the right to only select competitors that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no competitors are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no competitors to be winners and will award no prize money.

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

## A.13 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the Prize Administrator to maximize the impact of contest funds. Some factors outside the control of competitors and beyond the independent expert reviewer 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:

- The geographic diversity and potential economic impact of projects.
- Diversity among competitors.
- The quantity and quality of start-ups competing in the DAC Technology Prize that the competitor assisted.
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources are nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission generally.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits technological or programmatic diversity when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio and other competitors.
- The degree to which the curriculum or commercialization support best addresses engineering and hard-tech barriers.
- Whether the submission is likely to lead to increased employment, workforce development, and manufacturing in the United States, including in low- to moderate-income communities.
- 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), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) or members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities.
- The level of industry involvement and demonstrated ability to accelerate commercialization and overcome key market barriers, increase U.S. employment and manufacturing, and provide U.S. economic benefits.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate transformational technological, financial, or workforce advances in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical or financial uncertainty.
- The degree to which the submission supports complementary DOE-funded efforts or projects, which, when taken together, will best achieve the goals and objectives of DOE.

- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's funding to new competitors and recipients who have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission enables new and expanding market segments.
- Whether the project promotes increased coordination with nongovernmental entities for the demonstration of technologies and research submissions to facilitate technology transfer.
- Whether the submission content sufficiently confirms the competitor's intent to support commercialization of early-stage technology and establish a viable U.S.-based business in the near future.



# Appendix 2: Impact Tracking Metrics

Reported at point of cohort selection:

1. Number of competitors to program (total)
2. Number of competitors to program applying with a DOE-funded technology (e.g., licensed from a national lab or developed with help from a DOE grant)
3. Number of accepted cohort members working on a DOE-funded technology
4. Number of start-ups served and types of technologies, including names and locations.
5. Number of partnerships, including addition of new team members, focused on addressing DEIA and justice considerations.

Reported at beginning of performance period (baseline) and on an annual timescale:

6. Number of jobs created by companies (have companies report total number of employees at time of survey)
  - Number of full-time
  - Number of part-time.
7. Number of new national lab partnerships (e.g., Cooperative Research and Development Agreements, license agreements)
8. Number of start-ups that received investment/follow-on funding
9. Dollars raised by start-ups as investment/follow-on funding
10. Amount of company revenue
  - Total, summed across all companies
  - Average across all companies.
11. Number of prototypes launched
12. Number of demonstration projects launched
13. Number of patents filed/issued
14. Number of peer-reviewed publications
15. Catalog of public presentations, including the intended audience and purpose of the engagement
16. Number of contracts (e.g., pre-purchase, off-takes) signed
17. Number of contracts (e.g., pre-purchase, off-takes) delivered
18. Website development and traffic
19. Employee turnover rate compared to industry baselines.

**Notes:** “Competitor” and “cohort member” refer to the team as a whole. “Team members” refers to individuals on the team.