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Seeking solar innovators for ARENA's \$100 million challenge

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has today launched its global \$100 million 'Solar ScaleUp Challenge', and invites innovators, developers, engineers, financiers and solar customers around the world to accelerate innovation in large-scale solar and help drive down costs.

The aim of the Challenge is to stimulate greater innovation and collaboration in the solar sector – particularly in installation, operations and maintenance – enabling ARENA to realise its Ultra Low-Cost Solar (ULCS) vision.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said the large-scale deployment of solar is key to the clean energy transition and in achieving global decarbonisation.

“Ultra low-cost solar is critical for reducing electricity costs and decarbonising hard-to-abate sectors such as industry and transport. It is also a key factor in Australia becoming a renewable energy superpower, a vision which would see Australia playing a major role in supplying our key trading partners with low emissions products such as green iron and hydrogen.”

“Collaboration in solar is key to reducing costs and maintaining Australia’s leading role in the development and innovation of solar technologies. We are aiming to bring together leaders across Australia and the world to tackle the challenges presented in our quest for even cheaper renewable energy through this critical technology,” Mr Miller said.

The Challenge is being delivered in collaboration with Greenhouse Tech whose innovative online platform is designed to facilitate the formation of multi-disciplinary teams and support collaboration on a global scale. Greenhouse Tech has run similar global challenges in the past, including the NetZero Steel Challenge.

“We are keenly aware of the barriers preventing our ULCS vision from becoming reality, so we want to try something different to crack open the opportunity. Teaming up with Greenhouse Tech, which has a track record in driving this kind of innovation in the emissions reduction space, allows us to bring in more expertise to achieve the objectives of the Challenge,” said Mr Miller.

ARENA brought together some of the most influential people in the solar space at its inaugural Solar Lab to define the long list of actions needed to unlock ULCS. This included innovation in installation, operations and maintenance of solar farms, as well as extensive collaboration across both supply and demand.

“Bringing together all the different stakeholders involved in solar projects is key to solving these problems in an innovative way and quickly scaling the solutions, so we thought this topic was ideal for a challenge,” said Mark Rowland, Chief Collaboration Officer at Greenhouse.

Huge cost reductions in solar PV have already been achieved, but more breakthroughs are needed. There is now an opportunity to further reduce costs so that we can drive greater adoption of solar PV and unlock significant scale.

ARENA is looking to reduce the installed cost of a solar project to just 30 cents per watt and reach a levelised cost of electricity below \$20 per megawatt hour by 2030. This could help unlock a total installed capacity of 1 terawatt by 2050.

ARENA is inviting innovators, customers, financiers and anyone involved in the construction and operation of solar farms to participate. If you have ideas on how to contribute to reducing the cost of large-scale solar installation or operation and maintenance, then ARENA’s Solar ScaleUp Challenge might be for you.

ARENA is also administering the \$1 billion Solar Sunshot Program, aimed at growing Australia’s domestic solar PV manufacturing capabilities in Australia and commercialising local solar PV innovation. Where Sunshot is primarily focused on how components are made, the Challenge is focused on how they’re deployed.

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The Solar ScaleUp Challenge is open for 8 weeks and is expected to complement the [Solar Sunshot program](#) by building a pipeline of solar PV innovation that can be adopted by manufacturers along the supply chain and project developers.

For information about the Challenge, including who can enter, how to participate and submission deadlines, visit the [Solar ScaleUp Challenge website](#).

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