SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program

Guide for Experts:

Evaluators, Coaches, Mentors

Mar 2023

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 20 APRIL 2024

HE SolarHub Project:
A Greek-Turkish Solar Energy Excellence Hub to Advance the European Green Deal

Funded by
the European Union

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Project Summary	
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Start & End Dates:	1 Jan. 2023 – 31 Dec. 2026
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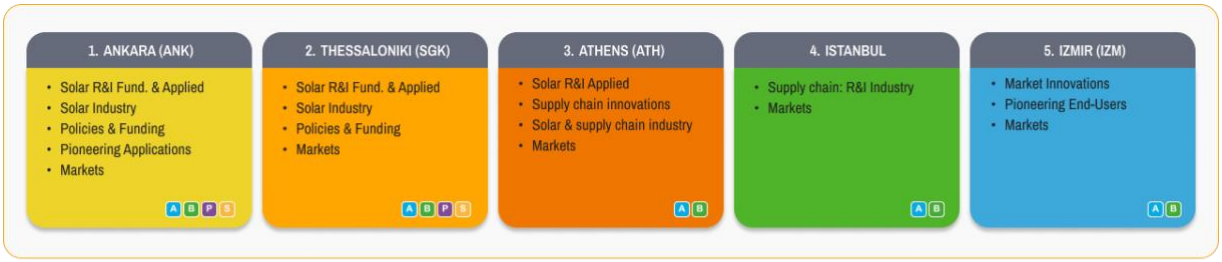
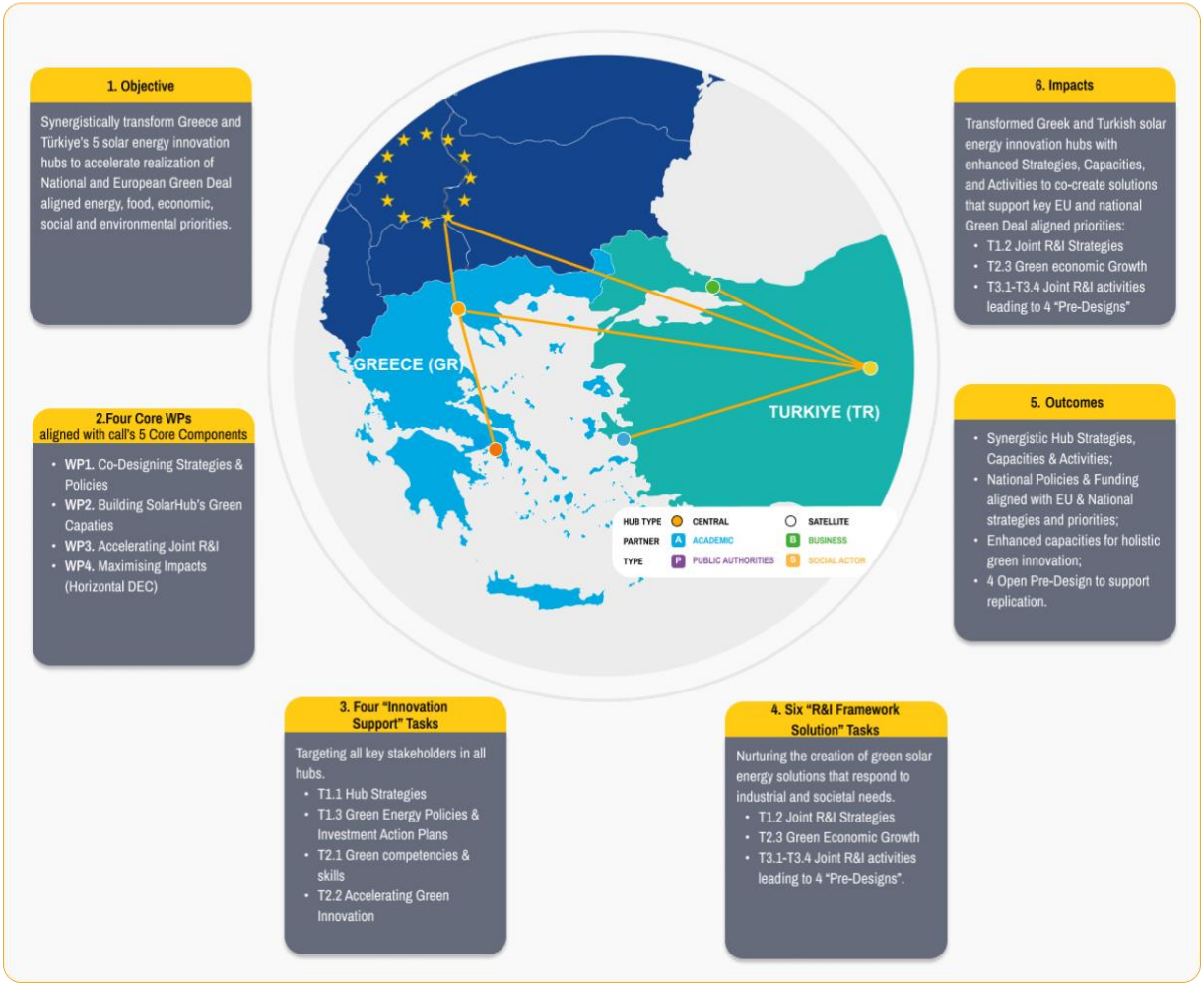
Coordinator:	ODTU Center for Solar Energy Research & Applications, Ankara / Turkiye
Project Webpage:	https://horizonsolarhub.eu
EU Cordis Webpage:	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101086110





Consortium

Disclaimer

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EC	European Commission
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
SME	Small & Medium Enterprise

Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary

SolarHub is a four-year project with 21 partners funded under the Horizon Europe WIDERA Excellence Hubs call. Through the linkage of academia, business government bodies and civil society, SolarHub is a perfect blend of Quadruple Helix collaboration in practice to create an Excellence Hub. The SolarHub project started in January 2023, aiming to interconnect and scale-up five solar energy innovation ecosystems located in Ankara, Thessaloniki, İzmir, Athens and İstanbul standing by a mantra of accelerating the Clean Energy Transition and the Green Deal initiative. Thanks to the diverse structure derived from the quadruple helix formation, this Greek-Turkish Solar Energy Excellence Hub takes on the challenge of aligning concrete and co-developed solutions for clean and secure energy and food supplies.

The SolarHub Acceleration Program is a strategic component of the project, designed to foster the development and commercialization of innovative solar energy technologies. The program aims to bridge the gap between research and market needs, facilitating startups and research teams in navigating the complex journey from ideation to market entry. It offers comprehensive support across various stages of start-up development, including mentorship, technical support, access to advanced R&I infrastructure, training, and networking opportunities. This multi-layered approach ensures that participants receive the necessary resources and guidance to scale their solutions effectively, addressing key challenges in the solar energy sector such as market access, technological development, and financial sustainability. The program operates in cycles, each focusing on different stages of start-up maturity, from early-stage ideation to market expansion, thus catering to a wide range of needs within the solar energy innovation ecosystem.

This document is a detailed guide for the experts (evaluators, business mentors and coaches) of the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program. It is structured to include the following chapters:

- **(2) SolarHub Acceleration**: Outlines the program's three cycles—Ignition, Momentum, and Synergies—each designed to support startups at different maturity stages within the solar energy sector and explains in more detail the first cycle of Ignition.
- **(3) Become a SolarHub Expert:** Explains the types, roles, requirements, expectations and remuneration of SolarHub experts.
- **(4) Next Steps:** Present the sources for more information and the steps for application.

The guide serves as a quick manual for experts, providing all the necessary information to participate in the SolarHub Ignition program Experts' pool.

2 SolarHub Acceleration Program

2.1 Overview

The SolarHub Acceleration Program is a comprehensive initiative designed under the SolarHub project to support research teams and startups at various stages of maturity within the solar energy sector. It comprises three distinct cycles, each tailored to address the specific needs and challenges of different stakeholders in the innovation process.

The first cycle, **SolarHub Ignition**, focuses on early-stage startups, entrepreneurs, and research teams, providing ideation workshops, basic business model formation, and initial market research. The subsequent cycle, **SolarHub Momentum**, is geared towards more established startups with a defined product or service, offering advanced business development, market penetration strategies, and investor readiness training. Finally, the **SolarHub Synergies** cycle caters to mature startups or SMEs with established products or services, aiding in expansion strategies, advanced market analysis, and partnership and network expansion.

As the SolarHub project progresses, the acceleration program will evolve to meet the changing landscape of the solar energy industry and the emerging needs of its stakeholders. **Each cycle is built to be dynamic, allowing for the integration of new insights, technologies, and market trends**. This ensures that participants receive the most current and impactful support, fostering innovation, growth, and sustainable success. Through this structured but flexible approach, SolarHub aims to cultivate an integrated ecosystem of solar energy solutions that will address today's energy challenges while trying to anticipate and help shape a future vision in the sector.

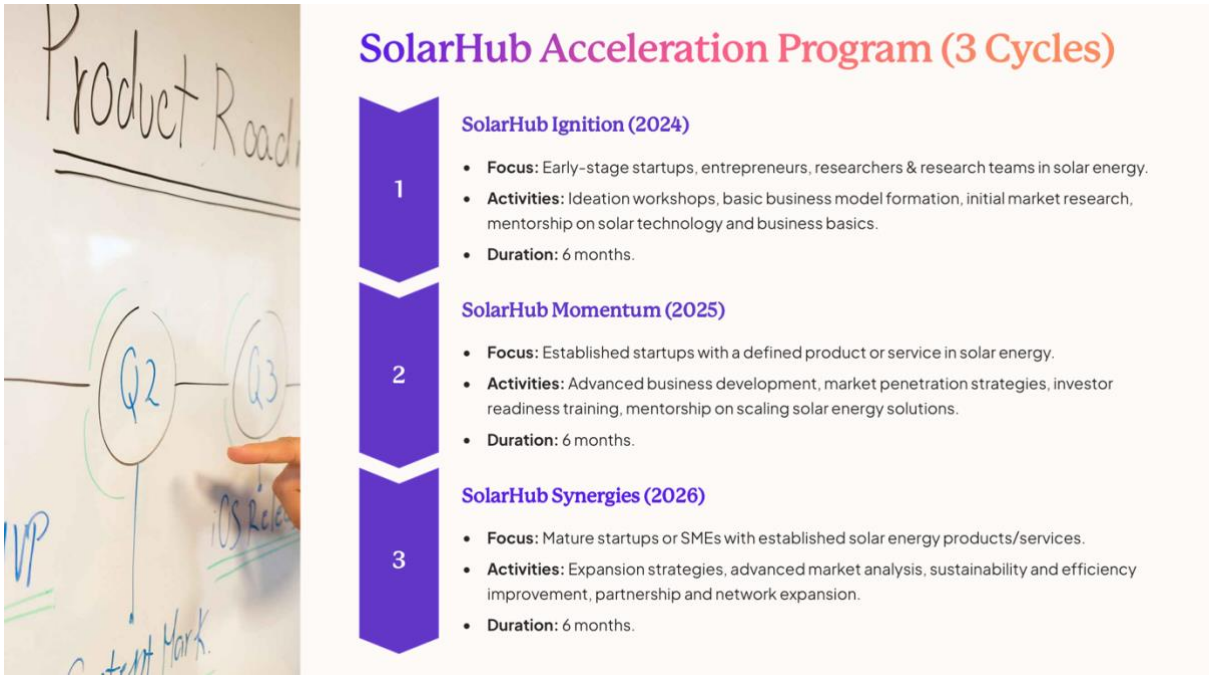


Figure 1: Overview of the SolarHub Acceleration Program

2.2 SolarHub Ignition 2024

	Focus:	Early-stage startups, entrepreneurs, researchers & research teams in solar energy.
	Activities:	Ideation workshops, basic business model formation, initial market research, mentorship on solar technology and business basics.
	Duration:	6 months (May 2024 – Nov 2024)

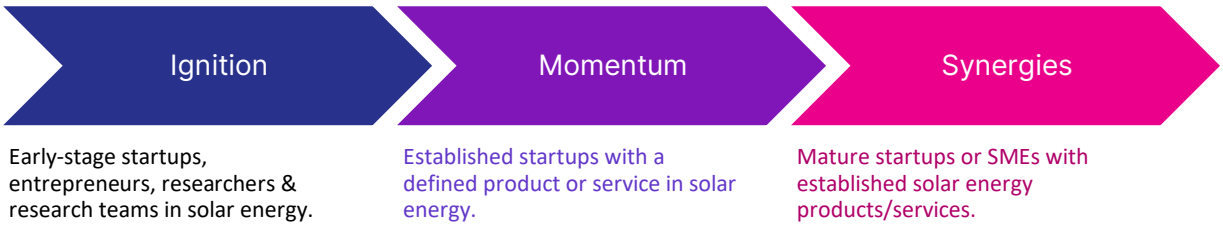
The **SolarHub Ignition phase** is the 1st cycle of the SolarHub Acceleration Program, designed for early-stage startups, entrepreneurs, researchers, and research teams dedicated to solar energy innovations. It is an essential starting point for those who are at the very beginning of transforming their solar energy concepts into reality, offering a six-month-long innovation support environment.

Participants in the SolarHub Ignition phase will benefit from a structured program that includes education and training, ideation workshops, mentorship and coaching, networking opportunities, and access to both finance and cutting-edge solar technologies. These components are aimed at enhancing the participants' understanding of both technical and commercial aspects of solar energy solutions, thereby fostering a holistic approach to innovation.

Through the Ignition phase, selected research teams or start-ups are not required to be incorporated, providing flexibility and encouraging participation from a broader range of innovators and researchers based in Greece, Türkiye, or Southeast Europe with links to the 2 mentioned countries. The ultimate goal of this phase is to prepare participants to refine their business strategies, advance their technological development, and effectively communicate their vision to investors and stakeholders, setting them on a trajectory for growth and long-term success in the solar energy sector.

2.3 SolarHub Momentum & Synergies

As the program evolves from the foundational Ignition phase, it will broaden its scope and deepen its impact with the following **Momentum** and **Synergies** phases. The Momentum phase is tailored for startups that have progressed beyond the initial stage and have a defined product or service in the solar energy domain. Finally, the Synergies phase will target mature startups or SMEs that have established products or services and are now looking to expand their reach and consolidate their market position. This phase will support strategic expansion, advanced market analysis, and further development of partnerships and networks.



3 Become a SolarHub Expert

The SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program invites expressions of interest from seasoned professionals eager to contribute their expertise to the forefront of solar energy innovation. We are building a dynamic pool of external experts who will play a pivotal role in evaluating pioneering proposals and providing mentorship to the next generation of solar energy startups. This chapter outlines the types of experts we seek and the process for their participation.

3.1 Evaluators

Requirements

Evaluators are critical to our selection process, tasked with assessing the viability, innovation, and potential impact of submitted proposals. Ideal candidates for this role should have:

- A strong background in solar energy, renewable technologies, or related fields.
- Experience in evaluating EU Framework Programme project proposals, preferably in a research, innovation, or start-up context, especially in EIC.
- An understanding of market demands, commercialization strategies, and the technical aspects of solar energy solutions.

Role & Expectations

Evaluators play a crucial role in the initial stages of the program by assessing the viability, innovation potential, and impact of the proposals submitted by applicants.

- Application Reviews: Evaluators are expected to review submitted proposals against a set of criteria, including innovation, technical feasibility, market potential, and the team's capability.
- Objective Judgement: Provide impartial, constructive feedback to help refine proposals and guide the selection process.
- Timely Deliverables: Complete evaluations within the specified timeframe to ensure a smooth progression of the selection process.

Remuneration

Evaluators will receive €100 for each proposal they assess. This fee is designed to compensate for the time and effort involved in the evaluation of each submission, ensuring a fair and detailed assessment process. Evaluators will be required to review at least 2 applications.

Timeline

Their services will be required during the evaluation phase of the acceleration program between 1-20 May 2024.

Evaluators can also work as mentors or coaches.

3.2 Business Mentors

Requirements

Business Mentors will guide selected startups in refining their business strategies, navigating market challenges, and identifying growth opportunities. We seek experts with:

- Extensive experience in business development, especially within the renewable energy sector or start-up ecosystems.
- Skills in financial planning, market analysis, and scaling business operations.
- A track record of successful mentorship or advisory roles (optional).

Role & Expectations

Mentors are tasked with guiding selected startups through the intricacies of business strategy, market entry, and operational scaling.

- **Strategic Guidance:** Offer insights and advice on business model refinement, market analysis, and growth strategies.
- **Networking Support:** Leverage your network to facilitate connections with industry professionals, potential customers, and investors.
- **Regular Engagement**: Commit to regular sessions with mentees, providing ongoing support and monitoring progress.

Remuneration

All Business Mentors will be compensated with €50 per hour (€400 Daily Rate) for their services rendered to the program. This rate applies to hours spent on activities such as mentoring sessions, coaching, and any other activities directly related to their role.

SolarHub Ignition program anticipates **12 hours of business mentoring per research team or start-up**. Business Mentors **will be assigned to at least one research team** or start-up by the SolarHub Ignition Program Team.

Timeline

Their services will be required during the implementation phase of the acceleration program between 1 Jun 2024 – 30 Nov 2024.

3.3 Technical Coaches

Technical Coaches will support teams in the technical development of their solar energy solutions. Required expertise includes:

Requirements

- Deep technical knowledge in solar energy technologies, product development, or engineering.

- Experience in guiding R&D projects from concept to prototype.
- Capability to advise on applying scientific principles in real-world scenarios and integrating innovative technologies.

Expectations:

- Technical Expertise: Advise on the technical aspects of project development, from concept validation to prototype realization.
- Solution Optimization: Assist in identifying and overcoming technical challenges, ensuring the project's technical viability and innovation potential.
- Progress Monitoring: Conduct regular check-ins to monitor the technical progress of the projects and provide actionable feedback.

Remuneration

All Technical Coaches will be compensated with €50 per hour (€400 Daily Rate) for their services rendered to the program. This rate applies to hours spent on activities such as coaching sessions, support of program participants, and any other activities directly related to their role.

SolarHub Ignition program anticipates **6 hours of technical coaching per research team or start-up**. Coaches **will be assigned to at least one research team** or start-up by the SolarHub Ignition Program Team.

Timeline

Their services will be required during the implementation phase of the acceleration program between 1 Jun 2024 – 30 Nov 2024.

3.4 Payment Arrangements for SolarHub Consortium Partners

*Experts affiliated with organizations that are part of the SolarHub Consortium **will not receive direct remuneration** from the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program for their participation as evaluators, mentors, or coaches. Instead, such experts will be compensated by their respective consortium-affiliated organizations in accordance with the internal policies and agreements of those organizations.*

By participating in this program, experts affiliated with SolarHub Consortium partners acknowledge this payment structure and agree to the terms set forth by their respective organizations for the provision of their expertise to the program.

4 Next Steps

4.1 More about the project

To get a better understanding of the SolarHub Project and the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program, we advise you to review the following sources:

- SolarHub Website
- SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program Presentation
- SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program Applicants Guide

4.2 Apply as an Expert

Interested experts are invited to apply through F6S platform to become part of our ecosystem. The application and selection process for interested experts is described herein:

Step 1: Visit the SolarHub program page on F6S

Complete the Expression of Interest form, detailing your expertise area(s) and preferred role(s) within the program (Evaluator, Business Mentor, or Technical Coach).

Step 2: Review Process

Your application will undergo a review by the SolarHub team. We consider your expertise, experience, and the potential impact of your participation on the program's success.

Step 3: Onboarding

Selected experts will be contacted to discuss their involvement, expectations, and the next steps. This includes detailed briefings on the evaluation criteria for proposals, mentorship guidelines, or technical coaching frameworks, ensuring you're well-prepared to support our innovators.

By participating as an expert in the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program, you will be at the heart of driving solar energy innovation forward. Your expertise will help shape the future of solar energy and support the next wave of entrepreneurs and researchers in the solar sector. We look forward to welcoming you to our community of experts.

4.3 Language

English is the official language for SolarHub Calls. Submissions done in any other language will not be eligible and, thus, will not be evaluated. English is also the official language during the execution of the program.

4.4 Data protection

The proposals are confidential, and each person involved in the program outside our consortium, will sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). To process and evaluate applications, SolarHub will need to collect Data. SolarHub partners will act as Data Controllers of data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage. Please refer to https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy to check F6S platform data privacy policy and security measures.

5 Annex 1: Expert Application

SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program - Expert Application Form

1. **Personal Data**
   1.1. Name (Text Field)
   1.2. Country (Drop Down)
   1.3. Gender (Drop Down: Male, Female, Prefer not to say)
   1.4. Email (Email Field)
   1.5. Phone (Text Field)
   1.6. LinkedIn profile (URL)
2. **Affiliation**
   2.1. SolarHub Consortium (Only for Project Partners, List with all Partners)
   2.2. Primary Affiliation (Text Field)
   2.3. Type of Affiliation (Drop Down: Academic, Industry, Research, Other)
3. **Educational Background**
   3.1. Graduate Studies (Text Field)
   3.2. Post-graduate Studies (Text Field)
   3.3. Other Studies or Certifications (Text Field, Optional)
4. **Expertise and Experience**
   4.1. Specific Expertise in the Solar Energy Sector (Long Text Field)
   4.2. Experience in Proposal Evaluation (Checkboxes: EC Proposal Evaluation, Open Call Proposals Evaluation, Other)
   4.3. Detail Your Experience in Proposal Evaluation, Mentoring and/or Coaching (Long Text Field)
5. **Type of Expert Services**
   5.1. Interested in (Checkboxes: Evaluation, Business Mentor, Technical Coach)
   5.2. For Technical Coaches Only: More Relevant Technologies / Pre-designs You Would Like to Be Involved With (Drop down of Pre-Designs)
6. **Terms and Conditions**
   6.1. Absence of Conflict of Interest (Checkbox)
   6.2. Acceptance of the Data Privacy Policies (Checkbox)
   6.3. Acknowledgement of Non-binding and No Commitment Clause (Checkbox)

Instructions

Please complete all sections of the application form accurately. For sections that require detailed explanations, ensure your responses are clear and concise, providing specific examples where relevant. Your application will be reviewed based on the information provided, so please ensure accuracy and completeness.

Terms and Conditions

Clause for Absence of Conflict of Interest

By checking this box, I, the undersigned, declare that to the best of my knowledge, no conflict of interest exists that could potentially influence my judgment or objectivity in performing my duties as an evaluator, mentor, or coach within the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program. I understand that a conflict of interest encompasses any situation where personal, direct or indirect financial interests, or professional or personal relationships might affect the impartiality or could create a conflict with the proper execution of my role. Should any such conflict arise during my involvement with the program, I commit to promptly disclose this information to the program coordinators.

Clause for Data Privacy

By accepting the Data Privacy Policies, I acknowledge that the personal information provided in this application will be processed in accordance with the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program's privacy policies and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This includes the use of my data solely for the purpose of evaluating my application and potential involvement in the program, maintaining communication with me, and for administrative tasks related to the program's execution. I understand that I have the right to access, rectify, delete, or limit the processing of my personal data at any time by contacting the program administration.

Clause for Non-binding and No Commitment

Please note that this expression of interest to participate in the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program as an external expert (evaluator, mentor, or coach) is NOT binding and does NOT constitute any commitment on the part of the SolarHub project. The selection of experts to support the program will be taken at a later stage, dependent on various factors including but not limited to the number of received applications, their scope, the domain they target, and the qualifications of potential evaluators, including their affiliations, expertise, and the need to maintain a balanced representation across various criteria (e.g., gender, professional background, type of affiliation, age). Furthermore, the program reserves the right to rotate or change experts to ensure a broad range of insights and evaluations.

By submitting this application, you agree to the terms and conditions set forth by the SolarHub Ignition Acceleration Program, including data privacy policies and the acknowledgment that this application does not bind you to any commitment to the program.