

## Energy Program for Innovation Clusters (EPIC) Round 3

To apply, please register with the American-Made Network online application portal, HeroX, at [Energy Program for Innovation Clusters \(EPIC\) Round 3 | HeroX](#). Rules and required forms for Full Applications are available on the HeroX website.

## EPIC Round 3 Overview:

The Energy Program for Innovation Clusters (EPIC) Round 3 is a \$4 million to \$9 million (pending FY24 appropriations) program to support incubators developing new programs that support energy entrepreneurs and startups.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE's) Office of Technology Transitions (OTT) developed EPIC to encourage robust growth of regional energy innovation ecosystems across the United States. Innovation ecosystems, or clusters, increase the productivity of startups, drive the direction and pace of innovation, and stimulate the formation of new businesses, which further reinforces the cluster itself.

In this program, (DOE) seeks to fund organizations that aid in the development of new business ventures, including incubators, accelerators, co-working startup communities, or any other organizations that self-identify as advocates for innovation and entrepreneurship. DOE encourages these organizations to compete in EPIC.

## This program consists of five components:

**1. Phase 1 - Prize Competition:** Competitors will design a minimum viable program (MVP) and demonstrate that they have a plan, access to the right networks, and the skills and expertise to successfully implement their MVP. It is expected that during Phase 1, competitors solicit and incorporate feedback from key stakeholders on their program design to ensure they can start implementing quickly in Phase 2.

Any non-governmental entity that meets the eligibility requirements can apply to Phase 1. Winners will each receive a \$150,000 cash prize.

**2. Phase 2 – Prize Competition Resulting in a Cooperative Agreement:** Only winners of Phase 1 are eligible to compete in Phase 2. In Phase 2, competitors will begin implementation of their MVP and should move as quickly as possible from MVP planning and program design to implementation. It is expected that by the end of Phase 2, competitors have recruited startups, successfully implemented a portion of their MVP, can speak to progress toward the metrics proposed in Phase 1, and have developed a 3-year plan to transition from MVP to full program.

Winners of Phase 2 will enter directly into negotiations with OTT for a \$1,000,000 multiyear cooperative agreement to scale their MVP.

**3. Cooperative Agreement:** The cooperative agreement will provide the winners of EPIC Phase 2 with a multiyear, stable source of funding - contingent on satisfactory performance of agreed upon goals - to scale the highest potential EPIC MVPs to support energy tech startups and grow their regional innovation ecosystems. All cooperative agreements will be governed by 2CFR200 and 2CFR910.

**4. Startup Pitch Competitions:** As part of EPIC, OTT and NREL will host at least two national pitch competitions for energy-related startups. The competing startups will be nominated by EPIC winners (past and present). Competing startups must be focused on hard-tech development. \$105,000 is available to energy-related startups for each pitch competition.

**5. Bonus Prizes:** EPIC is intended to serve as a scalable and replicable framework for efficiently deploying support to incubators serving energy entrepreneurs and startups. At any time, DOE Technical Program Offices may leverage this framework by sponsoring one or more Bonus Prizes up to \$600,000 in additional prizes. These Bonus Prizes may be added to any of the three previous categories (Prize Competition, Cooperative Agreement, or Startup Pitch Competition). At this time there are not any current Bonus Prizes, but they may be added at any point. Any updates will be posted on the HeroX page.

To apply, please register with the American-Made Network online application portal, HeroX, at [Energy Program for Innovation Clusters \(EPIC\) Round 3 | HeroX](#)