



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

# Solar Prize Round 8 Informational Webinar

July 9, 2024

# Topics

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# Solar Prize Overview

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# Purpose



## ENERGIZE

American ingenuity in solar **innovation**.



## EMPOWER

innovators to rapidly transform **ideas into prototypes**.



## ENGAGE

a network of labs, facilities, and partners to **prepare for market**.



# What is the Solar Prize?

## Multimillion-dollar prize competition

- Ready!, Set!, and Go! Contests
- JEDI Contest
- Power Up Contest

## National network of support organizations

- American-Made Network



# Grants vs. Prizes

## 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

# Prize Structure

- Three contests
- \$3 million in cash prizes
- \$900,000 in support vouchers
- \$200,000 in optional JEDI Contest prizes
- \$104,000 available in Power Up Contest for select non-winners
- **Ready! Contest:** Make plan and show off your idea.
- **Set! Contest:** Take that plan and design a proof of concept.
- **Go! Contest:** Develop a prototype, identify a pilot partner, and show a commercialization plan.



# JEDI Contest

- JEDI = Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- \$200,000 additional prize funds
- Optional component
- Describe how solution addresses solar market barriers facing underserved communities and work to substantially advance their approach toward JEDI goals as they progress through the competition
- Additional funding available at each contest (Ready!, Set!, and Go!) for successful JEDI submissions
- Must win the Ready! Contest in order to win the JEDI Contest.



\$200,000 in additional prizes

	JEDI Contest Winners	Prize*
<b>Ready!</b>	Up to 10 semifinalists	\$100,000 split equally among JEDI Contest winners, with individual prizes capped at \$25,000
<b>Set!</b>	Up to 5 finalists	\$50,000 in cash split equally
<b>Go!</b>	Up to 2 Go! competitors	\$50,000 in cash split equally

\*Prizes are shown as funding ranges when they depend on the number of winners.



# Power Up Contest

	Winners	Prize
Power Up Awardee	Up to 10	\$3,000 in cash for each awardee, and the opportunity to participate in the Power Up Program
Power Up Program Graduate	Up to 10 of the Power Up Teams	\$7,000 in cash for the Power Up Contest Awardees who complete and meet the requirements of the Power Up Program
Power Up Pitch Competition	1	\$4,000 and two complimentary passes to an industry conference for the winning Power Up Program Graduate team

- Designed to support and advance new and diverse teams that have compelling applications but are not selected as Ready! Contest winners.
- Receive tailored business support from a Power Connector following the Ready! winner announcement.
- Support will help refine their technology road map, improve business plan, and validate their product/market fit.
- See full details in the Official Rules.

# Eligibility

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# Eligibility Requirements



**Entrepreneurs**

**Students & Faculty**

**Scientists**

**Anyone with a  
BIG! Idea\***

\*Any U.S.-based individual or team with a desire to transform an idea that can be commercialized in 3 to 5 years through the later phases of the prize into impactful new solutions and develop those ideas into prototypes.

# Eligibility Requirements

Individuals, teams of individuals, private entities (for-profits and nonprofits), and nonfederal government entities (such as states, counties, tribes, municipalities, and academic institutions) are eligible to compete in the Ready! Contest.

- Individual Competitor – Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Group of Individuals – Online account holder must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Private Entities – Incorporated in and maintain primary place of business in the U.S.
- Academic Institutions – Must be based in the U.S.

**A single competitor or team may submit a maximum of three submissions.**

**Refer to the official rules for the complete eligibility requirements.**

Note: For the Set! and Go! Contests, competitors must be a for-profit business entity.

# What Kind of Ideas are We Looking For?

- **Hardware**
  - Efforts to create and support advanced manufacturing solutions.
  - Products to drive down costs with manufacturing, adoption, installations, etc.
- **Software**
  - Business models/design tools.
  - Regulatory compliance, customer acquisition, financing, operations and maintenance, and grid integration costs.
  - Advances in load disaggregation and control, proliferation of energy storage tech, and increase resiliency.
- Can be commercialized in 3 to 5 years.
- Make a case for how your idea will change or advance the solar industry.
- Refer to the rules!

Not sure if your idea  
is right for the  
Solar Prize?

Contact a Power  
Connector for  
support and  
insight



# What to Keep in Mind for JEDI

The JEDI Contest is focused on four key areas:

1. **Opportunity Space:** Competitors rigorously assess the needs of underserved communities and uncover key insights from potential customers or end users of the product.
2. **Solution Development:** Competitors design and develop a solution to overcome identified barriers.
3. **Market Impact:** Competitors measure progress and validate assumptions with potential customers, users, or market experts during development and testing to demonstrate the solution's impact and need in underserved communities.
4. **Network Activation:** Competitors advance the proposed solution by cultivating a diverse network of mentors and partners, which can include members of the American-Made Network, funders, and other relevant entities.



# What to Keep in Mind for JEDI

Not sure if you have a JEDI idea or need help adding JEDI goals to your innovative idea?

Contact Encolor Consulting -  
Rachel Dortin,  
[rdortin@encolorconsulting.com](mailto:rdortin@encolorconsulting.com)  
for support and insight!

Refer to the rules on the JEDI Contest  
and the JEDI Contest Submission  
Requirements

JEDI solutions addresses solar market barriers to adoption and deployment in underserved communities and work to substantially advance their approach toward JEDI goals as they progress through the competition.

JEDI Contest competitors must also demonstrate:

1. Their understanding of the unique needs of the communities they plan to engage;
2. Their credibility with the community, such as via a shared background or previous experience working with underserved or disadvantaged communities; and
3. Their commitment to long-term support of these communities.

# Where Can I See Previous Winning Ideas?

Visit <https://www.herox.com/American-Made-Challenges> to find all previous rounds of Solar Prize. Refer to the Teams tab to access the videos of previous winners at each contest.

You can also check out Solar Prize Round 5 Software Track, <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeR5software/teams>, Solar Prize Round 6, <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeround6/teams>, and Solar Prize Round 7, <https://www.herox.com/solarprizeround7/teams>, for teams that have been awarded JEDI Prizes in the past.

# Important Dates & Events

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# Important Dates

## Now!

- Follow the Solar Prize Round 8 on HeroX and start working.

## Power Connector Workshops/Webinars

- Through the summer – refer to HeroX timeline and you can find recordings under Resources.

## Sept. 26 at 5 p.m. ET

- Deadline to submit an entry to the Ready! Contest.



# Submitting to the Ready! Contest

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# Read the Rules



Official Rules

**American-Made Solar Prize Round 8**

THESE RULES ARE EFFECTIVE JUNE 14, 2024, FOR  
ROUND 8 OF THE SOLAR PRIZE

Official Rules of the  
American-Made Solar Prize Round 8  
are available online

<https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/solarprize/docs/American-Made-Solar-Prize-R8-Rules.pdf>



# Ready! Contest Goals

Rapidly transform an important problem from a conceptual or early-stage solution to a plan for building a proof of concept.

- **Problem-Solution Fit:** Develop a proposed solution that addresses a real-world problem facing the solar industry.
- **Team Capabilities:** The team has a demonstrated background and drive to accomplish the stated goals of the proposed solution.
- **Network Engagement:** Cultivate relationships with members of the American-Made Network and/or other entities to maximize the likelihood of creating a viable business based on the proposed solution and enhance the quality of the submission package.



# What to Submit

Submission Form, including Connector Recognition Reward, on HeroX:

1. 90-second video (public)
2. Cover page content and Technical Narrative
  - a) Narrative that answers four questions about the problem, solution, team, and plan (not to exceed 2,500 words)
3. JEDI Contest submission (not to exceed 500 words, optional)
4. One summary PowerPoint slide (public)
5. Letters of commitment or support (optional).



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## American-Made Solar Prize Round 8 Ready! Contest Submission

### Project Name

Innovation tagline (e.g., your mission in a few words)

**Keyword tags**

### Team

Names, geographic locations, contact info, and LinkedIn profiles

### Partners and American-Made Network

Key project partners and organizations (if any)

The Connectors that significantly helped you advance your solution and the major items they helped with (if applicable)

### Are you competing in the JEDI Contest?

[Link to your 90 second video](#)

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# Innovation in 90 Seconds Video (public)



## Suggested content

- The real-world problem you are solving.
- Your solution and why it is transformative.
- Who you are and why you have a competitive edge.
- (Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration) Describe the specific JEDI barriers that your solution is poised to address and how you will be successful.

## Reviewers will consider these criteria

- The video explains a compelling real-world problem.
- The video describes a unique innovation that can achieve market entry within the next 3–5 years.
- The video shows a passionate, knowledgeable, and skillful team.
- (Optional, for JEDI Contest consideration) The video describes a compelling solution to stated JEDI barrier(s).



## TIPS and TRICKS

- This is your first impression
- Be creative and focus on content
- Watch previous winners' videos
- Get feedback before you post online
- Please note that if the link to your video cannot be accessed by the Prize Administrators, your submission will be marked ineligible for missing materials.

# Technical Narrative: Four Questions

## 1. PROBLEM

What is the problem and why is solving it important?

## 2. SOLUTION

What is your solution, and why will it be successful?

**Word Limit: 2,500 words**  
+ 5 images or figures

## 3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TEAM

What have you done to date and what qualities give you a competitive edge?

## 4. PLAN

What is your plan to achieve your goals?



### TIPS and TRICKS

- Remember your audience
- Be specific (this portion isn't public)
- Pay attention to the word count

# Narrative Content & Review

## Question 3: *Accomplishments and Team* – What have you done to date, who are you, and what qualities give you a competitive edge?

### Suggested content you provide

- Describe your efforts to advance your solution since or prior to the announcement of the Prize and highlight key learnings and/or milestones achieved.
- Explain why winning the Ready! Contest will substantively change the likely outcome for the proposed solution.
- Introduce your team, explain how it came together, and highlight the knowledge, experience, and skills that make it capable of achieving success.
- What experience do you have trying new things, solving difficult problems, and overcoming barriers to bring ideas to reality?
- Discuss your team's diversity and plans to build upon your team diversity in the future.
- Describe what drives your team to realize this solution and why you will continue when facing difficulties.

### Evaluation Criteria

- A considerable amount of high-quality effort was put into defining and advancing the proposed solution.
- A clear explanation of how winning the Ready! Contest will significantly increase the team's chances of creating a viable business based on this solution was provided.
- The team's track record demonstrates notable entrepreneurial qualities such as adaptability, creativity, decisiveness, passion, and resourcefulness.
- The team's commitment to diversity is evident in its current makeup (including advisors and partners), as well as in its long-and short-term plans for future recruitment, collaboration, and other related internal diversity strategies.
- The team has the knowledge, experience, and determination to transform their proposed solution into a viable business in the near future.

# Narrative Content & Review

## Question 4: *Plan* – What is your plan to achieve your goals?

### Suggested content you provide

- Describe where you stand in your solution’s development cycle and define goals for Set! and Go! Demo Days and a one-year goal (**see special instructions in Official Rules**). If your team has received DOE funding in the last 5 years for a similar solution, discuss how you used those funds to date and how your goals during Solar Prize would complement prior funds.
- Describe your team’s readiness to meet your goals and whether your team requires additional talent and resources.
- Provide a high-level budget and plan to meet your goals between the conclusion of the Ready! Contest and the Go! Demo Day, including how you will leverage program resources, members of the American-Made Network, or other entities (include references to letters of support/commitment if applicable). Include a plan for assessment and feedback from many relevant stakeholders (e.g., possible investors, customers, and experts in the solution space, and entities that would be the eventual customers or end users of the product).
- Describe risks to the development plan and mitigation strategies (e.g., data requirements and plans to acquire the necessary data).

### Evaluation Criteria

- The stated goals are ambitious, reduce risks, show a commitment to an accelerated development cycle, and build upon prior funding (if applicable).
- Meeting the stated goals will demonstrate critical progress toward developing, testing, and validating the functionality and market demand of this innovation.
- The proposed plan effectively uses resources available in this program to advance the innovation.
- Sufficient risks to the development plan have been identified, and reasonable risk mitigation strategies have been described.



# JEDI Submission (Optional, for JEDI Contest Consideration)

## JEDI Submission (Optional, for JEDI Contest Consideration) – 500 words max

### Suggested content you provide

- Describe your organization’s unique value proposition(s) to underserved communities, how these propositions will lead to a sustainable business with paying customers, and how you validated your assumptions.
- Describe how your organization is integrating JEDI principles into your innovation.
- What makes your team uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities?
- Define JEDI goals for Set! and Go! Demo Days (based on the schedule listed in [Section 1.6](#)) and a one-year goal.

### Evaluation Criteria

- The competitor is pursuing an innovative and compelling solution to expand solar access in underserved communities.
- The competitor quantifies a critical JEDI problem, and their assessment of current solutions shows a comprehensive understanding of the opportunity space.
- The team is uniquely capable of addressing issues of solar adoption in underserved communities.
- The stated JEDI goals are SMART.



# Other Materials

- Submission Summary Slide (will be made public)
  - Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that contains technically specific details but can be understood by most people. There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.
- Letters of Commitment or Support (optional)
  - Attach one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., potential users of the proposed innovation or strategic manufacturing partners) to provide context. Letters of support from partners or others that are critical to the success of your proposed solution will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your solution will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multi-page letters.



# Power Up Contest

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# Power Up Contest: What to Expect

	Winners	Prize	Criteria
Power Up Awardee	Up to 10	\$3,000 in cash for each awardee, and the opportunity to participate in the Power Up Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opt in to the Power Up Contest on the Ready! Submission form</li> <li>• No other requirements</li> </ul>
Power Up Program Graduate	Up to 10 of the Power Up Teams	\$7,000 in cash for the Power Up Contest Awardees who complete and meet the requirements of the Power Up Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the attendance requirements of the Power Up Program (described in next slide).</li> <li>• Complete the HeroX submission form.</li> <li>• Submit the Power Up Growth Paper.</li> </ul>
Power Up Pitch Competition	1	\$4,000 and two complimentary passes to an industry conference for the winning Power Up Program Graduate team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each team must complete the Power Up Program to participate in and win the Pitch Competition.</li> <li>• Teams will give a 5-minute pitch with an accompanying slide deck that is reviewed by a selection official.</li> </ul>

# Power Up Contest: Opt In

	Winners	Prize
Power Up Awardee	Up to 10	\$3,000 in cash for each awardee, and the opportunity to participate in the Power Up Program
Power Up Program Graduate	Up to 10 of the Power Up Teams	\$7,000 in cash for the Power Up Contest Awardees who complete and meet the requirements of the Power Up Program
Power Up Pitch Competition	1	\$4,000 and two complimentary passes to an industry conference for the winning Power Up Program Graduate team

Anyone who submits to the Ready! Contest can opt in to the Power Up Contest by answering the following question on their submission in 100 words or less:

*The Power Up Contest offers a program for tailored business support and up to \$10,000 to 10 competitors who are not selected for Ready! but demonstrate a solution and team with potential. Would your team like to be considered for the Power Up Program if selected as a Power Up Awardee? If yes, please summarize in no more than 100 words what the benefit of the program would be for your team. Please note that **opting in to the Power Up Contest will not take you out of consideration for winning a Ready! award.***

# Power Up Contest: Program

After being selected as a Power Up Awardee, teams will participate in the Power Up Program that will include six sessions of webinars and online content, direct mentorship with subject matter experts, and tailored support from Power Connectors. To be awarded as a Power Up Program Graduate, the following requirements need to be met:

	Participation/Content	Evaluation Criteria
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Participate in at least half of the Power Up Program webinars by attending the webinars.</li><li>Power Up Awardees will meet with a mentor and/or subject-matter expert at least five times over the course of the program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attend half of the total number of sessions across of the course (attendance tracked by Power Connector).</li><li>Meet with mentors at least five times, verified by mentor.</li></ul>
Power Up Growth Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How you advanced your solution during the Power Up Program.</li><li>How you advanced your value proposition and business model during the Power Up Program.</li><li>How you advanced your customer and/or partnership discovery during the Power Up Program.</li><li>How you utilized resources in the program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The team shows significant improvements to their value proposition across the program.</li><li>The team shows significant improvements to their customer and/or partnership discovery across the program.</li><li>The team shows significant improvements in their business model across the program.</li><li>The team meaningfully engaged in the resources available to them through the Power Up Program and substantially advanced their solution over the course of the program.</li></ul>



# Power Up Contest: Pitch Competition

After completing the Power Up Program, teams can participate in the Power Up Pitch Competition where they could win \$4,000 and two passes to an industry conference.

They will give a closed-door 5-minute pitch to a panel of expert reviewers and a selection official.

	Suggested Content	Evaluation Criteria
Power Up Pitch Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe the real-world problem you are solving.</li><li>• Describe your solution and why it is transformational compared to existing solutions.</li><li>• Explain the features of your innovation and how it works. Discuss its expected functionality.</li><li>• What impact will this innovation have?</li><li>• What is the scale of the opportunity, and what is your target market?</li><li>• Who are you, and why do you have a competitive edge?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The pitch explains a compelling real-world problem and solution.</li><li>• The pitch explains an exciting innovation.</li><li>• The pitch clearly describes the features of the innovation.</li><li>• The impact of the innovation on community, jobs, and/or domestic markets was well explained.</li><li>• The pitch identifies a reasonable target market and a path toward making a significant impact on the U.S. solar industry.</li><li>• The pitch shows a knowledgeable and skillful team.</li></ul>

# Get Support for Your Submission

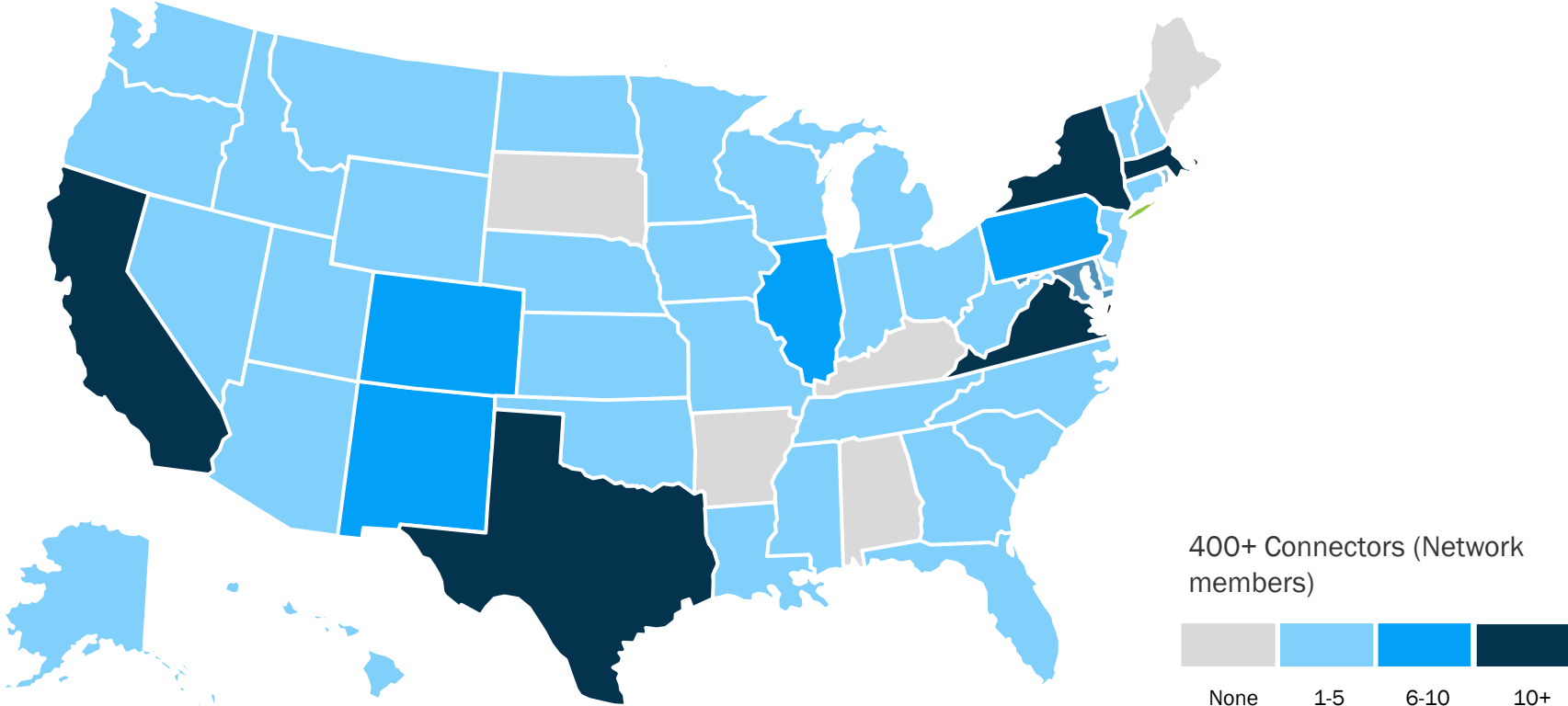
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# American-Made Network



# Connector Recognition Rewards

- \$281,000 of Recognition Rewards available
- \$120,000 available during the Ready! Contest
- You MUST list the Connector on your submission
- Organization MUST be an approved member of the American-Made Network. You can find the network here and eligible organizations here: <https://americanmadechallenges.org/network>

Reward Name	Anticipated #	\$	Details
Mobilize	Up to one per winning Ready! competitor (20 competitors)	\$5,000	Distributed to Connectors who recruit and/or support competitors who go on to win the Ready! Contest.
	Up to one per winning Power Up competitor (10 competitors)	\$2,000	Distributed to Connectors who recruit and/or support competitors who go on to win the Power Up Contest.

# Solar Prize Round 8 Ready! Power Connectors



[ghaffey@adventures.com](mailto:ghaffey@adventures.com)  
[nicole@adventures.com](mailto:nicole@adventures.com)



[nsc@ivtgroup.com](mailto:nsc@ivtgroup.com)



[powerconnector@encolorconsulting.com](mailto:powerconnector@encolorconsulting.com)



[amanda.buchanan635@gmail.com](mailto:amanda.buchanan635@gmail.com)



[swharmby@venturewell.org](mailto:swharmby@venturewell.org)

Contacts can be found on HeroX under Resources, Guidelines, and the FAQ!

# Important Dates

## Now!

- Follow the Solar Prize Round 8 on HeroX and start working.

## Power Connector Workshops/Webinars

- Through the summer – refer to HeroX timeline and you can find recordings under Resources.

## Sept. 26 at 5 p.m. ET

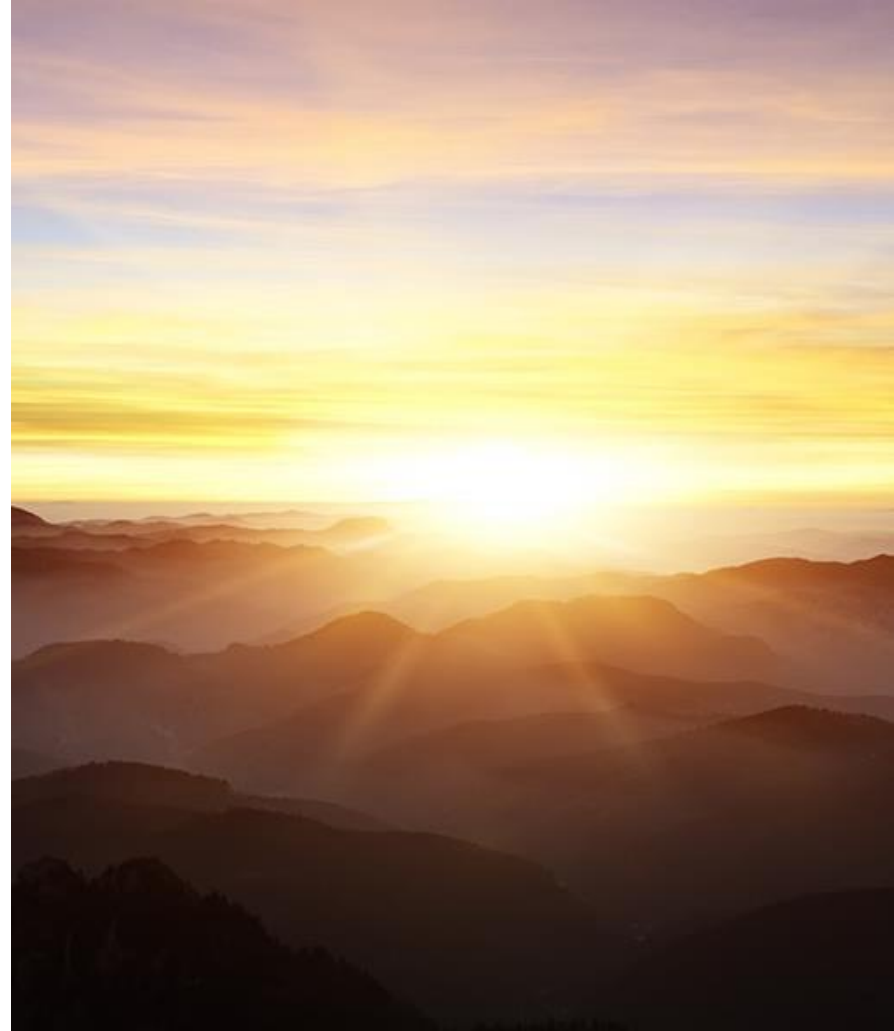
- Deadline to submit an entry to the Ready! Contest.





# Links

1. Follow the challenges on HeroX:  
<https://www.herox.com/solarprizeround8>
2. Rules:  
[https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/solarprize/docs/rules/r8/American-Made\\_Solar\\_Prize\\_Rules.pdf](https://americanmadechallenges.org/challenges/solarprize/docs/rules/r8/American-Made_Solar_Prize_Rules.pdf)
3. Send teams with questions here:  
[solar.prize@nrel.gov](mailto:solar.prize@nrel.gov)
4. Submit by Sept. 26.



# Questions?

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Email: [Solar.Prize@nrel.gov](mailto:Solar.Prize@nrel.gov)



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