South Carolina Solar for All Meaningful Involvement Plan

Version 1.0

Developed by

South Carolina Office of Resilience

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1.1   The Solar for All Award and Timeline

In October 2023 the South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR) applied for **Solar For All**, a competitive grant program offered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; LINK). The EPA Solar for All program was created to expand solar project opportunities for low-income communities. In April 2024, EPA announced funding for SCOR's Solar for All grant in the amount of $124,440,000. In December 2024 EPA approved SCOR's South Carolina Solar for All (SCSFA) workplan and budget, at which time SCOR commenced a one-year Planning Period to further refine the SCSFA program design and finalize the SCSFA Implementation Plan. Solar for All is a five-year program, to include the Planning Period (Figure 1). The SCSFA Implementation Phase is expected to run from January 2026 to April 2029[1].

Award Planning

May-December 2024
- Begin award
- Finalize workplan, budget with EPA

Planning Period

December 2024-December 2025
- Refine program design
- Finalize and submit the Implementation Workplan & Budget

Implementation Phase

January 2026-April 2029
- Program and project implementation

Figure 1. SCSFA Timeline

The SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan is one of several required plan and strategies to be completed by SCOR during the Planning Period as part of the process to finalize the SCSFA Implementation Plan. Additional plans and strategies include the Financial Assistance Strategy, Meaningful Benefits Plan, and Project-Deployment Technical Assistance Strategy (Figure 2). These documents, as well as SCSFA program news and updates, will be available on SCOR's SCSFA website: https://scor.sc.gov/solarforall.

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[1] SCOR has 120 calendar days after the conclusion of the period of performance (April 30, 2029) to complete grant implementation and reporting activities.

Figure 2. Plans and strategies to be refined during the SCSFA Planning Period

1.2   Purpose of the Meaningful Involvement Plan

The purpose of the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan is to establish and describe the formal mechanisms SCOR will use to obtain stakeholder input, facilitate ongoing stakeholder collaboration, and support iterative, two-way conversations with communities as SCOR builds, refines, and implements the SCSFA program. During the Planning Period, SCOR will use stakeholder input and feedback to:

- Determine funding allocations for the Community Solar Initiative and Solar Innovation Fund grant program (described below in Section 1.3)
- Identify communities' solar-related priorities, needs, and concerns
- Identify project types that will be most actionable during the term of SCOR's Solar for All award, optimize funding to achieve benefits and address community priorities, and meet EPA requirements

SCOR will utilize three different mechanisms – the SCSFSA Advisory Committee, the Community Leaders Action Team, and Stakeholder Roundtables (collectively, the "engagement groups") – to implement the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan (Figure 3). These groups will help SCOR decide how the SCSFA program will function throughout the Implementation Phase. These groups have the objectives of helping SCOR: understand what is possible under South Carolina laws and policies and EPA requirements, receive feedback from and facilitate partnerships with communities to identify

community-level priorities, and identify actionable projects that can be achieved through the SCSFA program.

- The SCSFA Advisory Committee will help SCOR determine what projects and programs are possible in South Carolina.
- The Community Leaders Action Team will assist SCOR in understanding what is wanted at the ground level. Community Leaders will have the opportunity to provide input towards what programs and projects they would like to see and what they think would be most beneficial for their communities.
- As the SCSFA Planning Period progresses, Stakeholder Roundtables will focus on specific topics (namely, financing workforce, and project deployment) looking at how the SCSFA projects and programs might be implemented in relation to the topic area discussed.

Figure 3. SCSFA Engagement Process

Overall, the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan is intended to serve as a framework for stakeholder engagement and includes a strategy for ongoing stakeholder feedback throughout the life of SCOR's Solar for All award. Feedback received during the Planning Period will inform updates to the SCSFA engagement strategy for the SCSFA Implementation Phase. As such, **SCOR views the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan as a living document** which may be modified as SCOR receives input from the SCSFA Advisory Committee and stakeholder groups; learns more about communities' solar-related priorities, needs, and concerns; and obtains feedback on the effectiveness of the engagement process from participants.

The SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan also establishes targets for community and stakeholder engagement outputs and outcomes for the SCSFA Planning Period. These targets are based on and informed by the reporting requirements established by EPA for all Solar for All awardees.

The SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan will meet EPA's community and stakeholder engagement requirements. In developing and implementing the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan, SCOR is committed to:

- Creating a statewide program that addresses the needs of a variety of communities,
- Establishing a systematic process for communities to engage with the South Carolina Solar for All program, provide guidance and feedback to SCOR and the Advisory Committee, and participate in decisions to refine and implement the program,
- Providing education, outreach, and engagement to under-resourced communities, the intended beneficiaries of the Solar for All program,
- Working with existing, trusted organizations and networks to ensure that the South Carolina Solar for All program reaches the state's diverse communities, and
- Partnering with state and local agencies, community-based organizations, and utilities to align similar efforts and reduce duplication of activities.

1.3   The South Carolina Solar for All Program

Through the EPA Solar for All award, the SCSFA Program aims to expand investment in and access to solar energy projects, reduce energy bills, enhance community resilience, and provide workforce training opportunities. SCOR recognizes that the program's success will depend on collaboration amongst many different entities. The SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan provides the framework for engaging the stakeholders and communities who will assist in shaping the key features of the proposed SCSFA Program as described below in Sections 1.3.1 to 1.3.5.

The financial assistance strategies considered for the SCSFA Program will adhere to the EPA requirements (see Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2).

EPA Requirements for Financial Assistance

- At least 75% of the award must go to financial assistance for solar projects.
- Allowable projects include residential rooftop, community solar, and solar + storage. Storage is only eligible if paired with a solar project.
- The project maximum is 5 MW nameplate capacity.
- At least 50% of the electricity generated from the system must be delivered to multiple residential customers with the same utility territory as the facility.
- At least 50% of the benefits and/or credits of the power generated from a community solar system must be delivered to residential customers in the same service territory.

1.3.1   Financial Assistance: Expand Access to Community Solar Programs

The **Community Solar Initiative** is intended to be a residential-serving, utility-owned community solar subscription program for income-qualified residents (homeowners and renters). SCOR intends to partner with electric utilities to expand or enhance existing utility-run programs and/or initiate new

programs. Utility feedback will be vital to understand where EPA-compliant subscriptions are feasible. This will enable SCOR to target outreach to those specific areas where the Community Solar Initiative is able to operate.

1.3.2   Financial Assistance: Establish a Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program

The **Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program** will expand solar, as well as solar and storage, opportunities across the state. Project types that may be considered during the Planning Period could potentially include solar deployment at multifamily affordable housing, community-serving facilities, commercial buildings, and resilience hubs. Potential projects would be required to include a component to serve low-income households and identify other sources of funding in order to maximize SCSFA resources and other forms of investment.

1.3.3   Coordination with Energy Efficiency Programs

SCOR seeks to partner with **home energy efficiency and weatherization programs** to coordinate activities and align efforts to engage and assist low-income households and communities. Potential partners include utilities, non-profits, community-based organizations, and state and local government agencies.

1.3.4   Workforce Training and Development

SCOR will build on the effective **solar and solar-related workforce training programs** that currently exist in South Carolina and will work to support greater participation in these programs, particularly for underserved students and individuals, and help grow the workforce needed to deploy solar in the state.

1.3.5   Intended Program Participants

The intent of the EPA Solar for All program is to expand opportunities for low-income communities to deploy solar energy resources. SCOR expects that potential SCSFA program participants to represent a wide range of communities (urban, rural, and suburban), different types of residential buildings (single-family, multi-family), and limited capacity and/or resources to deploy rooftop solar (renters; structures that are not suitable for rooftop solar).

For the Solar for All grant application, SCOR described how it aims to use the income thresholds to verify the eligibility of individual households seeking to participate in the Community Solar Initiative and in the projects funded through the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program. During the Planning Period, SCOR will develop and finalize the eligibility criteria for the SCSFA program beneficiaries, based on EPA guidance and requirements. Please see Appendix A for examples of criteria that SCOR will take into consideration for selecting eligible SCSFA program participants.

2   SCSFA Stakeholders

During the development of the SCSFA application and the Award Planning Phase, SCOR reached out to a wide array of organizations and existing solar-related networks and working groups to better understand opportunities and priorities for a South Carolina Solar for All program. The following stakeholder groups were identified and are briefly described below. SCOR designed the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan and engagement strategies to provide a variety of opportunities for these different groups to participate in and provide input to the program. These groups will be the SCSFA Program's primary audiences during the Planning Period.

2.1   Government Agencies

2.1.1   State Agencies

Many state agencies have roles and responsibilities that are pertinent to the expected activities of the SCSFA Program (Table 3). Several will participate in the SCSFA Advisory Committee (Section 3.4.1), while others will be invited to participate in Stakeholder Roundtables (Section 3.4.3) and/or consulted individually for input on specific aspects of the SCSFA Program.

Table 1. SCSFA Stakeholders - State Agencies

Agency	Relevance to the SCSFA Program
Commission for Minority Affairs	May assist with connecting to minority groups and businesses and to Native American communities and governments (State Recognized Tribes, Indian Groups, and Special Interest Groups).
Department of Commerce	Leads the SC Nexus for Advance Resilient Energy (SC Nexus), a tech hub driving advanced energy and grid resilience technologies for emerging and exportable energy solutions.
Department of Consumer Affairs	Provides resources and education for consumer protection and regulates disputes related to solar sales and leases.
Department of Employment and Workforce	Leads workforce development and training initiatives, maintains workforce data, and conducts analyses to help employers and employees make informed workforce-related decisions.
Department of Environmental Services	Responsible for regulations regarding the decommissioning of solar projects > 13 acres and end-of-live management of solar panels and batteries. The Community Engagement team works with a wide range communities and stakeholder on environmental issues.
Department of Natural Resources	The SCDNR Solar Habitat Siting Suitability Tool can be used to assess the sensitivity of lands to impacts from large-scale solar projects and their suitability for solar development.
Office of Economic Opportunity	Administers the state's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program. Partners with community action agencies and non-profits on local initiatives to address poverty.
Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS), Energy Office	ORS represents consumers of investor-owned utilities in South Carolina before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina. The Energy Office serves as the state's principal energy planning entity and conducts initiatives to encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation.

State Housing Finance and Development Authority	Creates and manages programs to provide quality affordable housing opportunities.

2.1.2 Regional and Local Governments

Regional and local governments are potential applicants for grants offered through the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program**.** Local governments are likely to be involved and/or interested in project siting processes and may be able to assist with outreach to local community-based and non-profit organizations. Regional governments, such as councils of governments (COGs), regional planning commissions, and regional councils, may also be involved and/or interested in participating in these processes and provide outreach and engagement opportunities. SCOR intends to work with associations such as the Municipal Association of South Carolina and the South Carolina Association of Counties to disseminate information about the SCSFA Program.

2.2 Tribal Entities

Catawba Indian Nation is a Federally Recognized Tribe, the only one located in the state of South Carolina. The modern-day tribal lands are located in York County and there are currently over 3,300 enrolled members of the Nation. Their Environmental Services Department develops and administers programs to improve the health and protection of the environment and of the people residing on the Catawba Indian Reservation.[2]

The South Carolina Minority Affairs Commission lists nine State Recognized Tribes, four Indian Groups, and three Special Interest Organizations.[3] SCOR plans to consult with the Minority Affairs Commission to determine the best methods for communicating and engaging with these groups.

2.3 Community-Based and Non-Profit Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are considered to be public or private nonprofit organizations that support and/or serve communities and/or certain groups within a community. A "community" can be defined by a particular geographic area or by a common interest. SCOR has received interest in the SCSFA Program from a variety of CBOs working locally, regionally, and statewide representing interests in energy (energy efficiency, energy burden, energy resilience, renewables), community development, economic opportunities (workforce; support for low-income areas), housing (housing associations, housing authorities) and the environment.

SCOR plans to enlist representatives from CBOs to serve on the SCSFA Community Leaders Action Team (see Section 3.4.2). SCOR will work with SCSFA Advisory Committee members to determine the best methods for communicating and engaging with local-level entities. SCSFA Advisory Committee members with connections to local CBOs include Coastal Carolina University, the EPA Region 4 Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC), Energy Justice Coalition, Furman University Shi

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[2] https://www.catawba.com/index.php
[3] https://cma.sc.gov/south-carolinas-recognized-native-american-indian-entities

Institute, South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED), and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE).

2.4   Solar Project Developers/Industry

Solar project developers are entities that guide solar projects from the planning to the construction stages. Responsibilities include identifying and acquiring land, securing the necessary site surveys and permits, obtaining financing, and overseeing the engineering, procurement, and construction processes.

Solar industry stakeholders in South Carolina include manufacturers of solar cells, panels, and batteries, as well as firms working on the recycling of materials at the end-of-life stage.

SCOR plans to invite representatives from the solar project development and industry sectors to participate in the SCSFA Stakeholder Roundtables (see Section 3.4.3). SCOR will consult with SCSFA Advisory Committee members, and the South Carolina Solar Council[4] in particular, to determine the best methods for communicating and engaging with project developers and industry representatives. The South Carolina Solar Council support solar energy growth by providing a platform for education and dialogue between industry professionals, citizens, utilities, and policy makers in South Carolina.

2.5   Electric Utilities

South Carolina has 46 electric utilities that vary considerably in terms of population served and governing structures. The Public Service Commission of South Carolina is charged with regulating the rates and services of four investor-owned utilities (IOUs): Duke Energy Carolinas (23% of customers), Duke Energy Progress (6% of customers), Dominion Energy South Carolina (27% of customers), and Lockhart Power (0.4% of customers). Santee Cooper is a state-owned utility, managed by a board of directors appointed by the Governor and approved by the State Senate. Santee Cooper provides distribution to retail customers (7% of customers) as well as generation and transmission for other utilities. Self-governing distribution electric utilities include 21 Electric Cooperatives (31% of customers) and 20 municipal utilities (6% of customers). Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (CEPCI) is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative and provides power to the Electric Cooperatives, primarily through long-term purchase agreements with Santee Cooper and Duke Energy Carolinas. Municipal utilities have purchase agreements with the larger IOUs, Santee Cooper, or individual Electric Cooperatives.

Electric utilities play a large role in the development and deployment of solar projects and conduct other programs with relevance to the SCSFA program and its potential offerings. Pertinent to the Community Solar Initiative, many of the state's utilities already offer some type of community solar subscription program for their customers. SCOR will continue to engage with those utilities to determine opportunities for expanding those program offerings to low-income customers. Pertinent to the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program, some individual projects may need to coordinate with their location's electric provider to ensure proper installation and interconnection of the solar system to the utility's grid and enter into a net metering agreement to receive credits from the excess energy produced by the

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[4] https://www.scsolarcouncil.org/

solar system. Many utilities also offer energy efficiency programs, which could provide additional opportunities to coordinate communication, outreach, and services to target SCSFA program participants.

2.6   Funding Organizations and Financial Institutions

One of EPA's objectives for the Solar for All program is for awardees to incentivize additional financial investments in local communities. As such, SCOR expects to require applicants to the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program to indicate how they will leverage other sources of funding, such as zero-to-low interest loans or IRS tax credits, to maximize SCSFA resources.

SCOR will conduct Project Financing Stakeholder Roundtables (Section 3.4.3) to obtain feedback from experts working in the financing and solar development arenas. Expected stakeholders include community development financial institutions (CDFIs), community-based and non-profit organizations, and solar project developers. SCOR will consult with SCSFA Advisory Committee members (particularly the North Carolina Clean Energy Fund, the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development, and the South Carolina Solar Council), to determine the best methods for communicating and engaging with stakeholders with funding and financial expertise.

2.7   Workforce Programs

Providing workforce training and employment opportunities is another core objective of EPA's Solar for All program. SCOR has designated $2 million of the SCSFA budget to support training for solar-related occupations. The South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce is the key state agency stakeholder and is partnering with SCOR to develop the SCSFA Solar Workforce Assessment and Strategy.

To obtain additional input from workforce stakeholders, SCOR will conduct Stakeholder Roundtables (Section 3.4.3) specifically focused on solar workforce training needs and priorities. Expected stakeholders include technical colleges, universities, community development organizations, and solar project developers. SCOR will consult with SCSFA Advisory Committee members to determine the best methods for communicating and engaging with these stakeholders.

3   Planning Period

During the Planning Period, SCOR will initiate the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan and stakeholder engagement process, with assistance from the SCSFA Engagement Facilitator and feedback from the Advisory Committee, Community Leaders Action Team, and Stakeholder Roundtables.

3.1   Potential Conflicts of Interest

SCOR aims to encourage participation in the process to refine the SCSFA program design but does not want potential participants in engagement groups to receive an unfair advantage or preclude themselves from applying for competitive sub-awards under a SCSFA grant program, per state and federal procurement rules. SCOR, in conjunction with the SCSFA Engagement Facilitator, will develop guidance to share with participants involved in SCSFA engagements.

3.2   SCSFA Engagement Facilitator

The SCSFA Engagement Facilitator will be contracted to work throughout the Planning Period and Implementation Phase of the SCSFA program to ensure continuity in engagement and feedback activities.

The Engagement Facilitator will assist SCOR with organizing and facilitating the SCSFA stakeholder and community engagement processes, as well as assist with related planning, reporting, and communications tasks throughout the SCSFA project period.

During the Planning Period the Engagement Facilitator will be responsible for organizing and leading SCSFA engagements with community and stakeholder groups and writing summary reports to be shared with participating individuals and groups, EPA, and other SCSFA stakeholders. These summary reports and input obtained during these engagements will assist SCOR in developing the SCSFA Implementation Workplan.

3.3   Communications

Throughout the Planning Period, SCOR and the Engagement Facilitator will develop informational materials and content for SCOR to use on the SCSFA website, emails/listservs, newsletters, presentations, social media, and other mechanisms. Informational materials will enable SCSFA stakeholders to learn about the SCSFA Program and understand the processes to provide program feedback. SCOR will work to make these communications accessible to communities with respect to language, disability, and different modalities.

Once the SCFSA Program enters the Implementation Phase, SCOR will need to disseminate information more broadly. SCOR will work with trusted networks, associations, community leaders, and other groups to disseminate program information. SCOR, with the Engagement Facilitator, will identify which communication channels (e.g., online, in-person, paper) will be most effective with different groups, as well as other communication and outreach needs (e.g., translations for audiences with limited English proficiency).

During the Implementation Phase, SCSFA informational materials and content may be provided with the goal of educating communities on various topics of interest (benefits of solar, solar project options), as well as combating misinformation and dispelling myths about solar. SCOR will disseminate materials and communications that are accessible to people who may not have prior knowledge of energy policy, government programs, and acronyms.

3.4   SCSFA Engagement Groups

SCOR will utilize three engagement groups, who will meet periodically, as a part of the SCSFA meaningful involvement strategy (Figure 5). Multiple groups will allow for more focused conversations and foster input from a variety of perspectives. Collectively, the groups will help SCOR determine how SCSFA will function throughout the Implementation Phase. The Advisory Committee will consist of members from various organizations who have relevant experience to broad aspects of the SCSFA program. The Community Leaders Action Team will consist of community leaders from communities that could potentially benefit from SCSFA. Finally, the Stakeholder Roundtables will convene diverse subject matter experts to address topics most pertinent to the implementation of potential SCSFA-funded projects.

Figure 4. SCSFA Engagement Process

3.4.1   SCSFA Advisory Committee

The SCSFA Advisory Committee provides guidance on program development and implementation. Members are asked to contribute their expertise and to represent the interests of their stakeholders, communities, and sectors as SCOR builds the SCSFA program.

SCSFA Advisory Committee members will assist SCOR with the following activities:

1) **Engagement and communications**, to include finalizing the Meaningful Involvement Plan, connecting SCSFA to communities and stakeholders, disseminating information, and participating in other engagements
2) **Refining program goals** for financial assistance, meaningful benefits, and technical assistance during the Plan
3) **Reviewing program progress** throughout the Implementation Phase to ensure efficient and effective delivery of program services

SCOR anticipates monthly or bi-monthly meetings during the Planning Period and quarterly or semi-annual meetings in subsequent years. Meetings will be conducted at SCOR and virtually. The table below lists the participating organizations, their expertise, and current solar and solar-related programs, projects, and/or responsibilities (Table 4).

Table 2. SCSFA Advisory Committee Member Organizations

Agency/Organization	Expertise	Relevance to SCSFA Program
State Agencies		
Department of Commerce (SC Commerce)	Energy Technology, Workforce Development	SC Commerce leads the SC Nexus for Advance Resilient Energy (SC Nexus), a tech hub driving advanced energy and grid resilience technologies for emerging and exportable energy solutions.
Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW)	Workforce Development	SCDEW leads workforce development and training initiatives, maintains workforce data, and conducts analyses to help employers and employees make informed workforce-related decisions. SCOR will partner with SCDEW to conduct a Solar Workforce Assessment for the state.
Department of Environmental Services (SCDES)	Environmental Programs, Community Engagement	SCDES, through their Bureau of Land & Waste Management has initiated a Solar Panel Stakeholder Group. The group discusses how to appropriately manage solar panels at the end of the lifecycle. Topics include how to oversee the decommission of large-scale solar projects and the environmental impacts of hazardous components sometimes found in solar panels.
Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)	Environmental Programs	SCDNR's Solar Habitat Siting Suitability Tool compares the sensitivity of lands to impacts from large-scale solar projects and their suitability for solar development.
Office of Economic Opportunity (SC OEO)	Economic Assistance, Energy Programs	The SC OEO manages the state's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
Office of Regulatory Staff, Energy Office (Energy Office)	Community Engagement, Energy Planning, Workforce Development	The Energy Office serves as the principal energy planning entity for the state and advances South Carolina's energy strategy and policy through education and outreach. The Energy Office encourages energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation through a broad range of initiatives.
State Housing Finance and Development Authority (SC Housing)	Community Engagement, Financial Assistance	SC Housing creates affordable housing opportunities through a broad range of programs that provide competitive market-based financial products for homeownership; comprehensive home repair programs to correct life, health and safety conditions and provide accessibility; financing supportive housing programs that include needed services for vulnerable residents; and financing of multifamily projects to increase the availability of quality rental homes.
Community-Based and Non-Profit Organizations		
EPA Region 4 Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC)	Community Engagement, Technical Assistance	The SC TCTAC delivers statewide, no cost technical assistance for successful application to federal and private grants, and provides guidance on community engagement, meeting facilitation to

		remove barriers and improve accessibility for communities. The SC TCTAC office is located at the University of South Carolina.
South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED)	Community Engagement, Economic Assistance	Member association that supports development of healthy and economically sustainable communities in SC. Focused on minority, underserved, and under-resourced communities. CDFIs included in membership.
South Carolina Energy Justice Coalition	Community Engagement	A nonpartisan collective of over 60 organizations of SC working to support communities experiencing high energy burdens, persistent energy inefficiency, and other inequities in the SC energy system.
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE)	Community Engagement, Energy Planning	SACE is a nonprofit organization that promotes responsible and equitable energy choices to ensure clean, safe, and healthy communities throughout the Southeast.
Solar Project Developers/Industry		
South Carolina Solar Council (SCSC)	Energy Technology, Technical Assistance, Workforce Development	The mission of the SCSC is to provide a platform for solar energy growth in South Carolina accomplished through education and dialogue with all stakeholders including citizens, advocates, utilities, and policy makers. The SCSC also serves as a resource for solar energy information, suppliers, installers and workforce development in South Carolina.
Funding and Finance		
North Carolina Clean Energy Fund (NCCEF)	Community Engagement, Financial Assistance, Technical Assistance	NCCEF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the clean energy economy in North and South Carolina. NCCEF is looking to serve as a potential SCSFA financing partner. Additionally, NCCEF is a partner on NC's EPA Solar for All Program.
Academia		
Coastal Carolina University (CCU)	Workforce Development, Community Engagement	CCU conducts a "Solar Ambassador" course to train students on solar outreach and implementation with non-profits. CCU also works with RE-volv, a nonprofit that helps nonprofits in underserved communities to deploy solar by providing financing and education, to fund projects with groups in the Coastal Carolina area.
Furman University, Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities	Community Engagement, Financial Assistance	The Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities is a regionally focused institute and academic hub that promotes interdisciplinary research and teaching in support of sustainability on the Furman University campus and in the greater community.
University of South Carolina (USC), Department of Geography and School of the Earth, Ocean & Environment	Energy Policy	Research projects at USC examine the U.S. electricity system as it transitions to more renewable forms of energy, with specific focus on regulations, energy insecurity, and energy labor in the southeastern U.S.

3.4.2   Community Leaders Action Team

The purpose of the Community Leaders Action Team will be to provide a formal structure for community-based organizations and other community and local leaders to participate in the SCSFA program, particularly as SCOR develops the Meaningful Benefits Plan and SCSFA Implementation Workplan. Through the Community Leaders Action Team SCOR will obtain feedback from trusted individuals who can share what kind of projects their communities would most like to see. Action Team members will be asked to participate by:

- Providing community input and/or representing their community's interest in addition to those of their specific CBO or agency

- Engaging in two-way information sharing, focused on identifying community needs, priorities, and gaps
- Helping to identify and promote opportunities, such as ideas for a SCSFA project pipeline, funding, partnerships, and networks

SCOR will establish an easy-to-complete and user-friendly application process for the Action Team. The application process will be used to ensure geographic and organization diversity, achieve a target membership level (approximately 24 members), understand member capacity to attend monthly to bi-monthly meetings (in person and virtual) during the Planning Period, and determine what types of support may be necessary to facilitate participation (e.g., mileage, meals, day/time availability). SCOR aims to hold meetings in different locations of the state to accommodate members and will likely move to quarterly meetings after the Planning Period.

3.4.3   Stakeholder Roundtables

Stakeholder Roundtables will be used to obtain ongoing input from various perspectives and interests as SCOR and the SCSFA Engagement Facilitator develop actionable plans and strategies for implementing the SCSFA program. Three stakeholder working groups will be formed around key topic areas: workforce, project deployment technical assistance, and project financing.

Expected participants include state, regional, and local government agencies; universities, technical colleges, and high school training programs; solar project developers; electric utilities; community development financial institutions (CDFIs); and community-based and non-profit organizations. SCOR may form additional Roundtable groups if recommended by the Advisory Committee and/or Community Leaders Action Team.

SCOR will prioritize using existing networks and contacts to distribute information and invite participation in the Stakeholder Roundtables. For example, Advisory Committee members represent a variety of sectors and can assist with broadly disseminating information to their stakeholders and constituents. Each topic area will have three or four meetings during the Planning Period and semi-annual to annual meetings in subsequent years. SCOR will conduct a combination of in-person and virtual meetings and include opportunities for site visits as SCSFA projects are deployed.

3.5   Integrating Stakeholder Feedback into the SCSFA Program

SCOR will solicit different types of feedback from each engagement group. Preliminary topics are listed in Table 5. These topics may be modified or added to, depending on stakeholder feedback.

The SCSFA Advisory Committee will help SCOR determine what projects and programs are possible in South Carolina. They will assist SCOR consider input obtained through the Community Leaders Action Team engagements and the Stakeholder Roundtables.

The Community Leaders Action Team will assist SCOR in understanding what is wanted at the ground level. Community Leaders will have the opportunity to provide input towards what programs and projects they would like to see and what they think would be most beneficial for similar communities across South Carolina. SCOR expects to integrate information about communities' priorities, concerns,

needs, and gaps into the final SCSFA Implementation Workplan, in particular the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program application process and review criteria. The Engagement Coordinator will work with the Engagement Facilitator to obtain community feedback on solar projects via online survey platforms, as well as in-person engagements.

As the Planning Period progresses, Stakeholder Roundtables will be conducted to focus on specific topics looking at how the SCSFA Program might be implemented in relation to the topic area discussed. Prior to conducting the Stakeholder Roundtables, SCOR expects to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit initial feedback on project deployment and technical assistance needs.

Table 3. Feedback Topics for SCSFA Engagement Groups

Engagement Group	Feedback Topics
Advisory Committee	• Recommended methods for connecting to different stakeholder groups • Benefits, challenges, and feasibility of the Community Solar Initiative (i.e., subscriptions offered through utility community solar programs) • Reviews of different community solar project models (i.e., potential project offerings through the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program) • Review of workforce training options
Community Leaders Action Team	• Energy burdens and costs; needs for resilient energy resources • Project siting • Other benefits communities are seeking and prioritizing (for example, workforce opportunities, funding/financing for community projects) • Existing or planned infrastructure, facilities, and/or projects that could be leveraged
Stakeholder Roundtables: Workforce	• Most beneficial services for workforce development program participants (for example, childcare, transportation) • Skills, abilities, and certifications most needed by employers • Strategic pathways to build skills and help employees acquire certifications
Stakeholder Roundtables: Project Financing	• Most feasible and effective financing options to leverage for projects funded under the Solar Innovation • Consumer protection practices and policies
Stakeholder Roundtables: Project Deployment Technical Assistance	• Needs related to developing and implementing projects (coordinating with utilities, interconnections and net metering agreements, project siting, permitting) • Policies and procedures for quality assurance and control • Operations and maintenance requirements • Workforce needs and opportunities

Feedback received from the engagement groups will be used when developing the final Financial Assistance Strategy, Meaningful Benefits Plan, and Project-Deployment Technical Assistance Strategy, all of which will be reflected in the final SCSFA Implementation Workplan.

3.6   Engagement Evaluation

SCOR will utilize various feedback methods to evaluate the success of the SCSFA Engagement processes. Targeted questions will be employed during meetings and engagements and exit surveys and polls (online and/or paper) will be given after each engagement. SCOR may also use follow-up methods such as phone calls or small group sessions to receive feedback on the SCSFA Engagement processes.

The Engagement Facilitator will work with the SCSFA Engagement Coordinator to complete summary reports containing feedback from the SCSFA Advisory Committee, Community Leaders Action Team, and Stakeholder Roundtables. Results from exit surveys and polls, as well as written feedback responses will be recorded and maintained. Both staff members will also utilize responses from exit surveys given after engagement events to improve subsequent engagement processes.

EPA Requirements for Engagement Reporting

Specific outputs and outcomes from outreach and engagement events:

- Type of outreach (main topic covered; target stakeholders/audience)
- Who attended (number and summary of attendees, including census tracts)
- Language of materials circulated
- Description of feedback received
- Public availability of summarized feedback
- Outcome of outreach or meeting
- Community feedback on outreach

General narratives and examples of the following:

- Participatory governance mechanisms
- Media attention
- Program evaluation and evidence-building activities

3.7   Timeline

SCOR expects the Advisory Committee to meet monthly over the course of the Planning Period. SCOR anticipates that the Community Leaders Action Team and the different Stakeholder Roundtable groups will meet 4 to 6 times during Planning Period; however, this could be subject to change depending on participant availability and meeting location.

4   Implementation Phase

As the Planning Period progresses, the methods and timeline of the engagement process for the Implementation Phase will be developed. Here SCOR presents a general, expected framework for conducting meaningful involvement during the Implementation Phase.

First, SCOR expects to continue quarterly to semi-annual Advisory Committee, Community Leaders Action Team, and Stakeholder Roundtables to provide updates on the SCSFA program and project progress. These events will also provide an opportunity for those participants to provide feedback.

Second, communications and outreach plans will be developed for the different SCSFA program offerings (i.e., the Community Solar Initiative and Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program) as those programs are refined and finalized during the Planning Period. Expected activities and plan components are briefly described in Sections 4.5and 4.6).

4.1   SCSFA Engagement Facilitator

During the Implementation Phase, the Engagement Facilitator will organize and facilitate ongoing stakeholder and community engagements in order to obtain feedback on SCSFA project progress and effectiveness. This feedback will be used to inform any necessary programmatic changes. Additionally, the Engagement Facilitator will gather information from these engagements that may be used in semi-annual reports to EPA. Throughout the Implementation Phase, the Engagement Facilitator will develop informational materials and content for SCOR to use on the SCSFA website, emails/listservs, newsletters, presentations, social media, and other mechanisms that may be used for disseminating information about the program.

4.2   Ongoing Engagement Meetings

The Advisory Committee, Stakeholder Roundtables, and Community Leaders Action Teams will continue to meet throughout the Implementation Phase. Meetings for each group will continue quarterly to semi-annually to ensure SCOR receives feedback on the SCSFA projects as they are implemented.

4.3   Engagement Evaluation

SCSFA engagement evaluation will continue throughout the Implementation Phase as described in Section 3.6.

4.4   Communications and Outreach

Throughout the Implementation Phase the SCSFA website will be updated to communicate the status of SCSFA Program. SCOR will also keep the webpage updated with links to consumer protection information applicable to SCSFA. Likewise, SCOR will continue to send newsletters to the SCSFA email list. SCSFA will continue to utilize the networks of the participants of the engagement meetings to ensure the program information is disseminated to the communities that can benefit from SCSFA Program.

SCOR will work to ensure that SCSFA communications provide the opportunity for meaningful access to all programs and activities for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). When determining which documents and communications are translated into a foreign language, SCSFA staff will consider factors such as the number and proportion of the LEP persons served by the program, frequency LEP individuals encounter SCSFA, importance of the LEP persons to the SCSFA program, and available resources and costs. For a full explanation of SCOR's policy regarding LEP individuals, please see SCOR's Notice of Non-Discrimination on the SCOR website.[5]

4.5   Community Solar Initiative (Subscription Program)

SCOR intends to partner with electric utilities to expand or enhance existing utility-run programs and/or initiate new programs. South Carolina has over 40 electric utilities operating across the state, with many, but not all, having existing subscription programs. Specific opportunities will be identified and assessed during the Planning Period. Program communications and outreach strategies will likewise be refined during the Planning Period and into the Implementation Phase.

SCOR plans to hire two Case Managers who will assist in certifying income and other information for the Community Solar Initiative. The Case Managers will also serve as household liaisons and will report participant feedback to SCOR staff routinely. Feedback will also be discussed at SCSFA Advisory Committee meetings to determine if program processes and procedures can be improved to address the participant feedback.

4.6   Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program

SCOR will solicit applications for solar projects that serve low-income households identified as eligible for participation in the SCSFA Solar Innovation Fund.

SCOR will develop and produce a Solar Innovation Fund Request for Proposal (RFP) guidance document containing information to assist applicants in preparing their project proposals and submitting their grant applications. The RFP guidance document will be made available online and to those without internet capability. SCOR plans to provide project deployment and technical assistance to applicants during the application period. Feedback received during the planning period will be incorporated into the scoring process for grant applications.

SCOR will hire staff to manage the Solar Innovation Fund, monitor the fund's grant projects, provide programmatic and technical assistance, and serve as liaisons with the awarded subgrantees. These staff members will report participant feedback to SCOR staff routinely. Feedback will also be discussed at SCSFA Advisory Committee meetings to determine if program processes and procedures can be improved to address the participant feedback.

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[5] https://scor.sc.gov/

5   Resource Summary

SCOR has allocated the following resources (Table 6) for implementing the SCSFA Meaningful Involvement Plan. These resources include funds to hire SCOR staff, contract with an Engagement Facilitator, provide participant support, and obtain tools and services to facilitate communications and outreach activities.

Table 4. SCSFA Resources for Meaningful Involvement

Category	Details	Amount ($)
Personnel	SCSFA Community Engagement Coordinator SCSFA Reporting Coordinator Community Solar Initiative: (2) Community Solar Case Managers Solar Innovation Fund: Grant Program Coordinator, Community Solar Case Manager	$1,652,412
Contractual	Engagement Facilitator	$275,000
Participant Support (SCSFA Engagement Groups)	Meals and light refreshments Travel support Outreach & engagement activities	$149,900
Communications & Outreach	Survey application license for soliciting public feedback Email/listserv marketing software File sharing software Language translation services Advertising costs for engagement	$42,970
	TOTAL	**$2,120,282**

Appendix A. SCSFA Participant Eligibility Criteria

The intent of the EPA Solar for All program is to expand opportunities for low-income communities to deploy solar energy resources. SCOR will utilize the Planning Period to develop and finalize the eligibility criteria for the SCSFA program participants. Listed below are some of the factors that SCOR will take into consideration when developing communications materials, conducting outreach, and selecting eligible SCSFA program participants.

Income Thresholds

SCOR may use the following income thresholds to verify the eligibility of individual households seeking to participate in the Community Solar Initiative and in the projects funded through the Solar Innovation Fund Grant Program (Figure 5, Table 5, Table 6).

- For Metropolitan Areas, low-income individuals and households with incomes not more than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), whichever is higher.
- For Non-Metropolitan Areas, low-income individuals and households with incomes not more than 80% AMI, 200% FPL, or 80% Statewide Non-Metropolitan Area AMI, whichever is highest.
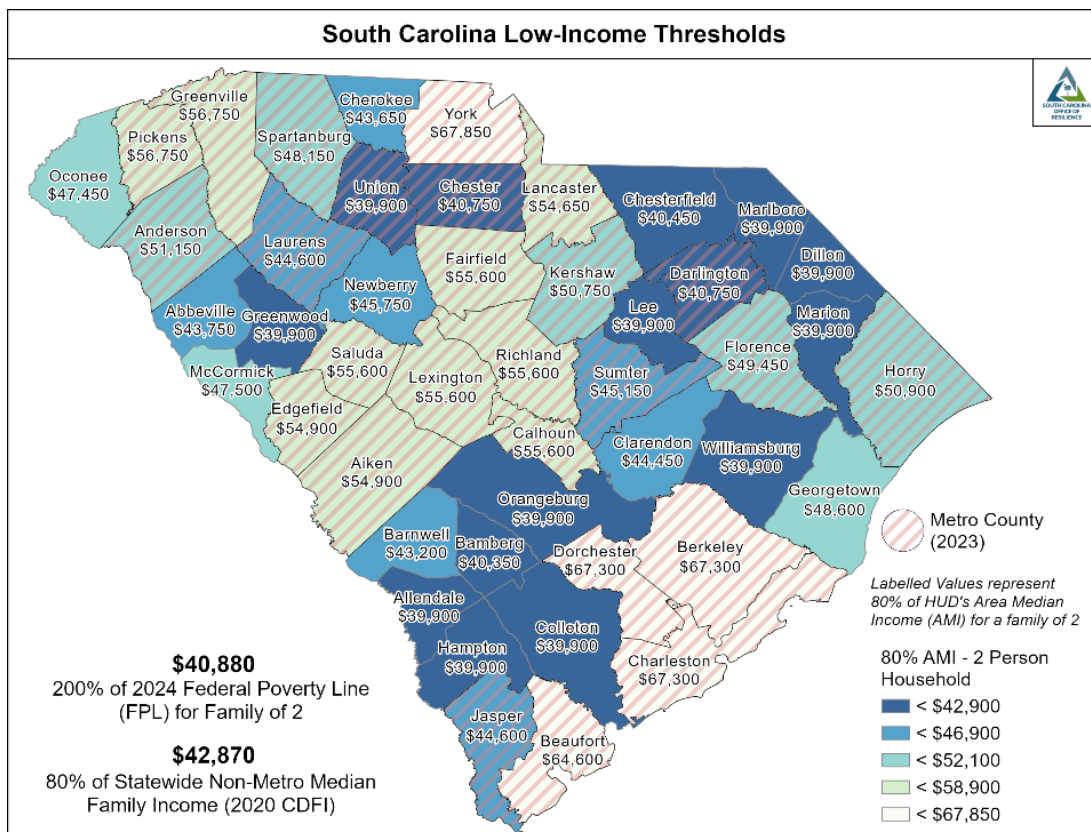

Figure 5. South Carolina Low-Income Thresholds

Table 5. 80% AMI, for 2-person households, for South Carolina counties[6]

County	80% AMI (2-person household)	County	80% AMI (2-person household)	County	80% AMI (2-person household)
Abbeville	$43,750	Dillon	$39,900	Lexington	$55,600
Aiken	$54,900	Dorchester	$67,300	Marion	$47,500
Allendale	$39,900	Edgefield	$54,900	Marlboro	$39,900
Anderson	$51,150	Fairfield	$55,600	McCormick	$39,900
Bamberg	$40,350	Florence	$49,450	Newberry	$45,750
Barnwell	$43,200	Georgetown	$48,600	Oconee	$47,450
Beaufort	$64,600	Greenville	$56,750	Orangeburg	$39,900
Berkeley	$67,300	Greenwood	$39,900	Pickens	$56,750
Calhoun	$55,600	Hampton	$39,900	Richland	$55,600
Charleston	$67,300	Horry	$50,900	Saluda	$55,600
Cherokee	$43,650	Jasper	$44,600	Spartanburg	$48,150
Chester	$40,750	Kershaw	$50,750	Sumter	$45,150
Chesterfield	$40,450	Lancaster	$54,650	Union	$39,900
Clarendon	$44,450	Laurens	$44,600	Williamsburg	$39,900
Colleton	$39,900	Lee	$39,900	York	$67,850
Darlington	$40,750				

Table 6. Federal Poverty Line (FPL) and 80% Statewide Non-Metropolitan Area AMI for South Carolina[7]

Metric	Household Size	Modifier	Raw	Modified
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	1	200%	$15,060	$30,120
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	2	200%	$20,440	$40,880
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	3	200%	$25,820	$51,640
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	4	200%	$31,200	$62,400
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	5	200%	$36,580	$73,160
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	6	200%	$41,960	$83,920
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	7	200%	$47,340	$94,680
Federal Poverty Line (2024)	8	200%	$52,720	$105,440
Statewide Non-Metro Median Family Income (2020 CDFI Tract)	NA	80%	$53,588	$42,870

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[6] Source: HUD User Portal, FY 24 Income Limits Documentation System, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/home.html.
Note: These values may be adjusted for correct family size using HUD's Family Size Adjustment Factor.
[7] FPL Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Poverty Guidelines, https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines.
Statewide Non-Metro AMI Source: CDFI Public Viewer, available through https://cimsprodprep.cdfifund.gov/CIMS4/home/.

Energy Burden

SCOR may use energy burden information to focus outreach and communications efforts. Energy burden refers to the percentage of a household's income that is spent on energy costs such as electricity and natural gas. Households with a high energy burden have fewer resources for other essential needs such as food and medical care. Figure 6 shows areas of South Carolina with a high percentage of households experiencing high energy burdens.
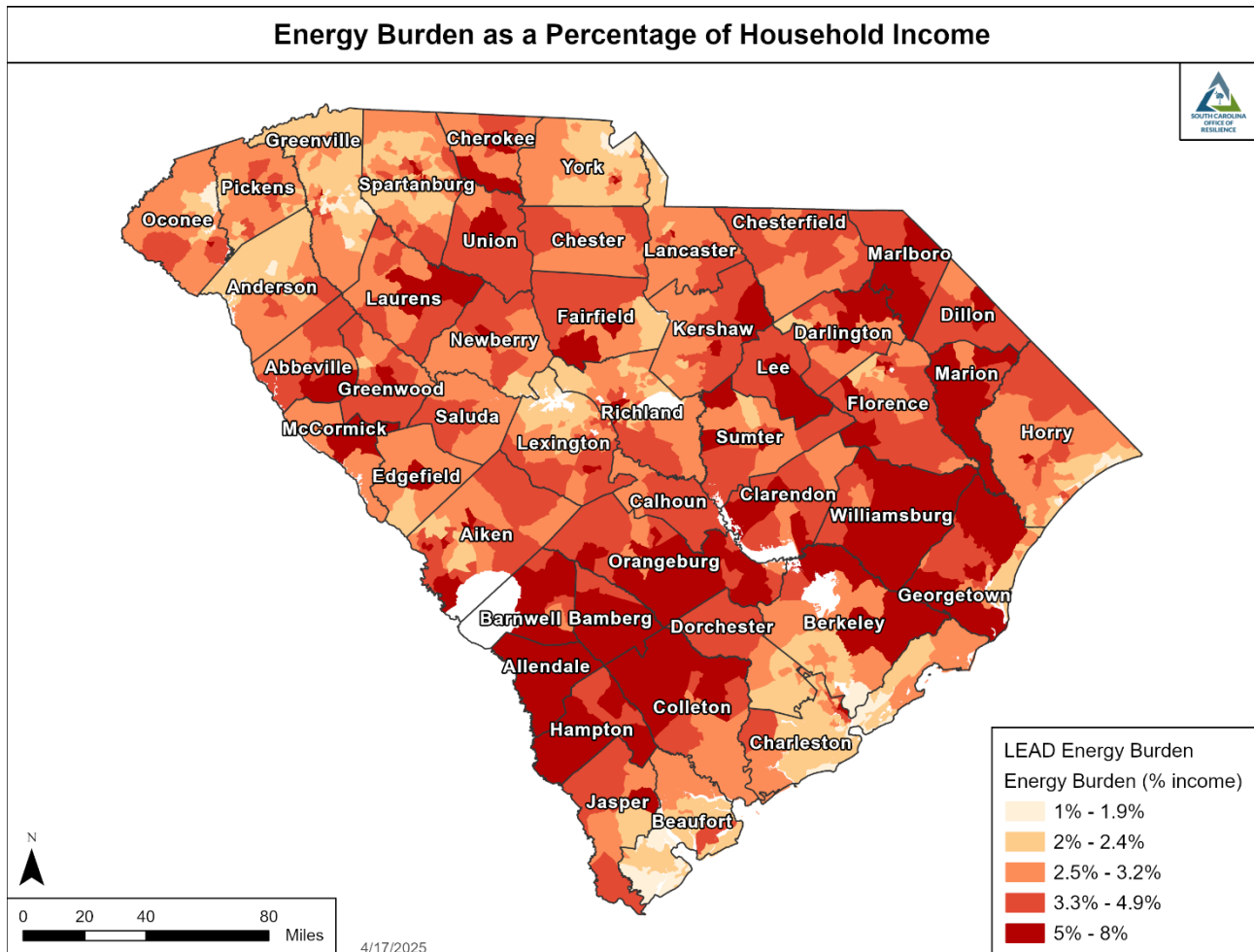

Figure 6. Energy Burden as a Percentage of Household Income, for South Carolina[8]

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[8] Energy Burden Data is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy's Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool (Accessed June 26, 2024). The Low-Income Energy Affordability Data comes primarily from the 2022 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Public Use Microdata Samples and is calibrated to 2022 U.S. Energy Information Administration electric utility (Survey Form-861) and natural gas utility (Survey Form-176) data. https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/low-income-energy-affordability-data-lead-tool-2022-update.