


# Digitizing Utilities Prize Round 3: Resilient Grid Innovation

## VOUCHER GUIDELINES

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# 1 Introduction

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Office of Electricity (OE) launched Round 3 of the American-Made Digitizing Utilities Prize: Resilient Grid Innovation. This prize aims to incentivize technology development partnerships among interdisciplinary teams of software developers and data experts to transform digital systems, data analytics, and grid resource integration for the electric sector. DOE is particularly interested in identifying solutions to challenges related to extreme events. Additionally, DOE seeks demonstrations that produce contextualized grid datasets that can contribute to public repositories to advance research and collaboration in the field.

Round 3 of the Digitizing Utilities Prize offers $2.425 million in cash and a total voucher pool of $375,000 to help entrepreneurs and utilities to develop and refine their solutions to accelerate the development and integration of grid edge resources and facilitate the transformation of the electric sector by advancing digital systems and data analytics.

This new, scalable approach to rapid product development not only provides innovators with cash prizes but also activates 17 national laboratories to help accelerate commercialization of American energy innovation. In addition to cash prizes the program offers contest winners non-cash prize awards in the form of vouchers. These vouchers will allow winners to access tools, equipment, and expertise at national laboratories.

This document provides details about how winners can use the vouchers. The intent of this voucher system is to allow prize winners from the Progress Phase of Round 3 of the Digitizing Utilities Prize to leverage the capabilities of the national laboratories to further develop the winners' concepts. NLR, as the Prize Administrator, will manage administrative activities related to vouchers.

# 2 Voucher Overview

The vouchers allow prize winners from the Progress Phase of Round 3 of the Digitizing Utilities Prize to access tools, equipment, and expertise at national laboratories so that they may develop, test, and validate their innovative solutions.

The winners of the Progress Phase will each receive a $75,000 voucher to use at a single DOE national laboratory. The prize administrator will provide resources so competitors can identify the appropriate national laboratory with the available expertise, researchers, and facilities. All voucher funds will be sent to the national laboratory performing the voucher work and must be used entirely at a *single* national laboratory. Voucher funds may not be redeemed for cash or transferred.

The national laboratories may provide competitors with:

- Access to hardware and development tools
- Testing and validation capabilities
- Other expert services that may be negotiated between the winners and the laboratory, organization, or facility.

Please use the link to access a complete list of all 17 national laboratories along with detailed information.

# 3 Voucher Process

The process for vouchers issued under the Progress Phase consists of the following steps designed to pair competitors with the national laboratories that are capable of providing valuable assistance for their specific projects. This process starts with winners of the Progress Phase being announced and progresses through the following steps:

1. **Announcement** —DOE will review and select winners. Only winners of the Progress Phase will receive a $75,000 voucher.
2. **Proposal** — Competitors will submit descriptions of their technical challenges and preferred national laboratories in a form provided by the prize administrator.
3. **Matchmaking** — The prize administrator will provide competitors with the contact information for Principal Investigators (PIs) at national laboratories as needed.
4. **Perform** — Winners are responsible for negotiating the required Voucher Statement of Work (SOW) with the identified national laboratory they would like to work with. Winners finalize the SOW, and once completed, forward the SOW to the prize administrator. The prize administrator will confirm the SOW contains activities that qualify for voucher work. Qualified activities must adhere Official Rules and the policies specified in this document and relate to work that aligns with the solution or product and/or advancing power sector data analytics technologies that was awarded the Prize. Winners and national laboratory research staff may renegotiate the SOW and resubmit it if they choose, as winner needs may change over time. The national laboratories will perform the work and receive compensation in accordance with the payment process described below.

# 4 Voucher Use Policies

The following terms specify the voucher use policy for Round 3 of the Digitizing Utilities Prize Progress Phase:

- **Voucher Recipients** — Only Progress Phase winners will receive vouchers.
- **Voucher Redemption** — Winners may use a voucher only at a single DOE national laboratory.
- **Allowable work** — All work conducted by the national laboratories and funded through vouchers must be exclusively dedicated to advancing the winning innovation selected in the Progress Phase. For example, funds may be used for prototyping, developing, testing, or validating the innovation. When considering whether work will advance a particular innovation. Costs of the work must be reasonable. No alcohol, food, travel, or other personal expenses will be allowed.
- **Arms-Length Transactions** — Winners and the national laboratories should operate in accordance with their conflicts of interest policies.
- **Process Compliance** — All winners agree to adhere to the requirements contained in this document. Failure to follow these requirements may limit competitors' ability to acquire voucher funds.
- **Use or Lose** — Voucher winners must enter into an agreement with a participating lab within 60 days of voucher award. Vouchers will remain redeemable for twelve (12) months from the date of finalized agreement, subject to extension at DOE's sole discretion.

# 5 Voucher Payments

**The following are mandatory for using voucher funds at a national laboratory:**

- **Statement of Work** – All projects must have a statement of work (SOW) describing the proposed project scope to be covered with the voucher funds. SOWs can be developed collaboratively by the teams and the laboratory staff who will be conducting work for them, but laboratory staff will finalize the SOW. Winners will submit the final product to the prize administrator via digitizingutilitiesprize@nlr.gov.
- **Budget** — When constructing an SOW, all teams should work with the laboratory to also define a draft budget and clearly describe how the voucher funds will cover the proposed SOW.
- Once voucher winners identify work at a laboratory, winners must contact the prize administrator at digitizingutilitiesprize@nlr.gov for further guidance on how to process their voucher funds.