

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Community Energy Activation Program

Grant Guidelines

November 2025



Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

Community Energy Activation Program

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1 Overview of grant opportunity

Grant Details	
Opening date and time	27 November 2025, 9:00am EDST
Closing date and time	16 February 2026, 5:00pm, EDST
Application outcome date	May 2026
Project delivery timeframe (for successful applications)	From date of Funding Deed Execution until 30 April 2029
Assessment timeframe (for successful applications)	Approximately 6 weeks
Decision-maker	Director, Community and Home Programs
NSW Government Agency	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
Type of grant opportunity	Targeted, competitive Single round
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	A total of \$5 million is available. Individual grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$600,000.
Enquiries	Senior Project Officer, Consumer Energy Delivery Team Email: communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

The Community Energy Activation Program is a NSW Government initiative that aims to educate, empower and connect local communities with support to help them to save money on their energy bills, reduce emissions and access energy saving products and services.

This initiative supports the NSW Consumer Energy Strategy, which commits to:

- ensuring everyone can benefit from and participate in the energy transition
- keeping energy bills as low as we can
- maintaining a stable and reliable energy system, and
- contributing to achieving net zero emissions.¹

¹ Source: [*NSW Consumer Energy Strategy | Powering our people and communities](#) (pg. 13)

A 2023 Energy Consumers Australia survey found that 89% of households want to learn more about reducing energy use and costs.² They are seeking personalised guidance on product or service suitability and the electrification process, highlighting the need for targeted, trusted support.

There are over 70 active community energy groups across NSW, these organisations play a vital role in:

- leading local renewable energy projects
- building trust within communities
- reducing barriers to participation through education and engagement.

Targeted funding will strengthen their impact, enabling them to reach more people and deliver greater benefits across NSW.

This initiative will expand the role of community energy groups as local energy champions, providing trusted guidance on electrification and energy-saving solutions. It goes beyond funding education alone – flexibility is built in, allowing groups to propose approaches that best suit their communities, as long as they align with the program outcomes (see section 1.1.2).

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The Community Energy Activation Program is a \$5 million initiative that funds community energy organisations to broaden their engagement with their local community on the energy transition; boost the uptake of existing programs and resources; and partner with the NSW Government to create a reliable and affordable clean energy future.

The initiative aims to make energy information more accessible and to build consumer confidence in adopting technologies, like solar, batteries and other energy saving technologies, that will lower their energy costs, cut carbon emissions and increase energy independence. By supporting trusted local voices, it helps ensure all NSW consumers can find the information they need, as well as participate in and benefit from cleaner, more affordable energy.

The program's overarching objectives are to:

- reduce barriers for the community to access energy-saving products and services
- support and upscale community-led initiatives
- improve awareness and uptake of existing financial support and energy efficiency programs
- deliver measurable benefits - lower energy bills, reduced emissions, and protect the community against future electricity cost increases.

1.1.1 Source agency

Funding of \$5 million is administered by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

² Source: [2024 Energy Consumers Australia Household and Small Business Energy.pdf](#)

1.1.2 Program outcomes

The expected end of program outcomes for the Community Energy Activation Program are:

- increase community knowledge and capability to take control of their energy use and empower them to take action
 - enhance energy consumers' understanding of the energy saving products and services available to them and encourage uptake
 - expand the number of community groups and households supported by community energy organisations
 - boost the number of community organisations and households accessing NSW energy rebates, incentives and resources
 - establish stronger partnerships between the NSW Government and the community energy sector, resulting in more effective delivery of electrification information and incentives to a broader and more diverse audience
 - capacity building within the community energy groups.
-

1.2 Funding and eligibility

Total grant funding available \$5 million

Minimum application amount \$150,000

Maximum application amount \$600,000

The applicant will need to provide a plan outlining the type of approaches they intend to use within their community, including the community organisations and other organisations they plan to engage or partner with.

1.2.1 Funding

To ensure equitable distribution of funds, there are funding caps on specific activities.

- **Maximum grant funding per application: \$600,000**
Applications seeking the maximum grant amount of \$600,000 are expected to demonstrate a significantly higher level of impact and delivery capacity. This includes having a broader geographic reach and strong, functional partnerships.
- Costs related to **venue hire, catering, and marketing** for workshops and outreach activities are capped at **10% of the total grant amount** over the life of the project
Example: If an organisation runs five workshops, the total spent on venues, catering and promotional materials across all events must not exceed 10% of the total grant amount over the life of the project
- **Administrative costs** are capped at **10% of the total grant amount**
Administration costs include legal fees, insurance policies, audit fees, IT systems and software, that specifically relate to delivery of the funded activities

- A **minimum of 10% co-contribution** is a requirement of this program (see Section 1.5 Co-contribution). Financial or in-kind co-contributions can be included.
-

1.3 Eligible organisations

To be eligible you must be one of the following:

- an Australian based not-for-profit organisation (NFP), which is established with the purpose or mandate to advocate on behalf of household energy consumers and/or to promote consumer energy benefit through community energy initiatives. This includes:
 - recognised peak bodies
 - social enterprises that are registered as a not-for-profit within Australia, or
 - research organisations with a public purpose.
- a community energy group

A community energy group is an organisation whose aims and activities include initiating and/or implementing community energy projects, independently, or in partnership with others.³

Partnerships between organisations are encouraged. However, while two or more organisations can partner to deliver the grant, only one organisation ('lead applicant') should apply on behalf of all partners and will enter into a funding agreement with the NSW Government.

1.4 Eligibility requirements

All applicants must:

- hold an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be a legal entity capable of entering into a legally binding funding agreement
- be financially solvent (this will be confirmed by the program team as part of eligibility checks)
- deliver activities within New South Wales that directly and exclusively benefit consumers and communities in New South Wales
- hold a current Public Liability Insurance policy to the value of at least \$20 million

Note: Any individual or entity – whether internal staff or volunteers, externally engaged personnel, or recruited contractors – intending to conduct consumer guidance or recommendation activities must:

- Be appropriately equipped and authorised to deliver such guidance and recommendations, with access to personnel possessing sufficient expertise to do so competently; and
- Hold a current Professional Indemnity Insurance policy (with an amount not less than \$5 million in respect of any one claim) and have suitable risk mitigation strategies in place.

(Refer to section 1.5 *Eligible activities* for further details.)

³ Source: [Community-Energy-Collective-Impact-Report_2023.pdf](#)

1.5 Eligible activities

Funding is available for:

- conducting energy education/information workshops (including marketing and publishing costs) at local community events, e.g. Parent and Citizen Associations, Rotary, Probus clubs, garden clubs, council events, etc. (noting a cap of 10% of the total grant amount over the life of the project on logistical costs like catering, hall hire, transport).
- adapting and delivering existing energy education/guidance initiatives to engage new and diverse audiences, with a focus on local relevance, and unlocking barriers to action for previously un-engaged consumers.
- providing expert, face-to-face guidance to the community on topics, including but not limited to energy saving products and services, energy efficiency upgrades, electrification, virtual power plants and microgrids (note: additional eligibility criteria apply to this activity).
- delivering other innovative or alternative activities that address specific needs of the local community to enable them to benefit from energy saving products and services, and link consumers with NSW energy incentives and rebates. The alternative activities must focus on the following outcomes:
 - increasing the number of community groups and consumers supported by the community energy organisation
 - empowering energy consumers to take action to better manage their energy use and costs
 - increasing the number of community organisations and households applying for other forms of renewable energy adaptation support from the NSW Government
 - strengthening partnerships between the NSW Government and community energy groups
 - improving the reach and effectiveness of electrification information and incentives.
- producing marketing materials approved by the NSW Government relating to the above activities, and any fees associated with publishing these (note: funding limitations apply).
- staffing costs to deliver the project (inclusive of on costs). Funding of people resources is eligible where it can be demonstrated that the person/s possesses relevant skills and experience to conduct the funded activities.

If the individual is an existing organisation representative, it must be clearly shown that their role within the project is not the result of cost shifting, and the funding will be used to expand the work of the organisation to new cohorts.

Cost shifting is the practice of transferring expenses from one funding source to another order to cover costs for work already being undertaken by the group.

- procuring consultants to assist in upskilling staff and developing tailored resources for the intended beneficiaries

Where funding is used to engage personnel, the scope of engagement must include a component focused on capacity building of existing employees or volunteers within the community energy group. This should involve the transfer of relevant knowledge, skills, or resources to the group to enable continued delivery or development of the initiative beyond the funding period.

- developing strategic partnerships that enable the development of a service that helps more consumers access energy-saving products and services tailored to their needs and budgets.
- renewable energy related activities that would otherwise not occur without the funding from this program, or to expand current activities to a wider audience.
- Up to 150 km of motor vehicle travel may be covered by the grant; any travel exceeding this distance requires prior approval from the department. The amount claimed must align with the rates and record-keeping requirements set by Revenue NSW, as outlined [here](#). This applies to motor vehicle travel only (not air or rail) and excludes any accommodation or meal costs.

Note: This funding does not cover capital purchases or expenditures. However, it can be used to support the negotiation and formalisation of arrangements that enable consumers to access these solutions in ways that suit their needs and budgets.

1.5.1 Beneficiaries of the program

The initiatives should deliver direct benefits to consumers and communities by connecting them with expert energy guidance and linking them to a range of NSW Government support programs. This ensures communities are not only well-informed, but also actively supported in managing their energy use, transitioning to efficient energy solutions and reducing energy costs.

1.6 Co-contribution

You must provide a minimum 10% co-contribution towards project delivery. This can be met through a financial contribution, in-kind support, or a combination of both.

In-kind contribution to support project delivery may include:

- volunteer hours
- venue hire
- use of existing resources, equipment or tools.

The calculation of in-kind contribution must be reasonable estimates based on fair market value and observe the cost and quantity caps outlined in Table 1 below. Documentary evidence is required to substantiate these costs.

Table 1: In-kind contribution figures for the Community Energy Activation Program

Category	Resource	Cost cap per grantee (incl. GST)	Quantity cap
Printed collateral ⁴	Brochures, pamphlets, handouts, signage	\$4,000 per year	Cost cap only
Design services ⁵	Design of printed collateral	\$400 per instance	5 instances across project duration
Venue hire ⁶	Meeting room hire	\$1,500 per event	Cost cap only
Volunteer hours ⁷	Volunteers working on the initiative (excluding the officer engaged for this initiative)	\$70 per hour	35 hours per week

While 10% co-contribution is mandatory, higher applicant contributions may strengthen your application's value for money assessment and may improve competitiveness.

A record must be kept to verify contributions, such as:

- timesheets for volunteer hours
- receipts
- rental comparisons for space
- quotes or invoices for services.

1.7 Ineligible activities

Funding cannot be used for:

- broad awareness campaigns or activities only focusing on creating passive communication materials (e.g., factsheets) without direct community engagement
- activities that do not directly reduce barriers to consumer participation to adopting energy saving products and services, including activities that are primarily linked to unrelated projects or programs run by your organisation
- Direct financial or service support to small businesses or commercial entities — the program is designed to support energy consumers and households, not to subsidise or provide direct assistance to commercial operations. However, you may engage with businesses or commercial entities where this helps facilitate lower energy costs or improved outcomes for household

⁴ Source: [Marketing Materials | Officeworks](#)

⁵ Source: [Design Services | Officeworks](#)

⁶ Source: [Meeting Rooms for Hire in Sydney CBD | Tagvenue Australia](#)

⁷ Source: [Cost of Volunteering Calculator - The Centre for Volunteering](#)

energy consumers. activities that are business-as-usual for the organisation (e.g., staff who are not working on the project, rent or utilities)

- capital expenditure - direct purchase of physical products such as solar systems, batteries or appliances (bulk or otherwise)
 - organisation maintenance and ongoing costs (including, but not limited to software licenses, lease/loan payments, vehicle expenses)
 - reimbursement of expenses incurred before the funding deed was executed by both parties
 - covering existing debts or budget deficits of the organisation
 - attendance at conferences and conference-related travel, and unrelated staff training costs
 - activities that are delivered outside NSW and do not benefit NSW communities.
-

1.8 Ineligible organisations

The following are not eligible to apply:

- individuals, sole traders or businesses
 - local councils
 - government agencies
 - energy product suppliers and retailers
 - organisations deemed financially insolvent
 - unincorporated associations
 - organisations that do not operate in NSW or are based overseas.
-

2 Application process

2.1 Key dates

Opening date and time 27 November 2025, 9:00am EDST

Closing date and time 16 February 2026, 5:00pm, EDST

All applications must be submitted before the closing date. Late applications will not be considered.

These dates are subject to change, and you will be notified of any changes.

2.2 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines. Applications and supporting documents must be submitted through the NSW Government's Grant Management System (GMS).

Steps to apply:

1. complete the application form on the GMS
2. provide all requested information
3. address all the eligibility criteria
4. address all the merit criteria
5. attach all required supporting documents
6. submit your completed application in the GMS.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application after you submit it through the GMS.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au.

If we find an error or information is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you. A record of any additional information provided, for the purpose of assessment of an application for funding, will be kept by the Department.

2.3 Support to applicants

2.3.1 Technical support for the Grants Management System

For assistance using the NSW Government Grant Management System (GMS), please refer to the Help for Applicants guide.

2.3.2 Further information

Additional information and frequently asked questions about the program are available on the Community Energy Activation Program web page.

For questions regarding eligibility, or for assistance with submitting your application online, please email communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au.

3 Selection criteria

3.1 Addressing the eligibility criteria

After the application period closes, the program team will assess each submitted application for completeness and confirm eligibility against the eligibility criteria outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Eligibility and supporting documents

Eligibility element	Example of evidence to confirm eligibility
Applicant is a not-for-profit organisation, including recognised peak bodies, which is established with the purpose or mandate to advocate on behalf of household energy consumers and/or to promote consumer energy benefit through community energy initiatives. This can include a social enterprise that is registered as a not-for-profit within Australia, or a research organisation with a public purpose, OR is a Community Energy Group	Statement of purpose Mission statement Governing document(s) Articles of incorporation Trust deed (if the organisation is a charitable trust) Organisation's constitution Organisation excerpts from the Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission Organisation is listed on Community Energy Map - Community Power Agency or Community Energy Groups Coalition 4 Community Energy
Applicant holds an Australian Business Number (ABN)	Organisation is listed on ABN Lookup and ABN status is not 'cancelled'.
Applicant is a legal entity, financially solvent and capable of entering into a legally binding funding agreement	Organisation can be located on Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) - Register , and the status of the organisation is not 'deregistered'. A separate search of the ASIC insolvency notices database to confirm solvency.
Delivers activities within New South Wales that directly and exclusively benefit consumers residing in New South Wales	Detailed information showing that the community or communities you are targeting through this project is wholly within New South Wales.

Eligibility element	Example of evidence to confirm eligibility
Applicant holds a current Public Liability Insurance policy to the value of at least \$20 million	A copy of your current Public Liability Insurance policy to the value of at least \$20 million
If undertaking consumer guidance or recommendation activities, the applicant holds a current Professional Indemnity Insurance policy, with an amount not less than \$5 million in respect of any one claim	Current Professional Indemnity Insurance policy, with an amount not less than \$5 million in respect of any one claim
If undertaking consumer guidance or recommendation activities, the applicant has experience undertaking these activities and has appropriate risk and liability mitigations in place	Descriptions of past projects (scope, objectives, outcomes) Case studies or project summaries Photos or media coverage of completed work
Applicant is not duplicating funding sought through other NSW programs	Program team will cross-check applications against records of funded projects under the closely linked Inclusive Energy Outreach Program (IEOP) and may request clarification where overlaps are identified.

3.2 Merit assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed competitively against the following criteria and ranked relative to other applications:

#	Merit assessment criteria	Weighting
1	Understanding of intended beneficiaries (groups and individuals) You must: • clearly identify and understand the target communities or groups, including opportunities and challenges specific to the selected beneficiaries • demonstrate your ability to achieve outreach beyond your existing networks • explain to what extent your organisation has strong ties to, and trust within, the local or target community you aim to support through this project • show how your approach is tailored to beneficiary needs, including: ○ engagement strategies and expected reach ○ partnerships with other related energy organisation(s) or how this complements any existing initiatives in the local area. ○ provide details on how the project will engage and reach consumers (e.g. estimated numbers, cohort types, and locations) ○ where relevant, explain how activities delivered to beneficiaries within any of the Renewable Energy Zones in NSW, complementing existing initiatives in the area, rather than overlapping with them.	25%
2	Project design You must: • describe what initiatives or activities you are delivering, including whether it's new or expanded. • provide a clear scope, objectives, timeline, activities, milestones, and expected outcomes.	20%

#	Merit assessment criteria	Weighting
3	Budget and resource allocation You must: • demonstrate how funds will be used to deliver the project and offer value for money • provide a detailed budget, including: ○ justification of requested funds relative to the project purpose, objectives and scope ○ indicative costs including labour costs (noting the funding caps outlined in Section 1.2 of this document) ○ co-contributions.	15%
4	Applicant capacity and capability You must: • demonstrate relevant skills or experience in delivering similar projects • identify delivery risks and mitigation strategies. • provide details on: ○ project team structure, roles and responsibilities ○ partnerships, networks and relationships that will be leveraged to deliver the project	15%
5	Project impact You must: • outline how your initiative(s) will lead to increased capability of consumers to take control of their energy use, reduce bills and empower them to take action • outline how this project will support local communities to increase their understanding of energy saving products and services available to them, and are empowered to take action to access these • confirm how your project will connect with NSW Government programs, capture real-world outcomes, and contribute to organisational or sectoral capability uplift • explain how you will follow up with consumers to understand if they have taken steps to access or use energy-saving products or services. • outline the number and type of consumers targeted by the proposed initiative/s, and how these will deliver meaningful outcomes	25%

3.3 Measuring the impact of your project

You must measure the potential impact of your project to connect with and benefit as many consumers as possible. Refer to Table 3 for suggestions on how to measure outcomes and impact.

Table 3: Example indicators and measurement tools for project impact

	Knowledge and awareness	Behavioural change/Removal of barrier to action	Capability uplift for community organisations and grantees	Access to other support programs
Indicator(s)	End-consumers increased understanding of energy bills, appliance efficiency, and energy-saving practices	Action taken as a result of empowerment through education/guidance/service interaction Bill savings	Ability to deliver services outside of business-as-usual, or extend current services Expanded consumer reach and engagement	Increased uptake of other NSW Government rebate and support programs Effective use of Department developed resources to support program objectives and enhance community outcomes
Measurement tools	Pre- and post-program surveys Quizzes or interactive assessments Focus groups or interviews Case studies/consumer testimonials	Pre- and post-program surveys Pre- and post-program energy bill analysis (captured through survey) Estimated savings based on implemented energy efficiency measures Case studies/consumer testimonials	Attendance records (pre- and post-) Demographic data collection Geographic distribution of participants End-of-program acquittal report (qualitative reports/testimonials from grantee organisation)	Pre- and post-program surveys Case studies/consumer testimonials

3.3.1 Approach to equity of distribution

To support equitable access and ensure fair distribution of resources, the independent assessment panel may exercise discretion during the assessment and grant allocation process. This discretion will be applied in circumstances where:

- multiple applications propose similar activities targeting the same consumer group or geographic area
- there is a risk of duplication of services or oversaturation in a particular location
- the proposed initiative is being delivered for communities located within a designated NSW Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and Urban Renewable Energy Zones (UREZ).

In such cases, the Department may:

- prioritise applications that demonstrate strong community connection, inclusive practices, or organisation capacity-building outcomes
- consider the geographic spread of proposed initiatives to ensure a balanced distribution across NSW
- prioritise applications that clearly show how communities will benefit from the energy transition within REZ and UREZ, especially where proposed initiatives complement - but do not duplicate - existing programs and strategic objectives.

This approach ensures that the program delivers maximum community benefit, avoids duplication, and supports a diverse range of organisations and initiatives.

3.3.2 Other NSW Government funding programs

You may apply for other NSW Government funding programs, including [the Inclusive Energy Outreach Program](#) . However, the **same work cannot be funded by different programs**. Each application must clearly demonstrate that the proposed activities, outcomes, and associated costs are distinct and not duplicated across the programs.

Personnel and time allocation

Where personnel are engaged across multiple projects from different programs, clear and auditable records must be maintained. This includes:

- documenting the specific time allocated to each project, where relevant
- ensuring time records are accurate, up-to-date, and verifiable
- demonstrating that personnel costs claimed under this initiative are not also claimed from any other funding source.

Failure to maintain appropriate records may result in funding being withheld or recovered.

4 Assessment process

Grant applications will undergo a single stage assessment process involving an eligibility check and a merit assessment. Following assessment, applications will be recommended for approval or declined by the decision maker. A summary of the assessment process is as follows:

1. Application submitted
2. Eligibility/completeness assessed by program team
3. Merit assessment undertaken by expert panel
4. Assessment meeting conducted and scores/rankings confirmed
5. Recommendation made to the decision maker for approval
6. Successful/unsuccessful applicants advised

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

4.1.1 Merit assessment

All eligible applications will be assessed against the merit criteria by an independent assessment panel. Ineligible applications will not be assessed.

4.1.2 Scoring system

A numerical scoring system will be used by the assessment panel to evaluate applications. Each assessor's scores will then be combined and weightings applied, to determine the ranking of each application.

4.1.3 Assessment panel

The assessment panel will consist of three members, with expertise in community outreach, social needs and energy-related programs.

We may ask you for additional information, if required, as part of the assessment. You will have 5 business days from the date of our written request for the additional information to be provided. If a response is not received in this timeframe, the application may not be considered for funding.

4.1.4 Decision making

The assessment panel will make funding recommendations to the relevant departmental delegate (refer to Table 5), regarding which applications best meet the criteria and objectives of the program, for their final decision.

Table 4: Decision makers for the Community Energy Activation Program

Funding amount recommended	Departmental delegate (Decision Maker)
Up to \$600,000	Director – Community and Home Programs Branch

4.2 Final decision and notification

You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your application.

Decisions made by the Department are final in all matters, including the:

- approval of applications to progress from the eligibility stage to the assessment stage
- amount of funding awarded
- terms and conditions of funding.

Without limitation, the submission of your application is not, and does not represent, an agreement to negotiate an offer or guarantee funding by the Department. There is no binding agreement between the parties until the funding deed has been fully executed by both parties.

4.3 Feedback on applications

If you wish to receive feedback on your application, the Department will arrange to share feedback from the assessment process. Unsuccessful applicants should email communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au and the Department will provide feedback in writing via email or will arrange a meeting.

4.4 Publication of grants information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published about the grants awarded no later than 45 calendar days after the grant deed takes effect. Relevant information about the grants awarded will be made available on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the grant funding is approved or declined.

When you communicate about the funded project internally and externally, please acknowledge the support received from the NSW Government, as per guidance provided by the Program Team and included in your funding deed. Resources will be made available for grant recipients to use. These must not be altered to remove any logo or disclaimer material included.

All records about this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* (NSW).

5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Funding deed

If your application is successful, we will invite you to enter into a funding deed with the Department.

You will have 10 business days to sign and return the funding deed from the date we send it to you. If you do not return the agreement within the allocated time, we may withdraw your funding offer. The funding deed needs to be signed by someone with the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of your organisation.

The funding deed is not binding until signed by both parties.

Funded activities **must not commence** until the **funding agreement has been signed by both the applicant and the Department**. This ensures that all parties are formally committed to the terms and conditions of the funding arrangement, and that the program is delivered in accordance with agreed expectations.

Any costs incurred prior to the execution of the agreement **will not be eligible for funding** and may not be recognised as part of the funded activity.

5.2 Grant payments

Payments for successful applicants will be released according to the milestones set out in the funding deed. Example milestones are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 5: Funding deed milestones and requirements for successful applicants

Milestone	Amount	Indicative requirements	Approximate timings
Milestone 1	30% of grant amount	Signed funding deed, approved project plan, risk assessment, and budget. A correctly rendered tax invoice for the milestone amount.	May 2026
Milestone 2	30% of grant amount	Submission of a progress report with evidence of delivery of funded activities. A correctly rendered tax invoice for the milestone amount.	April 2027
Milestone 3	30% of grant amount	Submission of a progress report with evidence of delivery of funded activities. A correctly rendered tax invoice for the milestone amount.	April 2028
Milestone 4 (Final acquittal report)	10% of grant amount	Submission of a Final End of Project Report with financial acquittal, approved by the Program Manager. A correctly rendered tax invoice for the milestone amount.	April 2029

* The applicant organisation is responsible for any costs not met by the funding.

Milestone payments will be made on scheduled dates outlined in the funding deed. To trigger the release of each payment, you must first submit the required documentation in the format provided by the Department.

Payments will only be released once the Department has reviewed and approved the submitted documentation.

5.3 Unspent funds

Please note that grant funds can only be spent on eligible activities, as outlined in the executed funding deed. All costs outside of these are to be borne by you, as the grantee.

The NSW Government requires that any unspent funds granted to you under this initiative will be returned to the Department upon the completion of the project. Please contact the Department via email to communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au to discuss the process if this occurs.

5.4 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

If you are a successful grant recipient, you have the following reporting and communication responsibilities. These may vary as the program develops, which will be agreed with you and approved by the program team.

1. Regular progress meetings with the Program Team

(30-minute online monthly meeting, updates to project tracker)

To ensure funded activities are on track and the grantee is supported.

To foster collaboration and share important information and learnings from the projects.

There will be a requirement to keep a project tracker up to date at every meeting to discuss progress, agreed key performance indicators and budget.

2. Progress reports

To outline achievements, barriers to implementation, next steps and a financial report.

To provide evidence of delivery of funded activities completed to date.

3. End-of-project report

Outline overall achievements, barriers to implementation and lessons learned. This will also need to include a certified financial statement.

Once approved by the Program team, an acquittal letter will be sent.

5.5 Knowledge sharing and peer learning opportunities

To support sector-wide capability building and continuous improvement, the Department will facilitate knowledge sharing sessions and peer learning opportunities throughout the delivery of the Community Energy Activation Program. These sessions will provide grantees with a platform to share insights, challenges, and successes from their projects, fostering collaboration and the transfer of knowledge and resources across the NSW community energy sector.

5.6 Evaluation

The Department may use your deidentified application and project data for training, case studies, and evaluations.

You may be contacted by the Department or an authorised third party on the Department's behalf to provide input as part of an evaluation of the Community Energy Activation Program.

5.7 Variations

While requests for variations to projects are available, the Department has limited capacity to carry over funds to future financial years. Therefore, projects should be completed within the timeline in the funding deed.

No additional funding will be considered for projects during implementation unless there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for additional funding will be considered on their merit and if funds are available within the program budget.

Any changes to the awarded project will need to be approved by the Department. Changes to projects and/or funding deeds require a formal variation. You are required to submit a variation request in the Grants Management System (GMS) when:

- Modifying the funding amounts – increase or decrease
- Amending timelines
- Changing project scope

Please note that retrospective variations to the grant agreement may not be considered.

If you think you may need a variation, contact communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au to discuss before submitting a formal request in the GMS.

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Handling complaints

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in its programs. Complaints will be managed promptly and professionally, with all concerns reviewed in line with established procedures. Applicants and stakeholders can expect clear communication, respectful engagement, and appropriate action where necessary to resolve issues.

When submitting a complaint, please include:

- a brief description of your concern and what happened
- the person, agency, or area of NSW DCCEEW involved
- relevant dates, locations, and any reference numbers
- what you would like us to do to resolve your complaint
- your contact details: name, postal address, and phone number
- if you prefer your complaint to be handled confidentially

If you wish to lodge a complaint or raise a concern, please email communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au.

6.2 Access to information

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) gives members of the public an enforceable right to access government information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices). Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

The Department may release any information received or relating to your application in response to a request lodged under the GIPA Act, or as otherwise required or permitted by law.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/resources/government-information-public-access-act-2009-gipa-act>

The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. The Cabinet Office coordinates the preparation of the papers – that is, the return to order. The return to order may contain privileged and public documents. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under Standing Order 52.

6.3 Ethical conduct

You are responsible for ensuring your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Crimes Act 1900 No 40* (NSW). If we suspect or discover you have submitted misleading or false information, we may investigate the application further, and if deemed appropriate, may exclude your application from further consideration.

Applicants must not lobby the NSW Government on an issue related to the selection process or seek to gain an unfair advantage for their application. For guidance on acceptable communication and advocacy of proposed projects, please read the *NSW Lobbyists Code of Conduct*.

The Department reserves the right to disqualify individuals and organisations from participating in this initiative for an identified period. This can be done if the Department believes, on reasonable grounds, that an individual or organisation has engaged in misconduct relating to any part of the grant process. In determining whether to disqualify an individual or organisation, the Department may consider whether they have:

- breached the guidelines for participating in the grant process
- breached a direction given by the Department in relation to the grant process
- been involved in, or is suspected of being involved in, conduct intended to affect the integrity of the grant process.

6.4 Conflict of interest management

The Department will adhere to its conflict-of-interest procedures and all personnel involved in administering or assessing this initiative will be required to declare their interests. All advisors engaged by the Department are required to disclose any conflict of interests they may have in relation to applicants. They may also be excluded from partaking in discussions on those projects.

If you are aware of any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest, you must submit a declaration in writing via email to communityenergyprograms@dcceew.nsw.gov.au. You must comply with any directions from the Department in the management of a conflict of interest.

Mitigation measures are in place to ensure conflicts of interest that may arise during any stage of this grant initiative are adequately addressed. This ensures the grant process is equitable.

6.5 Confidentiality

Unless otherwise stated, any confidential information provided by you as part of, or in connection with, a registration, application or negotiation process will be treated confidentially by the Department.

We may disclose confidential information provided by you to the following parties:

- the Minister or Minister's office
- the NSW Ombudsman and Audit Office of NSW
- Departmental staff, consultants and advisors
- any agency or body of the NSW Government, or any other organisation or individual considered by the Department to have a need or an entitlement to know that information. The need or entitlement to know the information must arise out of connection with the Department's assessment, verification or due diligence of any aspect of an application
- where authorised or required to by law.

We will use reasonable endeavours to ensure that any information received which is marked 'Commercial-in-confidence' or 'Confidential' is treated as confidential. However, all information in or relating to your application will remain subject to the *GIPA Act*.

If we disclose confidential information to any of the above parties, we will inform the party that the information is strictly confidential. We will otherwise only disclose confidential information provided by you with your consent.

6.6 Privacy

The Department is required to comply with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (Privacy Act) and will handle any personal information collected in relation to this initiative in accordance with the Privacy Act and the Department's Privacy Policy.

Information provided in relation to your application will be stored on a database and will only be used for the purposes for which it was collected. This may include disclosure to other government agencies to assess the merits of your application or as otherwise permitted by the Privacy Act.

You must take reasonable steps to ensure any person, whose personal information is included in your application, has:

- been informed about the purposes for which their information has been collected and may be used
- consented to their information being supplied to the Department and other government agencies.

If your application is successful, the details of the project will be published, including but not limited to:

- the name of your organisation and any partnering organisations involved in the project
- project title, description, project location, anticipated time for completion, and total grant amount awarded.

6.7 Provision of false or misleading information

The Department takes fraud very seriously. It is an offence to provide false or misleading information to us. If an individual or organisation provides any information, or makes any representations to us that we consider is, or may be, inaccurate, intended to mislead, deceptive, deceitful, or otherwise fraudulent, we may take the following actions against you as the applicant:

- refuse to consider your application
- refuse to accept or consider any further applications from you
- withdraw your funding offer
- require the return of any received payment that the Department determines the applicant was not entitled to receive in accordance with these guidelines and the terms of the funding deed
- report the matter to the NSW Police.