

Centre for Sustainable Energy



Advice on making an application for a community based energy project to Awards for All

Introduction

This is a quick guide for helping community based energy projects interested in applying to *Awards for All*; the lottery's scheme for small grants of up to £10,000 (inc VAT).

As far as we know the grants available currently exceed the demand; a rare situation with any grant scheme, but particularly so in the current difficult economic circumstances.

The most important advice to heed is to read through the [Awards for All guidance](#) and make sure you're entirely happy that what you want to get funding for fits their criteria. It may be easier to apply to *Awards for All* than other lottery programmes but it's still time consuming. It will take about 10-15 hours to think it all through, develop a budget, answer every question on the application form, re-write it, and get somebody to check it. If you receive a grant offer the additional paperwork needed can be even more onerous.

The following isn't comprehensive - because it's written with a typical energy related community group in mind; individual circumstances will change each application but this is to give some guidance on how to complete the application.

CSE can also help community groups in our area with bids to *Awards for All*, e.g. our fundraising experts can read and comment on completed drafts.

1. What organisations do they fund?

The programme will fund a wide range of organisations: voluntary or community organisations, school, health body or a parish or town council. So organisations don't have to be a charity, but you'll need to have the following:

- A governing body with at least 3 members
- Your own bank account, they require at least two people to sign each cheque or authorise a withdrawal
- An independent referee who knows your work well but isn't involved in the group or the project.

If you get an award offer they'll ask for proof of these things:

- a copy of your organisation's governing document, constitution or set of rules (if you're not a charity);
- bank statements;
- evidence of cheque withdrawal rules from your bank,
- and latest accounts.

You may also need public liability insurance if you are undertaking any public events.

2. About your project

There are a number of activities or capital items that *Awards for All* won't fund- perhaps the most pertinent to community energy projects are the following:

- You can't ask them to fund your own organisation's salary costs or running costs (but you can sub-contract to another organisation to deliver activities).
- They won't fund items that benefit individuals (for example equipment that is not shared).

For building or land projects they won't fund:

- Land or building projects where the ownership or lease is not in place
- Land or building work costing more than £25k (inc. VAT)
- Feasibility studies for building work costing more than £25k (inc. VAT)
- An organisation making the application that doesn't own the building or land
- Projects that haven't got planning permission in place, where this is an issue
- You will need to be able to spend the money within a year of the grant offer

You might argue that a renewable scheme is not a building project, just an enhancement or an addition to a building, but the grant assessors will probably not see it that way. So with these restrictions in mind the most likely acceptable energy related capital projects include the following:

- Small solar pv installations
- Solar hot water
- Air source heat pumps
- Ground source heat pumps

- Energy efficiency measures (depending on the size of the property this could include solid wall insulation).

But if you're considering any of these remember the restrictions already mentioned (and look at page 9 of the guidelines for a full list); ensure you've based your grant request on written quotes, and ensure that the project has a benefit to the community.

There may also be other activities that you want to run; these could be training, education or outreach projects. Some examples could include running courses on draught proofing, or setting up a project to attract more volunteers from the local community, or providing home energy advice to people in the community at risk of fuel poverty. Remember you can't get funding to pay for an employee of your own organisation to do this but you can get another organisation to help. Items like volunteer expenses, venue hire, travel costs are permissible.

3. Why is your project needed?

Before looking at why your project is needed it would help to understand the *Awards for All* outcomes which are the critical part of the application. Outcomes are the differences that the funding will make. If you're not familiar with outcomes its worth looking at the Big Lottery's guide: (http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_explaining_the_difference.pdf)

Awards for All have 4 outcomes. You must show how your project meets at least one of them to be considered for a grant:

1. People have better chances in life – with better access to training and development to improve life skills.
2. Stronger communities – with more active citizens working together to tackle issues within the community.
3. Improved rural and urban environments – which communities are able to better access and enjoy.
4. Healthier and more active people and communities.

You will need to say why your project is needed by describing the problems or issues your group aims to address. Whilst reducing carbon emissions is a valid need and worth mentioning, it isn't likely to be sufficient on its own, as it doesn't fit neatly into one of the four outcomes.

Think of the other issues that your project will help with that are related to the outcomes above: is the community centre too cold or are the fuel bills too high, or maybe there aren't many people in the community with the skills needed to take forward some of the community's carbon reduction

plans. These project needs flow naturally into a project that will help meet the second and third outcomes above.

You will need to show the evidence for this need. This requires some sort of needs assessment to identify the existing problems in the community, how bad these are, the services available and the needs not being met. Look for local data and any relevant local or national statistics and reports (e.g. CSE's [fuel poverty indicator](#); local council planning documents; [neighbourhood statistics](#) etc). Most importantly you must show that you have consulted with as many of the people who will benefit from your project as possible, that you have listened to what they have said and that your project reflects their concerns. This makes sense not only in terms of getting funding but your project will be much stronger if it reflects the needs of the local area. Your plans are also much more likely to succeed if you have the backing of local residents, to gain planning permission as well as ongoing support for future low carbon projects in your community.

If your project aims to provide home energy advice to residents in your area, make sure you can show that residents are worried about increasing fuel bills, that there is evidence that your area has many households in fuel poverty, whether there is a particular group who is suffering the most, that people aren't currently accessing energy efficiency grants and that there aren't other services in the area that could provide these services.

4. Promotion & involvement of the whole community

You'll need to describe how you will promote and publicise the project. The reason for this becomes clear in the next question: How will your project actively seek to involve as wide a range of people as possible?

More points are given to applications that seek to involve as wide a range of people as possible. This makes your consultation with the local community even more pertinent as it should provide an opportunity to ask people who have not been involved before if they would be interested in the project.

5. Meeting the outcomes

More points are given to applications that meet more of the outcomes. However most community energy projects will only be able to meet the following:

- 2. Stronger communities – with more active citizens working together to tackle issues within the community.*

You might claim that your project will get more people involved in improving a local community building or working towards achieving lower carbon emissions, or that the project will meet a

current unmet need to get more people involved in community matters in your area. Or your project may be targeting a particular group (older people or younger people) who aren't currently participating in environmental activities or understand the issues. You'll need to show how this will happen and it should flow from the needs identified earlier.

3. *Improved rural and urban environments – which communities are able to better access and enjoy.*

Your project may improve a community building, making it warmer in the winter, reducing its fuel bills or generating an income so that the costs of using it can be reduced for all members of the community.

Be specific about how many people will benefit and in what ways.

If your project also involves other environmental activities such as recycling, gardening or conservation then your project could help achieve some of the other outcomes. But it is much better to have two very strong outcomes than four weak ones.

6. How is it assessed?

The assessors will look at the following factors to help reach a decision:

- the need for your project
- who will benefit
- how you will achieve their outcomes
- if they have funded you before
- your organisation's income
- the total project cost.

When they do not have enough funds to support all the applications they have a scoring system which gives more points to applications that:

- show strong evidence of need
- seek to involve as wide a range of people as possible
- meet more of their outcomes
- are from organisations that *Awards for All* has not funded before
- are from organisations with a smaller annual income

- are for smaller projects.

We think that *Awards for All* does not need to apply this scoring system at the moment as the demand for their grants is not greater than the total funding allocated to the programme. However this may change as funding gets more and more competitive.

Finally, it is worth noting that CSE can help groups to deliver their *Awards for All* project. We have a range of skills and experience of supporting community groups and can quote to provide a number of services that *Awards for All* may fund, such as an audit or some community training. A summary of our community support services, including training, can be downloaded [here](#).

Irrespective of our involvement in the project delivery, CSE is willing to help bid through advice and comment on completed drafts.

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