



# Official Prize Rules

MARCH 2023

# Preface

The U.S. Department of Energy’s High Voltage Direct Current Prize will be governed by 15 U.S.C. § 3719 and this Official Rules document. This is not a procurement under the Federal Acquisitions Regulations and will not result in a grant or cooperative agreement under 2 CFR 200. The Prize Administrator reserves the right to modify this Official Rules document if necessary and will publicly post any such notifications and notify registered prize participants.

Date	Modification

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# 1 Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Electricity is launching the High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Prize. This prize aims to expand the ideas that will lead to innovation in the HVDC space and help the United States determine technology gaps that, if solved, can help accelerate U.S. work in this technology space. This prize will focus on expanding the problem solvers in this field, building new ideas, and identifying a path of advancement for those new ideas from new technology innovators, including small businesses and universities.

## 1.1 Prizes

The HVDC Prize offers a total prize pool of \$200,000 in cash. Up to four winners will receive \$50,000 each in cash.

## 1.2 Key Dates

- Prize Launches: March 7, 2023
- Informational Webinar: April 6, 2023
- Submissions Due: June 7, 2023
- Winners announced August/September 2023 (anticipated).
- We are anticipating that winners will be showcased at a relevant event or webinar in 2023; more information will be forthcoming about this opportunity.

## 1.3 Eligibility and Competitors

The competition is open only to private entities (for-profits and nonprofits); nonfederal government entities such as states, counties, tribes, and municipalities; and academic institutions, subject to the following requirements:

- Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.
- Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
- 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 6 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.
- DOE national laboratory employees cannot compete in the prize.
- Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs are not eligible to compete.
- Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See Consolidated Screening List.
- This prize competition is expected to positively impact U.S. economic competitiveness. Participation in a foreign government talent recruitment program<sup>1</sup> could conflict with this

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign government talent recruitment program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, and whether having a

objective by resulting in unauthorized transfer of scientific and technical information to foreign government entities. Therefore, 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<sup>2</sup> are not eligible to compete.

- As part of your submission to this prize program, you will be required to sign the following statement:

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

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Prize Background

The DOE Office of Electricity is launching the HVDC Prize, geared toward expanding the ideas that will lead to innovation in the HVDC space and help the United States determine technology gaps that, if solved, can help accelerate U.S. work in this technology space.

These ideas should lead to new technology solutions that will help connect renewable distributed generation to population centers and help improve integration with the energy grid. The teams should also identify a path forward for advancement for the proposed ideas. The ideas do not need to be commercially ready. However, teams should develop a roadmap for the idea to be actualized in the energy market.

HVDC technologies provide an alternative electrical transmission system to the conventional alternating current (AC) system. HVDC can increase the power grid's capacity to receive, transmit, and deliver a large amount of energy. HVDC technology is more cost-effective compared to high-voltage alternating current for longer transmission distances. In addition, HVDC transmission can improve grid resilience, security, and operation flexibility and accommodate the integration of renewable energy transmission into the existing grid to reach the nation's goal of carbon neutrality. Many large-scale renewable resources are in remote or offshore areas, which are typically far away from load centers and require efficient delivery of energy over long distances. Some of the key advantages of HVDC transmission are superior economics for long-distance applications, lower reactive and "skin effect" losses, smaller right-of-way requirements, lower costs, suitability for underwater applications, higher capacity rating, and the ability to connect asynchronous AC systems, handle longer periods of overload operations, and manage instabilities. There

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full-time or part-time position). Some foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs operate with the intent to import or otherwise acquire from abroad, sometimes through illicit means, proprietary technology or software, unpublished data and methods, and intellectual property to further the military modernization goals and/or economic goals of a foreign government. Many, but not all, programs aim to incentivize the targeted individual to physically relocate to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at U.S. research facilities or receipt of federal research funds while concurrently working at and/or receiving compensation from a foreign institution, and some direct participants not to disclose their participation to U.S. entities. Compensation could take many forms including cash, research funding, complimentary foreign travel, honorific titles, career advancement opportunities, promised future compensation, or other types of remuneration or consideration, including in-kind compensation.

<sup>2</sup> Currently, the list of countries of risk includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China.

are also some disadvantages to HVDC transmission related to cost, conversion equipment, switching, control, and availability.<sup>3</sup>

The HVDC Prize is intended to expand the ideas that will lead to innovation in the HVDC space and help the United States determine technology gaps that, if solved, can help accelerate HVDC deployment in the United States. This prize will focus on expanding organizations that see themselves as problem solvers in this field, building new ideas from new technology innovators, and including small businesses and universities in the HVDC technology space.

## 2.2 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The Prize Administrator must conclude that all the following statements are true when applied to your submission:

- The proposed solution and path forward for advancement for the proposed idea is related to the HVDC industry.
- The majority of activities that are described in and support the submission package are performed in the United States and have the potential to benefit the U.S. market.
- The proposed solution represents an innovation that will move the industry beyond its current state.
- The proposed solution is not dependent on new, pending, or proposed federal, state, or local government legislation, resolutions, appropriations, measures, or policies.
- The proposed solution does not involve the lobbying of any federal, state, or local government office.
- The proposed solution is based on fundamental technical principles and is consistent with a basic understanding of the U.S. market economy.

## 3 How to Enter

Go to [HeroX](#) and follow the instructions for registering and submitting all required materials before the deadline. Competitors also have the ability to form teams or find partners through the HeroX platform.

### 3.1 What to Submit

The submission will include a cover page and a 2,500-word technical narrative that describes the following:

- Team description, capabilities, and background.
- Technical narrative about the problem being addressed and the idea/potential solution.
- Letters of support/recommendation in support of the team (optional).

**Winning teams: Up to four winners selected at \$50,000 cash award each (total prize pool: \$200,000).**

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how reviewers evaluate and score your submission. Reviewers 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.

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration. 2018. *Assessing HVDC Transmission for Impacts of Non-Dispatchable Generation*. Washington, D.C.: EIA.  
<https://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/electricity/hvdctransmission/pdf/transmission.pdf>.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

## 3.2 Cover Page Content

List basic information about your submission, including:

- Idea title.
- Team name.
- Short description.
- Key team members (names, contacts, and links to their professional online profiles).
- Other partners (if any).
- Your city, state, and nine-digit ZIP code.

## 3.3 Technical Narrative

You should answer each of the following three questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the three questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these questions must not exceed 2,500 words**, 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.

<b>Narrative</b>	
Max 2,500 words and five supporting images or figures (PDF) Template:	
<b>Question 1: Problem – What is the problem, and why is solving it important?</b>	
<p><b>Suggested Content Competitor Provides</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce your team, explain how it came together, and highlight the knowledge and skills that make it uniquely capable of achieving success.</li> <li>• Highlight your team’s diversity and experience and the track record that makes it likely to succeed in the prize competition. What experience do you have trying new things, solving difficult problems, and overcoming barriers to bring ideas to reality?</li> <li>• Describe the problem, and explain why now is the right time to solve it. Be specific to the problem space that your innovative idea addresses.</li> <li>• Explain why existing solutions and approaches are inadequate. Be as technically specific as possible to your innovation area, providing examples where possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score on a scale of 1–6 is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team’s track record demonstrates notable qualities such as adaptability, creativity, decisiveness, and resourcefulness.</li> <li>• This team is diverse and has the knowledge, experience, and determination to determine a problem and a solution, as well as a path forward for their solution.</li> <li>• The competitor addresses a critical problem using important metrics and a compelling analysis of why now is the right time to address it.</li> <li>• The competitor’s assessment of current solutions and their limitations shows a comprehensive understanding of the problem-solution space.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show how you know this is a significant problem using evidence-based validation (e.g., interviews with users, case studies, literature).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competitor uses real-world evidence to validate key assumptions about industry need.</li> </ul>
<b>Question 2: Solution – What is your solution, and why will it be successful?</b>	
<p><b>Suggested Content Competitor Provides</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe how your solution is better than the existing solutions described in Question 1.</li> <li>Describe your innovation in as much detail as possible.</li> <li>Describe your innovation’s unique value proposition and how it will lead to widespread HVDC adoption.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score on a scale of 1–6 is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The solution represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions, valid technical foundations, and lessons learned from other efforts.</li> <li>The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution.</li> </ul>
<b>Question 3: What is the path forward for advancement of the solution?</b>	
<p><b>Suggested Content Competitor Provides</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe your efforts to advance your solution concept since the announcement of the prize contest, or prior, and highlight key milestones achieved.</li> <li>Explain how your team’s expertise has led to the development of this idea/solution.</li> <li>Describe if your team will be advancing the solution in the future. If not, what is the successful path forward for this solution?</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score on a scale of 1–6 is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A considerable amount of high-quality effort was put into defining and advancing the proposed solution. This team has a viable plan to advance the idea/solution and/or has provided evidence that there is a viable path for the advancement of this solution in the energy market.</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewer Recommendation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A single score on a scale of 1–6 is provided, taking the following statement into consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a prize.</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Letters of Support or Commitment (Optional)

Attach one-page letters (of support, intent, or commitment) from other relevant entities to provide context. Letters of support from partners or others that are critical to the success of your proposed solution will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your solution will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters.

### 3.5 How We Determine and Award Winners

The Prize Administrator screens all completed submissions and ensures that the teams are eligible. Then the Prize Administrator, in consultation with DOE, assigns subject-matter-expert reviewers who independently score the content of each submission. The reviewers will be composed of federal and nonfederal subject-matter experts. They will review the competitors’ submitted materials according to the evaluation criteria.



## 3.6 Reviewer Panel Scoring

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Experts will review each submission individually and assess the response from the competitor to each statement in the criteria described in the tables in Section 3.3.
- Reviewers will score each section 1–6, depending on the degree to which the reviewer agrees that the submission reflects the statements for consideration.
- Each section score will be added together to generate a total score for the submission.
- The total scores from each reviewer will be averaged to produce a final score for the competing team/organization. This score will inform the reviewer decisions on prize awards.

## 3.7 Interviews

DOE may decide to interview a subset of competitors. The interviews would be held prior to the announcement of the winners and would serve to help clarify questions the reviewers may have. Participating in interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of a competitor's likelihood to win.

## 3.8 Final Determination

DOE will designate a federal employee as the judge before the final determination of the winners. Final determination of the winners by the judge will take into account the reviewers' feedback and scores, application of program policy factors, and the interview findings (if applicable).

## 3.9 Announcement

Approximately 60 days after the contest closes, the Prize Administrator will notify the winners and request the necessary information to distribute the prizes. The Prize Administrator will then publicly announce the winners.

# 4 Additional Terms and Conditions

See the Appendix for additional requirements.

**COMPETITORS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE APPENDIX MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.**

# Appendix: Additional Terms and Conditions

## A.1 Requirements

Your submission for the High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Prize is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online by 5 p.m. EST on April 19, 2023, before the prize submission period closes. Late submissions or any other form of submission may be rejected.
- All submissions that you wish to protect from public disclosure must be marked according to the instructions in Section A.10. 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 elements in your submission. 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 submission errors due to technical challenges.
- Your submission must be in English and in a format readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- Submissions will be disqualified if they contain any matter that, in the sole discretion of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) or the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), is indecent, obscene, defamatory, libelous, and/or lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for any of the prizes described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. You should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the prize described here and no other prize on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
- The Prize Administrator, when feasible, may give competitors an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.
- As part of your submission to this prize, you will be required to sign the following statement:

I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this prize. I understand that I am providing this submission to the federal government. I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this prize competition and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the federal government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

## A.2 Verification for Payments

The Prize Administrator will verify the identity and role of all competitors before distributing any 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 for the individual or entity that was responsible for the submission. Each competitor will be required to sign and return to the Prize Administrator, within 30 days of the date on the notice, a completed NREL Request for ACH Banking Information form and a completed W9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>). In 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 does not respond to notifications, (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.

In the event of a dispute as to any registration, 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. All competitors may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

## A.3 Teams and Single-Entity Awards

The Prize Administrator will award a single dollar amount to the designated primary submitter, whether consisting of a single or multiple entities. The primary submitter is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among its member competitors or teammates as they deem appropriate. The Prize Administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters or disputes between team members or competitors.

## A.4 Submission Rights

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 purposes. This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the Prize Administrator or HeroX applications, including 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, Prize Administrator, and judges and reviewers 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 competitors’ names and, as applicable, the names of competitors’ team members and organization that participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

1. The competitor’s entire submission is an original work by the competitor, and the competitor has not included third-party content (such as writing, text, graphics, artwork, logos, photographs, likeness of any third party, musical recordings, clips of videos, television programs or motion pictures) in or in connection with the submission, unless (i) otherwise requested by the Prize Administrator and/or disclosed by the competitor in the submission, and (ii) the competitor has either obtained the rights to use such third-party content, or the content of the submission is considered in the public domain without any limitations on use.
2. Unless otherwise disclosed in the submission, the use thereof by the Prize Administrator, or the exercise by the Prize Administrator of any of the rights granted by the competitor under these rules, does not and will not infringe or violate any rights of any third party or entity, including, without limitation, patent, copyright, trademark, trade secret, defamation, privacy, publicity, false light, misappropriation, intentional or negligent infliction of emotional distress, confidentiality, or any contractual or other rights.
3. All persons who were engaged by the competitor to work on the submission or who appear in the submission in any manner have:

- a. Given the competitor their express written consent to submit the submission for exhibition and other exploitation in any manner and in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter discovered, throughout the world.
- b. Provided written permission to include their name, image, or pictures in or with the submission (or, if a minor who is not the competitor's child, the competitor must have the permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian), and the competitor may be asked by the Prize Administrator to provide permission in writing.
- c. Not been and are not currently under any union or guild agreement that results in any ongoing obligations resulting from the use, exhibition, or other exploitation of the submission.

## A.5 Copyright

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

## A.6 Contest Subject to Applicable Law

All contests are subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations. Participation constitutes each participant's full and unconditional agreement to these Official 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 award is contingent upon the availability of appropriations.

## A.7 Resolution of Disputes

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

Neither DOE nor the Prize Administrator will arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or among competitors.

## A.8 Publicity

The winners of these prizes (collectively, "winners") will be featured on DOE and NREL websites.

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

## A.9 Liability

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest. 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 judge responsible for this prize, the judge has determined that no liability insurance naming DOE as an insured will be required of competitors to compete in this competition per 15 U.S.C. § 3719(i)(2). Competitors should assess the risks associated with their proposed activities and adequately insure themselves against possible losses.

## A.10 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The following applies only to portions of the submission not designated as public information in the instructions for submission. If a submission includes trade secrets or information that is commercial or financial, or information that is confidential or privileged, it is furnished to the government in confidence with the understanding that the information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, DOE will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for review of the application or as otherwise authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the government's right to use the information if it is obtained from another source.

Submissions containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information and may use or disclose such information for any purpose.

The submission must be marked as follows, identifying the specific pages containing trade secrets, confidential, proprietary, or privileged information: "Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data: Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets, confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. [End of Notice]"

The header and footer of every page that contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as follows: "Contains Trade Secrets, Confidential, Proprietary, or Privileged Information Exempt from Public Disclosure." In addition, each line or paragraph containing proprietary, privileged, or trade secret information must be clearly marked with double brackets.

Competitors will be notified of any Freedom of Information Act 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 Freedom of Information Act representative prior to the release of materials. DOE does intend to keep all submission materials private except for those materials designated as "will be made public."

## A.11 Privacy

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

## A.12 General Conditions

DOE reserves the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the prize, 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 prize, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel the prize. Any performance toward prize goals is conducted entirely at the risk of the competitor, and DOE shall not compensate any competitors for any activities performed in furtherance of this prize.

Although DOE may indicate that it will select up to several winners for each prize, 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.

## A.13 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the prize judge to maximize the impact of prize 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:

- Geographic diversity and potential economic impact of projects.
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources are non-duplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and the DOE mission generally.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits technological or programmatic diversity when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio and other competitors.
- The degree to which the submission is likely to lead to increased employment and manufacturing in the United States or provide other economic benefits 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 that, 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 toward enabling a just and equitable clean energy economy in their region and/or community.

## A.14 National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

This prize is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321, et seq.). NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions. For additional background on NEPA, please see DOE's NEPA website at <http://nepa.energy.gov/>.

While NEPA compliance is a federal agency responsibility and the ultimate decisions remain with the federal agency, all participants in the HVDC Prize will be required to assist in the timely and effective completion of the NEPA process in the manner most pertinent to their participation in the prize competition. Participants may be asked to provide DOE with information on fabrication and testing of their concept such that DOE can conduct a meaningful evaluation of the potential environmental impacts.

## A.15 Return of Funds

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

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