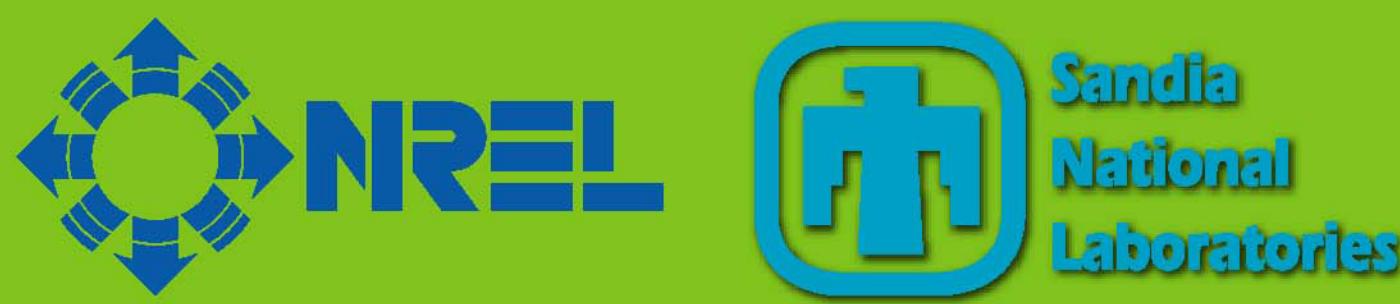
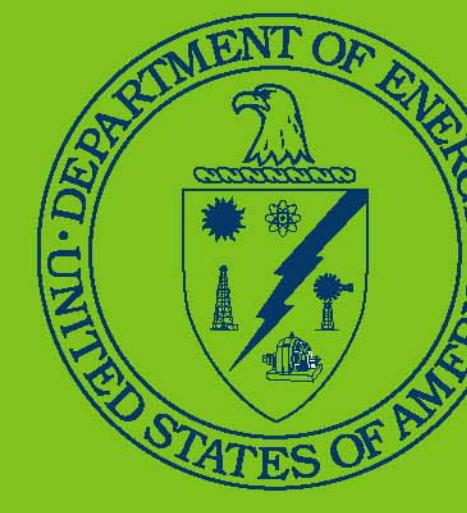


Strategic Planning of Communications and Knowledge Transfer for the Solar Energy Technologies Program



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U.S. Department of Energy
Energy Efficiency and
Renewable Energy
Bringing you a prosperous future
where energy is clean, abundant,
reliable, and affordable

"Promoting and communicating benefits and results are key elements of effective partnering. At the most basic level, technology cannot be transferred from DOE-sponsored research without communications... --2003-2007 Solar Energy Technologies Program Multi-Year Technical Plan

The Program uses communications products and activities to

- Inform and persuade audiences
- Move them to action
- Help overcome barriers for particular technologies and applications.

In our second year of "living the plan," the Communications team is refining the implementation section of the plan to improve project tracking, cost monitoring, and usability. Additionally, the team is working with program management to streamline planning and budgeting processes to maximize our efforts in supporting solar energy research.

Goals

The goal of the Solar Communications Team is to get the right information to the right people at the right time in the right form at the right cost, and to measure the effectiveness of projects and our strategic communications plan.

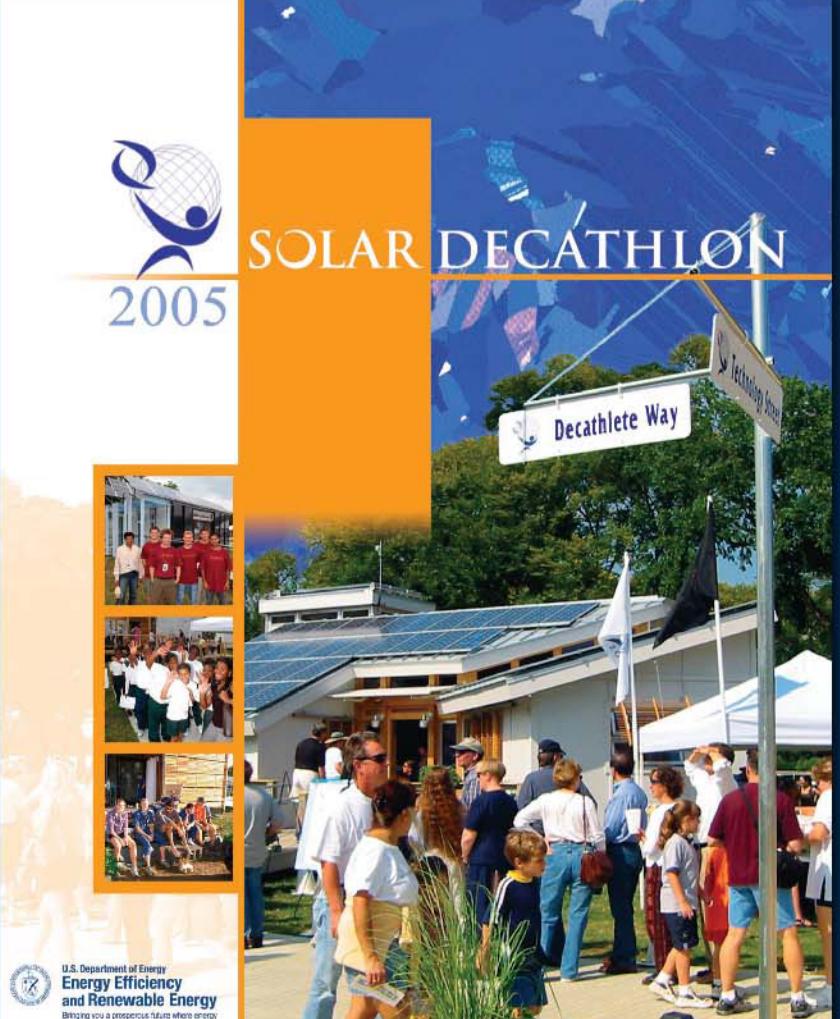
Accomplishments

Our communications efforts in FY 2005 emphasized the following:

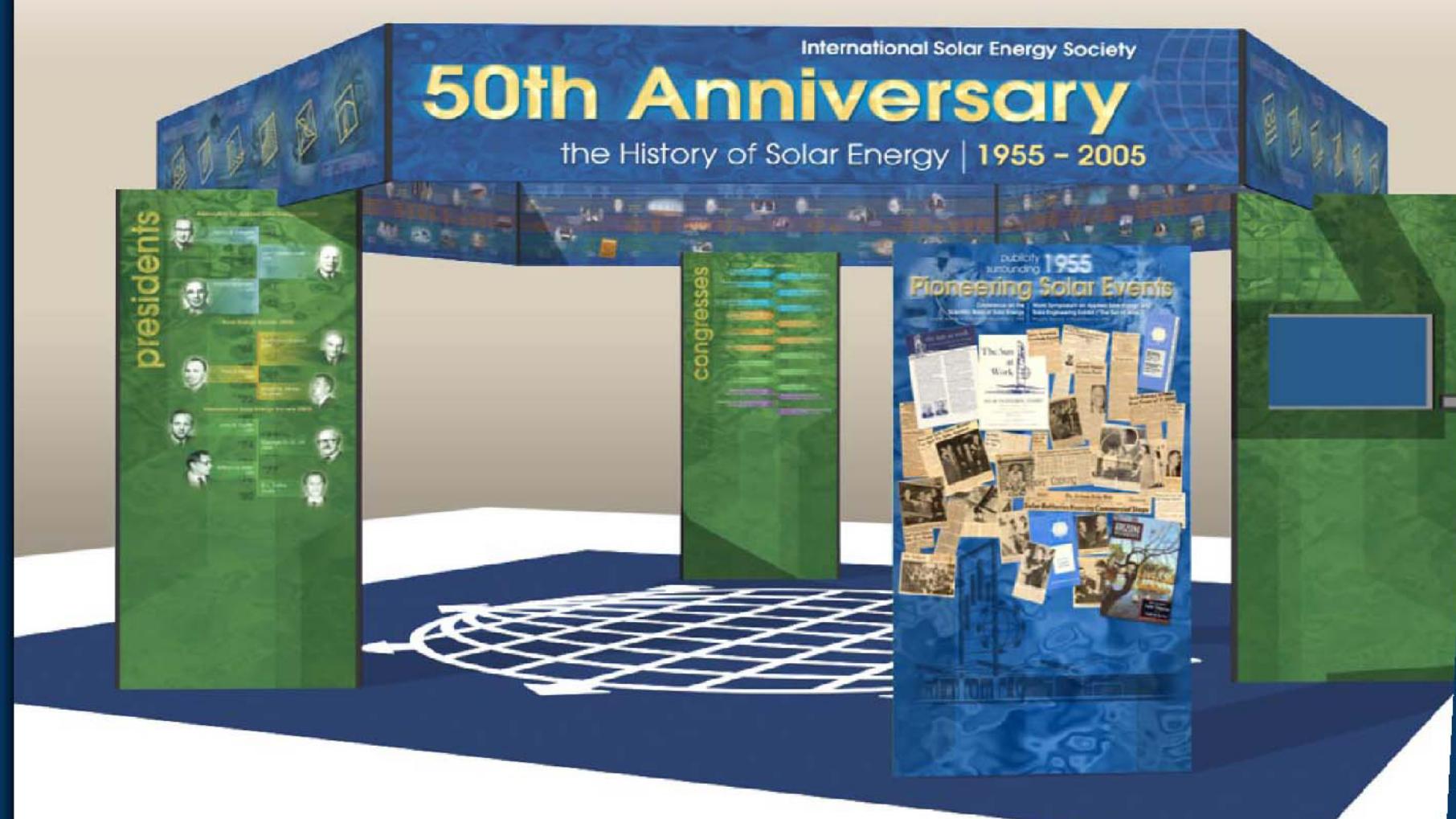
- Reaching the Buildings and Consumer audiences (e.g., Solar Decathlon, International Builders' Show).
- Developing and distributing critical program documents to key stakeholders (e.g., Solar Program Review Meeting Proceedings, Industry Roadmap, second Multi-Year Program Plan).
- Conducting a gap analysis of communications products and evaluating their effectiveness.
- Working with our program management to streamline business processes and improve communications of management expectations.
- Developing and maintaining content for all Solar Program Web sites that reflect research and program accomplishments.
- Representing the interests of the Solar Program at strategic events (technical conferences, meetings, workshops, community events).

Examples of images/success stories:

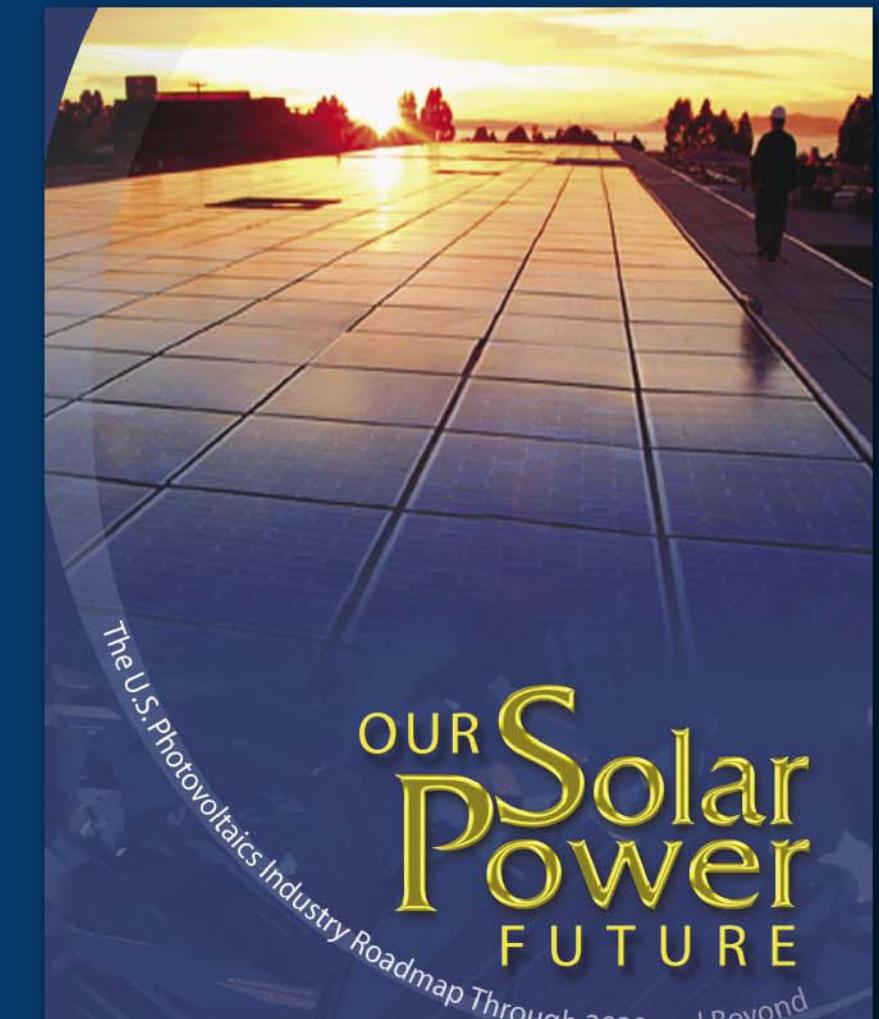
Solar Decathlon



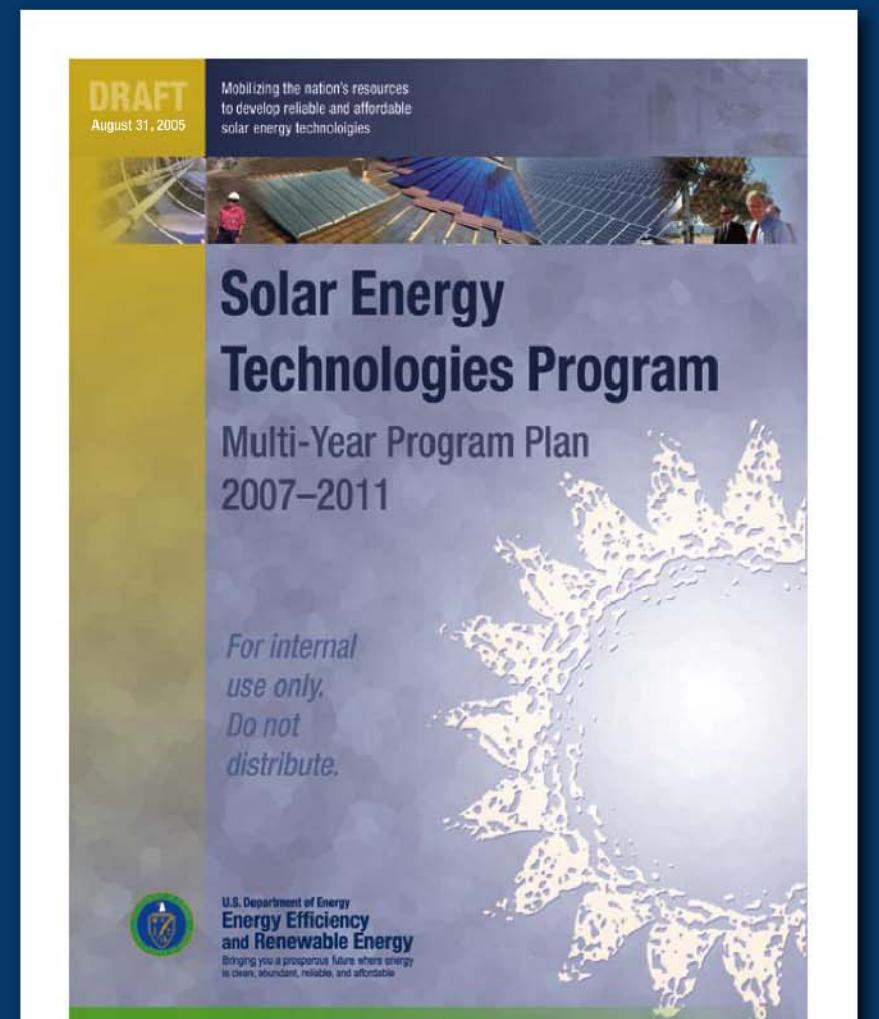
ISES Exhibit



Solar Industry Roadmap



Multi-Year Program Plan



The Solar Communications Team activities are focused within four primary areas: (1) Planning (2) Developing and producing (3) Transferring knowledge (4) Measuring

Planning—strategic planning, budgeting, and aligning with the Solar Program's systems-driven approach.

Looking Ahead:

The team identified several lessons learned regarding the strategic planning process thus far:

- Evaluate our strengths and weaknesses annually to better understand "where we are" and "where we want to be" in terms of the impact we want to have on critical audiences.
- Work more on the "where we want to be" with critical audiences.
- Improve the usability and integration of the implementation plan in our business processes for budgeting, costing, and accountability.
- Develop a metrics process as part of our strategic planning effort to assess how we are doing or how we did.

Developing and producing—creating and producing a variety of communications products, including print, Web, and exhibits, to convey research results and program's messages.

FY 2005 Highlights:

- Completed Proceedings CD-ROM for the 2004 Solar Program Review Meeting.
- Completed Solar Program Annual Report, FY 2004.
- Planned and facilitated communications strategies around the development of the "Home by Design" house for the 2005 International Builders' Show.
- Designed and produced an historical exhibit for the 2005 ISES conference.
- Assisted in producing the 2007-2011 Solar Program Multi-Year Program Plan.
- Assisted in the communications needs and logistical planning for the 2005 Solar Decathlon.
- Assisted in developing the second Solar Industry Roadmap.
- Prepared the IEA PVPS: U.S. National Survey Report with W. Bower of Sandia.
- Contributed to the IEA PVPS: Trends Report.

Transferring knowledge—transferring research and program information (both internally and externally) to critical audiences from the national laboratories and program management.

FY 2005 Highlights:

- Interacted with the builders and consumer audiences at such events as the International Builders' Show, Solar Decathlon.
- Tailored content on the Solar Program Web site to the needs of consumers.
- Produced the PV Manufacturing R&D Project Web site that includes searchable summaries of all subcontracted research.
- Engaged the solar community at IEEE PV Specialists, SEPA's Solar Power 2005 Conference and the 2005 ISES Solar World Congress.
- Collaborated with the international solar industry through participation in IEA PVPS Task 1 (Collaboration and information dissemination committee).

Measuring—measuring and assessing the relationships to critical audiences and the effectiveness of messages to them.

Looking Ahead:
A metrics framework for communications is needed. As we develop the process and collect data, this will allow us to:

- Make better business decisions.
- Measure the impact of messages.
- Show relevance, in the longer term, to research through indirect and direct correlations.
- Control costs.
- Demonstrate our value to our management.



In FY 2005, the team spent a majority of its time in the "implementation" and "assessment" phases. Implementation for the communications team is executing proposed communications projects in support of Solar Program. Assessment is answering "how did we do?" and "how are we doing?" in terms of getting the Solar Energy Technologies Program's message out.

Stages and Levels for Evaluating Public Relations Programs

The Solar Program helps to direct and support advances being made in the solar technologies of photovoltaics, concentrating solar power, and solar heating and lighting. The Program uses communications products and activities to:

- Inform and persuade critical audiences
- Move them to action
- Help overcome barriers for particular technologies and applications.

Metrics and assessment are the data collection and research methods used to measure the relative effectiveness of communications. Metrics are needed to determine whether audiences are hearing, understanding, and acting on the Solar Program messages. In FY 2006, we want to refine a metrics process to measure effectiveness of and assess selected projects and the strategic communications plan. When we measure effectiveness, we will give quantifiable dimension to our efforts. When we assess, we will determine the value and importance to key communication activities for the Solar Energy Technologies Program.

The diagram shows the stages of metric and performance assessment in sequence (from bottom to top). Each stage contributes to increased understanding and adds information for evaluating effectiveness.

Preparation stage—assesses the quality and adequacy of information (outputs) in strategic planning.

Implementation stage—assesses the adequacy of projects implemented (outtakes) to meet communication objectives.

Impact stage—provides feedback on the consequences (outcomes) of the communications program.

*Outputs—a measure of the immediate results of a particular communications activity, e.g., the amount of exposure received.

**Outtakes—measure whether target audience groups actually received, paid attention, and understood the messages directed at them.

***Outcomes—measure whether the communications materials and messages that were disseminated have resulted in any opinion, attitude and/or behavior changes on the part of targeted audiences.