



Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot

OFFICIAL RULES

March 2024

Preface

The U.S. Department of Energy's American-Made Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot 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 U.S. Department of Energy and the prize administrator reserve the right to modify this Official Rules document if necessary and will publicly post any such notifications as well as notify registered prize participants.

Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is launching the American-Made Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot, a new prize in search of the best photos of solar energy. The competition will award prizes and feature photos on SETO’s website, at solar events and conferences, and in other outreach material. Winners of the Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot can earn up to \$2,500 for a photo in one of eight categories.

The competition will be governed by this document, which is intended to establish fair contest rules and requirements. In the case of a discrepancy with other competition materials or communication, this document takes precedence. DOE reserves the right to change competition criteria, rules, and measurable outcomes.

Table of Contents

- Preface2**
- Executive Summary.....3**
- Table of Contents3**
- 1 Overview4**
 - 1.1 Photo Categories4
 - 1.2 Awards.....5
 - 1.3 Important Dates.....5
 - 1.4 Submission Elements.....5
- 2 Selection Process and Standards.....5**
 - 2.1 Scoring Criteria6
 - 2.2 Who is Eligible to Enter.....6
 - 2.3 Photo Requirements.....7
 - 2.4 Conditions of Entry8
 - 2.5 Use of Photos.....8
- Appendix A. Additional Terms and Conditions9**
 - A.1 Universal Contest Requirements9
 - A.2 Verification for Payments9
 - A.3 Teams and Single-Entity Awards..... 10
 - A.4 Submission Rights 10
 - A.5 Resolution of Disputes 11
 - A.6 Publicity 11
 - A.7 Liability..... 11
 - A.8 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act..... 12
 - A.9 Privacy 12
 - A.10 General Conditions..... 12
 - A.11 Program Policy Factors..... 12
 - A.12 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance 13
 - A.13 Return of Funds..... 13

1 Overview

The Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot supports SETO in gathering impactful images of solar technologies for use in communicating information to communities, individuals, and organizations working to advance solar technologies. The competition enables the office to continue building a photo library that features solar energy technologies, research and development activities, and infrastructure. These photos will be made available to the public and will be featured in SETO's outreach efforts, including in presentations, newsletters, educational materials, social media, and other engagement materials. Photo submissions will be made publicly available/downloadable.

1.1 Photo Categories

Photographers may submit up to 10 photos (total) in the following eight photo categories:

- 1. Solar and Weather (Weather)**
Photos capturing the interplay between solar technologies and various weather conditions.
- 2. Solar Workforce and Installation (Workforce)**
Photos showcasing members of the solar workforce and individuals and teams behind solar installations.
- 3. Concentrating Solar-thermal Power (CSP)**
Photos showing CSP systems, their mechanisms, and the innovations of this solar sector.
- 4. Research Processes, Solar Technologies in Detail, and Manufacturing (Research-Manufacturing)**
Photos that unveil the research, development, and manufacturing processes behind cutting-edge solar technologies.
- 5. Utility-Scale, Commercial Solar, and Grid Integration (Utility-Scale)**
Photos that showcase large-scale solar installations, including those visibly integrated into utility grids.
- 6. Community Solar/Multifamily Housing (Community)**
Photos capturing the role solar plays in community sustainability through shared solar initiatives and solar-integrated multifamily housing.
- 7. Residential Solar (Residential)**
Photos capturing solar installations of residential properties.
- 8. Agriculture and Solar, Solar in Nature, Solar and Wildlife (Nature)**
Photos showcasing the coexistence of agriculture and solar power and/or how solar projects interact with local wildlife.

All photos must be taken within the United States or U.S. territories.

1.2 Awards

There will be two awards per photo category: one winner and one runner-up. Judges will select two overall grand prize winners. Up to 200 honorable mentions will also be recognized. The following amounts will be awarded to each winner:

- Grand Prize: \$2,500
- Category Winner: \$1,000
- Category Runner-Up: \$500

Up to 18 prizes will be awarded from a cash prize pool of \$17,000. The judges maintain the right to refrain from selecting a winner in a category if no submissions meet the established criteria.

1.3 Important Dates

All dates are subject to change:

- March 5, 2024: Competition opens
- May 23, 2024: Competition closes
- June 27, 2024: Expected winners announcement

1.4 Submission Elements

All photos must be submitted via the [HeroX website](#) as zip files by **5 p.m. ET on May 23, 2024**, and comply with each of the photo requirements set forth in section 2.3.

All photographers are required to submit their legal name, contact information, and a brief description of each photo. The description should include the names of any people in the photo, the state (and facility if applicable) where the photo was taken, the date the photo was taken, a short description of any activity, facility or structure represented by the photo and indicates that the photo is under the Creative Commons – Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) (see [Marking your work with a CC license - Creative Commons](#)).

All photos must be submitted as zip files and use this file naming convention:

PhotoTitle_LastName_CategoryAbbreviation

Please use the abbreviated category names (located in parentheses in section 1.1) when naming your files.

2 Selection Process and Standards

All photos must be submitted via the [HeroX website](#). A prize administrator will vet the photos to ensure that they are relevant to the category. The administrator may reassign a photo to a category different than that identified in the submission. The administrator will also ensure that the photos meet the selection standards laid out below in section 2.1.

2.1 Scoring Criteria

Judges will select the winners of the competition. Each photo will be scored based on the following criteria: emotional appeal/impact, composition/content, technical quality, and originality. The photos will be scored on a scale of 1–6, as shown in Table 1, based on how well they address the statement(s) under each criterion (listed below).

Table 1. Scored Item Scale

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

Judges will provide a score for each of the following four criterion based on the bulleted criterion descriptions. Table 2 outlines the weight of each criterion for determining final scores.

Criterion 1: Emotional Appeal/Impact

- The photo is visually powerful and portrays solar energy technologies positively.

Criterion 2: Composition/Content

- The organization of the object, landscape, or people enhances the image.
- The image demonstrates thoughtful composition, maintaining the integrity of the main elements without cropping or distortion.
- The solar-related content is apparent and easily identified.

Criterion 3: Technical Quality

- Light, exposure, and color have been used effectively.
- The photo shows skill in the use of light direction, character, color, and contrasts.
- The photo is of high resolution and is in focus.

Criterion 4: Originality

- The photo is unique in perspective, angle, or content.

Table 2. Scored Item Scoring Guide

Criteria	Total Item Score Possible	Percentage of Total Score	Total Possible Points
Emotional Appeal/Impact	6	20%	120
Composition/Content	6	30%	180
Technical Quality	6	30%	180
Originality	6	20%	120
TOTAL	24	100%	600

2.2 Who is Eligible to Enter

All professional and amateur photographers who meet the eligibility guidelines below are encouraged to enter the competition.

Each photographer must be a United States citizen or a legal permanent resident. If the photographer is under 18, a parent or legal guardian must submit the photo on behalf of the photographer and accept the terms and conditions of the prize. Current federal employees and support service contractors working on a federal site may submit photos, but are ineligible to receive cash prizes (photos from such personnel will still be acknowledged in competition selection announcements and through other nonmonetary means of recognition).

Each photographer can submit up to 10 photos. If a photographer wins more than three times, they will be awarded for their three highest winnings. Subsequent winning photos outside of those top three will be acknowledged through contest selection announcements and other means of recognition but will not receive additional cash prizes.

2.3 Photo Requirements

- Each photo must be the original work of the photographer.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated images are not allowed.
- Each photo must be taken within the last five years within the United States or U.S. Territories.
- Each photo must be taken in accordance with federal, state, and local laws.
- Each photo must not have any offensive, unlawful, or abusive content.
- Each photo must not have any identifiable personnel (see below for exception), addresses, license plates, or other personally identifiable information.
- For each photo in which a person is recognizable, the photographer must have written permission in the form of a model release from that person, or in the case of a minor, from the minor's parent or guardian. An example of a model release form [can be found here](#).
- Each photo must not violate or infringe upon another person's rights or include confidential or proprietary information or content.
- Each photo must exclude restrictive markings, copyright notices, logos, watermarks, or business marks, except when featuring technologies or devices with the developer's logo.
- Each photo must be submitted as a zip file through the [HeroX website](#) using the following file naming convention: PhotoTitle_LastName_CategoryAbbreviation
- Each photo must be a high-resolution digital copy (minimum size 2100 x 1500 pixels), submitted as a zip file. For zip files too large for the HeroX platform, a photographer can upload submissions using Box. If uploading images through Box, please complete all required fields in the HeroX application and indicate "Upload Images on Box" before submitting. For more about submission requirements, please email solarphoto@nrel.gov.

2.4 Conditions of Entry

By submitting a photo as part of this prize, the photographer agrees to and hereby is submitting the photo under the Creative Commons – Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) (See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) that allows others, including the U.S. Government, the right to use, publish, copy, distribute and modify the photo provided that proper attribution is provided. The photographer is solely responsible for his or her photo submissions, acknowledges that the U.S. Government is relying on the photographer’s compliance with all prize rules, and holds the U.S. Government and the prize administrator harmless from and against all claims related or resulting from the photographer’s failure to comply with the prize rules.

2.5 Use of Photos

- All photos must be submitted under the Creative Commons – Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) that allows others, including the U.S. Government and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), the right to use, publish, copy, distribute, and modify the photos provided proper attribution is provided.
- All submitted photos may be used in electronic and print materials.
- If ownership of any photograph submitted to this competition is contested in any matter, the prize administrators reserve the right to discontinue use of said photograph and disqualify the photograph from the competition.

Appendix A. Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Submissions are subject to following terms and conditions:

- Photographers must post the final content of their submission or upload the submission form on the HeroX platform before the relevant contest closes. Any other form of submission will not be accepted. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- By clicking Submit in HeroX, the photographer is agreeing to make their photos public, along with their name.
- Photographers must include all the required submission elements. The prize administrator may disqualify a submission after an initial screening if the photographer fails to provide all required submission elements. Photographers may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges or to fix non substantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.
- Elements of the photographer's submission package, such as photo descriptions, must be in English.
- Submissions and photographers will be disqualified if any engagement with the Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot—included but not limited to the submission, the HeroX forum, or emails to the prize administrator—contains any matter that, in the sole discretion of DOE or NREL, is indecent, obscene, defamatory, libelous, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- If a photographer clicks Accept on the HeroX platform and registers for any of the contests described in this document, they are agreeing to be bound by these rules in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. Photographers should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions apply only to the contests described here and no other contests on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.

A.2 Verification for Payments

The prize administrator will verify the identity and role of all photographers before distributing any prizes. Receiving a prize payment is contingent upon fulfilling all requirements contained herein. The prize administrator will notify winning photographers using provided email contact information for the individual or entity that was responsible for the submission. Each photographer will be required to sign and return to the prize administrator, within 30 days of the date on the notice, a completed NREL Request for ACH Banking Information form and a completed W9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>). In the sole discretion of the prize administrator, a winning photographer 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; (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 photographer. 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 photographers 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 designated primary submitter, whether consisting of a single or multiple entities. The primary submitter is solely responsible for allocating any prize funds among its member photographers or teammates as they deem appropriate. The prize administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters or disputes between team members or photographers.

A.4 Submission Rights

In addition to the Creative Commons license granted in accordance with 2.4 Conditions of Entry, by making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a photographer 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 parts of the submission that are designated as "public" for government purposes. This license includes posting or linking to the submitted photographs on the prize administrator or HeroX applications, including the competition website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and the inclusion of the submission in any other media worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the prize administrator, and judges for purposes of the contests, including but not limited to screening and evaluation purposes. The prize administrator and any third parties acting on their behalf will also have the right to publicize photographers' names and, as applicable, the names of photographers' team members and organization, which participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, the photographer represents and warrants that:

1. The photographer's entire submission is an original work by photographer of which the photographer is the sole author and copyright owner and photographer has not included third-party content (such as writing, text, graphics, artwork, logos, photographs, likeness 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 and/or disclosed by photographer in the submission, and (ii) photographer has either obtained the rights to use such third-party content or the content of the submission is considered in the public domain without any limitations on use.
2. Unless otherwise disclosed in the submission, the prize administrator's use or exercise of rights granted by the photographer does not and will not infringe 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 photographer to work on the submission or who appear in the submission in any manner have:

- Given the photographer 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 in perpetuity;
- Provided written permission to include their name, image, or pictures in or with the submission (or, if a minor who is not photographer's child, photographer must have the permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian) and the photographer may be asked by the prize administrator to provide permission in writing;
- 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. Each submission is free of malware.

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 award is 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.

Neither DOE nor the prize administrator will arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or among photographers.

A.6 Publicity

All submissions could be featured on the DOE and NREL websites.

Except where prohibited, participation in the contest constitutes consent to DOE's and its agents' use of each participant'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 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 competition, 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 DOE SETO, the director has determined that no liability insurance naming DOE as an insured will be required of photographers to compete in this competition per 15 USC 3719(i)(2). Photographers should assess the risks associated with their proposed activities and adequately insure themselves against possible losses.

A.8 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. Photographers will be notified of any Freedom of Information Act requests for their submissions in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 70.26. Photographers may then have the opportunity to review materials and work with a FOIA representative prior to the release of materials.

A.9 Privacy

If a photographer chooses to provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website, they 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 them in matters regarding their submission and/or the contest unless they 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 may recognize up to 200 honorable mentions and award up to 2 grand prize winners and up to 16 total category runners-up and winners, DOE reserves the right to only select submissions that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no submissions are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no submissions to be honorable mentions, category runners-up, category winners, or grand prize winners and will award no prize money.

A.11 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert judges will be carefully considered, it is the role of the prize judges to maximize the impact of contest funds. Some factors outside the control of photographers and

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

- Diversity in geography, technology, and subjects shown.
- Photographers who have been selected as winners in more than one category; photos that have been selected as winners in more than one category.
- The creative interpretation of the submission category and how it relates to the office's mission.
- The degree to which techniques enhance the submission's creativity, focus, presentation, etc.
- The degree to which the submission portrays new and expanding aspects of solar energy.
- The degree to which the submission can be used to expand awareness and education about solar energy technologies.
- Whether technologies are skewed through heavy retouching, filtering, and coloring in photos.

A.12 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance

DOE's administration of the Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot is subject to NEPA (42 USC 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/>.

A.13 Return of Funds

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

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