

AMERICAN
MADE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



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1 Introduction

The Sunny Awards for Equitable Community Solar (The Sunny Awards) recognize community solar projects and programs that develop or employ best practices to increase equitable access to the [meaningful benefits](#) of community solar for subscribers and their communities. These benefits include greater household savings, low- and moderate-income household access, increased resilience, community ownership, and equitable workforce development.

The White House set a goal to achieve a decarbonized electricity system by 2035 and decarbonized energy sector by 2050. To ensure an equitable clean energy transition, the White House also announced the Justice40 initiative,¹ which directs that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including clean energy investments—flow to [disadvantaged communities](#).

Community solar will play a pivotal role in achieving these goals. Community solar is a form of solar energy generation that allows all community members to access the meaningful benefits of renewable energy, particularly those with low to moderate incomes, renters, and those for whom traditional rooftop solar is unavailable. Community solar is one method of ensuring equity—the consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people—in the clean energy transition.

Community solar is defined by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area.

The [National Community Solar Partnership](#) (NCSP), a program of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), supports a coalition of stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every U.S. household and enable communities to realize its meaningful benefits, such as greater household savings, LMI household access, increased resilience, community ownership, and equitable workforce development. NCSP is working toward a 2025 target to enable community solar to power the equivalent of 5 million households and generate a cumulative \$1 billion in energy bill savings.

The Sunny Awards will recognize community solar projects and programs that employ best practices to make a positive, meaningful impact on the subscribers and communities that the community solar project or program serves. Excellent submissions will be able to show evidence that their project or program enables equitable access to the meaningful benefits of community solar.

To be recognized by the Sunny Awards, competitors must be able to demonstrate that their community solar project or program provides at least one of the five primary Meaningful Benefit Categories listed in Table 1 below. These primary benefits, as well as the two innovation categories, also represent the Meaningful Benefit Special Recognition categories in which applicants can be recognized. Details on requirements for each category can be found in [Eligibility Requirements](#).

The Sunny Awards will deliver up to \$100,000 in cash prizes to winning competitors. In addition, competitors may also receive non-monetary recognition.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>

- Up to 50 competitors selected as Sunny Finalist Award winners will win \$1,000 cash prize.
- Up to 5 competitors selected as Sunny Grand Prize Award winners will win additional \$10,000 cash prize.
- Competitors that provide at least one of the Primary Meaningful Benefits listed in Table 1 will receive non-monetary recognition.
- Competitors with the highest scoring submissions in each Meaningful Benefit Category will also receive non-monetary recognition.

Additional details on awards can be found in the [Contest and Awards to Win](#) section below.

Table 1: Meaningful Benefit Categories Recognized by the Sunny Awards

Primary Benefits Categories	Projects and Program Criteria
Greater Household Savings	Provide at least 20% reduction in electricity bills for residential subscribers to a project.
LMI Household Access	Include at least 40% subscribers from low- to moderate-income (LMI) households. (See Key Terms for guidance on how to define LMI households).
Resilience & Grid Benefits	Include the capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions.
Community Ownership	Include community ownership of or equity in project assets, which may include other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements or partnership flip models.
Equitable Workforce Development	Support community workforce development by advancing high wages, reducing income disparities across demographic lines, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment.
Innovation Benefits Categories	
<i>Innovation: Community Engagement</i>	Demonstrate innovative and replicable inclusive and authentic community engagement practices that enable community input to drive project outcomes.
<i>Innovation: Innovation in Impact</i>	Deliver an innovative and replicable meaningful benefit that is not already included in the Meaningful Benefit Categories.

Table 1 describes the Meaningful Benefits Categories recognized by the Sunny Awards. Note that, to receive any level of recognition or award, a project or program must meet the criteria in at least one of the Primary Meaningful Benefits Categories: greater household savings, increased low- to moderate-income household access, resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development.

1.1 Community Solar Meaningful Benefits

There are many different models for community solar, including community solar projects or programs that are developed, owned, and administered by a utility, projects that are developed and administered by private, third-party developers, projects that are led, owned, and managed directly by subscribers and community members, and others. States or utilities often set guidelines for how community solar projects are developed and subscriptions are managed, and these guidelines may vary widely across jurisdictions and utility territories. While business models and guidelines differ, consistency in the meaningful *benefits* provided by community solar subscriptions can build consumer trust and ensure all U.S. households have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the clean energy transition. Through the Sunny Awards, the NCSP seeks to recognize community solar projects and programs of all business models and in any jurisdiction that are able to provide the following meaningful benefits to subscribers and their communities:

Greater Household Savings: Adopting community solar can lower household energy costs relative to the overall household income, especially for those in [frontline](#) and [disadvantaged communities](#). Low-income households spend 8.6% of their income on energy costs, three times more than non-low-income households. For families at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), the average ratio of energy expenditures to overall household income is 16%—nearly 1/6th of household income. Residents of counties with higher average energy expenditures have higher premature mortality rates, poorer health, and lower average life expectancy.^{2, 3, 4}

In responses to a [Request for Information \(RFI\) on equitable community solar](#) released in 2021, NCSP received feedback from stakeholders that at least a 20% reduction in electricity bill costs for community solar subscribers was necessary to have a meaningful impact on household energy expenditures and to provide benefits at parity with rooftop solar. This 20% bill savings level was used to determine NCSP's target to generate \$1 billion in cumulative electricity bill savings for the equivalent of 5 million households through community solar between 2021 and 2025.⁵

Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI) Household Access: The cost of solar energy systems has fallen dramatically over the past decade.⁶ As solar electricity has become more affordable, residential solar adoption has increased, with more than 3.3 million solar energy systems currently operating across the

² Reames, T. G. (2016). Targeting energy justice: Exploring spatial, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in urban residential heating energy efficiency. *Energy Policy*, 97, 549–558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2016.07.048>

³ Reames, T. G., Daley, D. M., Pierce, J. C. (2021). Exploring the nexus of energy burden, social capital, and Environmental Quality in shaping health in US counties. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(2), 620. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020620>

⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2015). One in three U.S. households faced challenges in paying energy bills in 2015. <https://www.eia.gov/consumption/residential/reports/2015/energybills/>

⁵ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/webinar-getting-5-million-current-community-solar-deployment-and-pathways-reach-5>

⁶ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-futures-study#:~:text=Produced%20by%20the%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Energy%20Solar,electricity%20supply%20by%202035%20and%2045%25%20by%202050.>

United States at the end of 2021. Despite decreases in system costs, many U.S. households still lack access to affordable solar electricity, especially renters, homeowners who can't access affordable financing, and those without suitable roof conditions or adequate sun exposure. While rooftop solar adoption has become more equitable relative to income over time, the *Solar Futures Study*⁷ finds that only 31% of solar adopters came from households that earned less than the area median income. In addition, census tracts with majority Black and Hispanic populations exhibit 30% and 69% less rooftop solar adoption respectively, compared to the average census tract.

As of 2021, 65 MW_{AC} of community solar capacity dedicated to serving LMI households was online, with more than 200 MW_{AC} in project queues, representing just over 5% of the 5.2 GW_{AC} of total installed community solar capacity. The Justice40 initiative⁸ directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to [disadvantaged communities](#) (DACs). Household income is one of 36 indicators used to determine whether a community is considered a DAC. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, NCSP is prioritizing, among other program benefits, the provision of at least 40% of new community solar capacity for LMI households.

(See [Key Terms](#) for guidance on how to define LMI households).

Resilience and Grid Benefits: A resilient power system, as defined by the DOE Grid Modernization Initiative⁹ and the National Academy of Sciences,¹⁰ must be capable of lessening the likelihood of long-duration electrical outages occurring over large service areas, limiting the scope and impact of outages when they do occur, and rapidly restoring power after an outage. As extreme weather events become more common and place undue stress on electricity infrastructure, solar and other distributed energy resources can help communities rapidly recover. During extreme weather, the lack of resilient infrastructure to deliver energy can cost human lives as access to essential services is disrupted.¹¹

Community solar projects that are designed with resiliency and reliability in mind can be a decentralized source of energy for a community in the event of a grid outage or emergency. Community solar can enable communities to utilize solar-plus-storage or microgrids to prevent disruptions in power caused by extreme weather and other events, and to rapidly restore electricity to critical facilities or 'island' segments of the distribution network if the grid goes down. Community solar projects that incorporate virtual power plants or other demand response actions can reduce peak load demand, making the larger grid more resilient. Community solar that is sited strategically may also be able to provide technical grid benefits including the ability to improve voltages at the end of the feeder, alleviate congestion, and reduce line losses. Community solar projects may offer supplementary resilience benefits when they are co-located with resilience hubs that provide additional services to support community development and growth. Increasing equitable access to reliable sources of energy before, during, and after extreme events is a priority of the NCSP.

⁷ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-futures-study>

⁸ <https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative>

⁹ <https://www.energy.gov/gmi/grid-modernization-initiative>

¹⁰ <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/24836/enhancing-the-resilience-of-the-nations-electricity-system>

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3879211/?report=printable>

Community Ownership: Community ownership allows community members, other individuals invested in supporting the community, or organizations that reflect the interests of those members, to have equity ownership rights in a community solar project.¹² Ownership is one method to allow community members to determine how a community solar project is developed and how its benefits are distributed. The Institute for Local Self Reliance (ILSR) found that local ownership of a one megawatt community solar project would provide nearly twice the cash flow to the local community compared to a third party-owned lease model of the same size. This amounts to nearly \$5.7 million in net present value over the 25-year project life.¹³ Additional benefits of community ownership can include local job creation, increased property values, and the retention of wealth within a community.

Where direct ownership of project assets is not possible or desirable, community solar may provide other wealth-building opportunities for subscribers and their communities through [community benefit agreements](#) or other innovative approaches to reinvest the monetary benefits of a community solar project back into the local community.

Community ownership has been identified as one strategy to increase energy democracy, which is one of [eight priorities](#) of the DOE's Justice40 efforts. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, NCSP is prioritizing, among other program benefits, inclusion of community ownership and other community wealth building in community solar projects and programs.

Equitable Workforce Development: The grid transformation required to meet the nation's clean energy goals presents substantial workforce development opportunities. Distributed energy projects like community solar can support more local jobs than large-scale, centralized projects. Additionally, clean energy jobs often pay above-average wages, even for low-wage workers.¹⁴

Despite this opportunity, most solar companies have difficulty filling workforce vacancies, often due to lack of experience, training, or technical knowledge in the applicant pool. To meet the nation's clean energy goal to decarbonize the electricity grid by 2035, the solar industry will need to grow by an estimated 500,000 – 1,500,000 jobs. Incorporating local workforce development in community solar projects or programs provides a unique opportunity to expose more people to careers in clean energy and contribute to growing local economies. Equitable and effective workforce development initiatives are industry-driven, employee-centric, and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Workforce initiatives should support broad occupational training leading to industry-recognized credentials and career-track employment. They should also provide pathways to jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits, devoid of hostility and harassment, where workers are properly classified as employees, and have a free and fair choice to join, form, or assist a union.

Innovation Category - Innovation in Community Engagement: Energy democracy, one of the eight principles of the Justice40 Initiative, is the principle that communities should have a say and agency in shaping and participating in their energy future.¹⁵ Inclusive and [authentic community engagement](#) includes practices in which community members define and drive the outcomes of the decision-making

¹² Ben Paulos, unpublished

¹³ https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Advantage_Local-FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ Solar Futures Study <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/Solar%20Futures%20Study.pdf>

¹⁵ https://iejusa.org/section-1-defining-energy-justice/#section1_1

process to ensure that project benefits accrue to the community. When community members are authentically engaged, project developers are accountable and responsive to community priorities and needs and the outcomes of a program or project will clearly reflect the priorities of community members, potentially lowering customer acquisition and retention costs for the developer. Community solar projects and programs should include authentic community engagement with members of the community where the project will be constructed, or the program will serve to ensure that project outcomes and benefits reflect the priorities of community members.

Innovation Category - Innovation in Impact: Community solar has the potential to deliver a number of meaningful benefits to subscribers and their communities beyond those included in the Meaningful Benefits Categories recognized by the Sunny Awards. Community solar projects and programs should continue to innovate to identify additional, beneficial impacts and opportunities projects and programs can provide.

2 Contest and Awards To Win

The Sunny Awards is a competition that includes three different types of recognition and awards. Competitors will submit a project or program that demonstrates best practices in providing meaningful benefits to community solar subscribers or their community by completing the submission and providing the required evidence detailed in the [What To Submit](#) section of this document.

2.1 Competitor Types

Competitors may submit a submission package to the Sunny Awards for a community solar **project** or **program**.

- Community solar **projects** are individual community solar installations. Projects may be any size and any installation type (rooftop, ground mount, etc.) as long as they fit within the DOE definition of community solar (see 'Overall Eligibility Requirements' below). Projects must have been energized and subscribed for at least 6 months prior to nomination in order to be eligible.
- Community solar **programs** are state, district, territory, or utility-run initiatives to enable, incentivize, or otherwise support the development of multiple community solar projects within a specific jurisdiction (typically a state, district, or territory boundary or a utility territory). Programs may be of any size. State-level enabling legislation is not required. Programs must include at least one project that has been energized and subscribed for at least 6 months prior to nomination in order to be eligible.

Competitors may be an individual entity or a team of entities. The DOE will only review the first submission received for a particular community solar project or program, so entities that have worked with partners on the development of a community solar project or program are encouraged to participate as a team and coordinate on submitting a submission package. If applying as a team, please review the [Team Requirements](#) section below.

2.2 Awards Process

Initial submissions will be screened by the DOE for Semifinalist Recognitions and Sunny Finalist Awards. Winners of the Sunny Finalist Awards will then be reviewed and scored by a panel of external reviewers using the scoring guidance in this document. The DOE and its prize administrator will use these scores,

the supporting evidence provided, and follow-up interviews as needed to determine the winners of the Sunny Grand Prize Awards and the non-monetary Meaningful Benefit Category Special Recognition.

2.3 Semifinalist Recognition

*Strong evidence + eligible in **one** category*

Any competitor that meets the criteria for at least one Primary Meaningful Benefits Category will be recognized on the NCSP webpage and in a public announcement. Submissions must include appropriate, complete, and verifiable evidence of the best practices employed by their project or program to provide at least one Primary Meaningful Benefit. Semifinalist Recognition does not come with any cash prize. The competitors recognized as Semifinalists will be evaluated for Finalist Awards by DOE reviewers using the [scoring guidance](#) in this document.

2.4 Sunny Finalist Awards

*Strong evidence + eligible in **one** category*

Up to 50 of the competitors selected for Semifinalist Recognition will be selected to receive a cash prize of \$1,000. These competitors will then be evaluated for the Sunny Grand Prize Awards by a panel of external reviewers using the [scoring guidance](#) in this document.

2.5 Sunny Grand Prize Awards

*Strong evidence + eligible in **at least two** categories*

Up to 5 finalist competitors will receive \$10,000 in prize money for their projects or programs that demonstrate significant achievement in best practices for delivering meaningful benefits *across multiple categories*.

2.6 Meaningful Benefit Category Special Recognition

*Strong evidence + eligible in **at least one** category*

DOE will also present non-monetary Meaningful Benefit Category Special Recognition to recognize up to three programs or projects in all the Meaningful Benefit Categories. These recognitions will highlight the attributes of each project that set apart each winning project or program. DOE hopes that by highlighting these exemplary projects or programs, others interested in facilitating community solar can adopt these attributes as best practices.

1. Greater Household Savings
2. LMI Household Access
3. Resilience and Grid Benefits
4. Community Ownership
5. Equitable Workforce Development
6. *Innovation Category*: Community Engagement
7. *Innovation Category*: Innovation in Impact

DOE will publicly recognize the full team of organizations listed in the submission for each winner. Monetary prizes will be delivered to the Team Lead identified in the project or program's submissions (see Team Requirements section for more details).

Both Sunny Grand Prize Award Winners and Meaningful Benefit Category Special Recognition winners will be publicly announced by DOE and invited to participate in a series of DOE-hosted webinars on community solar best practices. Winners' best practices will also be used to develop a collection of case studies to encourage greater adoption of these practices.

3 How To Enter

Complete a submission package online at <https://www.herox.com/sunnyawards> before the contest closing date.

4 Important Dates

Please visit <https://www.herox.com/sunnyawards> to view the key dates for each round of the awards program.

5 Eligibility Requirements

Competitors in The Sunny Awards must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, a competitor certifies that they are in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification before awards are announced and payments are disbursed.

5.1 Number of Submission Packages Allowed

For Projects: Competitors (individual entities or project teams) may submit up to three submission packages, each covering a separate solar project. If different submissions cover the same project, only the first submission covering that project will be reviewed.

For Programs: An entity or team nominates and may only submit one submission package for a community solar program.

5.2 Team Requirements

Competitors planning to participate as a team must meet the following requirements:

1. A team must have a single legal entity representing the entire team. This entity shall be designated the Team Lead. The Team Lead is responsible for complying with all the rules of this prize challenge including coordinating with its team members, resolving any conflicts, working with DOE and its prize administrator, responsibly allocating resources, submitting all required materials, and complying with all guidance and restrictions.
2. Any cash prizes awarded will be sent to the Team Lead. The Team Lead will be responsible for distributing any cash prize among project or program team members. The DOE is not responsible for resolving any disputes among team members.

3. For project-focused teams only, we encourage the Team to include and prioritize funds for the project’s community partner.
4. For program-focused teams only, the Team Lead must be an electric utility, an electric co-operative, municipal power company, or a state, local or tribal government entity.

The Team Lead must be able to receive payments that are legally made from the U.S. in U.S. dollars or designate a team member that can. To receive prize money, the Team Lead must be a member of the National Community Solar Partnership. [Register to join the Partnership here.](#)

5.3 Overall Eligibility Requirements (required for all submissions)

- Community solar projects and programs must fit within the DOE definition of community solar, which is ‘a solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.’
- Projects or programs must be based in the United States or its territories.
- The nominated project must have been energized for at least 6 months prior to submission. The nominated program must have at least one project energized for at least 6 months prior to submission.
- The nominated project or program must serve at least some residential customers (does not exclusively serve commercial entities, nonprofits, or other anchor tenants).
- There are no minimum or maximum restriction on the size of a solar project to be eligible to compete in this prize program.
- To be eligible for Semifinalist Recognition or a Sunny Finalist Award, projects or programs submitted must provide evidence demonstrating they meet the criteria in **at least one** of the meaningful benefits categories listed in the table below. To be eligible for a Sunny Grand Prize Award, projects or programs submitted must provide evidence demonstrating they meet the criteria in **at least two** of the meaningful benefits categories listed in the table below:

Greater Household Savings	<p>Projects or programs provide at least 20% reduction in annual electricity bills for all residential subscribers to a project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: a project or program may deliver a monthly electricity bill savings of 20% or more for all residential subscribers. • Example: Monthly bill savings may vary but the project or program provides a 20% average electricity bill savings, as compared to non-subscribers paying the same rates, over the course of at least six months.
LMI Household Access	<p>Projects or programs include at least 40% subscribers from low- to moderate-income (LMI) households. (See Key Terms for guidance on how to define LMI households).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: At least 40% of the number of subscribers to a project or program come from LMI households. • Example: At least 40% of the generation capacity of a project is subscribed to LMI households.

Resilience & Grid Benefits	<p>Projects or programs include the capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: The project includes battery storage that is able to deliver 10 hours of emergency backup power to critical facilities. • Example: The project includes and supplies a microgrid that is able to ‘island’ and continue to deliver power during an outage.
Community Ownership	<p>Projects or programs include community ownership of or equity in project assets, which may include other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements or partnership flip models.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: Residential subscribers directly purchase and own 25% of the solar panels within a community solar array. • Example: The community solar project is owned by a member-owned electric cooperative or municipal utility.
Equitable Workforce Development	<p>Projects or programs support community workforce development by advancing high wages, reducing income disparities across demographic lines, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: The project developer hires and trains community members for related positions, such as in design, construction, or community engagement. • Example: The project developer provides solar career education, leveraging local organizations to target underrepresented participants and highlighting career pathways.
<i>Innovation Category:</i> Community Engagement	<p>Projects or programs demonstrate innovative and replicable inclusive and authentic community engagement practices that enable community input to drive project outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: The project developer partners with a local community organization to involve community members in project design, benefits structure, and siting. • Example: The project is intentionally built in a high-traffic area and includes signage or interactive elements that educate community members and connect them with resources.
<i>Innovation Category:</i> Innovation in Impact	<p>Projects or programs deliver an innovative and replicable meaningful benefit that is not already included in the Meaningful Benefit Categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: The project is located in or primarily serves residents of a census tract identified as a Disadvantaged Community by the Justice40 Disadvantaged Communities Reporter. • Example: The project is located in a state without enabling legislation

The above list of examples is not exhaustive. DOE encourages all projects and programs that deliver unique and meaningful benefits to their subscribers and local community to apply.

- As part of competitors’ submission to this awards program, competitors will be required to sign the following statement:
 - I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this awards program. I understand that in providing this submission to the Federal Government, I

certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this awards program 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.

- Additional eligibility requirements in A.12.

6 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The awards administrator must conclude that all the following statements are **true** when applied to your submission. If any of the following are not true for your submission, your submission will not be reviewed and will not be awarded.

- The project or program submitted represents a community solar power project, program, or group of projects developed in the United States or its territories. The DOE defines [community solar](#) as any solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.
- The benefits realized by the project or program are not dependent on pending legislation or regulation.

7 What To Submit

A complete submission package for The Sunny Awards should include the following items:

- Cover page content (will be made public)
- Narrative describing the project or program and how it delivers the community solar benefits described in this document (not to exceed 2,400 words)
- Project photo, video, or program materials, including supporting evidence for benefits provided
- Additional supporting documentation

The following details provide guidance on what information to provide and how judges evaluate and score your submission. Judges will evaluate your submissions by agreeing or disagreeing with assigned statements on a 1-6 scale.

Special Note on Supporting Evidence: Section 5, ‘Supporting Evidence,’ lists the *suggested* evidence competitors can provide to demonstrate the impact of their project or program in each category. This suggested evidence is classified as either high- or low-quality evidence. If the suggested evidence cannot be included with the submission, please provide the strongest alternative evidence possible or justification for why evidence cannot be provided for this category.

Evidence should be appropriate, complete, and verifiable, according to the guidelines below:

Appropriate

- Is the evidence submitted relevant to the criteria for the Sunny Awards and/or a specific category of awards?

- Is the evidence clearly linked to the project or program being nominated?

Complete

- Does the evidence cover the required time period (6 months)?
- Is the evidence recent (within 1 year)?
- Does the evidence contain all the information necessary to evaluate a project or program?

Verifiable

- Does the evidence come from a reputable source? Does that source stand behind the evidence?
- Is there a way to confirm the accuracy of the evidence?

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

See tables below for details about each of the items and review section 9 for information about how we score.

Cover Page – List basic information about your submission (public) <i>(To be completed via the HeroX Submission Form)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community solar project or program name • (Project Only) the project’s city, state, and nine-digit zip code • (Program Only) the program’s state(s) • Project or program size (kW or MW capacity) • Promotional Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website or other promotional material for the project or program ○ Photos or videos of your project • Team Lead organization name, contact information, and links to LinkedIn profiles • Additional partner organizations the award or recognition will be shared with (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles) • Submission Categories – select as many as apply (*note that your project or program must comply with the criteria of at least 2 categories in order to be eligible for an Sunny Award Grand Prize. Category points are cumulative, so programs or projects that provide benefits across more categories will receive more points toward the Sunny Award Grand Prize.) • Date when the program was launched or the project was energized and fully operational (*note that projects must be energized and subscribed for at least 6 months to be eligible. Programs must have had at least one project energized and subscribed for at least 6 months to be eligible.)

Narrative: All competitors should provide responses to the prompts in Section 1. In Section 2, competitors should provide responses to the prompts for any category for which they would like to be considered for a Meaningful Benefits Category Special Recognition. Competitors must respond to **at least** two categories in Section 2 to be eligible for a Sunny Awards Grand Prize. The aggregate response to these two sections must not exceed 2,400 words. The reviewers will score the sections based on the content you have provided. (non-public)

Max 2400 Words

Template: <https://www.herox.com/sunnyawards/resource/1035>

Section 1: Tell us about your project or program (background information, 300 word maximum)

Example content to provide

- *Briefly* describe the development timeline of your community solar project or program, from conception to operation or implementation. (Bullet points acceptable)
- What are the objectives/goals of the community solar program/project?
- Describe the subscribers and community/communities served by the project/program.
- Describe the roles of the project or program team and how team members worked together to support the project/program.

This section is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The statement comprehensively outlines the timeline of the project
- The statement comprehensively outlines the objectives/goals of the program or project
- The statement has a complete description of the types of communities the program or project serves
- The statement includes a clear description of the roles of project or program team members.

Section 2: Tell us about the meaningful benefits the project or program is delivering

Each submission must be able to demonstrate that their community solar project or program provides at least one of the five primary Meaningful Benefits listed below (Categories 1-5) in order to be eligible for any Sunny Award or Recognition. In order to be eligible for a Sunny Grand Prize Award competitors must demonstrate that their community solar project or program provides 2 or more meaningful benefits listed below (Categories 1-7). In addition to this narrative, competitors will need to provide evidence to support their statements on the benefits they are providing. Details on supporting evidence can be found in Section 5. (300 word maximum per category)

Category 1: Greater Household Savings

Example content to provide

- **Project:** Describe how the project allocates subscriber bill credits, including the percentage of bill savings being realized by residential and non-profit subscribers (with a minimum of 20% savings for residential subscribers as compared to consumers not participating in community solar). Describe how your organization calculates bill savings.
- **Program:** Describe how the program supports community solar projects in ensuring residential and/or non-profit subscribers receive at least 20% or more bill savings (this could include state program incentives or other financial support programs). Describe how your program calculates bill savings.

This section is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The statement demonstrates how subscriber bill credits are allocated and provides evidence of at least 20% bill savings on average

Category 2: LMI Household Access

Example content to provide

- **Project:** Describe how your project acquires and maintains LMI household subscribers (include the percentage/number of households of LMI households subscribed)
- **Program:** Describe how the design of the program prioritizes LMI household participation including any unique benefits in addition to bill savings
- Describe how your project or program defines LMI. Competitors are encouraged to use their state community solar program's definition for LMI or the federal definition for LMI (see [Key Terms](#) for details). If your project or program uses another method (census tract, self-

This section is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The statement demonstrates strong level of LMI household engagement in the project or program with at least 40% of the residential subscribers being LMI households

<p>certification, etc.) please describe those methods here.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Category 3: Resilience & Grid Benefits</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Example content to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project: Describe how the project provides improved resilience for households or strengthens grid resilience (this might include providing storage as back-up power during an outage for households, critical facilities, or community hubs or reducing peak load through virtual power plans or other demand response action). Include examples, if possible, of when this system has been used to deliver back-up power or otherwise support more resilient or reliable provision of energy. • Program: Describe how the program supports community resilience (household or community facilities) or strengthens grid resilience. 	<p style="text-align: center;">This section is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement demonstrates that the community solar project or program provides power in the event of a grid outage or strengthens grid operations through demand response and other actions
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Category 4: Community Ownership</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Example content to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project: Describe how the project incorporates community ownership or other measures that build wealth for subscribers or community members, including a description of the ownership model and how benefits are accrued or determined by community members. • Program: Describe how the community solar program supports community ownership, including but not limited to community ownership of assets, community wealth-building measures, or community-member control over community solar projects 	<p style="text-align: center;">This section is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement demonstrates how the project or program provides opportunities for community ownership or wealth building

<p><u>Category 5: Equitable Workforce Development</u></p> <p>Example content to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the project or program supports the creation and retention of good-paying jobs where workers are properly classified as employees, and have a free and fair choice to join, form, or assist a union. • Describe how the project or program supports women-owned or minority-owned businesses (WMBEs) and/or reduces income disparities across race and gender lines • Describe how the project or program ensures a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community where the project or program is located • Describe how the project or program ensures a safe work environment that is devoid of hostility and harassment 	<p>This section is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement demonstrates how jobs created by the community solar project will provide livable wages and benefits • The statement describes how the project partners with underrepresented businesses and other partners • The statement demonstrates the ways in which the project or program engaged with and if necessary, trained the local workforce during the timeline or development to operation through local workforce boards, pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship programs, community colleges, etc. • The statement describes how the construction project and/or training program ensures a safe working environment
<p><u>Category 6: Community Engagement</u></p> <p>Example content to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how your project or program included community engagement and who was involved during planning, building, and operation stages of the project or program • Describe how community groups drove and designed the outcomes of the project or program 	<p>This section is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement comprehensively demonstrates how the project or program included authentic community engagement, what the process looked like and who was involved • The statement comprehensively demonstrates how community groups drove and designed the outcomes of the project or program
<p><u>Category 7: Innovation in Impact</u></p> <p>Example content to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe all other benefits the project or program is delivering to the subscribers and community that are not listed in this document 	<p>This section is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement demonstrates new or ground-breaking innovation in the benefits a community solar project or program is delivering to the subscribers or community

Program/Project Materials (required) (non-public)		
Section 5: <i>Supporting Evidence</i>		
General Supporting Materials		Each category is scored on a 1-6 scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Program Only) Official program materials or guidance (Project Only) Documentation of permission to operate from utility or registration of facility RECs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Quality Evidence: 4-6 points Low Quality Evidence: 1-3 points
Category 1: Greater Household Savings		
Goal: Community solar projects and programs provide electricity bill savings that lower the amount households spend on energy relative to their income.		
Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
Project or program must reduce the electricity bills of residential subscribers by at least 20% on average over the course of a year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (High Quality) Official program materials or grant agreements that include language guaranteeing bill savings of 20% or more for residential subscribers. (High Quality) Aggregated program participant bill savings data from utility provider or subscription manager to demonstrate actual bill savings as compared to consumers not participating in community solar. (do not include Personally Identifiable Information (PII)) (Low Quality) Customer testimony or qualitative reports indicating bill savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (High Quality) Residential subscription contract, highlighting language that guarantees bill savings of 20% or more for residential subscribers. (do not include PII) (High Quality) Documentation from a state or utility program that the project meets requirements for a 20% or greater bill savings. (High Quality) Aggregated subscriber bill savings data from utility provider or subscription manager to demonstrate actual bill savings as compared to consumers not participating in community solar. Must include 1 year worth of data*. (do not include PII)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Low Quality) Customer or subscription manager testimony of reported bill savings. • *If evidence is deemed insufficient, the program administrator may ask you to verify your methods for calculating bill savings
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Category 2: Low- to Moderate-Income Household Access
Goal: Low- and moderate-income (LMI) households have equitable access to participation in community solar projects and programs that allow them to realize the benefits of the clean energy transition.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
At least 40% of the residential subscribers to a community solar project or program are LMI households.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Official program materials that include language requiring or incentivizing participating community solar projects to include at least 40% LMI households among their subscribers. • (High Quality) Aggregated program participant data from utility providers or subscription managers to demonstrate the participation of LMI households. (do not include PII) • (Low Quality) Survey results or other anecdotal evidence that projects within the community solar program include at least 40% LMI households. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Approval documents from a state or utility program confirming the percentage of LMI household subscribers. • (High Quality) Aggregated subscriber enrollment data from the utility provider that demonstrates LMI household participation. (do not include PII) • (Low Quality) Project promotional materials that include language about reserved or subsidized subscriptions for LMI households.

Category 3: Resilience & Grid Benefits

Goal: Community solar projects and programs provide access to power in the event of a power outage to subscribers and their communities, including residences, critical facilities or resilience hubs, and/or strengthens the local grid through demand response and other actions.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
<p>The community solar project or program includes some form of battery storage, microgrid capabilities, or demand response feature that can provide power during an outage or otherwise contribute to fewer outages on a local grid.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Official program materials that demonstrate incentives or requirements for connection to a storage system, from on-site battery to community solar facility or microgrid. • (High Quality) Official program documentation showing how the storage must be utilized in an outage. • (High Quality) Program materials that demonstrate prioritization of projects built in locations that would provide more stability to the grid • (Low Quality) Anecdotal evidence of battery/storage connection despite a lack of specific requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Official documentation, such as electrical permits or utility agreements, of connection to a storage system, from on-site battery to community solar facility or microgrid. Includes specifications such as kWh capacity. • (High Quality) Reliable documentation showing evidence of operation for project in the event of an outage. • (High Quality) Official utility documentation showing that community solar project includes the ability to improve voltages at the end of the feeder, alleviate congestion, and reduce line losses. • (Low Quality) Picture or other proof of battery/storage purchase without specifics and without proof of installation.

Category 4: Community Ownership
Goal: Community solar projects and programs provide an opportunity for subscribers and their communities to build wealth and have democratic control over energy generation through community ownership or other avenues for community wealth building.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
Local community members, subscribers, or local community organizations that provide services to a community-owned facility or have equity in the community solar project (including partnership flip models where ownership will be transferred after tax equity is realized) or the project includes other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Official program materials that document a requirement or incentive for community ownership of community solar projects or inclusion of a Community Benefits Agreement. • (High Quality) Community solar project registration/approval forms that demonstrate the ownership structure of participating projects. • (Low Quality) Anecdotal evidence or survey responses that describe the ownership structures of participating projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Business charter or other documentation that demonstrates the project's ownership structure. • (High Quality) Official Community Benefits Agreement contract demonstrating community wealth-building opportunities. • (Low Quality) Promotional materials (website, articles, etc.) that demonstrate the project's ownership structure.

Category 5: Equitable Workforce Development
Goal: Community solar projects and programs support equitable development of and access to quality jobs in a local clean energy workforce.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
The community solar project or program advances high wages, reduces income disparities across race, gender, or other demographic lines, ensures a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community where the project is located, and creates a safe working environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Program materials describing the plan to attract, train, and retain a diverse, skilled and well-qualified local workforce. • (High Quality) Program materials describing how the project will ensure the highest standards of workplace safety and health. • (High Quality) Program materials describing workforce requirements for professional training, specific details on training, certification, or licensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (High Quality) Documentation of Project Labor Agreement (collective bargaining agreement between unions and contractors that govern terms and conditions of all workers on a construction project). • (High Quality) Payroll data showing pay, benefits, classification of employees (do not include PII) • (High Quality) Prime or subcontractor agreements

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Low Quality) Program materials describing educational or workforce development opportunities associated with the project, without specifics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with women and/or minority-owned business (Low Quality) Company report summarizing average wages, benefits, % of women or minority workers
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Category 6: Innovation Category: Community Engagement
Goal: Identify innovative models that ensure the design and benefits distribution of community solar projects or programs are driven by the voice and meet the unique needs of the local community.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
Community solar projects or programs implement inclusive and authentic community engagement practices that ensure community input drives project outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (High Quality) Official program materials requiring or incentivizing the use of authentic community engagement for participating community solar projects. (Low Quality) Anecdotal evidence of communities that have been authentically engaged in the design of participating community solar projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (High Quality) Testimony from local community organizations verifying authentic community engagement throughout the development of the community solar project. (Low Quality) Evidence of local community member participation on a project's design team or steering committee. (Low Quality) Meeting notes, agendas, or sign in sheets from community engagement activities.

Category 7: Innovation Category: Innovation in Impact
Goal: Community solar projects and programs identify and deliver additional, innovative meaningful benefits for subscribers and their communities.

Criteria	Suggested Evidence (Program)	Suggested Evidence (Project)
Community solar projects and programs identify additional meaningful benefits and can demonstrate that they are delivered to subscribers and their communities.	Evidence quality is at the discretion of the applicant. Please submit the highest quality evidence possible to demonstrate the additional meaningful benefits delivered by the community solar program.	Evidence quality is at the discretion of the applicant. Please submit the highest quality evidence possible to demonstrate the additional meaningful benefits delivered by the community solar project.

Additional Supporting Documentation (Optional, non-public)

Attach up to 5 one-page letters of support or articles (e.g., news or press) about the project/program from other relevant entities to provide context and evidence to support your written submission. These must be written by third-party entities or organizations and should provide supporting evidence that your project met the goals of this awards program.

Examples of entities that may express support could include but are not limited to businesses, non-profits, media outlets, elected officials, community leaders, or members of the target audience. Letters that support the claims made in your written narrative and serve as evidence of your success will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not affected by or related to your campaign will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters.

Reviewer Recommendation

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

Statement is scored as a 1 or 6

8 How We Score

Reviewers will first ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. DOE reserves the right to reassign submissions to from a program to a project or vice-versa. Additionally, DOE reserves the right to reassign submissions to different Meaningful Benefit Categories than the team identified on its cover page. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each category of the review criteria receives a score from 1 to 6. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the total sum of the scores for all the categories. Category points are cumulative, so programs or projects that provide benefits across more than two categories will receive more points toward a Sunny Award Grand Prize. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final awards judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the awards.
 - Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.

Reviewer Comments: Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The awards administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors to continue to

improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

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

For the Meaningful Benefit Category Special Recognitions, DOE retains the right to alter the maximum number of winners in each category depending on the number and quality of submissions in each category.

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

9 Key Terms

Primary Meaningful Benefits: Through stakeholder Request for Information feedback and other stakeholder engagements, the National Community Solar Partnership has identified key outcomes of community solar programs and projects that should benefit subscribers and their communities. The five community solar outcomes that have been identified as meaningful benefits are: 1) greater household savings, 2) LMI household access, 3) resilience & grid benefits, 4) community ownership, and 5) equitable workforce development.

Low- to Moderate-Income: Definitions for low- to moderate-income vary. For this Prize, we are looking for projects that serve low- to moderate-income populations. Submissions must identify the definition you are using. If the state where the project(s) or program is located has an applicable LMI definition, you should use that applicable LMI definition. If your state does not have a definition for low- to moderate-income populations, competitors are encouraged to use the federal definition for low- to moderate-income which is households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, or households earning 80% or below of the area median income as defined by the most recent data from the US Census Bureau.

Frontline Communities: Communities that experience the greatest impacts and consequences of climate change. These are often communities of color whose communities were placed in the least desirable areas, often with high exposure to pollution and climate impacts, such as flooding.

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a community as either: a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as census tract), or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native Americans), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for DACs has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for thirty-six (36) indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parenthesis show how many indicators fall in that category): Fossil Dependence (2); Energy Burden (5); Environmental and Climate Hazards (10); Vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19). ([Source](#))

Energy Insecurity: The inability of a household to meet its basic heating, cooling, and energy needs over time.

Authentic Community Engagement: includes practices in which community members define and drive the outcomes of the decision-making process to ensure that project benefits accrue to the community. When community members are authentically engaged, project developers are accountable and responsive to community priorities and needs and the outcomes of a program or project will clearly reflect the priorities of community members.

Community Benefits Agreement: Strategic vehicles for community improvement, while benefiting private sector developers and both state and local governments. Community Benefits Agreements are not zero-sum instruments. They are legal agreements between community benefit groups and developers, stipulating the benefits a developer agrees to fund or furnish, in exchange for community support of a project. Benefits can include commitments to hire directly from a community, contributions to economic trust funds, local workforce training guarantees and more.

10 Additional Requirements

Please read and comply with additional requirements in Appendix A.

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

Appendix 1: Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Your submission for The Sunny Awards is subject to following terms and conditions:

- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online at <https://www.herox.com/sunnyawards> before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
- The narrative, supporting evidence and letters of commitment/support are not intended to be made public; however, see [Section A.8](#) regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- You must include all the submission's required elements. The awards 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. Any attachments must be in a readable and searchable PDF format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- Competitors will be disqualified if during any engagement with The Sunny Awards, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the awards administrator, or other forms of communication contain 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 awards described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. You should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the contests described here and no other contests on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
- The awards administrator, when feasible, may give competitors an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

A.2 Submission Rights

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

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the awards administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest, a non-commercial license to display publicly only parts of the submission package designated as "public." This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the 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 awards administrator, and judges for purposes of the contests, including, but not limited to, screening and evaluation purposes. The awards administrator and any third parties acting on its behalf will also have the right to publicize the competitors' names and, as applicable, the names of competitors' team members and organizations, which participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, 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 upon any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.3 Copyright

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

A.4 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.5 Resolution of Disputes

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

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

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

A.6 Publicity

The winners of these awards (collectively, "Winners") will be featured on DOE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, marketing, social media, audio (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.7 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 the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (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.8 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:

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

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

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

2. 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."
3. 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.9 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.10 General Conditions

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

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for each category, 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.

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

A.11 Program Policy Factors

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

- Geographic diversity of potential winners.
- Diversity in project or program type (state program, utility-led program, third party-developed project, community-owned project, etc.)
- Whether the DOE recognition is nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate the adoption of best practices to provide meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to community solar energy and its benefits among audiences and in areas that are underserved by existing efforts by the U.S. solar market.
- The degree to which the submission supports and complements DOE's existing programs and strategies to achieve DOE goals.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE engagement with new audiences 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), members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities, or members from minority business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, or veteran-owned businesses.

A.12 Additional Eligibility Requirements

- Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any awards contests 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 in the Prize.
- Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs are not eligible to compete.
- Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Binding Operational Directives (BOD) 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 Department of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: <https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list>.

A.13 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 non-cash prizes be returned to the government.

This is the end of the rules document, thank you for reading.