Grant guidelines and assessment process

To be considered for a grant, applications must be submitted through the AusNet Energy Resilience Community Fund (ERCF) grants portal.

Round one opens at 11am on Monday 29 July 2024

Closing dates
- Major Grants – Initial proposal by 5pm 23 August 2024. Full application by 5pm, 20 September 2024
- Energy Education and Literacy Grants - 5pm 23 August 2024
- Energy Resilience Grants - 5pm Friday 23 August 2024

Contact us

For further information or clarification on the application process, please contact the ERCF manager Kim Sullivan before submitting your application

p: 0499 781 580

e: ERCF@ausnetservices.com.au.

Our grant programs

The ERCF has three grant programs:

- **Major Grants** - $50-500k per grant
- **Energy Resilience Grants** – $5-50k per grant
- **Energy Education and Literacy Grants** – $5-25k per grant

These include funding for physical and mobile energy resilience assets and education, awareness and literacy programs to help build and strengthen community energy resilience, and help communities prepare for and recover after a severe weather event or outage.

By negotiation, we may also fund eligible projects that who fall outside the funding rounds or broader eligibility criteria.

Due to the expected high volume of applications, if an application meets the eligibility criteria but is unsuccessful in a funding round, it may be considered in future rounds.

For more information or to discuss your project or application, please call our ERCF manager Kim Sullivan on 0499 781 580, or email ERCF@ausnetservices.com.au.

Major grants

Funding amount: $50k-$500k per grant

Examples of what we may fund, include:

- community hubs – 'shower and power' centres
- mobile assets that can be used in various locations – for example, mobile shower facilities or major generators powering sections of a main street
- community batteries that fit with our network considerations
- larger solar and storage solutions for single premises or facilities
- smaller scale generation and storage over multiple facilities, such as community organisations that support residents over several locations or buildings, or a small business wanting to support multiple members to become more energy resilient.

You can apply for full or part funding, if funding has been secured from other sources.

How to apply

Applying for a major grant is a two-stage process:

- Stage one - Initial proposals must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 23 August 2024. Initial proposals must undergo a technical review to ensure the project:
    - o   has been properly scoped and costed
    - o   is feasible and deliverable
    - o   has considered all technical requirements and electricity network considerations.
- Stage two – If we approve the initial proposal, we'll ask you to submit a full grant application by Friday 20 September 2024

All applications must be submitted through our grants portal. We'll let you know the outcome of your application in the week commencing 11November 2024.

Energy Resilience Grants

Funding amount: $5k-$50k per grant

Examples of what we may fund, include:

- generators, solar and storage solutions, backups for critical businesses or sections of main streets
- generator-powered mobile facilities, such as cool rooms, kitchens or showers to support a community during a power outage or emergency
- upskilling or training technicians to install energy resilience solutions in their local communities.

How to apply

Submit an application through our grants portal by 5pm on Friday 23 August 2024. We'll let you know the outcome of your application in the week commencing 20 September 2024.

Energy Education and Literacy Grants

Funding amount: $5-25k per grant

Examples of what we may fund include:

- learning and development resources, multi-media, communications and promotional campaigns to educate community members about energy and using it wisely
- resources and tools that help communities prepare for and respond to an electricity outage or reliability issue– i.e. how to prepare for and where to go during an outage or severe weather event, and what support services are available in their local area
- short courses or programs on maintaining energy resilience equipment such as generators
- allocation for specialists to deliver energy education or resilience programs.

How to apply

Submit an application through our grants portal by 5pm on Friday 23 August 2024.

We'll let you know the outcome of your application in the week commencing 20 September 2024.

Who can apply

Funded projects must be located within our electricity distribution area, and clearly improve or increase community energy resilience for their communities. To check if your project falls within our network visit the Find your energy distributor website.

Eligible organisations include:

- councils in AusNet's electricity distribution network for projects within our electricity distribution network
- small businesses and regional peaks and chambers
- community and charitable organisations including social enterprises
- community energy foundations
- sole traders may apply with a valid ABN and an annual turnover of $10m or less
- applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to deliver the project within the specified budget and timeframe
- organisations do not need to have DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) or TCC (Tax Concession Charity) status to apply Please refer to individual grant streams for specific eligibility

- if your organisation is not based in our electricity distribution network but delivers community energy resilience projects within our network, you may be eligible. Please speak with the ERCF manager before submitting an application.

What we won't fund

- Residential energy upgrades for individuals or households.
- Insulation or high-efficiency window glazing.
- Heating or cooling systems.
- Feasibility studies.
- Projects that duplicate an existing program or service.
- Ongoing or recurring funding.
- Other categories, at our discretion.

How we assess applications

Your application will be evaluated and weighted against ERCF objectives and criteria that consider:

- how the project will build or strengthen community energy resilience
- the target beneficiaries, how broad the reach and impact is and any ongoing benefits
- where the project will be located or implemented
- community impact and how success will be measured
- if the project will be locally-led and delivered
- the completion date and key milestones
- evidence of the project's financial viability, including itemised breakdown of costs and any other funding or project partners

We take a rigorous, fair and transparent approach to assessing applications and carefully consider if there's a strong alignment between project goals, ERCF objectives and community need.

If you have any questions about the application process, please speak with the ERCF manager *before* submitting your application.

All information in your application, including details about delivery partners, must be accurate. We suggest involving your delivery partners in the application process.

Applications are accepted until the closing date

- Make sure your application is accurate and complete. We may begin assessing your application as soon as you submit it and once an application is submitted, there can be no further changes.
- The assessment period is six weeks after the closing date for Major Grants, and four weeks for Energy Resilience Grants and Energy Literacy and Education Grants.
- A rigorous, fair, and transparent approach is taken to assessing applications to ensure careful consideration and weighting against the criteria, strong alignment between project goals and ERCF objectives and community need.
- Careful and considered assessment will ensure grants are awarded to projects that have clearly articulated how they best meet the needs of their communities and have the greatest potential for impact and success.
- We will answer any questions until the closing date.

The assessment process

- The ERCF manager reviews all applications to determine eligibility.
- Eligible applications will be referred to our Evaluation and Assessment Committee (EAC) who will review and assess it against the stated criteria and make funding recommendations.
- Funding recommendations are referred to the independent external Advisory Panel that includes professionals and experts from across the business, community and energy sectors.
- The Advisory Panel reviews funding recommendations to ensure:
    - the assessment process is fair and transparent
    - funded projects will meet community need and be impactful
    - communities across our electricity distribution are demographically and geographically well represented.
- Funding recommendations are submitted to our executive team for approval.

Notification of outcome

- We'll notify all applicants in writing of their application's outcome. Notifications will be sent approximately six weeks after the Energy Resilience and Energy Education and Literacy Grants close, and eight weeks after the Major Grants close.

Grant agreement

- Successful applicants must submit a signed Funding Agreement accepting the terms and conditions of the grant, including any reporting requirements.
- An invoice must be submitted with the signed Funding Agreement.
- We will publish an external report of successful applications to stakeholders through our communication channels.
- Successful applications agree to acknowledge AusNet in all references to the grant funding, including in any marketing and communications activities and materials.

Grant completion dates and acquittal

For Major Grants, the terms and conditions of your grant agreement will detail your acquittal and reporting obligations in line with your project timeline, including any key reporting dates. The terms and conditions for Major Grants grant agreements will vary depending on the individual project, acknowledging the complexity of delivering large energy resilience solutions. An estimated completion date must be discussed with us and included in the initial proposal and application.

For Energy Resilience Grants and Energy Education and Literacy Grants, funds must be delivered within 12 months of receiving funds.

We want to know:
- the project was delivered in line with what was outlined in your application
- what the final achievements or results were
- did you have to change your approach or plans from your initial application
- what impact is the project already having and what you expect the long-term impacts will be
- confirming the grant money was spent in accordance with terms and conditions set out in the grant agreement

- good news stories about the positive impact your project is having in the community - with pictures and videos if possible.
- We would also love to know how your project is going and may ask you to submit a brief quarterly progress report.
- Recipients will need to provide project updates and complete an acquittal report at the end of the project. Specific obligations for each grant stream will be detailed in the grant agreement
- Any variations to the budget or deliverables of the project need to be discussed with AusNet.

Budget

We need to see how your project will be costed, including contingency allowances, and that it can be delivered on budget and on time. This also includes any other confirmed funding sources or in-kind support.

Your organisation, or the figures outlined in your budget, do not need to be audited as a requirement of applying for or receiving a grant.

You can choose to include quotes at the application stage. As long as you carefully and clearly identify all costs and confirmed additional funding sources. Funding must only be used for the purposes stated in the Funding Agreement.

Delivery Partners

You must include details about any delivery partners, including any past projects they have been involved in.

Collaborative projects

We strongly encourage collaborative applications that extend the reach and impact of the project or initiative, including those:
- with multiple funding sources or partners (including cross-sector partnership)
- requiring gap funding to deliver. Other confirmed funding sources must be identified
- benefiting multiple organisations or locations and facilities. For example, a peak body wanting to install solar panels and batteries for members (community/charitable organisation or small business members) for several community or small business facilities.

You must demonstrate the role of any other partners and identify and confirm their capacity to deliver other funding sources.

Innovation

What is your project's unique point of difference?

We strongly encourage projects that look at new ways to solve old problems, introducing new approaches, technologies, or methodologies that will achieve community energy resilience. As long as the project meets the ERCF eligibility criteria and objectives we will consider it.

Required documentation

Before you submit your application, make sure you have uploaded any supporting documents.

The documents you may need to provide are:
- project plan and description
- technical requirements and considerations
- overview of your communications and engagement approach and plan
- delivery and implementation schedule and quotes, if applicable
- budget with itemised costs, including the amounts of any additional funding and in-kind support.

Please name each document clearly with your organisation's name and submission number. Remember to only attach requested documents.

Tips for a successful application

- Save your application regularly to prevent your work from being lost.
- Ensure any files you upload have been saved before exiting or submitting the application.
- Check your application carefully. Once you've submitted your application, you cannot make any changes.
- When your application has been submitted successfully, you will get a confirmation email and automatic receipt from SmartyGrants.
- For any technical issues, contact SmartyGrants on +61 3 9320 6888 during business hours.
- Do not share personal or confidential information about any individuals in this application.

Need help?

Call ERCF manager Kim Sullivan on 0499 781 580 or email the social impact team at ERCF@ausnetservices.com.au.