



# SolarAPP+ Prize Official Rules

*Effective September 6, 2023  
Modification 2*



# Preface

The SolarAPP+ Prize Program is designed to accelerate the adoption of SolarAPP+. The SolarAPP+ Prize will be governed by these official rules. The prize administrator reserves the right to modify the official rules if necessary, will publicly post any such modifications, and will notify prize competitors of any modifications.

## Modification Summary

Date	Modifications
Revision 1 4/6/2023	Page 5, 8, 9 and 10: Step 2 final submission due date moved from April 27, 2023 to June 28, 2023
Revision 2 9/6/2023	Pages 5, 8 - 10: Extension of Step 2 submission due date. New deadline of January 4, 2024

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# 1 Program Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Solar Automated Permit Processing Plus (SolarAPP+) is a software tool developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) that enables instant online permitting for compatible residential rooftop solar systems. To date, SolarAPP+ has been implemented by 25 authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) and been used to issue over 9,500 residential rooftop solar permits. Local governments that have adopted the SolarAPP+ have saved an estimated 9,500 hours in plan review time, and projects are installed about two weeks faster, given that permits are issued instantly for code-compliant systems.<sup>1</sup> Although SolarAPP+ is free for local governments to adopt, there are associated costs that arise during the adoption process.

The SolarAPP+ Prize was created to promote the adoption of SolarAPP+ and provide incentives to ease adoption costs. AHJs, such as counties, cities, and incorporated towns and villages, in the United States are eligible to compete.

## 1.2 Background

NREL estimates that conducting a plan review on an individual permit application takes between 15 and 60 minutes, and AHJs across the country are already struggling to process permits for the growing solar market. The SolarAPP+ software tool automatically conducts plan reviews, freeing up AHJ staff time and delivering instant permits for code-compliant systems. Compared to traditional permitting processes, SolarAPP+ has reduced the time from permit application to install by approximately 10 business days.<sup>2</sup>

The SolarAPP+ Prize has been designed to reward those who adopt SolarAPP+. Interested AHJs can adopt SolarAPP+ via two separate adoption pathways<sup>3</sup>:

1. Software integrated approach: SolarAPP+ conducts the plan review and integrates into the AHJ's existing online permitting system that issues the permit.
2. Standalone model: SolarAPP+ issues the permit on behalf of the AHJ and processes permit payment.

AHJs do not need to select their adoption pathway prior to applying for the prize. NREL will provide technical assistance throughout the prize to help AHJs determine which adoption pathway is best for them, how SolarAPP+ aligns with their implementation of the relevant model codes,<sup>4</sup> and how to set up a pilot program within that adoption pathway, among other areas of support.

## 1.3 The Prize

NREL will select winners to receive a cash prize of \$15,000 each. Competitors must complete a submission highlighting their interest in adopting SolarAPP+, their code compatibility with the software, and the impact it would have on their solar permitting process.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on SolarAPP+ performance, see: <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/83046.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on SolarAPP+ performance, see: <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/83046.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Interested AHJs can review a detailed description of the two adoption pathways here: <https://help.solarapp.org/article/215-how-do-i-register-my-ahj-for-solarapp>.

<sup>4</sup> SolarAPP+ will not consider adjustments to the implementation of the model codes unless an AHJ provides a public health and safety justification. NREL will investigate each amendment on a case-by-case basis.

Following the submission deadline, the prize administrator will select competitors who will be eligible to win the prize and submit proof of SolarAPP+ adoption. Cash prizes will be awarded to the selected AHJ competitors that have successfully adopted SolarAPP+ before June 28, 2023 (final submission deadline).

### Cash Prizes

- \$1,000,000 for prize payments
- Each winner receives \$15,000

To win the prize, the AHJ must adopt SolarAPP+ during the prize period. This requires that the AHJ begin piloting SolarAPP+ with contractors in their community on or before June 28, 2023. If the pilot is successful, the AHJ can then move to full adoption after the prize period, whereby any licensed contractor can use SolarAPP+ to receive a permit in the AHJ. The reviewers will use the judging criteria described in this document to select AHJ competitors and verify the successful adoption of SolarAPP+.

## 1.4 Prize Process

AHJs who wish to compete in the SolarAPP+ Prize must complete two steps to win an award:

**Step 1 (Submission):** Eligible AHJs will answer a questionnaire and upload a letter of support to demonstrate their intent to adopt SolarAPP+, the impact it would have on their solar permitting process, and their demonstrated need for the product and the SolarAPP+ Prize. Submissions are due by November 4, 2022, at 3 p.m. ET. The prize administrator will then evaluate all received submissions and select AHJ competitors who will be eligible to complete Step 2 of the prize and receive a cash award. Competitors who submit but are not selected cannot move on to Step 2 and will not receive an award.

**Step 2 (SolarAPP+ Adoption):** Selected AHJ competitors will submit proof of SolarAPP+ adoption by demonstrating that the SolarAPP+ pilot has begun by the final submission deadline (June 28, 2023, 3 p.m. ET) in order to receive a \$15,000 cash prize award. NREL will provide selected AHJ competitors with technical assistance for adoption of the SolarAPP+ tool throughout the prize period. Only one prize can be awarded per competitor. AHJ competitors must have been selected in Step 1 to win an award.

To sign up, go to: [www.americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/solarapp](http://www.americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/solarapp).

## 2 Important Dates

- **Program Announced and Registration Opens:** September 12, 2022
- **Step 1 Submission Deadline:** November 4, 2022, 3 p.m. ET
- **Eligible AHJ Competitors Announced:** Late November 2022 (anticipated)
- **Step 2 Final Submission Adoption Deadline:** January 4, 2024, 5 p.m. ET
- **Winners and Awards Announced:** February 2024 (anticipated).

For the most up-to-date information on prize deadlines and events, please visit our website: [www.herox.com/solarapp](http://www.herox.com/solarapp).

## 3 Eligibility Requirements

This prize is open to all governmental entities or AHJs that have authority over residential rooftop solar photovoltaic permitting. Examples include counties, cities, and any incorporated towns or villages in the United States.

The SolarAPP+ Prize submission can be provided by any division of an AHJ, such as:

- Building, planning, or zoning department

- Office of Community Development
- Office of Economic Development
- Inspections
- Permitting
- Plan Check
- Sustainability
- Other.

The submission should show support from the relevant authority within the AHJ that is responsible for issuing permits to install rooftop residential solar photovoltaics, through a letter of support (on official AHJ letterhead) from the department with authority over solar permitting. For further details on the letter of support requirements, see [Section 6.5.1](#). To win a prize, you must be selected to move from Step 1 to Step 2.

All AHJs in the United States that intend to adopt SolarAPP+ during the prize are eligible to compete, subject to the following requirements:

- The AHJ must be located within the United States.
- Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) are not allowed to compete.
- Federal employees are not eligible to win any prizes in this program.
- Employees of an organization that cosponsors this program with NREL are not eligible to participate in this competition.
- Individuals who worked at NREL within the six months prior to the submission deadline are not eligible to participate in this program. Additionally, members of their immediate families (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, or parents) and anyone who lives in their household, regardless of relation, are not eligible to participate.
- NREL employees directly involved in administration of the SolarAPP+ Prize are not eligible to participate in this program.
- 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 identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Binding Operational Directives (BODs) as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible to compete. See <https://cyber.dhs.gov/directives/>.
- Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: <https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list>.
- This SolarAPP+ Prize is expected to positively impact U.S. economic competitiveness. Participation in a foreign government talent recruitment program<sup>5</sup> could conflict with this

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<sup>5</sup> A foreign government talent recruitment program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, and whether having a full-time or part-time position). Some foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs operate with the intent to import or otherwise acquire from abroad, sometimes through illicit means, proprietary technology or software, unpublished data and methods, and intellectual property to further the military modernization goals and/or economic goals of a foreign government. Many, but not all, programs aim to incentivize the targeted individual to physically relocate to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at U.S. research facilities or receipt of federal research funds while concurrently working at and/or receiving

objective by resulting in the 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>6</sup> are not eligible to compete.

- As part of the submission to this SolarAPP+ Prize program, the AHJ 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 in providing this submission to NREL, I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for the Prize 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 that false statements or misrepresentations to the Federal Government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287.

To compete in the SolarAPP+ Prize, the AHJ must comply with the eligibility requirements above. By uploading a submission, a competitor certifies that they are in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification before prizes are awarded. As soon as the SolarAPP+ Prize administrator becomes aware that a competitor is not eligible to win the SolarAPP+ Prize, the competitor may be disqualified. The registered competitor is the AHJ that registers in HeroX to compete.

## 4 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. NREL will review all submissions to ensure that the following statements are **true**:

- The submission is provided by an authorized representative from an authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) or local government within the United States.
- The submission relates to adopting SolarAPP+ for solar photovoltaic permitting of residential systems.

## 5 Additional Requirements

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

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

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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>6</sup> Currently, the list of countries of risk includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China.

# 6 Prize Rules

## 6.1 Introduction

The SolarAPP+ Prize will award \$1,000,000 in cash prizes. The SolarAPP+ Prize is designed to incentivize AHJs to adopt SolarAPP+ for residential rooftop solar permitting for eligible systems. The following rules are for potential and actual competitors in the SolarAPP+ Prize.

## 6.2 Prizes To Win

The SolarAPP+ Prize will select AHJ competitors to win a cash prize of \$15,000 each for the successful adoption of SolarAPP+. AHJs selected to compete in Step 2 will be provided technical assistance to support their adoption of SolarAPP+.

## 6.3 How To Enter

Complete an online form and submit a final submission package online at <https://www.herox.com/SolarApp>. See “[Prize Process](#)” below for more details.

## 6.4 Prize Process

The SolarAPP+ Prize requires the following steps:

1. **Registration:** Eligible competitors must register to participate at <https://www.herox.com/solarapp>. To register for the prize, competing AHJs must create a HeroX account and click on the “Accept the Challenge” button.
2. **Submission (due November 4, 2022):** Eligible AHJs must answer a questionnaire and upload a letter of support to demonstrate their intent to adopt SolarAPP+, the impact it would have on their solar permitting process, and their demonstrated need for SolarAPP+. The required submission materials include:
  - a. **Questionnaire** – The questionnaire consists of 14 questions covering background information related to the AHJ’s current permitting processes and permit volume.
  - b. **Evidence of Support** – This is a letter of support or intent that demonstrates commitment from the permitting authority at the AHJ.

The above submission materials and information must be uploaded to the HeroX website (by clicking on “Begin Entry”) by November 4, 2022, at 3 p.m. ET.

3. **Submission Evaluation:** The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completeness and assigns subject-matter-expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. NREL expects to award as many prizes as possible, within the appropriated funds. The prize administrator will consider all competitors and will allow AHJs to participate in the SolarAPP+ Prize based on the merit review criteria described in [Section 6.5.1](#). If more AHJs apply than can be awarded prizes, the merit review criteria will also be used to determine which AHJs will be able to compete for the prize based on the greatest impact.
4. **AHJ Competitor Selection:** Approximately one month after the submission deadline, the SolarAPP+ Prize administrator will publicly announce selected AHJ competitors and invite them to compete in Step 2.
5. **Verification of Adoption of SolarAPP+:** Selected AHJ competitors will work to adopt SolarAPP+ and submit proof of implementation by the final submission deadline (**January 4, 2024, 5 p.m. ET**). To prove adoption, AHJ competitors will be required to submit via HeroX:

- a. **Webpage** – A webpage that guides installers through the pilot process of using SolarAPP+ within the AHJ.
  - b. **Public Announcement** – A publicly released announcement from the AHJ that advertises the launch of a SolarAPP+ pilot in their AHJ.
  - c. **Proof of Registration** – Evidence that registration is complete within the SolarAPP+ platform, as verified by the SolarAPP+ team.
  - d. **Proof of Instant Workflow** – Evidence of an instant, online permitting workflow for SolarAPP+ projects. If the AHJ is using the integrated adoption pathway, they must show evidence of an instant, online permitting workflow in their own software. This could be done through screenshots of the entire SolarAPP+ permit workflow, from contractor permit submission start through automatic generation of permit job card and inspection scheduling enabled within that software. If the AHJ is using the standalone adoption pathway, the SolarAPP+ team can verify this aspect on behalf of the AHJ, given that SolarAPP+ will be instantly issuing the permit for the AHJ.
6. **Submission Review:** The prize administrator and prize judge will evaluate the competitor’s proof of adoption based on completeness and accuracy.
  7. **Award and Announcement:** Approximately one month after the competition closes, the SolarAPP+ Prize administrator will publicly announce and notify AHJ competitors of the award and take steps to issue payment.

## 6.5 What To Submit

To compete in the SolarAPP+ Prize and be eligible for an award, competitors will be required to upload two separate submissions to HeroX:

- **Step 1:** Submission (Due November 4, 2022, 3 p.m. ET)
- **Step 2:** Proof of Adoption (Due **January 4, 2024, 5 p.m. ET**).<sup>7</sup>

### 6.5.1 Step 1: Submission

#### What To Submit

A complete submission package includes the following items:

Item	Content	Made Public	Scored
HeroX Submission Materials	Questionnaire	No	Yes
	Letter of Commitment or Support	No	Yes

<sup>7</sup> Note: Only AHJ competitors who are selected in Step 1 can participate in Step 2 submission.

Questionnaire (to be completed via the HeroX submission form):

## Questionnaire

Respondents are encouraged to complete the entire SolarAPP+ Prize questionnaire

1. Is your AHJ willing to implement SolarAPP+ to automate plan review in your online permitting system and/or issue permits on your behalf? Yes/No
2. Is your AHJ implementing National Electrical Code (NEC) 2017 or NEC 2020?
  - a. If not, will your AHJ adopt either of these model codes before the end of the prize period (January 4, 2024)?
3. Is your AHJ implementing International Residential Code (IRC) 2018 or 2021?
  - a. If not, will your AHJ adopt either of these model codes before the end of the prize period (January 4, 2024)?
4. Is your AHJ implementing International Building Code (IBC) 2018 or 2021?
  - a. If not, will your AHJ adopt either of these model codes before the end of the prize period (January 4, 2024)?
5. Are you aware of any local amendments to any of the aforementioned model codes in your AHJ (NEC, IRC, and/or IBC)? If yes, please explain the amendments and how they pertain to public health and safety.
6. Does your AHJ process any building permits online? Yes/No
  - a. If yes, what software do you use?
    1. Accela Citizen Access
    2. Tyler Technologies (EnerGov)
    3. Central Square (E-TRAKiT)
    4. OpenGov
    5. Homegrown, or developed in-house at the AHJ
    6. Other (please describe)
  - b. If yes, does the online system issue a permit job card immediately after payment confirmation from the contractor? Example: Many AHJs automatically issue permits after payment for like-for-like water heater replacements. Yes/No
  - c. If yes, does that system allow for the submission of .pdf or other attachment types as part of the contractor submission process? If not, can this be done?
  - d. If yes, does the system process solar permits online?
7. Is your AHJ planning to change its permit software during the SolarAPP+ Prize period (before January 4, 2024)? Yes/No
  - a. If yes, what software are you adopting?
8. If your AHJ does not issue permits online, would your AHJ be willing to allow SolarAPP+ to do so on the AHJ's behalf? Yes/No
  - a. If yes, would your AHJ also be willing and able to open an account with SolarAPP+'s third-party payment vendor, Stripe? Yes/No
9. Please estimate how many solar permits were processed in your AHJ in 2021.

- a. Please estimate how many minutes, on average, it takes your staff to complete plan review on a single solar permit.
- 10. Please estimate how many solar contractors received at least one approved permit in 2021 in your AHJ.
- 11. Do permitting- or inspection-related delays slow adoption of solar in your AHJ?
- 12. Have you considered SolarAPP+ previously? Yes/No
  - a. If yes, what prevented you from adopting SolarAPP+?
- 13. What risks do you see relating to your AHJ's ability to adopt SolarAPP+ during the prize period, and how might they be mitigated?
- 14. How will the adoption of SolarAPP+ support diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and priorities within your AHJ?

**Letter of Commitment or Support:**

**Letter of Commitment or Support**  
(as a PDF)

Attach a one-page letter of support, intent, or commitment on the letterhead of the agency or AHJ that has authority to issue residential rooftop solar permits that shows intent to consider SolarAPP+ adoption. The letter should be signed by an AHJ employee who holds a director-level position or equivalent level of authority at the AHJ. The AHJ may also consider submitting a separate or combined letter of support from the inspection agency, if it is different from that with authority over permitting. Provide the strongest possible evidence that the AHJ has the necessary resources to adopt SolarAPP+. Letters of support from relevant decision-making departments that are critical to SolarAPP+ adoption will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the adoption of SolarAPP+ will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters.

**How We Score and Select AHJ Competitors**

**Selection Criteria**

The answers to the questionnaire and the letters of support will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing these elements of the submission package, expert reviewers from NREL will assign a score between 1 and 3 for each of the seven categories below, taking into account the questions described in each category. NREL expects to distribute as many prizes as possible. If more submissions are received than can be awarded, these criteria will be used to identify the applicants for which SolarAPP+ would have the greatest impact.

Scoring Rubric		
1	2	3
Disagree	Neutral	Agree

## Merit Review Criteria

Expert reviewers give a score of 1–3 for each statement below

### Solar Permit Volume

- The competitor shows significant solar permitting volume or opportunities for growth that SolarAPP+ could help address (expected solar volume >60 permits per year by 2024).
- The competitor has provided evidence that three or more contractors apply for permits annually within the AHJ.

### Code Eligibility

- The competitor shows that they are code-compatible, or will be compatible with SolarAPP+ during the prize period (NEC 2017, NEC 2020, IRC 2018, IRC 2021, IBC 2018, IBC 2021).
- The competitor has not adopted local amendments to the model codes that they have implemented, such that minimal or no modifications to SolarAPP+ would be required.
- If the AHJ has adopted a local amendment to the model codes, they have demonstrated the public health and safety justification associated with the amendment (AHJs without local amendments to the model code receive full score on this sub-criterion).

### Adoption Pathway

- The competitor identifies a SolarAPP+ adoption pathway that could be feasible to implement SolarAPP+ either the integrated or standalone adoption pathway.

### Demonstrated Need

- The competitor shows that SolarAPP+ could reduce their solar permit workload and/or expand the AHJ's capability for solar plan review.

### Risk Assessment

- The competitor shows a strong understanding of the risks to adopting SolarAPP+ in their AHJ and how to navigate those during the prize period.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- The competitor demonstrates a compelling justification for how SolarAPP+ can support their DEI priorities, such as increasing low- and moderate-income solar adoption in disadvantaged communities within the AHJ and/or economic development within those areas.

### Letter of Support

- The letter demonstrates that the permitting department and other relevant decision makers are in support of adopting SolarAPP+.

The judge will select the competitors, taking into account their scores and the program policy factors. These selectees will be invited to participate in Step 2 and will be given the opportunity to receive technical assistance during the prize period. If they successfully adopt SolarAPP+ by the prize deadline, the competitor will receive a \$15,000 cash prize.

## 6.5.2 Step 2: Proof of Adoption Submission

### What To Submit

A complete proof of adoption submission package includes the following items:

Item	Content	Made Public	Scored
HeroX Proof of Adoption Submission Materials	Webpage URL	Yes	Pass/Fail
	Public Announcement	Yes	Pass/Fail
	Proof of Registration	No	Pass/Fail
	Proof of an Instant Workflow	No	Pass/Fail

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

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

#### Webpage URL:

<b>Webpage URL</b> See examples <a href="#">here</a>
Provide a hyperlink or URL that directs to a publicly accessible AHJ webpage that guides installers through the process of using SolarAPP+ within the AHJ. This webpage should be easy to follow and should include a link to the <a href="#">SolarAPP+</a> website.

#### Public Announcement:

<b>Public Announcement</b>
Provide a press release or other public AHJ announcement that advertises the launch of a SolarAPP+ pilot.

#### Proof of Registration:

<b>Proof of Registration</b>
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Submit the username, date of registration, and name of the AHJ. This will be cross-checked for accuracy to prove the registration is complete.

#### Proof of Instant Workflow:

#### Proof of Instant Workflow

If the AHJ is using the integrated adoption pathway, the AHJ must show evidence of an instant, online permitting workflow in their own software. The AHJ must submit a PDF containing screenshots of the online permitting workflow for SolarAPP+ projects in HeroX. These screenshots should demonstrate the workflow process and must include the entire SolarAPP+ permit workflow, from contractor permit submission start through permit job card issuance. The permit job card must be automatically generated, without human review, after permit fees are automatically invoiced and payment is confirmed within the software. The screenshots must also describe how the contractor can schedule inspection. If the AHJ is using the standalone adoption pathway, the SolarAPP+ team will verify instant workflow.

### How We Score and Select Winners for the Award

Selected AHJ competitors must submit their SolarAPP+ Prize proof of adoption submission package by the deadline. Completed submission packages will be evaluated against the following criteria on a pass/fail basis. To win an award, AHJ competitors must receive a “pass” score on each of the below submission items. At NREL’s discretion, a competitor may be given a limited opportunity to correct identified submission errors after the submission deadline.

#### Expert Reviewers Give a Score of Pass/Fail for Each of the Required Submission Items:

##### Webpage URL (Pass/Fail)

- The SolarAPP+ information provided on the webpage is accurate, clear, and accessible to the public.

##### Public Announcement (Pass/Fail)

- The AHJ competitor has publicly released an announcement describing the adoption of SolarAPP+.

##### Proof of Registration (Pass/Fail)

- The AHJ competitor has completed registration on the SolarAPP+ website and has a verified username, date of registration, and name of AHJ.

##### Proof of Instant Workflow (Pass/Fail)

- Submitted materials clearly demonstrate the workflow process. The permit workflow must show the process for a contractor to start a permit and track it through permit job card issuance. The permit job card must be automatically generated without human review, after permit fees are automatically invoiced and payment is confirmed within the software. The AHJ must also show how the contractor can schedule inspection.

## 6.6 Submission Scoring Process

The scoring of the SolarAPP+ Prize submissions—both Step 1 (Submission) and Step 2 (Proof of Adoption)—will proceed as follows:

1. Expert reviewers read, score, and comment on each submission. Each question listed in the questionnaire is reviewed and given equal weight. Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this competition, or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.
2. The SolarAPP+ Prize administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with the competitors. Any interviews will be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the reviewers may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.
3. The judge's final determination of winners will take into account reviewer scores and the program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#). NREL will conduct the review, and the Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted.

# Appendix 1: Additional Terms and Conditions

## A.1 Universal Prize Requirements

AHJ submissions for the SolarAPP+ Prize are subject to the following terms and conditions. “You” and “your” refer to competitors in the contest.

- If any team member is actively receiving funding from SETO at the submission deadline, SETO will review any potential prize awards, as well as other U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) funding, and make a decision as to whether awarding a prize to individuals or entities already receiving funding is in line with the program policy factors stated later in these rules ([Section A.13](#)).
- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online at [www.herox.com/solarapp](http://www.herox.com/solarapp) before the prize closes. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
- 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 submission errors due to technical challenges.
- Your submission must be in English and in a PDF readable and searchable format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- You will be disqualified if any engagement during the prize—including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the prize administrator, or other forms of communication—contains any matter that, in the discretion of DOE, is indecent, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for the competition described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE for all purposes relating to this competition. This agreement is in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to this competition. You should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions apply only to the competition described here and no other competitions 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.
- If you violate the terms of service of the license and related registration requirements to use SolarAPP+, you will be disqualified from this prize.

## A.2 Verification for Payments

The prize administrator will verify the identity and role of participant entities 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 30 days of the date the notice is sent, a completed NREL 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 will 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 business entity designated by the primary submitter, whether it consists of a single or multiple entities. The winning business entity is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among its member competitors as they deem appropriate.

## A.4 Submission Rights

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the competition, a competitor is granting to DOE, the prize administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the competition, 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’s or HeroX’s submissions, the competition website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and including the submission in any other media, worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the prize administrator, and reviewers for purposes of this competition, 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 who participated in the submission on the competition website, indefinitely.

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

The competitor is the sole, original author and copyright owner of the submission, or that the competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright, trade secret, trademark, nondisclosure agreement, patent, or any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

## A.5 Copyright

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

## A.6 Prize Subject to Applicable Law

This competition is 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 competition. 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 competition.

In the event of a dispute, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the competitor. The "authorized account holder" is the natural person or legal entity assigned an email address by an Internet access provider, online service provider, or other organization

responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted address. Competitors and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

The prize administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or any disputes between competitors.

## A.8 Publicity

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

Except where prohibited, participation in the competition 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 competition or the 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 competition, whether the claim or cause of action arises under contract or tort.

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this competition delegated to the director of SETO, 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 (FOIA)

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records. Any confidential commercial information contained in a submission should be designated at the time of submission.

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

- The cover sheet of the submission must be marked as follows, and must identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]

- The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: "May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure."

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

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

## A.11 Privacy

If you choose to provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the competition 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 competition unless you choose to receive updates or notifications about other competitions 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 competition, 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 competition, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel or modify the competition.

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for the competition, DOE reserves the right to only select competitors that are likely to achieve the goals of the prize. If, in DOE's determination, no competitors are likely to achieve the goals of the prize, DOE will select no competitors to be winners and will award no prize money.

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

## 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 the competition funds. Some factors outside the control of competitors and beyond the independent expert reviewers' scope of review may need to be considered to accomplish this goal. The following is a list of such factors. In addition to the reviewers' scores, the following program policy factors may be considered in determining winners:

- Geographic diversity and potential economic impact of projects in a variety of markets
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources will be nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission generally
- The degree to which the submission is likely to lead to increased employment and manufacturing in the United States or provide other economic benefit to U.S. taxpayers
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate transformational technological, financial, or workforce advances in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical or financial uncertainty
- The degree to which the submission supports complementary DOE efforts or projects, which, when taken together, will best achieve the research goals and objectives
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's funding to new competitors and recipients that have not been supported by DOE in the past

- The degree to which the submission exhibits team member diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, with participants including but not limited to graduates and students of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) or members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other disadvantaged communities<sup>8</sup>
- The degree to which the submission enables new and expanding market segments
- Whether the project promotes increased coordination with nongovernmental entities for the demonstration of technologies and research submissions to facilitate technology transfer.

## A.14 Definitions

**Prize administrator** means both the Alliance for Sustainable Energy, operating in its capacity under the Management and Operating Contract for NREL, and SETO. When the prize administrator is referenced in this document, it refers to staff from both the Alliance for Sustainable Energy and SETO. Ultimate decision-making authority regarding competition matters rests with the director of SETO.

**Reviewers** are the industry and federal government experts who review the competitor submissions and evaluate and score the plans.

**Judge** is the DOE official who makes the final decision about the winners, reviewer scores, interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#).

**Competitor** is an individual, organization, or team that registers to compete in the prize and submits the required items to be considered eligible for a cash prize.

## A.15 Return of Funds

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

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<sup>8</sup> DOE defines “disadvantaged communities” as areas that most suffer from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens, such as poverty, high unemployment, air and water pollution, and presence of hazardous wastes, as well as high incidence of asthma and heart disease. Examples include but are not limited to: economically distressed communities identified by the Internal Revenue Service as Qualified Opportunity Zones; communities identified as disadvantaged communities by their respective states; communities identified on the Index of Deep Disadvantage referenced at <https://news.umich.edu/new-index-ranks-americas-100-most-disadvantaged-communities/>, and communities that otherwise meet the DOE definition of a disadvantaged community.