

RURAL COMMUNITY ENERGY FUND

Assessment Criteria

A good application will demonstrate the following characteristics:

Section 2. Applicant Organisation

Financial Accounts:

Eligible Organisation accounts are active and robust with evidence of good financial management and that the organisation is already working at a level of scale/income consistent with the proposed project or if project represents a scale-up in organisational activity, the organisation is likely to cope.

Group skills

Good size of core project group, with a full range of relevant skills held within the group or with any skills gaps supported by identified partners or other external support. A reasonable amount of time has already been committed by the group to assess the technical feasibility of the project.

Governance:

Decision-making is based on a broad consensus that gives meaningful influence to a wide base of participation across the host community

Legal ownership of project is consistent with community influence and benefit

Legal ownership is consistent with community involvement and benefit, and this 'locked in' (e.g. owned by a Registered Society exclusively serving the host community)

Project Management

Project manager - suitability

A Project manager is in place who is clearly able to offer the time, skills and experience required or Project manager recruitment plans in place which appear to be robust and feasible

Project Partner(s) - suitability

Partners that clearly bring credibility (e.g. local authority, other credible organisation) and have a clear positive contribution to the project

Section 3. Objectives & Impact

Eligible technologies & location

The project is designed to take a specific eligible technology/multi-technology approach through to investment and is focused on a specific site. The proposal is well thought through and structured.

Community Benefit

Community ownership and investment

The project is community led and the applicant organisation has exclusive provision for community benefit enshrined in their governing document. Income and benefits generated will flow to the community where the infrastructure will be located

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Benefits to the host community

Benefits are clearly identified and entirely contained within the local host community and distributed to a reasonable proportion of the local population. This will depend on the scale of the project.

Community engagement

The local community is engaged and supportive of the project, a good level of community engagement has been carried out and there are plans for ongoing engagement and communication activities.

Involvement of other stakeholders

Project has explicit support from all likely major stakeholders

Project Outcomes

The project outcomes are consistent with the RCEF grant aims and requirements.

Project deliverables are clearly stated and will have been able to determine the following:

- Technical feasibility will have been done to a reasonable level, indicating suitability
- Potential grid connection issues will be understood, indicating no major problems
- Some community consultation will have been carried out, indicating no major opposition
- A legal agreement for your use of the site will have been established with the landowner
- Potential planning issues for the site will be understood
- An outline business plan for the next stages of the project, costs and activities that may be supported by a development grant will have been developed.

Section 4. Project Delivery

Project Plan

There is a clear project plan in place supported by a timetable of milestones to develop the project.

Technologies - eligibility

Robust pre-feasibility has identified a preferred technology and the feasibility study is focused on investigating that technology/ies. Feasibility work is focused on renewable energy or low carbon energy facility. The project has sought to learn lessons from past RCEF or other community energy projects.

Project - scale

The project will require planning permission and significant pre-planning development OR generate energy for multiple building installations which have been identified and agreed in principal.

Energy efficiency

Robust assessment has scoped the business case for energy efficiency as part of a multi-technology project AND measures and buildings have been identified

Proposed Feasibility Work

Applicants brief to potential consultant(s)

Applicant's project brief to consultant(s) is specific and detailed with clear outcomes and timelines. The proposal is not speculative AND builds on pre-feasibility/assessment work undertaken to date

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Feasibility Report Structure (provided by potential suppliers)

Supplier(s) Proposal(s) according to the Feasibility Report Structure should include:

- community engagement
- community benefits
- technology
- financial projections
- planning & permitting
- site
- operation and governance
- scheduling

Consultant(s) proposals meets all the requisites of the feasibility report structure AND fully meets the applicants brief AND shows a deep understanding of the brief. Consultants have tailored the proposal to the community, including appropriate technologies, approach, outcomes and milestones.

Permissions and Consents

Land ownership

Ideally the Land owner has committed exclusivity as a minimum (and possibly other legal agreement) with the applicant or Land owner has been engaged and is positive about the project

Consents

Consents, permissions and contracts that the project will need once at a development stage, such as, listed building consent, grid connection, planning permission have been identified and will be investigated during the grant stage.

Risk Management

Key risks have been identified and there is a robust plan to monitor and mitigate risk. The application is supported by a risk register.

Finance

Suitability of chosen suppliers

Consultant(s) are well suited to their work and three quotes have been provided for all work, the applicant has researched and evidenced that the costs are good value.

Quantity of work being done

The proposed plan will enable the project to achieve all RCEF aims, renewable/low carbon energy installation, community ownership and benefit and rural economic benefit.

Cost of work being done by chosen suppliers

The grant request is reasonable and proportionate to the technology type and scale of the project. Costs are sensible and in line with market rates

Grant Payment schedule

The grant payment schedule is staged and enables the group to make progress on project deliverables and demonstrate successful completion of staged work.

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Timescales proposed by the applicant

The timetable is realistic and each stage of the project is proportionate to the technology type and resources available. The ordering of activity is logical.

State Aid

Applicant grant request will not take them over the State aid threshold as no other State aid has been received or is expected. Or, submitted information on State aid indicates that, whilst there is other incoming State aid, the grant will not bring them near the de minimis threshold AND it is very unlikely that their State aid profile will affect their eligibility for further RCEF development grant

Minimum Requirements

In addition, minimum requirements (pass/fail) are:

- The project is based in a rural community – magic map
- The organisation purpose is compatible with RCEF aims
- The project scale is compatible with RCEF
- The proposal focuses on eligible technologies/multi-technology approaches, any innovative projects are replicable and deliverable
- The project intends to involve the host local community
- The project is intended to benefit the host local community
- At least 50% of the project will be community owned