



Energizing Rural Communities Prize

Informational Webinar

March 21, 2023



Housekeeping

This webinar is being recorded and will be made available later.

Questions:

- There will be time for a Q&A session at the end of the presentation
- You can type questions in the chat at any time.

Technical Issues:

If you experience technical issues, please check your audio settings under the “Audio” tab

Agenda

1. DOE/OCED/ERA
2. The Energizing Rural Communities Prize
3. Submission Package
4. Scoring Criteria
5. Competitor Support
6. Next Steps
7. Q&A

Overview



Background: DOE, OCED, and ERA

Within DOE, the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED)'s mission is to **deliver clean energy demonstration projects** at scale in partnership with the private sector **to accelerate deployment, market adoption, and the equitable transition to a decarbonized energy system.**

At OCED, the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) Program is designed to provide financial assistance to improve, in **rural or remote areas of the United States¹**, the resilience, safety, reliability, and availability of energy and environmental protection from adverse impacts of energy generation.

Through workshops and community input, ERA has found that two of the biggest barriers to improving energy systems in rural or remote areas are developing the necessary **partnerships** and securing **financing**.

¹A city, town, or unincorporated area that has a population of not more than 10,000 inhabitants

The Justice40 Initiative

White House Executive Order 14008 directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to disadvantaged communities



Federal investments

- Clean energy
- Energy efficiency
- Clean transit
- Affordable and sustainable housing
- Training and workforce development
- Remediation + reduction of legacy pollution
- Development of clean water infrastructure



DOE J40 priority benefits

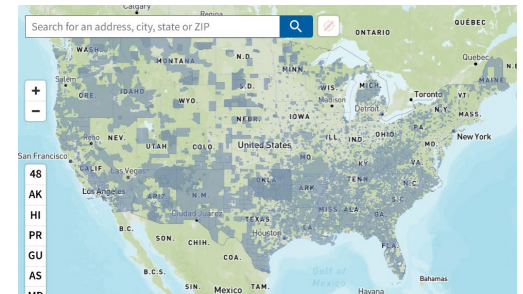
In disadvantaged communities:

- Decrease energy burden
- Decrease environmental exposure/burdens
- Increase parity in clean energy access
- Increase access to low-cost capital
- Increase clean energy enterprise creation
- Increase clean energy job pipeline/training
- Increase energy resiliency
- Increase energy democracy



Disadvantaged communities

- Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/>
- DOE's Disadvantaged Communities Reporter <https://energyjustice.egs.anl.gov/>



Primary Beneficiary Requirement

Applications must identify at least one area in the United States (including U.S. territories) with a population of not more than 10,000 (using 2020 Census Bureau figures) that benefits from the proposal.

The identified area must be either: (a) a city, town, or other incorporated municipality, or (b) a Census Designated Place or similarly discreet and identifiable community that is not located within an incorporated municipality.

The population of the primary beneficiary is determined by an individual zip code and name of city, town, incorporated municipality, Census Designated Place, or other unincorporated area

See [Appendix B of the Official Rules Document](#) for additional information on this requirement.

Example Scenarios

If our proposed project is meant to benefit our city which has a population of under 10,000 inhabitants, but we are located in a county that covers a larger area with more than 10,000 inhabitants, are we still eligible?

Yes. The identified area must be either: (a) a city, town, or other incorporated municipality, or (b) a Census Designated Place or similarly discreet and identifiable community that is not located within an incorporated municipality. The population of the primary beneficiary is determined by an individual zip code and name of city, town, incorporated municipality, Census Designated Place, or other unincorporated area.

Could multiple rural communities partner together if the total population benefiting from the project ends up being over 10,000 inhabitants?

Yes. The population requirement is based on the number of inhabitants in individual cities, towns, incorporated municipalities, Census Designated Places, or other unincorporated areas. There is no limit on the cumulative total of people benefiting from a project.

Could multiple communities partner together if some of the communities have a population greater than 10,000 inhabitants?

Yes. As long as the competitor identifies a rural or remote area that benefits from the proposal, it is okay if additional communities benefit, even if those communities do not meet the definition of “rural or remote area” as defined in the [Official Rules Document](#).

New Prize

Energizing Rural
Communities Prize





What is the Energizing Rural Communities Prize?

The \$15 million Energizing Rural Communities Prize challenges individuals and organizations to **develop partnership plans or innovative financing strategies to help rural or remote communities improve their energy systems and advance clean energy demonstration projects in rural or remote areas.**

The term “rural or remote area” is defined as a city, town, municipality, or unincorporated area that has a population of not more than 10,000 inhabitants.

This prize:

- Contains **two** submission tracks – **PARTNER** and **FINANCE**
- Is made of **two** phases – **Phase One** and **Phase Two**
- Will award up to **\$15M in cash prizes and in-kind assistance**
- Will select up to **90 winners** in Phase One
 - Up to **60** in PARTNER and up to **30** in FINANCE



Prize Goals

This prize seeks to:

- Demonstrate innovative and replicable partnership and financial mechanisms that act as initial steps toward clean energy projects.
- Better prepare rural or remote communities to secure funding for clean energy projects, either through future ERA funding opportunities or other public or private funding sources.
- Identify, understand, and further develop activities that prepare communities to complete clean energy projects.
- Build trust and strengthen the networks between and within rural and remote communities in support of energy improvements aligned with DOE's Justice40 priorities.

Potential Competitors

- **Non-federal-government entities** such as municipalities, states, counties, federally recognized tribal governments, territories, public housing authorities, and/or regional planning organizations.
- **Indian Tribes** which includes Alaska Native Regional Corporations and Village Corporations, Intertribal Organizations, and Tribal Energy Development Organizations.
- **Community-based organizations (CBOs)** that interface with utilities, trade organizations (i.e., regional chapter of NRECA, APPA).
- **Community-based funding organizations** such as green banks, credit unions, or community development financial institutions (CDFIs).
- **Nonprofit or for-profit organizations** such as utilities, energy upgrade service providers, project developers, unions, faith-based organizations, and other entities. Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States.
- **Academic institutions and student groups.** Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
- **Individuals** such as local entrepreneurs and technology developers.

Energizing Rural Communities Prize TIMELINE

The Energizing Rural Communities Prize consists of two tracks, both following the same phased timeline:

Partner Track

\$10M Prize Pool

Finance Track

\$5M Prize Pool

PHASE

1

Awards up to
\$100,000

March 1, 2023

Phase 1 Opens
*Competitors develop and submit
a partnership or finance plan*

May 24, 2023

Phase 1 Closes

July 2023

Winner Announcements

PHASE

2

Awards up to
\$200,000

July 2023

Phase 2 Opens*
*Phase 1 winners implement their
partnership or finance plan*

July 2024

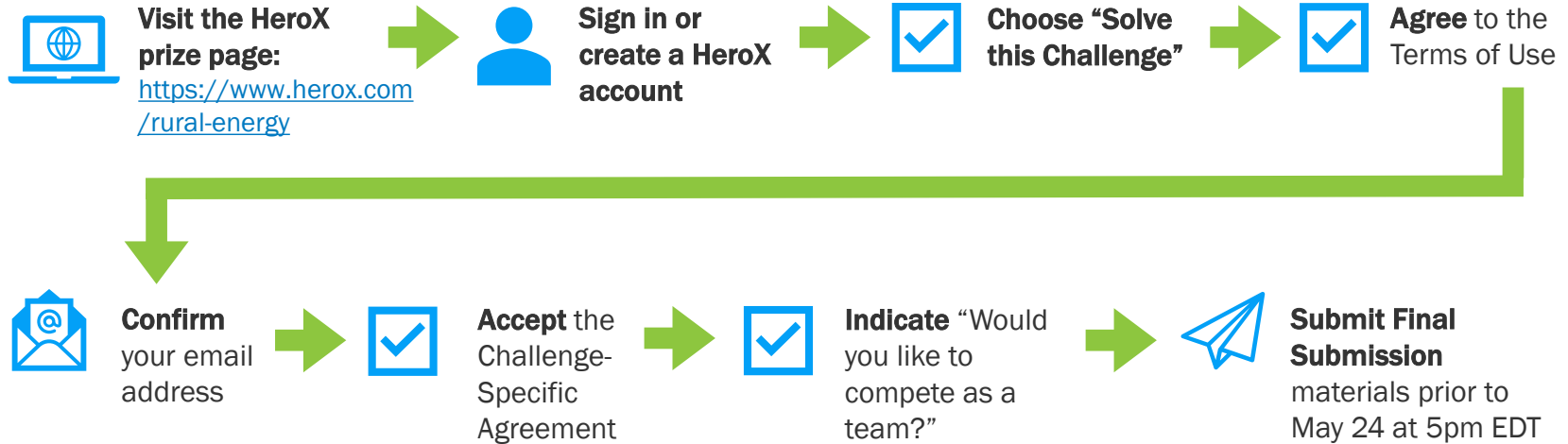
Phase 2 Closes

August 2024

Winner Announcements

**Phase 2 is only open to Phase 1 winners within each track.
All dates subject to change.*

Register and Compete



Competitors may submit multiple applications to both tracks, but the Prize Administrator will only accept and review one submission per track per community served.

Power Connector Support: Phase One

- Community Development through Network Outreach and One-on-One Engagements
- Virtual Networking Events for Teambuilding
- [Office Hour Support](#): Dedicated time slots to provide feedback on in-process applications





What to Submit: Phase One

PARTNER Track

- Cover Page
- Summary Slide
- Three-Minute Video Pitch
- Partnership Plan
- Evidence of Commitment

FINANCE Track

- Cover Page
- Summary Slide
- Three-Minute Video Pitch
- Project Plan
- Financial Statement

Reviewing and Scoring Process

1. A qualified panel of 3-5 multidisciplinary reviewers, comprising subject matter experts from DOE, national labs, academia, and private industries, score final submissions
2. The rules document provides details on scoring statements
3. Reviewers use 6-point scale to evaluate each statement
4. Scores from individual reviewers summed for all scoring statements.
5. The preliminary scores for all teams yield a preliminary ranking of teams.
6. The prize administration team convenes to review preliminary scores, discuss and agree upon final scores, and recommend the winners to DOE leadership
7. This recommendation will provide the basis for DOE to act as the final judge and determine the winners.

Scoring

Criterion #: Title

Suggested Content Competitor Provides

- Suggestion 1...
- Suggestion 2...
-etc.

Each Statement Scored on a 1–6 Scale

- Scoring Statement 1...
- Scoring Statement 2...
-etc.

Submissions will be scored on how well they address scoring statements:

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

PARTNER Track

Facilitate new or existing partnerships that enable development of clean energy projects in rural or remote communities. Successful competitors will create connections that lead to collaborative efforts for the development of clean energy projects in rural or remote communities. Collaborative efforts could include providing engineering services to advance project concepts, encouraging multiple communities to aggregate similar energy projects to unlock economies of scale, or facilitating equipment acquisition.

Formation of partnerships that advance development of clean energy projects in rural or remote areas.

At the conclusion of this prize, targeted outcomes include:

- Project permitting
- Preliminary engineering studies or designs
- Renewable energy resource assessments
- Utility analysis or offtake agreements
- Hiring and building a team to complete the project
- Co-signed memorandum of understanding between the partnering organizations that outlines what they aim to achieve
- Creation of a new multi-stakeholder organization
- Other outcomes critical to improving clean energy deployment in rural or remote communities.

PARTNER Track Scoring Criteria



Partnership Plan and Project Plan*:

1. Criterion 1: Relevant Experience
2. Criterion 2: Proposed Partnership Activities
3. Criterion 3: Expected Outcomes, Impacts, and Success Metrics
4. Criterion 4: Budget, Staff, and Other Resources
5. Criterion 5: Strategy for Achieving Community Energy Goals After Completion of the Prize

*Note that the scored statements vary by track.

FINANCE Track

Connect communities to capital for current or future clean energy projects by developing innovative and functional business models, new approaches to financing clean energy projects, the expansion of existing business models to new rural and remote areas, and innovative ways to leverage other fiscal incentives such as tax credits.

Improve access to capital for clean energy projects in rural or remote areas of the United States.

At the conclusion of this prize, targeted outcomes include:

- A **credit union** or a **green bank** starts to offer **loans** and other financial support for clean energy projects in one or more rural and remote communities.
- A **utility** launches a new **community solar** project and begins subscribing customers in a rural or remote community.
- A **financial institution** helps a **nonprofit organization** qualify clean energy projects for financing.
- A **project developer** demonstrates the feasibility of a unique financing model for a clean energy project in a rural or remote community.
- A financial institution develops resources explaining how rural electric cooperatives can incorporate **IRA tax credits** and incentives into a variety of clean energy projects in rural or remote communities.
- A **local or regional government** successfully attracts clean energy investment into a rural or remote community within its jurisdiction.
- A **rural electric cooperative** implements a plan to finance sustained operation and maintenance of an existing or new clean energy system.

FINANCE Track Scoring Criteria



Partnership Plan and Project Plan*:

1. Criterion 1: Relevant Experience
2. Criterion 2: Proposed Partnership Activities
3. Criterion 3: Expected Outcomes, Impacts, and Success Metrics
4. Criterion 4: Budget, Staff, and Other Resources
5. Criterion 5: Strategy for Achieving Community Energy Goals After Completion of the Prize

*Note that the scored statements vary by track.

Upcoming Webinars

**PARTNER Track Webinar: April 5, 2023, 2:00pm
MT/4:00pm ET:**

This one hour webinar will dive deeper into the PARTNER Track. [Register here.](#)

**FINANCE Track Webinar: April 6, 2023, 11:00am
MT/1:00pm ET,** This one hour webinar will dive deeper into the FINANCE Track. [Register here.](#)

Office Hour Support:

30-minute meetings to ask questions and/or get feedback on your application.

[Sign up for a time slot with CEBN.](#)

Sign up for a time slot with EFN.

Networking Events

These sessions will provide networking opportunities with other competitors and breakout groups focused on individual tracks.

March 30, 10:00am MT/12:00pm ET. [Register here.](#)

April 13, 9:00am MT/11:00am ET. [Register here.](#)

Next Steps

Recruit

Team members,
community partners,
local organizations

Register

Your team on
HeroX

Read

The rules to plan
your
participation

Connect

With Power
Connectors to put
together your plan

Design

Your plan and
submission materials
by 5/24/23



Thank you

AMERICAN
MADE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



OCED
Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations



Email: ruralenergyprize@nrel.gov



American Made: americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/rural-energy



HeroX Forum: www.herox.com/rural-energy

The Buildings Upgrade Prize (Buildings UP)

Launched in January 2023, Buildings UP is designed to rapidly scale energy efficiency and efficient electrification building upgrades in communities across the country. The prize is envisioned to consist of four phases over approximately five years.

Application support prizes available for new and under resourced teams.

Phase 1: Concept

- \$22M+ in Prizes to Teams + Technical Assistance
- Applications due by July 18, 2023
- Seeking 20–60 teams to join the “coopetition.”



www.heroX.com/buildingsUP

