



# 2024 RENEW AMERICA'S SCHOOLS OFFICIAL PRIZE RULES

March 2024

**Submission Due: Thursday, June 13 by 5 p.m. ET**

# Preface

The U.S. Department of Energy's Renew America's Schools Prize will be governed by 15 U.S.C. §3719 and this Official Rules document. The Prize Administrator reserves the right to modify this Official Rules document if necessary and will publicly post any such notifications as well as notify registered prize participants.

## What Is This Document?

This Official Rules document provides competitors with information to construct a compliant, and potentially successful, submission package to participate in the 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize (also advertised on EERE Exchange as DE-FOA-0003325). The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Renew America's Schools Program funds eligible energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at public K-12 schools, prioritizing schools serving high-need communities. The 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize will fund portfolios of schools and school facilities demonstrating need for energy improvements, including energy efficiency cost-saving measures, and financing for renewable energy projects.

**This document describes a funding program that utilizes both prize authority<sup>1</sup> and financial assistance.<sup>2</sup>**

This document contains the Official Rules and guidance for how to compete in the Phase 1 Prize and subsequently enter into a Cooperative Agreement with DOE, which is Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Reading this document, in full, should answer most questions potential competitors may have. Failure to follow these instructions will result in a non-compliant submission package. Additional questions should be emailed to: [Schools@DOE.gov](mailto:Schools@DOE.gov). Please refer to the HeroX website to find the answer to your emailed question. Questions must be submitted not later than 3 business days prior to the application due date and time. Please note, feedback on individual concepts will not be provided through Q&A.

To apply, competitors will need to register and complete their submission package on the Prize's HeroX page before June 13, 2024, at 5 p.m. E.T. Required forms and suggested templates are available on this prize page.

For technical issues with the HeroX website, please email: [RenewSchoolsPrize@nrel.gov](mailto:RenewSchoolsPrize@nrel.gov).

## Teaming Partner List

DOE is continuing to gather information for the "Teaming Partner List" to facilitate the formation of project teams for this Prize. The Teaming Partner List allows organizations who may wish to participate on an application to express their interest to other competitors, explore potential partnerships, and form project teams.

Updates to the Teaming Partner List will be available on the [HeroX prize page](#). The Teaming Partner List will be regularly updated to reflect new teaming partners who provide their organization's information.

**SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:** Any organization that would like to be included on the Teaming Partner List should fill out this [Microsoft form](#) or email the information to [Schools@doe.gov](mailto:Schools@doe.gov) with the subject line "Teaming Partner Information."

**DISCLAIMER:** By submitting a request to be included on the Teaming Partner List, the requesting organization consents to the publication of the above-referenced information. By facilitating the Teaming Partner List, DOE is not endorsing, sponsoring, or otherwise evaluating qualifications of individuals and

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<sup>1</sup> 15 U.S.C. §3719

<sup>2</sup> 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 910

organizations self-identifying themselves for placement on the Teaming Partner List. DOE will not pay for the provision of any information, nor will it compensate any competitors or requesting organizations for the development of such information.

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# 0. Introduction and Program Summary

The Renew America's Schools Program competitively selects and funds eligible energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at public K-12 schools. This \$500 million program is a first-of-its-kind investment made possible by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, as part of the Administration's broader [Action Plan for Building Better School Infrastructure](#). The program supports the implementation of infrastructure improvements in schools, with a focus on local educational agencies (LEAs) that qualify as rural and/or high poverty. The program will help create healthier learning environments, lower utility costs, and redirect funds to support students and teachers.

Proposals considered under the 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize will support a portfolio of schools that identify the need for energy improvements, including energy efficiency improvements and/or renewable energy upgrades. Funded improvements will result in improved health outcomes, energy savings, and/or energy cost savings.

The 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize consists of **the Prize competition** (Phase 1) and a subsequent **Cooperative Agreement** (Phase 2 and Phase 3). Competitors submitting proposals should be organizations with the capacity to aggregate and manage portfolios of school facilities to receive energy assessments and improvements. Competitors should consider leveraging the Teaming Partner List, found on the [HeroX prize page](#), to add additional capacity and expertise.

This Official Rules document outlines the components of the Renew America's Schools Prize (Phase 1) and subsequent Cooperative Agreement process and funding (Phase 2 and Phase 3).

## PRIZE (PHASE 1)

### **PHASE 1 (PRIZE): Portfolio + Team = Up to 23 Winners at \$300,000 cash prize each**

In Phase 1 ("Portfolio + Team"), competitors will identify a minimum of 10 schools/school facilities to be included in their application. The portfolio may span multiple LEAs. The portfolio should exhibit a high need for energy assessments and, ultimately, energy improvements. The goal of Phase 1 is for competitors to successfully assemble their project team, assemble their portfolio of school facilities, demonstrate the need for energy improvements at schools and school facilities in the defined portfolio, and outline their process to complete the tasks in Phase 2. Based on successful completion of Phase 1, winners will be invited to enter into negotiations with DOE for a Cooperative Agreement. Negotiations for a Cooperative Agreement will require additional steps as outlined below.

## COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT (PHASE 2 and PHASE 3)

### **PHASE 2 (COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT): Strategic Plan + Energy Audits = \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per recipient**

**ONLY winners from the Phase 1 Prize will be eligible to negotiate with DOE to receive a Cooperative Agreement for Phase 2 and Phase 3 funding.**

Phase 2 ("Strategic Plan + Energy Audits") will be synonymous with Budget Period 1 of the Cooperative Agreement. Funding in Phase 2 will reimburse Recipients for costs associated with energy audits and strategic planning and design. DOE will<sup>3</sup> allocate a set amount of funding per Recipient, determined by the number of schools or school facilities submitted in their Phase 1 application [see Table 1 below]. In

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<sup>3</sup> DOE reserves the right to terminate award negotiations at any time for any reason. DOE reserves the right, without qualification, to reject any or all applications received in response to this Prize to Cooperative Agreement and to select any application, in whole or in part, as a basis for negotiation and/or award.

Phase 2, Recipients conduct The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers ([ASHRAE](#)) Level 2 energy audits of all the schools/school facilities in the portfolio and develop a comprehensive Strategic Plan for implementing energy improvements. Energy audits and the Strategic Plan should provide schools with clear pathways to prioritize energy improvements, access private sector funding and/or tax credits, and realize high-impact health and safety benefits.

**PHASE 3 (COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT): Implementation = \$7,000,000 to \$14,000,000 per recipient**

Phase 3 (“Implementation”) will be synonymous with Budget Period 2 of the Cooperative Agreement. In Phase 3, DOE will allocate a set amount of funding per Recipient, determined by the number of schools/school facilities submitted in their Phase 1 application [see Table 1]. In Phase 3, Recipients oversee implementation of the energy improvements identified at the end of Phase 2. DOE will work with Recipients to ensure that high-priority energy improvements are implemented within the allotted budget for Phase 3. Phase 3 should directly advance the measurable goals of energy savings and high-impact health and safety benefits outlined in Phase 1.

**Table 1: Winner Will Receive Funding Based on Their Portfolio Size**

	PHASE 1 Prize PORTFOLIO + TEAM	PHASE 2 Cooperative Agreement STRATEGIC PLAN + ENERGY AUDITS	PHASE 3 Cooperative Agreement IMPLEMENTATION
10–14 Schools & School Facilities*	\$300K	\$500K	\$7M
15–19 Schools & School Facilities	\$300K	\$750K	\$10.5M
20+ Schools & School Facilities	\$300K	\$1M	\$14M

\*Portfolios must have 10 or more schools/school facilities

**Table 2: 2024 Renew America’s Schools Overview = \$180M Across 3 Phases**

	PHASE 1 Prize PORTFOLIO + TEAM	PHASE 2 Cooperative Agreement STRATEGIC PLAN + ENERGY AUDITS	PHASE 3 Cooperative Agreement IMPLEMENTATION
Number of Anticipated Awardees	Up to 23 winners. Minimum of 10 schools per portfolio selected.		
Award	\$300K cash prize each	\$500K – \$1M*	\$7M – \$14M*
Cost Share	No cost share required	Minimum 5%	Minimum 25%
Total Award Funding (\$180M)	Up to \$6.9M	\$10 – \$15M	\$150 – \$170M

\*Winner will receive funding based on portfolio size

\*Federal funding provided in Cooperative Agreement depends on portfolio size. See Table 1.

DOE will allocate Federal funding according to the number of schools/school facilities in the winning portfolio submitted in Phase 1 [see Table 1]. DOE does not require funding to be used equally across schools/school facilities. DOE reserves the right to terminate award negotiations at any time for any reason.

## 0.1. Background and Context

The Renew America's School program falls within the office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP). Federal share for the Prize and Cooperative Agreement will be funded, in whole or in part, with funds appropriated by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), more commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The BIL is a once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure, designed to modernize and upgrade American infrastructure to enhance United States competitiveness, drive the creation of well-paying union jobs, tackle the climate crisis, and ensure stronger access to economic, environmental, and other benefits for disadvantaged communities. The BIL appropriates more than \$62 billion to the Department of Energy (DOE) to invest in American manufacturing and workers; expand access to energy efficiency and clean energy; deliver reliable, clean, and affordable power to more Americans; and demonstrate and deploy the technologies of tomorrow through clean energy demonstrations.

DOE's BIL investments will support efforts to build a clean and equitable energy economy that achieves a zero-carbon electricity system by 2035, and to put the United States on a path to achieve net-zero emissions economy-wide by no later than 2050<sup>4</sup> to benefit all Americans.

This program supports the implementation of [Section 40541 of the BIL](#), which provides \$500 million for grants for energy improvements at public school facilities for the five (5)-year period encompassing Fiscal Years (FYs) 2022 through 2026. DOE aims to partner with public school stakeholders to facilitate substantial additional investment, prioritize schools with high needs, minimize administrative burden, and build enduring capacity in local educational agencies (LEAs) to maximize impact equitably and efficiently.

The activities to be funded under this program support BIL Section 40541 and the broader government-wide approach to support projects that enable replicable and scalable impacts; create innovative, sustaining partnerships; leverage funding and economies of scale; focus on disadvantaged communities; improve student, teacher, and occupant health; enrich learning and growth; assist schools that serve as community assets (e.g., neighborhood cooling centers or disaster recovery shelters); and are crafted thoughtfully within the context of school facilities (e.g., procurement restraints, construction windows). These projects should maximize the benefits of the clean energy transition as the nation works to curb the climate crisis, empower workers, and advance environmental justice.

## 0.2. Program Purpose

There are nearly 130,000 K-12 schools in the United States,<sup>5</sup> including both public and private schools. Each year, public schools alone spend more than \$8 billion on energy costs, exceeding their combined annual budget for computers and textbooks.<sup>6</sup>

Many of these schools have aging infrastructure, which is why the American Society of Civil Engineers gave American schools a D+ rating on their 2021 report card.<sup>7</sup> Aging schools often pose budgetary

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<sup>4</sup> [Executive Order \(EO\) 14008](#), "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," January 27, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/04/fact-sheet-the-biden-harris-action-plan-for-building-better-school-infrastructure/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/articles/biden-harris-administration-announces-500-million-program-better-school-infrastructure>

challenges for cash-strapped school districts and threaten the ability of students to learn in comfortable and healthy classrooms. If poorly maintained, critical building systems, such as heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems, can contribute to respiratory issues and even promote the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. School districts in rural, high-poverty, and disadvantaged communities shoulder a disproportionate majority of aging, decaying school buildings. By prioritizing energy improvements in schools, LEAs can reduce their second highest operational expense and leverage the savings to fund future facility maintenance and educational programs.

This program seeks applications that not only address the need for energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades, but also create innovative and sustaining partnerships, leverage funding and economies of scale, and provide replicable and scalable models for sector-wide change. It supports administration goals, laid out above, by funding projects that address historic inequities in school facilities investments, reduce school energy expenditures, help schools lead the nation in solving the climate crisis, and create well-paying union jobs. Energy consumption at U.S. public K-12 schools is a significant source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and the second highest operational expense to schools, second only to salaries. Packages of energy improvements, e.g., combining HVAC and lighting upgrades with solar water heating, can save even more energy than individual upgrades, and zero-energy or zero-energy ready construction can reduce energy consumption by more than 65%. These improvements can pay dividends for years to come: Every dollar saved on utility bills is a dollar better spent on educating children.

As part of the whole-of-government approach to advance equity and encourage worker organizing and collective bargaining, and in alignment with BIL section 40541, this program and any related activities will seek to encourage meaningful engagement and participation of workforce organizations, including labor unions, as well as underserved and disadvantaged communities and underrepresented groups, including consultation with Tribal Nations. Consistent with [Executive Order 14008](#), this program is designed to help meet the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments in clean energy and climate solutions flow to disadvantaged communities, including those identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), as well as all Federally Recognized Tribes or Tribal entities (whether or not they have land).

### 0.3. Renew America's Schools Prize: Phase 1

The goal of Phase 1 ("Portfolio + Team") is for competitors to successfully assemble their project team, assemble their portfolio of schools/school facilities, demonstrate the need for energy improvements at the defined portfolio, and outline their process to complete the tasks in Phase 2. In Phase 1, competitors will assemble project teams and portfolios, ensuring there are a minimum of 10 schools/school facilities included in their portfolio. Competitors will also provide timelines and processes for conducting energy audits/energy assessments of their portfolio to be completed in Phase 2 and pathways for financing improvements, stacking funds, and leveraging tax credits and/or private sector capital. Up to 23 winners will receive cash prizes of \$300,000 each.

### 0.4. What to Submit for Cooperative Agreement Negotiations

The Cooperative Agreement negotiation process will consist of several meetings between DOE and the Selectee to negotiate the terms of the Cooperative Agreement. This includes the Statement of Project Objectives (SPO), budget, and other contractual requirements.



If selected for award negotiations, DOE reserves the right to require that Selectees provide additional or clarifying information regarding the application submissions, the project, the project team, the award requirements, and any other matters related to anticipated award. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of documentation that may be required:

1. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance;
2. Statement of Project Objectives (SOPo);
3. SF-424a Budget justification;
  - i. Indirect cost information;
4. Updated Community Benefits Plan;
5. Pre-Award Information Sheet (PAIS);
  - i. Participants and Collaborating Organizations;
  - ii. Current and Pending Support;
6. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration;
7. FedConnect registration;
8. Letter(s) of Commitment (Blended Cost Share Letter).

Organizations negotiating an award will be held to specific and rapid turnaround times during the award negotiation process. DOE may terminate award negotiations with Selectees that are unable to meet required deadlines.

#### **0.4.1 SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance**

Selectees must complete the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance, available at <https://grants.gov/forms>. Complete all required fields in accordance with the instructions on the form. The list of certifications and assurances in Field 21 can be found at <http://energy.gov/management/office-management/operational-management/financial-assistance/financial-assistance-forms>, under Certifications and Assurances. Note: The dates and dollar amounts on the SF-424 are for the complete project period and not just the first project year, first phase, or other subset of the project period.

#### **0.4.2 Statement of Project Objectives (SOPo)**

Selectees must complete a SOPo that includes tasks, subtasks, milestones, deliverables, and more. DOE will provide a SOPo template to Selectees at the time of Negotiations.

#### **0.4.3 SF-424a Budget Justification**

Selectees must complete each tab of the budget workbook for the project, including all work to be performed by the prime recipient and its subrecipients and contractors. Selectees should include costs associated with required annual audits and incurred cost proposals in their proposed budget documents. The data fields in the “Instructions and Summary” tab of the budget workbook will auto-populate as the Selectee enters information into the Workbook. Selectees must carefully read the “Instructions and Summary” tab within the Budget Justification Workbook.

#### **0.4.4 Updated Community Benefits Plan**

To support the goal of building a clean and equitable energy economy, the BIL-funded projects are expected to (1) support meaningful community and labor engagement; (2) invest in America’s workforce; (3) advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); and (4) contribute to the President’s goal that 40% of the overall project benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged

communities (the Justice40 Initiative).<sup>8</sup> To ensure these goals are met, Selectees must update their Community Benefits Plan (submitted for Phase 1) to reflect how their project incorporates the four objectives stated above.

#### **0.4.5 Pre-Award Information Sheet**

Selectees must complete the Pre-Award Information Sheet and all required attachments, including but not limited to: Participants and Collaborating Organizations, Current and Pending Support, and any other required disclosures, waivers, attachments or supporting documentation. The Pre-Award Information sheet can be found at <https://www.energy.gov/eere/funding/eere-funding-application-and-management-forms>.

#### **0.4.6 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management**

Each Selectee (unless an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (1) Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov> before submitting award negotiation documents; (2) provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in your award negotiation documents; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. DOE may not make a Federal award to a Selectee until the Selectee has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if a Selectee has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DOE is ready to make a Federal award, DOE will determine that the Selection is not qualified to receive a Federal award.

#### **0.4.7 FedConnect**

Each Selectee must register in FedConnect at <https://www.fedconnect.net>.

#### **0.4.8 Grants.gov**

Each Selectee must register in Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) to receive automatic updates when Amendments to this Prize are posted. However, please note that applications will not be accepted through Grants.gov.

#### **0.4.9 Electronic Authorization of Applications and Award Documents**

Each Selectee must submit an application and supplemental information under this Funding Opportunity through electronic systems used by the DOE, including HeroX and FedConnect, which constitutes the authorized representative's approval and electronic signature.

#### **0.4.10 Letter(s) of Commitment (Blended Cost Share Letter)**

Cooperative Agreements resulting from this funding opportunity will have blended cost share. A minimum 5% cost share is required for Phase 2: Budget Period 1 ("Strategic Plan + Energy Audits," and a minimum 25% cost share is required for Phase 3: Budget Period 2 ("Implementation"). See Appendix B–E for additional details on Cost Share requirements.

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<sup>8</sup> The Justice40 initiative, established by E.O. 14008, sets a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities. Consistent with E.O. 14008 and Justice40 interim implementation guidance, M-21-28 and M-23-09, DOE recognizes geographically defined disadvantaged communities as identified by the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), and also recognizes that all Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal entities are disadvantaged communities, whether or not they have land.

## 0.5. Eligible Entities

Entities eligible for participation in the 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize must meet the eligibility requirements as described in [Section 40541\(a\)\(3\) of the BIL](#). If the application does not meet these eligibility requirements, it will be considered ineligible and removed from further evaluation. Specifically, an eligible entity is described as a consortium of:

One local educational agency (LEA)<sup>9</sup> and one or more of the following:

1. Schools;
2. Nonprofit organizations that have the knowledge and capacity to partner and assist with energy improvements;
3. For-profit organizations that have the knowledge and capacity to partner and assist with energy improvements; or
4. Community partners that have the knowledge and capacity to partner and assist with energy improvements.

### Domestic Entities

The proposed prime recipient and subrecipient(s) must be domestic entities. To qualify as a domestic entity, the entity must be organized, chartered, or incorporated (or otherwise formed) under the laws of a particular state or territory of the United States; have majority domestic ownership and control; and have a physical place of business in the United States.

The following types of domestic entities are eligible to participate as a prime recipient or subrecipient of this Cooperative Agreement:

1. Institutions of higher education;
2. For-profit entities;
3. Non-profit entities; and
4. State and local governmental entities, and Tribal Nations.

DOE/National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) are eligible to apply for funding as a subrecipient, but they are not eligible to apply as a prime recipient.

Non-DOE/NNSA FFRDCs are eligible to participate as a subrecipient, but they are not eligible to apply as a prime recipient.

Entities banned from doing business with the United States government, such as entities debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in Federal programs are not eligible.

Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that engaged in lobbying activities after December 31, 1995, are **not** eligible to apply.

**Note: Only Phase 1 Prize winners are eligible to enter into negotiations with DOE for a Cooperative Agreement (encompassing Phase 2 and Phase 3 awards).**

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<sup>9</sup> The term "local educational agency" (LEA) has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. See 20 U.S.C. § 7801(30). The term "[local educational agency](#)" generally means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a [State](#) for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public [elementary schools](#) or [secondary schools](#) in a city, [county](#), township, school district, or other political subdivision of a [State](#), or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a [State](#) as an administrative agency for its public [elementary schools](#) or [secondary schools](#). The term "local educational agency" includes an elementary school or secondary school funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, under certain circumstances.

## 0.6. Eligible Types of Improvements (for Phase 3)

Energy improvements in Phase 3 (“Implementation”) may take the form of repairs, renovations, or installations to the facility envelope, air-conditioning system, ventilation system, heating system, domestic hot water heating system, compressed air system, distribution system, lighting system, power system, and/or controls of a building. Projects may also include renewable energy improvements such as rooftop solar, micro wind turbines, alternative fueled vehicle infrastructure, and purchase or lease of alternative fueled vehicles. Any improvement in a school or school facility that achieves energy savings and leads to an improvement in teacher and student health, including indoor air quality, is also allowable. Costs related to electrifying end uses to take advantage of clean energy from the electric grid are also eligible. Packaging multiple improvements for deeper energy savings and carbon reductions is encouraged.

## 0.7. Important Dates

Refer to the timeline on [HeroX](#) for relevant dates and deadlines.

- **Phase 1 Submission Deadline:** Thursday, June 13 at 5 p.m. ET
- **Informational Webinar #1:** Thursday, March 21 at 3 p.m. ET (see HeroX for Zoom Link)
- **Informational Webinar #2:** Tuesday, March 26 at 2 p.m. ET (see HeroX for Zoom Link)
- **Office Hours #1:** Wednesday, April 24 at 1 p.m. ET (see HeroX for Zoom Link)
- **Office Hours #2:** Wednesday, May 29 at 2 p.m. ET (see HeroX for Zoom Link)
- **Phase 1 Prize Winner Announcement:** August 2024 (anticipated)
- **Expected Timeframe for Cooperative Agreement Negotiations:** Starting in Fall 2024 (anticipated).

# 1. Prize (Phase 1)

## 1.1. Introduction

The goal of Phase 1 (“Portfolio + Team”) is for competitors to successfully assemble their project team of eligible entities, assemble their portfolio of schools/school facilities, demonstrate the need for energy improvements at the defined portfolio, and outline their process to complete the tasks in Phase 2. In Phase 1, competitors will assemble project teams and portfolios, ensuring there are a minimum of 10 schools/school facilities included in their portfolio. Competitors will also provide timelines and processes for conducting energy audits/energy assessments of their portfolio to be completed in Phase 2 and pathways for financing improvements, stacking funds, and leveraging tax credits and/or private sector capital.

## 1.2. Prizes to Win

Up to 23 Phase 1 winners will receive cash prizes of \$300,000 and become eligible to move into negotiations for a Cooperative Agreement with DOE for Phase 2 and Phase 3.

## 1.3. How to Enter

Complete a submission package online at <https://www.herox.com/renewschoolsprize> before June 13, 2024, at 5 p.m. ET. To learn more about the process of setting up a HeroX account and applying to a prize, please reference the “HeroX Instructional Guide” under the Resources tab in HeroX.

## 1.4. Phase 1 Contest Process

**1. Preparation, Activation, and Submission:** Competitors complete their submission packages, following the instructions in this document and submit online before Phase 1 of the contest closes. Competitors may use the Teaming List, located on HeroX, to express their interest to other competitors, explore potential partnerships, and form project teams.

**2. Assessment:** The Prize Administrator screens all completed submissions and assigns a panel of DOE-approved subject matter expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. DOE’s SCEP considers input from expert reviewers and makes the final decision on all winners. Scoring protocol and technical review criteria are outlined in Section 1.7.

**3. Announcement:** Approximately 60 days after Phase 1 closes, the Prize Administrator notifies winners and requests the necessary information (IRS W-9 form, ACH form, and prize acceptance form) to distribute cash prizes. The Prize Administrator will then publicly announce the winners.

## 1.5. Phase 1 Important Dates

- **Phase 1 Opens:** March 20, 2024
- **Phase 1 Submission Deadline:** June 13, 2024
- **Evaluation Period:** June – July 2024
- **Winner Notification:** August 2024 (anticipated)

## 1.6. Submission Package

The following items constitute the prize submission package and must be submitted through the [HeroX](#)

Platform prior to the prize deadline. The submission documents are summarized below in Table 3. Additional details in this section explain how to successfully collect and present the information for each required document. All templates and resources for this Prize can be found on HeroX under the Resources tab.

**Table 3. Submission Items for Phase 1**

Section	Page/Size Limit	Will be made Public	Required	Template Provided
0. Team Name	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A
1. Technical Narrative	10 pages maximum including cover page, text should be at least 11-point font	No	Yes	Yes
2. Energy Justice Mapping Tool Reports	No Page Limit	No	Yes	Yes, use if unable to generate report
3. School Energy Assessment (SEA) Form Tool Reports	No Page Limit	No	Yes	Yes
4. Community Benefits Plan (CBP)	5 pages maximum including cover page, text should be at least 11-point font-	No	Yes	Yes
5. Resumes	One page maximum per individual, combined into a single document	No	Yes	No
6. Letters of Commitment	One page maximum per letter, combined into a single document	No	Yes	No
7. Summary Slide	1 slide maximum, designed for conference room projection, text should be at least 14-pt font	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Renew America’s Schools Prize platform and resources can be accessed here:

<https://www.herox.com/renewschoolsprize>

Below is a detailed description of each required application component.

**1. Technical Narrative:** (template provided)

(10 pages maximum, including cover page)

The Technical Narrative should address the first four of five evaluation criteria (see Section 1.7 for all Evaluation Criteria):

- Need for Planning and Energy Assessment: Facility and Community Need
  - Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Percentage per School/School Facility
    - Free & Reduced-Price Lunch Percentage should be calculated based on the number of students who are eligible to participate in the Free Lunch

and Reduced-Price Lunch Programs under the National School Lunch Act of 1946 divided by the total student population at the school.

- Team Composition, Capability and Experience
  - A description of the capacity of the eligible entity to provide services and comprehensive support to make the energy improvements.
- Implementation Plan for Phase 2
  - A draft work plan of the intended achievements of the eligible entity at the school.
  - A description of the energy improvements that the eligible entity would carry out at the school if the application were approved.
  - An assessment of the expected needs of the eligible entity for operation and maintenance training funds, and a plan for use of those funds, if applicable.
- Impact and Replicability: Strategic Partnership and Scalability

In the Narrative, competitors should also address organizational background (including the history and state of the school facilities identified in the portfolio), high-level project goals, project impacts to student learning and growth, and other relevant details.

A template is provided to help organize the narrative; use of this template is encouraged, but not required. The suggestions in the Technical Narrative Template are not meant to be prescriptive or restrictive; the competitor should decide how to best structure their response. Templates can be found on [HeroX](#) under the Resources tab.

## **2. Energy Justice Mapping Tool Reports:** (template provided as needed)

(No page limit, but reports must be combined into a single .pdf document)

DOE developed the “Energy Justice Mapping Tool for Schools” (<https://energyjustice-schools.egs.anl.gov>) to help competitors derive relevant needs information on a school-by-school basis. Competitors must use this tool to generate a report for information regarding each school/school facility within the submission. All reports should be included with the application submission as a standalone attachment combined into one singular .pdf.

Competitors who are unable to locate and generate a .pdf report from the Energy Justice Mapping Tool for Schools (<https://energyjustice-schools.egs.anl.gov/>) are required to use the “Energy Justice Template Report” template, posted on [HeroX](#) under the Resources tab, to generate a one-page maximum report for each school/school facility within the submission. Please note, competitors should only use this template if they are unable to locate their school within the Energy Justice Mapping Tool for Schools.

Please upload a single .pdf document to [HeroX](#) that includes the one-page summary report per school/school facility. For example: if the portfolio has 10 schools, the .pdf document uploaded will be 10 pages long.

## **3. School Energy Assessment (SEA Form) Tool Reports:** (template provided)

(No page limit)

Competitors must use DOE’s School Energy Assessment (SEA) Form to generate a facility condition report, which is a needs assessment of the current condition of the school and school facilities that would receive the energy improvements. The SEA Form is available at <https://www.energy.gov/scep/school-needs-and-benefits-assessment-resources>.

Additional trainings on how to use the form can be found on: [School Needs and Benefits Assessment Resources | Department of Energy](#)

For each school/school facility, save the SEA Form Excel file. Combine all the files into a Zip folder to upload to HeroX. Please note that HeroX will only accept one file; this should be a Zip file containing more than one SEA Form Excel file. For instructions on how to create a Zip folder, see [Zip and unzip files - Microsoft Support](#).

#### **4. Community Benefits Plan (CBP):** (template provided)

(5 pages maximum, including cover page)

The Community Benefits Plan (CBP) sets forth the competitor's approach to ensuring Federal investments advance the following four goals:

- 1) Community and labor engagement;
- 2) Investing in quality jobs;
- 3) Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); and
- 4) Contributing to the Justice40 Initiative.

A template is provided to help organize the CPB. Use of this template is encouraged, but not required. The suggestions in the CBP Template are not meant to be prescriptive or restrictive; the competitor should decide how to best structure their response. Templates can be found on [HeroX](#) under the Resources tab.

In the CBP, the competitor should address the following:

**1. Community and Labor Engagement:** The CBP must describe the competitor's actions to date and future plans to engage with labor unions and community stakeholders – such as local governments, Tribal governments, and community-based organizations that support or work with disadvantaged communities as defined for purposes of the Justice40 Initiative.

**2. Investing in Quality Jobs:** A well-qualified, skilled, and trained workforce is necessary to ensure project stability, continuity, impact, and success of meeting program goals. High quality jobs are critical to attracting and retaining the qualified workforce required.

The CBP must describe the competitor's approach to investing in workforce education and training of both new and incumbent workers and ensuring jobs are of sufficient quality to attract and retain skilled workers in the industry.

**3. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** The CBP must include a section describing how DEIA objectives are addressed by the competitor's organization and will be incorporated into future Prize and Cooperative Agreement work. Examples include partnerships with underrepresented businesses, educational institutions, and training organizations that serve workers who face barriers to accessing quality jobs, and/or other project partners to help address DEIA.

**4. Justice40 Initiative:** Competitors must provide an overview of how their proposed portfolio and project plans benefit disadvantaged communities. This section should identify specific disadvantaged communities to which the anticipated project benefits will flow. Benefits include, but are not limited to, measurable direct or indirect investments or positive project outcomes that achieve or contribute to the following in disadvantaged communities: (1) a decrease in energy



burden; (2) a decrease in environmental exposure and burdens; (3) an increase in access to low-cost capital; (4) an increase in high-quality job creation, the clean energy job pipeline, and job training for individuals; (5) increases in clean energy enterprise creation and contracting (e.g., business enterprises in disadvantaged communities or other socially disadvantaged enterprises); (6) increases in energy democracy, including community ownership; (7) increased parity in clean energy technology access and adoption; and (8) an increase in energy resilience. Applicants should identify whether any disadvantaged communities, as identified in the Energy Justice Mapping Tool for Schools (which aligns with the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)), or any Federally Recognized Tribes or Tribal entities (whether or not they have land) will benefit from the proposed portfolio and project plan.

## **5. Resumes:**

(1 page maximum per individual)

A resume provides information used by reviewers to evaluate an individual's relevant skills and experience. Competitors must submit a one-page resume for each project manager and key personnel that includes the following:

1. Contact information;
2. Education: All academic institutions attended, major/area, degree;
3. Training: (e.g.,) certification or credential from a Registered Apprenticeship or Labor Management Partnership;
4. Professional experience: Beginning with the current position, list professional/academic positions in chronological order with a brief description; and
5. List all current academic, professional, or institutional appointments, foreign or domestic, at the applicant institution or elsewhere, whether or not remuneration is received, and whether full-time, part-time, or voluntary.

Each resume must not exceed one (1) page per individual. Combine all letters into a single .pdf document for submission.

## **6: Letters of Commitment:**

(1 page maximum per letter)

Letters from portfolio schools/LEAs and any other key project partners identified at time of application should be submitted. These letters should state the entity's intent to participate in the proposed project and their role(s) should the project move forward.

Each letter must not exceed one (1) page. Combine all letters into a single .pdf document for submission.

## **7: Summary Slide (to be made public):** (template provided)

(1 slide maximum)

Competitors must provide a single public-facing slide summarizing the proposed project. The Summary Slide must include the following information:

- Project Name
- Project Description

- Summary of Need (Community, Facility)
- Project Goals
- Any key graphics (illustrations, charts and/or tables)

A “Summary Slide Template” is provided. Using the template is encouraged, but not required. Templates can be found on [HeroX](#) under the Resources tab.

## 1.7. How We Determine Winners

The Prize Administrator screens all completed submissions and assigns a panel of DOE-approved subject matter expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. DOE’s SCEP considers input from expert reviewers and makes the final decision on all winners. DOE will designate a Federal employee as the Prize Judge before the final determination of the winners. Final determination of the winners by the Judge will consider the reviewers’ feedback and scores and application of program policy factors (see Appendix A.13).

All items in the submission package, with the exception of the cover pages, will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will assign a score between 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) and 6 (“Strongly Agree”) for each of the five criteria as noted below.

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

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Reviewers will review each submission individually and assess the response from the competitor to each statement in the five criteria described below.
- Reviewers will assign a score to each section, with scores ranging from 1 to 6 (see table above), 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 judge’s decisions on prize awards.

Each criterion will be weighted as described below. Each criterion is broken down into several sub-criteria of equal weight.

### **Criterion 1: Need for Planning and Energy Assessments (20%)**

The competitor should describe their intended portfolio of schools and school facilities, and their need(s), as measured by the following parameters:

- **Facilities:** Extent to which schools or school facilities identified in portfolio exhibit a high need for energy assessments and may require energy improvements (e.g., age of school, deferred maintenance, fiscal/capital constraints for facility, services, high energy costs, failing systems, and/or others).
- **Community:** Degree to which the project is based in and serves a community of high need (e.g., rural schools, and schools serving a high percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced priced lunch).

### **Criterion 2: Team Composition, Capability, and Experience (20%)**

The competitor should introduce their proposed project team and outline the team's core competencies:

- **Project team composition:** Demonstrate that the team has the necessary experience, team members, and relationships to successfully implement their plan (both in energy and financing).
- **Experience:** Demonstrate that the team members have a successful track record within relevant sectors (such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, school infrastructure, financing).
- **Commitment:** Demonstrate that the team has documented that all needed team members will be in place and ready to commit the time needed to accomplish the stated goals for Phase 2.

### **Criterion 3: Implementation Plan for Phase 2 (20%)**

The competitor should develop their plan for Phase 2 (energy audits/energy assessments, financial analyses, and strategy for implementation of upgrades), addressing:

- **Plan:** Adequacy, reasonableness, and soundness of the project plan to complete the required Strategic Plan and ASHRAE Level 2 energy audits within the time allotted to Phase 2 (9–12 months).
- **Schedule:** Likelihood of successfully maintaining schedule proposed for Phase 2 and demonstrate how they will accomplish key milestones toward meeting project goal(s).

### **Criterion 4: Impact and Replicability (20%)**

The competitor should situate their project within larger sustainability, decarbonization, and clean energy goals, demonstrating how pivotal aspects of their project can be extrapolated to different sites and contexts through strategic use of:

- **Partnerships:** Extent to which the project strategically leverages partnerships, including energy-related performance contracting.
- **Benefits:** The potential benefits in terms of cost savings, air quality improvements, and emissions reductions from full implementation of the project.
- **Scalability:** Extent to which the project addresses replicability and scalability of the project, both within the competitor's LEA and/or by external LEAs; Plans to build upon this work within the LEA, disseminate strategies and lessons learned to external LEAs, and/or collaborate with other LEAs on pursuing energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

### **Criterion 5: Community Benefits Plan (20%)**

The Community Benefits Plan must set forth the competitor's approach to ensuring that Federal investments advance the following four goals: 1) community and labor engagement; 2) investing in job quality and workforce continuity; 3) advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); and 4) contributing to the Justice40 Initiative:

- **Community and Labor Engagement:** Extent to which competitor's Community Benefits Plan illustrates project viability and social risk mitigation through community and labor engagement.
- **Workforce:** Extent to which competitor's Community Benefits Plan illustrates investment in the American workforce.
- **DEIA:** Extent to which competitor's Community Benefits Plan illustrates diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) goals.
- **J40:** Extent to which competitor's Community Benefits Plan illustrates "Justice 40 Initiative" benefits to disadvantaged communities.

## 1.8. Additional Terms and Conditions

The Prize Administrator, working with DOE, has the right to refuse any submission for incompleteness or non-responsiveness to the topic area of this prize.

See Appendix A for additional requirements. COMPETITORS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX A MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

## 1.9. Ineligible Submissions

Ineligible submissions will not be further reviewed or considered for award. The Prize Administrator will send a notification letter by email to the individual identified as the submission owner in HeroX. The notification letter will state the basis upon which the submission is ineligible and not considered for further review.

## 2. Cooperative Agreement (Phase 2 and 3)

### 2.1. Introduction

Competitively selected Phase 1 winners will be invited to negotiate Cooperative Agreements with DOE. In Phase 2 (“Strategic Plan + Energy Audits”), these winners (also referred to as Recipients) will begin by conducting energy audits/energy assessments and financial analyses. Using the results of these studies, each Recipient will develop a strategic plan and implementation framework for energy improvements.

Energy improvements in Phase 3 (“Implementation”) may take the form of repairs, renovations, or installations to the facility envelope, air-conditioning system, ventilation system, heating system, domestic hot water heating system, compressed air system, distribution system, lighting system, power system, and/or controls of a building. Projects may also include renewable energy improvements such as rooftop solar, micro wind turbines, alternative fueled vehicle infrastructure, and purchase or lease of alternative fueled vehicles. Costs related to electrifying end uses to take advantage of clean energy from the electric grid are also eligible improvements. Packaging multiple improvements for deeper energy savings and carbon reductions is encouraged.

### 2.2. Cooperative Agreement Process

Winners from Phase 1 will receive a schedule for award negotiations. During negotiations, each Selectee will work with Project Officers (POs) from DOE’s SCEP to create a Statement of Project Objectives (SOP) and other selection documents. Failure to engage in timely communication with POs and submit documents as requested, may result in the termination of award negotiations.

A DOE Contracting Officer, or their representative, will review the proposed budget for the project and work with the Selectee to resolve any issues relating to the budget. The Contracting Officer is required to make certain determinations before executing the award, such as assessing the Selectee’s financial management and project management capabilities and reviewing the proposed cost share for the project.

The Contracting Officer is required to perform a financial management assessment to assess the Selectee’s ability to manage the financial aspects of an award and plans to accomplish project activities with reasonable economy and efficiency.

DOE reserves the right to terminate award negotiations at any time for any reason. DOE reserves the right, without qualification, to reject any or all applications received in response to this Prize to Cooperative Agreement and to select any application, in whole or in part, as a basis for negotiation and/or award.

### 2.3 Award Overview

#### 2.3.1 SCEP Funding Agreements

Through Cooperative Agreements, SCEP provides financial and other support to projects that have the potential to realize funding program objectives. SCEP does not use such agreements to acquire property or services for the direct benefit or use of the United States government.

#### 2.3.2 Estimated Funding

DOE expects to make a total of approximately \$180,000,000 of Federal funding available for awards through both the Prize and Cooperative Agreement, subject to the availability of appropriated funds. DOE anticipates making up to 23 awards under this Prize to Cooperative Agreement structure. Individual total award values may vary between \$7.8M and \$15.3M, depending on the portfolio size submitted in Phase 1: Prize.

DOE may establish more than one budget period for each award and may fund only the initial budget period. Funding for all budget periods, including the initial budget period, is not guaranteed.

### 2.3.3 Period of Performance

SCEP anticipates making awards that will run up to 60 months in length across Budget Period 1 and 2. Typically, SCEP will review project performance on an annual basis and decide to continue funding or not. A decision to continue funding will be contingent upon the recipient's satisfactory performance. The end of the budget period is also referred to as Go/No-Go decision points. To determine satisfactory performance, SCEP will evaluate project performance, project schedule adherence, the extent to which milestone objectives are met, compliance with reporting requirements, and overall contribution to the program goals and objectives. As a result of this evaluation, SCEP may, at its discretion, authorize the following actions: (1) continue to fund the project, contingent upon the availability of funds appropriated by Congress for the purpose of this program and the availability of future-year budget authority; (2) recommend redirection of work under the project; (3) place a hold on Federal funding for the project, pending further supporting data or funding; or (4) discontinue funding the project because of insufficient progress, change in strategic direction, or lack of funding.

## 2.4 What To Submit for Phase 2 Continuation Application

DOE intends to invite all Phase 1 Winners to enter into negotiations with DOE to receive Federal awards ranging between \$7.5 million and \$15 million for Phases 2 and 3. Federal funds allocated for Phases 2 and 3 are dependent on the number of schools/school facilities within the portfolio [see Table 1]. The Cooperative Agreement will have two distinct phases (also referred to as two Budget Periods). **DOE requires a minimum of 5% cost share for the Cooperative Agreement in Phase 2, and minimum 25% for the Cooperative Agreement in Phase 3.** For more information about cost share requirements, see Appendix B – E.

- In Phase 2 (“Strategic Plan + Energy Audits”), Recipients will conduct energy audits/energy assessments and financial analyses. DOE will fund this part of the Cooperative Agreements from \$500,000 to \$1 million each, dependent on the number of schools and school facilities defined in the portfolio of the winning competitor’s Phase 1 submission. Recipients will develop comprehensive project plans and implementation frameworks based on results of the energy audits/energy assessments and financial analyses. Strategic plans will be made public as case studies for other schools, school districts, and partnering organizations.
  - Deliverables for the end of Phase 2 (Budget Period 1) continuation application will include but are not limited to the following:
    - Full Construction Budget (see Appendix B Section IV.A.vi for Davis-Bacon Act requirements);
      - A cost estimate of the proposed energy improvements.
    - Letter(s) of Commitment for Cost Share minimum for Phase 3 (25% of total project costs or more);
    - ASHRAE Level 2 Energy Audits;
    - Strategic Plan (to be made public) – Purpose: Work plan of the intended achievements at the school/school facilities:
      - A description of the energy improvements at the school/school facility that includes details of Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs) and planned renewables for implementation;
      - Maintenance Plan: an assessment of the expected needs for operation and maintenance training funds, and a plan for use of those funds;

- An assessment of the expected energy efficiency, energy savings, and safety benefits of the energy improvements;
- Plan to implement [Build America, Buy America \(BABA\)](#) (see Appendix B–E Section IV. A. v).
- Plan to implement Davis Bacon Act (see Appendix B–E Section IV.A.vi).
- Financial analysis and plan; and
- Plan to leverage opportunities such as IRS Elective Pay, 179D, or State Revolving Loan Funds established by BIL Section 40502;
  - An identification of other resources that are available to carry out the activities for which grant funds, including the availability of utility programs and public benefit funds.
- Updated Statement of Project Objectives (SOPO) with schedule of tasks and milestones; and
- Updated Community Benefits Plan (CBP).
- In Phase 3 (“Implementation”), DOE intends to fund energy improvements identified during Phase 2. DOE intends to fund this Phase of the Cooperative Agreements from \$7 million to \$14 million per award, dependent on the number of schools and school facilities defined in the portfolio of the winning competitor’s Phase 1 submission. In addition to DOE Federal funds, the Cooperative Agreement is funded in part by required cost share through other leveraged funds.

# Appendix A: Prize Terms and Conditions

## A.1 Universal Contest

Your submission for SCEP 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 program deadline. SCEP 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 handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- DOE or the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (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.
  - Note – NREL serves as the Prize Administrator. DOE makes selections for the Prize Award, but NREL awards the Prize. DOE will then manage the Cooperative Agreement.
- 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 Official 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 program:

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

## A.2 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.

## A.3 Teams and Single-Entity Awards

The Prize Administrator will award a single dollar amount to the designated primary submitter, whether consisting of 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 Official 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 that 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 competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright, trade secret, trademark, nondisclosure agreement, patent, or upon any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

## A.5 Copyright

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

## A.6 Contest Subject to Applicable Law

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

## A.7 Resolution of Disputes

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

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

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

## A.8 Publicity

The winners of these Prizes (collectively, “Winners”) will be featured on DOE and NREL websites.

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

## A.9 Liability

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

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

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

Applicants should not include trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information in their application unless such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project or to comply with a requirement in the FOIA. Applicants are advised to not include any critically sensitive proprietary detail.

If an application includes trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it is furnished to the Federal 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 (FOIA). 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 merit review of the application or as otherwise authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the Federal government’s right to use the information if it is obtained from another source.

If an applicant chooses to submit trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, the applicant must provide two copies of the submission (e.g., Concept Paper, Full Application). The first copy should be marked “non-confidential,” with deleted trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information. The second copy should be marked “confidential” and must clearly and conspicuously identify the trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information and 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 Federal government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information and may use or disclose such information for any purpose as authorized by law.

The cover sheet of the Full Application, and other applicant submission must be marked as follows and identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information:

**Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:**

Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes or in accordance with a financial assistance agreement between the submitter and the government. The government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]

In addition, (1) the header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information must be marked as follows: “Contains Business Sensitive Information, Trade Secrets, or Proprietary or Otherwise Confidential Information Exempt from Public Disclosure,” and (2) every line or paragraph containing such information must be clearly marked with double brackets or highlighting. DOE will make its own determination about the confidential status of the information and treat it according to its determination.

## A.11 Privacy

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

## A.12 General Conditions

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

Although DOE may indicate 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 or Cooperative Agreement.

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

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

### **A.13 Program Policy Factors**

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

1. The degree to which the proposed submission represents a desired geographic distribution (considering past awards under the Renew America's Schools program and current applications), including whether the project is in a community that is facing job and revenue loss in the energy transition;
2. The degree to which the schools serve a high percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or have a designated school district local code of 41, 42, or 42 as determined by the National Center for Education Statistics in consultation with the Census Bureau;
3. The degree to which the submission leverages private sector investment through energy-related performance contracting;
4. The degree to which the submission collectively represents diverse types and sizes of competitors, which represent diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility principles;
5. The degree to which the project's solution, schedule, or strategy will maximize deployment or replication;
6. The degree to which the submission incorporates Selectee or team members from Minority-Serving Institutions (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)/Other Minority-Serving Institutions); and partnerships with socially disadvantaged entities, such as Minority Business Enterprises, Minority-Owned Businesses, Woman-Owned Businesses, Veteran-Owned Businesses, or Tribal Nations;
7. The extent of the disparity between the fiscal capacity of the eligible entity to carry out energy improvements at school facilities and the needs of the partnering local educational agency for those energy improvements, including consideration of
  - (A) the current and historic ability of the partnering local educational agency to raise funds for construction, renovation, modernization, and major repair projects for schools;
  - (B) the ability of the partnering local educational agency to issue bonds or receive other funds to support the current infrastructure needs of the partnering local educational agency for schools; and
  - (C) the bond rating of the partnering local educational agency.
8. The level of buy-in and participation by project participants as evidenced by letter(s) of commitment.

# Appendix B – E: Cooperative Agreement Requirements

Appendices B – E are available on HeroX under the Resources tab for this Prize.