

**Organization:** Live to Zero LLC  
**Application Title:** Decentralized Solar Decathlon  
**Control Number:** 1371-1519

## **Criterion 1: Technical and Logistical Approach (30%)**

### **Strengths:**

- Applicant proposes an alternative to a centralized venue and is able to discuss the FOA requirements and why the proposed method is better.
- A lot of detailed information is provided on the many activities associated with the competition.
- The applicant makes a compelling case for decentralization, doing so would fundamentally change the program.
- Demonstration of distributed model in EHDC competition is a strength
- Applicants propose a very interesting idea of locating houses permanently on university sites and leveraging digital engagement.
- Decentralized approach to the solar decathlon eliminates the need for a venue that can accommodate 20 houses with equal and unobstructed access to the sun.
- Applicant demonstrates an understanding of the challenges associated with a centralized solar decathlon including the transportation of the houses to the venue and proposes a decentralized approach to the solar decathlon in which houses are built on or near the campus of participating universities to combat these challenges.
- Uses virtual tools and a content management system to link the decentralized locations in a “Virtual Village ”CDS is proposing a decentralized SD.
- They propose to spread out the event to 20 collegiate teams to build and install permanent homes on or near their campuses; with an awards ceremony and media event in DC. It is an interesting and new idea.
- CDS believes this approach is more impactful and can be yearlong. The Homes can be climate specific, unique and this would spare contenders from having to ship their homes to a centralized location.
- Adamant that this paradigm shift away from a centralized concept is necessary for financial reasons and frees teams from expenses associated with travel.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The plan does not provide sufficient site characteristics information; no specific venues provided.
- The year-long proposed competition and associated schedule for SD17 requires an immediate start in order to conclude by the end date (November 15, 2017) stated in the FOA.
- No transportation infrastructure information provided
- Insufficient information on how coordination among 20 different sites will be accomplished.

- The Program Administrator would no longer be directly responsible for site-specific tasks, such as logistics, procurement, planning, power, etc. would be delegated to the teams; this is a requirement for the PA in the FOA.
- Unfortunately this proposal is somewhat unresponsive to the spirit of coordinating an event which ultimately results in a large central gathering of participants and their submissions. While they are correct that doing so is much more challenging it is a critical part of the program and should not be dropped.
- Because of how dramatically different of a competition the applicants are proposing, the application would be much stronger if it went into detail on how the competition data would be collected and used.
- The application does not sufficiently address the loss of a national centralized site in terms of communications and publicity for the event itself.
- It is unclear how the applicant will evaluate solar decathlon houses at 20 sites around the country on a basis that insures fairness and transparency.
- Links to additional resources were not reviewed as they are not part of the application materials.
- Legal requirements by jurisdiction for video surveillance in each house will need to be addressed by the competition organizers.
- While a unique idea, CSDS's proposal does not offer a detailed logistical plan to host the events or to market the SD occurring at each of 20 campuses and therefore the workability of their plan is not evident.
- The adequacy of the venue (or in this case 20 venues) is not discussed. It is assumed you could find a place to build a permanent home on each of 20 campuses.
- There no solid logistical plan presented

## **Criterion 2: Implementation Approach (30%)**

### **Strengths:**

- A thorough description of tasks and milestones provided that demonstrates an understanding of the implementation of the project.
- A very detailed description on cost savings and long-term sustainability of the program was provided.
- Applicant has put a lot of thought into the work breakdown structure and demonstrated they have extensive knowledge about what would need to be done.
- The proposal is much more deeply embedded into engagement with local universities and stakeholders.
- Opportunities to impact the host communities and outreach to the local clean energy industry are expanded to 20 different venues versus one and a yearlong competition.
- Provides appropriate timelines, milestones and deliverable for a decentralized solar decathlon.
- Proposes a decentralized approach that reduces administrative cost and team cost of participation.
- This plan would certainly engage local university and educational communities; could make the SD a much more localized event. 20 local SD homes -- that are permanent--

would certainly help to educate the community and provide access to customers long after the competition is over.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The Go/No-go description is very brief for budget periods 1-4.
- There were no milestones for fund raising.
- The outreach and education responsibilities are no longer with the Program Administrator but rather with the competing teams. Thus, no specifics on the types of education projects and how the local educational community will be engaged.
- Nothing related to outreach to local clean energy industry.
- Nothing specific provided related to degree of economic impact on host communities.
- Switching to a decentralized model after EERE has selected the participating teams based on a centralized model would cause undue complication for a lesser result. While the applicant acknowledges they would be willing to discuss the matter with EERE a detailed solution was not presented.
- The application could be much stronger if it went into greater detail on timelines and deliverables. For example, it is unclear what the timelines imposed on the teams would be, and how it would address gap, such as matching the competition to the academic cycle.
- The decentralized approach transfers/adds responsibilities to the participating universities which are being chosen under a separate funding opportunity announcement.
- It is unclear, whether there is an opportunity to pursue this approach in 2017. An alternative approach for the 2017 solar decathlon is not provided.
- Team selection for 2019 occurs in parallel to the start of the 2017 competition which limits the ability to incorporate lessons learned.
- CSDS' implementation Plan seems simplistic for such a large scale event(s). The tasks laid out in Table 3 (pages 12-14) seem overly simplistic and don't convey that the authors appreciate/understand the level of detail and management involved in running such a national event.
- The milestone chart in Table 5 has verification measures but a sense of timing is not included.
- The scheduling in Figure 2 is so broad as to not be helpful.

### **Criterion 3: Team and Resources (20%)**

#### **Strengths:**

- The consortium has former solar decathletes involved plus three of the principals have managed solar decathlons.
- There is a minor level of information provided regarding universities hosting at 20 separate sites and the types of support that will be needed.
- Applicant refers to current success in a decentralized energy-related competition; the magnitude and specifics are not sufficient to deduce comparability to a competition the size of the Solar Decathlon.

- The team is excellent
- Running and participating in prior competitions is a strength for the team
- The teams seem highly qualified to manage the competition.
- Live to Zero has demonstrated capability running a decentralized competition.
- Proposed project management team has direct, relevant solar decathlon experience including competition management, site operations, event production, communications, sponsorship recruitment and volunteer recruitment.
- The CDS Team is made of past SD winners and competitors so they have experienced a SD before and understand the limitations a centralized event.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Not all of the prospective team members have been identified (only 3 resumes submitted);
- It was difficult to fully determine the overall experience of the full team.
- Nothing provided with regard to prospective facilities.
- Applicant refers to the decentralized venue concept not being compatible with the current DOE College Team Competition solicitation for 2017; no work-around provided.
- Could not determine how the 20 locations would effectively implement the EERE FOA site requirements. Specifically, a description of specific venue attributes and benefits not provided.
- Only 5 letters of commitment (beyond responses from an on-line questionnaire) from university staff regarding some level of participation.
- No recipient/third party sponsorship/cost share letters of commitment provided.
- The personnel costs in the budget spreadsheet look a bit high.
- Regarding other financial considerations, each campus would have responsibility for operations/logistics but estimated cost not considered.
- Very little in the application discusses the complication of marketing a decentralized event, and there is no discussion of how DOE leadership could effectively engage with an event so structured.
- The proposed budget could also be more fleshed out.
- Applicant does not demonstrate any financial support in the proposal.
- Sponsorship program outline was not reviewed nor evaluated as it was outside of the application.
- The adequacy of the PR/marketing and project support team could not be assessed.
- An indication of the amount of time committed by each of the program management team is unclear.
- The adequacy of vendor and sub-recipient information has not been demonstrated.
- The CDS Team is made of past SD winners and competition managers so they have experienced/helped run a SD before. However, being part of past SD is very different than running what they are proposing-- a large, national, Multi-city, decentralized event.
- While there is SD experience in the background of the team members, there had no other relevant experience to what they were proposing (large, multifaceted, multi city/multi venue events). In a decentralized event such as they are proposing, having solid marketing/advertising/web support is key to insuring a strong, national event with great impact.

- There is no one on the team with these areas of expertise or the experience necessary to unite 20 separate events into one compelling story and national showcase.
- There was no financial plan (including prize money) so it was not possible to evaluate this component.

#### **Criterion 4: Roles, Responsibilities, Capabilities, Knowledge, Experience and Partnerships (20%)**

##### **Strengths:**

- The team gathered high quality letters of support and generated a comprehensive plan
- Many letters of support/commitment to supporting a decentralized solar decathlon are included.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- The proposal did not specify which public and/or private institutions, organization or bodies would be represented.
- No letters of commitment from government/city authorities.
- No sponsors/partnerships or cost-sharing information provided
- Very little provided on volunteer recruitment /utilization.
- Sponsorships were not adequately discussed. The applicant mentioned they would hire someone to handle this if awarded.
- The applicant's proposal would require universities to commit to a permanent structure on their campuses, which is not addressed in the application. Additionally, there is no indication of support for this type of competition structure from the leadership of universities.
- Cost share providers have not been identified and are not supported by letters of commitment as requested on p. 24 of the FOA.
- The partnership arrangement between the prime applicant and the two key subcontractor partners is not clearly articulated.
- While it is clear CSDS understands what it takes to run a single, solar decathlon, they have not provided an organizational structure that is compelling/appropriate
- There are no partnership agreements; just letters of support from many academic institutions for the concept/idea of a decentralized SD.
- There was no indication of support from 20 State/regional/local governments.