



Frequently Asked Questions

Powering Communities Program

Overview

1. What is the Powering Communities Program?

The Powering Communities Program supports the Australian Government's commitment to assist community organisations to lower their energy bills and improve their energy efficiency practices. The program will fund small projects in each of the 151 Federal electorates to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption.

A total of \$10.2 million is available for the program. Each electorate will receive up to \$67,700 for allocation to successful applications. A maximum of 12 projects will be funded in each electorate.

2. What grants are available?

Under the program, the grant funding for each project will be up to 100 per cent of eligible project costs.

- The minimum grant amount is \$5,000
- The maximum grant amount is \$12,000

You are responsible for any remaining eligible project expenditure above the maximum grant amount awarded plus any ineligible expenditure.

3. What is the department's role in the assessment of applications?

We will assess all applications against the Powering Communities Program [grant opportunity guidelines](#). We will assess your application for completeness and against all the eligibility criteria. To be recommended for funding, your project must meet all eligibility criteria, provide value for money and be considered a proper use of public resources.

The Program Delegate decides which grants to approve taking into account the eligibility assessment by the department, information you provide, and the availability of grant funds.

4. Will the department contact me with questions relating to my application?

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submitted application after the application closing time.

5. What are the community consultation arrangements within my electorate?

Community consultation is a critical element of the program. Members of Parliament (MPs) must establish a community consultation committee, or engage an existing community consultation committee to identify potential applicants and projects within their electorate. The identified projects must be consistent with the program's intended outcomes and eligibility criteria.

6. Are co-contributions required?

No, co-contributions are not required as the grant will fund up to 100 per cent of eligible expenditure up to the maximum grant value (\$12,000). The applicant must be able to fund any additional expenditure not covered by the grant and also any ineligible expenditure costs.

Eligibility

7. How is a not-for-profit organisation defined?

A not-for-profit organisation is an organisation that is not operating for the profit or gain of its individual members.

For the purposes of this program, not-for-profit organisations must also be an incorporated legal entity with a current Australian Business Number (ABN).



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8. What types of not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply?

If your organisation is not an incorporated not-for-profit entity you are not eligible to apply. However, you may be able to nominate a project sponsor that is an incorporated not-for-profit entity that could apply on your behalf provided they also meet the program's eligibility criteria.

Any incorporated not-for-profit organisation that is not owned by a Commonwealth, state or territory government, is eligible to apply.

Examples of not-for-profit organisations may include:

- police and citizen youth clubs
- child care centres
- surf clubs
- local aged care bodies
- non-distributing co-operatives
- companies limited by a guarantee
- Indigenous not-for-profit corporations
- some local emergency service volunteer organisations.

9. What if I received a previous grant under Energy Efficient Communities program?

Organisations that received grants under the Energy Efficient Communities program are not eligible to receive a Powering Communities Grant.

10. Are unincorporated not-for-profit organisations eligible to apply for a grant?

Not-for-profit applicant organisations that are unincorporated are not legal entities and therefore not eligible to apply. However, these organisations may be able to nominate an eligible project sponsor that is a legal entity that could apply on their behalf.

If an unincorporated organisation identifies such a project sponsor, this organisation would apply on your behalf. The project sponsor must be an incorporated not-for-profit entity that meets all of the eligibility criteria. The project sponsor would also need to be nominated by the MP's office, submit the grant application and enter into

the grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

11. Are trusts eligible to apply for a grant?

No. However, an incorporated trustee can apply on behalf of a trust with responsibility for a community asset or property. You will be required to provide relevant trust documents.

12. Are churches eligible to apply for a grant?

Generally, churches are unincorporated entities and therefore ineligible to apply. However, churches can apply through a project sponsor that is eligible, such as their incorporated diocese or an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust that holds church property.

Before applying, please check that your ABN is listed as incorporated via [ABN Lookup](#). If your diocese ABN is listed as unincorporated in ABN Lookup but your ABN/organisation was historically incorporated under a particular legislation, you must provide evidence of incorporation to confirm eligibility.

13. Can funding be used to improve the energy efficiency of a leased building?

Yes, funding can be used on a leased building with the consent of the building or facility manager.

14. Can I apply for a project that has already started?

We will not fund projects that you have already started or where contracts are already in place at the time of application. Any project expenditure incurred prior to the date you submit your application is not eligible.

15. When can I start my project?

You may start your project from the date you submit your application online.

However, if you choose to start your project before you enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth, any costs incurred are at your own risk.



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You will not receive any funding if your application is unsuccessful.

16. Is installing building insulation an eligible activity?

No. Installing or upgrading building insulation is not an eligible activity.

17. Why do solar products and installers need to be approved by Clean Energy Council (CEC)?

To be an eligible activity, solar PV panels and inverters and lithium ion battery products must be Clean Energy Council (CEC)-approved products. Solar and battery systems must be designed and installed by CEC-accredited installers. You can find [approved products](#) and [accredited installers](#) on the CEC website. These requirements have been set so that products meet relevant Australian Standards and installers have appropriate training.

18. Can I apply if I received funding under the Stronger Communities Program?

Yes, you can apply if you received funding under the Stronger Communities Program, provided that your Powering Communities Program application is for a different project.

However, you are not eligible if you received a grant under the Energy Efficient Communities Program, even if that was for a different project.

19. Can Section 355 Committees (NSW) apply for a grant?

No, section 355 committees are not eligible as they are part of local councils, they are not a separate entity and are not incorporated entities as required under 4.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines. Further, section 355 committees are part of NSW local government bodies. Government bodies are specifically listed as ineligible under 4.4 of the guidelines.

20. Can two applications be submitted, for the same premises?

Yes. However, to be eligible, each applicant and each project must meet all eligibility requirements. Two grants cannot fund the same project.

To be recommended for funding, all projects must meet all eligibility criteria, provide value for

money and be considered a proper use of public resources.

21. Are projects on local council property eligible?

Local government bodies such as councils are not eligible to apply for a Powering Communities Grant. Eligible not-for-profit community groups that occupy a council-owned building can apply for a grant. If the applicant does not own the building/facility where the project is to be located, the application must include a letter of consent from the building or facility owner/manager.

22. How do I determine my project period?

When calculating the duration of the project, you should factor in additional time for product sourcing and purchasing delays, obtaining approvals, scheduling volunteers, contracting tradespeople, possible weather and seasonal delays, COVID-19 and any other unforeseen circumstances that may prevent you from completing your project on time.

When determining the length of your project you should be aware that your project expenditure must be incurred between the project start and end dates to be eligible.

You must also complete your project no later than 30 June 2022.

How to apply

23. How do I submit an application?

The program is only open to applicants that have been invited to apply by their local federal MP following community consultation processes.

MPs will invite selected applicants to apply. Applicants will submit an application via the portal on business.gov.au. You must not forward your invitation to the online grant portal to anyone else.

24. Can I submit my application as soon as I get an email from my MP?

You must wait until the program is open for applications at 10:00am Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 1 July 2021.



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Once the program is open and you have received an email with an invitation to apply you can submit your application online via the grant portal. If you have previously used the grant portal, you can use the same account with the same sign-in details.

25. To be eligible, does the applicant's organisation need to be located within the electorate of the nominating MP?

To be eligible, it is the project that must be located in the nominating MP's electorate, regardless of the address of the applicant's organisation.

26. Can I submit separate projects from the same organisation in multiple electorates?

Yes. However, each project must be nominated by the local MP in each federal electorate as a result of the community consultation process. Projects must be located in the same electorate as the MP nomination.

27. What happens if there are technical difficulties when I try to submit my application?

If you experience technical difficulties when trying to submit your application you can contact us on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

28. When do applications close?

All applications must be submitted by 5:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) 20 September 2021.

MP nominations close on 6 September 2021.

29. What types of projects are suitable for funding?

The program funds projects to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use.

The following projects are a guide to types of suitable projects.

- energy generation projects including solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage
- new split system air conditioners to replace some older types of units.

- solar and heat pump bathroom and kitchen hot water heaters to replace older units
- replacement of non-LED lighting with LED lighting
- controls upgrades for airconditioning and lighting
- appliance replacements including induction cooktops and commercial refrigeration
- other activities including energy audits and installing metering equipment.

For a full list of eligible activities, refer to Section 5.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines.

30. If my eligible project costs exceed the maximum grant amount of \$12,000, will I receive the maximum available grant amount of \$12,000?

MPs determine how grant funding will be allocated across projects in their electorate. The amount of grant funding allocated to a project is at the discretion of your MP (between the minimum grant amount of \$5,000 and maximum grant amount of \$12,000).

If your eligible project costs exceed the amount of grant funding awarded, you are responsible for those costs.

An invitation to submit an application by your MP does not guarantee that your application will be successful. Your application will be assessed by the department for completeness and against all the eligibility criteria.

31. How do I withdraw my application?

If you want to withdraw your application, contact your MP and notify the department by calling 13 28 46 or via the program's mailbox: PCP@industry.gov.au

If you have been nominated but do not want to proceed with an application you must inform your MP immediately.

32. Are there any mandatory documents that I need to provide?

Section 6.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines lists the attachments we require. The application form will include instructions on the required supporting documentation. These may include:



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- evidence of your not-for-profit status
- at least one quote(s) to validate your major project costs. Quotes that relate to solar projects must identify the make and model of any major equipment purchases, such as solar PV modules, inverters and batteries. Quote(s) must be dated on or after 30 March 2021 and for eligible activities listed in Section 5.1 of the grant opportunity guidelines.
- letter of consent from the building or facility owner/manager (where applicable)
- a project plan
- trust documents if applicable.

You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

33. Do I need to provide quotes?

Yes, you are required to provide a quote to validate your major project costs

Quotes that relate to solar projects must identify the make and model of any major equipment purchases, such as solar PV modules, inverters and batteries.

Quote(s) must be dated on or after 30 March 2021.

34. How do I account for GST in my project costs?

The application will ask you to provide your eligible project cost over the life of the project.

When calculating the total project cost, if you are registered for GST:

- you should remove the GST components of the project costs and provide the GST exclusive amount, and
- where applicable we will add GST to your grant payment and provide you with a recipient created tax invoice.

When calculating the total project cost, if you are not registered for GST:

- you should provide the cost of your project including the GST components (GST inclusive).

35. Can I provide extra information to the department once my application has been submitted?

No. However, during our assessment of your application, we may contact you if we require additional information or clarification.

Assessment

36. How will my application be assessed?

The department assesses all applications. We will assess whether:

- you are eligible to apply
- you are an eligible entity
- you have an eligible project to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use
- your project has at least \$5,000 in eligible expenditure.

Funding decision

37. When will I be advised about the outcome of my application?

We will assess applications progressively. Funding decisions will be provided on a continuous basis throughout the duration of the program.

All assessments are expected to be completed and grants awarded by the end of December 2021. However the timeframe for finalising the assessment process will depend on the quality and quantity of the applications.

We will provide advice on the outcome of each application via the on-line grant portal. Your MP may also contact you to discuss your project.

38. What happens next if I am successful?

If you are successful, you must enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. We may use an approval letter grant agreement which



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along with your application, forms a grant agreement.

We consider the agreement to be executed (take effect) from the date of our approval letter.

We will tell you in this letter of any particular conditions that may apply to your grant funding.

We may use an exchange of letters grant agreement when we need to clarify or amend any details in your application form.

Details of your project will be listed on GrantConnect.¹

This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project
- description and aims of your project
- amount of grant funding awarded
- Australian Business Number
- organisation location
- your organisation's industry sector.

We publish this information to ensure open access to non-sensitive data within Australian Government agencies to enable greater innovation and productivity across all sectors of the Australian economy.

Payment and reporting

39. Am I required to report on the progress of my project to the department?

You will not be required to provide progress reports but you must provide an end of project

report on completion of your project. We will provide a template for this with instructions on how to complete and submit the end of project report in the grant portal.

When you submit your end of project report you will need to:

- provide photographs of your completed project activities
- be able to identify the total eligible expenditure incurred for the project
- include a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement
- report any underspends of the grant money.

You are also required to keep records of your project for two years. You may be required to provide them to us for evaluation upon request (see Section 11 of the grant opportunity guidelines).

40. When are grant funds paid?

Grant funding will be made in a single up-front payment upon execution of the grant agreement. You will be required to report how you spent the grant funds at the completion of the project.

Further information

41. Need more information?

For more information, visit business.gov.au or call 13 28 46.

We may update this document from time to time to add further information, where required.

¹ <https://www.grants.gov.au/>