



Tribal College and University (TCU) Energy and Food Sovereignty Nexus Prize

FEBRUARY 2025
Official Rules

Preface

The U.S. Department of Energy's Tribal College and University (TCU) Energy and Food Sovereignty Nexus Prize will be governed by 15 U.S.C. §3719 and this official rules document. This is not a procurement under the Federal Acquisitions Regulations and will not result in a grant or cooperative agreement under 2 CFR 200. The prize administrator reserves the right to modify this official rules document if necessary and will publicly post any such notifications as well as notify registered prize participants.

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Modification Summary

Date	Modifications
Revision 1 1/10/2025	Pages 18-34: Added rules for Phases 2 and 3.
Revision 2 2/28/2025	The vocabulary in the rules document has been amended to comply with the Executive Order on Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing, and Agency-Wide Policy to Promote Equal Opportunity.

1 Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs has launched the \$4.1 million American-Made Tribal College and University (TCU) Energy and Food Sovereignty Nexus Prize. This prize encourages TCUs to create demonstration projects that educate students on energy and food sovereignty within Tribal regions. As part of the American-Made program, this prize accelerates energy modernization by incentivizing innovation through prizes, training, teaming, and mentoring.

Under this prize, TCUs will develop student-led projects, supported by faculty advisors, that are innovative and impactful. These projects will address the intersection of energy and food sovereignty, providing hands-on learning and energy infrastructure on campuses. This experience will engage students in energy education and campus energy planning, aligning with the goals of the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs:

1. Implement energy planning, education, management, development, and efficiency.
2. Promote Tribal energy development, efficiency, and use.
3. Strengthen Tribal energy infrastructure.
4. Electrify Tribal land, housing, and businesses.

This prize document contains the official rules for Phase 2 (2A and 2B) and Phase 3 of the prize. Rules for Phase 1 can be found on [HeroX](#).

1.1 Prizes

Winning teams will split a cash prize pool of up to \$4.1 million between the three phases of the prize, as shown below. All prizes awarded must be paid to a TCU.

Contest	Winners	Individual Team Prizes	Total Prize Pool
Phase 1: Teaming	Up to 30	\$40,000*	\$1,200,000
Phase 2A: Planning and Permitting	Up to 20	\$75,000	\$1,500,000
Phase 2B: Construction and Demonstration Planning	Up to 20	\$60,000	\$1,200,000
Phase 3: Demonstration Results and Sustainability Presentation	Up to 7	First place: \$75,000	\$75,000
		Second place: \$50,000	\$50,000
		Third place: \$35,000	\$35,000
		Up to four honorable mention prizes: \$10,000	\$40,000
Total		Up to \$250,000 (includes first-place bonus prize)	\$4,100,000

*See [Section 1.3](#) for details.

1.2 Key Dates

Date	Event
August 28, 2024	Prize announced
<i>Phase 1: Teaming</i>	
September 26, 2024	Phase 1 open for submissions
December 4, 2024, 5 p.m. ET	Phase 1 submission deadline
January 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 1 winner announcement
<i>Phase 2A: Planning and Permitting</i>	
January 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2A open for submissions
April 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2A submission deadline
May 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2A winner announcement
<i>Phase 2B: Construction and Demonstration Planning</i>	
May 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2B open for submissions
September 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2B submission deadline
September 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 2B winner announcement
<i>Phase 3: Demonstration Results and Sustainability Presentation</i>	
October 2025 (anticipated)	Phase 3 open for submissions
February 2026 (anticipated)	Phase 3 submission deadline
February 2026 (anticipated)	Phase 3 winner announcement

1.3 Prize Phases

The TCU Energy and Food Sovereignty Nexus Prize consists of three phases designed to incentivize student-led teams at TCUs. These teams will develop and implement demonstration projects, gaining hands-on experience in energy and food sovereignty, which can then be applied to benefit their Tribal regions. The three phases are as follows:

Phase 1: Teaming – Teams will recruit members and develop a plan for their energy and food sovereignty nexus demonstration projects. This will include developing a project schedule, building a team roster, identifying faculty support, and creating project plans. Up to 30 winning teams will receive a cash prize of \$40,000.

All teams are expected to have at least three student team members and one faculty member attend an Office of Indian Energy Annual Program Review event in person. The event will tentatively be held November 2025 in Denver, Colorado. Teams are responsible for all costs associated with travel. Teams are encouraged to leverage Phase 1 funding to offset travel costs, as no additional funding will be provided for travel to the event. Travel will not be reimbursed by DOE or the prize administrator.

Phase 2A: Planning and Permitting – Winning teams from Phase 1 will complete all preparatory work needed for project installation, including budget, timeline, and necessary permits and permissions. At the end of Phase 2A, up to 20 winning teams will receive a cash prize of \$75,000 each to purchase equipment and begin installing their demonstration projects. Winning teams will also be eligible to compete in Phase 2B.

Important note regarding National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) approvals: All teams competing in Phase 2A of this prize must submit an [EQ-1 NEPA form](#) and **must receive NEPA approval¹ for their projects prior to site preparation and any civil engineering.**

Phase 2B: Construction and Demonstration Planning – Teams will complete construction of their proposed projects and will discuss lessons learned and how they have modified or adjusted their plans. Up to 20 TCUs will receive a cash prize of up to \$60,000 each in this phase.

Phase 3: Demonstration Results and Sustainability Presentation – Teams will complete their demonstrations, including food and energy systems integration. All winning Phase 2B teams will be invited to participate at a February 2026 DOE Tribal event (in-person or virtual) to present the results of their demonstration projects, including plans for sustainability. After the presentations, cash prize awards will be presented to the top three teams and up to four honorable mentions. If the event is held in person, teams will be responsible for all costs associated with travel. Teams are encouraged to leverage Phase 2 funding to offset travel costs, as no additional funding will be provided for travel to the Office of Indian Energy Annual Program Review event. Travel will not be reimbursed by DOE or the prize administrator.

1.4 Eligibility and Applicants

All-Phase Eligibility

The DOE Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs will only consider submissions from: (1) Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), and (2) proposed projects located on the associated TCU campus.

Submissions from a consortium of TCUs will be accepted, but must be submitted by a single TCU acting as the applicant representing the consortium. If the applicant is applying on behalf of a consortium, the proposed project must be located on a campus within the consortium.

All teams will be required to provide eligibility statements and evidence to support DOE's eligibility determination. DOE will not make eligibility determinations prior to an application being submitted. Teams who do not meet the requirements of this subsection will be deemed ineligible, and their submissions will not be reviewed or considered. Only one submission per TCU will be accepted. More specifically:

“TCUs,” for the purposes of this prize, are:

- (1) institutions of higher education located in the 48 contiguous United States or Alaska, and
- (2) defined and eligible based on the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. § 1801(a)(4)) and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. § 1001, et seq.), respectively, as follows:

¹ For more information about NEPA and the approval process, please see https://www.eere-pmc.energy.gov/PMCRecipient/EO_Sample.docx.

“TCUs,” for the purposes of the prize, are institutions of higher education that are formally controlled or have been formally sanctioned or chartered by the governing body of an Indian Tribe or Tribes, except that no more than one such institution shall be recognized with respect to any such Tribe; including:

Those institutions cited and eligible for funding under Section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. § 301 note), any other institution that qualifies for funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. § 1801 et seq.), and Diné College, authorized in the Navajo Community College Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-471, Title II (25 U.S.C. § 640a note).

“Consortium” (plural consortia), for the purposes of this prize, means a group of TCUs (as defined above) that have chosen to submit a single submission. Under this prize, a consortium is eligible to submit a submission, provided that the submission is submitted by a single TCU representing the consortium.

“Campus,” for the purposes of this prize, means a collection of buildings and land that are part of a TCU.

Phase 1 Eligibility

- Applicants must be: (1) a TCU, and (2) on whose campus(es) the proposed project(s) will be located. Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.

Phase 2A Eligibility

- Only winners of Phase 1 are eligible to compete in Phase 2A.
- Applicants must be (1) a TCU, and (2) on whose campus(es) the proposed project(s) will be located. Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.

Phase 2B Eligibility

- Only winners of Phase 2A are eligible to compete in Phase 2B.
- Applicants must be: (1) a TCU, and (2) on whose campus(es) the proposed project(s) will be located. Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.

Phase 3 Eligibility

- Only winners of Phase 2B are eligible to compete in Phase 3.
- Applicants must be: (1) a TCU, and (2) on whose campus(es) the proposed project(s) will be located. Individuals or groups of individuals are not eligible to compete.

Additional Eligibility

- DOE employees, employees of sponsoring organizations, members of their immediate families (e.g., spouses, children, siblings, or parents), and persons living in the same household as such persons, whether or not related, are not eligible to participate in the prize.
- Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within 6 months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any prize contests in this program.

- Federal entities and federal employees are not eligible to participate in any portion of the prize.
- DOE national laboratory employees cannot compete in the prize.
- 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.
- Individuals participating in a foreign government talent recruitment program² sponsored by a country of risk³ and teams that include such individuals are not eligible to compete.
- Entities owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of a government of a country of risk are not eligible to compete.
- To be eligible, an individual authorized to represent the applicant must agree to and sign the following statement upon registration with HeroX:
 - I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this prize. I understand that the information contained in this submission will be relied on by the federal government to determine whether to issue a prize to the named applicant. I certify under penalty of perjury that the named applicant meets the eligibility requirements for this prize competition and complies with all other rules contained in the official rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the federal government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287, and 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733 and 3801-3812.

² A foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment program is defined as an effort directly or indirectly organized, managed, or funded by a foreign government, or a foreign government instrumentality or entity, to recruit science and technology professionals or students (regardless of citizenship or national origin, or whether having a full-time or part-time position). Some foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs operate with the intent to import or otherwise acquire from abroad, sometimes through illicit means, proprietary technology or software, unpublished data and methods, and intellectual property to further the military modernization goals and/or economic goals of a foreign government. Many, but not all, programs aim to incentivize the targeted individual to relocate physically to the foreign state for the above purpose. Some programs allow for or encourage continued employment at U.S. research facilities or receipt of federal research funds while concurrently working at and/or receiving compensation from a foreign institution, and some direct participants not to disclose their participation to U.S. entities. Compensation could take many forms, including cash, research funding, complimentary foreign travel, honorific titles, career advancement opportunities, promised future compensation, or other types of remuneration or consideration, including in-kind compensation.

³ DOE has designated the following countries as foreign countries of risk: Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China. This list is subject to change.

2 Background

2.1 Prize Background

The purpose of this prize is to encourage TCUs to develop and implement demonstration projects that help educate students about energy innovation while also addressing food sovereignty for the TCU campus and Tribal region. Students are encouraged to develop projects that are relevant to the local climate and community. Projects may include, but are not limited to, geothermally (ground-source) heated/cooled greenhouses, wind-powered greenhouses, or agrivoltaics.

Agrivoltaics systems are dual-use projects composed of solar arrays along with plants, livestock, and/or pollinators. A solar-powered greenhouse is one example of an agrivoltaics system. Another example is a ground-mount solar array with strategically placed planting, using the solar panels as coverage for shaded plants and the unshaded areas for sun-seeking plants. Livestock systems may incorporate animal grazing around ground-mount solar arrays or underneath elevated solar arrays.

Students are encouraged to incorporate local traditional plants and/or livestock into their designs as well as relevant energy systems to ensure that foods are grown as sustainably as possible.

2.2 Prize 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:

- The proposed solution is related to the energy and food sovereignty nexus.
- The majority of activities that are described in and supported by the submission package are performed in the United States and have the potential to benefit the U.S. market.
- The proposed solution is not dependent on new, pending, or proposed federal, state, or local government legislation, resolutions, appropriations, measures, or policies.
- The proposed solution does not involve the lobbying of any federal, state, or local government office.
- The proposed solution is based on fundamental technical principles and is consistent with a basic understanding of energy production and food sovereignty.

2.3 Additional Requirements

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

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

3 Phase 1: Teaming

3.1 Goal

TCU student-led teams will recruit student members and develop a plan for their energy and food sovereignty nexus demonstration project. This will include developing a project schedule and team roster, identifying faculty support, and building project plans.

3.2 Prizes

At the end of Phase 1, up to 30 winners will receive a cash prize of \$40,000 each. All applicants are expected to have at least three student team members and one faculty member attend an in-person event hosted by the Office of Indian Energy in Denver, Colorado, in November 2025. Applicants are responsible for all costs associated with travel. Applicants are encouraged to leverage Phase 1 funding to offset travel costs, as no additional funding will be provided for travel to the Office of Indian Energy event. Travel will not be reimbursed by DOE or the prize administrator. At the event, each team will present a poster on their proposed demonstration project(s). All prizes will be paid directly to the relevant TCU and not to individual team members.

3.3 How To Enter

Go to [HeroX](#) and follow the instructions for registering and submitting all required materials before the phase deadline.

3.4 Important Dates

Refer to the timeline on HeroX and [Section 1.2](#) for relevant dates and deadlines.

3.5 Process Overview

Phase 1 consists of the following steps:

1. **Activation and Submission** – Applicants develop and submit comprehensive project proposals for their energy and food sovereignty nexus demonstration projects. Applicants complete their submission packages and submit online via HeroX before the phase closes.
2. **Assessment** – The prize administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns subject-matter-expert reviewers to independently score the content of each submission. The scoring criteria assess the following applicant activities:
 - **Proposed Project Overview, Innovation, and Project Impacts:** Provide an overview of your project and design. Describe the project’s approach to integrating energy and food sovereignty, highlighting any unique and innovative methods to optimize both areas. Additionally, describe your project(s) local impacts.
 - **Project Plan:** Provide a detailed project plan, including key milestones, budget, timeline, partnerships and support, and risks and challenges.
 - **Team and Experience:** Describe the TCU and its role in the community, the motivation and skills of the student team, the expertise of faculty advisors, and the team's experience with similar projects to ensure successful implementation and community impact.

Details of the criteria can be found in [Section 3.6.23](#).

3. **Announcement** – After the winners are publicly announced, the prize administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning Phase 1, applicants develop their solutions in accordance with their plan to compete in Phase 2A.

3.6 What to Submit

Each submission package for Phase 1 is required to have the following elements:

- Online video (public)
- Cover page information submitted via HeroX (some elements will be made public)
- Narrative
- Summary PowerPoint slide (public)
- Letter of commitment from TCU (not public).

Each submission package for Phase 1 may include the following optional element:

- Additional letters of commitment or support from community and/or partner organizations (not public).

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how reviewers will evaluate and score submissions. Reviewers will evaluate submissions by assigning a single score for each scored submission section, based on their overall agreement or disagreement with a series of statements:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Non-Responsive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3.6.1 Online Video (Required, Public)

Online Video – <i>What’s your team’s proposed project in 90 seconds?</i>	
<p>Suggested content applicant provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the proposed energy and food nexus project. • A summary of the TCU and community, along with the potential benefits the project could bring. • An introduction to the team members and their roles. 	<p>A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The video clearly explains the proposed energy and food nexus project. • The video provides a clear summary of the TCU and its surrounding community. • The project team is introduced along with an overview of their roles.

Post your publicly accessible video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo). The video cannot be longer than 90 seconds. Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways, but do not focus on time-consuming activities that only improve production values (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques).

3.6.2 Cover Page Content (Required, Some Elements Will Be Made Public*)

List basic information about your submission, including:

- Project title*
- Project type (solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, agrivoltaic, other) *
- Executive summary of project (max 250 words) *
- TCU name*
- TCU city, state, and address
- TCU nine-digit zip code
- Faculty lead name
- Faculty lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Student team lead name
- Student team lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Key project members (names, emails, and roles on the team)
- Other partners (if any)
- Confirmation of intent to attend and participate in the 2025 Office of Indian Energy Annual Program Review.
 - If your team is awarded a Phase 1 prize, at least three student team members and one faculty member are expected to attend and present a poster at the DOE Office of Indian Energy Annual Program Review, to be held (tentatively) in Denver, Colorado, November 2025.
 - Names of anticipated attendees.

*Fields above will be publicly available via the HeroX website following the Phase 1 winner announcement.

3.6.3 Narrative (Required, Not Public)

You should answer each of the following three questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the three questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these three questions must not exceed 2,500 words**, not including captions, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission (see template for details).⁴ 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. If the narrative contains proprietary or sensitive information that you want protected from public disclosure, it must be marked in accordance with the instructions in [Appendix 1](#).

⁴ To help teams, DOE is providing an elective template to illustrate the types of information needed to evaluate whether teams meet minimum requirements in the associated critical success factors. Teams are not required to use this template and may submit using any form or format of their choosing. All submissions should address the substantive measures outlined in the template outlines and described in this rules document.

Narrative

Max 2,500 words and five supporting images or figures (PDF)

Find template on HeroX

Question 1 – Proposed Project Overview, Innovation, and Project Impacts

Suggested content applicant provides:

- **Project overview:** Provide a project overview. Describe the project’s approach to integrating energy and food sovereignty. Discuss the preliminary design, and explain how you plan to balance energy production with food sovereignty goals.
- **Innovation:** Highlight any unique or innovative methods you plan to use to optimize both energy production and food sovereignty. Explain how these innovations will enhance efficiency, sustainability, and the overall impact of the project.
- **Project Impacts:** Describe the anticipated local project impacts, including improved access to energy and food resources, economic development, sustainability, support for cultural traditions and values, and/or educational opportunities.

A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:

- **Project overview:** The project demonstrates a well-conceived and practical approach to integrating energy production and food sovereignty.
- **Innovation:** The project showcases a high level of innovation that significantly enhances the integration of energy and food sovereignty to maximize impact.
- **Project Impacts:** The project shows promise to significantly benefit a Tribal community by improving access to energy and food resources, promoting economic development, ensuring sustainability, supporting cultural traditions and values, and/or creating educational opportunities.

Question 2 – Project Plan

Suggested content applicant provides:

- **Project plan:** Create a project plan that outlines the following:
 - **Key project milestones:** Outline key project milestones such as finalizing the design, obtaining permits and approvals (including NEPA; see [Section 1.3](#)), procuring materials, installation and construction, operational launch, and beginning data collection.
 - **Project budget:** Outline a high-level budget that includes all sources of funding (including prize funds) and how they will be used for the project.

A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:

- **Key project milestones:** The project plan outlines key milestones and demonstrates detailed planning for each stage of the project.
- **Budget:** The budget is clearly described and realistic. The budget is detailed and includes all sources of funding and how funds will be used for the project.
- **Timeline:** The plan includes a timeline with achievable milestone completion dates that aligns with the competition period described in [Section 1.2](#).
- **Partnerships and support:** Partnerships and community support for the project are

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeline: Create a construction timeline that includes anticipated milestone completion dates. ○ Partnerships and support: Discuss any partnerships or outside support for the project. Consider including additional letters of support from partners and/or members of the community to strengthen your submission. ○ Risks and challenges: Discuss potential risks and challenges and your plans to mitigate them. 	<p>included and are validated with letters of support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risks and challenges: Potential risks and challenges are identified, along with clear strategies for mitigating them.
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Question 3 – Team and Experience

<p>Suggested content applicant provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TCU overview: Introduce your TCU and its significance within your community. ● Student team: Introduce the student team implementing the project, their roles and responsibilities, and the motivation for participating in the prize. ● Faculty advisors: Introduce the faculty advisor team and their background and experience as related to energy and food sovereignty. ● Experience: Highlight your team’s experience with similar projects and/or challenges. How will this experience support the proposed project’s overall success? 	<p>A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TCU overview: An overview of the TCU is provided, and its significance in the community is described. ● Student team: The student team leading the project is clearly described, including individual roles and responsibilities and transition plans in case of team member graduations. The team is highly motivated to successfully complete the project. ● Faculty advisors: The faculty advisors provide relevant expertise, offering strong guidance and support to the student team. ● Experience: The team showcases relevant experience with similar projects and challenges, which will help them successfully build and implement a project that will make a meaningful impact in their community.
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Reviewer Recommendation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. 	<p>A single score of 0–6 is provided, taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a Phase 1 prize.
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3.6.4 Submission Summary Slide (Required, Public)

Make a public-facing, one-slide submission summary that introduces your team and/or organization and your mission. There is no template, so applicants are free to present the information in any format. Any text must be readable in a standard printed page and a conference room projection and should be in at least 14-point font. This element will be made publicly available.

3.6.5 Letter of Commitment From TCU (Required, Not Public)

Provide a signed letter of commitment from the team's TCU that confirms the TCU's full support for the proposed project. This letter should detail the institution's commitment to providing the necessary resources, guidance, and collaboration to ensure the successful execution and community impact of the project.

3.6.6 Additional Letters of Commitment or Support From Community and/or Partner Organizations (Optional, Not Public)

Upload additional letters of commitment or support from community and/or partner organizations. These letters should demonstrate external support for your project, highlight partnerships, and outline how these organizations will contribute to the success and impact of your initiative within the community. Please combine all letters into a single PDF and upload as a single document. Maximum of one page per individual or organization.

3.7 How We Determine and Award Winners

The prize administrator screens all completed submissions and ensures that the teams are eligible. Then the prize administrator, in consultation with DOE, assigns subject-matter-expert reviewers who independently score the content of each submission. The reviewers will be composed of federal and nonfederal subject-matter experts with experience in areas relevant to the competition. They will review the applicant's submission package according to the criteria above.

3.7.1 Reviewer Panel Scoring

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Experts will review each submission individually and assess the response from the applicant to each statement in the four criteria described in the tables in [Section 3.6.3](#).
- Reviewers will score each section 0–6, depending on the degree to which the reviewer agrees that the submission reflects the statements for consideration.
- Each section score will be added together to generate a total score for the submission.
- The total scores from each reviewer will be averaged to produce a final score for the competing team/organization. This score will inform the judge's decisions on prize awards.

3.7.2 Interviews

DOE may decide to interview a subset of applicants. The interviews would be held prior to the announcement of the winners and would serve to help clarify questions the reviewers may have. Participating in interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of an applicant's likelihood of winning.

3.7.3 Final Determination

DOE will designate a federal employee as the judge before the final determination of the winners. Final determination of the winners by the judge will take into account the reviewers' feedback and scores, application of program policy factors, and the interview findings (if applicable).

3.7.4 Announcement

Approximately 30–60 days after the contest closes, the prize administrator will notify the winners and request the necessary information to distribute the prizes. The prize administrator will then publicly announce the winners.

3.8 Additional Terms and Conditions

See [Appendix 1](#) for additional requirements.

APPLICANTS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX 1 MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

4 Phase 2A: Planning and Permitting

4.1 Goal

Winning teams from Phase 1 will complete all preparatory work required prior to project installation. This includes obtaining necessary permits and permissions, finalizing detailed project designs, and securing commitments from key partners. Teams will also engage with community stakeholders to build support for their projects and develop comprehensive implementation plans, ensuring that all foundational elements are in place for successful project execution.

4.2 Prizes

Up to 20 winners will receive \$75,000 each. Prizes will be paid directly to the relevant TCU.

4.3 How To Enter

Go to [HeroX](#) and follow the instructions for registering and submitting all required materials before the phase deadline.

4.4 Important Dates

Refer to the timeline on [HeroX](#) and [Section 1.2](#) for relevant dates and deadlines.

4.5 Process Overview

Phase 2A consists of the following steps:

- 1. Progress and Submission** – Winners from Phase 1 work to refine and finalize their project designs. Competitors prepare detailed construction plans and obtain necessary permits. Teams engage with community partners and stakeholders to strengthen support. Competitors complete their submission packages, including all required documentation including the EQ-1 form via the [Project Management Center \(PMC\)](#) portal. Submissions

are made online through the designated platform before the Phase 2A deadline (see [Section 1.2](#)).

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 reviewer criteria assess the following competitor activities:
 - **Project Design:** Evaluators review the current project design, modifications since Phase 1, integration of energy and food sovereignty initiatives, supporting documentation, and project permits and approvals.
 - **Construction Budget, Timeline, Risks, and Challenges:** Reviewers examine the project budget, construction timeline, and the team’s approach to potential risks and challenges.
 - **Partnerships and Community Support:** Reviewers evaluate project partnerships, community support, and TCU involvement, including a review of commitment letters.
 - **Plan for Collecting Metrics on Impact:** Reviewers assess the expected outcomes, proposed impact measurements, and data collection plan for evaluating the project’s local impacts.
3. **Announcement** – After the winners are publicly announced, the prize administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning Phase 2A, competitors will build their solutions in accordance with their plan to compete in Phase 2B.

4.6 What To Submit

Each complete submission package for Phase 2A is required to have the following elements:

- Cover page content (required, some elements will be made public)
- Narrative (required, not public)
- EQ-1 submission via the [Project Management Center \(PMC\)](#) portal, with associated maps, pictures, documents, and descriptions, as detailed by the EQ-1 requirements
- Summary PowerPoint slide (required but may be the same as Phase 1; public)
- Project design documents, permits, and approvals (required, not public)
- Letters of commitment from the TCU (required, not public) and other letters of support (optional, not public).

4.6.1 Cover Page Content (Required, Some Elements Will Be Made Public*)

List basic information about your submission (via the [HeroX](#) submission form), including:

- Project title*
- Project type (solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, agrivoltaic, other)*

- Executive summary of project (maximum 250 words)*
- TCU name*
- TCU city, state, and address
- TCU nine-digit zip code
- Faculty lead name
- Faculty lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Student team lead name
- Student team lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their professional online profiles)
- Other partners (if any).

*This element is a public element and will be made publicly available.

4.6.2 Narrative (Required, Not Public)

You should answer each of the following four questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the four questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these four questions must not exceed 5,000 words**, not including captions, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. You may also include **up to 10 supporting images, figures, or graphs**. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided. If the narrative contains proprietary or sensitive information that you want protected from public disclosure, it must be marked in accordance with the instructions in [Appendix 1](#).

Narrative	
Maximum 5,000 words and up to 10 supporting images or figures (PDF)	
Question 1: Project Design	
Provide an overview of the current project design, highlighting any changes from Phase 1. Include details about the integration of energy and food sovereignty initiatives.	
<p>Suggested content competitor provides:</p> <p>Project Design Overview: Describe your current design and any modifications since Phase 1. Explain how these changes improve feasibility, efficiency, and/or impact.</p> <p>Energy and Food Integration: Explain how energy and food sovereignty initiatives are integrated into the project. Highlight strategies and technologies used to balance and optimize both aspects.</p>	<p>A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:</p> <p>Project Design Overview: Provides a detailed description of the current design, clearly explaining modifications and their benefits.</p> <p>Energy and Food Integration: Demonstrates effective integration of energy and food sovereignty initiatives, with clear strategies for balancing both aspects.</p>

<p>Supporting Design Documentation⁵: Include project drawings, schematics, or other plans as supporting images.</p> <p>Summary of Project Permits and Approvals: List all required permits and approvals, specifying the issuing authority, date of issuance, and purpose. Demonstrate compliance with regulations. Include copies of all required permits in Section 3.6.4.</p>	<p>Supporting Design Documentation: Includes comprehensive visual representations of the project design.</p> <p>Summary of Project Permits and Approvals: Provides a thorough overview of all required permits and approvals, demonstrating readiness for implementation.</p>
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Question 2: Construction Budget, Timeline, Risks, and Challenges
Present a comprehensive budget and timeline for your project and identify potential risks and challenges.

<p>Suggested content competitor provides:</p> <p>Budget: List the major categories of expenses (e.g., materials, equipment, labor) and provide estimated costs for each category. Describe how you plan to track expenses throughout the project and how unexpected costs or budget overruns will be addressed. If your project exceeds the total prize amount to be awarded, please explain how your team plans to address the budget shortfall with additional funds or in-kind services.</p> <p>Construction Timeline: Provide a detailed timeline covering all project phases. Include key milestones such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design finalization • Material procurement • Installation • Operational launch, highlighting critical dependencies and checkpoints. <p>Risks and Challenges: Identify potential issues that could arise during implementation. Provide a detailed plan for mitigating these risks and overcoming challenges to ensure successful project completion.</p>	<p>A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:</p> <p>Budget: The project presents a thorough budget breakdown with realistic cost estimates, a clear plan for expense tracking, and a feasible strategy for managing financial challenges, demonstrating sound financial planning.</p> <p>Construction Timeline: The project provides a comprehensive and detailed timeline that includes all key milestones, critical dependencies, and checkpoints, demonstrating a clear path to successful completion.</p> <p>Risks and Challenges: The project identifies potential risks and challenges and presents a thorough and feasible plan for mitigating these risks and overcoming challenges, ensuring successful project completion.</p>
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⁵ Teams may include this as part of their 10 allowable images and/or as part of their documentation uploaded per [Section 3.6.4](#).

Question 3: Partnerships and Community Support

Describe the partnerships you've formed for the project and explain how your project is supported by the Tribal community.

An updated letter of commitment must be provided from the relevant TCU noting continued support for the project. Letters of support from partners are strongly encouraged but not required.

Suggested content competitor provides:

Partnerships: List your project partners (e.g., local businesses, community organizations, or Tribal departments). Explain each partner's role and contributions to the project.

Community Support: Describe support from the Tribal community. Highlight any community engagement activities you've conducted. Explain how your project aligns with community needs and values.

TCU Support: Describe how your TCU is supporting the project. Competitors must include a letter of commitment from their TCU approving the project and any relevant land/facility use. Please include a signed letter of support from your TCU as part of the [Section 3.6.6](#) submission materials.

A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:

Partnerships: The project has formed meaningful partnerships that enhance its capacity to meet its goals. The roles and contributions of each partner are clearly defined.

Community Support: The project demonstrates strong support from the Tribal community. It shows how the project aligns with community needs and values and includes evidence of community engagement.

TCU Support: The submission includes clear support from the TCU, including necessary approvals and resource commitments, ensuring institutional backing for the project's success.

Question 4: Plan for Collecting Metrics on Project Impact

Describe how you will measure the impact of your project and its benefits to the community.

Suggested content competitor provides:

Expected Outcomes: Explain how your project will improve access to energy and local food resources in your community. Describe the economic benefits you anticipate, such as job creation or skill development. Outline the educational opportunities your project will provide, including how it will sustainably engage students and community members in learning about energy and food sovereignty during and beyond the prize.

Impact Measurements: Describe how you'll collect data on:

- Energy usage or energy efficiency gains (e.g., amount of energy produced or energy usage avoided)

A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for each of the following statements:

Expected Outcomes: The project clearly describes anticipated benefits in terms of energy access, food sovereignty, economic development, and educational opportunities.

Impact Measurements: The project outlines specific, relevant metrics that will effectively measure its impact across all key areas.

Data Collection Plan: The project presents a feasible and well-thought-out plan for collecting impact data, with clear methods and responsibilities assigned.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people or facilities benefiting from improved energy and food resources • Community impacts (e.g., number of people or facilities benefiting from improved energy and food resources, jobs created, local businesses involved) • Educational impacts (e.g., student participation, conference visits, poster presentations, skills learned) • Community involvement (e.g., event attendance, volunteer participation, joint events with the local community). <p>Data Collection Plan: Provide a detailed explanation of your methods for collecting this impact data. This might include tools such as surveys, usage logs, or participation records. Explain how frequently you plan to collect data and who on your team will be responsible for managing this process. Describe any partnerships or resources you'll use to support your data collection efforts.</p>	
Reviewer Recommendation	
<p>There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX.</p>	<p>A single score on a scale of 0–6 is provided for the following statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The innovation, team, and plan should be strongly considered for a Phase 1 prize.

4.6.3 Submission Summary Slide (Required, Public)

Make a public-facing, one-slide submission summary that introduces your team and/or organization and your mission. There is no template, so competitors are free to present the information in any format. Any text must be readable in a standard printed page and a conference room projection and should be in at least 14-point font. This element will be made publicly available. The slide may be updated or may be the same as the Phase 1 submission.

4.6.4 Project Design Documents, Permits, and Approval (Required, Not Public)

Please submit copies of all necessary permits and approvals obtained for the project. These documents are essential to demonstrate compliance with local, state, Tribal, and federal regulations, and to verify that your project is ready for implementation. If interconnection with a local utility is

required (e.g., for ground-mounted solar), include permits from this process. Ensure that all relevant permits and approvals are up to date and properly documented. Up to 20 pages maximum.

4.6.5 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Determination Documentation (Required, Not Public)

To be eligible for a Phase 2A award, teams must provide:

1. A copy of their submitted EQ-1 form
2. A final NEPA determination number
3. A summary of the NEPA determination received for their project (250-word maximum).

To obtain a NEPA determination, teams must submit their planned project via an EQ-1⁶ form to DOE on the Project Management Center website⁷ no later than the Phase 2A submission deadline to allow adequate time for review and processing. After submitting the EQ-1 form, teams must email the prize administrator at TCUprize@nrel.gov with a copy of the submitted EQ-1 form.

A step-by-step guide on how to submit an EQ-1 form can be found at: <https://www.eere-pmc.energy.gov/RefDocs/EQ1SubmissionGuide.pdf>.

4.6.6 Letters of Commitment From TCU (Required) and Other Letters Support (Optional)

Teams must submit an updated, signed letter from their TCU stating that the institution supports the project and approves any land or facility use. A project map that specifies where on the campus the project(s) will be located should also be included. Teams may also include letters from other supporters, such as community leaders or partners. These optional letters should show how the supporters endorse the project and what they will contribute. All letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

4.7 How We Determine and Award Winners

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how reviewers will evaluate and score your submission.

Following the submission deadline, the prize administrator screens all completed submissions and ensures that the teams are eligible. Then the prize administrator, in consultation with DOE, assigns subject-matter expert reviewers who independently score the content of each submission. The reviewers will be composed of federal and nonfederal subject-matter experts with expertise in areas relevant to the competition. They will review the applicant's submission package according to the scoring criteria described in [Section 3.6.2](#).

4.7.1 Reviewer Panel Scoring

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Experts will review each submission individually and assess the response from the applicant to each statement in the four criteria described in the tables in [Section 3.6.2](#).

⁶ A copy of the EQ-1 form can be found at: https://www.eere-pmc.energy.gov/PMCRRecipient/EQ_Sample.docx

⁷ <https://www.eere-pmc.energy.gov/NEPA.aspx>

- Reviewers will score each section on a scale from 0–6, depending on the degree to which the reviewer agrees that the submission reflects the statements for consideration.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Non-Responsive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- Each section score will be added together to generate a total score for the submission.
- The total scores from each reviewer will be averaged to produce a final score for the competing team/organization. This score will inform the judge’s (DOE’s) decisions on prize awards.

4.7.2 Interviews

DOE may decide to interview a subset of applicants. The interviews would be held prior to the announcement of the winners and would serve to help clarify questions the reviewers may have. Participating in interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of an applicant’s likelihood of winning.

4.7.3 Final Determination

DOE will designate a federal employee as the judge before the final determination of the winners. Final determination of the winners by the judge will take into account the reviewers’ feedback and scores, application of program policy factors, and the interview findings (if applicable).

4.7.4 Announcement

Approximately 30 days after the contest closes, the prize administrator will notify the winners and request the necessary information to distribute the prizes. The prize administrator will then publicly announce the winners.

4.8 Additional Terms and Conditions

See [Appendix 1](#) for additional requirements.

APPLICANTS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX 1 MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

5 Phase 2B: Construction and Demonstration Planning

5.1 Goal

The goal of Phase 2B is to complete the construction and demonstration of the proposed project(s), ensuring that they are operational and on track for achieving their intended outcomes.

5.2 Prizes

Up to 20 winners will receive \$60K each. Prize awards will be paid to the relevant TCU.

5.3 How To Enter

Go to [HeroX](#) and follow the instructions for registering and submitting all required materials before the phase deadline.

5.4 Important Dates

Refer to the timeline on [HeroX](#) and [Section 1.2](#) for relevant dates and deadlines.

5.5 Plan Phase Process

Phase 2B consists of the following steps:

1. **Progress and Submission** – Teams will complete the construction of their proposed projects and implement their demonstration plans. They will document their progress, any challenges faced, and lessons learned during this process. Competitors will then compile their submission packages, including evidence of project completion and initial operational data, and submit them online before the Phase 2B deadline.
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 reviewer criteria assess the following competitor activities:
 - a. **Evidence of Completed Construction and Operational Status** – Reviewers will evaluate the submitted photographic evidence, video documentation, and technical summary to confirm that the project is fully constructed and operational. A single pass/fail score will be provided based on whether all required documentation has been submitted and clearly demonstrates that the project is fully constructed and operational.
 - b. **Construction Progress and Lessons Learned** – Reviewers will assess the team’s description of project completion, challenge management, budget management, learning and growth, and community engagement. A pass/fail score will be provided for each of these elements, evaluating the team’s adaptability, problem-solving skills, financial stewardship, reflective insights, and community involvement.
 - c. **Demonstration Planning and Long-Term Sustainability** – Reviewers will provide pass/fail scores, evaluating the team’s plans for project demonstration, operational

management, campus and community integration, long-term sustainability strategies, and potential future influence.

Teams must receive passing scores for each scoring criterion to be considered for an award. If a team does not succeed in their initial submission, they will be allowed to submit an amended submission within 14 days (or longer if agreed upon by the prize administrator) to provide additional information to address any criteria they failed to address in the initial submission.

- 3. Announcement** – After the winners are publicly announced, the prize administrator notifies them and requests the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. After winning Phase 2B, winners will be eligible for Phase 3, where they will present their achievements, share lessons learned, and highlight plans for long-term sustainability. The presentations will take place at the February 2026 DOE Tribal event, to be held in person or virtually.

5.6 What To Submit

Each complete submission package for Phase 2B is required to have the following elements:

1. Cover page (public)
2. Evidence of the completed construction and energizing of the food energy nexus project
3. Narrative.

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how reviewers will evaluate and score your submission. Reviewers will evaluate your submission by assigning a single score (pass/fail) for each scored submission section, based on their overall agreement or disagreement with a series of statements.

5.6.1 Cover Page Content (Public)

List basic information about your submission, including:

- Project title*
- Project type (solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, agrivoltaic, other) *
- Project commission date
- Executive summary of project (maximum 250 words) *
- TCU name*
- TCU city, state, and address
- TCU nine-digit zip code
- Faculty lead name
- Faculty lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Student team lead name
- Student team lead contact information (email, phone number)
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their professional online profiles)
- Other partners (if any).

* This element is a public element and will be made publicly available.

5.6.2 Evidence of the Completed Construction and Energizing of the Food Energy Nexus Project

Evidence of the Completed Construction and Energizing of the Food Energy Nexus Project

Provide clear evidence that your food energy nexus project has been fully constructed and is operational. This documentation is crucial for demonstrating that your project has moved from the planning stage to reality.

Required documentation:

Photographic Evidence: Include a series of high-quality photographs (at least five, no more than 10) that show different aspects of your completed project. Please ensure that photos clearly demonstrate the key components of both the energy and food systems.

Video Documentation: Submit a brief video (2–3 minutes) showcasing your operational project. The video should demonstrate the project in action, highlighting how the energy and food systems work together.

System Specifications: Provide a one-page technical summary of your completed system, including key specifications of both the energy production or energy efficiency and anticipated food production components.

NEPA Compliance: Within the photographic and video documentation sections above, please include evidence that construction didn't begin until after receiving NEPA approval and the appropriate permits.

Optional documentation (limit 20 pages):

Operational Data: Include initial operational data that demonstrates that your system is functioning. This could include energy production figures or other relevant metrics.

Completion Certificates: If applicable, include copies of any relevant completion certificates, inspection approvals, or commissioning.

Other Documentation: Include any additional documentation that you believe demonstrates the completion and successful operation of your project.

A single pass/fail score will be provided for the following criterion:

- All required documentation (photos, video, and technical summary) has been submitted and clearly demonstrates that the project is fully constructed and operational.

5.6.3 Narrative

You should answer each of the following two questions. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses. You decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two questions do not have a word limit; however, **the aggregate response to these two questions must not exceed 3,000 words**, not including captions, 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. If the narrative contains proprietary or sensitive information that you want protected from public disclosure, it must be marked in accordance with the instructions in [Appendix 1](#).

Narrative	
Maximum 3,000 words and five supporting images or figures (PDF)	
Question 1: Construction Progress and Lessons Learned	
Provide an update on your project’s construction progress and share key insights gained during this phase.	
<p>Suggested content competitor provides:</p> <p>Project Completion: Describe the completed construction of your project. How does the final result compare to your original plans?</p> <p>Challenge Management: What major challenges did you encounter during construction, and how did you address them?</p> <p>Budget Management: Provide a brief update on your project budget, explaining any significant changes from your original plan.</p> <p>Learning and Growth: What are the most important lessons your team has learned during the construction process?</p> <p>Community Engagement: How have students and community members been involved in the construction phase? What skills or knowledge have they gained?</p>	<p>A single pass/fail score will be provided for each of the following criteria statements:</p> <p>Project Completion: The team provides a clear and comprehensive description of the completed construction, effectively comparing the final result to the original plans. The response demonstrates adaptability and problem-solving skills in achieving project goals.</p> <p>Challenge Management: The team identifies major challenges encountered during construction and clearly explains how these were addressed. The response shows resourcefulness and resilience in overcoming obstacles.</p> <p>Budget Management: The project update includes a concise yet informative overview of the budget, clearly explaining any significant changes from the original plan. The team demonstrates good financial stewardship and adaptability in managing project resources.</p> <p>Learning and Growth: The team articulates meaningful lessons learned during the construction process, showing reflection and insight that could benefit future projects or other TCUs.</p> <p>Community Engagement: The response provides strong evidence of student and community</p>

	involvement in the construction phase, clearly outlining the skills and knowledge gained. The project demonstrates effective integration of educational opportunities and community participation.
Question 2: Demonstration Planning and Long-Term Sustainability Describe your plans for demonstrating your project and ensuring its long-term sustainability.	
<p>Suggested content competitor provides:</p> <p>Demonstration and Metrics: Outline your plan for fully activating and demonstrating your project. What are the final key metrics will you use to show its impact?</p> <p>Project Operations: How will you manage the day-to-day operation of your project? Who will be responsible for maintenance?</p> <p>Campus and Community Integration: Describe how your project will be integrated into campus and community life.</p> <p>Long-Term Sustainability: Explain your strategies for ensuring the project’s long-term viability, including any plans for future funding or support.</p> <p>Future Influence: Describe how your project might influence future energy and food sovereignty initiatives at your TCU or in your community.</p>	<p>A single pass/fail score will be provided for each of the following criteria statements:</p> <p>Demonstration and Metrics: The team presents a clear and feasible plan for demonstrating the project, with well-defined, measurable metrics to show its impact.</p> <p>Project Operations: The project has a well-thought-out strategy for day-to-day operations and maintenance, with clear assignment of responsibilities.</p> <p>Campus and Community Integration: The team demonstrates a strong plan for integrating the project into campus and community life.</p> <p>Long-Term Sustainability: The team provides robust strategies for ensuring the project's long-term viability, including realistic plans for future funding or support.</p> <p>Future Influence: The team articulates a compelling vision for how the project might influence future energy and food sovereignty initiatives at their TCU or in their community.</p>

5.6.4 Submission Summary Slide (Public)

Make a public-facing, one-slide submission summary that introduces your team and/or organization and your mission. There is no template, so competitors are free to present the information in any format. Any text must be readable in a standard printed page and a conference room projection and should be in at least 14-point font. This element will be made publicly available. The slide may be updated or may be the same as the Phase 1 or 2A submission.

5.7 How We Determine and Award Winners

The following details provide more guidance on what information to provide and how reviewers will evaluate and score your submission.

Following the submission deadline, the prize administrator screens all completed submissions and ensures that the teams are eligible. Then the prize administrator, in consultation with DOE, assigns subject-matter expert reviewers who independently score the content of each submission. The

reviewers will be composed of federal and nonfederal subject-matter experts with experience in areas relevant to the competition. They will review the applicant's submission package according to the scoring criteria described in [Section 4.6](#).

5.7.1 Reviewer Panel Scoring

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Experts will review each submission individually and assess the response from the applicant to each statement in the criteria described in the tables in [Section 4.6](#).
- Reviewers will score each section pass/fail, depending on whether the reviewer agrees that the submission reflects the statements for consideration.
- Teams must receive a passing score for all criteria to be considered for a Phase 2B award by the prize judge.

5.7.2 Interviews

DOE may decide to interview a subset of competitors. The interviews would be held prior to the announcement of the winners and would serve to help clarify questions the reviewers may have. Participating in interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of a competitor's likelihood of winning.

5.7.3 Final Determination

DOE will designate a federal employee as the judge before the final determination of the winners. Final determination of the winners by the judge will take into account the reviewers' feedback and scores, application of program policy factors, and the interview findings (if applicable).

5.7.4 Announcement

Approximately 30 days after the contest closes, the prize administrator will notify the winners and request the necessary information to distribute the prizes. The prize administrator will then publicly announce the winners.

5.8 Additional Terms and Conditions

See [Appendix 1](#) for additional requirements.

COMPETITORS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX 1 MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

6 Phase 3: Demonstration Results and Sustainability

6.1 Goal

The goal of Phase 3 is to showcase the results and impacts of the demonstration projects completed by the winning teams from Phase 2B. This phase provides an opportunity for teams to present their achievements, share lessons learned, and highlight plans for long-term sustainability. The presentations will take place at the February 2026 DOE Tribal event, allowing teams to share their experiences with peers, experts, and stakeholders in the field of energy and food sovereignty.

6.2 Prizes

At the end of Phase 3, all Phase 2B winning teams will present the impact and results of their projects, and the top teams will receive the following prizes:

- First place: \$75,000
- Second place: \$50,000
- Third place: \$35,000
- Up to four honorable mention prizes: \$10,000.

The total prize pool for Phase 3 is \$200,000.

6.3 How To Enter

To enter Phase 3, teams will be required to:

1. Prepare a presentation showcasing their project results and impacts
2. Deliver their presentation at the February 2026 DOE Tribal event (in-person or virtual, as determined by DOE)
3. Be prepared to answer questions from the judging panel and audience.

No additional HeroX submission is required for this phase.

6.4 Important Dates

Refer to the timeline on [HeroX](#) and [Section 1.2](#) for relevant dates and deadlines.

6.5 Plan Phase Process

Phase 3 consists of the following steps:

1. **Progress and Submission** – Teams prepare their presentations highlighting project results, impacts, and plans for sustainability. Teams will then deliver their presentations at the February 2026 DOE Tribal event.

2. **Assessment** – A panel of reviewers will evaluate the presentations based on the criteria outlined in [Section 5.6](#). Reviewers and the prize judge (DOE) will deliberate and select the top three winners and up to four honorable mentions.
3. **Announcement** – Winners will be announced at the conclusion of the event (anticipated).

6.6 Presentation Requirements

Presentation Requirements	
Each team will be allotted 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by a 5-minute Q&A session with the review panel.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Presentations should cover the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brief description of the project and its goals ○ Key team members and partners. • Implementation and Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overview of the implementation process ○ Challenges faced and how they were overcome. • Results and Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Energy production and efficiency achievements ○ Food sovereignty outcomes ○ Educational impact on students and the community ○ Economic benefits to the TCU and surrounding area. • Lessons Learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Key insights gained from the project ○ Recommendations for similar future projects. • Sustainability and Future Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Long-term sustainability strategy ○ Plans for expansion or replication. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Presentations will be scored on a scale of 0–6 for each of the following criteria:</p> <p>Project Impact: The project demonstrates significant and measurable improvements in energy efficiency and production, makes tangible contributions to food sovereignty, provides substantial educational benefits, and creates positive economic impacts for the TCU and surrounding community.</p> <p>Innovation and Creativity: The project employs unique and effective approaches to integrating energy and food systems, demonstrating creativity and resourcefulness in both its design and implementation.</p> <p>Sustainability and Scalability: The team presents a comprehensive and viable plan for the project’s long-term sustainability, with strong potential for expansion or replication at other TCUs or in other Tribal communities.</p> <p>Presentation Quality: The presentation is clear and well-organized and effectively communicates the project’s goals, implementation, and outcomes, with the team demonstrating a thorough understanding of their project through insightful responses to questions.</p>

<p>Teams should prepare visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint slides, photos, or short video clips) to support their presentation. All presentation materials must be submitted to the prize administrator at least one week before the event.</p>	
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6.7 How We Determine and Award Winners

Reviewers will evaluate each presentation by assigning a single score for each scored submission section, based on their overall agreement or disagreement with the criteria statements in [Section 5.6](#).

6.7.1 Reviewer Panel Scoring

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- Each reviewer will independently score the presentations based on the criteria in [Section 5.6](#) on a 0–6 scale, as shown below:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Non-Responsive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- Scores from all reviewers will be averaged to produce a final score for each team.
- Teams will be ranked based on their final scores.

6.7.2 Final Determination

DOE will make the final determination of winners, taking into account the reviewer’s scores and feedback, the team’s alignment with DOE’s program goals and policy factors (as outlined in [Section A.13](#)), and the overall impact and potential of the projects.

6.7.3 Announcement

It is anticipated that winners will be announced at the conclusion of the February 2026 DOE Tribal event.

6.8 Additional Terms and Conditions

See [Appendix 1](#) for additional requirements.

COMPETITORS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX 1 MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

Appendix 1: Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Requirements

Your submission for the prize is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online by 5 p.m. ET on the prize deadline date, before the prize's phase submission period closes. Late submissions or any other form of submission may be rejected.
- You must include all the required elements in your submission. The prize administrator may disqualify your submission after an initial screening if you fail to provide all required submission elements. Applicants may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges.
- Your submission must be in English and in a format readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- Submissions will be disqualified if they contain any matter that, in the sole discretion of the U.S. Department of Energy or the prize administrator, is indecent, obscene, defamatory, libelous, and/or lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for any of the prizes 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. You should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the prize described here and no other prize on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
- The prize administrator, when feasible, may give applicants an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.
- As part of your submission to this prize, you will be required to sign the following statement:

I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this Prize. I understand that the information contained in this submission will be relied on by the federal government to determine whether to issue a Prize to the named Applicant. I certify under penalty of perjury that the named Applicant meets the eligibility requirements for this Prize competition and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the federal government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287, and 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733 and 3801-3812.

A.2 Verification for Payments

The prize administrator will verify the identity and role of all applicants before distributing any prizes. Receiving a prize payment is contingent upon fulfilling all requirements contained herein. The prize administrator will notify winning applicants using provided email contact information for the individual or entity that was responsible for the submission. Each applicant will be required to sign and return to the prize administrator, within 30 days of the date on the notice, a completed National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Request for ACH Banking Information form and a completed W-9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>). In the sole discretion of the prize administrator, a winning applicant will be disqualified from the competition and receive no prize funds if: (i) the person/entity does not respond to notifications; (ii) the person/entity fails to sign and return the required documentation

within the required time period; (iii) the notification is returned as undeliverable; or (iv) the submission or person/entity is disqualified for any other reason.

In the event of a dispute as to any registration, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the applicant. 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. All applicants may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

A.3 Teams and Single-Entity Awards

The prize administrator will award a single dollar amount to the applicant, whether consisting of a single TCU or a TCU consortium. The applicant is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among the consortium as applicable. The prize administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters or disputes between consortium members, if applicable.

A.4 Treatment of Submission Materials

The elements of the submission that are designated public will become publicly available as part of this prize. Therefore, these elements must not include trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information.

If it is necessary to share trade secrets or business-sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it should only be done in an element that is NOT designated as public. Any confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise.

The submission must be marked as follows and must identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or confidential, proprietary, or privileged information: “Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data: Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets, confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. [End of Notice]”

The header and footer of every page that contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as follows: “Contains Trade Secrets, Confidential, Proprietary, or Privileged Information Exempt from Public Disclosure.” In addition, each line or paragraph containing proprietary, privileged, or trade secret information must be clearly marked with double brackets. DOE, the prize administrator, and any other third party supporting DOE in the contest assume no liability for the public disclosure of any information in the elements designated as public and for any unmarked information any element NOT designated as public.

Furthermore, by making a submission and consenting to the rules of the prize, the applicant is granting to DOE, the prize administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest a license to display publicly and use the elements of the submission that are designated as public and any unmarked information in the elements of the submission that are NOT designated as public for government purposes, including posting or linking elements on websites or publicizing the submissions and applicants in the media and other announcements. The applicant is granting to DOE, the prize administrator, and other third parties a limited license to use or disclose any properly marked information for evaluation purposes only.

A.5 Representation and Warranties

By entering, the applicant represents and warrants that:

1. The applicant's entire submission is an original work by the applicant, and the applicant has not included third-party content (such as writing, text, graphics, artwork, logos, photographs, likenesses of any third party, musical recordings, clips of videos, television programs, or motion pictures) in or in connection with the submission, unless (i) otherwise requested by the prize administrator or disclosed by the applicant in the submission, and (ii) the applicant acquired the necessary rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission, as specified throughout the rules.
2. To the best of the applicant's knowledge, the use of the submission in the prize, including any use by DOE or the prize administrator, does not and will not infringe on or violate any rights of any third party or entity, including, without limitation, patent, copyright, trademark, trade secret, defamation, privacy, publicity, false light, misappropriation, intentional or negligent infliction of emotional distress, confidentiality, or any contractual or other rights.
3. All persons who were engaged by the applicant to work on the submission or who appear in the submission in any manner have:
 - a. Given the applicant their express written consent to submit the submission for exhibition and other exploitation in any manner and in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter discovered, throughout the world;
 - b. Provided written permission to include their name, image, or pictures in or with the submission (or, if a minor who is not the applicant's child, the applicant must have the permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian), and the applicant may be asked by the prize administrator to provide permission in writing; and
 - c. Not been and are not currently under any union or guild agreement that results in any ongoing obligations resulting from the use, exhibition, or other exploitation of the submission.
4. The submission is free of malware.

A.6 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 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 award is contingent upon the availability of appropriations.

A.7 Resolution of Disputes

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

Neither DOE nor the prize administrator will arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between applicant team members or among a consortium of applicants.

A.8 Publicity

The winners of these prizes (collectively, "winners") will be featured on DOE's and the prize administrator's 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.9 Liability

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest. 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 judge responsible for this prize, the judge has determined that no liability insurance naming DOE as an insured will be required of applicants to compete in this competition per 15 U.S.C. § 3719(i)(2). Applicants should assess the risks associated with their proposed activities and adequately insure themselves against possible losses.

A.10 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Where necessary, materials should be marked as noted in [Section A.4](#). Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, DOE will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for review of the application or as otherwise authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the government's right to use the information if it is obtained from another source.

Applicants will be notified of any Freedom of Information Act requests for their submissions in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 70.26. Applicants may then have the opportunity to review materials and work with a Freedom of Information Act representative prior to the release of materials. DOE does intend to keep all submission materials private except for those materials designated as "will be made public."

A.11 Privacy

If you choose to provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website, you understand that such information will be transmitted to DOE and may be kept in a system of records. Such information will be used only to respond to you in matters regarding your submission and/or the contest unless you choose to receive updates or notifications about other contests or programs from DOE on an opt-in basis. DOE and NREL are not collecting any information for commercial marketing.

A.12 General Conditions

DOE reserves the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the prize, or any part of it, at any time. If any fraud, technical failure, or any other factor beyond DOE's reasonable control impairs the integrity or proper functioning of the prize, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel the prize. Any performance toward prize goals is conducted entirely at the risk of the applicant, and DOE shall not compensate any applicants for any activities performed in furtherance of this prize.

Although DOE may indicate that it will select up to several winners for each prize, DOE reserves the right to only select applicants that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no applicants are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no applicants to be winners and will award no prize money.

DOE may conduct a risk review, using government resources, of the applicant and project personnel for potential risks of foreign interference. The outcomes of the risk review may result in the submission being eliminated from the prize competition. This risk review, and potential elimination, can occur at any time during the prize competition. An elimination based on a risk review is not appealable.

A.13 Program Policy Factors

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

- Geographic diversity and potential economic impact of projects.
- Whether the use of additional DOE funds and provided resources are nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and the DOE mission generally.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits technological or programmatic diversity when compared to the existing DOE project portfolio and other applicants.
- The degree to which the submission is likely to lead to increased employment and manufacturing in the United States or provide other economic benefits to U.S. taxpayers.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate transformational technological, financial, or workforce advances in areas that industry by itself is not likely to undertake because of technical or financial uncertainty.
- The degree to which the submission supports complementary DOE-funded efforts or projects, which, when taken together, will best achieve the goals and objectives of DOE.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's funding to new applicants and recipients who have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission enables new and expanding market segments.

A.14 National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

This prize is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321, et seq.). NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions. For additional background on NEPA, please see DOE's NEPA website at <http://nepa.energy.gov/>.

While NEPA compliance is a federal agency responsibility and the ultimate decisions remain with the federal agency, all participants in the TCU Energy and Food Sovereignty Nexus Prize will be required to assist in the timely and effective completion of the NEPA process in the manner most pertinent to their participation in the prize competition. Participants may be asked to provide DOE with information on fabrication and testing of their device such that DOE can conduct a meaningful evaluation of the potential environmental impacts.

A.15 Definitions

“Prize administrator” means both the Alliance for Sustainable Energy operating in its capacity under the Management and Operating Contract for NREL and DOE’s Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs. When the prize administrator is referenced in this document, it refers to staff from both the Alliance for Sustainable Energy and Office of Indian Energy staff. Ultimate decision-making authority regarding prize matters rests with the Director of DOE’s Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs.

A.16 Return of Funds

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

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