



EPIC PRIZE ROUND 2

OFFICIAL RULES DOCUMENT

Modification 2

April 6, 2023

Modification 1 included:

- Added details on the Building Technologies Office Bonus Prize to Appendix 3
- Introduced the Geothermal Technologies Office Bonus Prize of \$50,000

Modification 2 included:

- Added details on the Geothermal Technologies Office Bonus Prize to Appendix 3

Modification 3 included:

- Removed the public requirement for the video in the Move It and Prove It phases.
- Introduced the Geothermal Technologies Office Start-Up Pitch Competition Bonus Prize to Appendix 4
- Introduced the Grid Enhancing Technologies Start-Up Pitch Competition Bonus Prize to Appendix 4

Modification 4 includes the following, which are highlighted throughout the document:

- Added details on the downselect process for the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition
- Added details about the prize money for the Prove It Core Start-Up Pitch Competition
- Added eligibility and participation details to the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition
- Updated the Solar Energy Technologies Office Start-Up Pitch Competition Bonus Prize to Appendix 4

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EPIC PROGRAM SUMMARY

These rules apply to Round 2 of the Energy Program for Innovation Clusters (EPIC) Prize, with over \$4 million in prizes available across three phases and an additional \$210,000 of prizes available through two pitch competitions. Round 2 opened for submissions on August 2, 2022. Round 1 of EPIC included a single-phase prize with 20 winners announced in October 2020. Round 1 was held in conjunction with a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), with 10 awardees announced in June 2021. Winners of the Round 1 EPIC Prize or FOA are both eligible to apply to the Round 2 Prize program.

EPIC PRIZE PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Technology Transitions (OTT) developed EPIC to encourage robust growth of regional energy innovation ecosystems across the United States. Innovation ecosystems, or clusters, increase the productivity of start-ups, drive the direction and pace of innovation, and stimulate the formation of new businesses, further reinforcing the cluster itself.

EPIC fulfills the congressional mandate for OTT to establish a competitive funding program for incubators¹ supporting energy innovation clusters.² The two core elements described below are the base of the EPIC program structure, to which as much as \$300,000 in additional Bonus Prizes may be added at any time. Bonus Prizes are a Boost Element and described further in the section titled [BOOST ELEMENTS](#).

EPIC consists of two elements:

1. **Core Incubator Prize:**
A 3-phase competition for incubators to propose high-impact ideas that support energy entrepreneurs and innovators, with an emphasis on supporting hard-tech solutions. Cash prizes are then awarded to those teams that make the most progress and impact over the course of the prize competition period. Competitors are incubators.
2. **Core Start-Up Pitch Competition:**
Two national pitch competitions for energy-related start-ups that occur during the final two phases of the Core Incubator Prize. Competitors are start-ups nominated by Core Incubator Prize Semifinalists. Competing start-ups must be focused on hard-tech development. Start-ups that are solely software or a business model innovation without being part of a hard-tech package are not eligible.

1 See definition in Glossary.

2 Energy Act of 2020, Title IX, Section 1001-6G.

CORE INCUBATOR PRIZE PROGRAM:



OTT's EPIC Prize is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's American-Made Challenges and the associated network. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) serves as the Prize Administrator for American-Made Challenges.

American-Made Challenges fast-track development timelines from years to months and speed progress thanks to rapid prize timelines and goals. Because prizes enable rapid innovation and relatively quick fund dispersion, they can be extremely effective in advancing new thinking in the energy sector, quickly building solutions, and making impactful connections between the public and private sectors. OTT's EPIC Prize is supported by the American-Made Network, which is composed of more than 250 organizations including government, universities, accelerators, incubators, manufacturers, and investors. [Visit the Network Matching Tool](#) to connect with members of the Network who may be relevant regional partners or available to serve as resources for entrepreneurs, innovators, and start-ups that you are supporting.

GLOSSARY

- Incubator: Any organization that aids in the development of new business ventures, including business incubators and accelerators, co-working start-up communities, or any other organizations that self-identify as advocates for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Minimum Viable Program: A scalable program model addressing the [Program Requirements](#) that your organization tests within the time constraints of the 3-phase EPIC Core Incubator Prize.
- Hard-tech: Any technology solution that involves physical products or processes, including those that are chemical or biological in nature.
- Semifinalist: Any winner of Design It, the first phase of the Core Incubator Prize. This includes winners of Design It Bonus Prizes.
- Finalist: Any winners of Move It, the second phase of the Core Incubator Prize.

BACKGROUND

DOE helps power and secure America's future and ensure the country's role as a leader in science and technology. In 2015, the Secretary of Energy authorized the formation of the Office of Technology Transitions (OTT) to be responsible for developing and overseeing delivery of DOE's strategic vision and goals for technology commercialization and engagement with the business and industrial sectors across the United States. OTT's statutory authority is derived from the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980, Energy Policy Act of 2005, and Energy Act of 2020. OTT's statutory mission is to expand the commercial impact and public benefit of DOE's research, development, demonstration, and deployment (RDD&D) portfolio to advance the economic, energy, and national security interests of the nation.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, over one million people in this country start a business each year, and by the end of the first year, at least 40% of them will be out of business. Within five years, more than 80% of them will have failed.³ Businesses often start and fail in the United States; however, when successful, they are critical to the economy and its growth both in the United States and abroad. Along with strengthening existing industries, start-ups drive technology development and the creation of new industries, business model innovation, and job creation. In particular, barriers to market entry for hardware or hard-tech start-ups are particularly high and include large capital requirements,⁴ long development times, and the need to integrate into complex systems and supply chains.⁵ EPIC was created to increase the number of businesses that successfully navigate the start-up process and have major impacts on the U.S. economy and workforce by bringing new energy technologies to market.

OTT recognizes that technology start-ups, particularly in energy-related sectors, 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.⁶ Innovation-accelerating organizations, which typically self-identify as incubators or accelerators, provide important services to assist start-ups in getting to market and play an increasingly important role for companies and entrepreneurs.

Strong business incubation services including, but not limited to mentoring, entrepreneurial training, access to testing, and prototyping assistance not only provide direct support for early-stage start-ups, but also have the potential to de-risk the start-ups for follow-on investors. Incubators have the

3 David A. Lewis, Elsie Harper-Anderson, and Lawrence A. Molnar, *Incubation Best Practices That Lead to Successful New Ventures* (2011); U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration

4 Hara Wang, Cyril Yee, *Climate Tech's Four Valleys of Death and Why We Must Build a Bridge* (2020); Rocky Mountain Institute

5 David J. Garfield, Kate E. Moore, Richard Adams, *New Approaches to Energy Hardware Innovation and Incubation* (2019); UMD and EFI, *Regional Clean Energy Innovation*

6 David A. Lewis, Elsie Harper-Anderson, and Lawrence A. Molnar, *Incubation Best Practices That Lead to Successful New Ventures* (2011); U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration

potential to accelerate regional economic development, strengthen national innovation capacity, and expand domestic energy-related manufacturing. By screening applicant companies, 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. Funding for traditional incubators is not widespread, given a funding focus on individual companies and laboratory research, and EPIC represents DOE's effort to engage with and support this community.

OTT supports incubators across the country through EPIC, which includes the EPIC Core Incubator Prize and EPIC Core Start-up Pitch Competitions.

EPIC CORE INCUBATOR PRIZE PROGRAM SUMMARY

OTT welcomes incubator organizations 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 EPIC. All competitors must address the Program Requirements (See the [PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS](#) section for definitions).

Program Requirements:

- A. Create New Programming
- B. Support Start-up Creation
- C. Build Regional Partnerships
- D. At least one of the following:
 1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
 2. Rural and Disadvantaged Communities
 3. Lab-to-Market
 4. Sector-Specific Support
 5. Other High Impact Theme

Competitors in the Core Incubator Prize will compete in three escalating phases:

Design It – 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 Core Incubator 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.

Any non-governmental entity that meets the eligibility requirements can apply to Design It.⁷ Winners are considered Semifinalists and will receive a cash prize and the ability to nominate a start-up to the Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions. See the

⁷ Subject to the [ELIGIBILITY](#) requirements.

[DESIGN IT PHASE RULES](#) for more information.

Move It – Only winners of Design 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
- 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 Design It phase.

Winners will be determined through a combination of the online submission package and interview session. The performance of the nominated start-up in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition may also be considered. The competitors that show the most significant progress will move on to the next phase. Winners are considered Finalists and will receive a cash prize. See the [MOVE IT PHASE RULES](#) for more information.

Prove It – Only winners of Move It are eligible to compete in Prove It. Competitors will prove their MVP implementation of the Program Requirements is successful. Competitors will provide:

- Quantitative and qualitative justification (metrics, measures) for the MVP's success
- A plan for driving long-term growth, endurance, and repeatable success of the MVP
- 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 interview session. The performance of the nominated start-up in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition may also be considered. Winners will receive a cash prize. See the [PROVE IT CONTEST RULES](#) for more information.

The Core Incubator Prize can be augmented by Boost Elements at any point. These will be outlined in the corresponding rules document for the EPIC Prize (see [APPENDIX 3](#) for more information).

EPIC CORE START-UP PITCH COMPETITIONS SUMMARY

The Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions run concurrently with the Core Incubator Prize. One competition will take place during the Move It phase, and the second during the Prove It phase. Each of these competitions offer an opportunity for start-ups nominated by EPIC Prize Semifinalists to present their business plans to win a cash prize. All Semifinalists (selected during the Design It phase) are eligible to nominate a start-up to the two subsequent pitch competitions. Start-ups

compete for first, second, and third place cash prizes. Additionally, the incubator nominator of first-place start-up will also receive a cash prize.

These prizes may be augmented by Boost Elements outlined in the rules document for the corresponding round.

See [CORE START-UP PITCH COMPETITION RULES](#) for more information.

BOOST ELEMENTS

EPIC is intended to serve as a scalable and replicable framework for efficiently deploying support to incubators serving energy entrepreneurs and start-ups. At any time, DOE Program Offices may leverage this framework by sponsoring one or more Boost Elements.

The Boost Elements are as follows:

- **Core Incubator Prize Bonus Prize:**
A Program Office may elect to provide a Bonus Prize to one or more incubators competing in the Core Incubator Prize for focusing on a priority area of their choice. Bonus Prize winners are awarded from the pool of Design It Phase competitors. Bonus Prize winners are considered Semifinalists and become eligible to move onto the Move It Phase.
- **Core Start-Up Pitch Competition Bonus Prize:**
A Program Office may elect to provide a Bonus Prize to one or more start-ups competing in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions for working in a specific priority area.
- **Partner Prize Program:**
A Program Office may elect to fund an entire stand-alone 3-phase EPIC Prize to award incubators focusing support on a specific priority area. This stand-alone 3-phase prize would use the same structure as Core Incubator Prize, but run separately from the Core Incubator Prize. DOE will release a separate announcement if a Partner Prize Program is added.
- **Partner Pitch Competition:**
A Program Office may elect to fund an entire stand-alone Start-Up Pitch Competition, asking incubators to nominate start-ups focused in a specific priority area. Partner Pitch Competitions are run separately from the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition. DOE will release a separate announcement if a Partner Pitch Competition is added.

Boost Elements may be added at any point. Any updates will be posted on the HeroX prize page [here](#).

ELIGIBILITY

ALL CONTEST ELIGIBILITY

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 Lab 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 Department of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See [Consolidated Screening List](#).
- Individuals participating in foreign government talent recruitment programs of foreign countries of risk are not eligible to compete. 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 by resulting in unauthorized transfer of scientific and technical information to foreign government entities.

INCUBATOR PRIZE PROGRAM 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. If an entity seeking to compete does not have majority domestic ownership and control, OTT may consider issuing a waiver of that eligibility requirement where (1) the entity otherwise meets the eligibility requirements; (2) the entity is incorporated in and maintains a primary place of business in the United States; and (3) the entity submits a compelling justification. OTT may require additional information before making a determination on the waiver request. See Appendix 2 for more information on the waiver process.
- Academic institutions must be based in the United States.

Programming proposed by incubators must have an emphasis on supporting start-ups with a hard-tech focus.

A single competitor may only submit one submission.

While 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.

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.

There are two eligibility tracks in the Core Incubator Prize. To determine your track eligibility, please see [Round 2 Overview](#).

Move It Phase Eligibility

- Only Semifinalists, winners of the Design It Phase or Design It Phase Bonus Prizes, 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.

CORE START-UP PITCH COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY

Start-ups in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition must be nominated by a Semifinalist (i.e., a winner of a Core Incubator Prize or Bonus Prize during the Design It Phase).

Start-ups must be private entities incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.

Start-ups must be focusing on a hard-tech energy innovation that benefits the U.S. domestic market. Start-ups that are solely software or a business model innovation without being part of a hard-tech package are not eligible.

Start-ups must have fewer than 500 employees to be eligible.

Start-ups may not have won prizes in any of the previous EPIC Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions or Partner Pitch Competitions.

Start-ups with employee(s) or owner(s) who are also employees at a National Lab are allowed to participate in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition as long as:

- The lab employee is not billing time to the lab for pitch competition preparations, AND
- The start-up is using only publicly available lab resources (if any at all) and paying for any lab resources it is using.

EPIC PRIZE ROUND 2

ROUND 2 OVERVIEW

Round 1 of EPIC consisted of two elements:

1. October 2020: A single-phase \$50,000 prize with 20 winners
2. June 2021: A Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) with 10 awardees

Round 2 of EPIC evolves this initial framework into two new elements:

1. \$4 million in prizes issued to incubators via the “**EPIC Core Incubator Prize**”
2. \$210,000 in prizes to incubator-nominated start-ups via two “**EPIC Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions**”

All of the elements described above for the **EPIC Core Incubator Prize** and **EPIC Core Start-Up Pitch Competition** are applicable to Round 2. Any incubator, including winners from Round 1 or the EPIC FOA, are eligible to apply to Round 2.

Round 2 Incubator applicants, called “Competitors,” are eligible to apply in one of two Tracks:

- Track 1 – New Location⁸ or Emerging Incubators
- Track 2 – New Initiative(s) or Programming at Established Incubators

A Competitor is an “Emerging Incubator” if no more than one of the following criteria are true. A Competitor is an “Established Incubator” and should apply to Track 2 if two or more of the following criteria are true:

CRITERIA: The organization...

- Has been incorporated for 5 or more years
- Has provided support to 30 or more start-ups
- Has seen more than \$1.5 million in third-party investment flow through the organization in support of start-ups
- Has companies in its portfolio that have reached a combined total of over \$100 million in third-party investment.

The Prize Administrator may reassign incubators from one track to another at its discretion.

⁸ Competitors should apply to Track 1 if they are opening an incubator in a new location. If you are an Established Incubator, the new location must be in a different state from your existing locations.

In addition to the prizes described below, more prizes may be available if [Boost Elements](#) are added to the EPIC Prize Program.

ROUND 2 EPIC PRIZE AMOUNTS

Prizes for the Core Incubator Prize are awarded to successful incubator applicants.

		2 Eligibility Tracks	
		New & Emerging	Established Incubators
DESIGN IT!	Create a plan to support energy startups & entrepreneurs. Define metrics for success.	10	10
		20 winners \$50K each	
MOVE IT!	Put your plan into action. Provide leading indicators of success.	5	5
		10 winners \$100K each	
PROVE IT!	Demonstrate success in accomplishing your planned goals.	4	
		4 winners \$500K each	

Applicants in each track do not compete against each other **in the first 2 phases**. In the Prove It phase, applicants from each track **DO compete against each other**, but at least one winner will be awarded per track.

In addition to the \$4 million in Core Incubator Prize funding, one \$50,000 Bonus Prize is available in Design It for incubators supporting water power and/or the blue economy, one \$50,000 Bonus Prize for incubators supporting buildings technologies, one \$50,000 Bonus Prize for incubators supporting solar technologies, and one \$50,000 Bonus Prize for incubators supporting geothermal technologies. More details about the Bonus Prize criteria are found in [APPENDIX 3: CORE INCUBATOR BONUS PRIZES](#).

An additional \$300,000 in other Bonus Prizes can be added to this at any time. Bonus Prize additions will be posted on [HeroX](#).

ROUND 2 START-UP PITCH COMPETITION PRIZES

Competitors in the Start-Up Pitch Competition are **start-ups that are nominated by** Semifinalists (i.e., winners of a Core Incubator Prize or Bonus Prize during the Design It Phase). Incubators do NOT participate in the Start-Up Pitch Competition directly; they participate by nominating a start-up to compete. The first, second, and third place prizes described below are awarded to successful start-ups, not to the incubator. However, the incubator nominating the first-place winning start-up in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition will also receive a \$25,000 prize.



1st Place: \$50K



2nd Place: \$20K



3rd Place: \$10K

Incubator nominating the 1st place start-up will be rewarded \$25K

For both pitch competitions, in addition to the prizes above, a \$20,000 Bonus Prize will be available for a start-up focused on solar hard-tech solutions. The incubator nominating this start-up will earn a \$10,000 award.

IMPORTANT DATES

Please visit [HeroX](#) to view the key dates for the Core EPIC Prize Round 2.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

All competitors in EPIC must address the following Program Requirements.

- A. *Create New Programming* – The competitor’s application to this Prize proposes start-up support services, programs, or program components that the incubator is not already pursuing in a given region.
- B. *Support Start-up Creation* – The competitor helps start-ups to form and grow, with an emphasis on companies developing hard-tech for energy-related applications.
 - i. Start-up formation is the development of new, viable companies. Helping start-ups grow could include, but is not limited to, providing meaningful assistance toward fundraising, customer discovery, or technology maturation. Start-ups can be at any stage of maturity.
 - ii. Hard-tech is defined as technology solutions that involve physical products or processes, including those that are chemical or biological in nature.
 - iii. Energy-related applications are inclusive of any solutions that improve the cost, reliability, efficiency, or secondary impacts of energy usage and systems. For example, battery storage, carbon capture, and alternative proteins to meat are considered energy-related applications.
- C. *Build Regional Partnerships* – The competitor grows and strengthens local networks of energy innovation stakeholders, including mentors, investors, universities, National Labs, state/local government entities, manufacturing partners, and other organizations that add value to their start-ups.

- D. Applications must address at least one of the following. Teams can drive significant impact across multiple areas are of interest, but competitors should consider prioritizing significant impact in a single area over a marginal impact across multiple areas. In the technical narrative, be sure to address your rationale for choosing your selected area(s).
1. *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)* – The competitor finds and supports underrepresented or undersupported entrepreneurs and helps start-ups recruit, hire, and retain employees from underrepresented backgrounds.
 - a. Please clearly illustrate how your proposed program advances diversity, equity, and inclusion principles, including any context particular to your region. 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 (but not limited to) helping start-ups deploy demonstration projects in collaboration with members of disadvantaged communities.
 - a. A community is a group of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native Americans), where either type of group experiences common conditions.
 - b. A disadvantaged community is a community experiencing one or more of the following:
 - Low income, high and/or persistent poverty
 - High unemployment and underemployment
 - Racial and ethnic residential segregation, particularly where the segregation stems from discrimination by government entities
 - Linguistic isolation
 - High housing cost burden and substandard housing
 - Distressed neighborhoods
 - High transportation cost burden and/or low transportation access
 - Disproportionate environmental stressor burden and high cumulative impacts
 - Limited water and sanitation access and affordability
 - Disproportionate impacts from climate change
 - High energy cost burden and low energy access
 - Jobs lost through the energy transition
 - Poor access to healthcare
 - c. A definition for “rural” may be found here: <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=49cd4bc9c8eb444ab51218c1d5001ef6>

- d. Please demonstrate, using quantitative and/or qualitative means, how the communities you seek to work with are rural and/or disadvantaged, as well as how you plan to ensure that proposed engagements with the community are sensitive to the needs of the community.
3. *Lab-to-Market* – The competitor supports the commercialization of technologies developed at DOE National Laboratories by, for example (but not limited to), incentivizing the creation of start-ups licensing intellectual property (IP) from the National Labs, brokering arrangements by which an established corporate entity utilizes National Lab IP or facilities, or using market-driven approaches to spur research and development in strategic technology areas. Competitors are welcome to work with any of the DOE National Labs, even if a lab is not in your geographic region. A list of all DOE National Labs can be found here: <https://labpartnering.org/choosing-a-lab>.
 - a. Please identify the National Lab(s) you are interested in working with, why this partnership is strategic for your region, and how you plan to support the commercialization of lab technologies.
 - b. Letters of support or other evidence of productive engagement with relevant National Lab stakeholders are strongly encouraged. You may contact a lab using the Lab Partnering Service link provided above.
4. *Sector-Specific Support* – The competitor develops tailored support services and programs for companies in a specific (competitor-identified) industry or technology area that is strategic for their region.
 - a. Please demonstrate why the chosen industry or technology area is strategic for your region, how your team is equipped to support the chosen industry or technology area, and what outcomes you hope to achieve.
5. *Other High-Impact Theme* – We welcome new and creative program ideas that will support the goals of EPIC. Examples may include, but are not limited to, programs focused on manufacturing or workforce development. Please explain the need for this new priority area, including a regional context for this need and how your MVP addresses this need.

All competitors are encouraged to advance equity and inclusion among their team, partners, and advisors and should describe any such practices and efforts in their submission.

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, Time-Bound) and show the

extent to which the MVP has achieved its ideal outcomes. Competitors may reference OTT's metric list (

APPENDIX 5: IMPACT TRACKING METRICS).

OTT recognizes incubation programs may require significant time to show progress toward the identified success metrics. As such, OTT 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.

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

DESIGN IT PHASE RULES

INTRODUCTION

The Core Incubator Prize is a 3-phase competition that identifies incubator teams implementing high-impact ideas that support energy entrepreneurs and innovators as well as provides cash prizes to those teams that make the most progress and impact over the course of the prize competition period. The Core Incubator Prize consists of a base model consistent across all rounds of the EPIC Prize and round-specific Boost Elements.

GOAL

Competitors design a “minimum viable program” (MVP) for energy entrepreneurs 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.

HOW TO ENTER

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

DESIGN IT PHASE PROCESS

The Design It phase consists of three steps:

1. **Application and Submission** – Competitors incorporate all Program Requirements into their MVP design. Competitors complete their submission packages and submit online before Design 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 capabilities to support energy entrepreneurs and start-ups and build regional partnerships. 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.
 - **Start-up Recruitment and Pipeline** – Prove that you have or can develop a strong pipeline to access energy start-ups and a plan for nominating start-ups to participate in the Start-Up Pitch Competitions.
 - **Network, Team, and Resources** – Demonstrate that your team has the regional network and expertise to implement the plan and provide value-add 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 Design It, semifinalists will implement their plan, make progress on their plan, and compete in Move It.

WHAT TO SUBMIT

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate your submissions by agreeing or disagreeing with assigned statements on a 1–6 scale, as shown below. These statements are the criteria.

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

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

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-second video (public) • Cover page content • Core Narrative that answers four questions (not to exceed 2,500 words) • One-slide PowerPoint summary (public) • Letters of commitment or support (optional)

Note: Portions of the submission package are made available to the public.

These have been denoted as such, and DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional details.

Online Public 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 your target program requirement(s) and why it is critical that your organization addresses it
- Describe your MVP

While 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.

Post your publicly accessible 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.

Cover Page – List basic information about your submission
Template⁹: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

- Organization name
- Link to your 90-second video online
- Key project members (names, roles, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Track you are applying into
- Program requirement(s) you are addressing
- 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 5 Supporting Images or Figures (PDF)
Template¹⁰: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

Problem Overview

Question 1: *Describe the regional context and the need for the program requirements you're addressing.*

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the regional context in which your organization works
- Identify any regional challenges or gaps that exist for providing support to energy entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Identify the program requirement(s) you are addressing and why it is critical that your organization address them now
- Describe the outcomes you hope to achieve.

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor clearly defines and demonstrates a strong understanding of the regional needs for serving energy entrepreneurs
- The competitor makes a compelling case for why new programming in the identified program requirement area(s) will make a positive impact on their region
- The competitor demonstrates a strong understanding of the selected program requirement area(s)
- The outcomes directly address the problems and program requirement area(s) identified

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

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

Minimum Viable Program (MVP)
Question 2: Describe your MVP and how it fulfills the EPIC Prize objectives

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the MVP and how it adds value to supporting energy start-ups and regional partnerships • How the program addresses the program requirement area(s), including the required emphasis on supporting hard-tech companies • Why new programming is needed and why addressing a program requirement adds value to your organization • Describe how your MVP is new/different from your current programming • Identify leading indicators and metrics that will be used to evaluate your MVP's success. 	<p>A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor's proposed program will deepen regional partnerships and add value to the energy start-ups they support • The competitor clearly addresses the criteria outlined for their selected program requirement area(s), including the required emphasis on supporting hard-tech companies • The MVP has potential to make significant progress toward the goals described in the selected program requirement area(s) • The competitor has identified appropriate qualitative and quantitative success metrics • The MVP represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions and lessons learned from other notable efforts in this space.
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MVP Implementation Plan
Question 3: Describe how you would implement the MVP and validate its success

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define your goals, implementation plan, and budget for your MVP in Move It and Prove It, including specific milestones • Describe your team's readiness to implement your MVP • Provide evidence that after winning Design 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. • Describe how you envision sustaining, replicating, or scaling the MVP after the EPIC Prize • Describe the plan to track identified leading indicators and metrics that will be used to evaluate your MVP's success. (see • APPENDIX 5: IMPACT TRACKING METRICS for additional details) 	<p>A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation plan is ambitious, includes a risk mitigation strategy, and shows a commitment to an accelerated program development cycle • The stated Move It and Prove It goals represent substantial progress toward developing the MVP • The competitor has demonstrated access to necessary resources, and/or a plan to obtain additional resources needed to execute their proposed plan • The plan to track identified metrics appears reasonable and useful to evaluate the MVP's success.
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Organization and Team
Question 4: Describe your organization, team, and network and why you are qualified to

implement the MVP

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the mission and objectives of the organization and how it fulfills the program requirements• Describe your team members and/or organization's past performance of assisting entrepreneurs launch or grow business ventures• Describe your external advisors, advisory board, and/or regional partnerships• Describe what practices you engage in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors• Describe what makes your team uniquely qualified to implement the MVP• How your organization will attract start-ups.	<p>A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The competitor has described a comprehensive mission and set of objectives that align with DOE's portfolio of energy-related missions• The competitor has a successful track record of supporting entrepreneurs to launch or grow business ventures• The competitor has access to a strong network of individuals and organizations that complement the competitor's expertise• The competitor has engaged in thoughtful and specific practices to advance equity and inclusion among their team, partners, and advisors• The submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support new start-ups.
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Reviewer Recommendation

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.	<p>Statement is scored as a 1 or 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This competitor should be strongly considered for a Design It prize. (yes/no)
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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 the 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.

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

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

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 score from 1 to 6, 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 total 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 to 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 Design 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 judge's final determination of winners takes the submission package, reviewer scores, interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

MOVE IT PHASE RULES

GOAL

Competitors move their MVP forward by demonstrating that Program Requirements are being incorporated. Competitors will show they have the right talent and resources to be successful and have begun implementing their MVP. Competitors will also nominate a start-up to participate in the Start-Up Pitch Competition.

HOW TO ENTER

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

MOVE IT PHASE PROCESS

Move It Phase consists of three steps:

- 1. Activation and Submission** – Competitors will make significant progress moving their MVP forward, complete their submission packages, and submit online before the Move It Phase ends.
- 2. Start-Up Pitch Competition Nomination** – Competitors can nominate a start-up to compete in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition. The reviewer scores from the pitch competition and the associated quality of the start-up may be considered by the judge for the Move It phase.
- 3. 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.
 - **Plan Implementation** – Demonstrate significant progress implementing your MVP.
 - **Start-up Recruitment and Pipeline** – Prove that you have a strong pipeline to access energy start-ups and a functional plan for nominating start-ups to participate in the Start-Up Pitch Competitions.
 - **Network, Team, and Resources** – Demonstrate that your team has the regional network and expertise in place to complete the implementation of the MVP.
- 4. Interview Day** – Participate in an interview session with the panel of reviewers to provide additional details on your MVP implementation.
- 5. Announcement** – After the finalists are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning the Move It Phase, finalists make progress on their plan and compete in the Prove It Phase.

WHAT TO SUBMIT

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

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-second video • Cover page content • Narrative that answers four (not to exceed 2,500 words) • One-slide PowerPoint summary (public) • Letters of commitment or support (optional)
Interview Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Interview Day Event

Note: None of the submission package during the Move It phase will be made available to the public. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional details.

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate your submissions by assigning a single score for each scored submission section, based on their overall agreement or disagreement with a series of statements.

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

Online Video
<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your organization and how it is uniquely qualified to address the needs of the entrepreneurs and energy technologies it serves • Describe your target program requirement(s) and why it is critical that your organization addresses it • Describe your MVP <p>While 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. It is not required to update your video from the previous phase.</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 value (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques) are not necessary.</p>

Cover Page – List basic information about your submission

Template¹¹: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

- Organization name
- Link to your 90-second video online
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Program Requirement(s) you are addressing
- 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 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 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 2,500 Words and 5 Supporting Images or Figures (PDF)

Template¹²: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

Question 1: Problem Overview

Describe the regional context and the need for the program requirements you're addressing.

Suggested content you provide

- Briefly describe your regional context, the challenges faced supporting energy start-ups, and the program requirement area(s) you are targeting
- Describe what you have learned about these challenges and program requirement area(s) during Move It
- Describe how your learnings reinforce or change the outcomes you hope to achieve

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor presents a clear understanding of the regional needs for serving energy start-ups 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 MVP

Suggested content you provide

- Briefly describe the MVP and how it addresses the identified regional challenges and program requirement

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor is successfully meeting goals and outcomes proposed in Design It

¹¹ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

¹² 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>area(s), including the required emphasis on supporting hard-tech companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe progress implementing your MVP during Move It and if you were able to meet (or exceed) your planned goals • Highlight key activities, relationships, and milestones completed during Move It • Report on the metrics identified during Design It and describe any early conclusions that the results show • Describe any feedback you received on your MVP and what changes you already implemented as a result of that feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor demonstrates that impressive and convincing progress was made during Move It • Activities, relationships, and milestones accomplished directly address the program requirement area(s) • The metrics are providing relevant and useful insight into the MVP's success • The competitor solicited feedback from relevant stakeholders and made improvements to the MVP based on this feedback
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Question 3: MVP Implementation Plan
Describe your short-term and long-term plan for implementing and validating the MVP

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define your goals, implementation plan, and budget for the Prove It phase, including specific milestones • Highlight any changes you are making to your implementation plan as a result of feedback you obtained during Move It • 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. • Describe how you envision sustaining the MVP post EPIC and any plans for replicating or scaling • Provide updated metrics and leading indicators, as well as a tracking plan for Prove It (see • APPENDIX 5: IMPACT TRACKING METRICS for additional details). 	<p>A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation plan is ambitious, reduces risks, and shows a commitment to an accelerated program development cycle • The proposed plan will lead to the completion of MVP implementation during Prove It • The competitor has demonstrated they have the resources or a plan to get the resources needed to complete implementation of the MVP • The competitor has outlined an ambitious, but realistic, plan for sustaining the MVP and highlights opportunities and potential for replication or scaling • The metrics and leading indicators are providing relevant and useful insight into the MVP's success.
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Question 4: Organization and Team
Describe your organization, team, and network and why you are qualified to implement the MVP

Suggested content you provide

- Briefly describe the mission and objectives of your organization and team members' expertise
- How has your team evolved over the prize phase? Please highlight how the diversity, knowledge, and skills that make the team uniquely capable of achieving success.
- What regional partnerships, networks, or advisors you have utilized during Move It?
- Describe the process your organization used to nominate a start-up for the Pitch Competition, any support you provided to that start-up as they prepared to compete, and your plan to recruit a start-up for the next Pitch Competition
- Describe what practices you engaged in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors.

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor has described a comprehensive mission and set of objectives that align with DOE's portfolio of energy-related missions.
- The team has the knowledge, experience, and determination to successfully implement the MVP.
- The competitor filled expertise gaps with additions to the team or their network.
- The submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support new start-ups.
- The competitor has been thoughtful about equity and inclusion as they build out their team and select start-ups.

Reviewer Recommendation

- There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.

Statement is scored as 1 or 6:

- This competitor should be strongly considered for a Move It prize. (yes/no)

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 the 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 additional requirements about your submission in [Appendix 1](#).

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

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 score from 1 to 6, 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 total 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 to 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 considerations for the judge's final determination of winners include the submission package, reviewer scores, interview findings, nominated start-up's performance at the Start-Up Pitch Competition, and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

PROVE IT CONTEST RULES

GOAL

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

HOW TO ENTER

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

PROVE IT PHASE PROCESS

The Prove It Phase consists of three steps:

- 1. Activation, and Submission** – Competitors have completed or exceeded their original expectations for their MVP and provide documentation that the program will be sustained post EPIC in addition to plans for replication or scaling in the future. Competitors complete their submission package by the Prove It deadline.
- 2. Start-Up Pitch Competition Nomination** – Competitors can nominate a start-up to compete in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition. The reviewer scores from the pitch competition and the associated quality of the start-up may be considered by the judge for Prove It.
- 3. 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.
 - **MVP Completion and Results Documentation** – Complete implementation of your MVP and document the results through quantitative and qualitative feedback and metrics.
 - **Start-up Recruitment and Pipeline** – Prove that you have a strong pipeline to access energy start-ups in general for your organization and proven strategy for nominating start-ups to participate in the Start-Up Pitch Competitions.
 - **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.
- 4. Interview Day** – Participate in an interview session with the panel of reviewers to provide additional details on your MVP completion and future plans.
- 5. Announcement** – After the finalists are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes.

WHAT TO SUBMIT

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

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-second video • Cover page content • Narrative that answers four questions and addresses any of the Round-specific Additional Program Criteria (not to exceed 2,500 words) • One-slide PowerPoint summary (public) • Replication and Continuation documentation (required).
Interview Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Interview Day Event

Note: Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such, and DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional details.

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

Reviewers and the prize judge will evaluate your submissions by assigning a single score for each scored submission section, based on their overall agreement or disagreement with a series of statements.

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

Online Video
<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your organization • Describe your MVP and the need that it addressed • Showcase what you have accomplished since the Design It Phase <p>You should update your video from previous phases to illustrate the work you have accomplished over the course of the competition. While 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.</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 value (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques) are not necessary.</p>

Cover Page – List basic information about your submission

Template¹³: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

- Organization name
- Link to your 90-second video online
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Program Requirement(s) you are addressing
- 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 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 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 5 Supporting Images or Figures (PDF)

Template¹⁴: <https://www.herox.com/EPICRound2/resource/1039>

Question 1: Problem Overview

Describe the regional context and the need for the program requirements you're addressing.

Suggested content you provide

- Briefly describe your regional context, the challenges faced supporting energy start-ups and entrepreneurs, and the program requirement area(s) you are targeting, including the required emphasis on supporting hard-tech companies
- Describe what you have learned about these challenges and program requirement areas during Prove It
- 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

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor presents a clear understanding of the regional needs for serving energy start-ups and entrepreneurs and how their programming addresses these needs
- The competitor significantly advanced their understanding of the program requirement area(s) during Prove It
- The competitor logically identifies key regional and contextual factors that led to the success of their MVP

¹³ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

¹⁴ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

Question 2: Minimum Viable Program (MVP) Results

Describe the completion of your MVP

Suggested content you provide

- Briefly describe the MVP
- Describe how you completed the MVP during Prove It and if you were able to meet or exceed your planned goals
- Highlight key activities, relationships, and milestones completed during Prove It
- Report on the metrics and leading indicators identified during Move It and the conclusions you can draw
- Evaluate if and how your MVP successfully addressed the program requirement area(s)
- Identify lessons learned from your MVP implementation and what advice you would give another incubator looking to implement a similar program.

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor successfully met or exceeded the goals and outcomes proposed in Move It
- The competitor demonstrates impressive and convincing progress was made to complete MVP implementation during Prove It
- Activities, relationships, and milestones accomplished directly address the program requirement areas
- The competitor provides evidence that their MVP had a positive impact on the program requirement area(s)
- The metrics and leading indicators provide relevant and useful insight into the MVP's success
- The competitor provides a balanced assessment of both the successes and lessons learned from the MVP implementation.

Question 3: Future Plans

Describe how you will replicate or scale your MVP

Suggested content you provide

- Describe your plans to sustain, replicate and/or scale the MVP, as well as what changes would be made to the programming moving forward
- Provide an explanation of the Replication and Continuation documentation and why these commitments are the most relevant to showing program continuation
- Provide evidence that you currently have the commitments, funding, and resources to sustain the MVP or a plan to obtain them
- Provide a high-level budget and plan to meet your goals
- Identify your short-term (1 year) and long-term (5 year) goals for the impact of your MVP and what metrics would be used to track success.

A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:

- The competitor presents an ambitious, but realistic plan to sustain, replicate, and/or scale the MVP
- There is a high probability the competitor will be successful in their plan implementation
- The Replication and Continuation documentation provides relevant and strong evidence of program continuation
- The competitor has demonstrated they have the resources or a plan to get the resources needed to sustain the MVP
- If successful, the short-term and long-term goals have a significant impact on the support available for energy entrepreneurs.

Question 4: Organization and Team

Describe your organization, team, and network and why you can build on the success of your MVP

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your organization’s strategic plan and how the lessons learned from the MVP fit into that plan • Describe how your organization has and will continue to build its internal capacity to support the MVP • Describe the process your organization used to nominate a start-up to the Pitch Competition and any support you provided to that start-up as they prepared to compete • Describe what practices you engaged in to advance equity and inclusion among your team, partners, and advisors. 	<p>A single 1-6 score is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor has taken concrete action to demonstrate that continuation of the MVP is a priority and adds value to the organization • The competitor filled expertise gaps with additions the team or their network • The submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support new entrepreneurs • The competitor has been thoughtful about equity and inclusion as they build out their team and select start-ups.
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Reviewer Recommendation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. 	<p>Statement is score as a 1 or 6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This competitor should be strongly considered for a Prove It prize. (yes/no)

Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF will be made public)
<p>Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains information about your organization, MVP, and accomplishments since Move It. 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>

Replication and Continuation Documentation (Required)
<p>Competitors must provide the best documentation possible that this program will be sustained, replicated and/or scaled. Documentation could include legally binding commitment from partners, state sponsorships, etc.</p> <p>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.</p>

Interview Day Event
<p>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.</p>

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

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

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 score from 1 to 6, 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 total 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 to 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.

The considerations for the judge's final determination of winners include the submission package, reviewer scores, interview findings, nominated start-up's performance at the Start-Up Pitch Competition, and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

CORE START-UP PITCH COMPETITION RULES

INTRODUCTION

The Core Start-Up Pitch Competition is a national pitch competition that identifies the best energy related start-ups, nominated by incubators currently competing. Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third place. Additionally, the incubator who nominates the first-place start-up will also receive a cash prize. These prizes could be augmented by Boost Elements (see [BOOST ELEMENTS](#) section for more info). Start-Up Pitch Competitions may be held in conjunction with the Core Incubator Prize or as a stand-alone event.

The Prize Administrator may contract with an organization to host the Pitch Competition. The hosting organization may not nominate a start-up to compete in the competition they are hosting.

During Round 2 of the Core Incubator Prize, two Core Start-Up Pitch Competitions will be held – one during Move It and one during Prove It. During Prove It the Start-Up Pitch Competition will have two steps. All nominated startups will submit a 5-minute video pitch. Up to eight (8) startups will be down selected to compete in-person at the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition Finals at the DOE Small Business Forum and Expo in New Orleans in July 2023.

An overall first (\$50,000), second (\$20,000), and third (\$10,000) place prize will be awarded to the start-ups. During the Prove It Core Start-Up Pitch Competition, the DOE Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) will also award the first-place team \$50,000, the second-place team \$20,000, the third-place team \$10,000, the fourth-place team \$5,000, and the fifth-place team \$3,500. Thus, the overall prize amounts for the Prove It Core Start-Up Pitch Competition are as follows:

Overall Place	Total Prize Amount
First	\$100,000
Second	\$40,000
Third	\$20,000
Fourth	\$5,000
Fifth	\$3,500

The incubator who nominated the first-place start-up will also receive a prize of \$25,000. During the Prove It Core Startup Competition there will be a downselect process where up to 8 startups will be selected as Finalists will be awarded a \$1,000 finalist prize.

GOAL

Start-ups, nominated by Semifinalists currently competing in the Core Incubator Prize, showcase their business ideas for the opportunity to win a cash prize. Start-ups must be focusing on a hard-tech energy innovation that benefits the U.S. domestic market. Start-ups that are solely software or a business model innovation without a hard-tech component are not eligible.

HOW TO ENTER

The Prize Administrator will determine which incubators are eligible to nominate start-ups. Nominated start-ups will receive an invitation from the Pitch Host. Incubators may use whatever process they deem best to determine who to nominate, but only startups with fewer than 500 employees are eligible to compete in the competition. If selected as a finalist, start-ups must be willing and able to attend and pitch at the DOE Small Business Forum and Expo in New Orleans, LA on July 11 and 12, 2023. OSDBU will cover the cost of registration for the Small Business Forum for one representative from the selected start-ups.

PITCH COMPETITION PROCESS

1. **Pitch Competition Announcement** – The Prize Administrator announces the host and format for the upcoming Pitch Competition. Pitch Competitions may be held as virtual or in-person events, as determined by the Prize Administrator and Pitch Host.
2. **Incubator Determination** – The Prize Administrator will determine which incubators are eligible to nominate a start-up. During the Core Incubator Prize Round 2, all Semifinalists competing in Move It or Prove It are eligible to nominate. Future Start-Up Pitch Competitions may have different incubator selection criteria.
3. **Start-Up Nominations** – Eligible incubators each nominate one start-up to compete in the Pitch Competition. The start-up must agree to participate (step 5) in order to receive the nomination. If multiple incubators nominate the same start-up, nominations will be processed on a first-come-first-served basis. The Prize Administrator reserves the right to downselect the number of teams participating in the Pitch Competition (see step 6).
4. **Invitation to Compete** – The Pitch Host invites nominated start-ups to participate in the Pitch Competition.
5. **Participation Confirmation** – Start-ups accept their nominations by confirming their participation and providing a brief overview of their technology and company before the deadline set by the Pitch Host.
6. **Virtual Pitch Submission** – By the deadline set by the Pitch Host, nominated startups must submit their Virtual Pitch Submission. This submission will include:
 - o A 5-minute pitch video addressing the scoring criteria below.
 - o Self-certification that the start-up meets the eligibility requirements.

- o A confirmation that if selected as a finalist, a representative is willing and able to participate in the Pitch Competition Finals in person in New Orleans.

This video may, at the discretion of the Prize Administrator, be shared publicly. If a start-up does not accept its nomination or withdraws before the deadline, the incubator may nominate a new start-up so long as the start-up accepts the nomination by the deadline set by the Pitch Host.

- 7. Submission Evaluation and Selection** – All Virtual Pitch Submissions will be evaluated through the process described below. Up to 8 start-ups will be selected as finalists. Each finalist will receive a \$1,000 finalist prize and be invited to participate in the Pitch Competition Finals.
- 8. Competition Preparation** – The start-up prepares its pitch. The Pitch Host provides at least one webinar or preparation session for start-ups.
- 9. Pitch Competition Finals** – Finalist start-ups participate in the Pitch Competition Finals in person and are scored by a panel of expert reviewers.
- 10. Winners Announcement** – Pitch Competition winners will be announced at the conclusion of the event. After the winners are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes.

PITCH COMPETITION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Start-ups will be given 3-5 minutes to pitch. The final format and allotted time will be provided by the pitch host and described in the Invitation to Compete. The start-up should have a clear understanding of their technology, the market, and the business model to commercialize the technology.

Start-ups will be evaluated across six different categories. Each category has a series of criteria the reviewers will consider when assigning a single score for that category, according to the scale below:

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

Start-ups will receive a single score for the following six categories:

Category	Criteria Statements	Score (1-6)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The start-up presents an impactful energy solution The technology represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions, valid technical foundations, and lessons learned from other notable efforts in the space 	
Market Opportunity and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The start-up has a strong understanding of the potential market The target market segment is large enough to create an investable opportunity 	
Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The value proposition is clearly articulated The start-up is pursuing a compelling solution that will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers 	
Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team's track record demonstrates notable entrepreneurial qualities such as adaptability, creativity, decisiveness, and resourcefulness The team has the knowledge, experience, and determination to transform their technology into a viable business in the near future The team has engaged in thoughtful and specific activities to advance equity and inclusion, including for disadvantaged communities¹⁵ (e.g., those that are affected by persistent poverty, job loss due to the energy transition, etc.). 	
Investment Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The start-up has demonstrated the ability to attract investment capital or grant funding The assumptions used to estimate ROI are reasonable 	
Presentation and Overall Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The presenter effectively communicated their start-up's innovation and business plan This start-up should be strongly considered to win the Pitch Competition 	
<i>Total Score</i>		___/36

15 Disadvantaged communities are those experiencing one or more of the following: Low income, high and/or persistent poverty; High unemployment and underemployment; Racial and ethnic residential segregation, particularly where the segregation stems from discrimination by government entities; Linguistic isolation; High housing cost burden and substandard housing; Distressed neighborhoods; High transportation cost burden and/or low transportation access; Disproportionate environmental stressor burden and high cumulative impacts; Limited water and sanitation access and affordability; Disproportionate impacts from climate change; High energy cost burden and low energy access; Jobs lost through the energy transition; Lack of access to healthcare.

HOW PITCH COMPETITION WINNERS ARE DETERMINED

A panel of reviewers chosen by the Pitch Host will evaluate the start-ups based on the categories above. Each category listed above receives a score from 1 to 6; each of the categories are equally weighted. The final score from an individual reviewer equals the total sum of the scores for all the sections. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the pitch.

Immediately following the conclusion of the pitches, the reviewers will meet to recommend winners. The final judge, a representative of OTT, will make the final selection of winners based on the scores and recommendation of the reviewer panel.

APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

UNIVERSAL CONTEST REQUIREMENTS

Your submission for the 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. OTT 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 non-substantive 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 hand-written 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.

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 W9 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.

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.

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 applications, 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, which participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, Competitor represents and warrants that:

The competitor is the sole, original author and copyright owner of the submission or that the applicant 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 upon any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

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 applicant, or that the applicant 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 applicant is aware; and that the submission is free of malware.

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.

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.

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.

LIABILITY

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume and, thereby, have assumed any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest or development of any submission. Upon registration, except in the case of willful misconduct, all participants agree to and, thereby, do waive and release any and all claims or causes of action

against the federal government and its officers, employees, and agents for any and all injury and damage of any nature whatsoever (whether existing or thereafter arising, whether direct, indirect, or consequential; and whether foreseeable or not), arising from their participation in the contest, whether the claim or cause of action arises under contract or tort.

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this contest delegated to the Director of OTT, the Director has determined that no liability insurance will be required of competitors to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

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.

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.

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 Design 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.

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.
- The Program Requirement area diversity.
- The performance of the nominated start-up in the Core Start-Up Pitch Competition.
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources are non-duplicative 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.
- 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) 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.

- The degree to which the submission is likely to lead to increased employment and manufacturing in the United States or provide other economic benefit to U.S. taxpayers.
- 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 applications to facilitate technology transfer.
- Whether submission content sufficiently confirms the competitor's intent to commercialize early-stage technology and establish a viable U.S.-based business in the near future.

APPENDIX 2: FOREIGN WORK REQUIREMENT

Waiver

If an entity seeking to compete does not have majority domestic ownership and control, the Office of Technology Transitions (OTT) may consider issuing a waiver of that eligibility requirement where (1) the entity submits a compelling justification; (2) the entity is incorporated in and maintains a primary place of business in the United States; and (3) the entity otherwise meets the eligibility requirements. OTT will not waive the eligibility requirement that all competing entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States. Entities seeking a waiver should include a justification along with their submission. OTT may require additional information before making a determination on the waiver request. There are no rights to appeal DOE's decision on the waiver request.

The justification must address the following waiver criteria and content requirements:

Waiver Criteria

Entities seeking a waiver must demonstrate to the satisfaction of OTT that its participation: (1) has a high likelihood of furthering the objectives of this Prize competition and (2) aligns with the best interest of the U.S. industry and U.S. economic development.

Content for Waiver Request

A waiver request must include the following information:

1. Entity's name and place of incorporation
2. The location of the entity's primary place of business
3. A statement describing the extent to which the entity is owned or controlled by a foreign government, agency, firm, corporation, or person who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, including the applicable percentage of ownership/control
4. A compelling justification that addresses the waiver criteria stated above
5. A description of the project's anticipated contributions to the U.S. economy
6. A description of how the entity has benefitted U.S. research, development, and manufacturing, including contributions to employment in the United States and growth in new U.S. markets and jobs
7. A description of how the entity has promoted domestic manufacturing of products and/or services.

APPENDIX 3: CORE INCUBATOR BONUS PRIZES

WATER POWER TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE (WPTO) BONUS PRIZE:

One Bonus Prize of \$50,000 is available to incubators during Design It.

Areas of Interest

The Water Power Technologies Office¹⁶ (WPTO) is committed to developing and deploying a portfolio of innovative technologies for clean, domestic power generation from resources such as hydropower, waves, and tides. WPTO enables research, development, and testing of new technologies to advance marine energy and next-generation hydropower and pumped storage systems for a flexible, reliable grid.

Marine energy¹⁷ uses natural energy from moving water—such as waves, tides, and river and ocean currents—to produce renewable power. Marine energy also offers opportunities to provide clean energy to remote and island communities and to leverage the ocean to power blue economy¹⁸ applications such as ocean observation technology or desalination and water treatment devices. Hydropower¹⁹ is a clean, renewable, domestic source of energy and provides enormous benefits to the country's electric grid.²⁰ In 2021, hydropower accounted for 31.5% of U.S. renewable electricity generation, while pumped storage hydropower remains the largest contributor to U.S. energy storage, representing roughly 93% of all commercial storage capacity in the United States.

For this Bonus Prize, WPTO seeks to support activities that enable economic development, entrepreneurial ventures, and job growth in water power and/or the blue economy. Specifically, WPTO is interested in organizations that support entrepreneurship and accelerate company growth by supporting commercialization of water power technologies, improving competitiveness of start-ups related to water power and/or the blue economy, increasing connectivity and collaboration between relevant stakeholders, and leveraging the blue economy to support innovation and job creation. Additionally, these activities must center principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice; i.e., support individuals and communities from traditionally underserved and disadvantaged backgrounds and regions.

Bonus Prize Eligibility Requirements

In addition to the eligibility requirements for this prize, to be eligible for this Bonus Prize, teams must support activities specifically related to water power and/or the blue economy, and describe these in sufficient detail. Teams must describe how diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice objectives will be incorporated in the project, including how they foster a welcoming and inclusive environment,

16 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/water-power-technologies-office>

17 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/marine-energy-program>

18 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/marine-energy-blue-economy>

19 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/hydropower-program>

20 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/water/benefits-hydropower>

support people from underrepresented groups, advance equity, and whether project activities will be located in or provide benefits to underserved communities.

Evaluation Statement

The entry demonstrates an understanding of water power technologies and/or the blue economy, describes activities to enable entrepreneurship and innovation in this area, and includes a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

SOLAR ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE (SETO) BONUS PRIZE:

One Bonus Prize of \$50,000 is available to incubators during Design It.

Area of Interest

The Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is looking to support innovative hardware technologies that can improve the performance, affordability, reliability, and value of solar systems on the U.S. grid and to tackle emerging challenges in the solar industry. Competitors should identify a particular area of focus within the solar hardware innovation ecosystem and describe how they are uniquely positioned to support innovation in that area. Potential areas of interest include but are not limited to:

- Scaling domestic solar manufacturing
- Emerging photovoltaic cell/module technologies (e.g., multijunction, perovskite, or organic)
- Multiuse, integrated photovoltaic systems (e.g., building-integrated photovoltaics, agrivoltaics, floatovoltaics, or vehicle-integrated solutions)
- Advanced solar power electronics
- PV recycling
- Solar systems resilient to weather-related or cyber threats
- Concentrated solar-thermal power
- Solar projects intended to benefit disadvantaged or underserved communities

SETO is interested in organizations that can support innovators and accelerate the commercialization of new solar technologies. Examples of ways competitors can be uniquely positioned to support innovation include but are not limited to:

- Ability to support individuals and communities from traditionally underserved and disadvantaged backgrounds and regions
- Access to prototyping and other specialized equipment
- Access to testing sites
- Ability to facilitate connections with relevant stakeholders and networks (e.g., financiers, go-to-market partners, and potential customers)
- Mentorship by industry experts

Bonus Prize Eligibility

Open to all competitors that are eligible to the EPIC Prize.

Evaluation Statement:

The entry clearly demonstrates how the organization is uniquely positioned to support de-risking innovative solar technologies in a particular area of focus within the solar hardware innovation ecosystem. Strong entries will also incorporate elements of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the project (e.g., include how they foster a welcoming and inclusive environment, support people from underrepresented groups, advance equity, and whether project activities will be located in or provide benefits to underserved communities.)

BUILDING TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE (BTO) BONUS PRIZE

One Bonus Prize of \$50,000 is available to incubators during Design It.

Areas of Interest

The Building Technologies Office (BTO) focuses on developing innovative technologies that advance energy and carbon reduction, high-efficiency operation, and smart systematic control of the built environment while enabling grid interactivity and interoperability. Competitors should aim to detail and exemplify how their organization is uniquely qualified to provide the mentorship, expert technical support, and market insight to address the specific commercial barriers of a given building/construction technology area. BTO seeks to support technologies that demonstrate significant improvements in performance (both in efficiency and capacity), resiliency, embodied carbon reduction, affordability, and commercial viability. Specific qualifications include but are not limited to:

- Ability to support individuals and communities from traditionally underserved and disadvantaged backgrounds and regions
- Access to prototyping/fabrication facilities and other specialized equipment
- Measurement and Validation (M&V) testing sites
- Demonstration and deployment sites
- Network of relevant stakeholders and market enablers that include
 - Subject matter experts and business mentors
 - Venture capital, private equity and other financial institutions
 - Manufacturers and distributors
 - Local and federal governments
- Marketing and productization support
- Leadership and entrepreneurial training

Areas of technology focus can cover any element of the built environment; residential, commercial, and the role within the larger energy ecosystem. Potential technology areas of interest include but are not limited to:

- Domestic manufacturing (windows, heat pumps, insulation, etc...)
- Low GWP Refrigerants
- Whole home electrification
- Energy systems integration and control (battery, on-site renewables, etc...)
- Heat pumps and heat pump water heaters
- Thermal energy storage
- Air-sealing (windows, ducts, fixtures, etc...)

- Windows
- Solid state lighting (SSL)
- Electric appliances, plug loads, and other miscellaneous electric loads (MELs)

Bonus Prize Eligibility

Open to all competitors that are eligible to the EPIC Prize.

Evaluation Statement

Applying organization demonstrates an understanding of the building/construction industry and describes programs that would support start-ups overcome the unique technical and commercial barriers of the given technology focus area.

GEOTHERMAL TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE BONUS PRIZE

One Bonus Prize of \$50,000 is available to incubators during Design It.

Areas of Interest

Geothermal energy utilized for heat and power, presents an extraordinary opportunity to innovators and researchers seeking large-scale, deeply impactful outcomes as our nation aggressively builds toward a net-zero clean energy economy. Geothermal power fills a unique gap in the power sector; With no emissions, a small physical footprint it provides firm power, meaning it can provide consistent power operational 24 hours per day but it is also dispatchable, such that it can ramp to meet demand. These flexible characteristics provide significant value with respect to grid stabilization and load balancing.

Geothermal operations require a robust understanding of the subsurface, which requires the ability to reach the subsurface via drilling, and the ability to collect critical downhole characterization data during and after drilling. Drilling time can be reduced, for example, by 50% by optimizing processes, enabling steering, and down hole data collection (MWD), all of which is dependent on high temperature electronics and packaging. Advances in drilling and subsurface characterization are, however, limited due to the high temperatures and challenging hard-rock environments in which geothermal resources exist. Downhole sensor technology is not consistently reliable over 150°C, while anticipated geothermal environments can surpass 400°C. Improving the ability to characterize the subsurface and to drill more efficient, lower cost wellbores require the development of robust sensor packages that are survivable at geothermal temperatures.

The Geothermal Technologies Office (GTO) seeks to address these challenges through support of innovative high-temperature components and packaging that will facilitate greater drilling efficiencies and reliable subsurface characterization in geothermal operations. Competitors should identify a particular area of focus related to geothermal high temperature components and packaging and describe how they are uniquely positioned to support innovation in that area. Potential areas of interest include but are not limited to:

- Sensor development
- Device packaging
- High-temperature reliability characterization

Bonus Prize Eligibility Requirements

In addition to the eligibility requirements for this prize, to be eligible for this Bonus Prize, teams must support activities specifically related to geothermal, and describe these in sufficient detail. Teams must describe how diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice objectives will be incorporated in the project, including how they foster a welcoming and inclusive environment, support people from underrepresented groups, advance equity, and whether project activities will be located in or provide benefits to underserved communities.

Evaluation Statement

The entry demonstrates an understanding of geothermal technologies, describes activities to enable entrepreneurship and innovation in this area, and includes a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

APPENDIX 4: CORE START-UP PITCH COMPETITION

BONUS PRIZES

Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) Bonus Prize:

One Bonus Prize of \$20,000 is available to incubators during each Core Start-Up Pitch Competition. The nominating incubator will also receive a \$10,000 award.

Area of Interest Description

SETO is looking to support innovative hardware technologies that can improve the performance, affordability, reliability, and value of solar systems on the U.S. grid and to tackle emerging challenges in the solar industry. Competitors should present specific technical results to date, including stage of demonstration of the innovation, of a solar-relevant hardware innovation and should clearly identify how their technology meets SETO's goals. Additionally, competitors should present their planned path to market and specifically where they are on this path. The \$20k Bonus Prize will be given to 1 winner for each Pitch Competition.

Bonus Prize Requirements

Open to all start-ups developing solar technologies that are eligible for the EPIC Prize with a strong preference for start-ups who have not previously won funding from SETO in the past five years.

Evaluation Statement

Competitors clearly demonstrate how their technology can improve the performance, affordability, reliability, and value of solar systems on the U.S. grid by presenting specific technical results to date, including stage of demonstration of the innovation. The entry demonstrates a clear understanding of the technology, business model, and market potential, such that the competitor is well positioned for the next phase of commercialization. Strong entries will also incorporate elements of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the project (e.g., include how they foster a welcoming and inclusive environment, support people from underrepresented groups, advance equity, and whether technologies being developed will provide benefits to underserved communities.)

APPENDIX 5: IMPACT TRACKING METRICS

Reported at point of cohort selection:

1. # applicants to program (total)
2. # applicants to program applying with a DOE-funded technology (e.g., licensed from a National Lab or developed with help from a DOE grant)
3. # of accepted cohort members working on a DOE-funded technology
4. Breakdown of applicants by identity categories:
 - # of executive leadership team members per racial category in Note A (see next page in this document for notes).
 - # of executive leadership team members per identity category in Note B.
5. Breakdown of accepted cohort members by identity categories:
 - # of executive leadership team members per racial category in Note A.
 - # of executive leadership team members per identity category in Note B.
6. # companies served and types of technologies, including names and locations

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

7. # jobs created by companies (have companies report total number of employees at time of survey)
 - # Full time
 - # Part time
8. # new National Lab partnerships (e.g., CRADAs, license agreements)
9. # grants awarded (total, summed across all companies)
10. # companies that received investment / follow-on funding
11. \$ raised by companies as investment / follow-on funding
12. \$ of company revenue
 - Total, summed across all companies
 - Average across all companies
13. # prototypes launched
14. # demonstration projects launched

NOTES

“Applicant” and “cohort member” refers to the team as a whole.

“Team members” refer to individuals on the team.

A. Racial categories:

- Indigenous / Native American / Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black / African American
- Hispanic / Latino
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Two or more races

- White

B. Other identity categories (self-identified):

- Female / male / non-binary
- LGBTQ+
- Veteran / active military / reserve
- Person with disability
- Rural
- Has been adversely affected by low socioeconomic status