

## Solar Ambassador Prize Webinar Questions

8/17/2023

1. Do apartments qualify as households for the Solar Ambassador Prize?
  - a. Not right now. DOE is pursuing a multi-phased approach with the \$1 billion Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund. This first funding opportunity announcement (FOA) focuses on single-family residential rooftop solar PV and battery storage solutions. The Solar Ambassador Prize is a complementary effort to this first FOA. In addition, a second FOA is expected to be released next year and is likely to focus on community-level resilience investments, which may include solutions for multifamily buildings.
2. What is a “Last Mile Community”?
  - a. A Last-Mile Community is defined as a census block that (a) has a high percentage of very low-income households, and (b) experiences frequent and prolonged power outages. Very low-income households are defined as an individual, homeowner, or household that is enrolled in or receives benefits from one or more of the following government assistance programs: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Solar Ambassador organizations will perform outreach activities in Last Mile Communities to identify qualifying households. View the Last Mile Community Map here: [Interactive Puerto Rico Last Mile Community Map / Mapa interactivo de la comunidad de última milla de Puerto Rico \(herox.com\)](https://herox.com)
3. How were Last Mile Communities selected?
  - a. DOE used detailed sociodemographic data and power outage data to determine which census blocks in Puerto Rico experience the most frequent and prolonged power outages. These electrically vulnerable areas are called Last Mile Communities. You can find the map here: [Interactive Last Mile Community Map](https://herox.com)
4. How was the award amount for the Solar Ambassador Prize calculated? For a low-income community, the initial award is very low to fund community nonprofits doing the work to assist the DOE in identifying and working with so many households.
  - a. The Phase 1 prize amount was calculated with consideration for the scope of activities required in Phase 2. Winning teams from Phase 1 will receive a cash award of \$15,000 and will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize, but are not required to do so. DOE cannot restrict use of prize funds by awarded teams and no reporting on use of these funds is required under the Solar Ambassador Prize program. Teams with existing infrastructure and programming in place to utilize this prize amount are best positioned to participate. The \$100 per household award in Phase 2 is designed to reward Solar Ambassador teams for their hard work.
5. Can Solar Ambassadors choose who they will provide the services to? For example, can an Ambassador choose to work with a nonprofit instead of a private for-profit company?
  - a. The Solar Ambassador Prize will incentivize up to twenty Puerto Rican CBOs to perform program outreach, education, and assist homeowners complete the application process. Solar Ambassadors, employed by, and working on behalf of, the selected CBOs, will be the individuals performing these tasks. Solar Ambassadors – working through a third

party contractor - will provide qualified household data to installers selected in Topic Area One of the FOA. Installers will be assigned to households by DOE.

6. Could you please discuss the award amounts in Phase 2 of the prize?
  - a. For every verified household an Ambassador signs up in Phase 2, they will receive \$100. Verified households are households that complete a household intake application and are verified by a third party contracted by DOE. Once an Ambassador signs up 750 verified households, they will receive an additional \$10,000. The total funding across the Solar Ambassador Prize is enough funding to compensate Ambassadors for the first 30,000 verified households. The Prize Team will communicate with Ambassadors during Phase 2 to let them know the total number of verified households they will be credited with from their submitted household applications.
7. Can a Topic Area 1 for profit subrecipient also be qualified as a Solar Ambassador?
  - a. Yes, an applicant that is eligible for both the FOA and the Solar Ambassador Prize may apply to both opportunities.
8. Do churches comply as community-based organizations?
  - a. Yes, churches are eligible to apply for the prize.
9. If a company has several employees who will be working on the application and/or the Implementation Phase, should the application name all employees as a Team?
  - a. We encourage everyone to sign up on HeroX and participate as one team. However, it is not a requirement for all employees who will be participating in the prize to sign up on HeroX.
10. Can solar installation companies compete?
  - a. Solar installation companies may apply to the prize.
11. Is there a list of organizations that one could check if one can join?
  - a. There is not currently a list of awardees for Phase 1 of the Prize. Community-based organizations (CBOs) such as religious collectives, special interest groups, etc., as well as non-profit and certain for-profit entities, are all welcome to apply.
12. Do the applications have to be in English?
  - a. No, your submission can be in Spanish or in English. Language translation assistance may be provided at no cost to the applicant.
13. An education program was mentioned at the community meetings in Puerto Rico. What is the relationship with the Education program and the Ambassador program. Can you apply for both. Where is the information the education program. How to apply for it?
  - a. Entities who qualify for both the Solar Ambassador Prize and the Funding Opportunity Announcement are eligible to apply for both. Topic Area 3 of the FOA includes beneficiary education. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement website for information on each Topic Area and information on applying:  
<https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>
14. Do you accept consortium of organizations from multiple geographical areas?
  - a. The Prize Administration Team is seeking applicants from multiple geographic regions that can serve all priority Last-Mile Communities. Organizations with the ability to perform island-wide outreach to individuals with energy-dependent disabilities will also be prioritized. Organizations from multiple geographic areas may join together as one applying team.

15. If you are an awardee in Phase One and Phase Two for the intake of participants, will you also be able to participate in the installation of the Battery Backed Energy Storage System?
  - a. Solar Ambassadors will not be responsible for the solar installation process. Entities who qualify for both the Solar Ambassador Prize and the Funding Opportunity Announcement are eligible to apply for both. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement website for information on each Topic Area and information on applying: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>
16. What is the criteria for a qualified Puerto Rican household? Will engineers or architects certify these households or how is that done?
  - a. Beneficiaries of the program include low-income single-family households located in a Last Mile Community, or low-income single-family households with an energy-dependent disability. Once a household is verified, it will be passed to awarded solar companies to design and install a solar PV and battery storage system. DOE will allow some of the funding to make a home “solar ready”, such as certain rooftop repairs and electrical improvements.
17. Will individuals in Culebra and Vieques be reimbursed for travel to this training?
  - a. Travel for training will come at the expense of the winning teams. Winning teams from Phase 1 will receive a cash award of \$15,000 and will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize, but are not required to do so. DOE cannot restrict use of prize funds by awarded teams and no reporting on use of these funds is required under the Solar Ambassador Prize program. Winning teams have the option to use their Phase 1 cash award to travel for the required training.
18. Will the program cover installation cost and the solar panels and batteries?
  - a. Rooftop solar systems will not be totally free for the beneficiaries receiving them under this program. However, these systems will help the average qualifying family save money on their electricity bill. Some of those savings will be used for long-term maintenance payments on the system to keep them up-and-running for decades.
19. San Juan and Bayamon have ongoing programs to assist low income and/or medically compromised individuals who depend on powered equipment. Power pack batteries with solar panels will be awarded to those that qualify. Both San Juan and Bayamon hope to impact some 15,000 individuals. I imagine all these individuals are off the impact DOE lists.
  - a. Individuals receiving assistance from existing local clean energy programs such as those in San Juan and Bayamon, as well as participants in the Nueva Energia Program, may not be eligible beneficiaries. It is our preference that households participating in duplicative programs will not apply to the PR-ERF. To the extent possible, DOE will develop checks to prevent duplication of benefits.
20. Who will be your independent contractor?
  - a. Independent contractors will be competitively selected by DOE.
21. How can a community be included in the Last Mile Community map?
  - a. Last Mile Communities have already been identified via a detailed, data-driven approach. You can see the communities here: <https://www.herox.com/solarambassador/resource/1394>
22. Do applicants need to have an active website to apply?

- a. Your organization does not need a website to apply. You will, however, need to submit your application for the prize on the official HeroX website:  
<https://www.herox.com/solarambassador>
23. Are the office hours in a physical office or is it a virtual meeting?
  - a. This will be a virtual meeting. The purpose of the Office Hours sessions will be to walk through the application process in detail. These sessions will take place on September 12<sup>th</sup> and September 18<sup>th</sup>. We will post the link on HeroX soon.
24. Is there an example of the Household Intake Application (or at least the fields) that Solar Ambassadors will use for households?
  - a. The Household Intake Application will be shared with Phase 1 awardees during the mandatory Solar Ambassador Training in November. Solar Ambassadors will be trained on how to complete the form with homeowners.
25. What are the requirements for a home to meet? Property title, electric meter, zinc roof, LUMA bill? If the community does not have electrical infrastructure, does not have meters, there are no individual titles, but a qualified joint deed? Do only those that appear on your interactive map qualify as last-mile communities?
  - a. Beneficiaries include (a) very low-income single-family households where an individual with an energy dependent disability resides (no geographic restriction); or (b) very low-income single-family households located in a Last Mile Community. The Household Intake Application will include thresholds of proof for households to be considered beneficiaries for the program. The same Household Intake Application will be used by all Solar Ambassadors to sign up beneficiaries. DOE is aware of the complexities around property titles and roofing material and has incorporated flexibilities in the intake process to address these issues.
26. Can individual people or organizations apply for the Solar Ambassador Prize?
  - a. A single individual is not eligible for the prize. Only organizational entities are eligible. Employees of an organization are able to join their prize team as collaborators on HeroX, where they can follow the prize and contribute to their associated team's application.
27. What is the timeline for Phase 2? What is the date for the summary presentation submission?
  - a. Phase 2 is anticipated begin in November 2023, after the required training has been completed. The deadline for submissions for Phase 2 is at 5 PM on March 6, 2024, and that is when all submission materials, including the final presentation of the engagement plan and process, need to be submitted.
28. Do the projects need to adhere to a single model of contract? i.e. home batteries vs contract for many years
  - a. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement website for information on the technical specifications and business models under consideration to deploy solar PV and battery storage systems: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>. Projects included in Topic Area 1 of the FOA all must adhere to a single ownership and operations and maintenance model. Projects included in Topic Area 2 of the FOA will have more flexibility and options for ownership models and operations and maintenance models.
29. For Last Mile Communities, did the experts from national labs working on GIS take into consideration communities whose power is restored and then lost again for months? (Momentarily restored)

- a. Yes, multiple years of outage data were used to determine the most electrically vulnerable areas.
30. In your experience, how big does a team need to be in order to submit an application for Phase 1?
- a. The applicant team should include enough individuals to complete the work as asked for in the prize rules. Any individuals participating must be associated with an applying team.
31. What are the requirements for the in person intake? What minimal activities must a Solar Ambassador perform for the in person intake?
- a. Solar Ambassadors must have the ability to perform in-person outreach in priority communities. This will include door-to-door engagement with homeowners. This may also include the hosting of in-person community engagement events. Applying teams must have a robust and realistic outreach plan for in-person homeowner engagement that fits the needs of priority communities.
32. In the second phase, if the number of 750 people is achieved, the payment would be \$100 x person = \$7500, plus the \$10,000 incentive? Or just \$10,000.
- a. If the number of 750 verified households is achieved, then Ambassador will receive \$7,500 (\$100 x 750), and the additional \$10,000 incentive prize.
33. Does an educational institution qualify to participate or is the program only to houses?
- a. Educational institutions may qualify to participate as a team of Solar Ambassadors for the prize. Educational institutions are not eligible as beneficiaries for the solar PV and battery installation as directed by the FOA: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>.
34. Can coalitions be made among several like-minded organizations to apply?
- a. Yes, organizations can combine efforts and apply as a single team.
35. I have a solar generator company based in Texas ([www.fullchargesolar.com](http://www.fullchargesolar.com)), am I correct in understanding that the only way I could potentially enter this contest is if a PR company or entity decided to use my product as a solution?
- a. The Solar Ambassador prize goal is to incentivize local Puerto Rican entities to perform program outreach, education, and assist with intake processing of qualified Puerto Rican households for the PR-ERF. This prize is not focused on the actual solar installation. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement website for more information on other PR-ERF funding opportunities: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>
36. Where are the physical boundaries for the CDBG funding?
- a. DOE is coordinating closely with the Puerto Rico Department of Housing to reduce overlap and maximize impact. Please refer to the CDBG website regarding housing programs: <https://cdbg-dr.pr.gov/en/programs/housing/>
37. You explained that the Household Intake Application would be completed by the household occupant, not the Solar Ambassador. But can the Solar Ambassador help the household complete the Household Intake Application?
- a. Ambassadors will receive training to assist homeowners in the completion of intake applications and will upload household application materials to the online database. The submission materials on HeroX is separate from the household intake application, and this is completed by the Ambassador.
38. Are households going to receive an incentive if they qualify?

- a. Households will not receive a monetary incentive if they qualify for the program. However, the qualifying household will be eligible to receive a solar PV and battery storage system, which for the average family will save money on their electric bill.
39. Can applicants include a member of a local government of Puerto Rico (municipality and/or state)?
- a. Yes, Solar Ambassador teams may include members of local government.
40. Are Solar Ambassadors required to have identified households before applying, or is this a Phase Two step?
- a. No, Ambassadors are not required to identify households before applying. In Phase 2, Ambassadors will choose regions from the Last Mile Community Map where they would like to implement their proposed plan. You can find the Last Mile Community Map here: <https://www.herox.com/solarambassador/resource/1394>
41. Where is the forum?
- a. The forum is located on HeroX. You can find the link here: <https://www.herox.com/solarambassador/forum>
42. Do organizations that apply for the Solar Ambassador Prize need to work with a solar installation company?
- a. No, organizations are not completing solar installations in order to obtain prize awards. Organizations will be performing outreach, education, and assisting with intake processing of qualified Puerto Rican households.
43. What will be the alternative for the households unable to complete the application form, or don't have internet available or has technological difficulties.?
- a. Households without internet access may complete a paper copy of the application with the help of the Solar Ambassador, who will be trained in handling Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and collection to ensure the safety of homeowner information. Solar Ambassadors will have the ability to upload offline information when they are back in a service area. Qualified households may also mail their household intake applications to the independent contractor.
44. Can a for-profit technology organization participate as a team providing options to make the intake?
- a. For-profit entities are eligible to apply.
45. Do residents in apartments qualify for battery backup systems without solar panels? FYI, the majority of apartment complexes do not allow residents to install solar pv panels because of space constraints.
- a. Residents of apartment buildings will not be able to apply for this round of funding. DOE is pursuing a multi-phased approach with the \$1 billion Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund. This first funding opportunity announcement (FOA) focuses on single-family residential rooftop solar PV and battery storage solutions. The Solar Ambassador Prize is a complementary effort to this first FOA. In addition, a second FOA is expected to be released next year and is likely to focus on community-level resilience investments, which may include solutions for multifamily buildings.
46. Will the work area be only the Last Mile Blocks? Will applications only be worked on in these areas?

- a. The Prize Administration Team is prioritizing applicants that can conduct outreach in Last-Mile Communities, as well as applicants who can conduct island-wide outreach to individuals with energy-dependent disabilities who reside in very low-income households.
47. How many teams will be chosen?
- a. Up to 20 teams will be chosen in Phase 1.
48. Does the program have an established price maximum for the solar portion and the battery storage system portion?
- a. No, there is no established maximum price for solar PV and battery storage systems. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for more information on the pricing aspect of the Deployment Strategy (Section IV.C.v.): <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023>
49. What does maintenance look like? Will there be funds available for that?
- a. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Announcement website for more information on the maintenance requirements outlined in Topic Area 1 and Topic Area 2. <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/PRFOA2023> DOE is committed to ensuring long-term maintenance of the equipment to maximize resilience benefit to the beneficiary for decades.
50. The interpreter was not heard as to the question of restrictions on the use and/or expenditure of the money received.
- a. If you are selected as a Solar Ambassador, your organization will receive \$15,000 in seed money during Phase 1 to carry out proposed community engagement plans. Prize funds dispersed to participating Solar Ambassadors after Phase 2 will have no spending restrictions and will be rewarded to organizations on a per-household basis for qualified household intake applications.
51. Can an entity participate in phase 1 only?
- a. Organizations should only apply to the prize if they are able to fully deploy their plan in Phase 2. Solar Ambassadors will be selected in Phase 1 based upon their ability to participate in Phase 2 community engagement activities.
52. Will eligible households with damaged roofs still be able to apply for rooftop installation?
- a. Minor roof and home repairs can be eligible costs under the scope of installation services for qualified households. Major home repairs and whole-roof replacements will not be covered under the scope of installation.
53. Will the system require to be validated after installation or during installation?
- a. System installation and certification will follow all local regulations, processes, and codes. In addition, DOE will audit installations and collect regular data and reporting to ensure compliance with the guidelines of the FOA. A random selection of beneficiaries will be interviewed to measure the reduction in household-level energy burden, and that systems are performing as anticipated.
54. Do you know if there is any room for Hydrogen Fuel Cell programs.
- a. Hydrogen Fuel Cell programs are not included in the Solar Ambassador Prize.
55. How does DOE ensure quality control and consistent messaging communication and education between installers and ambassadors given there may be multiple organizations and approaches and just a one day training?



- a. DOE and its partners will work closely with the network of Solar Ambassadors to ensure consistent messaging, education, and communication. Awarded solar companies will undergo a separate planning phase to develop a detailed deployment plan with DOE that is estimated to last 5 months.
56. If the community my team wishes to engage with is not identified as a last mile community but is a rural one with citizens that may qualify for their income or health conditions, can I apply?
  - a. Yes, you may apply. Organizations with the ability to conduct outreach to qualifying households where an individual with energy dependent disability resides are encouraged to apply, regardless of geographic area.
57. The Treasury Department recently announced checks that were sent to over 65-year-old residents with income less than \$15,000 if filing solely, or \$30,000 when filling jointly. If a list of those residents are obtained, little additional work is required to create a list of qualified beneficiaries with no ambassador (or steward) intervention.
  - a. Very low-income beneficiaries are defined in the prize rules as an individual, homeowner, or household that is enrolled in or receives benefits from one or more of the following government assistance programs: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). In this case, very low-income beneficiaries are not identified by annual income. DOE encourages awarded Solar Ambassadors to leverage existing data sets, listservs, and other sources to better target qualifying households. DOE can help facilitate between awarded Solar Ambassadors, local government agencies, and others to leverage existing information as needed.
58. What happens if after training in November a Solar Ambassador can't deploy its Strategic Plan and Community Engagement approach?
  - a. Organizations should only apply to the prize if they intend to fully deploy their plan in Phase 2. Entities that encounter any problems during Phase 2 that may prohibit them from completing their proposed plan should contact the Prize Administration team for assistance.
59. There are communities that have their energy services restored fairly quickly only to lose them again after one day or on that same day and not have them restored for a long time. Are communities like these factored into the Last Mile Community designation? Or where communities that never got back power the only ones considered for the designation?
  - a. A Last-Mile Community is defined as a census block that (a) has a high percentage of very low-income households, and (b) experiences frequent and prolonged power outages. DOE used detailed sociodemographic data and several years of power outage data to determine which census blocks in Puerto Rico experience the most frequent and prolonged power outages. You can find the Last Mile map here: [Interactive Last Mile Community Map](#)
60. What guarantee is there that the homes we identify will actually receive the solar systems? We do not want to create false expectations in the communities. Is title to the property a requirement, would zinc roofs and substandard housing qualify? Many seniors will need roof repairs and sealing. Will these jobs prior to installation be covered by this call?



- a. If a household qualifies, it will be passed to the awardees of Topic Area 1 of the FOA to assess its “solar readiness” and design a solar PV and battery storage system. If a home is not solar ready, DOE may permit roof and home repairs in the scope of installation services.
61. Will an ambassador be allowed to recruit more than 750 applicants?
- a. Ambassadors may recruit more than 750 households at the approval of the Prize Administration Team.
62. If an applicant receives, NAP, TANF or LIHEAP, but it is not listed in the Last Mile Community Map, and doesn't have an energy dependent disability will they qualify?
- a. Very low-income single-family households that are not located in a Last Mile Community nor have a resident with an energy dependent disability will not be eligible.
63. How are applicants identified as being part of our ambassador's recruitment efforts? In other words: How are they linked to our organization?
- a. Solar Ambassadors will help households submit applications mainly through a web portal that is linked to the Solar Ambassador’s organization. DOE’s contractor will verify the household information and credit the Solar Ambassador with onboarding that household.
64. How will you avoid application duplicity if a participant registers with more than one ambassador?
- a. DOE’s contractor will cross-check for duplicate applications for the same household. In addition, many Solar Ambassador organizations will be tied to certain geographical zones of outreach. Please refer to the rules document for more information on how you can choose certain municipalities or census blocks to be your organization’s area of outreach.
65. Will this program provide contact lists so we can approach possible applicants, or will the program rely solely on ambassador efforts?
- a. Solar Ambassadors will be expected to utilize existing community connections to perform outreach activities. DOE encourages awarded Solar Ambassadors to leverage existing data sets, listservs, and other sources to better target qualifying households. DOE can help facilitate between awarded Solar Ambassadors, local government agencies, and others to leverage existing information as needed.