



**Community
Power
Accelerator**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



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Community Power Accelerator Prize Rules: Accessing Capital to Deploy Equitable Community Solar

Round 1 Phase 3 Rules

October 2023

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1 Prize 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 with Five Meaningful Benefits.

Teams participating in the prize are asked to develop a project portfolio of at least 1 MW of community solar (not exceeding 5 MW for a single facility). Competitors must develop projects that incorporate at least two of the following Five Meaningful Benefits (these are in no particular order):

- Low- to moderate-income (LMI) household access
- Greater household savings
- Resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership
- Equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.

More information about the Community Power Accelerator Prize can be found on [HeroX](#).

1.1 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 via the [Community Power Accelerator online platform](#).

Prize Phase	Duration (Anticipated)	Anticipated Number of Awards	Dollar Amounts
Phase 1: Ready!	2 months	Up to 25	\$50,000 per winning team (total prize pool: \$1,250,000)
Phase 2: Set!	4-7 months	Up to 25	\$200,000 per winning team (total prize pool: \$5,000,000)
Phase 3: Grow!	4-8 months	Up to 25	\$150,000 per winning team (total prize pool: \$3,750,000)

- **Phase 1 (Ready! Contest)**

Total Cash Prize: \$50,000 per winning team

Closed - [See Phase 1 Winners](#)

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. The goal of Phase 1 is to identify new, emerging, and/or expanding community solar developers and co-developers with a high potential of developing at least 1 MW of equitable community solar projects that include at least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits.

- **Phase 2 (Set! Contest)**

Open thru **January 12, 2024, 5 p.m. ET**

Total Cash Prize: \$200,000 per winning team

Up to 25 Phase 2 winners are eligible for award. 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 participate in the [Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab](#), a live, remote course designed to educate developers on community solar in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, Phase 2 teams are offered the opportunity to work directly with technical assistance coaches for free. Phase 2 teams will use this support to ensure their projects' readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook. By the end of Phase 2, teams will have created and refined their digital project profiles on the [Community Power Accelerator platform](#).

Phase 2 includes an investor pitch event where winning teams are invited to give 5-minute pitches about their organization, team, and Phase 2 portfolio of projects.

Teams must win Phase 2 to participate in Phase 3.

Phase 3 (Grow! Contest)

Total Cash Prize: \$150,000 per winning team

Anticipated Timeline: November 2023–August 2024

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, investors, and philanthropy. Using the Community Power Accelerator platform, competitors will secure investment commitments from investors and philanthropic organizations for a community solar portfolio of at least 2 projects (totally at least 1MW); each project must include at least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits.

To be eligible for award, competitors must secure commitments for 100% funding for their portfolio via the Community Power Accelerator Platform or other funding sources (including prize funding, if desired). If the funding source is external from the Accelerator, that source should be willing to join the Accelerator during this timeframe or provide contact information for any investors who are not a part of the accelerator.

1.2 Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opens	January 19, 2023
Phase 1 Informational Webinar	February 1, 2023
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	March 15, 2023, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	April 21, 2023
Phase 2 Opens; Learning Lab Training Courses Begin	April 27, 2023
Phase 2 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than January 12, 2024 , at 5 p.m. ET. Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 29, 2023, by 5 p.m. ET • January 12, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. <p>If a team submits to the August 29th deadline and their submission is <u>not</u> selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the January 12 submission deadline.</p>
Phase 2 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024
Phase 3 Opens (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024
Investor Pitch Event	Anticipated February 2024
Phase 3 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	No later than August 30, 2024 ¹
Phase 3 Winner Announcement	Rolling; no later than October 2024

¹ Competitors may submit their Phase 3 submission for review any time before **August 30, 2024**, as soon as submission requirements are met. After submission, if not selected for award, a team may resubmit their application 1 additional time (two submissions allowed per team total) up until the Phase 3 submission deadline.

2 Phase 3: Grow! Contest Rules

2.1 Introduction

The Phase 3: Grow! contest is the third in this three-contest phase series. A total of \$3.75 million in cash prizes are available in Phase 3. Below are the draft rules for competitor feedback of the Phase 3: Grow! contest. Phase 3 is only open to winners of Phase 2.

Phase 3: Grow! Benefits
Up to 25 Phase 3 teams (i.e., those that won Phase 2 awards) are eligible to receive a cash prize award of \$150,000 for completing the Phase 3 submission requirements.

2.2 Phase 3: Grow! Goal

The goal of Phase 3 is for new, emerging, and expanding community solar developers to secure 100% investment of their community solar portfolio of 2+ projects that equal in aggregate of at least 1 MW, and each of which include at least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits.²

By the end of Phase 3: Grow!, successful teams will have:

- Met with investors via the Community Power Accelerator Platform to secure and provide evidence of 100% financing for their Community Solar Project Portfolio³ (must be at least 2 projects that total in aggregate at least 1MW).
- Demonstrate and provide evidence that the team will incorporate at least 2 of the Five Meaningful Benefits into each project included in the portfolio.
- Complete all required HeroX submission elements (see Section 2.5 below)

2.3 Phase 3: Grow! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 3 Opens (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024
Phase 3 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	No later than August 30, 2024 ⁴
Phase 3 Winner Announcement	Rolling; no later than October 2024

2.4 Phase 2 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 3: Grow! contest.

To compete for a Community Power Accelerator Phase 3 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 2)

² Meaningful benefits include increased LMI household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.

³ Competitors are strongly encouraged to use the Accelerator platform to seek funding for their projects, however competitors are allowed to use funding external to the Accelerator to meet the Phase 3 funding requirement. Please see section 2.5 What to Submit - Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet description for more information.

⁴ Competitors may submit their Phase 3 submission for review any time before August 30, 2024, as soon as submission requirements are met. After submission, if not selected for award, a team may resubmit their application 1 additional time (two submissions allowed per team total) up until the Phase 3 submission deadline.

- Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheets for each project (minimum 2) with investor reference letters
- Project Pro Forma(s) (minimum 2)
- Phase 3 narrative, providing evidence of the incorporation of meaningful benefits, community engagement, and post prize replicability and scalability.

All submission materials must be uploaded to the [Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page](#) before the final Phase 3 submission deadline: **August 30, 2024**, at 5 p.m. ET.

2. **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 A.11](#) 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.

Phase 3 submissions will be accepted, reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis as submissions are received. Competitors who submit an application may, if not awarded, resubmit their application once.

3. **Announcement:** After the Phase 3: Grow! winners are publicly announced, the Prize Administrator will notify them and request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes.

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.

2.5 What To Submit

A complete submission package for the Community Power Accelerator Prize Phase 3: Grow! contest must 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 Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet (minimum 2) with investor reference letters.	Pass/Fail
4	Project Pro Forma and Coversheet (Minimum 2)	Pass/Fail
5	Phase 3 Narrative	Pass/Fail
Notes:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All documents must be uploaded in PDF format. 		

- 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.

1. Cover Page (selected elements will be made public)

Complete the basic information below about your organization via the HeroX submission form.

- Submission (project) title (will be made public)
- Organization name (will be made public)
- Organization city, state (will be made public)
- Organization nine-digit zip code
- Organization website URL (will be made public)
- Point of contact information (name, job title, email, phone)

2. PowerPoint Summary Slide (will be made public)

One slide maximum.

Optional Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1290>

Teams must update their single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains specific 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.

3. Community Power Accelerator Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1360>

For each project (minimum 2) in their 1MW+ portfolio, teams must provide a completed Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet with detailed information about the type of funding received (debt, equity, philanthropic, etc.), the amount, and basic financing terms (tables 1-7).

Additionally, teams must provide signed documentation of project financing from each investor or financing organization. Teams may use the template provided in the Project Financing Confirmation Documentation Sheet (tables 8-11, as applicable) or provide a separate signed letter from each investor or financing organization.

As part of the 100% funding requirement, teams are allowed to include funding that is conditional.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Teams should upload a PDF copy of each of their financing confirmation documentation sheet along with signed supporting investor reference letters.

Competitors are required to use the template document which can be [found here for tables 1-7](#).

Each documentation sheet must include:

- Table 1: Developer Summary
- Table 2: Project Summary
- Table 3: Project Financing Summary
- Table 4 - 8: Financing Summary (as applicable)

Additionally, each documentation sheet requires a signed affirmation from each Investor (Table 8-11 as applicable) or provide a separate signed letter from each investor or financing organization with the following information:

Pass Criteria:

- Competitor provides completed funding questionnaires that show investment for 100% of total anticipated project costs for a minimum of 2 projects that total at least, in aggregate, 1MW.
- For each project, all investors listed in the documentation sheet has a corresponding signed affirmation statement (Table 8-11 as applicable) or other signed letter confirming financing and basic terms.

Competitors must meet both of the above "Pass" criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.

Investor Information:

- Investor Name
- Address
- Point of Contact Name
- Point of Contact Phone Number
- Point of Contact Email
- Total funds invested
- Percentage ownership stake in project
- Key conditions of agreement

Signed Investor Affirmation/Statement :

- Confirmation that all “investor information” above is accurate
- They understand the significance of “meaningful benefits” to the Project,
- That the Developer has committed to provide, at minimum, at least 2 the following meaningful benefits to the Project’s community:
 - 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.
- That the financing is contingent on the Project’s continued good-faith delivery of the articulated meaningful benefits, for a minimum period of [XX] years passed the project’s commissioning date.

4. Updated Project Proforma(s) and Summary Cover Sheet

For each project (minimum 2) in their 1MW+ portfolio, teams must include an updated (from Phase 2) Proforma including an overview of the financial aspects and projected outcomes of their community solar projects and a 1-page word document cover sheet highlighting key details (list below).

Template: <https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1361>

Scoring: Pass/Fail

Proforma:

For each project included in the Phase 3 portfolio, teams must upload a PDF or excel copy of each of their updated project proforma.

Coversheet:

Teams should include a 1-page cover sheet highlighting key financial details of their projects.

Teams may use the Proforma template from the [learning lab](#).

Each portfolio and/or project pro forma(s) must include all applicable details including:

1. Project Scope
2. Project Sources and Uses
3. Project Proforma
4. Project Debt
5. Project Loan
6. Project Returns

Project Incentives (E.g., tax credits and other government subsidies)

Pass Criteria:

- The proforma and coversheet is credible, comprehensive and includes all of the required information as it is applicable to each project included in the portfolio.

Competitors must meet the above “Pass” criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award. It is DOE’s expectation that the proforma numbers match the commitments from financiers.

5. Narrative

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, tables and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. You may also include up to 20 supporting images, figures, or graphs. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

Scoring: Pass/Fail

1. Phase 3 Prize Portfolio Information: Construction Planning and Meaningful Benefit Documentation

Teams could include:

- **Construction Planning:** Discuss your plans for building each of your prize portfolio projects including:
 - Utility Interconnections – Do you have approval from the cognizant utility to connect your projects to the grid?
 - Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) – do you have your EPC finalized and approved?
 - Any outstanding roadblocks or barriers and your plan to overcome them.
- **Meaningful Benefits:**
 - A description of the meaningful benefits that each project in your portfolio⁵ offers.
 - Describe the strategies, initiatives, or programs that will be implemented to achieve these benefits.
 - Outline the metrics and indicators that will be used to measure the impact and success of these community benefits.
 - Provide documentation such as contracts, agreements, or partnership documents to provide evidence that your project will provide the meaningful benefits that you identified once constructed.
 - Competitors must provide supplemental documentation in the appendix, and/or point to specific

Pass Criteria:

- **Construction Planning:** The team is ready to begin construction on the described projects and demonstrates a comprehensive plan encompassing various aspects, such as: utility connections, engineering procurement and construction (EPC), construction timeline and anticipated connection date, as well as identification of outstanding roadblocks or barriers and their plan to overcome them.
- **Meaningful Benefits:** At least two of the Five Meaningful Benefits are provided by each project in the portfolio. The narrative clearly and effectively demonstrates that subscribers will receive meaningful benefits.
- **Meaningful Benefits:** The described strategies, initiatives, or programs are practical and feasible, considering the project's scope, resources, and timeline.
- **Meaningful Benefits:** The metrics are well-defined, measurable, and quantifiable, and will allow for accurate evaluation and comparison of the project's success.
- **Meaningful Benefits:** The provided documentation, such as contracts,

⁵ Minimum 2 projects that total at least, in aggregate, 1MW

<p>sections of their proforma as documentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Competitors must provide detail and documentation on how they are implementing two out of Five Meaningful Benefits including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater Household Savings: What is the total of estimated savings per subscriber? ▪ Low- to Moderate-Income Access: How much of the projects are dedicated to LMI communities? ▪ Resilience and Grid Benefits: What additional storage options are provided by the project? How much (kWh)? Under what circumstances will storage options be utilized and for what duration? ▪ Community Ownership: What is the ownership model for each project? What other strategies are used to employ wealth-building? ▪ Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship: Please detail your workforce training program – including if you have union support. What percentage of onsite training exists within your model? Do you commit to providing at minimum a prevailing wage? What is your support to minority and women owned businesses and workforce? 	<p>agreements, or partnership documents, supports the claim that the project will deliver the identified meaningful benefits beyond the project’s construction.</p> <p>Competitors must meet all of the above “Pass” criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.</p>
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2. Post Prize: Future Project Portfolio, Organizational Development Growth, Meaningful Benefits

<p>Teams could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future Portfolio: Describe your plan for your next projects, including a description of siting details, challenges, and support needed to support future growth. Teams may also discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project Identification/Selection: Why did you select the new projects? How 	<p>Pass Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future Portfolio: The description demonstrates a clear and comprehensive plan for expanding the team’s community solar portfolio after the prize concludes. The plan aligns with the organization’s long-
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<p>are you using your new projects to grow strategically? (e.g., expand into a geographic regional, reach a new demographic, internal organizational growth)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnerships: What are your plans for new partnerships or collaborations with organizations, utilities, local governments, or other stakeholders? ○ Challenges: What are development challenges you might face in your anticipated project(s)? What are your plans to overcome them or mitigate risks? ○ Support from NCSP: How could the NCSP provide your team with on-going support post-prize? (Note: additional support is not guaranteed post-prize). What are your plans to continue to utilize the Community Power Accelerator Platform? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizational Growth: Describe the areas of organization growth What capacities did your organization acquire during the prize that will enhance your ability to develop future solar projects? ● Scaling the Five Meaningful Benefits: How will you ensure meaningful benefits associated with future projects are equitable and inclusive for the communities you're serving? 	<p>term goals and showcases innovative approaches to growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future Portfolio: The description identifies and outlines potential collaborations with organizations, utilities, or stakeholders for replicating projects in new locations. It demonstrates a strategic approach to building partnerships and leveraging existing networks – including the intention to add new projects onto the platform and identifying partners and staff to participate on the platform and learning lab. ● Organizational Growth: The submission highlights the capacities acquired by the organization, showcasing how new skills and resources have enhanced the team's ability to develop future solar projects. This can include areas such as technical expertise, project management capabilities, financial resources, or stakeholder engagement strategies among other capabilities. ● Scaling the Five Meaningful Benefits: The description presents a well-defined framework or approach to ensure meaningful benefits associated with replicated or scaled projects are equitable for the communities served. The team demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion. <p>Competitors must meet all of the above "Pass" criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.</p>
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2.6 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 if the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria for each of the required submission elements. Team must receive a pass on 100% of the scoring criteria to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.

The Prize Administrator will first ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The Prize Administrator reserves the right to remove evidence that contains personally identifiable information (PII). 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 five 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. Project Funding Questionnaire with Investor Reference Letters
 4. Portfolio and/or Project Pro Forma(s)
 5. Phase 3 narrative

Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all five elements will be deemed as passing the Phase 3 screening.

- **Scoring.** A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. For each required submission element a set of “pass” criteria has been identified. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will decide if the submission elements meet the specified “pass” criteria for each of the required submission elements. Team must receive a passing score on all required the submission elements to be eligible for a Phase 3 award.
 1. 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 A](#) into account. DOE is

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

Appendix A: 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/communitypoweraccelerator> before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
2. The narrative and portfolio questionnaire 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 nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

A.2 Submission Rights

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

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 B: Background on the Community Power Accelerator Program

The Community Power Accelerator is an initiative of the National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP)⁶ that brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of the funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition.

This [online platform](#) makes it easier for developers, community-based organizations, lenders, and philanthropic organizations to identify and connect with each other based on criteria that each participant will include in their profiles. It creates a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those

⁶ Learn more and sign up for the NCSP here: <https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/join-national-community-solar-partnership>.

that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connects them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding.

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

- LMI household access
- Greater household savings
- Resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership
- Equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.

The Community Power Accelerator is designed to help achieve this goal by helping new community solar developers, co-developers, and existing developers looking to expand their operations to:

- **Gain expertise:** Designed for new, small developers and community-based organizations, our Learning Lab offers online training to get you ready to start a new community solar project or program.
- **Prepare projects for funding:** Our Credit-Ready Checklist, developed with experienced solar investors, will walk you through the requirements for getting your project prepared for funding.
- **Plan your projects:** We provide free consulting services on completing the Credit-Ready Checklist.
- **Focus on equity:** We advise you on incorporating meaningful benefits for communities into your project plan and recruiting equity-focused investors and philanthropic organizations.
- **Get projects funded:** Our online platform provides a place to shop your credit-ready projects around to verified project developers, investors, and philanthropic organizations.

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

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