

AMERICAN
MADE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Energizing Rural Communities Prize



Rules Workshop: February 1, 2023



O CED

Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations

Agenda

Time	Topic
10:00-10:15am	Introduction & Program Background
10:15-10:25am	Prize Background
10:25-10:45am	Outreach Discussion
10:45-10:55am	Timeline
10:55am-11:55am	Track Discussion
11:55am-12:00pm	Closeout
12:00-1:00pm	Final Q&A (optional)

Times listed in Eastern Time (ET)

Webinar Logistics:

- Everyone is joined in listen-only mode
- Audio Issues?—Try connecting over the phone
- If that doesn't work, visit the [Zoom Help Center webpage](#)
- Q&A—Submit your questions using the chat box

REAL-TIME POLL VIA POLL EVERYWHERE



- Go to pollev.com/nrelwebinars303 in your browser
 - Or text **nrelwebinars303** to **22333**.
- Enter your first and last name.
- Respond to each poll as they appear on your screen.



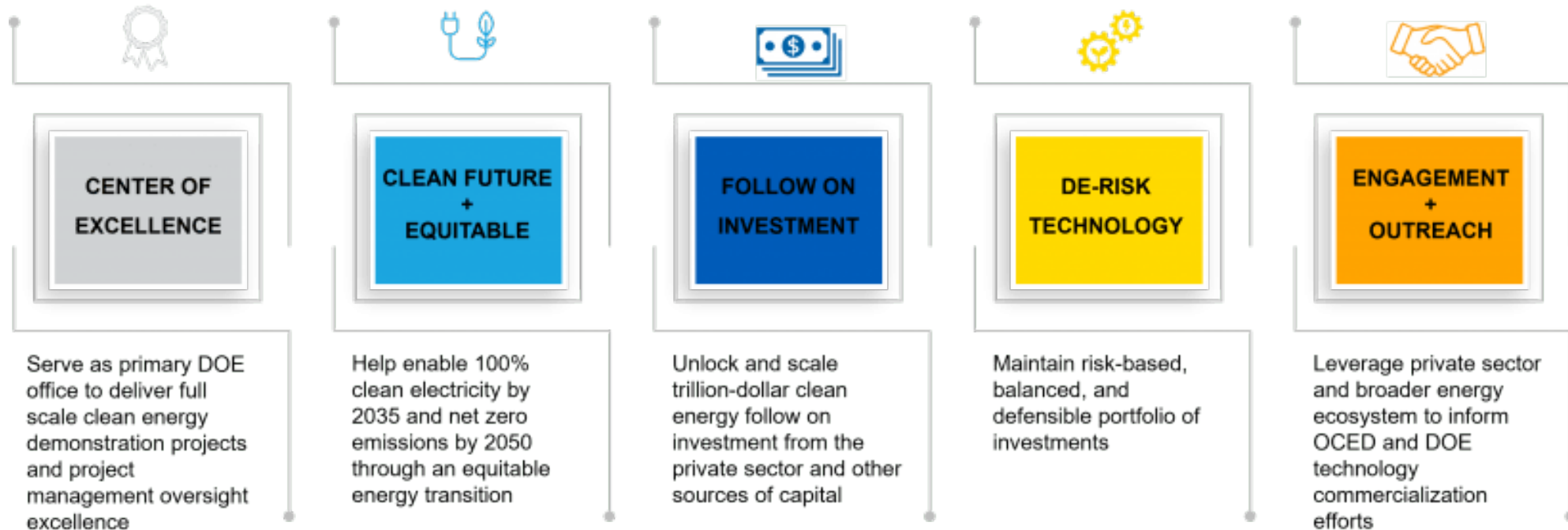
BACKGROUND

What is OCED?

The Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) was established in December 2021 as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to accelerate clean energy technologies from the lab to market and fill a critical innovation gap on the path to achieving our nation's climate goals of net zero emissions by 2050.

OCED's mission is to deliver clean energy demonstration projects at scale in partnership with the private sector to accelerate deployment, market adoption, and the equitable transition to a decarbonized energy system.

To achieve this mission, OCED has a clear mandate:



What is ERA?

The Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) Program is designed, in consultation with the Department of the Interior, to provide financial assistance to improve, in rural or remote areas of the United States, the resilience, safety, reliability, and availability of energy and environmental protection from adverse impacts of energy generation.

Nearly one in six Americans live in a remote or rural community. Due to low population density and isolation from larger electric grids, these communities face higher energy costs and poor electrical reliability. Rural communities also have a disproportionately high share of low- and moderate-income families, who have limited ability to cope with high electricity costs.

The ERA program will provide federal support to rural or remote communities to:

- Improve the overall cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, or distribution systems;
- Site or upgrade transmission and distribution lines;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation by rural or remote areas;
- Provide or modernize electric generation facilities;
- Develop microgrids; and
- Increase energy efficiency.



Energizing Rural Communities Prize

Through workshops and community input, the ERA Program has found that two of the biggest barriers to improving energy systems in rural or remote areas are developing the necessary partnerships and securing financing. With this in mind, the ERA has announced the Energizing Rural Communities Prize.

The \$15 million Energizing Rural Communities Prize challenges individuals and organizations to develop partnership plans or innovative financing strategies to help rural or remote communities improve their energy systems and advance clean energy demonstration projects in rural or remote areas. The term “rural or remote area” is defined as **a city, town, or unincorporated area that has a population of not more than 10,000 inhabitants.**



Why a Prize?

Financial Award Process

Write and submit concept papers

Concept paper review

Applicants write and submit full applications

Full applications review

Selections and negotiations

Begin performing

Prepare and submit reimbursement request

Request reviewed and reimbursement issued

Prize Award Process

Begin performing

Achieve predefined goal

Complete submission packet

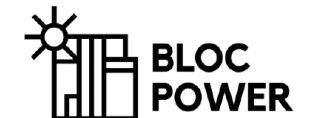
Judges score submissions

Winners receive payment

Power Connectors

Power Connectors are integrally involved with prize program execution, recruitment, and support. These organizations are contracted yearly to perform a variety of tasks for specific prizes that advance program successes, extend the reach to improve the diversity and inclusivity of the Network overall. Power Connectors also could assist with other innovative DOE programs based on new, and existing, program needs.

- Recruitment & Outreach
- Mentoring & Education
- Network & Partnership
- Event Management
- Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Program Design, Evaluation & Implementation



Goals of This Prize

This prize seeks to:

- Demonstrate innovative and replicable partnership and financial mechanisms that act as initial steps toward clean energy projects.
- Better prepare rural or remote communities to secure funding for clean energy projects, either through future ERA funding opportunities or other public or private funding sources.
- Identify, understand, and further develop activities that prepare communities to complete clean energy projects.
- Build trust and strengthen the networks between and within rural and remote communities in support of energy improvements aligned with DOE's Justice40 priorities.

Prize Timeline

Phase One Opens: March 2023

- Build your team and develop your plan
- Develop and submit submission materials

Phase One Closes: June 2023

Phase One Winner Announcement and Awards: July 2023

- Only Phase One winners are eligible to compete in Phase Two

Phase Two Opens: July 2023

- Refine your plan and begin implementing of plan to improve energy in rural or remote areas
- Develop and submit submission materials

Phase Two Closes: July 2024

Phase Two Winner Announcements and Awards: August 2024

Potential Competitors

- **Non-federal-government entities** such as municipalities, states, counties, federally recognized tribal governments, territories, public housing authorities, and/or regional planning organizations.
- **Indian Tribes** which includes Alaska Native Regional Corporations and Village Corporations, Intertribal Organizations, and Tribal Energy Development Organizations.
- **Community-based organizations (CBOs)** that interface with utilities, trade organizations (ie. regional chapter of NRECA, APPA).
- **Community-based funding organizations** such as green banks, credit unions, or community development financial institutions (CDFIs).
- **Nonprofit or for-profit organizations** such as utilities, energy upgrade service providers, project developers, unions, faith-based organizations, and other entities. Private entities must be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States with majority domestic ownership and control.
- **Academic institutions and student groups.** Academic institutions must be based in the United States.
- **Individuals** such as local entrepreneurs and technology developers.

The prize encourages submissions from individuals, organizations, and communities that historically have not received DOE funding.

The background is a solid blue color with a white topographic contour pattern. The contours are irregular, wavy lines that create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a map of a hilly or mountainous region. The lines are thin and closely spaced in some areas, while more widely spaced in others, creating a complex, organic texture.

POTENTIAL PRIZE STRUCTURE

PARTNER Track

Facilitate new or existing partnerships that enable development of clean energy projects in rural or remote communities. These connections may provide engineering services to mature project concepts, encourage multiple communities to aggregate similar energy projects to unlock economies of scale, facilitate equipment acquisition, or other collaborative efforts that support a step toward the development of clean energy projects in rural or remote communities.

\$10 million cash prize pool	
Phase One Prizes	Up to 60 cash prizes of \$100,000 each and in-kind mentorship services
Phase Two Prizes	Up to 20 awards of \$200,000 each selected based on project implementation.

Track 1: PARTNER

Formation of partnerships that advance development of clean energy projects in rural or remote areas

At the conclusion of this prize, targeted outcomes include:

- Successfully moved into local permitting stage of project construction
- Securing necessary engineering studies or designs for project execution
- A formal resource assessment or utility analysis for the identified community
- Evidence of hiring or building a project team capable of executing the identified project
- Execution of offtake agreements

FINANCE Track

Connect communities to capital for current or future clean energy projects. This capital may be used to support innovative business models, new approaches to financing clean energy projects, the expansion of existing business models to new rural and remote areas, and innovative ways to leverage other fiscal incentives such as tax credits.

\$5 million cash prize pool	
Phase One Prizes	Up to 30 cash prizes of \$100,000 each and in-kind mentorship services
Phase Two Prizes	Up to 10 awards of \$200,000 each, selected based on project implementation.

Track 2: FINANCE

Development of projects that improve access to capital for clean energy projects

At the conclusion of this prize, targeted outcomes include:

- Developing business models that will improve local access to capital directly or through tax incentives
- Creating business models and/or financing mechanisms that can support local, clean energy-related businesses
- Developing new, clean energy and energy efficiency loan and credit enhancement products
- Developing targeted training on financing and underwriting clean energy projects
- Business models that can provide long-term operations and maintenance solutions and support to sustain deployed clean energy related projects

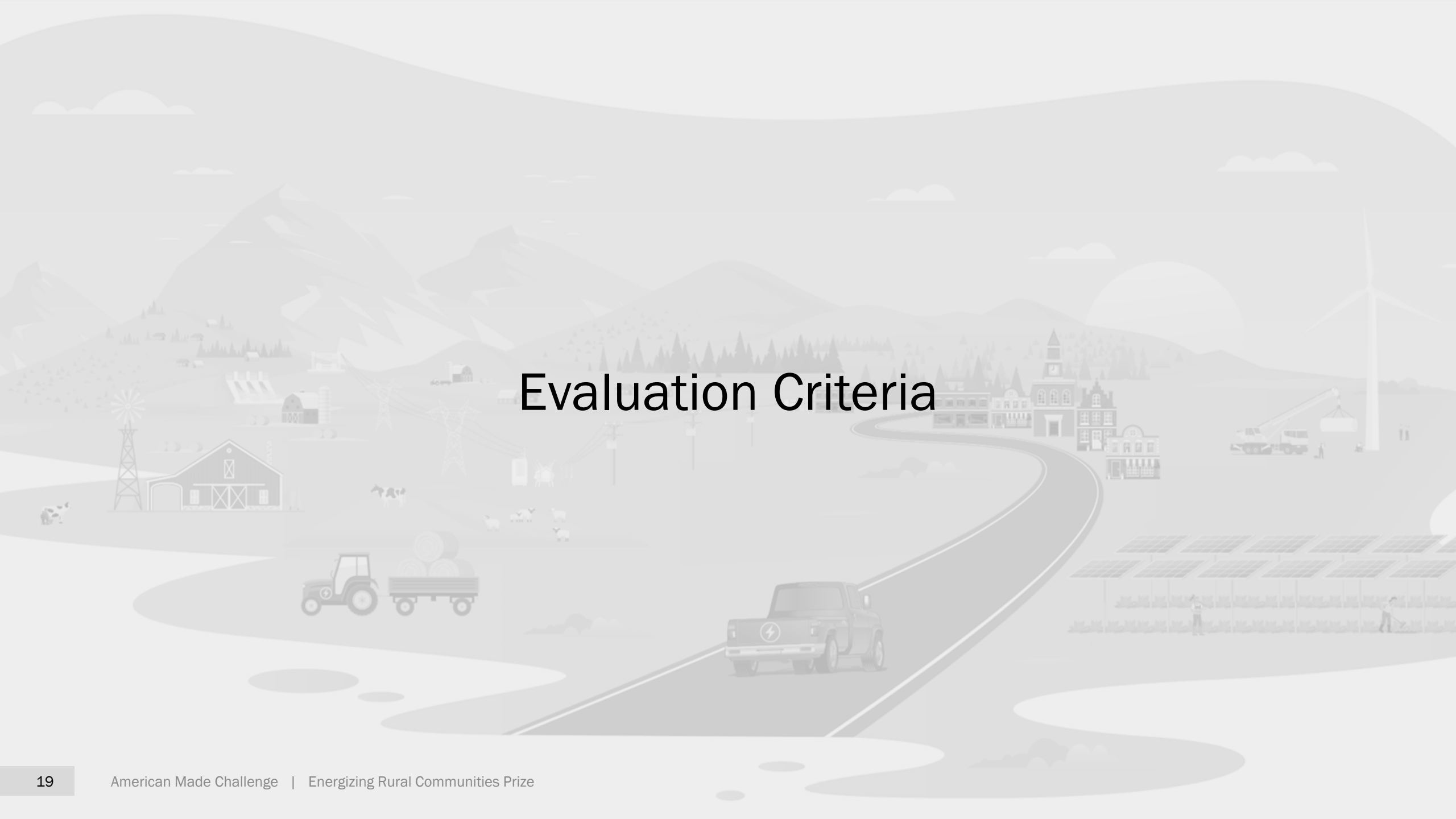
PARTNER and FINANCE Scoring Statements

Applications must include:

- *Required, unscored:*
 - Cover Page
 - Summary Slide
- *Required, scored:*
 - Three-Minute Video Pitch
 - Partnership Plan or Project Plan
 - Proof of Commitment or Financial Statement

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

Criterion #: Title	
Suggested Content Competitor Provides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion 1... • Suggestion 2... •etc. 	Each Statement Scored on a 1–6 Scale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoring Statement 1... • Scoring Statement 2... •etc.



Evaluation Criteria

PARTNER

Evaluation Criteria for PARTNER Track Submissions

There are *5 criteria* that must be addressed in the partnership plan and proof of commitment:

- **Criterion 1:** Relevant Experience
- **Criterion 2:** Proposed Activities During Phase Two of the Prize
- **Criterion 3:** Expected Outcomes, Impacts, and Success Metrics
- **Criterion 4:** Budget, Staff, and Other Resources
- **Criterion 5:** Long-Term Strategy for Achieving Community Energy Goals

FINANCE

Evaluation Criteria for FINANCE Track Submissions

There are *five criteria* that need to be addressed in the Project Plan and Financial Statement:

- **Criterion 1:** Relevant Experience
- **Criterion 2:** Proposed Activities During Phase Two of the Prize
- **Criterion 3:** Expected Outcomes, Impacts, and Success Metrics
- **Criterion 4:** Budget, Staff, and Organizational Structure
- **Criterion 5:** Long-Term Strategy and Plan for Future Funding

Questions?

Email: ruralenergyprize@nrel.gov

Forum: www.herox.com/rural-energy



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

