



RECENT Project Key Tips

How to get started with community green energy projects?

Step 1: Identify opportunities and develop a vision for your project

You might already have a pretty clear picture about your project. Good! If you not have done that yet, write your idea down in some clear and easy to understand sentences. Discuss your idea with others and try to find (more) allies.

If you have not gotten that far, a workshop with other interested people is a good way to go. Here, it is important to find a good setting and to be open-minded. Try to find a broad agreement for your ideas and be open for compromises if that makes it easier to make things happen! It is also important to consult with the wider community to ensure that their priorities are supported.

Your vision should be a long-term target, but try also to think about a concrete project which is realistic in the short term. Do not underestimate the workload, start small and smart!

Step 2: Develop your group and the partnership

In most cases you will be a group of people. Agree on roles and rules early, you might even write down who is going to be responsible for what and how you want the more concrete work to be organised.

You also need to find out whether your group included the people who have the right to decide on those activities you want to undertake and those measures you want to implement. If not, start with growing your network, discuss with building owners, business and your local politicians and try to convince them to support your ideas and be part of the process.

Step 3: Pick low-hanging fruits and do not forget about energy efficiency!

It's always best to reduce energy use and increase the building's energy efficiency as much as possible before considering renewable energy. The most environmentally energy is that one that is never used. It's also a way to make homes and other buildings cheaper to run and more comfortable to use. Energy efficiency improvements range from changes to behaviour which cost nothing, to physical improvements that pay-off in short time, like energy saving lighting and loft insulation to those which take longer time like wall insulation.

You might find some low hanging fruits here, which will quickly pay off and which will give you and your group a quick boost of energy by having achieved a success in short term.

Step 4: Getting a good understanding about energy needs

Are you planning an energy conservation projects or one in which you want to supply any concrete building, business or neighbourhood with renewable energy? Then it is important to understand the characteristic energy needs for specific buildings, business or the whole community. What kind of energy is currently used and how much? When is the energy needed, is there any peak load you need to consider (which months or weeks, but think also about peak loads in the morning or evening)?

For a very first overview about the characteristics of a neighbourhood you might do a group walk around with other members of the group and do a concrete list of what kind of buildings, businesses and infrastructure you see. How old are the houses? Can you see or do you know what kind of energy they use? Are there bigger public buildings or bigger businesses with high energy demand?

In some cases, you will need to do a more in-depth analysis, an energy audit. This can be done by experts but if you can not afford start by looking at records of energy use, gas and electricity meter readings and bills, try to get feedback from users and use an energy audit checklist to survey the building, noting observations about insulation, heating, lighting, appliances, water use, which parts of the building use the most energy and where energy is being lost. Based on this analysis, you can assess options for your project and choose a set of actions.

Step 5: Develop an Action Plan

Writing an action plan will help to structure your project and break down the process into small achievable goals. Your action plan should be based on your priorities and your vision, but you should take into consideration all constraints in terms of time and money. It is important to be as concrete as possible and to be clear on responsibilities: who is doing what when and how? How are decisions taken, how is reporting back in the group planned? You should plan for milestones, where you evaluate what has happened so far and if you need to adapt your plan.

Make use of lessons learnt by other community groups – do not reinvent the wheel

Step 6: Celebrating, Reflecting and Communicating

You are for sure enthusiastic about your idea, and so are your partners. But most probably, everything will take longer than expected. You will meet problems you never expected. So do not forget to celebrate even small successes with all your partners!

Use the opportunity to reflect on what you have done so far and if you want to change anything in your future plans.

And do not forget to tell your story! You will inspire other people and help them to avoid mistakes.