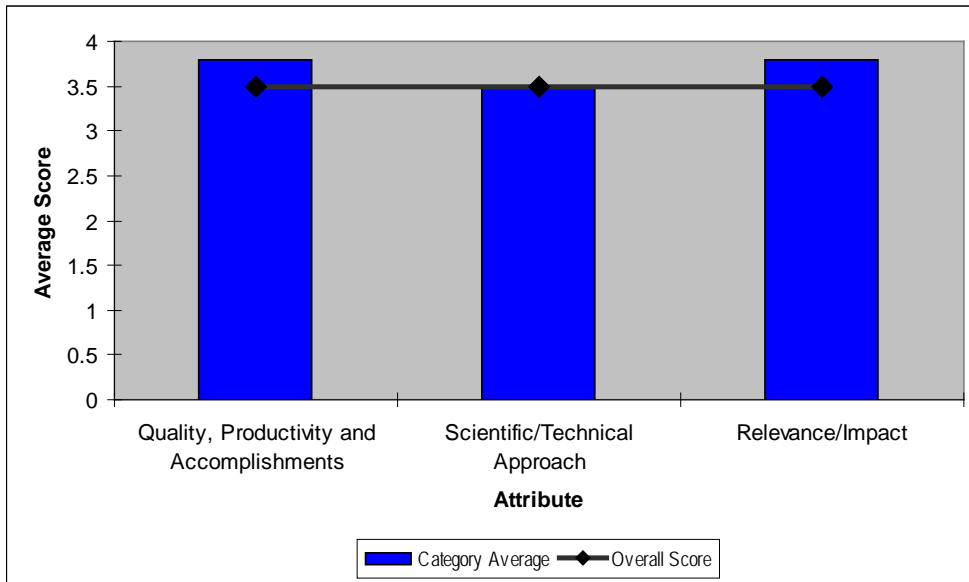


National Solar Tour

Principal Investigator: *Richard Burns, American Solar Energy Society*



This project supports activities of the non-profit American Solar Energy Society (ASES) in planning the National Solar Tour. The National Solar Tour provides the opportunity for participants to tour solar-enabled homes and buildings nationwide.

Quality, Productivity and Accomplishments (Average Rating 3.8)

Rating Comments

- 3.0 There has certainly been good value for the funding provided to the program.
- 4.0 Given the funds provided, there has been a remarkable result delivered. It appears the effort is scalable, the quality and accomplishments merit greater funding to support the work.
- 4.0
 - This project has been very successful in partnering with outside groups to implement the national solar tour. More than 140,000 people nationwide took part in the 2008 tour.
 - The majority of the funds were spent in developing educational materials for tour participants in the form of a free “getting started” magazine with information on how to assess and implement solar for your home.
 - The payback for this project appears to be extremely high relative to the DOE expenditure.
- 4.0 The productivity and quality of this tour is exceptional given the small dollars allocated to the program. The three levels of the classic inverted marketing pyramid are: Awareness, Consideration and Choice. This program moves prospects quickly through the top two levels and gives them a good basis to make an informed choice on their PV integrator.

Scientific/Technical Approach (Average Rating 3.5)

Rating Comments

- 3.0 The program appears to do a good job, given the small amount of funding, in providing support to local teams. There could be value in developing a specific plan for transitioning away from this activity.
- 4.0 A well thought out plan, with automated self service by participants leveraging the budget. Brilliant!

- 4.0 The approach to this project is primarily one of organizing and providing support for local tour organizers.
- 3.0 The technical approach would best be described as “viral” before that term became a common aspect of marketing landscapes. The approach sets up some very interesting opportunities for further development by leveraging some of the more modern tools.

Relevance/Impact (Average Rating 3.8)

Rating	Comments
3.0	Given the cost of the program, it is probably worth continuing. As number of players in the market increases, there will be a time other outreach activities might be more appropriate.
4.0	If this effort could be expanded to twice a year or Commercial Industrial then residential each year I think for a period of time many more could be served. Design professionals are generally in great need of expanding their capabilities and understanding of renewable energy and this sort of program support is excellent.
4.0	This project has been successful in increasing awareness of solar technologies and benefits across a broad spectrum of consumers nationally (in 300 communities). The participant numbers have shown consistent growth over time.
4.0	The impact of a tour such as this is not proportional to the number of visitors, as it crosses the border between the political and economic equations. Truth be told folks do solar for a variety of reasons, many of which are not economic. Economics just helps them justify their choices. When a visitor sees a solar house, it resonates at an emotional level – they “believe” it is good, and thus it becomes part of how they think of the world. And this is why the tour’s impact is way out of proportion to it immediate visited sites; in short, it impacts demand, it impacts the political structure, and it impacts the number of vested owners in the success of the overall PV community.

Overall (Average Rating 3.5)

Rating	Comments
3.0	This is a good way to reach grassroots consumers. The program could be a useful tool to survey the audience [which is done at some level] to provide feedback to other contractors or the PV industry in general. -What types of questions are in the survey? -Have there been trends in the survey responses? -What is the coordination level with the Solar Cities? -Any other materials provided in addition to Solar Today?
4.0	Keep up the good work!
4.0	This project is an excellent low-cost mechanism for increasing broad public awareness of solar energy applications and benefits.
3.0	This program could be epic in proportion to costs with just a few minor tweaks and investments; a heavy investment in systems, a bit more bling-bling on the tour itself, and some basic key messaging.