

Hannah Miller:

Thank you for joining today's webinar, the Energy Program for Innovation Clusters Prize Overview. Our presenters today are Marcos Gonzales Harsha, Principal Deputy Director at the Office of Technology Transitions at the U.S. Department of Energy; Katherine Harsanyi, the Program Manager at the U.S. Department of Energy; Melissa Monk of the U.S. Department of Energy; and Emily Evans of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a project administrator. Before we get started, I want to review a few housekeeping items and let you know how you can participate in today's session. Your phone lines are muted but you can type question into the question box at the bottom of your control panel. Please submit questions throughout the presentation and we will address them at the end.

You're listening in using your computer speaker system by default. For better sound quality, please dial in over the phone by selecting telephone in the audio pane of your control panel. The dial-in information will be displayed. Please use your PIN as well. This webinar is being recorded. You will receive a follow-up email with a link to the video. Okay, let's get started. We'll turn it over to Marcos. Thank you.

Marcos Gonzales Harsha:

Thanks very much. Welcome everyone. Again, I'm Marcos Gonzales Harsha with the Department of Energy's Tech Transition Office. We're real excited to be here to share with you a little bit about the EPIC Prize, which I'll let my colleagues tell you some more about. I'll be very brief. I just wanted to express appreciation for everyone's interest, the importance of this larger community of accelerators, incubators, the various other terms that are used for folks playing a really critical role. I just wanted to reflect really briefly here on the fact that, at DOE, we're in the technology development space, whether it's at our national labs or through collaborations with some of our private sector partners.

We do a lot of public partnership work. We're in the game of feeding innovation. But as you all know, on this call, feeding innovation can only get you so far. The translation of that innovation to the marketplace is really hard. That's where, especially I think in the energy technology space, you end up having folks talk about the Valley of Death or, if you're not having a good day, the Chasm of Death, or if you're more of a glass half-full type person, maybe Mountain of Opportunity is the way to think about it. But the point is it's really hard.

That's where, really, it's our partners, incubators, accelerators like you all that are critical. We are seeding the innovation. If we're seeding the innovation, then you're empowering it. So, that's maybe the message for today. We're seeding the innovation; you're empowering it. Ultimately, through this prize, we want to help empower you in that effort. So, thank you for all you do. Look forward to helping with some information here that, hopefully, you all will find useful. With that, I'll turn it over to Katherine. Thanks.

Katherine Harsanyi:



Thank you, Marcos. Hi, everyone. I'm Katherine Harsanyi, a program manager in the Department of Energy's Office of Technology Transition. I'm super excited to introduce you to the EPIC Prize. Today, I will go over the prize overview, the goals, and the eligibility. Melissa will go over key submission elements and scoring. Emily will go over HeroX and how to upload your submissions. Then we will have time for a Q&A session. Next slide, please.

So, I'd first like to give you a brief background on our office. The Office of Technology Transition's primary focus is to develop and oversee the delivery of DOE's strategic vision and goals for technology, commercialization, and engagement with the business and industrial sectors across the U.S. This office's mission is to expand the commercial impact and public benefit of the Department of Energy's research and development portfolio to advance the economic, energy, and national security interest of the nation. Next slide, please.

Thanks. The goals. So, the Energy Program for Innovation Clusters, the EPIC Prize, is a \$1 million single phase prize competition awarding up to 20 winners with \$50,000.00 each. This prize seeks to recognize the most novel, comprehensive, and impactful incubator plans that focus on developing strong regional innovation clusters, connections, and support for energy-related technology and entrepreneurial innovation. We developed this prize to support the national advancement of energy entrepreneurship and commercialization. Next slide, please.

Energy startups and innovative technologies are critical to the growth of the energy economy in the United States and abroad. Startups drive technology development, business model innovation, and job creation. The private sector has had difficulty providing sufficient capital, business development services, and entrepreneurial training to early-stage, high-risk, longer-term, capital-intensive technologies like those required for transforming the nation's energy systems. OTT welcomes incubators, accelerators, or similar organizations that provide direct support for early-stage startups and have the potential to de-risk the startups for follow-on investors. Next slide, please.

The EPIC Prize seeks to address this capital gap to support these organizations, supporting early-stage energy entrepreneurs and startups, to encourage these organizations to think more expansively about the role of incubators in the broader, regional, and national innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem, and to enable winners of this prize to enhance their organization's resilience and operational sustainability. Next slide.

By using the term incubator, OTT welcomes incubators' organizations that aid in the development of new business ventures, business accelerators, co-working startup communities, or any other organization that self-identifies as advocates for innovation and entrepreneurship to compete. Ten elements or characteristics that we're looking for in competitors are that a significant portion of the entity's efforts are focused on the formation and growth of the energy's technology-related startups; a selective process to choose participating startups; regular networking opportunities, introductions to



customers, partners, suppliers, advisory boards, and other players; high growth and test-driven startup mentorship and commercialization assistance; resource sharing and arrangements for startups; virtual tools and telework capabilities; physical spaces to operate; testing and/or prototyping facilities; opportunities to pitch ideas and startups to investors along with other capital formation avenues for startups; angel money, seed capital, or structured loans for member startups. Next slide, please.

So, we were excited to launch this prize two weeks ago, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, and it will close on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Any submissions received after the competition closes will not be reviewed. We hope to notify winners around the end of September. Next slide, please.

So, in general, the EPIC Prize is open to private entities, both for and non-profit, non-federal government entities such as states, counties, tribes, municipalities, and academic institutions. These entities must be incorporated and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control. The following groups are not eligible: DOE employees, employees or sponsoring organizations, members of their immediate families, and persons living in the same household are not eligible to participate in this prize. Federal entities and federal employees acting within the scope of their employment are also not eligible to participate in any portion of the prize. DOE national laboratory employees cannot compete in the prize.

We do encourage teaming however, no organization may submit, as a lead entity, more than one entry to the prize. If an entity is the lead organization on multiple submissions, DOE will accept the most recent submission submitted before the deadline and determine other submissions ineligible. For complete eligibility guidelines, please refer to the rules document on the EPIC Challenge website. Next, my colleague, Melissa Monk, will go over the submission and review criteria.

Melissa Monk:

Thanks, Katherine. Hello, everyone. Again, I'm Melissa Monk. I'm an AST contractor supporting DOE's Office of Technology Transfer. Up next, today, in the presentation is a discussion about key submission elements and scoring. Next slide, please.

What to submit? For the EPIC Prize, teams will submit the following; a cover page, a 90-second video, slides, and optional letters of commitment or support. At the end of the EPIC Prize, the U.S. Department of Energy, DOE, anticipates selecting as many as 20 winning teams for cash prizes of up to \$50,000 each. In the meantime, let's walk through each of these submission elements. Next slide, please.

Cover page. The cover page content is used as reference information about the overall team. The cover page will not be scored. On the cover page, you should list basic information about your submission, the title of your submission to this prize, a short description of your team, any Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data, key project members – include here their names, contact information, and links to their online



professional profiles. Also include here your city and state and list here, as well, any of your team's partners. Next slide.

The 90-second video. You will need to submit a video of not more than 90 seconds. Your video should describe your organization and how it is uniquely qualified to address the needs of the entrepreneurs and energy technologies it serves. Describe your proposed regional engagement plan. Examples of items to highlight here include your leadership, facilities, and overall philosophy. DOE, the prize administrator, or any other third-party supporting DOE will use the video to feature the prize winners. Your video must be made publicly available on either YouTube or Vimeo. Next slide, please.

Submission Slides. The competitor's slide presentation can include up to ten slides. There is no template. You are free to present the information in any format. The deck should fully describe your team and your idea, while being responsive to the evaluation criteria in the following topic areas: mission and operation, strategic plan, and team. Next slide, please.

Criterion one, mission and operation. Suggested content you should provide on this or these slides include your organization's mission and objective, a discussion of the energy-related technologies your organization supports, your past performance in helping startups successfully commercialize their technologies, how the organization meets the desired competitor characteristics in the prize rules, your organization's track record of successfully assisting entrepreneurs in launching or growing their business ventures, a description of any partnerships or working relationships that you would like to highlight. These could be with regional entities, including state and local government, as well as private sector entities. They could also include other incubators, either local or distant.

You should also discuss how your team leverages other available resources to support its organization's entrepreneurs. Discuss how the organization ensures participation of a broad and diverse community of entrepreneurs. Discuss any plans for regional engagement of economically challenged communities. For example, Qualified Opportunity Zones. Discuss your unique value proposition and your organization's structural advantages. In other words, how the organization is built to be successful within a respective region. And the approximate amount of capital your organization raised for entrepreneurs last year.

Expert reviewers will score the following statements on a scale of one to six. The overall submission presents a cohesive plan to attract and support new entrepreneurs to the energy space. The submission describes the innovative and comprehensive mission and set of objectives that align with DOE's portfolio of energy-related mission.

The submission describes how it fulfills most, if not all, of the desired competitor characteristics. The competitor has a successful track record of supporting entrepreneurs in launching or growing business ventures. The submission demonstrates an ability to create a collaborative environment and a plan to enable participation of a diverse



community of entrepreneurs including in historically underserved and economically challenged communities. Next slide, please.

Criterion two; strategic plan. Suggested content on this or these slides includes where your organization plans to be in two years with respect to regional engagement, your strategy to develop regional innovation clusters. These should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time-Bound, or SMART. The primary risk factor if you anticipate mitigating or overcoming to successfully implement the regional engagement plan. A discussion of how the plan will improve your operational sustainability. Include here your plans to develop new support or to enhance existing support be it cash or in-kind.

A discussion of partners in implementing your plan. These may include state and local entities, private partners both for and non-profit, as well as academic institutions. Mention any partnerships with other incubators. Address your plan's potential to be transferrable to other incubators or regions. Tell DOE about your plan for the prize funds if you are awarded a prize. Provide an estimated number of clients or entrepreneurs that you anticipate assisting with your plan.

Expert reviewers will score each of the following statements on a scale of one to six. The proposed plan addresses an identified problem or opportunity which is clearly and thoroughly described. There is a clear multi-year partnership strategy to develop regional innovation clusters. A submission identifies the strong constellation of partners to successfully implement its plan. There is a strong discussion of risks and mitigation measures. The impact metrics for the program are well-articulated and understood. They include smart goals for the program. The plan will yield an improvement in the organization's offering as a resource to local, regional entrepreneurs and innovators and boost the regional innovation ecosystem. Next slide, please.

Criterion three, the team. Suggested content you should provide here is a description of your staff or team, a description of your external advisors or your advisory board, and what makes your staff uniquely qualified to implement its plan. Expert reviewers will score this single statement on a one to six scale to see that there is a qualified team with credible and relevant experience. Next slide, please.

Here are the ratings the expert reviewers will use to score each statement about your slides. If they strongly disagree, they will assign it a one. A two indicates they disagree, or use a three to slightly disagree. A four indicates slight agreement. If they agree, they will score it a five. If they strongly agree, they will score it a six. Here's the weighted breakdown of each criteria. Criterion one has five scored statements. It's 42 percent of the total score worth 30 points.

Criterion two, the strategic plan, has six scored statements. It comes in at 50 percent of the total score worth 36 possible points. Criterion three, teams, has that single-scored statement with eight percent of the total score, worth six points. So, there are 12 total scored statements that brings us to 100 percent of your total score with 72 possible points.



So, there we have what you need to know about the key submission elements and scoring for the EPIC Prize. Next is Emily Evans from the NREL Renewable Energy Laboratory. Emily?

Emily Evans:

Hi, thank you so much, Melissa. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. We're really excited for this prize here. We're going to do a live demo of HeroX so you can see what it looks like. I'm going to go ahead and send out this URL to everyone. It's [HeroX.com/EPIC](https://HeroX.com/EPIC). When you navigate to this URL, you will come to this page. You can also go to our American-Made Channel main page and it will also be listed here.

But you can think of HeroX – if you're not familiar with our prizes – kind of your information and prize hub. This is where you're going to be uploading your submission documents – that's all the elements of your prize – and also your main point of communication for learning about the prize, accessing the official rules document, interfacing and networking with other competitors working on the challenge. Also, it includes a lot of other great features such as team matching. We're going to walk through all of these.

So, when you first navigate to this page, the first thing you're going to want to do is create an account. Do not sign in. There will be a login option up here that says, "Sign-in/login." The sign-up is really straightforward. It's first name, last name, email address, a few other items. That will get you set up and ready for the prize. Then, if you'd like to, you can hit, "Follow" the competition. This is if you're not interested in being a competitor, per se, but you want to keep tabs on what's going on, you can go ahead and click this button to follow. Then you can also share the challenge. If you want to share it on social media or with your networks, we always appreciate that.

Let's assume that you want to sign up and submit an application for this challenge, you'll be able to click on this, "Solve This Challenge" button, the big, red button. You'll click on it. It's going to walk you through the legal agreements, everything that's in the official rules document, which is linked here. I will show you that a little bit later. Let's accept.

Then you can say, "Yes, I want to create my own team," or, "I want to join as a team," or, "I want to compete individually." These options allow you to join with others for your application. If you are creating your own team, you are designated as the team captain. If you're joining someone else's team, someone else is going to be the team captain. Only the team captain is able to submit an application.

So, let's just say I want to compete individually. Then this button is going to change to "Begin Entry." So, when you go to upload your entry – again, the deadline here is September 10<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00PM Eastern. That is extremely important. This submission form will close exactly at 5:00PM on September 10<sup>th</sup>. If you do run into any technical difficulties when you're creating your submission, I would encourage you to do it early. Maybe put in your application a day or two ahead of time. But if you're coming up



against that deadline, shoot us an email at [EPICPrize@NREL.gov](mailto:EPICPrize@NREL.gov). Let's us know and we can help you on the back end. But we can't provide as much assistance if we don't know about it before the deadline.

So, going back to the submission form, you'll fill in your title, short description. Upload an image. This is nice. Upload an image of your facility or whatever is appropriate. How did you hear about this challenge? Then you're going to have an eligibility acknowledgement. You must fill this out before it's going to take you to the rest of the submission form. If you don't hit, "I agree" to each of these questions, it's not going to open it up. Insert an additional signature. This should just be your full legal name. "I agree."

Then after you complete the eligibility acknowledgement, then you can upload your submission package, cover page, link to that YouTube or Vimeo address for your video. Make sure when you're uploading, that your URL is public-facing because if it's not, then we won't be able to see it. We go through. We check these. We'll reach out to you if it's not, but that certainly does help us quite a bit. Your submission slide deck. You'll browse and upload the file here. Power Point, PDF file, please. Your official team name. Let us know where you're located, and your nine-digit zip code. Then save and preview. It's not going to let me do it because I don't have documents up here. But it'll take you through a confirmation page. Go ahead and make this page.

So, outside of committing just your typical entry, there are several tabs here to help guide you in your prize journey. The overview tab will give you a bit about the prize itself. Guidelines will give you some more information. The official rules. Timeline. We will keep this updated as we have updates. A lot of these dates are, especially in the later phases are anticipated dates. Keep an eye out especially for when we announce. Updates, all prize – updates will be posted here as well as emailed out to you as long as you're following or signed up as a competitor. The forum, you're able to come on here. You can talk about your innovation, your idea. You can get help. We also monitor these forums. You can ask questions and we'll respond to you directly here.

Community: you can see everyone who has signed up as a competitor in the challenge. Then, also, it'll – we have this great team matching feature. You can click right here and you can look to see who's looking for team members, teams that are looking for more people to join their team. It's a really great tool. You can click, "Add Yourself." You tell us a little bit about yourself and some skills. Then your – some biography information, if you're interested. That's tied to your main account, your name.

Let me navigate back. Really important: I would highly encourage everyone to check out the official rules document. It is listed here under their resources tab. I have it up here. This is very, very important. You'll be able to see all of the eligibility details. We only kind of skimmed the surface. There's a lot of information here. We will also be able to see a lot of the information that's been covered in today's slides.



The scoring range, one to six. Then, really important, the suggested content that you provide and each statement's scoring scale. When the judges go through, they are actually going to look at each and every one of these statements and rate it on a one to six. So, my advice to everyone, always, is to really hone in on the statement score, the scoring statements here so that you're able to easily speak to these as judges are going through and scoring your submission.

We will post other resources here as they become available. This is where you'll be able to see the link to the recorded webinar that we were doing today along with the Power Point presentation. Then FAQ, we will also update the FAQ with many of the questions that are asked today and then other questions that get asked as we get further along in the competition. With that, Hannah, I can hand it back over to you, and we'll go into the Q&A.

All right, so, just a reminder, if you have questions, you can enter that into the Q&A box and we'll be monitoring that. We will ask your – we'll try to get through as many questions as time allows.

So, first up, just – this is a great question. "Will this recording and presentation be available?" Just like we said, it'll be on HeroX under the resources tab shortly after this webinar. Give us a couple of days. You can also email us at [EPICPrize@NREL.gov](mailto:EPICPrize@NREL.gov) if you have any particular questions.

The next question is, "Are students and recent graduates eligible to apply?" Katherine/Melissa, I believe the answer to this is yes. Do you have anything to add to that?

Katherine Harsanyi:

Sure. So, the prize is not open to individuals. So, if, as a student or recent grad, you are part of a non-profit or a private entity, then you can apply as that entity.

Emily Evans:

Great. We had another question come in about if an organization doesn't explicitly raise capital for their startups but they work a network of investors, is that okay or do they really need to partner with someone who is a direct funder?

Katherine Harsanyi:

They do not need to partner with a direct funder. If incubators want to partner together or if they want to partner with other entities within their region, yeah, that's great. It doesn't have to be a direct funder.

Emily Evans: Great. Another question that came in is – so we're asking for a lot of information in these slides. There's a question: a really good slide presentation, some



people believe, has fewer words. Do you have some sort of guideline or recommendation for how much word copy should be input on these slides? Are you expecting this really content-heavy slides, or is fewer words acceptable?

My feeling on this is that you want to be able to get your message across in a very concise and readable way. The way that this prize is structured, there is likely going to be more content on these slides than the typical PowerPoint presentation where you might have only one or two words per slide. But you definitely want to use enough to get your point across. Would you agree with that, Katherine and Melissa?

Katherine:

Yes. Yeah, thank you. Yeah, we'd agree with that.

Emily Evans:

Perfect. We had another question about physical space for startups. If someone is a virtual accelerator but their network includes many incubators with physical space and customized mentoring, is that acceptable for the prize?

Katherine Harsanyi:

Yes, I would say so.

Emily Evans:

How important is it to have regional utilities as partners in your program?

Marcos Gonzales Harsha:

This is Marcos. I can jump in on that. We certainly will be looking at the strength of the constellation of partners that the applicant or competitor would be putting forward as part of their proposal, part of their submission. I think it would be unfair, nor would we have a hard and fast ranking system for the specific category of partner. But certainly, a highly relevant one would be the local power authorities, of course. But there are many other technologies beyond just the grid electricity space that, of course, would be considered part of the larger energy portfolio and then, equally useful partners. So, there's definitely no hard and fast rule on that, but it would certainly be something that I think would be seen as a good, favorable, strong partnership.

Emily Evans:

Thank you. Really appreciate that. We had a question come in: if a team can apply as a lead team then can they also be listed as a teaming partner on another application?

Katherine/Melissa, my read on that is yes, they can lead and application and then also team with another application. Is that your vision as well?



Katherine Harsanyi:

Yeah, I would say that's okay.

Marcos Gonzales Harsha:

Yeah.

Emily Evan:

Again, I will encourage everyone – I'll say this multiple times. Read the rules document. Make sure that what you're doing aligns with what's written in the official rules. If you have questions, you are always free to post here on the HeroX forum or email us for your particular situation. But in general, that sounds like that would be acceptable. We had another question that, "What is the impact on scoring if an applicant can guarantee matching funds?"

Katherine Harsanyi:

We don't have that as a scoring criteria.

Emily Evans:

Yeah. So, essentially, if it's not in those statements, we don't score on it or take it into consideration when we're looking at it. Everything that we're looking at is listed in those statements.

Emily Evans:

Yeah, for sure. I would encourage, if there's other things that you think are important considerations, put that in your application. Just we score very carefully on those statements. But you can definitely still put that type of information in there. Another question that has come up, "Can you describe what you're looking for in letters of commitment or support?"

Katherine Harsanyi:

So, those are optional. Let me just scroll down to where we have that, too. I think, as Melissa had said, we would be looking for potential partners, potential customers. These letters for partners or other that you think are critical for the success of your proposal.

Emily Evans:

Thank you. Let's see here. Does scoring include any considerations for minority-owned businesses and small businesses? Again, I would point people to those statements that are



scored. I don't believe that there's specific criteria for minority-owned businesses or small businesses. But again, that's great information. You can definitely put that in your submission summary slides.

Another question, "Is there a quick way for us to go through an eligibility check before we sign up for the prize and submit the entire package?" I would say that is a really good question. There's no mechanism in place where we're actually doing a screening process for eligibility before you submit the prize. That happens more on the back end. What I would encourage everyone to do is go to the official rules document. I'm going to send out this URL right now to everyone. Go through your official rules document. Look through the criteria. If there's a criterion there that you have a question on, please reach out to us. Send us an email. We can help on a case-by-case basis.

Some resources say that the due date is September 9<sup>th</sup>. This person wanted to make sure that the official deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup>. It was previously September 9<sup>th</sup>. We've since updated everything and absolutely confirming that the deadline for submission is 5:00PM Eastern on September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Another question we got in is, "Can teams have a team captain that doesn't live in the U.S. even though the organization is U.S.-based and the program is in the U.S.?" Again, I would refer you to the eligibility requirements. As long as you believe that you can meet those eligibility requirements with the U.S.-based organization, it's totally fine to have team members that live abroad as long as you're able to meet the criteria there. Again, if you have questions, please do email us. We're EPICPrize@NREL.gov.

Next question. "Is there any limits on what the awardee can use the \$50,000 cash award for program expenses? Can you use it for staff, travel, events, pilot and other typical business expenses?" The answer there is yes. This is what the coolest thing is about the prize program is that once you win that cash award, you've already done all the work. That is there to really support your innovation and further your innovation. But there is no constraints that we put on that funding. Melissa or Katherine, I don't know if you want to talk a little bit more about any – if there's any follow-on work or anything that might be coming down the pipeline.

Marcos Gonzales Harsha: Katherine, I'll defer to you on that.

Katherine Harsanyi: Or Marcos, yeah.

Emily Evans:

The question was really based on if there was any limits that the awardee can use their cash award for if they are selected as a winner. In terms of the prize competition with the official rules, there are no limits with the cash award because competitors do all the work ahead of time. That's kind of the beauty of the prize model. I'm wondering if you want to share any thoughts about anything that might be coming down the pipeline or future opportunities. I don't know if there's anything here, but I just wanted to give you space.



Marcos Gonzales Harsha:

I think addressing the question directly is fine. Public announcements about this program have made clear that it's part of a larger package. So, everyone should have full transparency on that. This is a \$1 million prize and it's part of a larger \$5 million program. But beyond that, not much we can share until we have something to share publicly about how the remainder of the funding might be spent. But yes, specifically, to your question, to the question came in, I guess, there is no official restriction on how the funds are used. Again, as you said, it's the prize model. The work's been done at the time the prize being awarded.

Emily Evans:

Thank you. Another question we got in is if there is a font size limit for the slide deck. All of that information is in the official rules document. So, I would encourage you to review that. Let me see here. One question that came in is, "What would make for a strong proposal idea? In other words, what is the current state of the ecosystem today and where does DOE envision it going with this prize?"

Katherine Harsanyi:

With this prize, we're hoping to build regional innovation clusters, build partnerships so that incubators can find other resources, so other resources can use – can connect with incubators and help energy startups and entrepreneurs.

Emily Evans:

Great. Thank you for that. Let's see here. Going back to the eligibility question for students, if a university had a program that kind of met that ideal competitor criteria, could a student team apply via their university?

Katherine Harsanyi:

Yeah, I think so, with their university. We might have to use – as long as they follow all the eligibility requirements.

Emily Evans:

Can you talk about how detailed the specific work plan for the prize money should be, as in how much detail about how the money will be spent or specific tasks or hours should be done – to be done, to be included? Kind of giving us that level of detail, again, in the slides that we're expecting.

Katherine Harsanyi:



I would say pretty – that can be brief. I would say go, read through the submission slide deck and that will tell you exactly how – what each – that will give you each statement that will be graded.

Emily Evans:

Thank you. So, another question, this one focused on the rules. The rules document discusses bolstering innovation clusters through regional engagement. How important is focusing the grant application on building innovation clusters as new programmatic activity, as opposed to focusing on the general work of the incubator/accelerator within their normal course of business that also helps out the innovation cluster?

Katherine Harsanyi:

So, first, this is a prize structure, not a grant structure. They're different mechanisms. Second, it really depends on the incubator and the region, I think, for how you – what your resources are and where you should focus in on, what is most important to that area, I think.

Emily Evans:

Thank you. We had a question come in about what are the reporting requirements for this award. This just goes back to what you just said, that this is a prize and not a grant. Prizes and grants accomplish some of the same goals but, in their nature, are very different. Competitors in the prize are doing all of the work right now in the competition phase. Then once cash awards are selected and sent out, there are no follow-up reporting requirements as a part of this prize.

We had a question come in, again, on the evaluation. If you would be adversely evaluated if your constellation of incubators and accelerators display cross-redundancy with other candidates. So, looking more at how we're going to be selecting winners.

Katherine Harsanyi:

I'd say the competitors are evaluated individually.

Emily Evans:

Exactly. Then I would just point, again, to the scoring statements that's in the official rules document. What is there is exactly what we score on.

We received a question, again, on kind of the grant versus the prize model. "Is this a cost-recovery grant? Do we receive the \$50k upfront upon the award or must we spend our program cost and then ask for the grant money to be recovered, recovering those costs?" Again, prize versus grant. The prize money, we send it to you within a few weeks of winners being announced. It takes a little bit for the paperwork to go through, but it's



definitely not something that you need to show proof that you spent those monies and what you spent them on and then you get reimbursed like you would with a grant. We just send you your cash award right away.

Thank you everyone for your great questions. We're seeing several questions on if we're going to be making a recording of this webinar and sharing the slides. The answer is yes, we will. We'll be posting it to HeroX within about a week or so, we'll have it up. We have a question about how many attendees are on this webinar. I think the highest number I saw was about 90. That was great.

Another question on eligibility requirements. "How will you compare applicants that are distant incubators with long track records versus those that are just getting started?" Again, I would refer you to the official rules document. Read through those scoring statements. The statements that are there is exactly what we're going to be scoring on.

Marcos Gonzales Harsha:

This is Marcos. I'll just add to that. It's certainly not that grades are a sign based on proven track record solely. Track record is important and considered as stipulated in the rules document. But certainly, the whole intent of this prize is to prompt new relationship development. So, ideally, we're creating new opportunity space for folks, encouraging that sort of activity to take place and ultimately helping to perhaps finance it in some way. But it's certainly taking into consideration that their regional ecosystem may not be fully formed yet, may not be robust yet. That's the space that they're hoping to fill with your proposed missions. So, both sides of the coin, let's say, are meritorious and worth consideration.

Emily Evans:

Thank you Marcos. I think that's really helpful. We got a great question in that goes, "The rules state that National Lab and employees working in – that National Lab employees working within their professional capacity cannot compete in this prize. The official rules state, 'DOE National Laboratory employees cannot compete in this prize.'" The question is, "Can they be advisors?"

I would say that, yes, they can be advisors but they cannot be a part of the submitting team and certainly not within – I would caution anyone away from using National Lab employees as advisors within their professional capacity, for sure.

There is a follow-up question on the regional engagement. Is there a preference for proposing new programming versus applying for the prize, discussing the work that is already underway which supports innovation clusters? So, is the intention of this prize for brand-new work that is being developed or just kind of in the ideation phase of things, or can it already be underway and kind of moving forward?



I'm happy to jump in and answer this question. Other panelists, please, feel free to correct this as well. So, rules do not stipulate that it must be new programming however, I would keep in mind that the spirit of the prize is to kind of develop and further this idea. So, when you're considering how far along your own idea is kind of in that process, I would keep that in mind and make sure you fully describe that.

Katherine Harsanyi:

Sorry, I was on mute when I was talking.

Emily Evans: Oh, no problem.

Katherine Harsanyi:

Thank you. Yeah, I would just go through the submission criteria. That should help answer a lot of questions, too. Yeah. We will only be grading on what is in the submission criteria.

Emily Evans:

We do see that a lot with other prizes. If something kind of, in a later stage versus a very early stage. It's really just a question of, "Can it be responsive to that scoring criteria or is it too far along to really be relevant within the context of the prize?"

Another prize administration question. When you have a team, does the money get split among the team or does the money go to the lead? The answer to that is whoever is the team captain, so that is the person who is submitting to the prize, they will be awarded the full cash value. Then they are then responsible for splitting it between team members or getting it to where it needs to go. That all happens sort of outside the purview of the prize.

Does the incubator/accelerator need to be registered in an organization to be considered legitimate contenders? So, do we need to – does organizations that are submitting, do they need to be registered organizations?

Katherine Harsanyi:

Yes. If you refer to the eligibility criteria, "This prize is open to," the first bullet is "private entities, both for-profits and non-profits, non-federal government entities such as states, counties, tribes, municipalities, and academic institutions. These entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with a majority domestic ownership and control."

Emily Evans:



A couple more questions we've got time for. If we don't get to your questions, we will do our best to follow-up via email with everyone who's asked a question or you're, again, always welcome to email us, clicked on the HeroX form or share and we'll be responsive to your question. One question that I think is useful is, "Are letters of support from advisors useful?"

Katherine Harsanyi:

They're useful but they are not part of the judging criteria. So, only the submission slides will be judged.

Emily Evans:

I would say that the letters of commitment, although they are – or letters of support, although they are not scored, they do certainly help to bolster applications. We put it in there. If you have those letters of support, I would certainly encourage you to upload them. But as Katherine noted, they are not scored.

Last question is if connectors are prioritized in any way in this process. The answer to that is no. If you're an existing connected within the American Made Network, you do not have a priority in terms of the scoring and selecting of winners. But I would certainly highlight that in your application. We love to see an active and engaged community of connectors within the American Made Network. We're really happy that you are here and interested in the prize.

So, with that, I think we will end the Q&A. Again, we will reach out to you if you've submitted a question that we did not answer. We will reach out either via the FAQ or directly via email. Marcos, did you want to close out the webinar, or Katherine, with any final words?

Marcos Harsanyi:

This is Marcos. I just appreciate everyone joining. I appreciate your interest. Hopefully, we've managed to answer some, maybe most of the questions asked. As noted, we'll have this recording of it online and follow-up separately as we can to ensure that everyone has complete information is able to apply if they're eligible. Really look forward to seeing what comes in. I'll hand it off to Katherine.

Emily Evans: Thank you so much, Marcos. Yes, thank you. Oh, yep, Katherine, please.

Katherine Harsanyi:

Thank you all for attending. We're excited to see your applications or submissions.

Emily Evans:



Yep, very excited. I'm still seeing the question roll in. We will get to as many as we possibly can via email and HeroX. You can see our [AmericanMadeChallenges.org](http://AmericanMadeChallenges.org) website up there and, of course, [EPICPrize@NREL.gov](mailto:EPICPrize@NREL.gov). Reach out to us, ask your questions. Thank you so much for joining. With that, that concludes our webinar.