



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



Preface

The American-Made Inclusive Solar Outreach Awards (Outreach Awards) recognize solar industry communications campaigns that demonstrate excellence in strategic, effective, inclusive, equitable, and meaningful communication to increase solar energy adoption and/or solar workforce recruitment and retention in diverse communities.

These rules are effective May 2022.

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1 Overview

The Outreach Awards are designed to recognize effective and inclusive solar industry communications campaigns. The goal of the Outreach Awards is to gather best practices in engaging diverse and/or underrepresented communities about solar energy and its benefits and to share those best practices with others.

These awards will recognize communications campaigns that are successful in increasing solar energy adoption and/or solar workforce recruitment and retention among a diverse target audience and that cross a variety of mediums, including digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, social media, audio, and more. Excellent campaigns will be able to show evidence that their campaign has had a positive, meaningful impact on their target audience. Examples of targeted, effective, and inclusive campaign goals could include but are not limited to:

- Increased solar adoption rates among the target audience,
- Savings on electrical bills among the target audience,
- Decreased energy burden among the target audience,
- Reduction in pollution or other environmental harm due to solar adoption in target communities or areas,
- Increased knowledge and positive sentiment among the target audience about the benefits of solar energy,
- Increased opportunities for the target audience to join, stay in, or advance in the solar workforce, or
- Increased solar jobs in the target communities or areas.

The awards will honor campaigns that target audiences that have the potential to increase the diversity of solar adopters and the solar workforce. “Diversity” includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the many characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. These target audiences could include but are not limited to Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural, low-income, or frontline communities; or persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.¹

The awards will also honor campaigns that seek to increase equitable access to solar energy and its benefits. “Equity” is consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people. These campaigns could aim to increase equitable access to solar energy benefits including but not limited to electrical bill savings, reduced environmental impact, increased

¹ Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. January 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>



resilience, and opportunities to join, stay in, and advance in the solar workforce.² In addition, these campaigns will use web accessibility standards³ so that people with disabilities can access their content.

2 Background

Transitioning to solar energy can help households across the country save money on their electricity bills, reduce their environmental impact, and improve resilience. Millions of Americans have experienced the benefits of solar, but many households have been left out either because of lack of funds, low credit scores, language barriers, or because their neighbors haven't gone solar—one of the biggest drivers of solar adoption.

Adoption of solar, including residential and community solar, can reduce energy burden for individuals, especially those in frontline and disadvantaged communities. Energy burden is a primary metric to measure energy insecurity. Low-income households spend 8.6% of their income on energy costs, three times more than non-low-income households. For families at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), the average energy burden is 16% or nearly 1/6th of household income. Counties with higher energy burdens have higher premature mortality rates, more residents experiencing fair or poor health, and lower average life expectancy.^{4,5,6}

The solar energy industry has also benefitted U.S. workers, employers, and the economy, and its impact is growing as solar energy deployment continues to speed up. However, the solar energy workforce does not currently reflect the diversity of American citizens since opportunities to join, stay in, and advance in the solar workforce have not been equitable for all groups of people.

Leading organizations have recognized these gaps in solar adoption and solar workforce recruitment and retention, and are starting to target more diverse audiences in their solar energy communications campaigns. Effective, inclusive communication about solar energy and its benefits is crucial for solar to realize its full potential. Go

3 Awards To Win

Awards will be made each year for three years. Up to three winners for each of the following categories may be selected, depending on the number and quality of applications in each category:

² Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. January 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

³ The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative defines web accessibility as “websites, tools, and technologies [that] are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.” An initial evaluation of web accessibility can be found here: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/preliminary/>

⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2015). One in three U.S. households faced challenges in paying energy bills in 2015. <https://www.eia.gov/consumption/residential/reports/2015/energybills/>

⁵ Reames, T. G., Daley, D. M., Pierce, J. C. (2021). Exploring the nexus of energy burden, social capital, and Environmental Quality in shaping health in US counties. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(2), 620. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020620>

⁶ Reames, T. G. (2016). Targeting energy justice: Exploring spatial, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in urban residential heating energy efficiency. Energy Policy, 97, 549–558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2016.07.048>



- Residential solar adoption campaign
- Community solar subscription campaign
- Solar co-op subscription campaign
- Utility-scale solar community engagement campaign
- Workforce recruitment and/or retention campaign

Winners will be publicly announced by the department of Energy (DOE) and invited to participate in a DOE-hosted webinar on communications and outreach best practices. Winners' best practices will also be used to develop a guide to encourage greater adoption of these practices. No cash prizes will be awarded.

4 How To Enter

Complete a submission package online at <https://www.herox.com/OutreachAwards> before the contest closing date.

5 Important Dates

These rules are applicable to the Outreach Awards. Please visit <https://www.herox.com/Outreach Awards> to view the key dates for each round of the awards program.

The awards will run on an annual cycle, following this timeline:

- For the 2022 submission period, the intent is to recognize campaigns launched in 2021.
- For the 2023 submission period, the intent is to recognize campaigns launched in 2022.
- For the 2024 submission period, the intent is to recognize campaigns launched in 2023.

6 Eligibility Requirements

Competitors in the Outreach Awards must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, a competitor certifies that it is in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification before awards are granted.

- Competitors must be a private entity (for-profit or nonprofit), an academic institution, or a nonfederal government entity (such as states, counties, tribes, or municipalities). The entity must be formed in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States. Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
- A competitor may submit a maximum of three submissions across all categories. If more than three submissions are received from a competitor, only the three most recently submitted submissions will be considered.
- As part of your submission to this awards program, you will be required to sign the following statement:



- I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this awards program. I understand that in providing this submission to the Federal Government, I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this awards program 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.
- Additional eligibility requirements in A.13

7 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The awards administrator must conclude that all the following statements are **true** when applied to your submission. If any of the following are not true for your submission, your submission will not be reviewed and will not be awarded.

- The campaign is related to the U.S. solar power market and is related to one of the award categories:
 - Residential solar adoption campaign
 - Community solar subscription campaign
 - Solar co-op subscription campaign
 - Utility-scale solar community engagement campaign
 - Workforce recruitment and/or retention campaign
- The campaign was implemented in the form of mass media exposed to an external audience.
- The campaign incorporated at least two or more forms of mass media, such as digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, social media, or audio elements.
- The campaign does not involve the lobbying of any federal, state, or local government office.

8 What To Submit

A complete submission package for the Outreach Awards should include the following items:

- Cover page content
- Narrative (not to exceed 1,000 words)
- Campaign materials
- Supporting documentation (optional)

See tables below for details about each of the items and review section 9 for information about how we score.



Cover Page List basic information about your submission
Template⁷: <https://www.herox.com/OutreachAwards/resources>

- Campaign name
- Submission category (Residential solar adoption campaign, Community solar subscription campaign, Solar co-op subscription campaign, Utility-scale solar community engagement campaign, or Workforce recruitment and/or retention campaign)
- Company name
- Key project members (names, contacts, and links to their LinkedIn profiles)
- Your city, state, and nine-digit zip code

Narrative
Max 1,000 Words

Template⁸: <https://www.herox.com/OutreachAwards/resources>

Section 1: *Background and Objectives*

Suggested content you provide

- Background – Describe the communications campaign, the reasons the campaign was launched, and the goals you had in mind when launching it.
- Target Audience – Describe your target audience and what actions you were trying to motivate among that audience. These awards aim to recognize campaigns that target underrepresented audiences that have the potential to increase the diversity of solar adopters and the solar workforce.
- Objectives – Describe the specific qualitative and quantitative goals and expectations you set for your campaign.

Each question is scored on a 1–6 scale

- Does the campaign set ambitious goals and objectives and effectively design a campaign to speak to diverse audiences and increase diversity and equity in the solar industry or solar adopters?
- Does the campaign effectively identify and target an audience that can increase the diversity of solar adopters or the solar industry?
- Does the campaign seek to increase equity in access to the benefits of solar energy in its award category?⁹

⁷ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

⁸ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

⁹ Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. January 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>



Section 2: *Execution and Results*

Suggested content you provide	Each question is scored on a 1–6 scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods and Strategies – Which communication channels did you leverage and what were the campaign products? These products could include creative outputs and media communication strategies. Challenges – What were the obstacles and constraints you faced in designing and executing your campaign, and what issues were overcome to allow the campaign to succeed? Outcomes – What qualitative or quantitative metrics did you identify and track to provide evidence that you achieved your objectives and overcame challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the campaign leverage the most effective communication platforms and strategies available to achieve its stated goals? Did the campaign successfully overcome challenges? Did the campaign reach and have a meaningful impact on its target audience? Did the campaign produce relevant measurable outputs that demonstrate its success? Did the campaign achieve its desired objective(s)?

Campaign Materials

Upload a PDF with campaign materials or provide a link to a shared folder or drive where the campaign materials are located. At least two digital, print, event, video, social media, podcast, mobile, or audio elements should be included.

Template¹⁰: <https://www.herox.com/OutreachAwards/resources>

Section 3: *Quality and Accessibility*

Suggested content you provide	Each question is scored on a 1–6 scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of campaign content, including but not limited to digital, print, event, video, social media, podcast, mobile, or audio elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the content well-suited and effectively adapted to the medium or media chosen? (video, website, printed newsletter, etc.) Do the submissions meet World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility standards?¹¹ Are the campaign materials creative, appealing, consistent, and functional?

¹⁰ Use of the template is optional; however, all components listed here must be included in your document if you chose to create your own.

¹¹ An initial evaluation of web accessibility can be found here: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/preliminary/>



Supporting Documentation (Optional)

Attach one-page letters of support or articles about the campaign from other relevant entities to provide context and evidence to support your written application. These must be written by third-party entities or organizations and should provide supporting evidence that either 1.) your campaign set ambitious goals and objectives for reaching a diverse target audience and/or 2.) met these goals and objectives through strategic, effective, inclusive, and meaningful communication campaigns.

Examples of entities that may express support could include but are not limited to businesses, non-profits, media outlets, elected officials, community leaders, or members of the target audience. Letters that support the claims made in your written narrative and serve as evidence of your success will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not affected by or related to your campaign will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters.

Reviewer Recommendation

- There is no direct corresponding submission requirement for this score. Rather, it is an overall assessment of all materials submitted in HeroX. This includes supporting documentation, if provided.

Statement is scored as a 1 or 6

- The presented campaign demonstrates excellence in strategic, effective, inclusive, and meaningful communication to diverse audiences in the solar industry and should be recognized as a best practice for the whole community.

9 How We Score

The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. Each bullet listed in the review criteria receives a score from 1 to 6. The bullets have equal weight, so questions that have more review criteria bullets have a greater influence on the final score. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the total sum of the scores for all the bullets. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final awards judge considers reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the awards.
 - Reviewers may not have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any entity that is a registered participant in this contest, or have a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered competitor.



- **Note:** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The awards administrator intends to provide comments to competitors after the winners are announced. These comments are intended to help competitors to continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- **Interviews:** The awards administrator, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the awards competitors. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the judge may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The judge's final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and program policy factors listed in [Appendix A](#) into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

10 Additional Requirements

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

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



Appendix A. Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

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

- You must post the final content of your submission or upload the submission form online at <https://www.herox.com/OutreachAwards> before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
- The cover page, narrative, and letters of commitment/support are not intended to be made public; however, see [Section A.8](#) regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- You must include all the submission's required elements. The awards administrator may disqualify your submission after an initial screening if you fail to provide all required submission elements. Competitors may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges.
- Your submission must be in English and in a readable and searchable PDF format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
- Competitors will be disqualified if during any engagement with the Outreach Awards, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the awards administrator, or other forms of communication contain any matter that, in the discretion of DOE, is indecent, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
- If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for the awards described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. You should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the contests described here and no other contests on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
- The awards administrator, when feasible, may give competitors an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

A.2 Submission Rights

The submission materials in this contest must be submitted and released to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the awards administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest, a license to display publicly any part of the submission package. This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the administrator's or HeroX's applications, on the contest website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and the inclusion of the submission in any other media, worldwide. The submission



may be viewed by DOE, the awards administrator, and judges for purposes of the contests, including, but not limited to, screening and evaluation purposes. The awards administrator and any third parties acting on its behalf will also have the right to publicize the competitors' names and, as applicable, the names of competitors' team members and organizations, which participated in the submission on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

- The competitor is the sole, original author and copyright owner of the submission or that the applicant has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright, trade secret, trademark, nondisclosure agreement, patent, or upon any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.3 Copyright

Each competitor represents and warrants that the competitor is the sole author and copyright owner of the submission; that the submission is an original work of the applicant, or that the applicant has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission, as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright or upon any other third-party rights of which the applicant is aware; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.4 Contest Subject To Applicable Law

All contests are subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations. Participation constitutes each participant's full and unconditional agreement to these Official Contest Rules and administrative decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the contest. This notice is not an obligation of funds; the final awards are contingent upon the availability of appropriations.

A.5 Resolution of Disputes

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

In the event of a dispute, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the competitor. The "authorized account holder" is the natural person or legal entity assigned an email address by an internet access provider, online service provider, or other organization responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted address. Competitors and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

The awards administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or any disputes between teams.

A.6 Publicity

The winners of these awards (collectively, "Winners") will be featured on DOE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, social media, audio (NREL) websites.

Except where prohibited, participation in the contest constitutes each winner's consent to DOE's and its agents' use of each winner's name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions, and/or hometown and state information for promotional purposes through any form of media, worldwide, without further permission, payment, or consideration.



A.7 Liability

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume and, thereby, have assumed any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest or development of any submission. Upon registration, except in the case of willful misconduct, all participants agree to and, thereby, do waive and release any and all claims or causes of action against the federal government and its officers, employees, and agents for any and all injury and damage of any nature whatsoever (whether existing or thereafter arising, whether direct, indirect, or consequential; and whether foreseeable or not), arising from their participation in the contest, whether the claim or cause of action arises under contract or tort.

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this contest delegated to the Director of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), the Director has determined that no liability insurance will be required of competitors to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

A.8 Records Retention And Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA)

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records. Any confidential commercial information contained in a submission should be designated at the time of submission.

Competitors are encouraged to employ protective markings in the following manner:

- The cover sheet of the submission must be marked as follows and identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]

- The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: “May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure.”
- In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

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

A.9 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.10 General Conditions

DOE reserves the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the contest, or any part of it, at any time. If any fraud, technical failures, or any other factor beyond DOE's reasonable control impairs the integrity or proper functioning of the contests, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel the contest.

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for each category, DOE reserves the right to only select competitors that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no competitors are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no competitors to be winners.

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

A.11 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the awards administrator to maximize the impact of contest benefits. Some factors outside the control of competitors 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 of potential winners.
- Whether the DOE recognition is nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to solar energy and its benefits among audiences and in areas that are underserved by existing efforts by the U.S. solar market.
- The degree to which the submission supports and complements DOE's existing programs and strategies to achieve DOE goals.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE engagement with new audiences and recipients that have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits team member diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, with participants including but not limited to graduates and students of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority serving institutions (MSIs), members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities, or members from minority business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, or veteran-owned businesses.



A.12 Definitions

Awards administrator means the Alliance for Sustainable Energy operating in its capacity under the Management and Operating Contract for NREL and SETO. When the awards administrator is referenced in this document, it refers to staff from both the Alliance for Sustainable Energy and SETO staff. Ultimate decision-making authority regarding contest matters rests with the Director of SETO.

A.13 Additional Eligibility Requirements

- Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any awards contests in this program. Additionally, members of their immediate families (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, or parents) and anyone who lives in their household, regardless of relation, are not eligible to participate in the Prize.
- 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.
- Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Binding Operational Directives (BOD) as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible to compete. See <https://cyber.dhs.gov/directives/>.
- Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of Department of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: <https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list>.

This is the end of the rules document, thank you for reading.





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