



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Official Rules

American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track

The American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track is designed to accelerate and sustain American solar innovation through a series of contests, leveraging a diverse and powerful support network of national laboratories, energy incubators, and other resources across the United States.

**These rules are effective June 10, 2021, for
Round 5 of the Solar Prize Software Track.**

Note: These rules are different from the rules for previous Solar Prize rounds. Round 5 has two tracks that focus separately on hardware and software components. Each track (Hardware and Software) has its own rules document. Please read these rules to ensure you have the most up-to-date information and are applying to the correct program.

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I. PROGRAM SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [Solar Energy Technologies Office](#) (SETO) is launching the American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track, a part of the American-Made Challenges, to accelerate the development, validation, and commercialization of innovative solar software solutions that will increase the competitiveness of the U.S. solar industry. These rules are specifically for the American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track. Any innovation that is focused solely on software is eligible for the Solar Prize Software Track. Innovations focused solely on hardware or that have a hardware component are eligible for the [Solar Prize Hardware Track](#).

The Software Track will support new and diverse entrepreneurs as they create new, scalable software products that will accelerate solar deployment growth in the United States. Competitors can win up to \$480,000 in cash and \$50,000 in support services.

Competitors participate in three escalating challenges, called the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests, developing their concept from idea to potentially marketable product in less than one year. Competitors also have the option to compete in a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Contest, which recognizes solutions that enable underserved communities¹ in the United States to overcome systemic solar barriers and share equitably in the societal benefits of solar deployment.

Additionally, competitors have access to the American-Made Network, a group of DOE national laboratories, incubators, investors, philanthropists, and seasoned industry leaders who provide technical insight, business development expertise, product validation, and other support throughout the competition. The contests and the American-Made Network bring connections, resources, and funding to competitors as they advance their innovations, accelerating their cycles of learning from years to months.

The Software Track advances the Biden Administration's goals of a carbon-pollution-free electricity sector by 2035 and an equitable clean energy economy with net-zero emissions no later than 2050² to the benefit of all Americans. The activities incentivized by this prize support the government-wide approach to the climate crisis by driving innovation that can accelerate the deployment of clean

¹ The Biden Administration defines "underserved communities" as populations sharing a particular characteristic that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, including communities comprised of Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in specific rural or urban areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

² Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" (Jan. 27, 2021). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

energy technologies, which are critical for climate protection. DOE is committed to pushing the frontiers of science and engineering, catalyzing clean energy jobs through research, development, demonstration, and deployment, and ensuring environmental justice and the inclusion of underserved communities.

2. BACKGROUND

New energy technologies have begun to reshape the national and global energy landscape. Advanced electrification, digitization, and deployment of grid-connected distributed energy assets are changing the energy industry. The United States has been at the forefront in this transformation, and as technologies, markets, services, and capital providers have evolved over the past decade, there is a reinvigorated entrepreneurial interest across all facets of the nation's energy system.

The domestic solar industry experienced a rapid expansion over the previous decade largely driven by solar equipment cost reductions. In parallel, software and business model innovations (e.g., remote system design software and solar leases) helped overcome solar deployment barriers and expand markets. Despite significant progress, barriers persist and have evolved as solar markets scale. Some of the biggest cost drivers for installed solar are those associated with the non-hardware aspects of solar deployment, including regulatory compliance, customer acquisition, financing, operations and maintenance, and grid integration costs. Looking forward, continued advances in load disaggregation and control, and the proliferation of energy storage technology, bring new opportunities to amplify the impact of distributed solar generation by increasing resiliency and adding value for communities.

At the same time, macro trends in communications, computation, and information technology bring new tool sets to rethink how today's solar energy problems are solved. Software and business model innovations developed by new and diverse entrepreneurs can streamline and accelerate solar industry growth; create significant domestic value by expanding solar markets and creating high-quality jobs; and accelerate the growth of new markets. They can specifically help expand solar access to underserved communities, which can benefit greatly from lower energy costs, economic development, and decarbonization.

The American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track is designed to spur innovations that address difficulties facing the solar energy sector. Spearheaded by SETO within the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) and in partnership with the [National Renewable Energy Laboratory \(NREL\)](#), the Software Track is a series of progressive contests that will incentivize the nation's innovators and entrepreneurs to rapidly discover, develop, iterate, and deliver new solutions to market, with the goal of creating new, widely used software to accelerate solar deployment growth in the United States. The program will make it faster and easier for our nation to transform innovative research and ideas into early-stage concepts and then build software products ready for validation. Competitors will not only be able to win cash prizes, but they will also be connected with mentoring, training, and other services from the American-Made Network, resulting in the long-term success of participants and ultimately the U.S. solar market.

Currently, the solar industry and its associated research community does not match the diversity of the United States. Women and minorities are underrepresented in the solar industry and in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. STEM fields also lack diversity in geographical origin, with U.S. rural areas underrepresented relative to large population centers. Since STEM students and graduates support research and development activities, which can often result in the formation of companies, the lack of diversity in that pipeline adversely affects the potential scientific and economic outcomes of those activities. To achieve the administration's energy justice goals, SETO is working to support more equitable participation in the solar energy community. SETO recognizes the inherent advantages of diverse teams and encourages competitors to consider diversity and inclusion when developing their teams.

3. CONTESTS: READY! – SET! – GO!

The Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests will fast-track efforts to identify, develop, and test disruptive solutions to meet solar industry needs. During each contest, participants work to rapidly advance their software solutions—and may also opt in to compete in the JEDI Contest (see [Section I.4](#)). DOE invites anyone, individually or as a team, to compete to transform a conceptual solution into an impactful product and business. This prize is specifically focused on software solutions. Competitors developing an innovation with a hardware component should apply to the [American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Hardware Track](#), which runs in parallel with the Software Track described in this rules document.

The Three Contests:

1. **Ready! Contest** – Competitors demonstrate that they have identified and taken action to develop a new, impactful software idea or solution that addresses a critical need for the solar industry. They also propose a path to develop a minimum viable product usable by early customers who can provide feedback for further development. Winners receive \$30,000 in cash and are eligible to compete in the Set! Contest. Any eligible person, team, or business can submit a package to compete in the Ready! Contest, although individuals must form a business if they advance to the Set! Contest. A panel of expert reviewers from industry, national laboratories, and government evaluate submissions. DOE selects the winners (semifinalists) based on reviewer input and the impact the new software solutions may have on the solar industry.
2. **Set! Contest** – Semifinalists work to substantially advance their software solution toward a minimum viable product that proves critical solution functionality. They must show that their product will solve a key issue in the solar industry and be in demand when it reaches the market. Competitors are expected to make significant progress in evaluating the market opportunity, developing a customer pipeline, and validating the product's fit in the market. The semifinalists are evaluated by a panel of reviewers during a national demonstration (demo) day event where competitors present their software solutions. The selected finalists receive \$60,000 in cash and are eligible to compete in the Go! Contest.

3. **Go! Contest** – Finalists work to substantially advance their minimum viable product to a refined product, which represents a significant evolution from the Set! Contest minimum viable product, and secure credible customer(s) to validate the business model. Finalists are evaluated by a panel of reviewers during a national demo day event, and DOE selects two winners. Each winner receives \$200,000 in cash plus \$50,000 in vouchers redeemable at national laboratories to further develop their solution.

The three contests offer a total of \$1.6 million in cash prizes and \$100,000 in vouchers.

Contest Funding:

Contest	Winners	Prize
1. Ready!	Up to 20	\$30,000 in cash
2. Set!	Up to 10	\$60,000 in cash
3. Go!	2	\$200,000 in cash and \$50,000 in vouchers

To learn more and sign up, go to <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software>.

4. JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (JEDI) CONTEST

The Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Contest encourages Software Track competitors to consider and incorporate environmental justice principles into their innovations. There are numerous barriers to accelerating the growth of solar in underserved communities in the United States,³ including some that can be overcome with software and business model innovations to help access financing, allocate the benefits of shared assets, improve customer outreach and engagement, and streamline development of relevant solar projects. Solar deployment in underserved communities can bring direct cost savings, public health benefits, job opportunities, and resilience when paired with energy storage technologies. Solar innovations and local capacity building are among the factors critical to ensuring underserved communities have access to clean energy.

³ <https://www.nrel.gov/state-local-tribal/lmi-solar.html>

The JEDI Contest is focused on four key areas:

- **Opportunity Space:** Competitors rigorously assess the needs of underserved communities and uncover key insights from potential customers or end users of the product.
- **Solution Development:** Competitors design and develop a solution to overcome identified barriers.
- **Market Impact:** Competitors measure progress and validate assumptions with potential customers, users, or market experts during development and testing to demonstrate the solution's impact and need in underserved communities.
- **Network Activation:** Competitors advance the proposed solution by cultivating a diverse network of mentors and partners, which can include members of the American-Made Network, funders, and other relevant entities.

In the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests, competitors have the option to also compete in the JEDI Contest, which provides up to \$300,000 in additional cash prizes (up to \$100,000 for each contest) distributed among JEDI Contest winners per the table below. JEDI Contest competitors describe how their solution addresses solar market barriers facing underserved communities and work to substantially advance their approach toward JEDI goals as they progress through the competition.

	JEDI Contest Winners	Prize*
1. Ready!	Up to 10 Ready! semifinalists	\$10,000 to \$30,000 in cash
2. Set!	Up to 5 Set! finalists	\$20,000 to \$60,000 in cash
3. Go!	Up to 1 Go! competitor	\$100,000 in cash

*Prizes are shown as funding ranges when they depend on the number of winners.

Up to 10 Ready! semifinalists, up to 5 Set! finalists, and up to 1 Go! competitor may win the JEDI Contest. The \$100,000 cash prize pool per contest is distributed among JEDI Contest winner(s), with the individual prizes capped at \$30,000 for the Ready! Contest and \$60,000 for the Set! Contest.

As in the Ready! Contest, anyone can compete in the JEDI Contest, but only Ready! semifinalists can win the JEDI Contest at the Ready! stage. In the Set! Contest, JEDI Contest winners are selected from the pool of Set! finalists. In the Go! Contest, the JEDI Contest winner is selected from the pool of Set! finalists competing in the Go! Contest, including the Go! Contest winner. Stated another way, a Set! finalist may win the JEDI Contest at the Go! stage even if they don't win the Go! Contest.

JEDI Contest winners are chosen by a panel of reviewers, including JEDI subject-matter experts. Competing in the JEDI Contest does not impact selections in the other Solar Prize Software Track

contests and is completely optional. DOE reserves the right to not award JEDI Contest winners if none of the submissions adequately address the needs of underserved communities.

Since the JEDI Contest runs in parallel with the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests, it follows the processes described in the subsequent sections (Sections II.5., III.5, and IV.5). Competitors who wish to compete in the JEDI Contest must indicate their interest in their submission package, describe how their solution enables underserved communities to overcome systemic solar barriers and share in the benefits of solar deployment, and detail their efforts to substantially advance their approach should they move through the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests. If a Ready! semifinalist does not win the JEDI Contest at the Ready! stage, they are still eligible to submit a JEDI solution in the Set! Contest. The same applies for Set! finalists who did not also win the JEDI Contest at that stage—competitors can try again in the Go! Contest.

To learn more and sign up, go to <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software>.

5. AMERICAN-MADE NETWORK

The American-Made Network cultivates resources and builds connections that enhance, accelerate, and amplify the competitors' efforts. The objective is to link participants with people, resources, financing, perspectives, and relevant industry expertise, all of which are necessary for long-term success.

The Network is composed of the following elements:

1. **Prize and Network Administrator (NREL):** DOE has partnered with NREL to administer the Solar Prize Software Track. NREL, as the administrator, helps competitors locate and leverage the vast array of national laboratory resources. NREL also connects elements of the Network with the competitors, as described below.
2. **Vouchers:** Winners of the Go! Contest receive vouchers that they may use to fund work at national laboratories to accelerate the improvement or validation of their products.
3. **Connectors:** Connectors are entities capable of identifying and recruiting contest participants, as well as supporting competitors on their innovation journey. Connectors can be incubators, universities, think tanks, industry groups, or any enabler seeking to help competitors win by performing support activities such as:
 - Attracting a diverse range of talented individuals to become contest competitors
 - Helping competitors refine their innovations, develop business plans, work with mentors, and connect with investors and industry partners
 - Raising nonfederal funding to support this program and its participants
 - Providing in-kind resources, tools, and facilities to accelerate competitors' abilities to innovate, test, and refine their solutions while reducing technology and business risks

- Offering feedback and resources to competitors who opted into the JEDI Contest as they develop and refine plans to address solar barriers faced by underserved communities

Connectors that support participants that win the Ready! Contest or compete in the Set! or Go! Contests are financially rewarded based on the table below.

Connector Recognition Reward Opportunities:

Recognition Reward Name	Anticipated Number of Awards	Dollar Amounts	Details*
Mobilize	Up to 1 per winning Ready! competitor (20 competitors)	\$1,000 per competitor	Distributed to Connectors who recruit and/or support competitors who go on to win the Ready! Contest.
Set! Mentor	Up to 1 per winning Set! competitor (10 competitors)	\$2,500 per competitor	Can be divided among up to 3 Connectors identified as significant supporters by Set! Contest winners.
	Up to 1 per non-winning Set! competitor (10 competitors)	\$1,000 per competitor	Can be divided among up to 3 Connectors identified as significant supporters by competitors who competed in but did not win the Set! Contest.
Go! Mentor	Up to 1 per winning Go! competitor (2 competitors)	\$5,000 per competitor	Can be divided among up to 3 Connectors identified as significant supporters by Go! Contest winners.
	Up to 1 per non-winning Go! Competitor (8 competitors)	\$2,500 per competitor	Can be divided among up to 3 Connectors identified as significant supporters by competitors who competed in but did not win the Go! Contest.
* Power Connectors and national labs are ineligible to receive Recognition Rewards.			

Competitors and reviewers in any given round cannot also be a Connector for that round. If a Connector formally joins a competitor, they forego any financial incentive and recognition payment for that round.⁴

Entities interested in participating as Connectors can visit the following site for details: <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/>.

4. **Power Connectors:** Power Connector are Connectors who play a more substantial role in the competition and receive funds to expand and amplify DOE and NREL’s efforts. Power Connectors operate under a contract with NREL and may be selected to host a national demo day. These stakeholders work to identify and support participants in the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests, and they also partner with NREL to envision and execute a long-term sustainable

⁴ Additional details can be found in the [Guidelines for Connector Recognition Rewards](#).

strategy for scaling the American-Made Challenges program. Power Connectors are ineligible for all Recognition Rewards. Power Connectors are rewarded for efforts that:

- Increase the number of new, diverse, and high-quality competitors
- Expand the network of partners, resources, and tools
- Increase the diverse of funding sources for competitors and the program
- Produce engaging and well-attended national demo day showcases
- Expand the number of technological challenges addressable by the program
- Provide leadership and support within the increasingly robust American-Made Network

Entities interested in participating as Power Connectors can visit the following site for details: <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/>.

6. IMPORTANT DATES

These rules are applicable to the Solar Prize Software Track. Please visit <http://americanmadechallenges.org/solarprize.html> and select the relevant round to view the key dates for each round of the prize.

7. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Competitors in the Software Track must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, a competitor certifies that it is in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification before prizes are awarded. As soon as the prize administrator becomes aware that a competitor is not eligible to win the Ready!, Set!, Go!, or JEDI Contest, the competitor may be disqualified. The registered competitor is the individual or entity that registers in HeroX to compete.

In keeping with the goal of growing a community of innovators, competitors are encouraged to form diverse, multidisciplinary teams while developing their concept. The HeroX platform provides a space where parties interested in collaboration can post information about themselves and learn about others who are also interested in competing in this contest.

Ready! Contest Eligibility

- Individuals, teams of individuals, private entities (for-profits and nonprofits), and nonfederal government entities (such as states, counties, tribes, municipalities, and academic institutions) are eligible to compete in the Ready! Contest.

- A single competitor or team of competitors may submit a maximum of two submissions. If more than two submissions are received from a single competitor or team, the two most recently submitted will be considered.

Set! Contest Eligibility

- Only winners of the Ready! Contest are eligible to compete in the Set! Contest.⁵
- Competitors must be a for-profit business entity, such as a corporation or other organization that is formed in and maintains a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.⁶ A for-profit business entity is eligible to compete only if it includes a winner of the Ready! Contest as an employee or owner. Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.
- At least one representative from a competitor organization must participate in Set! Demo Day. Set! Demo Day will be a virtual event.

Go! Contest Eligibility

- Only the winning for-profit business entities of the Set! Contest are eligible to compete in the Go! Contest.
- Competitors must be a for-profit business entity, such as a corporation or other organization that is formed in and maintains a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.⁷ Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.
- Competitors must submit evidence of credible customers in the form of executed customer agreements, payment receipts, or other means in the submission package. Credible customers in this context are customers who are motivated to engage with the competitor purely for financial reasons due to their interest in solar energy. Credible customers do not have personal, familial, or social ties to competitors. DOE and NREL do not provide a preliminary review of the evidence. Competitors should submit the strongest possible documentation to meet this requirement, including evidence of monetary transaction. A competitor is not eligible to win the Go! Contest if this requirement is deemed unfulfilled.
- At least one representative from a competitor organization must participate in the Go! Demo Day. The Go! Demo Day may be an in-person event; competitors must be willing to be flexible

⁵ For purposes of this requirement, winners are defined as the key project members listed on the cover page of the competitor's winning Ready! submission package.

⁶ EERE will consider issuing a waiver of the domestic ownership and control eligibility requirement. See [Appendix 2](#) for details.

⁷ EERE will consider issuing a waiver of the domestic ownership and control eligibility requirement. See [Appendix 2](#) for details.

with potential travel. The prize administrator informs all competitors about Demo Day details as soon as information becomes available to ensure there is plenty of time to make travel arrangements.

JEDI Contest Eligibility

- Only winners of the Ready! Contest are eligible to be winners of the JEDI Contest at that stage.
- Only winners of the Set! Contest are eligible to be winners of the JEDI Contest at that stage.
- In the Go! Contest, a JEDI Contest winner is selected from the pool of Go! Contest competitors. A Go! Contest competitor may win the JEDI Contest without winning the Go! Contest.

All Contests Eligibility

- Individuals, private entities (for-profits and nonprofits), and nonfederal government entities (such as states, counties, tribes, municipalities, and academic institutions) are subject to the following requirements:
 - An individual prize competitor (who is not competing as a member of a group) must be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident.
 - A group of individuals competing as one team may win, provided that the online account holder of the submission is a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident. Individuals competing as part of a team may participate if they are legally authorized to work in the United States.
 - Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.
 - If an entity seeking to compete does not have majority domestic ownership and control, EERE may consider issuing a waiver of that eligibility requirement where (1) the entity submits a compelling justification; (2) the entity is incorporated in and maintains a primary place of business in the United States; and (3) the entity otherwise meets the eligibility requirements. EERE may require additional information before making a determination on the waiver request. There are no rights to appeal DOE's decision on the waiver request. See [Appendix 2](#) for more information on the waiver process.
 - Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
- Non-DOE federal entities and federal employees are not eligible to win any prize contests in this program.
- Employees of an organization that co-sponsors this program with DOE are not eligible to participate in any prize contests in this program.

- Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any prize contests in this program. 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.
- NREL employees directly involved in administration of this prize are not eligible to participate in any prize contest in this program; however, NREL and other national laboratory employees, including lab researchers, may compete and win a prize contest in this competition, provided they are not competing in their official capacity as employees under a national lab contract nor leveraging national lab resources.
- Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government, such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs, are not eligible to compete.
- Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security Binding Operational Directives as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. 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 Consolidated Screening List: <https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list>.
- This prize competition is expected to positively impact U.S. economic competitiveness. Participation in a foreign government talent recruitment program⁸ could conflict with this objective by resulting in unauthorized transfer of scientific and technical information to foreign government entities. Therefore, individuals participating in foreign government talent recruitment programs of foreign countries of risk are not eligible to compete. Further, competitor teams that include individuals participating in foreign government talent recruitment programs of foreign countries of risk⁹ are not eligible to compete.

⁸ 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 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.

⁹ Currently, the list of countries of risk includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China.

- As part of your submission to this prize program, you will be required to sign the following statement:
 - I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this prize. I understand that in providing this submission to the Federal Government, I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this prize competition and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the Federal Government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287.

8. PROGRAM GOAL REQUIREMENTS

This prize program is interested in new software innovations that do not exist in the solar industry today and will dramatically benefit the solar marketplace. Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The prize administrator must conclude that all the following statements are **true** when applied to your submission:

- The proposed solution is related to the solar power industry.
- The proposed solution is a new software or a business model innovation. Solutions that have a hardware component and are not based solely on software or business model innovation are discouraged.
- The proposed software solution is not an information website, is not an incremental improvement of an existing software technology, and is sufficiently differentiated from widely available solutions on the market.
- The majority of activities that are described in and support the submission package are performed in the United States and have the potential to benefit the U.S. solar market.
- The proposed solution represents an innovation that will move the industry beyond its current state.
- The proposed solution is not dependent on new, pending, or proposed federal, state, or local government legislation, resolutions, appropriations, measures, or policies.
- The proposed solution does not involve the lobbying of any federal, state, or local government office.
- The proposed solution is based on fundamental technical principles and is consistent with a basic understanding of the U.S. market economy.

- The submission content sufficiently confirms the competitor's intent to commercialize early-stage technology and establish a viable U.S.-based business in the near future with revenues that do not solely depend on licensing fees of intellectual property.
- **JEDI Contest Only (Optional Opportunity):** The approach to enable underserved communities to overcome systemic solar barriers and share equitably in the societal benefits of solar deployment is clearly related to the competitor's submissions to the Ready!, Set!, and/or Go! Contest.

9. FIND HELP

Visit <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/> to review and contact the members of the American-Made Network who have signed up to help you succeed.

10. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

II. READY! CONTEST RULES

1. INTRODUCTION

The Solar Prize Software Track is a three-contest series with up to \$1.6 million in cash prizes and other benefits. It is designed to accelerate and sustain solar innovation by supporting entrepreneurs as they develop new, transformative software ideas into concepts and then into early-stage products ready for customer testing and market validation. In parallel, the JEDI Contest challenges competitors at each stage to create innovative software solutions that enable underserved communities in the United States to overcome systemic solar barriers and share equitably in the societal benefits of solar deployment (for details, see [Section I.4](#)).

Ready! Contest Prizes

- Up to 20 semifinalists
- \$600,000 in total cash prizes. Each semifinalist receives a cash prize of \$30,000.
- Optional JEDI Contest: \$100,000 in total cash prizes (see [Section I.4](#)).

The Software Track is the first step to set American entrepreneurs on a pathway of accelerated innovation, so ideas can become products in months, not years. The Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests are structured to provide the resources and environment necessary to create new solution concepts and develop them into early-stage products in rapid learning cycles.

The Ready! Contest is the first of three contests, with a total of \$600,000 in cash prizes. Anyone meeting the eligibility requirements can compete in the Ready! Contest, but only winners of this contest (referred to as Ready! Contest winners or Solar Prize Software Track semifinalists) can compete in the Set! Contest. **The following rules are for competitors in the Ready! Contest. “You” and “your” reference competitors in the contest.**

2. GOAL

Rapidly develop an idea for a new software solution that can address a critical need in the solar industry; propose a conceptual solution and a plan for building a minimum viable product that has broad solar market potential.

3. PRIZES TO WIN

The Ready! Contest offers up to 20 cash prizes of \$30,000.

4. HOW TO ENTER

Complete a submission package online at <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software> before the contest closing date.

5. READY! CONTEST PROCESS

The Ready! Contest consists of three steps:

- 1. Preparation, Activation, and Submission** – Competitors identify and take action on a critical need in the solar industry, develop a transformative software solution pathway, and make a plan to build a minimum viable product for this solution. One-person teams can compete, but building a diverse, multidisciplined team may help strengthen capabilities and team competencies. Competitors should leverage the American-Made Network for help and support; Network Connectors have the chance to win recognition payments if they help you succeed.¹⁰ Competitors complete submission packages and submit online before the Ready! Contest closes.
- 2. Assessment** – The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns subject-matter expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The judging criteria assess the following competitor activities:
 - **Problem-Solution Fit:** Develop a software concept solution to a real-world problem facing the solar industry. Perform substantive due diligence to gather feedback and validate that the proposed solution addresses an unsolved problem, is not duplicative with widely available solutions, and is technically feasible.
 - **Plan to Innovate:** Describe the technical requirements and critical design elements of the minimum viable product, including data requirements and plans to acquire the necessary data.
 - **Team Capabilities:** Form an exceptional, diverse, multidisciplined, and committed team to accomplish the proposed solution's stated goals. This team should have strong expertise in some, if not all, of the following areas: software development, data management, data engineering, market adoption, solar technologies, and business development.
 - **Network Engagement:** Cultivate relationships with members of the American-Made Network and/or other entities to maximize the likelihood of creating a viable business based on the proposed solution and enhance the quality of the submission package. The Network is there to help you succeed, and they are rewarded for assisting you, so do not hesitate to engage them to help make your solution better.
- 3. Announcement** – After the semifinalists are publicly announced, the prize administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning the Ready! Contest prize, semifinalists develop their solutions in accordance with their plan to compete in the Set! Contest.

¹⁰ The prize administrator has dedicated approximately \$85,000 to recognize members of the American-Made Network that help competitors advance through the contests (see [Section I.5](#)).

6. WHAT TO SUBMIT

A complete submission for the Ready! Contest must include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-second video (public) • Cover page content • Narrative that answers four questions about the <i>problem, solution, team, and plan</i> (including optional responses to questions for JEDI Contest consideration) • One summary PowerPoint slide (public) • Technical assistance request (public) • Letters of commitment or support (optional).

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

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

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

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

Online public video What is your innovation in 90 seconds?	
<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The real-world, unsolved problem you are solving. • Your solution and why it is transformational. • Who you are and why you have a competitive edge. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barriers that your solution addresses and why you will be successful. 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The video explains a compelling real-world problem. • The video describes a unique innovation that is implementable within the next two years. • The video shows a diverse, knowledgeable, and skillful team. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The video describes a compelling solution to stated JEDI barrier(s).

Post your publicly accessible video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways, but do not focus on time-

consuming activities that only improve production values (e.g., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques). Assistance from others with experience in this area may be helpful. Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you with creating your video.

Cover Page List basic information about your submission
Template¹¹: <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>

- Project name
- Software innovation tagline (e.g., your mission in a few words)
- Link to your 90-second video online
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Keywords that best describe your solution (e.g., financing, grid integration, machine learning)
- Your city, state, and nine-digit zip code
- The partner(s), affiliate(s), and Connector(s)¹² that significantly helped you¹³ advance your solution and the major items they helped with (if applicable)
- Whether you would like to compete in the JEDI Contest.

You should answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 2,500 words, or 3,000 words if you opted in for JEDI Contest consideration**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission (see template for details). You may also include **up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers score the questions based on the content you have provided.

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

¹² See description of Connector in [Section I.5](#).

¹³ Remember that you can incentivize Connectors help by agreeing to identify them here to receive a cash reward for that help if you win the Ready! competition. See the description of Recognition Rewards in [Section I.5](#) and the [Connector Guidelines](#) for details.

Narrative

Max 2,500/3,000 Words and 5 Supporting Images or Figures (PDF)

Template¹⁴: <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>

Question 1: **Problem** – What is the problem, and why is solving it important?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the problem, quantify its significance with metrics, and explain why now is the right time to solve it. Be specific to the problem space that your innovation addresses.¹⁵
- Explain why existing solutions are inadequate. Be as technically specific as possible to your innovation area, providing examples where possible.
- Describe any current competitors in this space and how you will evaluate the competitive landscape.
- Show how you know this is a significant problem using evidence-based validation (e.g., interviews with users, case studies, literature).
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barrier(s) your innovation addresses and why existing solutions are inadequate.

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The competitor quantifies a critical problem using important metrics and a compelling analysis of why now is the right time to address it.
- The competitor's assessment of current solutions and their limitations shows a comprehensive understanding of the problem-solution space.
- The competitor understands the current marketplace and potential competitive landscape related to such a software solution.
- The competitor uses real-world evidence to validate key assumptions about the industry need and proves that this solution does not already exist in the marketplace.
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitor quantifies a critical JEDI problem, and their assessment of current solutions shows a comprehensive understanding of the opportunity space.

Question 2: **Solution** – What is your solution, and why will it be successful?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe how your software solution is better than the existing products or emerging solutions described in Question 1.
- Describe your innovation in as much detail as possible.

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- Sufficient technical detail was provided to understand the underlying principles of operation of the innovation.
- The solution represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions, valid technical foundations, and lessons

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

¹⁵ Avoid providing background on the rapid growth of the solar industry or other high-level trends the reviewers are well versed in.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how your technical innovation compares against the current state-of-the-art or commercially relevant competition. • Describe your innovation’s unique value proposition and how it will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers. • Define the minimum viable product, including the software’s technical requirements and design elements, that will be produced by Set! Demo Day and explain what critical failures would cause you to reconsider your approach. • Does a version of this software solution already exist? If so, provide a link to the current software tool or solution. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe your innovation’s unique value proposition(s) to underserved communities, how the proposition(s) lead(s) to a sustainable business with paying customers, and how you validated your assumptions. 	<p>learned from other notable efforts in this space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution that will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers. • The planned Set! Demo Day minimum viable product is reasonably ambitious and validates the critical assumptions necessary to advance. • The current software solution is still in a very early stage of development and has potential to be significantly enhanced and expanded to meet the needs of the solar industry. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution to expand solar access in underserved communities, which will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers.
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Question 3: Accomplishments and Team – What have you done to date, and what qualities give you a competitive edge?

<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your efforts to advance your solution concept since the announcement of the prize or prior and highlight key milestones achieved. • Explain why winning the Ready! Contest will substantively change the likely outcome for the proposed solution. • Introduce your team, explain how it came together, and highlight the knowledge and skills that make it uniquely capable of achieving success. • Highlight your team’s diversity, experience, and track record that makes it likely to succeed in the prize competition. What experience do you have trying new things, solving difficult problems, and overcoming barriers to bring ideas to reality? • Describe what drives your team to realize this software solution and why you will 	<p style="text-align: center;">Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A considerable amount of high-quality effort was put into defining and advancing the proposed solution. • Winning the Ready! Contest will significantly increase the team’s chances of creating a viable business based on this solution. • The team’s track record demonstrates notable entrepreneurial qualities such as adaptability, creativity, decisiveness, and resourcefulness. • The team is diverse and has the knowledge, experience, and determination to transform their proposed solution into a viable business in the near future. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The team is uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities.
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<p>continue when facing difficulties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] What makes your team uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities? 	
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Question 4: *Plan* – What is your plan to achieve your goals?

<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe where you stand in your software solution’s development cycle and define goals for Set! and Go! Demo Days (based on the schedule listed in Section I.6) and a one-year goal (see special instructions below). • Describe your team’s readiness to meet your goals and if your team requires additional talent and resources. • Provide a high-level budget and plan to meet your goals between the conclusion of the Ready! Contest and Go! Demo Day, including how you will leverage program resources, members of the American-Made Network, or other entities (include references to letters of support/commitment if applicable). • Describe risks to the development plan and mitigation strategies (e.g., data requirements and plans to acquire the necessary data). • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Define JEDI goals for Set! and Go! Demo Days (based on the schedule listed in Section I.6) and a one-year goal. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stated goals are ambitious, reduce risks, and show a commitment to an accelerated development cycle. • Meeting the stated goals will demonstrate critical progress toward developing, testing, and validating the functionality and market demand of this innovation. • The proposed plan effectively uses resources available in this program to advance the innovation. • Sufficient risks to the development plan have been identified and reasonable risk mitigation strategies have been described. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The stated JEDI goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.
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Reviewer Recommendation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Statement is scored as a 1 or 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a Ready! Contest prize. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a JEDI Contest prize.
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Special Instructions for Question 4

- Use only specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) outcome-based goals, not activity-based, so that a neutral third-party can validate them.
 - For example: Demonstrate a definitive achievement of progress (e.g., “X letters of interest signed” or “achieve Y second run time”); do **not** describe how you spent your time (e.g., “provided a report,” “talked to customers,” or “performed tests”).
- SMART goals for Go! Demo Day should include demonstrating a functional, refined product based on learning throughout the competition and at least one credible customer agreement.
- In defining your SMART goals, include quantified, risk-reducing, meaningful, practical, and testable interim milestones.
- SMART goals should include assessment and feedback from many relevant stakeholders (e.g., possible investors, customers, and experts in the solution space, and entities that would be the eventual customers or end users of the product.).
- Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you formulate your SMART goals.

Submission Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF will be made public)

Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains technically specific details but can be understood by most people. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

Technical Assistance Request (Export from American Made Network Matching Tool)

Upload the Technical Assistance Request generated from the [American-Made Network Matching Tool](#). In the Matching Tool, you can identify the areas where you need assistance to realize your solution. The tool considers the unique capabilities that the national laboratories, a private facility, and/or members of the American-Made Network could provide to help you overcome these barriers. Your request is then made broadly available through the tool, so members of the American-Made Network can understand your needs and assist you, with the potential to earn Recognition Rewards for that assistance.

Letters of Commitment or Support (Optional)

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

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

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

7. HOW WE SCORE

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each bullet listed in the review criteria under the video submission and the narrative questions receives a score from 1 to 6. The bullets have equal weight, so questions that have more review criteria bullets have a greater influence on the final score. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the total sum of the scores for all the bullets. All reviewers' scores are then averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the prize.
 - Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.

Note: Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors to continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

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

The judge's final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision

maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

8. FIND HELP

Visit <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/> to review and contact the members of the American-Made Network who have signed up to help you succeed.

9. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

III. SET! CONTEST RULES

1. INTRODUCTION

The Solar Prize Software Track is a three-contest series with up to \$1.6 million in cash prizes and other benefits. It is designed to accelerate and sustain solar innovation by supporting entrepreneurs as they develop new, transformative software ideas into concepts and then into early-stage products ready for customer testing and market validation. In parallel, the JEDI Contest challenges competitors at each stage to create innovative software solutions that enable underserved communities in the United States to overcome systemic solar barriers and share equitably in the societal benefits of solar deployment (for details, see [Section I.4](#)).

Set! Contest Prizes

- Up to 10 winners
- \$600,000 in total cash prizes. Each winner receives a cash prize of \$60,000.
- Optional JEDI Contest: \$100,000 in total cash prizes (see [Section I.4](#)).

The Software Track is the first step to set American entrepreneurs on a pathway of accelerated innovation, so ideas can become products in months, not years. The Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests are structured to provide the resources and environment necessary to create new solution concepts and develop them into early-stage products in rapid learning cycles.

The Set! Contest is the second in this three-contest series and offers a total of \$600,000 in cash prizes. Only winners of the Ready! Contest can compete in the Set! Contest. These winners may be referred to as Ready! Contest winners or American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track semifinalists. Winning the Set! Contest is required to compete in the Go! Contest. **The following rules are for competitors interested in the Set! Contest. “You” and “your” refer to competitors in the contest.**

2. GOAL

The goal of the Set! Contest is to have competitors expand their ideas from the Ready! Contest and develop minimum viable products (MVPs) that showcase software solutions that will accelerate solar adoption and deployment, advance market acceptance, and/or improve technology development, performance, manufacturability, recyclability, and more. The Set! Contest is focused on three key areas:

- **MVP:** Develop a minimum viable product that proves critical solution functionality and can be demonstrated (via video, presentation, and/or in person) and accessed by the prize administrator for testing.
- **Market Opportunity:** Perform a rigorous customer discovery process, including user testing of the MVP, to validate product/market fit and uncover key insights from entities that would be the eventual customers or end users of the product.

- **Network Activation:** Cultivate a network of mentors and diverse partners to help advance the proposed solution, which can include national laboratories, members of the American-Made Network, funders, and other relevant entities.

Additionally, competitors will prove the market demand for their innovation, show the viability of their business case, and establish an effective approach to secure credible customers and validate the innovation's business model.

3. PRIZES TO WIN

The Set! Contest offers up to 10 cash prizes of \$60,000.

4. HOW TO ENTER

Complete a submission package online at <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software> before the contest closing date.

5. SET! CONTEST PROCESS

The Set! Contest consists of five steps:

1. **Progress and Submit** – Competitors work with the American-Made Network¹⁶ to advance their solution as much as possible. Competitors then create their Set! Contest submission packages and submit them online before the Set! Contest Demo Day.
2. **Preliminary Review** – All completed submissions are assigned to subject-matter expert reviewers. Reviewers independently review and score each submission and then participate in the demo day event and provide feedback.
3. **Virtual Demo Day** – Competitors participate in a virtual demo day event with a panel of expert reviewers and members of the public. The details and agenda for the event are provided 30 days in advance of the event.
4. **Selection** – The judge selects up to 10 winners, considering the written submission, the expert reviewer feedback, and the performance at the demo day.
5. **Announcement** – The prize administrator announces winners at the demo day event. After receiving the Set! Contest prize, winners can develop their solutions in accordance with their plan to compete in the Go! Contest.

¹⁶ The prize administrator has dedicated approximately \$85,000 to recognize members of the American-Made Network that help competitors advance through the contests.

6. WHAT TO SUBMIT

A complete submission for the Set! Contest must include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to software • Pitch and technical demonstration video (public) • Cover page content • Narrative that answers four questions about the <i>problem and solution, innovation, team, and plan</i> (including optional responses to questions for JEDI Contest consideration) • Summary PowerPoint slide (public) • Technical assistance request (public) • Letters of commitment or support (optional).
Virtual Demo Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set! Demo Day event

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

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

Access to Software (PDF with instructions on how to access and test software)

Provide MVP access to the reviewers and the prize administrator for testing. Instructions should include:

- Hyperlinks to website(s) where software is located or online platform(s) where the software can be downloaded (e.g., GitHub). If software is available for both mobile and desktop use, provide instructions on how to access both versions.
- Written instructions provided to early users to facilitate testing the software.
- Any other necessary information to use and test the software (e.g., log-in credentials).

Note that the demonstration of software functionality should occur in the pitch and demo video, as well as during the virtual demo day event.

The following details provide more 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, as shown below. These statements are the criteria.

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

Note: This submission package is being reviewed by solar industry and entrepreneurial professionals. Cumulatively, they represent decades of experience assessing novel ideas and solutions. However, their background may not be specifically in the problem you are solving. Transition quickly from general background into the details of your problem, solution, and plan.

Pitch and Demo Video Up to 5 minute pitch on your innovation, company, and MVP demonstration (public) If you opted in for JEDI Contest consideration, add up to 1 minute to your pitch (6 minutes total).	
<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the real-world problem you are solving. • Describe your solution and why it is transformational as compared to existing solutions. • Explain the features of your minimum viable product and how it works. Demonstrate its functionality and describe the user testing completed to date. • What progress has been made over the competition period? • What is the scale of the opportunity and what is your target market? • Who are you and why do you have a competitive edge? • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barriers your solution addresses and why you will be successful. 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The video explains a compelling real-world problem and solution. • The video demonstrates a minimum viable product for an exciting innovation. • The minimum viable product has retired significant technical risk. • Progress has been demonstrated during the competition. • The video identifies a reasonable target market and a path to making a significant impact on the U.S. solar industry. • The video shows a knowledgeable and skillful team. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The video describes a compelling solution to stated JEDI barrier(s), and the team has made progress toward their JEDI goals.

Post your publicly accessible video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways, but do not focus on time-consuming activities that only improve production values (e.g., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques). Assistance from others with experience in this area may be helpful. Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you create your video.

Cover Page List basic information about your submission.
Template¹⁷: <https://www.herex.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>¹⁸

- Project name
- Innovation's tagline (e.g., your mission in a few words)
- Link to your online pitch video
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Keywords that best describe your solution (e.g., financing, grid integration, machine learning)
- Your city and state and 9-digit zip code
- The partner(s), affiliate(s), and Connector(s)¹⁹ that significantly helped you²⁰ advance your solution and the major items they helped with (if applicable).
- Whether you would like to compete in the JEDI Contest.

You should answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 2,500 words, or 3,000 words if you opted in for JEDI Contest consideration**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. **A word count must be included** at the end of your submission (see template for details). You may also include **up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

Note: If your concept/innovation has substantially pivoted from your original submission, you must provide an explanation of how and why. It is understood that innovation and entrepreneurship are not usually a linear path, but major changes in direction should always be well rationalized. You were selected on the strengths of the idea submitted in the Ready! Contest, and significant changes without justification are unlikely to be successful.

¹⁷ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

¹⁸ **Important:** Templates from the Ready! Contest have been updated for the Set! Contest.

¹⁹ See description of Connector in [Section I.5](#).

²⁰ Remember that you can incentivize Connectors help by agreeing to identify them here (up to 3) to receive a cash reward for that help, regardless of if you win the Set! Contest. See the description of Recognition Rewards in [Section I.5](#) and the [Connector Guidelines](#) for details.

Narrative (PDF)

Max 2,500/3,000 Words and 5 Supporting Images or Figures

Template²¹: <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>

Question 1: *Problem & Solution* – What is the problem, and how are you solving it?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the problem, being specific to the problem space that your innovation addresses²² and why existing solutions are inadequate.
- Describe your innovation and how it is better than existing products or emerging solutions. Show how you know this, using evidence-based validation (e.g., feedback from user testing and interviews with experts).
- Describe your innovation's unique value propositions and how these lead to a sustainable business with paying customers.
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barrier(s) your solution addresses, why existing solutions are inadequate, and how you validated your assumptions.

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The competitor quantifies a critical problem, and their assessment of current solutions shows a comprehensive understanding of the problem-solution space.
- The solution represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions, a valid technical foundation, and lessons learned from experience gained.
- The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution, which will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers.
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitor quantifies a critical JEDI problem and plans to develop a compelling solution to expand solar access in underserved communities.

Question 2: *Innovation* – What progress have you made to prove your solution will be successful?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the current state of development of your minimum viable product, its technical specifications, and sufficient underlying details on how it works, including data requirements and status on acquiring the necessary data, to facilitate external evaluation of the performance claims you make.²³

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- Sufficient technical detail was provided to understand the underlying operational principles of the innovation.
- The minimum viable product is grounded in real-world assumptions and resolves critical technical and commercial risks.

²¹ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own. The provided template has been updated from the Ready! Contest.

²² Avoid providing general background on the rapid growth of the solar industry or other high-level trends with which the reviewers are well versed.

²³ Avoid characterizing core innovations as proprietary and thus preventing independent evaluation by the expert judges. It is the intent of the prize administrator that, unless otherwise noted, no parts of the submitted materials be released to the public (see [Appendix 1](#) for more details).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the progress made over the contest period and highlight key engagements, relationships, and milestones. • Describe how you have validated your technical performance assumptions. • Describe all user testing of the minimum viable product, who gave feedback, why it is important, and changes you made as a result of that feedback. • Describe your business model, cost model, and potential price points. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe how your innovation expands solar access in underserved communities and why your business model is sustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A considerable amount of high-quality effort was put into building a minimum viable product and advancing the innovation. • A rigorous customer discovery process and user testing campaign was performed to uncover key insights and relevant feedback on the minimum viable product. • The assumptions around the business model and pricing are reasonable, achievable, and competitive. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The innovation shows strong potential to expand solar access in underserved communities and supports the growth of a sustainable business.
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Question 3: *Team* – What qualities give you a competitive edge, and how have you grown?

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your team and highlight the diversity, knowledge, and skills that make the team uniquely capable of achieving success. • Describe how your team has evolved during the competition, including any strategic hires, partnerships, and investors. • Explain why winning the Set! Contest will substantively change the likelihood of your success. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Why is your team uniquely capable addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities? 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team’s drive, diversity, knowledge, and complementary skill sets provide a strong competitive edge toward realizing this solution in the near future. • The team identified skill gaps and brought in the right people or partners to fill those gaps. • Winning the Set! Contest significantly increases the team’s chances of creating a viable business based on this solution. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The team is uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities.
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Question 4: *Plan* – What is your plan to achieve your goals?

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the goals submitted in the Ready! Contest submission package and describe the actual outcomes. Update goals for the Go! Demo Day and define goals for the next 180 and 365 days (see special instructions below). 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitors are successfully meeting prior goals and demonstrating continued critical progress toward testing and validating the functionality and market demand of this innovation. • Stated Go! Contest Demo Day goals and 180- and 365-day goals are ambitious and
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your team’s readiness to meet your goals and the need for additional talent and/or resources. • Describe the specific functional improvements your refined product will demonstrate at the next demo day. • Provide a high-level budget plan to meet your goals for the next 180 days, including how you will leverage program resources—specifically the members of the American-Made Network, or other entities. • Describe risks to the development plan and mitigation strategies (e.g. data requirements and plans to acquire the necessary data). • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Report out on progress with respect to the Set! Contest JEDI goals and update your forward-looking JEDI goals for the Go! Demo Day, as well as the next 180 and 365 days. 	<p>risk-reducing, and they show a commitment to an accelerated solution development cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitors’ approach to complete their proposed plan is well-reasoned and makes good use of the program resources available to them (such as the American-Made Network). • Sufficient risks to the development plan have been identified and reasonable risk mitigation strategies have been described. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitors are successfully meeting prior JEDI goals, and the updated JEDI goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.
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Reviewer Recommendation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Statement is scored as a 1 or 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a Set! Contest Prize. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a JEDI Contest prize.

Special instructions for Question 4

- Use only specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) outcome-based goals, not activity-based, so that a neutral third-party can validate them (if possible).
 - For example: Demonstrate a definitive achievement of progress (e.g., “X letters of interest signed” or “achieve Y second run time”); do **not** describe how you spent your time (e.g., “provide a report,” “talk to customers,” or “perform tests”).
- SMART goals for the Go! Contest Demo Day should include demonstrating a functional, refined product based on learning throughout the competition and at least one credible customer agreement.
- In defining your SMART goals, include quantified, risk-reducing, meaningful, practical, and testable interim milestones.

- SMART goals should include assessment and feedback from many relevant stakeholders (e.g., possible investors, customers, and experts in the solution space, and entities that would be the eventual customers or end users of the product.).
- Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you to formulate your SMART goals.

Submission Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF will be made public)

Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains technically specific details but can be understood by most people. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

Technical Assistance Request (Export from American Made Network Matching Tool)

Upload the Technical Assistance Request generated from the [American-Made Network Matching Tool](#). In the Matching Tool, you can identify the areas where you need assistance to realize your solution. The tool considers the unique capabilities that the national laboratories, a private facility, and/or members of the American-Made Network could provide to you to resolve these barriers. Your request is then made broadly available through the tool, so members of the American-Made Network can understand your needs and assist you, with the potential to earn Recognition Rewards for that assistance.

Letters of Commitment or Support (optional, as a PDF)

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

Virtual Demo Day Event

You are required to participate in a virtual demo day event with a panel of expert reviewers that may involve a pitch, a closed-door question-and-answer session, and/or a technical demonstration.

Reviewers review and score your submitted material before the demo day and then, based on your demo day performance and deliberation with the judge, will finalize their recommendations for winners on the demo day. At least one representative from each competing team must be present at the demo day to be considered for a Set! Prize.

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

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

7. HOW WE SCORE

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers read, score, and comment on each submission. Each bullet listed in the review criteria under the video submission and the narrative questions receive a score from 1 to 6. The bullets have equal weight, so questions that have more review criteria bullets have a greater influence on the final score. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the total sum of the scores for all the bullets. All reviewers' scores are then averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners.
 - Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this contest; or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.

Note: Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors to continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

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

The judge's final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, team performance on the demo day, reviewer deliberation, interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

8. FIND HELP

Visit <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/> to review and contact the members of the American-Made Network who have signed up to help you succeed.

9. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

IV. GO! CONTEST RULES

1. INTRODUCTION

The Solar Prize Software Track is a three-contest series with up to \$1.6 million in cash prizes and other benefits. It is designed to accelerate and sustain solar innovation by supporting entrepreneurs as they develop new, transformative software ideas into concepts and then into early-stage products ready for customer testing and market validation. In parallel, the JEDI Contest challenges competitors at each stage to create innovative software solutions that enable underserved communities in the United States to overcome systemic solar barriers and share equitably in the societal benefits of solar deployment (for details, see [Section I.4](#)).

Go! Contest Prizes

- Up to two Winners
- \$400,000 in total cash prizes and \$100,000 in total vouchers. Each winner receives a cash prize of \$200,000 and \$50,000 in vouchers.
- Optional JEDI Contest: \$100,000 in total cash prizes (see [Section I.4](#)).

The Software Track is the first step to set American entrepreneurs on a pathway of accelerated innovation, so ideas can become products in months, not years. The Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests are structured to provide the resources and environment necessary to create new solution concepts and develop them into early-stage products in rapid learning cycles.

The Go! Contest is the third in this three-contest series offering a total of \$400,000 in cash prizes and \$100,000 in vouchers. Only winners of the Set! Contest can compete in the Go! Contest. These winners are referred to as Set! Contest winners or American-Made Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track finalists. **The following guidelines are for competitors interested in the Go! Contest. “You” and “your” reference competitors in the contest.**

2. GOAL

The goal of the Go! contest is to prove that your software solution has been developed and launched, you have thoroughly evaluated the market potential of the solution, and you have actual customers using and paying for the service(s) offered. The Go! contest is focused on four key areas:

- **Product Development:** Refine the product beyond its earlier MVP phase, incorporating lessons learned and customer feedback, such that can be demonstrated (via video, presentation, and/or in person) and accessed by the prize administrator for testing.

- **Paying Customers:** Secure credible customers, with evidence such as customer agreements, payment receipts, or other means.²⁴
- **Post-Contest Planning:** Develop a long-term plan for the ongoing success of the effort. Specifically, a compelling case that there is, or will soon be, sufficient funding in place to keep the effort going beyond this competition.
- **Network Development:** Solidify a core network of mentors and partners to help advance the proposed solution, which can include national labs, members of the American-Made Network, funders, and other relevant entities.

Additionally, competitors use continual customer and stakeholder feedback to substantially advance their solution from MVP to a refined product.

3. PRIZES TO WIN

The Go! Contest offers two \$200,000 cash prizes and \$50,000 in vouchers for each winner that must be spent at a national laboratory. Winners negotiate the scope of work to be performed under a voucher and can choose which national laboratory will perform the work. For additional information on how the voucher program works, see

https://americanmadechallenges.org/solarprize/docs/vouchers/r5/American-Made_Solar_Prize_Voucher_Guidelines_Software.pdf.

4. HOW TO ENTER

Complete a submission package online at <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software> before the contest closing date.

5. GO! CONTEST PROCESS

The Go! Contest consists of five steps:

1. **Progress and Submit** – Competitors work with the American-Made Network²⁵ to advance their solution as much as possible and secure credible customers. Competitors then create their Go! Contest submission packages and submit online before the Go! Contest Demo Day.

²⁴ Given the diversity of software solutions, there is flexibility in the number of paying customers needed to validate the business model. For example, a business-to-business software with utility customers may need only a small number of customers to prove its value, whereas a business-to-consumer software would need a much larger number of customers.

²⁵ The prize administrator has dedicated approximately \$85,000 to recognize members of the American-Made Network that help competitors advance through the contests.

2. **Preliminary Review** – Completed submissions are assigned to subject-matter expert reviewers. Reviewers independently review and score each submission, then participate in the demo day event and provide feedback.
3. **Demo Day²⁶** – Competitors participate in a demo day event with a panel of expert reviewers and members of the public. Event details and the agenda are provided 30 days before the event.
4. **Selection** – The judge selects two winners, considering the written submission, the expert reviewer feedback, and the performance at the demo day.
5. **Announcement** – The prize administrator announces the winners at the demo day. After receiving the Go! Contest prize, winners can develop their solutions in accordance with the plan submitted in the Go! Contest.

6. WHAT TO SUBMIT

A complete submission for the Go! Contest must include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to software • Pitch and technical demonstration video (public) • Cover page content • Narrative that answers four questions about the <i>problem and solution, innovation, team, and plan</i> (including optional responses to questions for JEDI Contest consideration) • Summary PowerPoint slide (public) • Voucher work slide • Technical assistance request (public) • Evidence of credible customer(s) (mandatory) and letters of support (optional)
Demo Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go! Demo Day event

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

All documents must be uploaded as a PDF.

²⁶ This event may be held virtually. If circumstances allow for this event to be held in person, the decision will be made and communicated to competitors in advance of the scheduled demo day date.

Access to Software (PDF with instructions on how to access and test software)

Provide refined product access to the reviewers and the prize administrator for testing. Instructions should include:

- Hyperlinks to website(s) where software is located or online platform(s) where the software can be downloaded (e.g., GitHub). If software is available for both mobile and desktop use, provide instructions on how to access both versions.
- Written instructions provided to early users to facilitate testing the software.
- Any other necessary information to use and test the software (e.g., log-in credentials).

Note that the demonstration of software functionality should occur in the pitch and demo video, as well as during the demo day event.

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how judges evaluate and score your submission. Judges evaluate your submissions by agreeing or disagreeing with assigned statements on a 1–6 scale, as shown below. These statements are the criteria.

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

Note: This submission package is reviewed by solar industry and entrepreneurial professionals. Cumulatively, they represent decades of experience assessing novel ideas and solutions. However, their background may not be specifically in the problem you are solving. Transition quickly from general background into the details of your problem, solution, and plan.

Pitch and Demo Video Up to 6 minute pitch on your innovation, company, and refined product demonstration (public)

If you opted in for JEDI Contest consideration, add up to 1 minute to your pitch (7 minutes total)

Suggested content you provide	Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the real-world problem you are solving. • Describe your solution and why it is transformational as compared to existing solutions. • Explain the features of your refined product and how it works. Demonstrate its functionality and describe the user testing completed to date. • What progress has been made over the competition period? • What is the scale of the opportunity and what is your target market? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The video explains a compelling real-world problem and solution. • The video demonstrates a refined product for an exciting innovation. • The refined product has retired significant technical risk. • Progress has been demonstrated during the competition period. • The video identifies a reasonable target market and a path to making a significant impact on the U.S. solar industry. • The video shows a knowledgeable and skillful team.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are you and why do you have a competitive edge? • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barriers your solution addresses and why you will be successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The video describes a compelling solution to stated JEDI barrier(s), and the team has made progress toward their JEDI goals.
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Post your publicly accessible video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways, but do not focus on time-consuming activities that only improve production values (e.g., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques). Assistance from others with experience in this area may be helpful. Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you with creating your video.

Cover Page List basic information about your submission.
Template²⁷: <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources²⁸>

- Project name
- Innovation’s tagline (e.g., your mission in a few words)
- Link to your online pitch video
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Keywords that best describe your solution (e.g., financing, grid integration, machine learning)
- Your city and state and 9-digit zip code
- The partner(s), affiliate(s), and Connector(s)²⁹ who significantly helped you³⁰ advance your solution and the major items they helped with (if applicable).
- Whether you would like to compete in the JEDI Contest.

You should answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 2,500 words, or 3,000 words if you opted in for JEDI Contest consideration**, not including captions, figures/graphs, or references. **A word count must be included** at the end of your submission (see template for details). You may also include **up to five supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

²⁷ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

²⁸ **Important:** Templates from the Set! competition have been updated for Go!.

²⁹ See description of Connector in [Section I.5](#).

³⁰ Remember that you can incentivize Connectors help by agreeing to identify them here (up to 3) to receive a cash reward for that help, regardless of if you win the Go! competition. See the description of Recognition Rewards in [Section I.5](#) and the [Connector Guidelines](#) for details.

Narrative (PDF)

Max 2,500/3,000 Words and 5 Supporting Images or Figures

Template³¹ : <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>

Question 1: *Problem & Solution* – What is the problem, and how are you solving it?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the problem, being specific to the problem space that your innovation addresses³² and why existing solutions are inadequate.
- Describe your innovation and how it is better than existing products or emerging solutions. Show how you know this, using evidence-based validation (e.g., feedback from user testing and interviews with experts).
- Describe your innovation’s unique value propositions and how these lead to a sustainable business with paying customers.
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe the specific JEDI barrier(s) your solution addresses, why existing solutions are inadequate, and how you validated your assumptions.

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- The competitor quantifies a critical problem, and their assessment of current solutions shows a comprehensive understanding of the problem-solution space.
- The solution represents an innovative approach built on reasonable assumptions, a valid technical foundation, and lessons learned from experience gained.
- The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution, which will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers.
- [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitor quantifies a critical JEDI problem and plans to develop a compelling solution to expand solar access in underserved communities.

Question 2: *Innovation* – What progress have you made to prove your solution will be successful?

Suggested content you provide

- Describe the current state of development of your refined product, its technical specifications, and sufficient underlying details on how it works, including data requirements and status on acquiring the necessary data, to facilitate external evaluation of the performance claims you make.³³

Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale

- Sufficient technical detail was provided to understand the underlying principles of operation of the innovation.
- The refined product is grounded in real-world assumptions and resolves critical technical and commercial risks.

³¹ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own. The provided template has been updated from the Set! competition.

³² Avoid providing general background on the rapid growth of the solar industry or other high-level trends with which the reviewers are well versed.

³³ Avoid characterizing core innovations as proprietary and thus preventing independent evaluation by the expert judges. It is the intent of the prize administrator that, unless otherwise noted, no parts of the submitted materials be released to the public (see [Appendix 1](#) for more details).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the progress made over the contest period and highlight key engagements, relationships, and milestones. • Describe how you have validated your technical performance assumptions. • Describe all user testing and feedback received on the refined product, why it is important, and changes you made as a result of that feedback. • Describe your business model, cost model, and potential price points. • Describe your current customers, customer pipeline, and strategy to acquire additional customers. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Describe how your innovation expands solar access in underserved communities and why your business model is sustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A considerable amount of high-quality effort was put into building a refined product and advancing the innovation. • User testing was effectively utilized to uncover key insights and provide relevant feedback on the refined product. • The assumptions around the business model and pricing are reasonable, achievable, and competitive. • The current customers are credible and the team is well positioned to grow the customer base. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The innovation shows strong potential to expand solar access in underserved communities and support the growth of a sustainable business.
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Question 3: *Team* – What qualities give you a competitive edge, and how have you grown?

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your team and how it has evolved, highlighting the diversity, knowledge, and skills that make the team uniquely capable of achieving success. • Describe how you identified any strategic partner(s) and discuss the rationale behind working with this partner versus others (if applicable). • Explain why winning the Go! Contest will substantively change the likelihood of your success. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] What makes your team uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities? 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team’s drive, diversity, knowledge, and complementary skill sets provide a strong competitive edge toward realizing this solution in the near future. • Any strategic partners are highly relevant to the identified path to market (if applicable). • Winning the Go! Contest significantly increases the team’s chances of creating a viable business based on this solution. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The team is uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities.
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Question 4: *Plan* – What is your plan to achieve your goals?

<p>Suggested content you provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the previous contest goals and describe the actual outcomes. Define goals 	<p>Each statement is scored on a 1–6 scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competitors are successfully meeting prior goals and demonstrating continued
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<p>for the next 90, 180, and 365 days (see special instructions below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the discrete improvements in functionality to the refined product you plan to implement over the next 90 to 180 days • Provide a high-level budget plan to meet your goals for the next 180 days, including how you will leverage program resources—specifically the voucher funds, members of the American-Made Network, or other entities. • Describe risks to the development plan and mitigation strategies (e.g. data requirements and plans to acquire the necessary data). • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] Report out on progress with respect to your previously submitted Go! Contest JEDI goals, and update your forward-looking JEDI goals for the next 90, 180, and 365 days. 	<p>critical progress toward testing and validating the functionality and market demand of this innovation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stated 90- and 180-day goals are ambitious and risk-reducing, and they show a commitment to an accelerated solution development cycle. • The competitors' approach to complete their proposed plan is well-reasoned and makes good use of the program resources available to them (such as national laboratories and the American-Made Network). • Sufficient risks to the development plan have been identified and reasonable risk mitigation strategies have been described. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] The competitors are successfully meeting prior JEDI goals, and the updated JEDI goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.
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Reviewer Recommendation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Statement is scored as a 1 or 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a Go! Contest Prize. • [Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration] This innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a JEDI Contest prize.

Special instructions for Question 4

- Use only specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) outcome-based goals, not activity-based, so that a neutral third-party can validate them (if possible).
 - For example: Demonstrate a definitive achievement of progress (e.g., “X letters of interest signed” or “achieve Y second run time”); do **not** describe how you spent your time (e.g., “provide a report,” “talk to customers,” or “perform tests”).
- SMART goals for the next 90 and 180 days should include demonstrating continued product refinement and increasing numbers of customers.
- In defining your SMART goals, include quantified, risk-reducing, meaningful, practical, and testable interim milestones.

- SMART goals should include assessment and feedback from many relevant stakeholders (e.g., possible investors, customers, and experts in the solution space, and entities that would be the eventual customers or end users of the product.).
- Members of the American-Made Network may be able to help you to formulate your SMART goals.

Submission Summary Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF will be made public)

Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary, which contains technically specific details but can be understood by most people. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

Voucher Work Slide (a PowerPoint slide as a PDF)

Template: <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/resources>

Using the Voucher Work Slide template, describe how you will use your voucher funds, including the entities you plan to engage and what they will do with the voucher funds.

Technical Assistance Request (Export from American Made Network Matching Tool)

Upload the Technical Assistance Request generated from the [American-Made Network Matching Tool](#). In the Matching Tool, you can identify the areas where you need assistance to realize your solution. The tool considers the unique capabilities that the national laboratories, a private facility, and/or members of the American-Made Network could provide to you to resolve these barriers. Your request is then made broadly available through the tool, so members of the American-Made Network can understand your needs and assist you, with the potential to earn Recognition Rewards for that assistance.

Mandatory Evidence of Credible Customer(s) and Optional Letters of Support (as a PDF)

Competitors must submit evidence of credible customer(s) in the form of executed customer agreements, payment receipts, or other means. Credible customers in this context are customers who are motivated to engage with the competitor purely for financial reasons due to their interest in solar energy. Credible customers do not have personal, familial, or social ties to competitors. DOE and NREL do not provide a preliminary review of the evidence. Competitors should submit the strongest possible documentation to meet this requirement, including evidence of monetary transaction. For more information on eligibility requirements see [Section I.7](#).

Given the diversity of software solutions, there is flexibility in the number of paying customers needed to validate the business model. For example, a business-to-business software with utility customers may need only a small number of customers to prove its value, whereas a business-to-consumer software would need a much larger number of customers.

Demo Day Event³⁴

You are required to participate in a demo day event with a panel of reviewers that may involve a pitch, a closed-door question-and-answer session, and/or a technical demonstration. Reviewers review and score your submitted material before the demo day and then, based on your demo day performance and deliberation with the judge, they finalize their recommendations for winners on the demo day. At least one representative from each competing team must be present at the demo day to be considered for a Go! Prize.

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

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

7. HOW WE SCORE

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers read, score, and comment on each submission. Each bullet listed in the review criteria under the video submission and the narrative questions receives a score from 1 to 6. The bullets have equal weight, so questions that have more review criteria bullets have a greater influence on the final score. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the total sum of the scores for all the bullets. All reviewers' scores are then averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final prize judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners.
 - Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this contest; or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.

Note: Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors to continue to improve and iterate on their submissions. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- Interviews: The prize administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the Go! Contest competitors. Interviews would be held prior to the

³⁴ This event may be held virtually. If circumstances allow for this event to be held in person, the decision will be made and communicated to competitors in advance of the scheduled demo day date. If it is held in person, competitors are required to organize their own travel and accommodations to participate in the demo day.

announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the judge may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The judge's final determination of winners take reviewer scores, team performance on the demo day, reviewer deliberation, interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix 1](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

8. FIND HELP

Visit <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/> to review and contact the members of the American-Made Network who have signed up to help you succeed.

9. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

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

V. APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. UNIVERSAL CONTEST REQUIREMENTS

Your submission for the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests is subject to following terms and conditions:

- If any competing team member is actively receiving funding from SETO at the Ready! submission deadline, SETO will review both any potential prize awards as well as other 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 V.14](#)).
- Competitors who won any contest in a previous round of the American-Made Solar Prize are discouraged from submitting the same or similar idea to a future round of the Prize.
- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online at <http://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software> before the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
- The video submission, summary slide, and technical assistance request will be made public.
- The cover page, narrative, and letters of commitment/support are not intended to be made public; however, see [Section V.11](#) regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- You agree to release your submission video under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).
- You must include all the required submission's 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.
- Competitors will be disqualified if during any engagement with the American-Made Solar Prize, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the prize 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 any of the contests described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you

and DOE and is 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 prize administrator, when feasible, may give competitors an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

2. VOUCHERS AND LABORATORY MATCHING

The prize administrator will coordinate with the other DOE national laboratories to ensure that the Technical Assistance Requests (TARs) are utilized to match laboratory expertise to the needs of the competitors. Set! Contest winners will include their planned use of voucher funds as a part of their Go! Contest submission. Winners of the Go! Contest will then be able to negotiate specifics with their laboratory partner and quickly begin voucher work.

Although winners can choose where they spend their voucher funding, all of voucher funds must be spent at a national laboratory. When working with a national laboratory, the funds will be provided directly to the laboratory on behalf of the winners to conduct a mutually-agreed-on scope-of-work between the laboratory and the winners. Voucher funds may not be redeemed for cash or transferred.

Further details about the voucher process are provided in the [voucher guideline](#).

3. VERIFICATION FOR PAYMENTS

The prize administrator verifies the identity and the role of a participant potentially qualified to receive the prizes. Receiving a prize payment is contingent upon fulfilling all requirements contained herein. The prize administrator notifies 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 National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Request for ACH Banking Information form and a completed W9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf>). At the sole discretion of the prize administrator, a winning competitor will be disqualified from the competition and receive no prize funds if: (i) the person/entity cannot be contacted; (ii) the person/entity fails to sign and return the required documentation within the required time period; (iii) the notification is returned as undeliverable; or (iv) the submission or person/entity is disqualified for any other reason.

4. TEAMS AND SINGLE-ENTITY AWARDS

The prize administrator will award a single dollar amount to the designated primary submitter, whether consisting of a single or multiple entities. The primary submitter is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among its member competitors as they deem appropriate.

5. SUBMISSION RIGHTS

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

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the prize administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest, a license to display publicly and use the parts of the submission that are designated as “public” for government purpose. This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the prize administrator’s or HeroX’s applications, on the contest website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and the inclusion of the submission in any other media, worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the prize administrator, and reviewers for purposes of the contests, including, but not limited to, screening and evaluation purposes. The prize administrator and any third parties acting on their behalf will also have the right to publicize the competitors’ names and, as applicable, the names of competitors’ team members and organizations, which participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

6. COPYRIGHT

By entering, 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.

7. 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 Prize 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.

8. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

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

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

address. Competitors and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

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

9. PUBLICITY

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

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

10. 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 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).

11. RECORDS RETENTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

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

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

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

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

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

- The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: “May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure.”
- In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

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

12. 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.

13. GENERAL CONDITIONS

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

Although DOE indicates in the Ready!, Set!, Go!, and JEDI Contests that it will select up to several winners for each contest, DOE reserves the right to only select competitors that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no competitors are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no competitors to be winners and will award no prize money.

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

14. PROGRAM POLICY FACTORS

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

- Geographic diversity and potential economic impact of projects in a variety of solar markets
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources continue to be nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission generally
- The degree to which the submission exhibits technological or programmatic diversity when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio and other competitors
- The level of industry involvement and demonstrated ability to accelerate commercialization and overcome key market barriers
- The degree to which the submission is likely to lead to increased employment and manufacturing in the United States or provide other economic benefit to U.S. taxpayers
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate transformational technological, financial, or workforce advances in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical or financial uncertainty
- The degree to which the submission supports complementary DOE 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 underserved communities
- The degree to which the submission enables new and expanding market segments
- Whether the project promotes increased coordination with nongovernmental entities for the demonstration of technologies and research applications to facilitate technology transfer.

15. 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 staff. Ultimate decision-making authority regarding contest matters rests with the Director of SETO.

Connector or Connector Organization means an entity that seeks to support the efforts of the competitors. These must be U.S.-based organizations that have the capacity to connect competitors to mentoring, business resources, and/or introduce them to possible sources of funding. This definition is intentionally broad so that many different types of entities are able to participate. Connectors will be earning recognition rewards based upon their support of the competitors. Further details can be found at: <https://network.americanmadechallenges.org/>.

Power Connector means a subset of Connectors that receive contracts from the Alliance for Sustainable Energy to play a more substantial role in the competition and receive funds to expand and amplify the American-Made Challenges: Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track. Not only will these stakeholders work to identify talent and support participants in the Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests, they will partner with NREL to envision and execute a long-term sustainable strategy for scaling the American-Made Challenges.

Voucher Funding – Vouchers are part of the Prizes for the Go! Contest. The funds will be provided directly to the national laboratory on behalf of the winner to conduct a mutually agreed upon scope of work between the laboratory and the winner. For further information, please see: https://americanmadechallenges.org/solarprize/docs/vouchers/r5/American-Made_Solar_Prize_Voucher_Guidelines_Software.pdf.

VI. APPENDIX 2: FOREIGN WORK REQUIREMENT

Waiver

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

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

Waiver Criteria

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

Content for Waiver Request

A waiver request must include the following information:

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

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