

**Bill Ferris, TechWerx**

Welcome everybody. Good afternoon, or good morning, depending on where you're logging in from today. We appreciate you being here for this Building Solar Understanding and Risk Education, or B-SURE, program office hour session.

Just a few quick logistical announcements before we get started. We hope that you can stay for the full duration of today's office hours, but we're also recording, and we'll be posting the recording FAQs, and transcripts on the TechWerx website in the next 2-3 days.

For today's session, the chat is disabled, but we do encourage you to use the Q&A function to submit your questions. You can submit your questions at any time. During the Q&A session at the end, DOE will answer your questions.

If you need any technical assistance on Zoom, the Q&A button should be available on your Zoom toolbar at the bottom of your Zoom window. It's usually under an icon with three dots at the bottom. However, if you don't see it, there might be a “More Options” menu on your toolbar, and the Q&A should be available for you there. Excuse me, the three dots will be the “More Options” button.

So, without further ado, I'll happily hand things over to our moderator to begin today's webinar.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Great, awesome. Welcome, everyone. We're very excited to host this Office Hours for the B-SURE Opportunity, Building Solar Understanding and Risk Education. This opportunity is being funded by the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation at the Department of Energy.

Briefly, I'll do a quick introduction. My name is Meghan Camello, and I'm part of the TechWerx Innovation Hub. TechWerx is an innovation hub designed to facilitate connections between DOE, academia, nonprofits, startups, and other innovators across the United States. TechWerx, is managed by RTI International, which is an independent research institute, and we're headquartered in Research Triangle Park in North Carolina.

TechWerx offers a lot of opportunities in many different topical areas, so in order to stay abreast of what's coming and what's new, we encourage you all to follow us on LinkedIn and sign up for our newsletter, which you can find on our website. Our website is [techwerx.org](http://techwerx.org). That way you'll be notified of any new opportunities as they are announced.

A couple housekeeping items. As Bill mentioned, questions will be handled, towards the end of this session. We're going to use the Q&A function of Zoom, so please go ahead and

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as you have any questions, just enter them in the Q&A, and feel free to upvote or like any of the questions so that we can make sure those get answered first. We may not be able to get through all the questions today, depending on timing, but we'll try to get through as many as we can with the time that we have. For those questions that we can't get through today, all the questions will be passed over to DOE and they'll work on getting them answered. All of the answers, whether they're answered live today, during the session, or those that will be answered offline, all of the questions will be posted on the FAQs on the opportunity page on our website. And we'll continue to update that periodically, and you can expect to see those in 2-3 business days.

Just a couple other housekeeping reminders. Per DOE guidance, we do not allow any AI bots or note-taking tools, such as Otter.ai or other tools, but you shouldn't need them for today's session because this is being recorded. And the recording, transcript, along with the slides, will be available on the website in a few business days. But if we notice any of the AI note-taking bots, we'll have to kick them out of the session.

And without further ado, we are joined today, by several people in the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation, including Stacy, Andrew, and KC. And with that, I'm going to pass it over to Stacy, who's going cover a little bit more about the opportunity.

**Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI**

Thank you so much, Meg, and thank you all for joining us today for this first Office Hours. I'm joined today by my DOE colleagues, KC Hirsch, Andrew Graves, Allie Robbins, Riley Yeager, and Tori Fessenden. They're also supporting this B-SURE program.

This opportunity is offered by the Integrated Energy Systems Office, which resides within DOE's Office of Critical Materials and Energy Innovation. Our mission is to drive research and development of energy solutions that enhance grid reliability and resilience, foster U.S. technological leadership, and reduce the cost of energy for Americans. We do this through creating initiatives that enhance energy security, conducting R&D, and by offering funding opportunities like this one to support our mission.

So, the B-SURE program aims to help consumer protection, consumer education, and consumer-facing service organizations design and deliver education and training on solar energy for consumers and the professionals who support them. So we want to work with trusted consumer protection organizations to address challenges that consumers face in the solar industry by enabling them to better support their stakeholders and consumers to confidently interact with the solar industry. All the way from initial inquiry to operation and maintenance and through decommissioning.

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We anticipate 5 to 8 awards of between \$250,000 and \$750,000 each. There's no cost share requirement for B-SURE.

Just a couple words on eligibility. Basically, applicants must be a domestic entity. You'll have to certify that when you submit.

We will apply the following program goals and policy factors when reviewing applications. And these include how an application would contribute to consumer protection in the rooftop solar market. The impact and replicability of the proposal, geographic diversity of awardees, and the project's ability to leverage existing resources. So that means both yours as the applicant, your resources that you bring to the table, your connections, as well as an ability to build on the existing body of DOE consumer protection resources developed over time.

The applications are evaluated based on four items: the project lead qualifications, the target audience, engagement and education strategy, and outreach strategy and potential impact of your proposal.

This is the timeline for the program. Today, you're attending the first office hours. It will be linked, as mentioned, on the TechWerx Opportunity page. So, I want to just mention briefly, you'll notice that Office Hour Session 2 is TBD. We had something come up at DOE where we have a required obligation, so we will be, announcing a different date than the original 21st. That'll be rescheduled and held later this month. So keep your eyes posted on the TechWerx page in your email. The opportunity is open through May 13th at 5 PM Eastern, and you could submit any time up until then. We anticipate agreements being executed in September, and after that, work can begin. The program's designed for two-year projects with project completion in September of 2028 anticipated.

Then finally, relating to the application materials. So you'll fill out an application form. There will be two uploads that are required: one being the project narrative, there's a template for you that's going to make up the bulk of the application and has a 10-page limit, including the cover page, and then a resume file will be required as well.

There will be prompts in the online application to upload both the project narrative and supporting documents, including resumes, as one file, and letters of support from partners are optional. The application can be saved as you go, which is really nice. It saves automatically every 60 seconds, and you can also manually save it.

So, that concludes our presentation. Now both TechWerx and DOE are available for your questions, so I'll turn it back over to Meg and TechWerx to facilitate.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Great, thank you, Stacy. It looks like we have a few questions in the queue. Again, please use the Q&A function if you do want to submit a question or upvote a question that, is already there, and we'll just start going down the list here.

So the first question here is around, eligibility. I see a question around, would, the American Solar Energy Society be a reasonable choice for a prime recipient for this program? Andrew, I know you're going take the lead on answering. I know we don't want to specifically call out eligibility for a specific organization, but urge you all to look at the eligibility criteria on the opportunity page. Andrew, do you want to speak any more to that?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Thanks for this question. As Meghan mentioned, you know, we're not drawing hard boundaries around, you know, what an eligible organization is and not, other than the sort of specific criteria about being a domestic entity that Stacy mentioned. So we're going to review all the applications that we receive that are eligible based on that shorter list of strict criteria. But in general, you know, we are trying to encourage organizations that would not be seen as primarily solar advocates. They would be primarily seen as consumer protection organizations. So that is the idea of the opportunity, is that it would be organizations that have a reputation more as consumer protection focused, and less that might be seen as kind of solar advocates, as their primary mission. That being said, an organization like that could look to partner with other organizations, they might help us get the word out about this opportunity, and reach out to other contacts and other types of organizations that they think might be a good fit, and then partner as a subrecipient to an organization like that.

I think there's another question in that question as well about partnering with state energy offices. I think that would be a great idea to look for opportunities to partner with state energy offices. You know, unfortunately, we are relying on the applicants to come up with, kind of, stakeholder partnership teams, so it's not something that we're in a position to provide contacts or, references. This is sort of why we put out these competitive opportunities to look for stakeholders out there in the country to develop good ideas, identify good partners, and put together proposals that we then, review. So unfortunately, I don't think we're in a position to connect applicants or anything like that.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Thanks, Andrew. And then for the next question we have here, if an organization is applying as a lead agency, can they also be a partner in another application?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

And yes, I think that, is acceptable, unless TechWerx has any sort of restrictions on that. My understanding is an organization could apply as a prime and then, be a subrecipient, or a partner on another application, as far as I know. We can double check for any legal requirements related to that, but that is as far as I know.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Nope, that's correct, Andrew. Thank you.

I see here another question around, how the program announcement refers to the rooftop solar, but they were curious, does the program also include consumer protection issues related to community solar and or plug-in solar?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yeah, it's a great question. I think we talked about that during the kickoff presentation as well. I think the opportunity was primarily written around the rooftop solar market, but we would certainly welcome and review applications for, community solar and other sectors as well that particularly relates to, small, commercial, community-facing, solar, like on libraries or churches or things like that. But community solar would be within bounds, something that we would be interested in looking at proposals for. I think anything larger on the utility scale side would probably be pretty far from our area of focus for this, but yeah, I think we will welcome applications, that would cover the different types of systems.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Thanks, Andrew. I don't see any other questions, so I'll hold for a couple minutes to see if anyone else has any questions. Urge you to put them in the Q&A.

As Stacy mentioned, we're going to have another office hours later this month. The details around that will be posted on the webpage. You'll also get a recap of this webinar, this Office Hours, in the next few days that will include a link to the recording, and an opportunity to learn more about the next office hours, so that should be in your inbox in the next 2-3 business days.

I see here we have another question about, what about providing or developing materials for consumer education for secondary or post-secondary audiences, as well as for professionals who work with consumers?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yeah, that's a really interesting question. So I think it depends a little bit on what we mean by the secondary, post-secondary audiences. I don't think we would be as interested in courses about solar that would be particularly taught in high schools or universities. We've done a lot of programs in the past around workforce training, that focused on training people at universities or in high schools to be solar installers and things like that. So I don't think that would really fit too well with what we're thinking. However, if you mean, consumer education around secondary or post-secondary audiences as far as the building maintenance, or building owners, or local governments that have jurisdiction over, secondary schools or post-secondary schools, and if that was the focus, thinking through, the process that schools might go through to look at installing solar on their own, school rooftops or adjacent facilities, things like that. If it was focused on the buildings themselves, and the interest in schools pursuing that and consumer protections around that space, I think that is something that we would be, really interested in looking at applications for,

And then professionals who work with consumers, yeah, I think in general, if there's, other types of organizations that work with, consumers, maybe if you could provide some examples as to what exactly you're thinking of. But yeah, if they're professional networks, of individuals who are involved in solar, and you'd be spreading consumer protections information through those professional networks like hospital administrators, or as I mentioned before, administrators for libraries, or fire departments, or, things like that. If that's the kind of thing you're talking about, then, yeah, I think that's something that we would be certainly interested in.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Awesome, thanks, Andrew.

I see another question here on, whether a state energy office that has a consumer protection interest or focus, would they count as a lead applicant?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yeah, again, we're not here to draw a clear line between what would be eligible and ineligible, but I think something like that is in the space that we would imagine. We may not have actually specified that, but I think a state energy office that had that sort of focus, particularly if it was a collection of state energy offices, if it was a number of state energy offices spanning a particular region or something like that, or there was a nonprofit organization that had as partners with multiple state energy offices in a region, something like that, I think would be especially interesting.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Thank you, Andrew.

I see here a question around, how long will the B-SURE program go on for? Example, if a follow-up is included to support buyers through the system's life cycle, how many years will the program be funded?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Stacy, maybe you can help me out. It is 2 years, right, we had talked about?

**Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI**

Yes, it's a two-year program. We appreciate that people are thinking longer term, because part of what we want to achieve is some longevity with whatever we seed here with our funding, to the extent that your organization has a plan to carry on, or just make resources available after the period of performance. We would appreciate that.

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yep, that's exactly the point I was going to follow up with that. Thank you. Yeah, so the program would only be for 2 years, but hopefully this would be seed funding to help your organization sustain a focus in this area, so you'd be able to assist people throughout their life cycle of the systems.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Thanks, Andrew and Stacy.

I see here another question around, understanding that the emphasis is on consumer protections for consumers considering solar. This person is curious, will, DOE also value educating home buyers and homeowners about the basics of solar?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yes, that is a core focus. Looking at homebuyers and homeowners, understanding the potential for putting solar on their homes, and navigating that process, and understanding whether it's right for them, is the core focus of the program, for sure. If you give me a second, I could read the first part of that. The first part of the question says, working with HUD-approved housing counseling agencies. That is not something that we had necessarily thought about, but that seems like a very promising, way to approach the program.

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**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Awesome. Thank you, Andrew.

Any other questions, please, put them in the Q&A. This has been great so far.

While we wait a couple more minutes to see if any other questions come in, I'll do a couple friendly reminders. Reminders that applications close May 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

I encourage you all, if you're planning to submit an application, to do so ahead of the 5 p.m. deadline just in case there's any technical difficulties. If you run into any technical difficulties with submitting the application, or have any other questions following this office hours that we didn't get to, you can either contact us via the Contact Us form that's on our website, techwerx.org, or you can send us an email directly at info@techwerx.org, and we will get back to you on those questions.

As I mentioned at the beginning, all the information, the slides that Stacy presented, the questions that were answered here, as well as the questions that were answered in the webinar on April 25<sup>th</sup>, will all be on our webpage in the FAQ section, so that's the best place to go for the latest information.

I see another question here. Do you cover anything about a system's end of life? It is a huge cost that people are not aware of, and a surprise like PV buyers needing to upgrade services. I would hope the goal can include educating people through the whole process.

I know the focus of the B-SURE opportunity is focus on the full life cycle. Andrew, do you want to speak any more to that?

**Andrew Graves, DOE CMEI**

Yeah, no, that's great. I mean, it's things like that that I think are exactly what we're, looking for to make sure that consumers are fully aware of, the full lifecycle costs and what can they expect the process to be like of, owning solar. So, yeah, we'd certainly welcome applications that include that end-of-life piece as well.

**Meghan Camello, TechWerx**

Well, if we do not have any other questions, or if any questions come up, like I said, you can contact us via email at info at techwerx.org, or, use the contact us, form that's on our website.

Applications close May 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm, and all of this information that we presented today, as well as the recording and the transcript, will be on the opportunity page on our website.

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You all will also receive an email follow-up after this office hours in the next two to three days that we'll have a link to this, and, we'll recap what we talked about today. So, we appreciate you all attending, and, we'll look forward to seeing your applications, so thank you.