Community Grant Fund

Guidance notes for applicants

Low Carbon Hub is championing community-owned energy across Oxfordshire. Our Community Grant Fund offers financial support for community energy activities across the County.

These notes are here to help you. If you have any questions, or require further assistance with your application, please contact info@lowcarbonhub.org or 01865 246099.

Applying to the community grant fund

Who can apply?

If your community group is a member of our network, you can apply for funding. You can apply on your own, or in a consortium with other community groups.

Please note: If you are part of a low carbon community group based in Oxfordshire, that is not yet part of our community network, we would love to hear from you and please contact us to find out how to join.

We welcome applications that support partnerships between our community groups and other organisations based in their community.

How much can I apply for?

- **Small community grants – up to £750** - You can apply for a small grant of up to £750 in any financial year. So long as we have sufficient funds in the pot, it is our aim to fund all qualifying applications.
- **Large community grants – up to £5,000** - You can apply for one of a small number of grants of up to £5,000 that will be awarded each year, in a competitive process.

Joint applications

We welcome joint applications from two or more community groups. If you apply jointly, you can apply for up to:

- £750 per group in the consortium for small community grants
- £5,000 per group in the consortium for large community grants, up to the maximum funding available in the fund for that financial year.

For example, if £12,000 is in the large community grant pot, a joint proposal from two groups can be for a maximum of £10,000, a joint proposal from three groups, for a maximum of £12,000.

When should I apply?

- **Small community grants** - you can apply for small grants throughout the year up to 31 January of the relevant financial year. Check our website for this year's deadlines.
- **Large community grants** - you can apply for large grants once a year in a two-stage process. Applications for the Outline Proposals stage usually open in the Autumn. Check the website for this year's dates and deadlines.

When will I know if my application has been successful?

We will let you know if your application has been successful within 30 days of the deadline.

What can I apply for?

You can use the grants to fund activities that contribute to our aim: to cut Oxfordshire's carbon footprint and contribute to the creation of a decentralised and locally owned renewable energy system. We welcome applications for activities that encourage the reduction of energy use and more sustainable practices, for example:

- Increasing renewable heat or electricity generation
- Improving energy efficiency in homes and buildings
- Supporting the shift to a low carbon transport system

Our small grants can include any activity that will benefit community groups and help them to thrive.

Community benefit guiding principles

Our aim: To cut Oxfordshire's carbon footprint and contribute to the creation of a decentralised and locally owned renewable energy system.

Our ethos: Community focused; inclusive; collaborative.

Our impact: Achieves leverage; tangible outcomes; visible; replicable; scalable; lasting.

Activities we will support

We invite applications relating to activities that help to encourage the reduction of energy use and fossil fuel consumption in Oxfordshire.

You can carry out the work yourselves, use the grant to buy in expertise, or pass it on to a local third-party organisation to deliver the activity. The activities you can use a grant for include, but are not restricted to:

Skilling up	Mentoring and training, including facilitating learning from other groups. Buying-in technical expertise.
Thriving community groups	Our small grants can be used for any activity that is beneficial to community groups and helps them to thrive.
Third party grants	You can champion the funding need of a local organisation or individuals who need funding to carry out low carbon activities. We are particularly keen to support energy efficiency measures.
Kit & engagement support	Paid hours to deliver projects e.g. small energy efficiency measures. Awareness events, so long as they have clear relevant long term objectives. Community surveys.
Policy and lobbying	Lobbying and campaigning, so long as the issue has direct local relevance. Research on energy issues with a direct local relevance.

What type of activity will the grant NOT fund?

Although we are happy to cover some staff time as part of any grant application, where funding requested is primarily to cover consultant or project management costs you are unlikely to be successful.

We do not support organisations that adopt a partisan political stance or activities that are party political.

We will not provide retrospective funding for activities that have already taken place.

How to apply

Small community grants

- Please complete the online combined Small Grants application form and Finance form, available to download as a Word doc if you prefer.

If you are applying in a consortium with other members of our community network, please make sure each group completes its own Small Grants application form.

Large community grants

Applying for a large community grant is a two-stage process. First, you submit an Outline Proposal application. We then invite a shortlist of projects to submit a Detailed application.

Stage 1: Outline proposals

Submit your large community grants Outline proposal form in the Autumn of each year.

Stage 2: Detailed application

Should your application progress, you will then receive a Detailed application form and a Large Grant Finance form.

How is your application assessed?

Once you submit your application, our team checks it meets the criteria set out in this guidance. If we need any further information or clarity on any point, we will contact you, and you will have an opportunity to amend your application. Our Impact Committee then reviews all applications that meet the criteria for approval.

What happens if you're offered a grant?

We will let you know within 30 days of the deadline whether your application has been successful. You then have 12 months in which to carry out the agreed activity.

Conditions

To receive a grant, you need to:

- Have a UK-based bank account in your organisation's name and financial procedures that require at least two people who are unrelated to sign cheques or make a withdrawal.

By accepting a grant, you undertake to:

- Use it for the activities set out in your application. Should circumstances arise such that the original purpose for the funds is no longer possible, please contact us to discuss any alternative activities you would like to propose for the grant.
- Keep receipts to provide evidence of expenditure.
- Notify us of any underspend, and unless an alternative use for the funds is agreed with us, you may need to repay the underspent funds.
- Complete and return the Grant Report Form within 12 months of receipt of the grant.

We'd like to make our grant application process as simple as possible for you. If you have any suggestions as to how we can improve this process, please let us know.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where does the Community Grant Fund get its funding?

We own a portfolio of community renewables that create an income that is used for community benefit. We use this income to support a range of low carbon community energy activities that cut Oxfordshire's carbon footprint and contribute to the creation of a decentralised and locally owned renewable energy system.

Up to 25% of this funding has been earmarked to set up the Community Grant Fund. Through this we are offering grant funding to our community group network to support their work.

How were the Grant Programme criteria arrived at?

The network of low carbon community groups across Oxfordshire represents a phenomenal system of dedicated volunteers, working on local projects to help tackle the global issue of climate change. We wanted to create a grant programme that supports the work that they identify as relevant to their community. We developed the grant criteria and structure in consultation with our community group network. We hope we have found a balance between creating a light touch and flexible application process and providing tangible evidence of the difference the support our funding has made.

Why do you only accept applications from your community group network?

With only limited funding available we have decided to limit eligibility to our community group network. These are Oxfordshire-based voluntary organisations, with a track record in delivering low carbon activity within their communities. Our growth and development has been in large part due to the support of this network. We are delighted that we are now able to use our income to support their activities and continue our partnership in tackling climate change.

How do I become part of your community network?

Any Oxfordshire group whose primary objective is that of reducing its community's carbon footprint or low carbon group can apply for a nominal £1 share to become a Low Carbon Hub IPS Community Shareholder. To find out more please contact us at info@lowcarbonhub.org.

Still have a question about our grant funding?

Get in touch with us at info@lowcarbonhub.org and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.