

TechWerx Building Solar Understanding and Risk Education (B-SURE) Office Hours
Transcript – April 28th, 2026.

Shane Hamstra, Tech Werx

Hello and welcome, everyone. We'll give each participant just another minute to join, as I still see the attendee numbers rising. If you need any assistance on Zoom, please enter those into the Q&A.

Welcome everyone. Good afternoon or good morning, depending where you're joining from today. Appreciate you being here for this office hours. If you have any needs, please use the Q&A. You can enter your questions for our presenters and panelists today. Also, if you have any Zoom questions, I'll be happy to look at those there and help you answer and respond there. So now, I'll hand things over to our moderator, Adam Klich, to get us going.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Hey, Shane. Hi everyone, good afternoon. Welcome to the Building Solar Understanding and Risk Education, or BSURE, office hours #2. This is an opportunity run by the Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation Program Office at the Department of Energy.

If you're not familiar with TechWerx, we are one of three innovation hubs for the Department of Energy. Our goal is to connect the Department of Energy with startups, researchers, industry, universities, nonprofits across the U.S. around energy innovation. To stay up to date on new opportunities or other news related to TechWerx, we recommend signing up for our newsletter, which is on our website. You can just scan the QR code, or go to techworks.org, and also follow us on LinkedIn.

Just a couple of housekeeping items. We're going to be using the Q&A function within Zoom today, so you should see it in the bottom where you can submit your questions. You also have the ability to upvote, or like the questions, and we'll go by order of the ones that have the most upvotes to the least. But we'll try to get through as many questions as we can, and based on the number of attendees, we might be able to answer all of your questions, hopefully. And just a quick reminder, we do not allow AI bots, kind of like Otto AI or similar in the meeting. This meeting is recorded. The recording will be posted on the website, along with the transcript and the slides, so you shouldn't need to have an AI bot here.

With that, I'm going to pass it over to Stacy Miller, who's going to walk us through a quick summary of the program, and then we'll dive into the Q&A.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Yes, thank you so much, Adam. DOE appreciates everyone joining our final office hours, where we're here to answer your questions. Applications are due Wednesday, May 13th.

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I'm Stacy Miller. I'm joined by my DOE colleagues, Susanna Murley, KC Hirsch, Allie Robbins, Riley Yeager, and Tori Fessenden, who are also supporting the program for DOE.

We have just a few slides with a little background before we take your questions. The Building Solar Understanding and Risk Education opportunity is offered by the Integrated Energy Systems Office, which resides within DOE's Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation. Our mission is to drive research and development of energy solutions that enhance grid reliability and resilience, foster U.S. technical leadership, and reduce the cost of energy for Americans.

This program is designed to help organizations whose mission includes a clear consumer protection focus to design and deliver education and training on solar energy topics for consumers and or the professionals who support them. The ultimate goal is to help consumers more confidently interact with the solar industry from initial inquiry to operation and maintenance, and through eventual decommissioning, so the full life cycle. We anticipate making 5 to 8 awards of between \$250,000 and \$750,000 each, and note that there is no cost share requirement.

To be eligible, an applicant must be a domestic entity and we're seeking partnerships with lead applicants who have expertise in consumer protection. In general, this opportunity is intended for organizations whose mission includes a clear consumer protection focus. Applicants need not have expertise in solar, as DOE has subject matter experts available to support the program, including long-time professionals at our national labs.

Organizations that are primarily perceived as solar advocacy organizations, or who focus narrowly on solar issues rather than broader consumer protection, may be better suited to participate as subrecipients or partners to a lead org with a more established consumer protection mission.

DOE will apply the following program goals and policy factors when we review applications. These include how an application contributes to consumer protection in the rooftop solar market, the impact and replicability of the proposal, and the geographic diversity of awardees. We also want to leverage the applicant's existing resources, as well as building on the body of DOE consumer protection resources that we have developed over time.

And on the next slide, you'll see how applications will be evaluated. Basically, there are four criteria, including the project lead and their qualifications, the target audience, engagement in education strategy, outreach strategy, and potential impact. And the relative weights for scoring are shown here.

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The next slide, we have a schedule. You're attending the second session of Office Hours today. It'll be linked on the TechWerc Opportunity page, along with the other webinar and office hours. So the opportunity is open through May 13th at 5 Eastern Time.

We're anticipating selections being made in July, and agreements being fully executed this September, so that performers can get to work then. This program is designed for 2 years, and project completion is targeted for September 2028.

On the next page, you'll see the application materials, that will be submitted. There's an online application form, along with two required uploads, including the project narrative, there's a template. The project narrative makes up the bulk of your application package. There's a 10-page limit, and that includes the cover page. And then there's a resume file required as well. Letters of support are optional.

There will be prompts on the online application for you to upload your project narrative and supporting resumes. You can submit it anytime between now and May 13th at 5 Eastern, and the application progress can be saved as you go. I think that it saves automatically every 60 seconds, too.

That concludes our presentation, and now both TechWerx and DOE are available to answer your questions. So, I'll turn it back over to TechWerx to facilitate those. Thank you.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Thank you, Stacey. As a reminder, if you have questions, please put them in the Q&A box in the bottom. We have a few that came in. So the first one, would the state agency that does consumer outreach and education be a strong lead applicant for the grant?

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Yes, a state agency, that has some component of consumer outreach and education could be a strong lead applicant.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Yeah, and I think we have something to that effect in the FAQ on the website as well, that as long as you meet the eligibility, yeah.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

We contemplated, offices of Attorneys general and, perhaps state energy offices, but there could be other state agencies as well.

Also in the FAQs, we note that to the extent that, you know, we can get some broader regional reach, that could be of interest, too.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Thank you, Stacy.

Okay, we have a second question, I'm going to summarize it. So, there is a requirement for at least one in-person training being delivered under the program. Does that need to be delivered directly by the applicant, the prime, or can it be done by, one of the subcontractors on it.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

My sense is that it wouldn't have to be delivered by the Prime, but it would have to be part of the project proposal. Hopefully that helps. So it could be delivered by a subcontractor or a partner to the project.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

But it must be part of the project.

Okay, next question. The template provided with the application includes an automatic \$50,000 set-aside for a one-day informational session with DOE staff. Can you elaborate with details on this event? Date, location, and who's required to attend?

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Certainly. So, selectees, we'll kick off the project officially with this initial meeting. It won't take a full day, but, it'll be either one-on-one with your project team, or maybe a collection of different project teams, if the timing works out, where we could deliver to multiple performers at once. It'll be an expectation that key personnel would attend the session with DOE, and you'll have an opportunity to ask questions, as well as get briefed from us on... on next steps. We'll identify the date based on how quickly we get the agreements, executed, anticipating in September. We'll make sure it works for your key personnel.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Thank you, Stacey.

On the timeline page, negotiations is listed. What does this mean?

I can take that. That's the period between us letting the selectees know that their proposal was selected for us to have an official, fully executed award. So, once an organization is selected we'll be sending you a package with the terms and conditions, the sub-agreement, and we'll negotiate on those, and once we're all in agreement and it's fully executed, then the project can be kicked off. So that's what the negotiations, phases are.

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Okay, next question. Should we add footnotes for any live links included in this proposal?

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

My understanding, and I might just lean on colleagues here if this is incorrect, but we're not able to, as reviewers, we're not able to look at any links. Anything you want us to read about your proposal has to fit in that 10 pages. Riley, is that correct?

Rylie Yaeger, DOE OTC

That is correct, that is my understanding. Links would not be something that they would review.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Good question.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Yep, and I was following up on the, what is the \$50,000 for?

So, these awards are structured as milestone-based fixed price. So, by attending and doing the deliverables that will be part of that milestone, you can then invoice for that \$50,000. So, it's not that that will cost you \$50,000 to attend, but that's the, kind of, what you can invoice as part of that milestone.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Yeah, and just to build on that, Adam, because this is milestone-based, you know, there's likely going to be a little bit of a dry spell in terms of being able to invoice for anything. So you can think of this as maybe front-loading some of that work that you're going to have to do before Milestone 1 is complete, or in this case, Milestone 2, since the initial meeting is Milestone 1. And this can help you just keep a flow while they're doing work toward the second milestone.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Alright, we have covered the questions that have come in so far. If you still have questions, please type them in the Q&A. If we don't see anything within 2 to 3 minutes, we may close a little bit early.

Okay, one question came in. Are you looking for applicants from certain parts of the country?

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

We have not, discussed any particular regions of the country that we would prioritize. We are interested in a geographic diversity for our awardees, so that's just something that we'll take into consideration. Anyone from anywhere in the country can apply.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Any other questions? If nothing else comes in in the next minute. We'll close early, and again if new questions come up between now and May 13th, feel free to send us an email at info at techwerx.org, and we'll work to address them, and also keep an eye on the FAQ that's on the Opportunity page, as we update that periodically.

I have one more question. Are the grant reporting requirements rigorous?

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Well, DOE will require at least quarterly reporting, and it might be that we require monthly reporting on progress toward the milestones. We, have other projects that we work with, and they have no problem meeting those reporting requirements. So, I think it's also a little more lax than the typical NOFO process.

Anything else you'd like to say, Riley or Susanna?

Rylie Yaeger, DOE OTC

Yeah, I would just add, Adam earlier said it's fixed price, so it's based on deliverables. So, when you're negotiating, if you are selected, we would clearly lay out the map of your invoicing and payment schedule, and in that schedule, it'll clearly lay out, like, for example, the hosting of a meeting of some sort. We would list out, here's what you would have to provide to prove you did, clearly stated there, and that would be what you would attach in your invoice itself when you do get paid out.

So along with that normal quarterly reporting, as you talk to DOE and TechWerx, there's also that payment schedule that would get negotiated out, that's based on the budget justifications that you guys are submitting, with this application. So, that's another piece, too.

Adam Klich, TechWerx

Thank you, Riley.

Okay, so I think with that, we'll call it for today, and again, you still have the option to submit questions between now and May 13th, and we look forward to reviewing your applications.

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Thank you for joining, everyone.

Stacy Miller, DOE CMEI

Thank you, everyone.