Community Power Accelerator
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

AMERICAN MADE SOLAR PRIZE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Community Power Accelerator Prize Round 2 Rules: Accessing Capital To Deploy Equitable Community Solar

THESE RULES ARE EFFECTIVE JULY 2023

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is a **$10 million, three-phase prize** designed to fast-track the efforts of new, emerging, and expanding solar developers and co-developers to learn, participate in, and grow multiple successful community solar projects**.** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is launching Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize Round 2.

Through this prize, DOE seeks to increase the number of equitable community solar projects by providing:

- **Tools and resources** to connect developers with private sector project financing for community solar projects using a standardized process.
- **Training** to build understanding of the full cycle of community solar development, including site acquisition, community relations, customer acquisition, financing, costs, and the unique challenges and benefits of a community solar model.
- **Free consulting** services for competitors on the steps necessary to get a community solar project financed.
- **Coaching on expanding developers' solar customer markets** to include low- and moderate-income populations, disadvantaged communities, and local workforce development, as well as increased resilience to power outages and household savings to make community solar projects attractive to the widest range of customers possible.

By the end of the prize, competitors will be ready to engage with the Community Power Accelerator online platform,[1] which provides a place for competitors to shop their credit-ready projects around to verified project developers, investors, and philanthropic organizations.

1.1 Who Can Participate?

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is open to U.S. community solar developers, including new developers and experienced developers who are expanding their community solar operations.

The prize also welcomes solar co-developers, organizations who are partnering with a project developer, and other non-developer organizations, such as local governments, nonprofits, and community-based organizations, to apply. Examples of new developers include (but are not limited to):

- Community-based organizations (such as local community health organizations, community action agencies, community and economic development organizations, etc.) that have real estate portfolios and/or are in construction
- Multifamily affordable housing providers
- State, local, and municipal governments
- Intermediary organizations such as community development financial institutions (CDFIs)
- General contractors with roofing and/or electrical experience
- Businesses related to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDIs) and women- and minority-owned businesses

[1] The Community Power Accelerator brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition. This online platform will create a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connect them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding. More information about the accelerator can be found in Appendix 2 or on the accelerator website.

- Other large real estate holders that could be available for solar deployment

Non-developer organizations that wish to participate in the prize should partner with a solar/community solar developer to support their submission.
The prize is seeking organizations that have the desire and ambition to develop and finance a project portfolio of two or more projects that, in aggregate, total at least 1 MW_{DC} of community solar (not exceeding 5 MW_{DC} for a single facility) during the course of the prize. Additionally, the prize is seeking organizations that have the ambition to scale their community solar portfolio beyond the scope of the prize. All eligible competitors must be interested in developing projects that incorporate at least two of the following benefits:

- Low- to moderate-income (LMI) household access
- Greater household savings
- Increased resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership or other wealth-building opportunities
- Equitable workforce development.

These five benefits are the "meaningful benefits" of community solar.

Financial organizations, investors, and philanthropies are not eligible for this prize. However, these organizations are encouraged to sign up on the Community Power Accelerator Program website to support teams. Investors and philanthropic institutions that are interested in learning more about how they can get involved should visit the Community Power Accelerator Program website or email communitypower@nrel.gov.

Teams that plan to develop only a single community solar project are not eligible for this prize.

For additional information on eligibility, see Section 4.

1.2 Prize Phases and Prizes To Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize has three phases (Ready!, Set!, and Grow!), which are designed to build capacity and guide developers through the steps required for successful community solar project development and financing.

Phase 1 (Ready! Contest)

Cash Prize: $50,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 winning teams will be selected for a cash award of $50,000 each. Winning teams will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize. This phase invites new or expanding community solar developers to compete by completing:

1. The "Introduction to Community Solar," a self-paced course available by registering online at: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8C9B44s4UtQOX9s
2. The Phase 1 submission package, which includes:
    - A description of the organization and team
    - Details about the proposed community solar project portfolio (two or more projects that, in aggregate, total a minimum of 1 MW_{DC})
    - Information regarding underserved and disadvantaged community engagement and partnerships

- Details about how the developer plans to grow as a community solar developer and scale their portfolio both during the prize and afterward.
- Identification of at least two of the five meaningful benefits per project.

In Phase 1, teams will be asked to propose a portfolio of potential community solar projects to be developed and financed during Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the prize (January 2024 – January 2025). Eligible teams must submit a minimum portfolio of at least 2 projects that total, in aggregate, a minimum of 1MW_{DC}. Competitors may propose to develop and seek financing for more than two projects and 1 MW_{DC} during the course of the prize (January 2024–January 2025). Competitors who propose more than two projects and 1 MW_{DC} must, in Phase 2 and Phase 3, deliver a total portfolio equal to the same megawatt capacity as their initial Phase 1 proposal.

Portfolios that exceed the minimum requirements are desirable in Phase 1, but if a competitor's total portfolio capacity is larger than 1MW_{DC} competitors will be held to this commitment in Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Phase 2 (Set! Contest)

Cash Prize: $200,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 Phase 2 winners will be selected. Each winning team will receive a cash award of $200,000 and will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 3 of the prize. Phase 2 teams will participate in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab, a live, remote course designed to educate developers on community solar in disadvantaged communities. See Section 2.3 for more information.
Additionally, Phase 2 teams will have the opportunity to work directly with technical assistance coaches for free. Phase 2 teams may use this support to prepare their projects for investment via the Credit-Ready Workbook, which includes a list of rigorous project requirements that investors look for before they are willing to fund a project, including information about system size, site control and zoning, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs. Teams will use the Credit-Ready Workbook to create and refine digital project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator platform. Teams will also work with coaches to create an investor pitch deck (detailed in Section 6.6) to prepare for Phase 3.
Teams must win Phase 2 to participate in Phase 3.

DOE anticipates that completing the Learning Lab Course and the Credit-Ready Workbook will require significant time and effort. The $200,000 prize awarded to each winning competitor is intended to help defray the expenditure of resources required to complete the Credit-Ready Workbook and to ensure that a staff member can participate in the Learning Lab.

Phase 3 (Grow! Contest)

Cash Prize: $150,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 Phase 3 teams (winners of Phase 2) will be selected as Phase 3 winners, and each will receive a cash prize of $150,000. Phase 3 teams will begin to engage fully on the Community Power Accelerator platform—an online meeting place for community solar developers and investors—to shop their community solar projects with investors and philanthropic organizations. Using the Community Power Accelerator platform, competitors will secure investment commitments from investors and philanthropic organizations for a community solar portfolio of at least two projects (at least 1 MW_{DC}); each of these projects must include at least two of the five meaningful benefits.

To be eligible for an award, competitors must secure commitments for 100% funding for their portfolio via the Community Power Accelerator platform or another funding source.
Phase 3 is expected to include a pitch or networking event where winning teams will be invited to connect with interested investors and philanthropies about their organization, team, and portfolio of projects.

Rules for Phase 3 of Round 2 are anticipated to be published in August 2023.

1.3 Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	July 14, 2023
Informational Webinars	August 8 and September 19
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	October 4, 2023, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	December 2023/January 2024
Phase 2 Opens	January 2024
Phase 2 Learning Lab Training Course	January 25–March 28, 2024, on Thursdays from 1–2:30 p.m. Eastern
Phase 2 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than July 31, 2024, at 5 p.m. ET. Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either: • May 30, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET • July 31, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. If a team submits by the May 30 deadline and their submission is not selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the July 31 submission deadline. The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision **approximately 1 month following the Phase 2 submission deadline to which they responded**.
Phase 2 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	June–August 2024 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Opens	July 2024 (anticipated)
Investor Pitch/Networking Event (Virtual or In-Person)	Fall 2024 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Submission Deadline	January 2025 (anticipated)
Phase 3 Winner Announcement	February/March 2025 (anticipated)

2. Background

The White House has set a goal to achieve a decarbonized electricity system by 2035 and a decarbonized energy sector by 2050. To ensure an equitable clean energy transition, the White House also announced the Justice40 Initiative,[2] which directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including clean energy investments—to flow to disadvantaged communities.[3] Community solar will play a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

Recently, the U.S. government passed into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which is aimed at increasing energy production and accelerating energy innovation at home. It is expected that some projects developed by participants in the Community Power Accelerator Prize may be able to take advantage of IRA tax credits and other project funding.[4]

2.1 What is Community Solar?

Community solar[5] is defined by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area. The community solar model can uniquely allow the benefits of the development to go toward communities that have traditionally been left out of the transition to solar energy.

There are many different models for community solar, including community solar projects that are:

- Developed, owned, and administered by a utility
- Developed and administered by private, third-party developers
- Led, owned, and managed directly by subscribers, nonprofits, and community members.

2.2 Community Solar Meaningful Benefits

One of the key goals of the Community Power Accelerator Prize is to support and grow a robust ecosystem of community solar project developers that incorporate meaningful benefits into projects across the United States. These benefits include low- and moderate-income household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development.

These Five Meaningful Benefits that may be included in community solar projects can help build consumer trust and ensure that all U.S. households have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the clean energy transition.

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[2] To learn more, visit the White House Justice40 Initiative website. See also Section 223 of Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.

[3] The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as census tract), or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for disadvantaged communities has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2); energy burden (5); environmental and climate hazards (10); vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).

[4] To learn more about the IRA, visit: https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/IRA-Energy-Summary_web.pdf.

[5] To learn more about community solar, visit: Community Solar Basics | Department of Energy.

Through the Community Power Accelerator Prize, DOE seeks to encourage community solar projects that provide **at least two** of the following Five Meaningful Benefits to subscribers and their communities:

LMI Household Access[6]	Projects include a minimum of 50% of subscribers from low- to moderate-income (LMI) households.
Greater Household Savings	Projects provide a reduction of a minimum of 20% in annual electricity bills and/or provide financial credits for all residential subscribers to a project.
Resilience and Grid Benefits	Projects include the capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage and/or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions.
Community Ownership	Projects include community ownership of, or equity in, project assets, which may include other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements and tax equity investment models.
Equitable Workforce Development	Projects support community workforce development by advancing high-wage opportunities, reducing income disparities across demographic groups, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment and pathways to union membership. Projects also build trust and strengthen relationships with businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDIs).[7]

2.3 Community Solar Learning Lab and Credit-Ready Workbook

In Phase 2, winning teams from Phase 1 will have the opportunity to participate for free in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course hosted by the University of New Hampshire. The course will deliver practical information on how to develop community solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. This intensive, live, remote course is instructor-led and features guest lecturers and expert speakers. To win Phase 2, Phase 1 winners will be required to participate in and pass this course starting **January 25, 2024.**

Throughout the Learning Lab Course, Phase 2 teams will work to complete the Credit-Ready Workbook. The workbook includes a list of rigorous project requirements that investors look for before they are willing to fund a project, including information about system size, site control and zoning, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs. The workbook was developed in collaboration with over 40 financial institutions familiar with solar lending and tax equity, including commercial banks, community development financial institutions (CDFIs), green banks, credit unions, private investors, and developers. Investors that sign up to participate in the Community Power Accelerator platform are specifically

[6] See Key Terms for a definition of LMI household access.
[7] A "socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) demographics-related business" is a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see Key Terms.

interested in funding community solar projects and have agreed to consider funding projects that use the Credit-Ready Workbook.

Once participants have completed all of the assignments in the Learning Lab Course, they will have a complete set of information to present a project to investors for underwriting.

3. Prizes To Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize will award up to $10 million in cash prizes to winning teams in the timeframe shown below. In addition, teams may also receive nonmonetary recognition. DOE reserves the right to increase cash awards pending available funds.

Prize Phase	Duration	Anticipated Number of Awards	Dollar Amounts
Phase 1: Ready!	3 months	Up to 25	$50,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $1,250,000)
Phase 2: Set!	4–7 months (anticipated)	Up to 25	$200,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $5,000,000)
Phase 3: Grow!	4–7 months (anticipated)	Up to 25	$150,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $3,750,000)

4. Eligibility Requirements

Competitors in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, competitors certify that they are in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification during a screening process and could result in an eligibility determination before awards are announced and payments are disbursed.
Competitors are defined as individual entities (private, public, nonprofit, community-based, etc.) that are new community solar project developers, co-developers, or existing developers that are expanding operations and have concrete plans to develop a portfolio of equitable community solar projects, each with at least two of the five meaningful benefits discussed in Section 2.2.

DOE may conduct a review, using government resources, of the competitor and project personnel for foreign interference. The risk review may result in the submission being deemed ineligible in the prize competition. This risk review, and the potential determination of ineligibility, can occur at any time during the prize competition. The results of a risk review are not appealable.

4.1 Competitor Eligibility Requirements

Competitors participating in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must meet the following requirements:

1. Competitors must be a U.S. legal entity and are responsible for complying with all the rules of this prize challenge, including working with DOE and its prize administrator, submitting all required materials, and complying with all guidance and restrictions.
2. Projects must be based in the United States or in U.S. territories.
3. Entities must be able to receive payments that are legally made from the U.S. government in U.S. dollars.
4. Competitors that plan to develop only a single community solar project are not eligible for this prize.
5. To receive prize money, competitors must be a member of the National Community Solar Partnership. Register for free to join the Partnership here. More information can be found here.
6. Community solar projects must meet the DOE definition of community solar, which is "a solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups."
7. The proposed projects must provide at least 40% of the power generated to residential customers; none of the projects can exclusively serve a single entity.
8. As part of teams' submission to this prize, teams will be required to sign the following statement:

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

9. Organizations that have already completed the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab are eligible to compete in Phase 1, and, if selected for Phase 2, they will not be required to retake the

course if they can show their Learning Lab badge as proof of completion and meet the other eligibility criteria.

10. Organizations that have already completed and passed the Introduction to Community Solar course within the past year will not be required to retake the course for Phase 1. All teams will be required to provide the email used to register for the course as well as the date of completion.
11. Organizations that have previously won Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize are not eligible to compete.
12. Although participation in this prize does not require competitors to have any competition-specific insurance, developers may be required to prove appropriate insurance coverage to receive financing.
13. Additional eligibility requirements can be found in Section A.12.

4.2 Number of Submission Packages Allowed

Only one submission per lead entity is allowed. If multiple organizations apply as a team, monetary prizes will be delivered only to the lead entity identified in the team's submission. Organizations may act as a lead entity only for a single submission but may also support multiple submissions as non-lead entities, if desired. In addition, only one individual from each winning Phase 1 submission will be allowed to participate in the Phase 2 Learning Lab.

All submissions must have a unique set of projects that make up their proposed portfolio of community solar projects. A single proposed project cannot be counted by multiple teams and may only appear once in any of the proposed portfolios of all teams.

4.3 Program Goal Requirements

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. If any of the following are not true for your submission, your submission will not be reviewed and will not be awarded.

- The competitor submission represents a community solar power portfolio of projects with the intent to develop a minimum of 1 MW_{DC} (not exceeding 5 MW_{DC} for a single facility) of community solar projects[8] in the United States or in U.S. territories.
- Each project within the submitted portfolio the competitor must describe how it will include **at least two**[9] of the Five Meaningful Benefits: (1) ≥50% low- and moderate-income household access, (2) greater household savings (≥20%), (3) increased resilience and grid benefits, (4) community ownership, and (5) equitable workforce development.
- At the time of Phase 2 awards, the project must be in a pre-construction state to ensure that at least two meaningful benefits are incorporated into the final project before construction begins.
- The benefits realized by the project are not dependent on pending legislation or regulation.

[8] DOE defines community solar as any solar project or purchasing program within a geographic area in which the benefits of the project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.

[9] Individual projects within a portfolio do not all need to offer the same meaningful benefits. For example, Project A may provide LMI household access and greater household savings, and Project B may provide increased resilience and grid benefits and community ownership.

5. Phase 1: Ready! Contest Rules

Ready! Contest Prizes
• Up to 25 awards • Each Phase 1 winner will receive a $50,000 cash prize • Phase 1 winners must designate a single individual to participate in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab (required for Phase 2: Set! award) • All Phase 1 winners will receive direct technical assistance mentorship and coaching.

5.1 Introduction

The Phase 1: Ready! contest is the first in this three-contest series and has a total of $1,250,000 in cash prizes.

Below are the rules for the Phase 1: Ready! contest. Phase 1 is open to all eligible teams (see Section 4).

5.2 Phase 1: Ready! Goal

Phase 1 is seeking new or expanding community solar developers with a high potential of developing at least 1 MW_{DC} of community solar projects (not exceeding 5 MW_{DC} at a single facility) that include at least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits each.

The goal of Phase 1: Ready! is to recognize successful new and expanding community solar project developers as they prepare and begin to execute community solar project development (e.g., pre-development activities and project financing).

5.3 Phase 1: Ready! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	July 14, 2024
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	October 4, 2023, 5pm E.T.
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	December 2023/January 2024 (anticipated)

5.4 Phase 1 Prize Process

1. **Preparation, Activation, and Submission**: Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 1: Ready! contest.

   To compete in Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize, teams must complete the Introduction to Community Solar self-paced course (including all required videos, readings, quizzes, and the final self-assessment exercise) and upload to HeroX the required Phase 1 submission materials, including a written narrative describing the proposed project portfolio (minimum 1 MW_{DC}), the organization and team, plans for community engagement and diversity

and inclusion, how the portfolio will incorporate at least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits, and the competitor's plan to grow as a community solar developer and scale their project portfolio. All submission materials must be uploaded to the Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page before the Phase 1 contest closing date.

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:

    - **Organization and Team –** Describe your organization, past experience, and team, and how your team would benefit from participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.
    - **Portfolio Plan and Future Plans To Scale –** What is your plan to implement a portfolio of at least 1 MW_{DC} of community solar projects during the course of the prize? What is your vision to scale after the prize?
    - **Underserved and Disadvantaged Community Engagement** – What is your plan to engage with and work with the communities in which you plan to develop community solar projects?

    The subject matter expert advisory reviewers may be composed of federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas. These advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the prize administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the 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.

3. **Announcement**: After the Phase 1: Ready! winners are publicly announced, the prize administrator will notify them and request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. Winners will then be eligible to compete in Phase 2 and participate in the Learning Lab starting on January 25, 2024.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- Winning teams will be required to submit an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) W-9 form and automated clearing house (ACH) forms as well as signing a prize acceptance form for payment to be issued.

5.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize should include the following items:

Item	Content
Submission Package	• Cover page (selected questions public*) • Portfolio narrative (3 page max) • PowerPoint summary slide (public*) • Evidence of completion of Introduction to Community Solar course • Qualitative narrative (3,500 words max) • Letters of support.

*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 the submission materials by agreeing or disagreeing with assigned statements on a 1–6 scale. Each statement will be evaluated on a sale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), as shown:

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

Cover Page: List basic information about your submission. *To be completed via the HeroX submission form. Starred (*) elements will be made public on HeroX.*

- Submission title*
- Organization name*
- Organization city* and state*
- Organization address
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL*
- Point of contact information (name, email, phone)
- Name, title, and experience level of proposed Phase 2 Learning Lab participant.

Portfolio Narrative: Describe basic information about your previous development experience and your expected Community Solar portfolio to be developed under the course of the prize.

Template: https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound2/resource/1379

3 page maximum

Past and Current Portfolio – What development projects have you completed or supported to date (this does NOT include projects planned for this prize)?

Note: If you have not developed any community or other renewable energy projects previously, include any relevant development experience that indicates your capacity to become a solar developer, and include potential examples (economic development, rehab, multifamily affordable housing, etc.).

Not having previous experience is not automatically a disqualifier. However, it is strongly recommended that such a competitor seek out partners with significant solar experience to collaborate with on their application.

1. For each bullet below, please describe separately both the community solar and other solar projects you have developed, or have helped develop, to date. Please only include projects that have been commissioned and are still in operation today.
    - The total number of community, and total number of other, solar projects
    - The total number of community, and total number of other, solar projects for which you led development
    - The total number of community, and total number of other, solar projects that you supported, but did not lead development for.
2. For each bullet below, please describe separately the total capacity (MW_{DC}) of both the community solar and other solar projects that you have developed, or have helped develop, to date. Please only include projects that have been commissioned and are still in operation today.
    - The total capacity (MW_{DC}) of community solar, and total capacity of other, projects that are still in operation today
    - The total capacity of community solar, and total capacity of other, projects for which you led development
    - The total capacity of community solar, and total capacity of other, projects that you supported, but did not lead development for.
3. Please list the states where the operational community solar or other solar projects are located.

Planned Prize Portfolio – What specific projects would you be seeking to develop and finance during the course of the prize? Please include as much information as possible, even if the information is tentative or anticipated. Teams are allowed to make changes to their planned projects in subsequent phases as needed.

1. Please describe the community solar projects (minimum two, totaling in aggregate at least 1 MW_{DC}) that you are planning to develop during the course of the prize. (These must be different from any projects listed in questions 1–3.) For each project, please include the following information:

- Current stage of development (initial idea, scoping, pre-financing, post-financing,[10] etc.) for each project within your proposed portfolio
- Project location, including whether the project is located in a disadvantaged community or Justice40 census tract[11]
- Total planned project size (kW_{DC}, MW_{DC})
- Number of planned offtakers/subscribers
- Current status of site control
- Developer, co-developers, and other partnerships
- Planned location
- Planned project ownership structure (third party owned, utility owned, community owned)
- Planned meaningful benefits.

Competitors may propose to develop and seek financing for more than two projects and 1 MW_{DC} during the course of the prize (January 2024–January 2025). Competitors who propose more than two projects and 1 MW_{DC} must, in Phase 2 and Phase 3, deliver a total portfolio equal to the same megawatt capacity as their initial Phase 1 proposal.

Portfolios that exceed the minimum requirements are desirable in Phase 1, but if a competitor's total portfolio capacity is larger than 1MW_{DC} competitors will be held to this commitment in Phase 2 and Phase 3.

PowerPoint Summary Slide* (to be made public): One slide maximum.
Template: https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound2/resource/1381

Competitors must create a single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains specific technical details about the submission that can be understood by a nontechnical audience. No specific template is required, but text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

Introduction to Community Solar Course: The Introduction to Community Solar Course is intended to help teams understand how community solar developers can build projects that include the Five Meaningful Benefits. The course is approximately 3–4 hours (including videos, reading assignments, quizzes, and self-assessment). You can go at your own pace and start and stop as you wish.

Organizations who have already completed and passed the Introduction to Community Solar course within the past year will not be required to retake the course for Phase 1. However, they will be required to provide the email used to register for the course as well as the date of completion.

[10] If a project has already received financing, please provide an explanation of why the current funding does not incorporate the five meaningful benefits.
[11] For information regarding disadvantaged communities and Justice40 census tracts, please see the DOE Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/about.

Important: To get access to the course, please register online at: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8C9B44s4UtQOX9s. You will receive an email with a unique course access link within **2–3 business days.**

At least one member of the lead organization must complete the **Introduction to Community Solar Course** and submit to HeroX the email they used to register for the course as well as the date of completion as evidence. The prize administrator will verify completion of both the course and the self-assessment using the email and date of completion provided via HeroX. This self-paced, single-module course is for organizations that wish to understand community solar or partner with community solar developers to develop equitable community solar projects. The course takes approximately 3–4 hours to complete.

To complete the course, teams must do the following:

1. Watch all course videos and view additional resources
2. Complete required readings
3. Complete and pass all three quizzes
4. Complete the "Assessing Your Organization's Potential Fit in Solar Development" assignment (part 1: complete self-assessment of your organization's capabilities and potential role(s) in solar development; part 2: submit assessment scores and written response)
5. Complete "Community Solar Development Statement" assignment.

Narrative:

Template: https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound2/resource/1380

You should answer each of the questions in the three areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the three areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these three areas must not exceed 3,500 words, not including captions, images, figures/graphs, and 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.

1. **Organization and Team** – Describe your organization, past experience, and team, and how your team would benefit from participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

24 points possible

Teams can provide:	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):
• **Organization and Mission:** A description of your organization's mission and goals and how they align with the overall prize goal of developing a (minimum) 1-MW_{DC} community solar portfolio with the Five Meaningful Benefits.[12]	• **Organization and Mission:** The description demonstrates a strong alignment between the organization's mission and goals and the overall prize goal of developing a (minimum) 1-MW_{DC} community solar

• **Experience With Solar Development**: A description of your current level of experience as a community solar developer and additional information on past projects you have led or supported. Alternatively, you can explain that you are new to community solar development or that you are an established developer seeking to expand.
 	
• **Experience With the Five Meaningful Benefits:** A description of any experience with providing meaningful benefits[12] (or similar) in past projects and how you can leverage this experience for your planned prize portfolio.
 	
• **Challenges and Barriers:** A description of any current challenges or barriers that are impeding your organization from developing community solar with the Five Meaningful Benefits.[12]
 	
• **Prize Participation and Benefit:** A description of how the specific activities[13] and benefits[14] of the prize would help you overcome your identified barriers to either become a community solar project developer or build on existing experience to expand development with the Five Meaningful Benefits.[12]
 	
• **Team:**
  ○ Describe your team that will participate in prize activities,[13] including a description of each team member's relevant expertise and ability to participate in the prize.
  ○ Describe your team's efforts to ensure that perspectives of diversity, equity,
	portfolio with the Five Meaningful Benefits, highlighting how they are mutually supportive and complementary.
	
	• **Experience With Solar Development and Five Meaningful Benefits:** The team demonstrates a high level of previous experience in and/or outside of community solar that can be successfully leveraged for community solar development with meaningful benefits.
	
	• **Challenges and Barriers/Prize Benefit:** The team has identified specific barriers that participation in the prize would help them overcome and has a clear and actionable vision for how the prize activities[14] and benefits[15] will strategically position the team to either become community solar project developers or build on existing experience to expand solar development with the Five Meaningful Benefits.[12]
	
	• **Team:** The team and organization has adequate capabilities and resources to dedicate to learning skills and acquiring knowledge of the unique challenges and attributes of community solar, enabling them to successfully secure financing for their proposed community solar project portfolio.

[12] Meaningful benefits include LMI household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership or other wealth-building opportunities, and equitable workforce development.
[13] Prize activities include participation in the Learning Lab (Phase 2, one individual per team), working with technical assistance providers (Phases 2 and 3) to complete the Credit-Ready Checklist (Phase 2), and meeting with financiers (Phase 3). For more information, see Section 1.2.
[14] Specific benefits of the prize include increasing organizational knowledge of community solar and the five meaningful benefits via the Learning Lab, increased confidence and skills from technical assistance, ability to leverage cash awards to seek additional funding for planned projects, and access to the Community Power Accelerator platform to identify and work with potential investors. For more information, see Section 1.

and inclusion are incorporated into your team. ○ Identify the individual who will be participating in the Phase 2 Learning Lab if your team is successful in Phase 1.	
2. **Prize Portfolio Plan and Future Plans To Scale –** What is your plan to develop a portfolio of at least 1 MW_{DC} of community solar projects over the course of the prize? A key mission of this prize is not just to have individual projects built, but to empower new community solar developers who intend to use this experience to scale up development of such projects once the prize is concluded. What is your long-term vision for scaling your community solar portfolio after the prize? *24 points possible* *Note: Both the narrative responses to this question and the information in the portfolio Narrative will be used to evaluate the below judging criteria.*	
Teams can describe: • **Portfolio Projects:** Describe and provide context for the portfolio that your team plans to develop over the course of the prize. Why did you select these projects? What is the potential impact of these projects? Please explain any missing information from the portfolio narrative. • **Meaningful Benefits:** For each meaningful benefit that you identified in the portfolio narrative, please provide additional detail on why that meaningful benefit was selected and how you envision implementing that meaningful benefit into your projects. Please describe how you plan to lock into your organizational or project bylaws guarantees of the long-term continuation of your proposed meaningful benefits and other high standards of business ethics beyond the completion of this prize. • **Development Partners:** Describe the role of any co-developers or other partners that will support the projects listed in the portfolio narrative. • **Long-Term Growth:** Describe your vision for your organization's long-term growth as a community solar developer. Outline your organization's long-term growth strategy as a	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement): • **Portfolio Projects:** The proposed prize portfolio described by the team is ambitious yet achievable and is well positioned for successful development and financing within the scope and timeline of the prize. • **Meaningful Benefits:** The team presents a well-thought-out plan for implementing the identified meaningful benefits into their projects, showcasing innovative approaches and strategies that can effectively deliver these benefits to the target communities. • **Development Partners:** The team clearly articulates the role of co-developers or other partners who will support the listed projects in the portfolio narrative, highlighting how these collaborations strengthen the team's capacity and enhance the likelihood of project success. • **Long-Term Growth:** The team presents a well-defined plan for scaling their community solar portfolio beyond the prize period and demonstrates the team's ambition and commitment to driving positive change in the community solar sector.

community solar developer. Elaborate on the following aspects: ○ Prospective Markets: Detail potential new markets or geographies that your organization would like to expand to in the future. ○ Subscriber Pool Expansion: Describe your plans and strategies to broaden your subscriber base, ensuring increased and equitable participation in community solar initiatives. ○ Expanded Benefits: Explain how your organization intends to provide and expand the five meaningful benefits within your future projects. Illustrate your approach to incorporating additional advantages that positively impact the communities you plan to serve.	*Note:* Individual projects within the same portfolio can have different sets of meaningful benefits, as long as each project has at least two.
Underserved and Disadvantaged Community Engagement – What is your plan to engage with and work with underserved and disadvantaged communities in which you plan to develop community solar projects? *30 points possible*	
Suggested Content: • **Service to Disadvantaged Communities:** Describe the communities where your projects will be located. Will your projects be in or serve disadvantaged communities/Justice40 census tracts? [15] • **Community Connection:** Describe how your team is connected or will be connected to the communities in which you plan to develop projects. Are you located within these communities or do you have existing partnerships? • **Disadvantaged Community Engagement:** Describe the specific activities and partnerships that would build trust and strengthen relationships with disadvantaged communities and support	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement): • **Service to Disadvantaged Communities:** The description clearly identifies the communities where the projects will be located and demonstrates a strong commitment to serving disadvantaged communities, particularly those in Justice40 census tracts. • **Community Connections:** The description illustrates how the team is currently connected with or will proactively cultivate relationships with the communities in which they plan to develop projects. The team has a clear commitment to inclusive and participatory community development. • **Disadvantaged Community Engagement:** The description outlines specific

[15] For information regarding disadvantaged communities and Justice40 census tracts, please see the DOE Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/about.

socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDIs)[16] and SEDI-owned businesses as you work to develop your projects. • **Community Concerns and Priorities**: Describe your community's current disposition toward community solar. What are their top concerns and priorities? What barriers do you expect that you might encounter? What factors might support your future success? ○ If you do not currently have specific communities identified, you may describe the attitudes, concerns, priorities, etc. that you might expect to commonly encounter within a community. • **Disadvantaged Community Subscription and Ownership:** What are some strategies you will employ to subscribe disadvantaged community members or owners to your envisioned community solar projects?	activities and partnerships that the team will undertake to build trust and strengthen relationships with disadvantaged communities as they work to develop their projects, showcasing an inclusive approach that empowers SEDIs and SEDI-owned businesses. • **Community Concerns and Priorities**: The description provides insights into the community's current disposition toward community solar, including their attitudes, concerns, and priorities, showcasing a thorough understanding of the local context and community dynamics. • **Disadvantaged Community Subscription and Ownership:** The team's strategies to encourage and enable disadvantaged community members to become subscribers or owners of the envisioned community solar projects, emphasizing inclusive participation and access to the five meaningful benefits of community solar.

Letters of Support (Optional) Allowable Upload Format: .pdf
Submit one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., community members, utilities, partner organizations) to provide context for your projects. Letters of support from partners or others who are critical to the success of your proposed portfolio will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your portfolio will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters. Individual letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

5.6 How We Score

The prize administrator will first ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

[16] "SEDI demographics-related business" means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see Key Terms.

- **Screening:** The Community Power Accelerator Prize administrator and DOE will screen each application for overall eligibility and completeness. Each submission must have the five main elements requested as part of the submission package:

    1. Cover page
    2. Portfolio narrative
    3. PowerPoint summary slide
    4. Completed Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab Introduction to Community Solar Course, including the self-assessment
    5. Narrative, including answers to all three areas.

    Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all elements will pass the Phase 1 screening for eligibility. Ineligible submissions will not be reviewed by the advisory reviewer panel and will not be considered for an award.
- **Scoring:** A panel of expert reviewers will read, score, and comment on each submission. There are four main categories of questions, each with a number of subcategories. Each subcategory of the review criteria will receive a score from 1 to 6. The final score from an individual reviewer[17] for a submission package equals the sum of the scores for all the categories. Category points are cumulative. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final review process considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the awards.

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

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

The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the 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.

[17] 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.

6 Phase 2: Set! Contest Rules

6.1 Introduction

The Phase 2: Set! contest is the second in this three-phase series. A total of $5 million in cash prizes is available in Phase 2. Below are the rules for the Phase 2: Set! contest. Phase 2 is only open to winners of Phase 1.

Phase 2: Set! Benefits
All Phase 2 teams (i.e., those that won Phase 1 awards) are eligible to receive: • An opportunity to designate a single individual to participate for free in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course. • Free direct technical assistance in developing their project portfolio. • A cash prize award of $200,000 for completing the Phase 2 submission requirements. • An opportunity to participate in an investor pitch/networking event to showcase their Phase 2 portfolio.

6.2 Phase 2: Set! Goal

The goal of Phase 2 is to build the capacity of new, emerging, and expanding community solar developers and co-developers and provide them with the tools and resources they need to develop a Phase 2 portfolio of two or more projects totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{DC} of community solar projects (not to exceed 5 MW_{DC} at a single facility), each of which include at least two of the five previously described meaningful benefits.

By the end of Phase 2: Set!, successful teams will have:

- Completed the instructor-led Learning Lab course and received a digital badge.
- Worked with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook and used that information to create and refine Phase 2 project profile(s) for a minimum of 1 MW_{DC} (two or more projects) or proposed Phase 1 portfolio (whichever is greater) on the Community Power Accelerator platform
- Created an investor pitch deck.

By the end of Phase 2, teams will be ready to fully engage in the Community Power Accelerator and begin to meet with potential investors to seek funding for their community solar projects.

6.3 Phase 2: Set! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 2 Opens	January 25, 2024
Phase 2 Learning Lab Training Course	January 25–March 28, 2024
Phase 2 Submission Deadline	Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than July 31, 2024, at 5 p.m. ET. Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either: • May 30, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET

	• July 31, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. If a team submits to the May 30 deadline and their submission is not selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the July 31 submission deadline. The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision **approximately 1 month following the submission deadline**.
Phase 2 Winner Announcement	June–August 2024 (anticipated)

6.4 Phase 2 Prize Process

- **Preparation, Activation, and Submission**: Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 2: Set! contest.

  To compete for a Community Power Accelerator Phase 2 prize, teams must complete and submit—via the HeroX portal—documentation for the following requirements:

  - Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
  - Updated PowerPoint summary slide (public; updated from Phase 1)
  - Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge
  - Community Power Accelerator project profiles—minimum 1 MW_{DC} (at least two projects) or proposed Phase 1 portfolio (whichever is greater)
  - Investor pitch deck representing all projects within the portfolio
  - Phase 2 narrative
  - Letters of support.

  All submission materials must be uploaded to the Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page before the final Phase 2 submission deadline: July 31, 2024.

- **Assessment:** The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns advisor expert reviewers to independently evaluate the content of each submission. The advisory reviewers may include federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas. Advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the prize administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners will take reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the 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.

- **Announcement**: Approximately 1 month following the submission deadline, the prize administrator will publicly announce the winners and send email notifications to both winners and non-winners. At this time, the prize administrator will request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. Winners will then be eligible to compete in Phase 3.

Financial and Tax Requirements: Winning teams will be required to submit an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) W-9 form and automated clearing house (ACH) forms as well as signing a prize acceptance form in order for payment to be issued.

6.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for the Community Power Accelerator Prize Phase 2: Set! contest should include the following items:

Item #	Content	Scored Item?
1	Cover page (will be made public)	No
2	Updated PowerPoint summary slide (will be made public)	No
3	Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge	Pass/Fail
4	Community Power Accelerator project profiles (one per project; minimum two projects that total, in aggregate, 1 MW_{DC}) or proposed Phase 1 portfolio (whichever is greater)	Pass/Fail
5	Investor portfolio pitch deck (not public)	Pass/Fail
6	Phase 2 narrative (not public)	Pass/Fail
7	Letters of support (optional)	No

Notes:

- Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such. DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public.

See Appendix 1 for additional details.

1. Cover Page (selected elements will be made public) Complete the basic information below about your organization and project portfolio. (To be completed via HeroX submission form.)
• Submission (project) title (will be made public) • Submission picture (.jpeg file format, will be made public) • Organization name (will be made public) • Organization city and state (will be made public) • Organization address • Organization nine-digit zip code • Organization website URL (will be made public) • Point of contact information (name, job title, email, phone) • Team members • Partner organizations • Portfolio details for each project: project name, size in MW_{DC}, city, state.

2. PowerPoint Summary Slide (will be made public)

One slide maximum

Optional template available: https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1290 (Examples from Round 1 can be found here)

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams must update their single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains an overview of their organization and each of their Phase 2 community solar portfolio projects, including each project's size and location. An optional template is available for competitors to use, or they may update their summary slide from Phase 1. Text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

3. Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab Course

The online Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course, hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide teams on how to develop community solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. This intensive virtual course is real-time and instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

The team member designated to take the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course must participate[18] in and complete all assignments for the course to receive the Learning Lab digital badge, which will serve as proof of completion. The Learning Lab course, as detailed in Appendix 3, is a 10-week course that will be held from January 25, 2024, to March 28, 2024, with weekly live Zoom sessions on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET. Competitors can expect to spend 8–10 hours per week working on assigned course activities, including the weekly 90-minute group Zoom sessions. The course will consist of regular, online Zoom meetings. The cohort will receive live-streamed instruction, collaborate on homework assignments, and begin development of their community solar project(s). By the end of the Learning Lab cohort course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite.
2. Assemble a development team capable of developing and managing a community solar project.
3. Develop and execute a robust business model and subscriber acquisition strategy that focuses on meaningful benefits.
4. Structure a creditworthy community solar portfolio and pitch it for financing.

[18] If a participant fails to make a Zoom meeting or fails to complete the required learning activities, they must work with the instructor to develop and execute a make-up plan to ensure that they learn the materials presented during the missed session and/or required learning activities. If a participant misses more than two Zoom sessions, the prize administrator may decide not to award a participant the digital badge for completion of the course. All required learning activities must be completed and approved by the University of New Hampshire instructor by the end of the course.

4. Community Power Accelerator Project Profiles

Upload a PDF printout of your project profiles (at least two, or proposed Phase 1 portfolio) on the Community Power Accelerator website.

Competitors who proposed more than two projects and 1 MW_{DC} in Phase 1 must deliver a total portfolio equal to the same megawatt capacity as their initial Phase 1 proposal.

Teams will work with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook and will use the information to create and refine project profile(s) on the Community Power Accelerator website. For more information about the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) and how it relates to the Community Power Accelerator project profiles, please see Appendix 2.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

Teams should upload a PDF copy of each of their project profiles that have been posted to the Community Power Accelerator web platform. Please note that some questions may require additional details, depending on the specific project.

Each project profile should include:

Project Details:

- Project name
- Project description
- Where is the project geographically located?
- What are the zip code(s) for the project?
- What is the size (or projected size) of the project in capacity (kilowatts [kW])?
- What is the expected generation in kilowatt-hours (kWh)?
- Which type of installation is this community solar project using?
- In which utility's service territory is the project located?
- Have you completed the following steps in project development?
    - Site control (for example, a land lease or lease option agreement is in place).
    - The title to the site has been checked and is clean.
    - A preliminary grid/system impact study has been conducted by the local utility.
    - An interconnection agreement or permission to interconnect (or a notice to

Pass Criteria:

- **Project Details:** The information provided by the team in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.
- **Team and Financial Information:** The information provided by the team in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.
- **Equity Information:** The information provided by the team in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.

Competitors must meet all of the above "pass" criteria to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

proceed [NTP]) from the applicable utility has been received. ○ The conditional use permit, and any ancillary permits, have received tentative approval by the local permitting authority. • When is the project expected to receive permission to operate? • Do you have an innovative business plan or community solar model? • Is the project replicable in another location? **Team and Financial Information:** • Do you have a project team (such as legal, finance, engineering, etc.)? • What is the total estimated cost of the project? • What types of capital, and how much (USD$), have already been committed for this project/development? • How much capital (USD$) has the organization self-invested in the project? • Beyond the capital already committed and self-investment, what is the total amount of capital (USD$) being sought for project financing? • What kind of and how much (USD$) financing are you seeking for this project? • What is your operations and maintenance strategy, and how will you fund these activities? • Do you have an input sheet or pro forma specific to this project that can be shared with potential capital providers? • Are you planning to sell this project? **Equity Information:** • Is this project intentionally designed to serve any specific communities and/or populations? Select all that apply. • Which meaningful benefits are applicable to your project? • What are the expected net savings per household that will be delivered to LMI customers? (20% is the suggested target from DOE.) • Is the project located within a Justice40 community, as identified by the Energy Justice Mapping Tool (https://energyjustic.egs.anl.gov/)?	

5. Investor Pitch Deck [19]

Create an investor pitch deck highlighting at least two projects (or more) within your project portfolio totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW_{DC}. The pitch deck should describe site details, business strategy, your organization, team, and financing needs. If you are developing more than two projects, your pitch deck should highlight at least two projects and then provide an overview of the rest of your portfolio.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .ppt, .pptx

Teams should prepare an investor pitch deck presentation that provides an overview of their organization/team as well as highlighting at least two of their projects for which they are seeking financing in Phase 2.

Teams are encouraged to utilize the information from the Learning Lab and the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) (Appendix 2) to inform their presentation. Teams should tailor their pitch decks to an investor audience.

Teams should include the following information for each project:

1. System Details
   a) Installation type: roof, ground-mount, canopy
   b) System size (kW)
   c) Anticipated annual production (kWh/year)
   d) Utility power rate ($/kWh)
   e) Power value (total $)
   Major equipment information: panels, racking, inverters.

2. Site Information
   a) What type of building or land is the project on?
   b) Who owns the building or land?
   c) What characteristics make the site a good site?
   d) What are some of the risks/concerns of the site?
   e) Utility service provider responsible for interconnection
   f) Relevant utility rules/regulations that allow for development and interconnection for your projects
   g) Utility/state incentives.

Pass Criteria:

- The pitch deck is well-tailored for an investor audience and has relevant and comprehensive information that is presented in a way that would be attractive to a potential investor.
- The pitch deck includes credible and well-defined information about the system details, timeline, site information, development team members, operations and maintenance, and risk.
- The project financial summary and pro forma presented is credible, well-defined, and tailored to an investor audience.
- The portfolio described is replicable and scalable. The team clearly and credibly describes how they are positioned for long-term success and additional development opportunities.
- The team has a financially sustainable business model and subscriber acquisition/management strategy that will enable projects to provide profit and debt service for debt and equity investors while continuing to provide meaningful benefits to subscribers.
- The pitch deck includes detailed and credible information about how the project will provide meaningful benefits and support disadvantaged communities.

Competitors must meet all of the above "pass" criteria to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

[19] This submission item builds on the investor pitch deck presentation assignment for the learning lab (see Appendix 3) but expands the scope of the presentation to include at least two Phase 2 projects that total 1 MW_{DC}.

3. Project Financials a) Total project cost b) Sources c) Which sources are already secured? d) Are terms sheets in place with other investors/lenders? e) Who is the borrower? f) What collateral is available to secure debt? g) Is the borrower able to provide guarantees? h) What is the specific lender/investor request? i) Additional information about scope, sources and uses, pro forma, and loans. 4. Development Timeline a) What is the current stage of the project? b) What work has been done to date? c) Provide an anticipated development timeline. 5. Development Team Members a) Organization chart. 6. System Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Plans a) Describe your operations and maintenance plan. b) What are the ongoing maintenance costs? c) How are you hedging against solar performance risk? d) Has an O&M provider already been identified or contracted? 7. Subscriber Management Plan a) Explain your subscriber management plan. b) How are electricity sales being generated? c) Explain the process by which the project earns revenue. d) Any applicable state, federal, or local government revenue incentive	

programs used to finance your projects e) Forecasted power rates f) Are any subscribers already signed up? g) What are the expected upfront and ongoing costs of customer marketing/maintenance? h) How are you hedging against any customer nonpayment risk? i) How are you hedging against solar performance risk? 8. Meaningful Benefits a) What percent of subscribers qualify as LMI (below 80% area median income)? (Minimum of 50%.) b) What projected percent discount off the cost of utility power is being provided to LMI subscribers? (Minimum of 20%.) • What are the total LMI resident savings per year? c) Does the project provide other community benefits beyond discounted power? • Job training • Prevailing wages • Education on solar technology • Resident services • Resilience • Community/cooperative ownership. 9. Describe any challenges, risks, or barriers that your team is currently facing or anticipates as they relate to project development or financing. How will you leverage innovative financing such as philanthropy (if needed)? a) Other information related to community benefits: amount of debt/equity, construction or permanent financing, interest rate, term, recourse/non-recourse. 10. Project Replication and Scalability a) What are your plans to scale your community solar development	

portfolio and replicate your model for additional/future projects? b) How will executing on this work set your team up for long-term success and additional development opportunities?	

6. Phase 2 Narrative Answer each of the questions in the two areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these two areas must not exceed 2,500 words, not including captions, images, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. 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. **Scoring:** Pass/Fail **Allowable Upload Format:** .pdf, .doc, .docx	
1. **Meaningful Benefits, Community Engagement, and Support to Disadvantaged Communities**	
Teams could include: • A description of how you are incorporating at least two of the five meaningful benefits[20] into each project included in your Phase 2 portfolio. ○ Why did you select the meaningful benefits that you are incorporating? ○ Include a SMART action plan[21] for how your team will implement, track, and measure the success and impact of the meaningful benefits that you plan to incorporate. ○ Describe documentation, organizational bylaws, or other conditions that ensure the continued provision of the meaningful benefits beyond the awarding of this prize. • An update on the specific activities that your team is doing to build trust, strengthen relationships, and provide direct benefits to the community, especially disadvantaged	Pass Criteria: • The competitor is actively working to support, encourage subscription from, and provide direct benefits[23] to disadvantaged communities, organizations, and individuals, such as SEDIs and minority- and women-owned businesses. • The submission clearly describes how the project portfolio will incorporate at least two of the five meaningful benefits into each project and includes a well-considered and credible SMART plan for implementation and measuring success. • The competitor has included additional meaningful benefits over and above the required two (two

[20] Meaningful benefits include LMI household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.
[21] A SMART action plan incorporates five characteristics of a goal: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. For more information about SMART goal planning, please see: https://www.atlassian.com/blog/productivity/how-to-write-smart-goals.
[23] Direct benefits could include workforce development, community ownership, economic development, or other meaningful benefits.

communities, and support SEDIs[22] and minority- and women-owned businesses. ○ How are you encouraging and supporting disadvantaged communities specifically (as opposed to communities generally) to become subscribers or owners of your community solar projects? How did your plan and activities diverge from your initial planning? ○ What lessons have you learned from your current engagement that could benefit others or help inform future projects?	points for each additional benefit provided, up to six points total). Competitors must meet all of the above "pass" criteria to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.
2. **Business Model Innovation, Risks and Barriers, and Strategy for Investment**	
Teams could include: • Any potential project risks, challenges, or barriers that your team is currently encountering or anticipates for your project portfolio and how you plan to address or overcome them. • A description of your strategy to get the attention of and meet with potential investors. ○ How will you leverage the Community Power Accelerator to facilitate your strategy? ○ What other resources and connections do you plan to leverage? ○ What types of investors (private investors, angel investors, philanthropic investors) do you anticipate engaging with, and how will you target your investment strategy to the types of investors you seek to attract? • What additional support do you need to be successful in Phase 3? ○ How do you plan to find this additional support in Phase 3?	Pass Criteria: • The team clearly articulates what makes their business strategy unique, replicable/scalable, and poised for success with support from the Community Power Accelerator platform, and will ultimately get funding for their projects. Competitors must meet the above "pass" criterion to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

7. Letters of Support (Optional)
Allowable Upload Format: .pdf

[22] A "SEDI demographics-related business" means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see Key Terms.

Submit one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., community members, utilities, partner organizations) to provide context. Letters of support from partners or others who are critical to the success of your proposed portfolio will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your portfolio will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters. Individual letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

6.6 How We Score

All items in the submission package, with the exception of the cover page and logistical questions, will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide whether the submission elements meet the specified "pass" criteria for each of the required submission elements. Teams must receive a pass on 100% of the scoring criteria to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

The prize administrator will ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The prize administrator reserves the right to remove evidence that contains personally identifiable information. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- **Screening.** The Community Power Accelerator Prize administrator and DOE will screen each application for overall eligibility and completeness. Each submission must have the six main elements requested as part of the submission package:

    1. Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
    2. Updated PowerPoint summary slide (public)
    3. Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge
    4. Community Power Accelerator project profiles
    5. Investor pitch deck
    6. Phase 2 narrative
    7. Letters of support (optional).

    Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all four elements will be deemed as passing the Phase 2 screening.
- **Scoring.** A panel of expert reviewers will read, score, and comment on each submission. For each required scored submission element, a set of "pass" criteria has been identified. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide whether the submission elements meet the specified "pass" criteria for each of the required submission elements. Teams must receive a passing score on all required the submission elements to be eligible for a Phase 2 award.

    - Reviewers are prohibited from having personal or financial interests in, or being an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or having a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered team.

- **Reviewer comments.** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The prize administrator intends to provide comments to teams after the winners are announced for each phase. These comments are intended to help teams continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- **Interviews.** The prize administrator may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the teams. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the prize administrator may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the 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.

7 Key Terms

Community Benefits Agreement: Community benefits agreements are legal agreements between community benefit groups and developers. These agreements stipulate the benefits a developer agrees to fund or furnish in exchange for community support of a project. Benefits can include commitments to hire directly from a community, contributions to economic trust funds, local workforce training guarantees, and more. These agreements can be used a tool to garner community support.

Community Ownership: Community ownership allows community members, other individuals invested in supporting the community, and/or organizations that reflect the interests of those members to have equity ownership rights in a community solar project.[12] Ownership is one method to allow community members to determine how a community solar project is developed and how its benefits are distributed. Additional benefits of community ownership can include local job creation, increased property values, and wealth retention within a community.

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

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

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

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as a census tract) or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for DACs has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2); energy burden (5); environmental and climate hazards (10); and vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).[24]

Equity: The consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people. Community solar is one method of ensuring equity in the clean energy transition.

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

Despite this opportunity, most solar companies have difficulty filling workforce vacancies, often due to lack of experience, training, or technical knowledge in the employment pool. To meet the nation's clean energy goal to decarbonize the electricity grid by 2035, the solar industry will need to grow by an estimated 500,000–1,500,000 jobs. Incorporating local workforce development into community solar projects or programs provides a unique opportunity to expose more people to careers in clean energy

[24] https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative

and contribute to growing local economies. Equitable and effective workforce development initiatives are industry-driven, employee-centric, and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Workforce initiatives should support broad occupational training that leads to industry-recognized credentials and career-track employment. They should also provide pathways to jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits, devoid of hostility and harassment, where workers are properly classified as employees, and have a free and fair choice to join, form, or assist a union.

Justice40: The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of clean water infrastructure—to flow to disadvantaged communities. To learn more, visit the White House Justice40 Initiative website. See also Section 223 of Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.

Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI): Definitions for LMI vary. This prize seeks projects that serve LMI populations. Submissions must identify the definition used. If the state where the project(s) or program is located has an applicable LMI definition, teams should use that definition. If the state does not have a definition for LMI populations, teams are encouraged to use the federal definition for LMI, which is households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, or households earning 80% or below of the area median income, as defined by the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI) Household Access: The cost of solar energy systems has fallen dramatically over the past decade. As solar electricity has become more affordable, residential solar adoption has increased, with more than 3.3 million solar energy systems operating across the United States at the end of 2021. Despite decreases in system costs, many U.S. households still lack access to affordable solar electricity, especially renters, homeowners who can't access affordable financing, and those without suitable roof conditions or adequate sun exposure. Although rooftop solar adoption has become more equitable relative to income over time, the *Solar Futures Study*[7] found that only 31% of solar adopters came from households that earned less than the area median income. In addition, census tracts with majority Black and Hispanic populations exhibit 30% and 69% less rooftop solar adoption, respectively, compared to the average census tract.

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

Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs): MSIs are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations.[25]

National Community Solar Partnership (NSCP): The National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP), a program of DOE's Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), supports a coalition of stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every U.S. household and enable communities to realize its meaningful benefits. NCSP is working toward a 2025 target to enable community solar to power the equivalent of 5 million households and generate a cumulative $1 billion in energy bill savings. NCSP has over 1,200 partners who leverage peer networks and technical assistance resources to overcome barriers to expanding community solar access.

[25] https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program

Although many investors have developed financial products to serve the community solar market, developers—especially new developers, co-developers, or those pursuing community ownership—often struggle to complete the necessary credit application requirements. A lack of expertise, experience, capacity, and pre-development funds to prepare the required application materials creates a gap in the deployment of community-led, community-focused community solar projects. The Community Power Accelerator Prize is designed to address these gaps and support and grow a strong network of solar project developers and co-developers that will support equitable community solar with meaningful benefits.

Native American and Alaska Native Village Tribal Communities: As defined by the National Congress of American Indians, "there are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) in the United States. Approximately 229 of these ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations are located in Alaska; the other federally recognized tribes are located in 35 other states. Additionally, there are state recognized tribes located throughout the United States recognized by their respective state governments."

Resilience and Grid Benefits: A resilient power system, as defined by the DOE Grid Modernization Initiative and the National Academy of Sciences,[10] must be capable of lessening the likelihood of long-duration electrical outages occurring over large service areas, limiting the scope and impact of outages when they do occur, and rapidly restoring power after an outage. As extreme weather events become more common and place undue stress on electricity infrastructure, solar and other distributed energy resources can help communities rapidly recover. During extreme weather, the lack of resilient infrastructure to deliver energy can cost human lives as access to essential services is disrupted.[11] Community solar projects that are designed with resiliency and reliability in mind can be a decentralized source of energy for a community in the event of a grid outage or emergency. Community solar can enable communities to utilize solar plus storage or microgrids to prevent disruptions in power caused by extreme weather and other events, and to rapidly restore electricity to critical facilities or "island" segments of the distribution network if the grid goes down. Community solar projects that incorporate virtual power plants or other demand response actions can reduce peak load demand, making the larger grid more resilient. Community solar that is sited strategically may also be able to provide technical grid benefits, including the ability to improve voltages at the end of the feeder, alleviate congestion, and reduce line losses. Community solar projects may offer supplementary resilience benefits when they are co-located with resilience hubs that provide additional services to support community development and growth. Increasing equitable access to reliable sources of energy before, during, and after extreme events is a priority of the NCSP.

Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual (SEDI)[26]: A SEDI demographics-related business means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances, due to their:

- Membership of a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society
- Gender
- Veteran status
- Limited English proficiency
- Disability
- Long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society
- Membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian tribe

[26] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/10/2022-04843/state-small-business-credit-initiative-demographics-related-reporting-requirements

- Long-term residence in a rural community
- Residence in a U.S. territory
- Residence in a community undergoing economic transitions (including communities impacted by the shift toward a net-zero economy or deindustrialization)
- Membership of an underserved community.

8 Additional Requirements

Please read and comply with additional requirements in Appendix 1.

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

Appendix 1: Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Submissions for The Community Power Accelerator Prize are subject to following terms and conditions:

1. The final content of a submission must be posted or uploaded via the form online at https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAcceleratorRound2 before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
2. The narrative and portfolio narrative are not intended to be made public; however, see Section A.8 regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
3. All required elements must be included. The awards administrator may disqualify a submission after an initial screening if it fails to provide all required submission elements. Teams may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges.
4. Submissions must be in English. Any attachments must be in a readable and searchable PDF format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
5. Teams will be disqualified if, during any engagement with The Community Power Accelerator Prize, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the awards administrator, or other forms of communication, contain any matter that, in the discretion of DOE, is indecent, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
6. If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for the awards described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. Teams 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.
7. The awards administrator, when feasible, may give teams an opportunity to fix non-substantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

A.2 Submission Rights

The submission materials in this contest must be submitted and released to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

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

A.3 Copyright

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

A.4 Contest Subject to Applicable Law

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

A.5 Resolution of Disputes

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

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

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

A.6 Publicity

The winners of these awards (collectively, “Winners”) will be featured on DOE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, marketing, social media, and/or audio websites.

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

A.7 Liability

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

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this contest delegated to the Director of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), the Director has determined that no liability insurance will be required of teams to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

A.8 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records. Any confidential commercial information contained in a submission should be designated at the time of submission. Teams are encouraged to employ protective markings in the following manner:

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

   Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:
   Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]
2. The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: "May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure."
3. In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

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

A.9 Privacy

Teams that provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website 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 teams in matters regarding submissions and/or the contest, unless teams choose to receive updates or notifications about other contests or programs from DOE on an opt-in basis. DOE and NREL are not collecting any information for commercial marketing.

A.10 General Conditions

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

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for each category, DOE reserves the right to only select teams that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no teams are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no teams to be winners.

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

A.11 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the awards administrator to maximize the impact of contest benefits. Some factors outside the control of teams and

beyond the independent expert reviewers' scope of review may need to be considered to accomplish this goal. The following is a list of such factors. In addition to the reviewers' scores, the below program policy factors may be considered in determining winners:

- Geographic diversity of potential winners.
- Diversity in project or program type (state program, utility-led program, third party-developed project, community-owned project, etc.).
- Whether the DOE recognition is nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate the adoption of best practices to provide meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to community solar energy and its benefits among audiences and in areas that are underserved by existing efforts by the U.S. solar market.
- The degree to which the submission supports and complements DOE's existing programs and strategies to achieve DOE goals.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's engagement with new audiences and recipients that have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission highlights a new developer who has unique potential and ability for development without prior development experience.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits team member diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, with participants including, but not limited to, graduates and students of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities, or members from minority business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, or veteran-owned businesses.

A.12 Additional Eligibility Requirements

1. Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any awards contests in this program. Additionally, members of their immediate families (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, or parents) and anyone who lives in their household, regardless of relation, are not eligible to participate in the Prize.
2. 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.
3. Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Binding Operational Directives (BOD) as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible to compete. See https://cyber.dhs.gov/directives/.
4. Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list.

A.13 Return of Funds

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

Appendix 2: Background on the Community Power Accelerator Program

The Community Power Accelerator is an initiative of the NCSP that brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition. This online platform will create a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connect them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding.

The online platform is part of the Community Power Accelerator, a program of DOE's NCSP that supports the rapid expansion of community solar through increased investment and funding. Equitable access to project funding is one of the most persistent barriers to community solar development, as noted in the DOE Equitable Access to Community Solar Request for Information. To get smaller community solar projects deployed, especially in underserved communities, developers need ways to build expertise, expand capacity, and access pre-development funds to prepare and meet funding application thresholds.

The goal of the Community Power Accelerator is to facilitate and finance more community solar projects that provide the meaningful benefits identified by the NCSP:

- Low- to moderate-income household access
- Greater household savings
- Increased resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership or other wealth-building opportunities
- Equitable workforce development.

The Community Power Accelerator and its resources are free and are open to all community solar developers, philanthropists, and investors, regardless of their participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

Appendix 3: Phase 2 Learning Lab

A3.1 Overview

Teams who are selected in Phase 1 will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize and the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab. To win Phase 2, Phase 1 winners will be required to participate in, and graduate from, a seven-module course starting in **January 2024**. Exact dates will be provided to teams before the end of Phase 1 so that they are able to plan for their participation, should they win Phase 1.

The Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab, hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide competitors on how to develop community solar projects that provide the five meaningful benefits and further Justice40 goals. This intensive virtual course is instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments. The University of New Hampshire will provide a digital badge to participants who have satisfied all course expectations as a community solar development professional.

Competitors are encouraged to review the course timeline and make sure they can commit to the dates and coursework (6–8 hours per week, plus a 90-minute Zoom session).

Please note that Learning Lab information is subject to change.

A3.2 Learning Lab Objectives

Upon completion of this course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite.
2. Assemble a development team capable of sponsoring, financing, developing, and managing a community solar project.
3. Complete the Credit-Ready Checklist and individual project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator Platform.
4. Understand the how to incorporate the five meaningful benefits into community solar projects.
5. Structure a creditworthy community solar project and pitch it for financing.

A3.3 Learning Lab Participant Expectations

The expectations of Phase 2 teams who are participating in the course are:

- Be prepared for class by carefully reviewing course materials and readings and completing assignments in advance, taking an estimated 4–5 hours per week.
- Complete the course final projects, as described in the syllabus.
- Attend and participate in attend all Zoom sessions.
- Engage in the learning content and encourage and support your peers in the Learning Lab.
- To build our learning community, we require that you keep your camera on during the Zoom sessions, unless extenuating circumstances make that impossible.

A3.4 Phase 2 Learning Lab Final Project

To complete the Phase 2 Learning Lab, teams will be required to complete a final project.

Example Final Project

Part A: Internal Community Solar Pitch

Prepare and present a summary-level PowerPoint and 2–3-page memo pitching the leadership within your organization on the role that it can play in community solar. The presentation should describe the niche roles in the community solar industry that your organization will seek to play and should justify why you think this choice lines up with your organization's strengths. The presentation should address the strengths and weaknesses of your organization within the context of regulatory and market challenges, site selection, community engagement, specific development roles and skill sets, financial strengths or weaknesses, and ability to operate assets.

Part B: Investor Community Solar Project Pitch

Students will prepare and provide a pitch deck presentation selling a specific project to an investor. Students should utilize the materials they developed during the course to share details about the project. Students should focus on specific points that investors want to know to evaluate their interest in the project and should provide examples of the strengths of the student's organization to educate investors on why the organization can deliver on the project. Students should highlight risks and how they will be managed.

A3.5 Phase 2 Learning Lab Required Participation and Grades

Class Participation

Participation in Zoom sessions is required. Participation in online discussions and group assignments is required where applicable. You are asked to make every effort to attend each Zoom class. If you miss one, please watch the class recording and post to the discussion board with comments and questions.

Grades

Grading will be mostly on a complete/incomplete basis. Quizzes (knowledge checks) with point values are there to assist you in assessing your own knowledge of the materials and may be taken twice. Our instructors are here to work with you throughout the course. Course completion/graduation is based on satisfactory completion of the module activities and participation in Zoom sessions.

This is the end of the rules document. Thank you for reading.