



Community Benefits Plan

The Louisiana HERO Project is first and foremost focused on providing comprehensive community benefits, including power security solutions, modernized clean energy accessibility, energy burden alleviation, and next generation sustainable workforce opportunities with good paying wages for the benefit of the residents and communities of Louisiana. (b) (4)

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The HERO Project Team is aligned with a shared eagerness and commitment to deliver measurable impact to the communities of Louisiana who have and continue to suffer from unplanned extended power outages during times of natural disasters and extreme weather. The severity and frequency of storms is prompting immediate action to deliver comprehensive innovative community resilience solutions and forge new pathways towards long-term integrated community energy planning.

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The HERO Project has the potential to become a national model for integrated community energy planning that prioritizes resilience, the reduced risk of long-duration outages, affordability, greenhouse gas reduction, and safety. The HERO Project Team members bring unique lenses to innovative community resilience solutions and methodologies to advance each goal set forth above and to achieve the related success-based metrics in the Technical Volume and detailed in SMART milestones in this Community Benefits Plan.

Community Transformation

Threats to the electricity grid are increasing in frequency, severity, and impact. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tracks weather and climate related natural disasters that caused more than \$1 billion in damages and counted eight such events in the first six months of 2021, causing 331 deaths and \$29.4 billion in collective damage (NOAA, 2021).



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Winter Storm Uri, in February 2021, caused power outages for millions of Texans for days in below-freezing temperatures. The storm revealed the dependence of critical services like water treatment and natural gas supply on electricity, magnifying the hardships to customers left without access to heat and water for an extended period (Pillon, 2021). In late August 2021, Hurricane Ida brought strong winds and widespread flooding from New Orleans to New York City, resulting in power outages for 1.2 million customers in eight states (EIA, 2021). Five days after the storm, more than 800,000 Gulf Coast customers were still without power in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees (Bogage, 2021).¹

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Community and Labor Engagement

A core focus of the HERO Project is to engage a network of community-led organizations and higher education institutions in collaborative energy planning with utilities and all levels of government to accelerate comprehensive deployment of energy resilient solutions. The HERO Project Team brings valuable expertise, proven strategies, effective methodologies, and a network of partners needed to catalyze engagement and empowerment across rural and urban communities.

HERO member Together Louisiana successfully launched the Community Lighthouse project in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida uniting civic, faith, governmental, and community leaders to align on a strategy for the deployment of clean energy community resilience hubs on Louisiana churches. In January 2022, the Community Lighthouse project was selected by the Department of Energy to be one of fourteen projects across the country to receive technical assistance under its “Energy Storage for Social Equity” Initiative. (b) (4)

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The Community Lighthouse project is one of the many Louisiana initiatives focused on centering community engagement in local resilience and clean energy planning. As HERO advances to the full application, the Project Team will engage a diverse group of community-based organizations to ensure comprehensive reach across geographic and organizational missions. Similarly, a network of research institutions and community and technical colleges will be engaged in planning for and implementing workforce development opportunities through HERO.

Labor agreements. Each team member has long-standing working relations and are in good standing with local labor unions, specifically the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO America’s Unions, and Louisiana Building & Construction Trades Council. (b) (4)

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Existing Community Engagement.

HERO will foster inclusive and empowering processes through continuing to build a network of community-based organizations and through developing strong community relationships. (b) (4)

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Hiring Strategies. The HERO Project will include prevailing wage requirements, workforce development, and apprenticeship programs within the contracting solicitations and awards. Local engagement with community and technical colleges in the application process and project development will support communities to help shape the design of the community Hub deployment plan and support local workforce participation.

Community Education and Engagement. The HERO Project will empower and partner with community-based organizations as part of the integrated community energy planning effort, and to support the deployment of Hubs. The HERO Project team will further work with community-based organization partners to lead community stakeholder conversations, conduct community engagement, and offer education sessions for the Hub Communities.

- **Engagement:** Conduct community listening sessions to understand the community needs for energy security and power resilience during times of crisis. Listening sessions will also seek to understand their perspectives on the benefits, challenges, and desired outcomes for HERO and for local Hub sites. Communities selected for Hub sites will also engage in site selection and workforce development.
- **Education:** Inform Hub Communities of the value in community resilience, localized clean energy, and a prepared workforce. Education sessions will seek to empower residents in disadvantaged communities to pursue apprenticeship and workforce development opportunities offered under the HERO Project and other related initiatives.

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Investing in the American Workforce

Workforce and Apprenticeship Approach

The HERO Project will leverage existing statewide next generation sustainable workforce programs by expanding community college and technical trade school curriculum, train-the-



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trainer programs, and apprenticeships to encompass carbon-free distributed energy resources, community microgrids, emergency disaster coordination, new grid services, and other emerging technical skills. The HERO Project Team will work together to remove barriers and ensure training opportunities are accessible and structured in a way that gives workers from disadvantaged communities the wraparound support and resources they need to successfully access and retain these energy jobs, mirroring existing work through the Louisiana Solar Corps.

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. Louisiana Solar Corps provides multiple career pathways to permanent solar jobs alongside supportive pathways, such as sales and finance, project management, safety, inspections, engineering, and manufacturing as demonstrated on Figure 2.

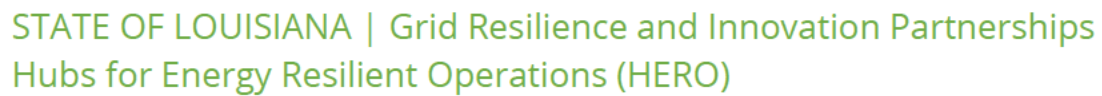
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Alongside UL, other research institutions in Louisiana are leading in clean energy, microgrid, and smart grid workforce deployment, such as the Tulane University Utility Vegetation Management Initiative and the Louisiana State University Smart Grid and Renewable Power Lab.

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Figure 2. Louisiana Solar Corps Career Pathways





Workforce and Safety Training Efforts. The workforce contracted or employed for the HERO Project will go through on-boarding and periodic training sessions covering industry fundamentals, safety requirements, compliance policies, technical development, diversity and inclusion, disaster response, and other relevant industry knowledge and skills training. Surveys and lessons learned sessions will be performed to refine and improve training and development plans and approaches throughout development and execution of the HERO Project.

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A primary strategy for the HERO Project is to have a diverse pool of workers and contractors through inclusive hiring practices and embedded diversity measures in the labor contracts.




























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Diverse Contractor Development. Beyond establishing requirements within procurement, the Project Team will further work to develop opportunities for new diverse contractors to compete as prime and subcontractors on project work, including information sessions in disadvantaged communities and job referral pipelines to project developers from workforce training efforts.

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Justice40 Initiative

The HERO Project is a comprehensive data-driven strategy specifically designed to protect and serve the disadvantaged communities of Louisiana hit the hardest by the series of hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, and other extreme weather over the decades and remain at an increasingly high risk. (b) (4)

HERO focuses on community engagement, strategic energy and resilience planning, and the deployment of Hubs in Louisiana to serve communities most at risk from environmental and economic harms. 56% of Louisiana's population resides in disadvantaged communities, according to the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), and within those census tracts are some of the nation's most at-risk communities for extreme hazards. (b) (4)



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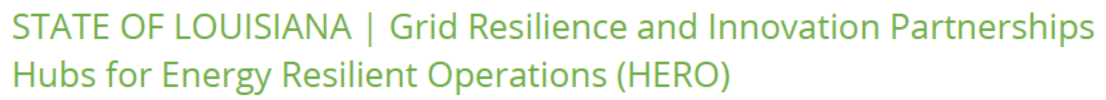
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