



SCCALE
203050

Methodology guide



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Methodology guide

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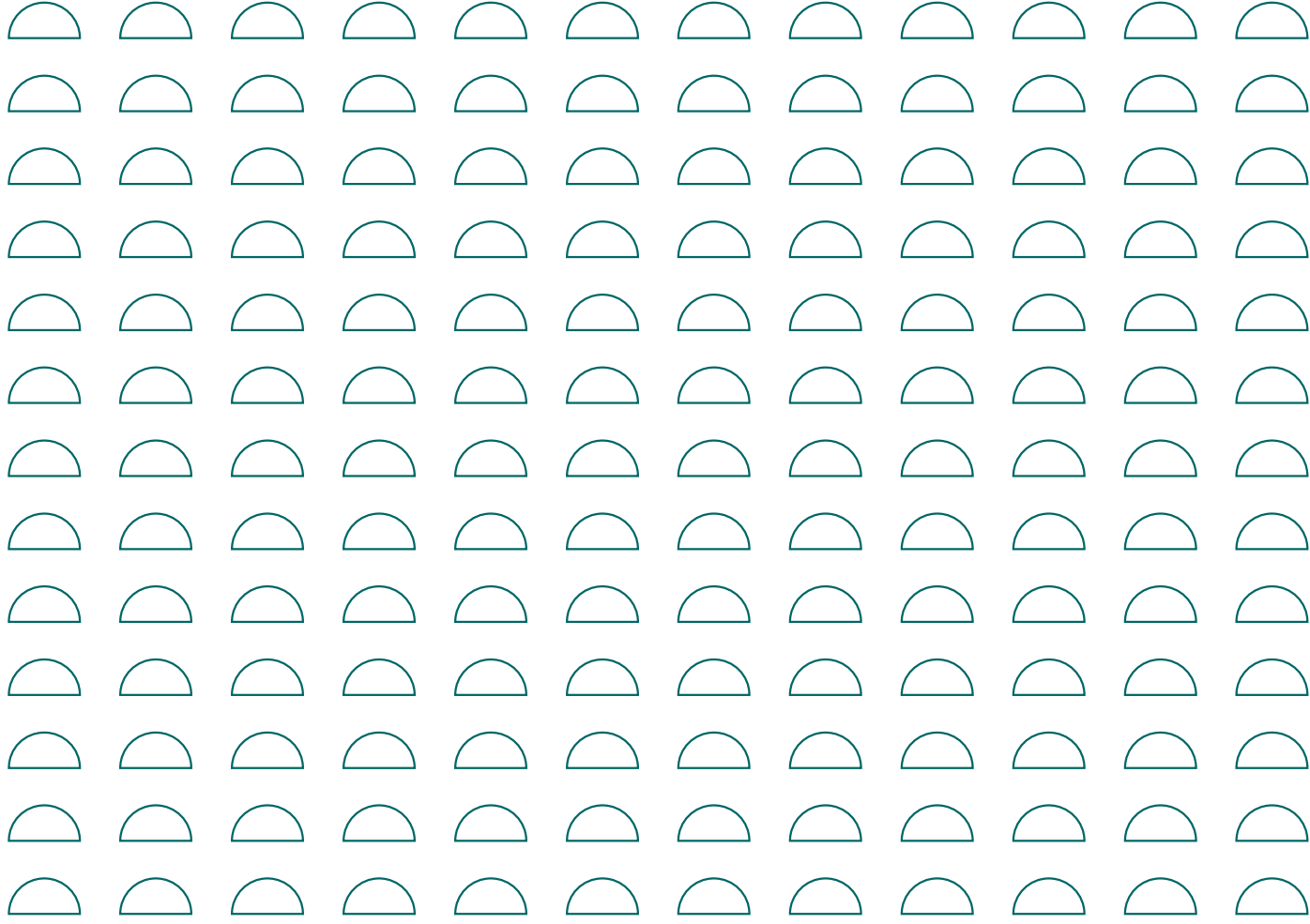
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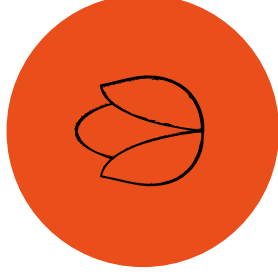
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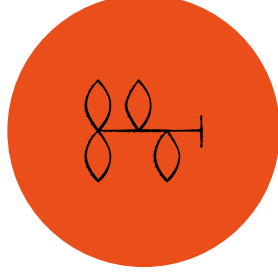
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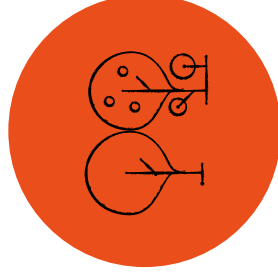
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1. Introduction

A guide to structured energy community growth

In front of you is the SCCALE methodology guide. It gathers all the methods deployed in five pilot projects and makes them available to thirty replication sites. The goal is a guide to help citizens start their own citizen energy projects following a standardised methodology and monitoring scheme. The methodologies were different at each of the pilot sites, due to the type of sustainable energy project that was undertaken as well as due to local conditions. The methods used at the five pilot sites were combined and standardised into this SCCALE methodology. The SCCALE methodology can help any project leader grow a community energy initiative from a core group of citizens into a large group of engaged citizens who are able to develop and maintain their community energy project on their own.

This methodology guide in combination with the development tool should provide you with the tools to work on your community energy project in a structured and methodological way. The development tool supports energy communities in tracking progress in all relevant domains: community members, personnel, financing, policy, the technical domain, knowledge, organisation and socio-economic factors. The tool, moreover, provides insight into energetic impact, a dashboard with key performance indicators per project stage, and reporting.

The pioneering days – in which people chose to develop community energy projects in their own way, with no need for help from others – are over. To scale up community energy in Europe, all who want to initiate a project – but are not necessarily pioneers – should have the tools to implement all the activities required to set up a community energy project.

This guide provides new community energy groups and new project leaders in



existing energy communities with a structure that enables learning on the job. The aim is to make it possible for anyone with a good idea for their community to develop that idea with their peers in the community into a quality community energy project with the right community energy engagement at the right time in the process.

About community energy

“Community energy” or “community power” refers to people in a community cooperating on energy issues. Community energy is a broad concept. It can refer to collective switching campaigns, collective investments in solar panels, but also to ownership of an energy supply company or even a distribution network. Some people work together informally, while others set up legal entities. Depending on the activity, community energy can take different forms.” (Community energy: A practical guide to reclaiming power, 2020)

This methodology guide focuses on the citizen engagement side of developing a diverse range of community energy projects. However, community energy is more than just developing renewable energy. It is renewable energy that is developed and owned by the community. Community energy offers many benefits to the community, creating fair and equitable projects from which all in the community benefit. We assume you have already made the decision to start a community energy project because of the benefits it will bring your community. There is no need to go deeper here into the reasons and advantages of community energy. These reasons and advantages can be found in The community energy guide.

Since the decentralisation of renewable energy, groups have been working on developing renewable energy together. Until 2010, the knowledge on how to do this was as decentralised as the energy production itself. Each community invented its own wheel. In 2011, energy communities started working together at European

level to share knowledge, resulting in the EU federation REScoop.eu. In 2016, the European Union began acknowledging the benefits of community energy by defining the organisation in the form of renewable energy regulations. And in 2019, the European Commission strengthened this support with the clean energy package. It's now time to SCCALE up community energy in order to give as many people as possible the tools and experiences of those that preceded them. Only in this way can we reach our EU renewable energy targets and have a fair and equitable energy transition.

Community projects

Community energy projects are developed differently from many other renewable energy projects. In non-community renewable energy projects, citizens from the community are an important project stakeholder either to be informed or involved in order to reduce opposition. In community energy, the citizens are the ones that develop the project themselves. They are the key initiator and owner of the project. This means they are also the decision maker for most decisions in the project. This creates a whole new dynamic in the development process.

How to read this guide

Below follow a few tips on how to use this guide.

A guide, not a blueprint!

The SCCALE methodology guide helps you through the process of engaging citizens in developing a community energy project. The methodology provides a structured and detailed oversight of activities involved in developing a project. A generalised guide can never fully embody the local context and the specifics of the project. It's your task to fill these in yourselves. The activities are numbered to enable referencing throughout this document. Although they are presented in chronological order, your project might be different, and some activities might not be relevant at a certain point in the development, or other activities for a later

stage can be useful to you at an earlier stage. In addition, the guide does not distinguish between project size. For small projects, some activities might seem unnecessarily repetitive. Larger projects allow going into greater detail at every step of the process, while this is not necessary for smaller projects. Use your own local knowledge and expertise to use this guide effectively. Treat it as a guide to help you implement a process and be inspired to engage citizens in your project. Don't view it as a blueprint that must be followed step by step!

Don't let this guide scare you!

Many times, initiators at first jokingly comment: "If I knew how much work it was going to take, I wouldn't have started the project." Before you is a guide that maps out more than 45 activities you are encouraged to engage in when developing a community energy project. And these are only the activities related to citizen engagement! Don't let this scare you off. All of these pioneers were proud of their projects in the end. They went through ups and downs, brought their community closer together, and finally created a project that the entire community could be proud of. And when you ask the follow up question "But was it worth it?", all reply with a full-hearted "yes"!

Other useful documents

This guide is not a stand-alone product. For more community energy knowledge and experience, please also consult the following guides.

- ▼ [Community energy guide](#)
- ▼ [Financing guide](#)
- ▼ [Municipality guide](#)

Tools

There are tools available for engaging citizens in support of your activities. The energy communities at the various pilot sites used different tools. Each activity will include a suggestion concerning the kind of tool you can use to support it.

These suggestions are based on the research conducted in the SHARES project. The SHARES project identified the most effective platforms and tools for supporting energy communities that are already available (primarily online) and accessible to an interested public. We suggest you use this research to go deeper into the available tools. Here we provide only a suggestion concerning the type of tool you can use to support your activity.

SHAREs identified 6 types of supporting tools.

- ▼ **001** Guides: These are guides or reports that give you basic knowledge. The community energy guide, for example.
- ▼ **002** Calculators: These are tools to help you calculate energy savings, photovoltaic energy production and CO2 reduction. They are often country specific. Ask other energy communities if you can use the tools they used for similar projects.
- ▼ **003** Mapping tools: Tools to find locations for your project.
- ▼ **004** Supporting programmes/platforms: Online platforms to support you in registering citizen engagement. For example, a platform to monitor energy or register the member details you need to implement your project.
- ▼ **005** Information tools: Tools to gather input in order to share new information or present information in a clear way to citizens. Examples include questionnaires, an online app or a board game.
- ▼ **006** System planning: Tools for energy supply contracts for example.

The SCCALE Development tool for energy communities

To monitor your progress throughout the development process, SCCALE has created a development tool. It is an academic tool to track your progress throughout the four stages of project management.

It can be helpful to report on your progress to community members, but also to

external stakeholders such as the municipality, in order to show what you have achieved over the years. In other cases, monitoring and reporting progress can be a way to demonstrate a good track record to the stakeholders who are providing financial support.

Finally, it's primarily a tool to help you reach key performance indicators on every aspect of your community energy initiative. It reveals where your initiative has weaknesses and where work needs to be done.

Each activity refers to specific questions in the development tool. After finishing an activity, answer these questions in the development tool. This results in dashboard updates and finished tasks.

2. The SCCALE methodology

From a single idea to an operational energy community

A method is a structured procedure for achieving specific milestones. In the context of citizen engagement, these milestones are usually something that record the end of a process with citizens. This usually involves diverse activities, like choosing to organise a meeting to discuss the general plan, or receiving a mandate to set up a legal entity.

We distilled a methodology from the five pilot projects to help citizens launch their own energy community projects in their neighbourhoods. All pilot projects had a different technical focus and a different context. This means that not all pilot projects engaged in each activity. This methodology guide should not be seen as a blueprint but as a document that will guide you through the process of community energy engagement in renewable energy and energy savings projects.

The SCCALE methodology is a process of citizen engagement that contains 12 milestones. All activities leading to these milestones are described below. They are a combination of the activities, methods and tools used at different pilot sites and combined into a single methodology.

The guide is set up in such a way that it can be applied to any community energy project. The five pilot sites had a broad range of goals. Some focussed on developing solar projects with the community, others on district heating or energy saving and awareness raising. In all projects, specific activities were engaged in,



and milestones were met, albeit in a different context with different content relevant to the project. However, most of the activities were undertaken by all pilot projects. The guide can therefore be considered as an overall view of the many activities you can undertake to reach the milestones you need to make your community energy project successful. Because without good citizen engagement, a community energy project is likely to fail.

The methodology is structured in stages, milestones, activities and workflows. A community energy project consists of the following four stages: (1) Inspiration, (2) Preparation, (3) Implementation, and (4) Operation. Each of these stages contains 3 milestones, numbered A to L. To reach these milestones, a set of activities must be carried out. The relevancy of each activity differs per project. The activities are subsequently allocated to 4 workflows: (1) Citizen engagement and communication; (2) Technology and business case; (3) Partners and authorities; and (4) Organisation and financing. The workflows are represented as circles in Figure 1. Each circle contains one or more activities. This guide focuses on the processes of citizen engagement in each of the workflows. In an activity to create a business case, for example, processes include the degree and method of citizen involvement in the business case creation.

The pilot projects were able to integrate different milestones in their development path. Most had not yet started the implementation stage at the time this guide was being written. Since this guide targets starting community energy groups, it will go into detail on the first two stages of development and will provide a generalised overview of the last two stages.



Figure 1: workflow icons citizen engagement and communication; technology and business case; partners and authorities; and organisation and financing, respectively.



Figure 2: Community energy project structure



Activity 2
Defining vision,
scope and goals

Activity 5
General technical
plan

Activity 4
Contact with the
municipality

Activity 3
Analysing
stakeholders

Activity 1
Setting up a core
team

Activity 6
Community meeting:
networking within
the community

Activity 8
Starting
document
community
energy project

Activity 7
Action plan for
reaching
milestone B

Activity 9
Financial
commitment for
next milestone



MILESTONE A
STARTING
DOCUMENT



Activity 10

Communicating with a broader group of citizens



Activity 11

Technical design



Activity 12

Community meeting: Presenting the general idea and attracting active community members



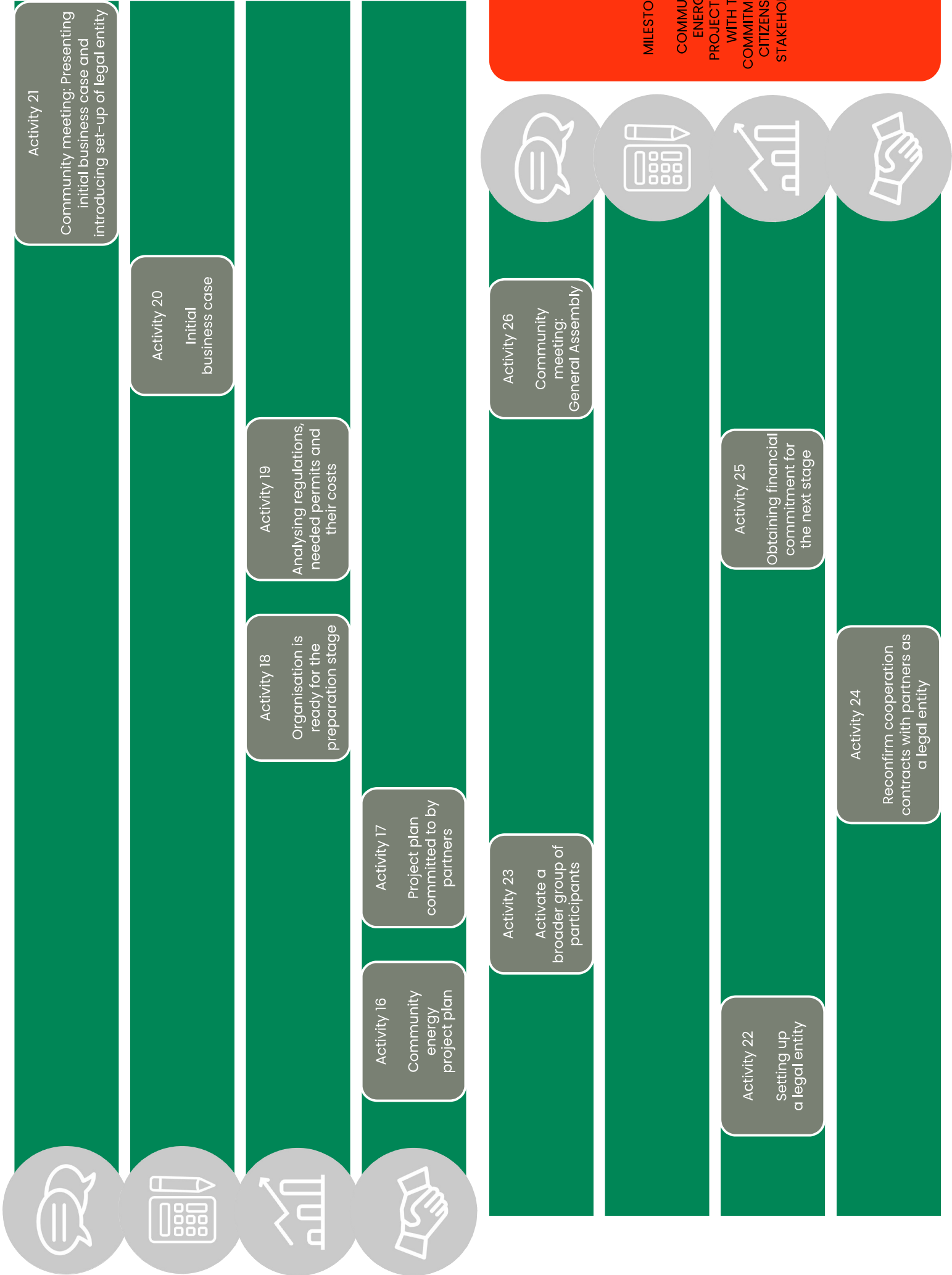
Activity 14
Formalising cooperation with municipality and other partners

Activity 13
Mandate for setting up a legal entity

Activity 15
Prepare to set up a legal entity



MILESTONE B
Community energy organisation with clear goal



Activity 21

Community meeting: Presenting initial business case and introducing set-up of legal entity

Activity 20
Initial business case

Activity 19
Analysing regulations, needed permits and their costs

Activity 18
Organisation is ready for the preparation stage

Activity 17
Project plan committed to by partners

Activity 16
Community energy project plan

Activity 26
Community meeting: General Assembly

Activity 23
Activate a broader group of participants

Activity 25
Obtaining financial commitment for the next stage

Activity 22
Setting up a legal entity

Activity 24
Reconfirm cooperation contracts with partners as a legal entity

MILESTONE C
COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECT PLAN WITH THE COMMITMENT OF CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS

3. Inspiration

Working towards a widely supported community energy plan

The first stage of development of a citizen energy project is called the inspiration stage. Imagine reading the newspaper, sitting in a café with friends or talking about renewable energy on someone's birthday. You want to do something for your community and help fight climate change, and you come up with an idea for a renewable energy project with your friends, your neighbourhood or the broader community. That is where all community energy projects begin. You start with a small, inspired group of people brainstorming on how this could work. This results in a starting document, Milestone A.



Activity 1: Setting up a core team

A citizen initiative often starts with one or two persons encouraging other people to join. A group of five people with complementary skill sets provides a good basis for the community process. A good core team forms the basis of a successful community energy project and future legal entity. It ensures sufficient clout, qualities, diversity and democratic legitimacy. The quality of the core team and your organisation will increase as your project progresses.

A good, diverse core team embodies qualities and diversity on several levels.

- ▶ The team has different roles for people with suitable qualities and capacities. The first roles are project leader, connector, technician, and a client for hiring external expertise.
- ▶ The team is diverse, being made up of different types of people. For this activity, you can focus on at least two aspects of diversity from among the following: gender, people rooted in the community, new inhabitants, age, ethnicity, homeowners, tenants, as well as thinkers/doers/willers/feelers).

As a core team, you should determine together what your ambition is in order to find common ground on why you are taking this initiative and what your project stands for. Relevant questions here are: What role do you want to play as an initiative? Do you want to make a plan yourself, do you want to do it together with the municipality or other partners? Do you already have an idea about ownership of the community energy system? Do you want to realise local ownership (possibly with a partner) and become a legal entity? Or are you limiting yourself for the time being to making a plan?

You can also discuss what your ambition means for the team. Creating a community energy plan or developing a community energy system takes time. You cannot predict when starting how extensive the project may become. Ambitions can change in the process, and you can work step by step. Still, it's good



Pilot example: Parentium – Poreč-Parenzo, Croatia

The green energy cooperative and the City of Poreč-Parenzo have a history of collaboration. Both parties discussed the idea of an energy community to connect citizens, create innovation in the public sector, and launch a renewable energy project that benefits the citizens. The voucher model was developed as an instrument for citizen investment in solar systems on public buildings at city level. The plan was to issue vouchers with a waiting period before they can be used. When the voucher expires, it increases in value thanks to the energy savings created by the solar energy system. To make this happen, the core team needed to discuss what resources and initiatives were needed. In the brainstorming sessions with the core team, the following questions were asked:

- ▶ What is the project concept and who are the stakeholders benefiting from the project's development?
- ▶ Who decides what in the process of issuing vouchers, and which stakeholders can give valuable input in a legal, community, technical domain? And, who has access to documents and data?
- ▶ What public procedures are needed for the project to be developed?
- ▶ What level of detail is required?
- ▶ Who does what, and when?

Answering these questions expanded the core group.

Since the partners were three hours apart, the City of Poreč-Parenzo and ZEZ used digital communication channels: phone calls (to resolve and discuss urgent actions), Whatsapp/Viber (to discuss non-formal actions), email (for formal communication and documentation exchange), and Google Meet/Zoom for deeper online discussions. Most importantly, live meetings with PowerPoint presentations, bilateral discussions and informal conversations helped the team to keep its motivation and focus.

to look for longer-term commitment in order to truly make your project a success. And serious ambitions require financing in order to ensure continuity and expertise. Acquiring financing also requires time and attention.

In practice, it's not always possible to create a diverse core team immediately. In this case, you can start by forming a diverse reflection group that requires little time from the participants. You can also recruit community ambassadors who play an important role, are social, and have limited tasks. From day one, look for financial resources to free up capacity, so that not only pensioners, but also young people and others can commit themselves to this time-consuming project. Keep recruiting and engaging people! Because you don't achieve such diversity and broad involvement in a day. It is an ongoing process.

You should think about how the work between the core team members is allocated based on the workflows. It is logical to do this based on the person's qualities, capacities and of course interests. The person responsible for a specific workflow will be responsible for organising all activities related to that workflow.

What is the result of activity 1?

- ▶ The team has different roles for people with suitable qualities and capacities.
- ▶ The team is diverse, with different types of people, or has a plan to grow towards the desired diversity.
- ▶ There is a shared understanding of why you are taking this initiative and what it stands for. There is a shared ambition concerning your role.
- ▶ The team is seriously committed to making the community more sustainable and willing to invest time in this.
- ▶ There is an ambition to raise money and the need for this is recognised by the initiators.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Are all skills necessary for the delivery of services part of the core team available in the team?
- ▶ How well are the required resources (capital and workforce) covered?



Activity 2: Defining vision, scope and goals

As a core team, in the beginning you want to obtain clarity about your joint vision of the future and the position you are taking as a citizen initiative. You should begin thinking about the role you want to play as an initiative and with whom you might want to collaborate. Consider defining the geographical boundaries of the initiative and writing down which goals you want to achieve in the short and long term. This is the starting point. The vision, scope and goals can be gradually adjusted in response to input from a larger group of local residents.

You can distinguish between the following different types of goals:

- ▶ **Technical goals** – are about the type of project you want to realise. These can vary from a 500 kWP solar installation to 5,000 homes connected to a district heating network.
- ▶ **Social goals** – quality action linked to strengthening community and building relationships.
- ▶ **Democratic goals** – you formulate the ambition of the community initiative around collective ownership or the degree of involvement from citizens (the step on the participation ladder).
- ▶ **Financial goals** – you can think of affordability, of striving, for example, to ensure that the energy bill of residents and businesses will not be higher in the future renewable energy system than with the current energy system.
- ▶ **Other goals** – you can also set goals that extend beyond the energy transition. For example, you can work on the community's quality of life in the areas of climate adaptation, mobility and biodiversity of the surroundings. Additional goals can help convince stakeholders to participate.

Subsequently, it is important to distinguish between longer-term goals for making the community more sustainable, and short-term action-oriented goals in which



Pilot example: Hyperion – Athens, Greece

In order to define common ground around a shared vision, we ran a series of co-creation community meetings, in-person and online, drawing from existing frameworks around energy communities.

The co-creation session involved a series of questions that sparked open-ended discussion. The goal was to start the process of creating a common, shared vision for Hyperion and its strategic direction. A number of questions also involved practical and concrete to-dos for members, such as looking up the national criteria on what constitutes energy poverty. We also discussed what sustainability means to the members in general, and members were also given the space to voice general questions, comments or concerns about the direction of the community.

For this process, we used a framework on post-growth transformative capacity for energy communities. In the in-person session, a flipchart and sticky notes were used to register the members' comments. In the online session, a Google Doc was used for this.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- Has the energy community defined a shared vision?
- Have goals and pathways been defined to achieve the shared vision?
- Does the shared vision line up with the expectations of members?



you come into contact with local residents. The short-term actions help you to get a better idea of the wishes and concerns that exist in the neighbourhood, and at the same time to gain more awareness and to grow as a citizen initiative.

What is the result of activity 2?

- The core team has discussed the vision for the future and the role of the initiative.
- The geographical boundaries of the area in question have been established by drawing explainable logical boundaries. A community can be a region but it can also be a neighbourhood.
- The short and long-term goals of the citizen initiative have been determined. The why of the initiative has been made concrete in clear goals. These have been formulated in a way that appeals to local residents.
- The goals and scope are on paper (and online).



Activity 3: Analysing stakeholders

For the growth and development of the citizen initiative, it is important to identify the social network in your defined area and invite the first new people to join the project team. A social network consists of associations, community centres and other local organisations. The social structures provide insight into your community, enabling you to take different types of people into account. Based on this analysis, you can make a simple citizen engagement plan to broaden your network. With the growing group of people involved, you can divide tasks so that you can move forward as an initiative and become more visible in the neighbourhood. After all, the project should be accessible to everyone in the neighbourhood.

The first action is to invite locally known people and key persons to become ambassadors. Ambassadors or contact persons from apartment blocks strengthen the community network and are the point of contact for people in the community. It is a light role that requires little time but ensures a fine-meshed network in the community. Throughout the process, keep inviting people to become ambassadors in order to eventually reach the entire community through warm contacts.

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

We realised that people in energy poverty were underrepresented among the current members of LICHT Leuven. So we contacted De RuimteVaart, an organisation based in the City of Leuven working with and giving low-threshold individual energy advice to this target group. We found that they were also looking for a partner to both pass on their expertise on low budget energy saving measures and to give their clients the opportunity to play a more active role in the local energy transition. We quickly realised that such a collaboration is a win-win situation. For the info session with De RuimteVaart we used a slide deck.

What is the result of activity 3?

- ▶ There is insight into existing social structures in the community, including socio-economic data, meeting places, key persons and one's own network.
- ▶ There is a simple citizen engagement plan to increase and broaden the network.
- ▶ New people are invited to become street ambassadors and to participate in the project.

How to proceed?

- ▶ Interview key people in your community to better understand what is going on among the population.
- ▶ Create a simple citizen engagement plan to involve more local residents.
- ▶ Look for ambassadors in the different parts of the community.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent has a social network formed around the EC and its members?
- ▶ Are local community members engaged to participate in your energy community?

Activity 4: Contact with the municipality

As a citizen initiative, a good relationship with the municipality at this initial stage is crucial. In one way or another, the local municipality will be your partner in issuing permits, obtaining subsidies or supporting your ideas with their knowledge and network. The initiative's core group needs the municipality to allow the initiative to grow. On the other hand, the municipality needs initiators in the community to help achieve the climate and other local goals that have been set. The approach is to work towards a full-fledged partnership with the municipality as equals, in which the citizen initiative represents the local residents who support the initiative. At the start, local citizens have not yet given that mandate to the citizen initiative. But the potential is there, because the group taking the initiative consists of local citizens who can serve both their own interests and the interests of their neighbours.

It is important to identify and reach the right people and department in the municipality, those who have a say, the power to decide, the motivation, and the

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

The municipality of Groningen received a subsidy from the national government within the framework of Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken (PAW, Natural Gas-Free Neighbourhoods Programme). This subsidy allowed the district, of which Selwerd-Zuid is a part, to experiment with alternative heating system technologies, with the aim of drawing lessons from the experiences.

Initially, municipal heat supply company Warmtestad was unwilling to participate in the project. It usually only undertakes projects to connect non-residential buildings and apartment blocks with block heating to their district heating network. Supplying heat to 200 private homes was considered too complex and did not fit with their existing activities.

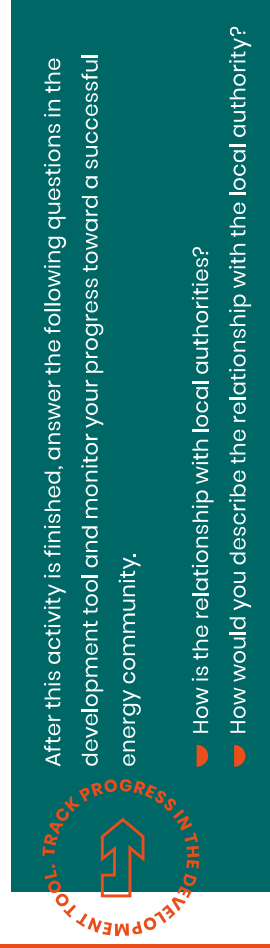
After Grunneger Power joined the project and took responsibility for the communication and participation processes with the residents of Selwerd-Zuid, Warmtestad was able to focus on implementing the district heating network and exploiting the heat sources.

ability to influence the municipality structure to help community energy grow. Each municipality has a different dynamic. Community members probably already know municipality procedures and how communication between the various departments work.

In the conversation with the municipal official(s), you will share the goals and scope of your community initiative and discuss how it currently ties in with existing policy and partnerships in the municipality. You may even ask for the relevant policy documents, project plans and budgets. At a later stage, when your own plans become more detailed, you will look even more carefully at how they relate to the spatial frameworks and the obstacles and opportunities that arise from them. In the conversation with the municipal official(s), you will also discuss your activities for the coming period and explore the possibilities for financing. Perhaps the municipality wants to make the community centre available free of charge for a community meeting, or they want to help with communication about the community initiative. For inspiration on roles that a municipality can play in supporting the financing of community energy, have a look at the chapter Support in financing projects in the Municipality Guide, and the Financing Guide (Chapter 3.4 'Local authority or municipal support').

What is the result of activity 4?

- ▶ A start has been made with the relationship with the municipality by announcing the citizen initiative and having talks with municipal official(s).
- ▶ The cooperation of the municipality in the (planned) community activities has been explored.
- ▶ You know how to obtain financing for the next activities.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ How is the relationship with local authorities?
- ▶ How would you describe the relationship with the local authority?

Activity 5: General technical plan



Every citizen initiative in the energy transition wants a working technical solution. That is why it's smart for the group taking the initiative to make an inventory of the technical possibilities available in the community. During this activity, the details are still open, because local citizens have not yet formulated the criteria needed to select from the various technical design options. This activity is very dependent on the technology being focused on. The general idea is to make sure from the beginning that you are not trying to accomplish something that is not technically feasible.

Pilot example: Les Economes – Île-de-France, France

Member training was important during the first days of our community. We published booklets and gave conferences and training sessions that complemented one another. Three booklets were written to provide our members with key information on the energy sector. The first booklet was a general overview about energy. What is it physically? How is it managed in France? Key figures were obtained for French energy production and the energy mix, sectoral consumption, power, consumption in general. We also discussed sufficiency and presented other relevant aspects (such as different sufficiency typologies or the "rebound effect"). The second and third booklets were respectively about eco-gestures, classified into different rooms of the house, and about the financial aid available for home renovation and its modalities. At a conference, we presented a general overview of the energy sector in France and what it means for sufficiency, while our partner megaWatt presented their 2022 scenario for a successful energy transition in France (focused on the details of the sufficiency measures they worked on). Finally, the training session consisted of having participants calculate the consumption of each electrical device in their home.

During the training session, for a tool we used Enercoop's Dr Watt Training. For the conference presentations, we used a PowerPoint slide deck we created for the training period and we also used datasheets for electrical tools that participants had to sort according to power and consumption.

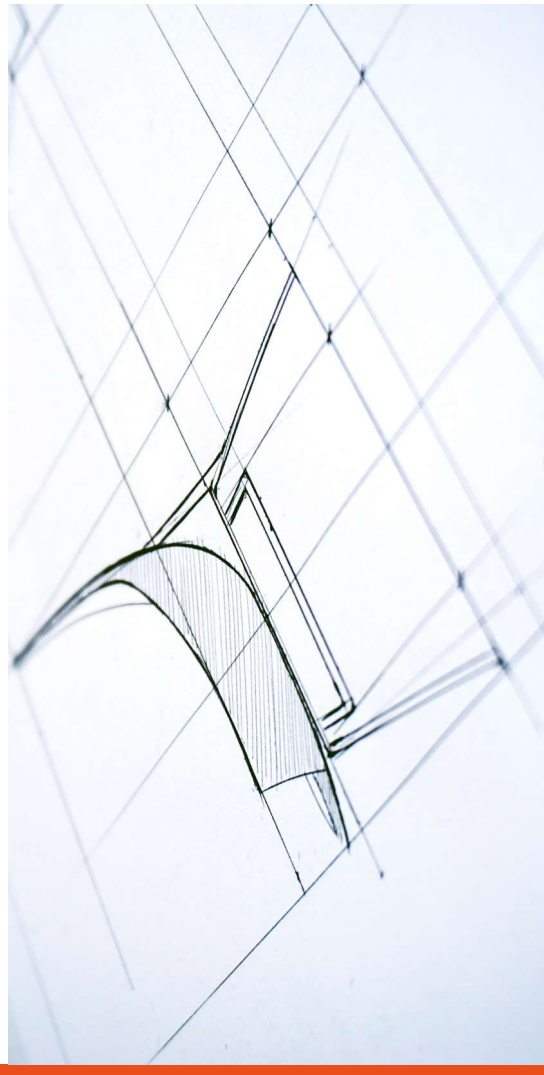
The technical plan provides a first insight into the possible community energy projects. Naturally, the municipality's local policy on what is possible is important input for this global technical analysis. For example, if you want to build a solar installation or a wind farm, you need to know whether local spatial planning policy has any restrictions in this regard. If you are looking at retrofitting, you can examine the general technical activities available to retrofit houses or incorporate energy saving measures.


Try to use your network in the community to find a good location for your community energy project. If you are looking for a rooftop for a solar installation, a member of your core group might have a connection to organisations with large buildings such as schools or storage facilities. Others might have connections with farmers that might be willing to lease their land for your projects.

At the beginning, try to focus on one project in one location and on what you think makes most sense for the community. This gives you the time to learn and test the citizen engagement process.

What is the result of activity 5?

- ▶ The technical feasibility of the community projects has been explored on the basis of public data and input from members of the community.
- ▶ There is a longlist of possible projects for the neighbourhood.





After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ✔ Have goals and pathways been defined to achieve the shared vision?
- ✔ How well is the new energy system integrated into the existing infrastructure?
- ✔ Has the existing (local) energy system been mapped?
- ✔ Have the required (renewable) energy potentials been identified, mapped and quantified?
- ✔ Have the required energy saving opportunities in buildings been identified?

Activity 6: Community meeting: networking within the community



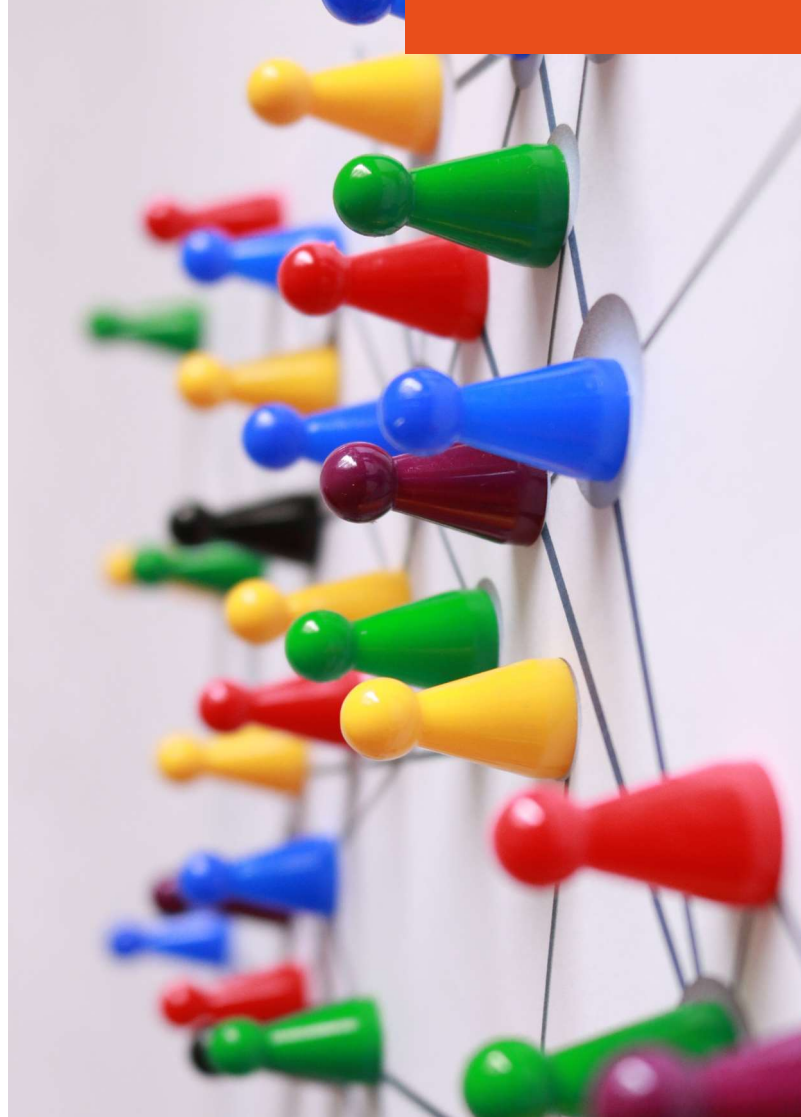
Community meetings are the most important activities at the inspiration stage. Many aspects come together in this activity: increasing your visibility, expanding your network, involving residents in your ideas and plans, collecting wishes and concerns, strengthening your organisation, recruiting active participants, and receiving a mandate to continue developing your ideas. At each meeting you present the work you have done, ask for a mandate to take the next step, and invite residents to participate.

The first community meeting can be a conversation in a living room, a street conversation or a community meeting, as long as you speak to a wider group of people than the core team. There is no need to recruit widely in the community yet. You can start with a close network of people you know would be interested. This is a first test of the legitimacy of the initiative. If the initiative is already solid, you can of course make the invitation public and actively recruit people. Various channels are available to recruit participants such as the (local) newspaper, social media and word of mouth.

Think about how you can make an interesting programme to present at the community meeting, including topics and possible speakers that would appeal to people. In any case, present the why of the initiative and the progress of the

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

We chose to send out an online survey to all LICHT Leuven members, in order to get an idea of their needs concerning their own housing situation and if and how they want to be engaged in collective action regarding the local energy transition. To make it accessible to those who prefer telling their story face to face, we organised a physical meeting. Based on the 140 replies, we were able to further shape the project to their needs.



initiative so far: the composition of the core group; your vision, scope and goals; stakeholder analysis; first contact with the municipality; and the general technical plan. In addition, you can discuss the wishes, ideas and concerns of the residents themselves.

Be prepared at every public meeting for the question concerning what the consequences will be for the community or any future participant. Prepare your answer to that question the best you can. Be clear about your starting points; only promise what you know you can deliver and substantiate why certain things cannot be known at this point. Document all these questions and answers in order to be placed on your website at a later stage. In future meetings and after you go public, you can refer to the website instead of repeating the story.

What is the result of activity 6?

- ✔ The citizen initiative ideas and activities were assessed by local residents other than the core team.
- ✔ The wishes, ideas and concerns of local residents were inventoried.
- ✔ Residents were involved. For example, because ideas were collected in group discussions, an inventory had already been made of those who want to join a working group or become a street ambassador.
- ✔ New people were involved in the initiative who wanted to play a role.
- ✔ There was enthusiasm on the part of the local residents to continue the initiative. This would be the beginning of a mandate from the entire neighbourhood.
- ✔ There is a list of names, email addresses and phone numbers with permission to keep people informed, so you can start a newsletter.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ✔ Has a social network formed around energy community members?
- ✔ How well are the required resources (capital and workforce) covered?
- ✔ To what extent is the energy community embedded in the local community?
- ✔ How many households are reached (with the meetings or events organised by the energy community)?



Activity 7: Action plan for reaching milestone B

In the action plan you convert vision, scope and goals into the activities that are necessary to reach Milestone B. These activities require more people than the core team. That is why the citizen initiative is being expanded with local residents who give substance to the (yet to be formed) working groups for implementation of activities. Another possibility is to start recruiting ambassadors. They will help expand your network in the community. This is necessary if the activities are to catch on with a broad group of local residents.

To get started, you can use the standardised action plan made for the SCCALE project that covers most activities with some examples from the pilot site: see SCCALE deliverable 3.3.

The activity plan contains activities in the four workflows described in this guide: citizen engagement and communication, technology and business case, partners and governments, and organisation and financing. The workgroups can be structured in the same way. Priority is given to forming two working groups: citizen engagement and communication, and technology and business case.

- ▶ The citizen engagement and communication working group provides information, facilitates dialogue, organises community meetings and conducts community surveys. The working group preferably consists of different types of local residents (depending on the community's composition): private owners, tenants, residents of housing associations and homeowner associations. The members of the working group are connectors or have experience with facilitating communication or engagement. This working group will identify the socio-economic characteristics of the community, such as population structure and social infrastructure. It uses the input from the stakeholder analysis and integrates it further.


- ▶ The technology and business case working group consists of local residents with skill sets in the area of sustainability and energy technology. This working group will map out the energy infrastructure, energy consumption and housing types, needed permits or technical calculations on production and the financial outputs of the project.

- ▶ The core group itself can handle the activities formulated in the other workflows. If there is insufficient strength and availability of people in the core group, it's important to set up one or two working groups for this or to further expand the core group.

For each workflow, formulate a number of activities that you will carry out in the run-up to Milestone B. Take into account the available capacity of people so that the activity plan is feasible. In addition to time, money may be required from third parties in order to carry out the activities. If this is the case, the activity plan also includes a budget. If you want to ask the municipality for money to cover the costs, an expected result will also be required for each planned activity.

What is the result of activity 7?

- ▶ The list of activities that lead to Milestone B being reached are divided across the four workflows.
- ▶ For each activity there is a budget, expected result and global planning with which external financing can be acquired.
- ▶ Forming at least 2 working groups: the citizen engagement and communication working group, and the technology and business case working group. Possibly also an organisation and financing working group, and a partners and authorities working group.
- ▶ The core team is organised and ready for the run-up to Milestone B.
- ▶ Community ambassadors have been recruited.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Have goals and pathways been defined to achieve the shared vision?
- ▶ Has the energy community business plan been written?
- ▶ What governance structure does your energy collective use?
- ▶ What governance and operational circles does your energy collective use?
- ▶ How well is leadership organised within the energy community?
- ▶ Have clear management processes been defined?

Activity 8: Starting document community energy project

The community energy project Starting Document is the result of all previous activities. In this report you describe what you want to achieve as a community energy organisation and what activities you will undertake to ultimately arrive at the Community Energy Plan at the end of the inspiration stage. In the starting document for the community energy organisation you lay down the frameworks of your citizen initiative as you envision them at this point. Those frameworks can change again later, but in the run-up to Milestone B this provides clarity and guidance. Share the starting document with the interested community members and the contact person at the municipality.

What does the Community Energy project Starting Document contain?

- ▶ Answers to the questions who you are and what do you want?
- ▶ Citizen initiative, organisation, challenges, starting points and objectives.
- ▶ Description of the project and possible solutions, geographical scope, general technical plan, options, risks and intended solutions.
- ▶ Activity plan for the four workflows
- ▶ Activities, intended results, required planning, human and financial resources.
- ▶ Summary and first activities





After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ✔ Has the energy community business plan been written?
- ✔ How well developed is the current energy community's business plan?
- ✔ Which scope does the value proposition have?
- ✔ Does your energy community promote energy saving behaviours (e.g., energy sobriety)?

Activity 9: Financial commitment for next milestone



The budget in the community energy organisation starting document shows the need to cover the activity costs. Many projects fail because a budget needs to be found for each activity, making the development a lengthy process. Spend time to find sufficient budget to reach the next milestone. Once the required financial resources are obtained, you can proceed with the activities for Milestone B.

Milestone B activities mainly comprise communication to the community: organising a community meeting and activities that raise awareness of the initiative in the community, such as making flyers and posters. Municipalities usually have subsidies available for the activities of local initiatives. If a relationship with the municipality has been developed in Milestone A, the municipality can immediately help with the subsidy application. Check the website of your municipality to see what the options are or ask the municipality whether they can offer support with the subsidy application.

If a municipal subsidy is not an option, financial coverage of the budget must come from alternative sources or from own resources. Examine the local possibilities such as charitable foundations or companies that might want to sponsor the sustainable initiative. This support can be in cash or in kind. Explore the possibilities of foundations, local funds and sponsorships to cover the Milestone 2 budget. Chapter 2 from the SCCALE Financing guide can help.

When relying on third parties to cover the costs, a community energy organisation will in most cases not yet be its own legal entity. Depending on the size of the budget, there may or may not be a need to set up your own legal entity. Also, national and local context determine whether a legal entity is required. Other options are to seek reimbursement of the costs (with receipts) from the municipality, or for the municipality or the sponsor to pay the costs directly. You have three options as an initiative:



Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

We use different sources of funding to finance the activities of LICHT Leuven. The energy scans of individual homes and the energy monitoring tool are funded through two municipal tenders with an earmarked budget for the next years. The sustainable heating project in the Dijlemolen building is being financed through a Flemish subsidy. The collective solar installations on non-residential buildings will be financed by the equity of the members of Ecopower and ECoOB (shares). And finally, the staff working hours needed for general overhead, communication and engagement actions are financed through the SCCALE budget.

- **001 Money without a legal entity**
If the municipality does not require a legal entity for a subsidy, you can apply for money as an initiative. Make sure that you make good agreements about where the money comes in, how payments are made and how you will supervise the transactions. A self-employed person can often act as a legal and financial contact person. The advantage of this is that you can start your work without having to start discussions about legal matters right away.
- **002 Money through an existing legal entity as a partner**
If the municipality does require a legal entity, but your initiative is not yet ready for it, you may be able to make arrangements with a local organisation that is a legal entity to act as a temporary budget manager. This can be another energy cooperative that is willing to help, the community association or a village council. Discuss whether they would like to be reimbursed for their assistance and make clear agreements concerning who is running the project. The advantage is that there is supervision of the money and your initiative still has the space to think about which legal form best fits its needs.
- **003 Own legal entity**
If the municipality does require a legal entity and/or your initiative considers it important to arrange this properly from the start, you can formalise your status immediately. The initiative could, for example, become an association or a light variant of a cooperative, in which you have democracy and legal clarity, and can become a full-fledged cooperative in the course of the process, as is appropriate to your project. For more information about legal entity, see

Activity 14. The advantage of this is that you are immediately taking significant steps, which shows that you are taking the project seriously. The following applies to grant applications: the higher the budget, the better your plan and the more robust your organisation must be. This is an important moment to check whether your ambitions match the possibilities. If you cannot raise enough money for your big ambitions, you will have to adjust the activity plan and budget.

What is the result of activity 9?

- There is clarity about who will be managing the money received and how the transactions will be supervised.
- Sufficient financial coverage has been obtained to implement the Milestone B activity plan.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- How well are the required resources (capital and workforce) covered?
- Is sufficient money available for initial activities (like arranging community meetings etc)?
- To what extent does the energy community have formal (legal-organisational) status as a business entity?
- To what extent are energy project assets owned by your energy community?

Milestone A: Starting document

You have reached Milestone A: starting document. This is the result of all previous activities. In this document you describe what you want to achieve as a community energy organisation, and what activities you will undertake to ultimately arrive at the community energy project plan (Milestone C) at the end of the inspiration stage. In the starting document, you lay down the frameworks of your citizens' initiative as you envision them at this point. These frameworks can change later, but this provides clarity and guidance in the run-up to Milestone B. Share the starting document with interested residents and the contact person at the municipality.

Activity 10: Communicating with a broader group of citizens



Now that you can continue with your project, it's important to spread your story extensively in your community. This requires good communication with a website and newsletter. You could make a small communication plan in which you also think together with a number of creative persons about campaigns that can bring the subject to life in the community.

The communication plan contains what your message is and how you are going to involve a wider group of local residents. Some questions that can help are:

- ▶ What is the story of your project and organisation?
- ▶ How do you want to convey your identity?
- ▶ How can you make use of the existing networks?
- ▶ What are busy places in your neighbourhood?
- ▶ What do you want to explain to people?
- ▶ What do you want to invite people to?
- ▶ What call to action do you propose?

In order to be more inclusive, it's important to realise that some people read poorly and often find the information too complicated. This may be a larger group than you might initially think. You can use a lot of images in your communication and write at a B1/B2 grammar level. And keep communicating on paper because not everyone is active on the internet or uses email.

Ideas to create enthusiasm in your community include: organising a competition with a few young and creative people, placing a physical object in the community, or organising another engagement campaign that appeals to the target groups. You connect with the identity and characteristics of your community. If you go looking for people and are able to get your message across, you can immediately invite residents to the next community meeting.



Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

The project is part of a redevelopment plan for the public space in the Selwerd-Zuid district. The number of parking spaces will be reduced, and more public greenery will be created. The municipality had already started an engagement process for this redevelopment plan. The idea for the heating network was later added to the redevelopment plan because the combination of the various activities is cheaper and causes less inconvenience.

Grunneger Power joined the existing consultations to introduce heating into the process. Although there was initially little interest in the heating plans, a group emerged from the broader group that started working with the heating plan.

An awareness-raising campaign was launched consisting of:

- ▶ A leaflet with a letter that was distributed in the district
- ▶ Posters that were spread throughout the district
- ▶ Two information meetings organised for residents, with the topics 'heating and cooking without gas' and 'how does a district heating network work'.
- ▶ Biodegradable graffiti in the streets that indicated where the heating network would be located.

This awareness-raising campaign yielded little immediate response. The initiative remained with a small group of early adopters who continued with the project. However, this campaign helped to increase awareness of the heating initiative. Later in the process the group benefited from the campaigning.

What is the result of activity 10?

- ▶ You have set up at least two communication channels: newsletter, website and/or socials.
- ▶ You have communicated via at least one paper channel: for example, flyers, local newspaper or posters.
- ▶ People start talking about your project.
- ▶ You have invited people to the next community meeting.





Activity 11: Technical design

To work out the technical details of your project, you need to be aware of its technical scope. Work with publicly available information or ask somebody from the community to make a list of all the details you need to research or calculate. To avoid needlessly using a lot of the budget in this early stage of the project, it's wise to do your own research. If necessary, you can do the research on the details yourself but have the calculations done by an experienced consultant. But always check with your community first to see if somebody is willing to help you.

If you have the budget to have an experienced consultancy company prepare a list of technical details that you need to research as an initiative, try to obtain as much information as you can to fill in the details. For example, if you are building a solar installation on a roof, one needed detail is the carrying capacity of the roof. You need to find out what the needed carrying capacity is for your installation. Secondly, you need to know if the roof has the right construction to support the weight of the solar panels. You will need the construction drawings of the building owner, or you can work with public records. If your project involves retrofitting houses, you need to know the details of the construction of the houses. This can be done using a survey. But at this stage, you can also rely on public information. Much information is available online or can be obtained from public sources with the cooperation of the municipality. You can use this data to develop scenarios that can be calculated and compared.

If they are not part of your core team yet, every community has some engineers. Don't hesitate to ask them to meet with you for an hour or two to double check the technical design. Most likely they will become involved in helping you make a technical design and form a technical working group that reflects on the ideas of the core group. As mentioned before, reflection groups are low barrier ways to get people involved. It takes one or two hours a month. Most people, if they support the project, are happy to share their knowledge of a field of interest, especially engineers.

Pilot example: Les Économies – Île-de-France, France

The goal of the game, called *le Milwattteur* (inspired by a traditional French board game), is to gain energy savings of 1000 Wh. The game is composed of five different types of cards. The most prevalent card is the "Eco-gesture" card (52 cards), which gives Wh saved to the player, divided into different levels of savings: 25, 50, 75, 100 and 200 Wh. They represent 52 different eco-gestures, a level of financial investment and the effort to implement them. Then three types of cards go together in the game (5 different trios): an "Attack", a "Defence" and a "Protection". These combinations generate output on things that can impact energy consumption. For example, "harsh winter" can be given by Player A to Player B to prevent Player B from playing until Player B plays the "Defence" "put on a jumper" that saves Player B from the "attack" once, or the "Protection" "Well insulated house" that saves Player B for the rest of the game. The last type of card is a "bonus" that doubles the savings of "an eco-gesture" card and gives information about collective sufficiency. The card game is a tool we use during our activities. We start by explaining what sufficiency is, and the different forms it can take, so people are already able to give examples. Then we play the game, and an Économies is at the table to explain the details on a card or to ask questions to the players. The game was created to facilitate discussion and exchange between citizens. We also ask participants to write down "a gesture to make today, a gesture to make within the month, a gesture to share". Finally, the activity ends with key messages being given by the Economist to the audience.

Until now, some 20 to 25 persons have been present at each of our activities. All were citizens who reached out thanks to our communication channel or one of our partners.

What is the result of activity 11?

- There is a technical design of the project based on publicly available information.
- There is a preliminary technical calculation to see if the project is feasible or can be made feasible.
- You identified people in your community that can help you with technical questions and can reflect on the work the core team is doing.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Has the technology roadmap for your project(s) been defined?
- ▶ To what extent are the technologies applied by the energy community mature, and have they successfully been applied by other energy communities?
- ▶ Has a risk register been developed?
- ▶ How diversified are the energy community's assets?
- ▶ To what extent is the energy community depending on public funding (for running its operations)? (like subsidies, grants or tax exemptions)?

Activity 12: Community meeting: Presenting the general idea and attracting active community members



At the community meeting Presenting general idea and attract active community members, the basic principles and collaborations are central. In addition, the core team aims to gain the trust of local residents in order to be able to speak to the municipality and other possible partners on their behalf. If the first meeting was still modest, it's now important to invite a broad range of local residents.

At this community meeting, you will present Milestone A: Community Organisation Start Document. Based on this, you can discuss the wishes and concerns of the community again and explain how you want to address them. You further elaborate on the basic principles of your project. You can introduce potential partners to your project, such as the municipality or the owner of a large roof.

Again, be clear that you do not have all the answers and you need the help of the community to advance the project. To do this, you create working groups of community members who want to participate, and you invite people to sign up as ambassadors. If you need specific details of local citizens, such as their annual energy consumption, or if they have any connections with organisations that can become partners, then this is the time to ask. Make sure you have the tools ready for people to enter their details. These can be online tools for energy measurement or online surveys. You can also ask for ideas to broaden your reach as an initiative, for example how to reach community members who were not at the meeting. Finally, at the end of the meeting you can ask for a mandate to continue with the initiative as a core group.



Pilot example: Les Économies – Île-de-France, France

The goal of our community meeting was to make our project public and present our ideas to citizens interested in committing to and joining our community. During the community meeting, we introduced Enercoop's model as well as our vision of the energy transition and why citizens' involvement is so important. We then spoke about sufficiency as a totality, explaining the concept and why it's complementary to energy efficiency and renewable energy development. We presented the SCCALE 20–30–50 project and our ideas of what Les Économies would eventually look like. NégaWatt was present to give a bit of perspective on the subject and explain why sufficiency is so important and why we should all act to combat climate change. And finally there was a Q&A session. We ended the session with snacks and drinks to allow people to socialise. We reached the community through the members of Enercoop. The venue organisation also disseminated the event. For this meeting, we used PowerPoint slide decks and a number of facilitating tools to break the ice at the beginning.

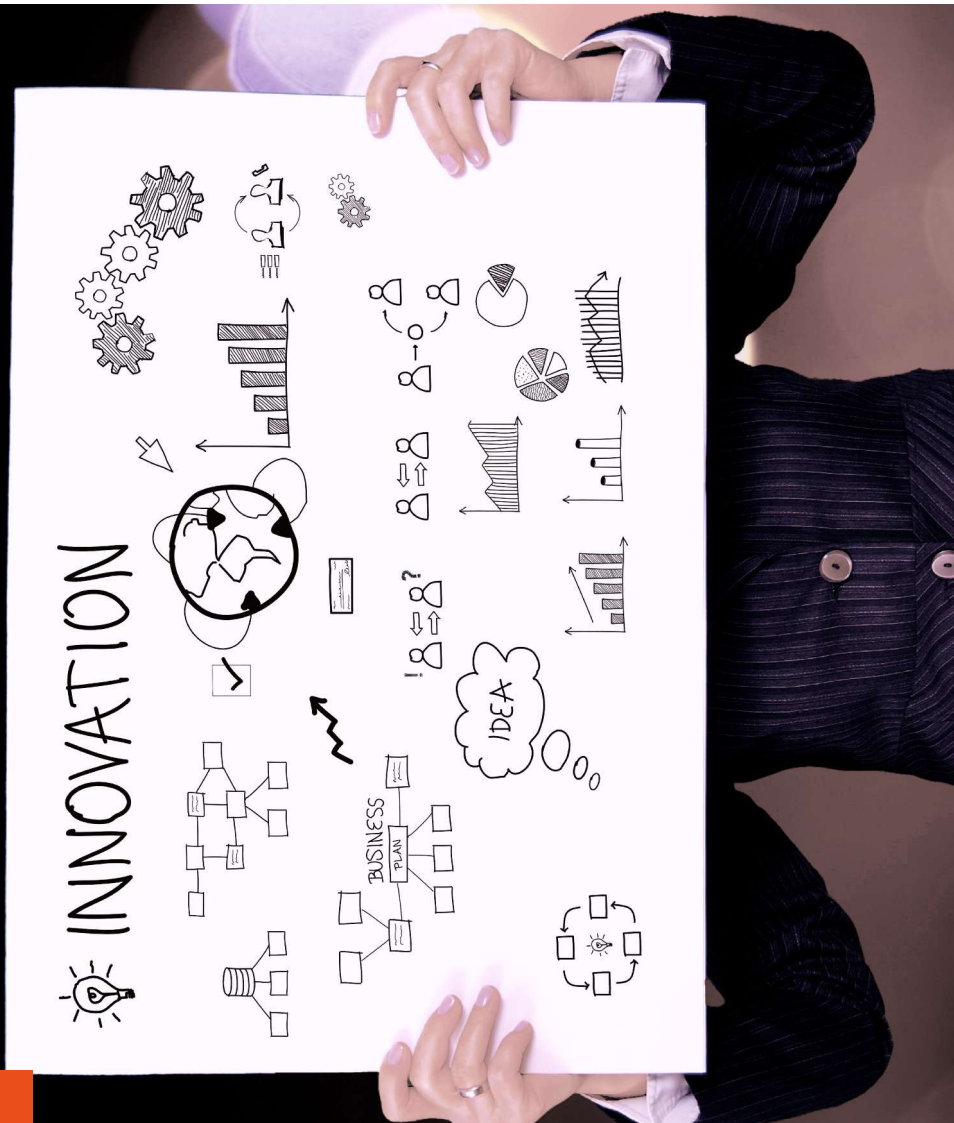
When can you judge this community meeting as having been successful?

- Basic principles have been formulated.
- Residents know the partners in the project.
- The core team has a mandate to continue with the initiative and to speak and cooperate as a community organisation on behalf of the community.
- The list of potential partners has grown.
- Local residents work together and talk in a positive, inviting atmosphere in which it is not only important to participate, but also to find the participation pleasant and enjoyable.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- To what extent is the energy community embedded in the local community?



Activity 13: Mandate for setting up a legal entity

The community meeting in Activity 12 resulted in a mandate from a broader group of residents to continue the project on the basis of the vision and principles, and to collaborate with the municipality. You want not only a mandate for your project, but also for the community organisation. You want the residents to have confidence in the community organisation so that it can collaborate with the municipality and develop plans. In addition to the starting points that were formulated during the community meeting, you make use of democratic values and energy community principles with which you underpin the values of a community energy project.

By making these guiding principles and values explicit and applying them, community building becomes part of the community organisation, and you can gradually build up trust and receive ever-wider support. Also, you can use this to explain your working method when in contact with the municipality and partners: you are not a market participant, not a government, but an energy community. You make this explicit and visible, for example on a website or social media account of your community organisation.

By focusing on democratic values, you make clear that the input and say of residents is paramount. The different dimensions of democracy are summarised below in six basic rules:

- ▼ **001** Deliberation: conducting substantive discussions and using citizen knowledge.
- ▼ **002** Accessibility: open meetings.
- ▼ **003** Inclusiveness: different types of people participate. There is room for disagreement, emotion and resistance.
- ▼ **004** A say: residents decide on the main points.

- ▼ **005** Transparency: you make visible what you are doing, and you ensure mutual trust so that tasks can be divided.
- ▼ **006** Efficiency: your process is valuable and workable. You do what is possible within the limits of your capacity as a community group.

Please remember that with this mandate, you cannot speak on behalf of all local members of a community. Doing so will result in awkward discussions with your municipality, since they are the representative body for all community members. You receive a mandate to speak for the network you represent, and you will gradually expand the network during the project. You can show everyone how you involve new groups of community members, you can show that the community has good discussions, that you include comments from residents in the plan, that you constantly make visible what you do, when people can join in the conversation and activities, and that residents make the decisions.

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

No new legal entity was needed in Groningen. Grunneger Power was an existing cooperative that was handling the heating project in Selwerd-Zuid. Residents participating in the heating project become members of the cooperative. Within Grunneger Power, a member group that meets periodically is formed for the specific project. The following matters are discussed in this group:

- ▼ **001** The setting of heat tariffs. These are determined by Warmtestad and explained in the group of members involved in the project. The residents have no formal influence on the heat tariffs.
- ▼ **002** Problems in the services provided by Warmtestad are discussed in the member group. This turns out to be effective. Discussing in group leads to recognition and faster solving of the problems.

In the future, Grunneger Power aims to play a bigger role and have greater influence for residents in heating projects. This will require further negotiations and agreements with the municipality and with Warmtestad about the control structure.

The ICA, the International Alliance for Cooperatives, has formulated seven principles. These principles make you the bearer of an internationally shared cooperative identity. This allows you to explain to the community that you are not a commercial company. These principles partially overlap with democratic values, but mainly indicate that you are a community organisation that is value-driven and does not focus on making a profit.

- ▼ **001** Voluntary and open membership
- ▼ **002** Democratic control by the members
- ▼ **003** Economic participation of members
- ▼ **004** Autonomy and independence
- ▼ **005** Education, training and information provision for members, employees and neighbours.
- ▼ **006** Cooperation between cooperatives
- ▼ **007** Attention to the community where the community initiative or cooperative is located.

What is the result of activity 13?

- ▼ Publication of the principles formulated by local residents (during the community meeting). Based on these principles, they trust the community organisation to work on the project on their behalf (with a mandate from the local residents) and to cooperate with the municipality and other partners.
- ▼ Publication of the democratic values and the cooperative principles with which the community organisation directs the community process and with which you shape the organisational development.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▼ To what extent does the energy community have a formal (legal-organisational) status as a business entity?
- ▼ Are decisions taken within the energy community transparent and participatory?
- ▼ To what extent are decision making rules regularly evaluated and updated?
- ▼ Do you feel that the rules for decision making are clear (e.g. at the General Assembly)?



Activity 14: Formalising cooperation with municipality and other partners

The community organisation will draw up a community energy plan together with local community members, in collaboration with the municipality. This collaboration can vary from project to project. In some cases, you agree on only informing the municipality about the progress. In most cases, they are responsible for permits, but there are many other forms. A municipality can join as a partner that is willing to invest or can supply you with locations to build solar installations or wind projects, or assets for retrofitting. Make sure there is room to share concerns and wishes about this. Be firm in your position; do not allow yourself to become an executive arm of the municipality. You represent your members and use the democratic values and ICA principles to underpin your working method. Make this change in the roles of the municipality and the new cooperation explicit in written agreements.

This activity requires that you, as a citizen initiative, choose to commence a constructive partnership with your municipality for the longer term. You also want to start a partnership at an administrative level. For the municipality, this often means a change in their role and working method, so it's important that you pay attention to this.

In addition to the project and community content, the conversation with the municipality is about attitude and relationship. Discuss your own ambitions and goals, compare them to the public ambitions and goals, and as a start find each other at the level of that goal. The community energy organisation must relate to the goals and tasks that the municipality has for the energy transition, which can be found in policy documents. Planning, priorities and tasks of the municipality will be influenced by the community organisation, because you become a partner in the implementation of that policy. Also, they need the free capacity to support your initiative as a partner.

The way you work together on the goals starts with the attitude. Community energy is not a top-down process, but also not only bottom-up. Rather it's working alongside each other as partners with a specific role to make the project a success. If necessary, discuss the traditional (top-down) working method of the municipality, otherwise you will not achieve an equal partnership. Allow mutual trust to grow by also aiming for connection in your own attitude towards the municipality. In addition, invest in the relationship with multiple people at the municipal organisation. In this activity you not only need government officials, but city council members must also be aware of and support the citizens' organisation.

Many projects will have other essential partners. For retrofitting houses, this can be a housing association or private homeowners. For the building a renewable energy production installation, this could be the roof owner or landowner. A stakeholder analysis allows you to identify the importance and degree of influence per stakeholder. Once you have determined the partners, together with these partners you establish the format in which you will meet, and with what frequency. In other words, you give shape to the consultation structure, for example in a project team, steering group or sounding board. You make agreements about the division of tasks and roles, the budget and the coverage of

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

The partners in the project are the municipality of Groningen, Warmtestad and Grunnegeer Power. At the executive level, the three parties share a mutual appreciation. Together they recognise the added value for the whole of the project. At the administrative level, no cooperation agreement has been signed yet between the three parties. This is partly because Grunnegeer Power wants a bigger role for the cooperative and more influence for the residents in upcoming projects. For this project, as long as Grunnegeer Power sticks to its current role in the project, everyone is satisfied. The ambition for the future gives rise to discussions between the partners. The municipality and the management of Warmtestad must get used to the role of a citizen cooperative and the control of residents in heating projects.

costs for Milestone C in order to draw up the actual community energy plan.

You will not know all the specific details of the project, but you will be able to create consensus around the idea of a community energy project based on specific principles. You agree that, in a process of co-creation with the community and the essential stakeholders, you will work out the financial, organisational and technical details. You record these cooperation agreements in a letter of intent or as part of a project plan.

What is the result of activity 14?

- The municipality accepts the democratic legitimacy of the citizen organisation and its position as an energy community.
- The citizen organisation has a letter of intent to cooperate with the municipality or other agreements have been made with the municipality at an administrative level.
- There is a detailed stakeholder analysis.
- The community organisation has a letter of intent with the essential stakeholders needed to make the project successful.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- How would you describe the relationship with the local authority?
- How do you rate the support by the local community?
- Does the energy community experience support from local officials and civil servants?

Activity 15: Prepare to set up a legal entity

The community organisation takes shape and expands to be able to handle greater responsibilities and to fulfil the democratic task for its members. In this activity, you ensure that multiple roles related to the workflows and capacities are fulfilled in the team. For example, there is someone on the team who maintains relationships with partners. In addition, multiple aspects or tasks are assigned to these roles. For example, the role of connector consists of communication, volunteer coordinator and community builder. There is an accountability structure, good coordination, and a common online environment in which files are shared. You also have a clear organisational structure for the input of volunteers and for decision-making with the community. This ensures democratic legitimacy and strengthens the mandate of the local member for the community organisation.

At this stage, it may be logical to decide to pay people for specific tasks. For example, a project leader, a community process facilitator, or a team of process facilitators can be hired to organise meetings and prepare reports. In addition, a communication professional can, for example, take on the implementation of communication tasks while residents think about the key messages and special target groups. It's important that you make clear agreements about the distinction between the tasks of residents (volunteers) and the supporting tasks of paid employees. You should also make agreements about the compensation that you as a community organisation offer for paid tasks.

Part of the growth of your organisation will depend on the use of external expertise. You can work together with other community energy organisations in the region, or there might be a national federation. You can also seek cooperation with private organisations. At this stage, these are mainly consultants who, for

example, help with technical design and the business case. But bear in mind that they often pay little attention to the specifics of the organisational structure of an energy community.

Think of this activity as a trial run for a democratic community energy organisation. While you may not have established a formal legal entity yet, you will operate as if you were a formal organisation. Together you can find out what works well. On that basis you can set up your legal form with articles of association and internal regulations. You will later formalise this before the civil-law notary. It's possible that for some reason a legal entity needs to be formed at an earlier stage of the project. Communicate to the community that this was a necessary step at the time and that the actual functioning and governance of the organisation will develop at a later stage.

Also, it's important to work together with broad groups of people from the community. In this way you increase the network, the commitment, the familiarity and the substantive knowledge about the specifics of the project and the democratic values of your organisation.

Pilot example: Les Economies – Île-de-France, France

To set up the legal entity, we performed a benchmark of different existing solutions for our energy community that had been verified by the legal team of Enercoop. We ended up selecting the "association" model. This model is very flexible and many of the parameters of the association had to be decided collectively by the group. A small group looked at a different model of an existing association, and shared their findings to the whole group. We discussed the different governance models, kind of members, contribution, subject of the association, role of the board, and members of the board. After the various discussions, we were able to draft a first version of our articles of association. We finished the work by holding two other discussion meetings on each point of the articles of association, so we were sure that everything was in line with what the community wanted their association to be.

Finally, we organised with all members a constituent general assembly to elect the board and vote to accept the articles of association. We sent the document to the prefecture and they created the association.

Three volunteer roles are relevant at this stage. All three of these roles are needed, but you can start with one or two roles to keep things organised. Over the years, the number of roles and the number of participants per role will grow.

- ▶ A connecting role as an ambassador. This is crucial because the ambassador will inform the community about the project. This gives residents confidence and makes it possible to reach a broader group of citizens.
- ▶ A substantive role as a member of working groups. This ensures broad knowledge and involvement from the neighbourhood. For example, a technology and business case working group that develops various models; a citizen engagement and communication working group that involves the community. They can now meet regularly under the coordination of the core team to work on a part of the project.
- ▶ A reflective role as a member. This ensures that those who do not have the time, but do have the specific knowledge, can reflect on the plans. This doesn't need to take up much of their time, but it gives you a good connection to address specific detailed questions to people with the right knowledge.

What is the result of activity 15?

- ▶ You know how to involve volunteers in these roles through meetings, your network and your communication.
- ▶ The community energy organisation has become stronger as several roles have been developed, a work structure has been set up, and there is a paid employee who works for the organisation.
- ▶ You work as if you were a formal organisation.
- ▶ Several working groups were started. These working groups have members and meet regularly.
- ▶ There is a more detailed activity plan to prepare for reaching Milestone C.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- To what extent does the energy community have a formal (legal-organisational) status as a business entity?

Milestone B: Community energy organisation with a clear goal

You have now reached Milestone B: a community energy organisation with a clear goal. In the previous activities you worked on creating collaboration and a vision. As a community energy organisation, you have now charted a course that is supported by residents in the community and possible partners. The charter document contains the results of the above activities. This forms a good basis for the rest of the project. It is good to share this document with interested residents, the municipality and other partners.



Activity 16: Community energy project plan



Drawing up the community energy plan is a process that you go through together with local members and partners. All that has been learned, collected, agreed and decided is brought together in this document.

You can collect the input of residents at community meetings and by means of citizen engagement tools. In addition, you can ask partners to provide input for the community energy plan. They often have knowledge and data that can be included in this document. Make sure that you've made clear agreements about the tasks and roles of partners in this process. As a core team, you draw up a community energy plan based on the collected input. This is a discussion document around which you can start a new conversation with members and partners to determine whether they agree with it. Make sure the partners understand that your members will have a say in the further development of the plan.

What are the results of activity 16?

- There is a detailed action plan for the project that is agreed to by the members.
- The plan clearly describes the actions needed to obtain financing for the next stage.



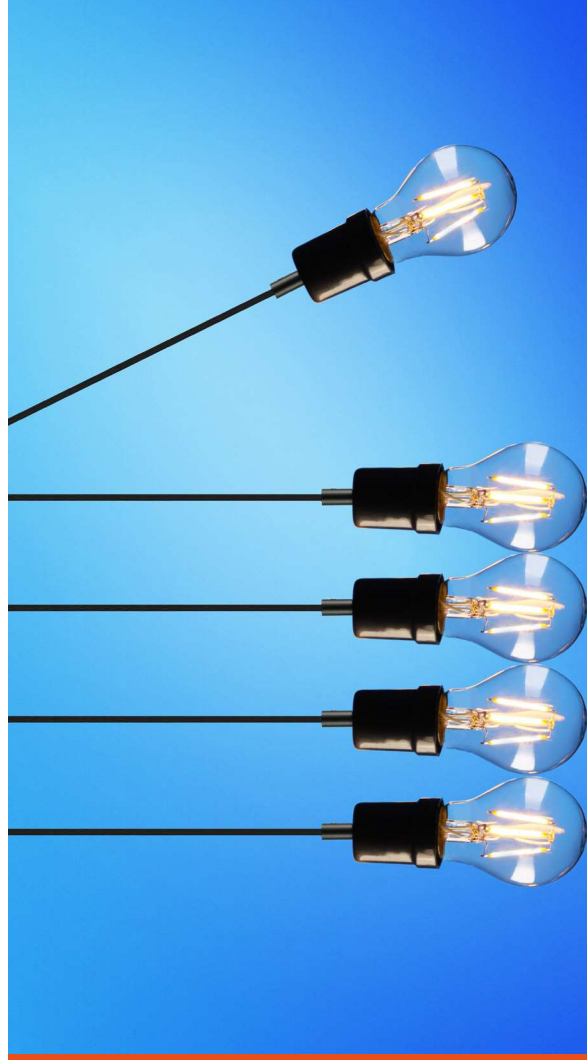
After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- Has the technology roadmap for your project(s) been defined?
- To what extent are the technologies applied by your RC mature, and have they successfully been applied by others before?

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

The municipality of Groningen developed heating scenarios for the city with the help of various consultancy firms (including CE Delft). The possibilities were described for each district. Initially, these were technical scenarios. Social factors were added later in the process. This resulted in an assessment framework for the heating transition per district. Which districts have priority and what are the possibilities for those districts? The presence of heat sources from nearby data centres and the realisation of a large district heating network in Northwest Groningen meant that a district heating network was an obvious solution for the Selwerd-Zuid district.

In addition, the district would be redesigned. The construction of a district heating network had to be included immediately, to prevent the streets from having to be broken up again later.



Activity 17: Project plan committed to by partners

Once you've made an agreed community energy project plan, it's essential to obtain a commitment from the other partners. The project plan clearly describes the role of these partners. Also, it's clear which knowledge is still lacking, but this will be filled in at a later stage. For example, financial compensation for using a plot of land or a roof. Other partners could be the distribution system operator, housing association, or homeowners.

If the municipality is an important partner, this activity should include making contact with the municipal council to gauge whether they agree with the basic principles, and initiating a discussion about this. You want the council to accept your community energy plan as part of its policy, so that you can actually start developing your project if the result is positive. In many cases, the municipality needs to issue a permit or provide other support. With this action, you get democratic support from the council before you begin your plan. Of course, you can also discuss the details with the responsible municipal officials.

You make an agreement with these partners, with the project plan as an appendix. This way, these partners are committed to at least everything that is agreed in the project plan. This is crucial in the next stage of development, where you start to invest a considerable amount of time and money in the preparation stage.

What is the result of activity 17?

- ▶ Partners are committed to the plan and to their role.
- ▶ Partners agree that the members of the community are in the lead and have a democratic vote over the process and the project.

- ▶ The city council is at least aware of and positive about the project. In some cases, an official vote has been taken to support the project as part of local policy.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ How would you describe the relationship with the local authority?
- ▶ Does the energy community experience support from local officials or civil servants?
- ▶ Have the required permits been submitted, or even already been approved?



Activity 18: Organisation is ready for the preparation stage

In this activity you ensure that the community energy organisation is sufficiently equipped to execute all the activities defined in the community energy plan. That is, you have the needed people and financial resources to start the preparation stage. Not doing this beforehand can lead to significant delays and costs if you get stuck in the preparation stage due to a lack of resources, knowledge or capacity.

The most important thing is that you have assembled the right knowledge, skills and capacity in your organisation to be able to carry out the activities you envisaged in the next stage. Sometimes you have to look beyond your own community for the necessary knowledge and skills, and hire external expertise. See if you can find this expertise at other energy communities in your region or country. You can set up mutual cooperation agreements between energy communities in your country. You can also use consultancy firms for parts of your

work. This requires you to properly fulfil a role as a client who asks the right questions in order to not waste money on research that does not help your project.

The community energy organisation functions best if the roles within the organisation are well defined, including the associated responsibilities and tasks. You clearly define where decisions are made and who executes them. So, everybody knows their role within an agreed scope (budget and working plan) within which they can execute their tasks. They also know that if anything changes regarding the scope, they need to go back to others who have the mandate to make these decisions for change. Having clear roles makes it easy to work together and makes it more fun, versus constantly having discussions concerning what somebody's mandate or role is in the project. This way it becomes a collective action, and you should therefore also share the fun of achieving intermediate results with each other. In organisations with many volunteers, it's important to have a back-up for tasks. This ensures continuity. Therefore, work in pairs on the execution of tasks.

In addition to professionalism, the network in the community (e.g. street ambassadors) and workable relationships with your partners (such as the municipality, network managers, water board, local companies, advisers) are also indispensable. This goes much further than having a list of names. We are referring to a package of agreements about basic principles with those involved. How you work together (e.g. frequency of consultations, who is involved in what), the roles, responsibilities, tasks, and results that you can expect from each other. And who does what if the agreements are not complied with? Being equipped, therefore, also means that you have your finances in order. This means that there is money available, that the money is well managed, that you can hire people, and that you can account for the expenditure. You also need a good organisation with a back office to answer emails, and someone to keep track of schedules and tasks. It must be clear how and from whom you will receive this money.

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

We are trying to minimise unpaid, voluntary work, and thus always try to remunerate any work that some of our members might do for us, such as legal advice and preparation of the project file for the distribution system operator. It's important to identify the available capacities of the energy community's members. We supported some paid work for Hyperion through European programmes and relevant funding. Insofar as voluntary work exists, we try to share the organisational burden by keeping various members engaged, and also frequently acknowledge people's contributions as a way to show our appreciation and to boost morale. Always opt for using the capacities within your community, rather than relying on external support. This allows members to feel more like co-owners of the project. It's important to have paid staff with dedicated roles and responsibilities so as to keep the momentum going.

Finally, you have to make sure you have (are given or take) the time to do what needs to be done: realistic schedules that give everyone room and time to contribute. If you experience stress in the team, or when you have community meetings where people are surprised about the decisions you've made, this is an important signal to see whether you have enough human resources, the right people, and sufficient funding for your ambition and result agreements.

What is the result of activity 18?

- ✔ There is a good team of volunteers, paid staff and hired expertise.
- ✔ The citizen energy organisation is a well-functioning organisation.
- ✔ You know where you can obtain sufficient funding and have time available to carry out the plans made.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ✔ Has the first paid staff member been hired?
- ✔ How strongly is the number of staff members fluctuating?
- ✔ To what extent are the key personnel regularly communicating with each other?
- ✔ Have clear management processes been defined?
- ✔ To what extent is the energy community championed by influential individuals?

Activity 19: Analysing regulations, needed permits and their costs

Almost every community energy project has to adhere to specific regulations or needs permits. It is important to make an analysis of the regulations and permits in order to avoid surprises in the preoperative stage that can cause significant delays. In the case of energy savings or energy retrofitting, you may need permits when working on, for example, historical buildings. Even simple awareness-raising projects or energy-saving monitoring projects must adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation.

Look not only look at the legal requirements for the project, but also for the entire organisation. In some countries, EU regulations on the definition of energy communities have been transposed into local laws, which helps to give clear guidance on your legal status or any obligations you need to have included in your organisation's articles of association. In the future, you're probably going to ask for investments from your members to ensure that you're clear about what you can and cannot do from a financial and legal perspective. Finally, in most countries there are specific laws about the energy market and what you need to do to participate in these markets as either a producer of renewable energy or as a supplier to your members.

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

Dijlemolens

To discover which permits were applicable, advice needed to be obtained prior to permit submission. In this process, it soon became apparent that the permits were highly dependant on the technology finally chosen, but also vice versa. The proposed technology also had to be adjusted after obtaining advice from the party that needed to authorise the permit (in this case the VMM, the Flanders Environmental Agency). This ensured that the analysis of the necessary permits also contributed to the decision on the final technology.

In this analysis, you can work with the municipality as a partner. In most cases they can refer you to the right people within the organisation that can tell you specifically which permits are needed for your project. In addition, try to speak with other energy communities that have already gone through the process of developing a project. They will know more about the needed regulations. Another option is to set up a legal reflection working group with members that have some legal expertise that can help point you in the right direction.

What are the results of activity 19?

- A document listing regulations that must be respected for the project to succeed. Consider technical, financial, and organisational aspects.
- A clear analysis of the regulations you need to take into consideration and how you will integrate these in the project.
- List of permits needed to develop the project.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- To what extent does the energy community have a formal (legal-organisational) status as a business entity?
- Have the required permits been submitted, or even already been approved?

Activity 20: Initial business case

When your project plan, needed permits and costs are clear, you can then start working out the technical and financial aspects in a first technical design and business case. The design and business case becomes part of the community energy plan. This will be the basis on which various parties and partners can decide to make the transition to the preparation stage.

In many cases concerning large projects, a consultancy firm or technical partner can be involved in drawing up a global design and the draft business case. You work out the various technical components in collaboration with this partner. In the case of a district heating project, this activity can be a very intensive and extensive, but also with smaller solar projects getting the technical and financial details right is crucial, and some professional experience is needed.

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

Originally (until the beginning of 2022) the plan was for Grunneger Power to act as heat supplier for the residents. Grunneger Power would purchase the heat from Warmtestad. In that case, Grunneger Power would manage the contacts with residents and deliver the service. However, the margin for Grunneger Power turned out to be too small to provide administration and technical support to residents, and to cover the risks. Moreover, this would lead to complex contract negotiations. The various parties were not ready for that.

Now, the plan is that Warmtestad will directly supply heat to the residents. There is still no insight into the business case for the supply of heat to individual homeowners. Warmtestad works with a global business case, as they do when they connect flats or non-residential buildings. The calculations are too coarse to apply to individual homeowners. There is also little transparency about the cost of the heat sources. There is a subsidy for the project from Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken (PAW, the Natural Gas-Free Neighbourhoods Programme). The municipality contributes financially via the PAW fund. Greater insight is needed into the exact business case because the PAW fund is a one-time subsidy.

However, do not just give this activity away to third parties. The external expert is there to help you make and fill in the business case. It is, however, crucial that you as a core team and other members of the community learn to work and understand the business case. The consultant should discuss and make the members of the technical and business case working group understand what the assumptions behind the numbers are. This is important because in later stages you and the members will need to explain this to a broader group of citizens.

The initial business case shows the preconditions under which the project is financially feasible. This means that the necessary investments and annual costs to maintain the facility can be paid for from the sale of heat (and cold), the managed energy saving, or the production of renewable energy. Until now, you had made a global calculation and assumed that the plan was financially feasible. This assumption was based on the fact that other developers also managed to build similar technologies. Now, you need to go into detail about the cost and revenue of each aspect of your project. Finally, the business case should also make clear how it benefits your members and the community. This can be as an investor in the energy community or as a consumer of the product.

If your initial business case shows that there is still a financial gap between the investments, the annual cost, and the sale of the product you are going to deliver, this is not a problem. The initial business case should show you what you need to work on to get prices down, and what your scope for negotiations are with suppliers and contractors. If these cost reduction opportunities are exhausted, this would be an argument for potential donors or government subsidies to bridge the financial gap. If subsidies are not yet in place, it might be a lengthy process to obtain them.

While projected revenue streams are important for making a business case for the project, they are also important for the financial sustainability of your organisation. It is quite possible that your organisation is able to run on volunteers with a small overhead for the first few years. But if your organisation does not have projects that provide revenue for the organisation, you will run into financial

trouble in the future. The more projects you have, the less likely it is that you can manage with only volunteers. You need to take the future of your organisation into consideration in the business case.

What is the result of activity 20?

- ▶ An initial business case has been made that shows the preconditions under which the project is financially feasible.
- ▶ Members of the core group and members of the community with specific knowledge understand the business case and can explain it independently to the community.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Does the energy community's business case run break-even?
- ▶ Has the energy community business case been evaluated and is it considered feasible?
- ▶ To what extent do energy community operations result in a healthy financial-economic business case?
- ▶ To what extent does the cash flow provide enough incoming revenues to pay for running expenses?
- ▶ Has the cash burn rate been calculated?
- ▶ To what extent are additional funds available to generate cash flow?

Activity 21: Community meeting: Presenting initial business case and introducing set-up of legal entity

conditions are required to have a feasible business case and what you as an organisation will try to do in the future to meet these conditions. You can also provide a glimpse into the impact of future scenarios on the organisation's business case. For example, how many projects you need to become a viable organisation with several people employed. Finally, you discuss the benefits for the community and the members individually.

In addition, you start the conversation about the ambition and organisational form of the citizen organisation. Which organisational form would best fit the organisation in the future? In this meeting, you want to come up with starting points for the choice of organisation type. It is a further elaboration of the principles obtained at the Activity 12 community meeting. Conduct an initial poll on the tricky issues and the preferred direction for the organisation. During this community meeting you can already invite people to become a board member for the organisation that may be formed, or to help in the development of the organisation.

You close the evening with a provisional vote to proceed. This is neither a hard "yes" or hard "no" to stop or continue. It is a vote to demonstrate whether the members of the community have confidence in your story. You have presented them the plan and the financial issues. The question is whether they believe you can make it work. What are the possible results? If you as a core team believe you can make it work, but your members do not, you need to work on the presentation of your project. Or it can be that your members support you and believe you as a core team can make it work, knowing all the preconditions. You can consider this as a vote to proceed with setting up a legal entity to continue the project. A third option is that you do not believe in the project yourselves, and your members do not believe in the project. Then you need to hold off on next steps and reconsider your project, or work on it until a consensus to proceed is reached.

There are roughly three ambition levels with organisational options.

- Residents can continue as a democratic company: the legal form this can take

Central at this community meeting is the business case and the 'Go' for moving ahead. In addition, you start the conversation about setting up a legal entity. Both topics are an important part of the community energy plan. Finally, this community meeting is the time to gauge whether the community members believe in the plan.

A working group and the core team have worked out the initial business case. You have insight into the costs and needed investments. During this community meeting you will present the project's business case. You can demonstrate what

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

What do you do in the monthly meetings to address the results in the bullet points mentioned above and other aspects that are important?

The Dijlemolens project was made possible by an intensive participatory process with the VME, in which it played an active role and helped shape the project. Therefore, an energy working group was created: a delegation of the VME/inhabitants and Extraqt, which came together on a weekly basis. The primary purpose of the meetings was to monitor progress of the project, make decisions, and certainly to ensure project continuity and commitment if the project was progressing slowly or had to await a decision from higher up. The meetings consist of Extraqt and delegates from the co-owners' association. This ensures involvement of the residents in each step of the project since they are regular participants in these meetings and contribute much input and insight. Each important decision is and must be discussed in these meetings before making it final. This approach created a well-informed and engaged energy community in the building. A delegate from the city also attended the meetings from time to time, as did the contractors when needed. When certain decisions had to be made, a slide presentation was used.

- depends on the national legal context. But the premise is that you will be an organisation in which members can invest and can expect an equitable profit.
- ▶ The organisation is not going to invest and will remain a volunteer organisation. In this case, few investments will be made and the investments will not generate a return. You will work with volunteers and be financed mostly by subsidies and donations.
 - ▶ Finally, the members can decide that the project risk is too high and that it's better to have another organisation (either local government or a private party) make the investment. In this case, you assume a representative role to make sure you negotiate the best benefits for the community and your members.

What is the result of activity 21?

- ▶ A provisional choice has been made to proceed.
- ▶ Basic principles were formulated about the role of the citizen collective.
- ▶ The core team has a mandate to continue with the initiative and to set up a legal entity.
- ▶ Residents join the activities, i.e. becoming a board member or taking on some other role.
- ▶ The list of interested parties has grown.
- ▶ People feel part of the community.

TRACK PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT TOOL

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent do energy community operations result in a healthy financial-economic business model?
- ▶ Does the energy community's business case run break-even?
- ▶ Has the energy community business case been evaluated and is it considered feasible?

Activity 22: Setting up a legal entity

When establishing the legal entity, you make the transition from an informal group of people who work together on the basis of trust, to a formal organisation in which roles and responsibilities are defined. This entity can enter into legal obligations with your cooperating partners. This is a big step.

What can help in this process is to begin acting like a legal entity even before this activity. Then you'll find out by doing whether you have thought out your responsibilities and tasks properly. Now is the time to evaluate your working method and discuss which articles of association and regulations you want to establish as the formal rules of the energy communities organisation.

Determine together what the crucial issues are that you want to properly discuss. Often, these are:

- ▶ The ambition of your organisation: your organisation needs an objective in the articles of association. This can be broad (e.g. making the community more sustainable) or limited (e.g. implementing these kinds of projects).
- ▶ Make sure the objectives of your organisation have a flexible formulation (broad objective), or a narrow and prioritising formulation (limited objective).
- ▶ The composition of the board and how these people are elected and replaced.
- ▶ The powers of the General Assembly of Members and the rules of your democracy.
- ▶ That the membership structure is open, i.e., based on voluntary participation and democratic principles. Then you have two options when it comes to choosing the type of legal entity: an association or a cooperative.
- ▶ Take on one or several roles regulated in energy market legislation.
- ▶ That the members or shareholders who are located in the vicinity of your local

energy project control and own the project.

- ▶ That you work based on social rules: democratic, value-oriented, and learning.

The best fitting type of legal entity will depend on your national legal context. In general, when opting to be an entrepreneur, a cooperative is the best legal form. On the other hand, an association fits best if you will be taking on a more volunteer representative role. However, these are not the only solutions. The community energy guide elaborates on this topic in Chapter 6.

Your national legal context also determines if from this point you are considered an energy community. In some cases, such as in Greece, an energy community has become a separate new legal entity. In other countries, you need to adhere to certain values. Check your legal context in order to take these into account. From now on, this guide will refer to the new legal entity as an energy community, regardless of its specific legal form.

Fortunately, the step to giving your organisation formal status by turning it into a legal entity is less difficult than one might think. However, this step requires the necessary attention and thought, since it lays the foundation for the future of your organisation. So take your time. If necessary, you can hold an extra community meeting to have a vote on the proposed articles of association and the proposed (interim) board.

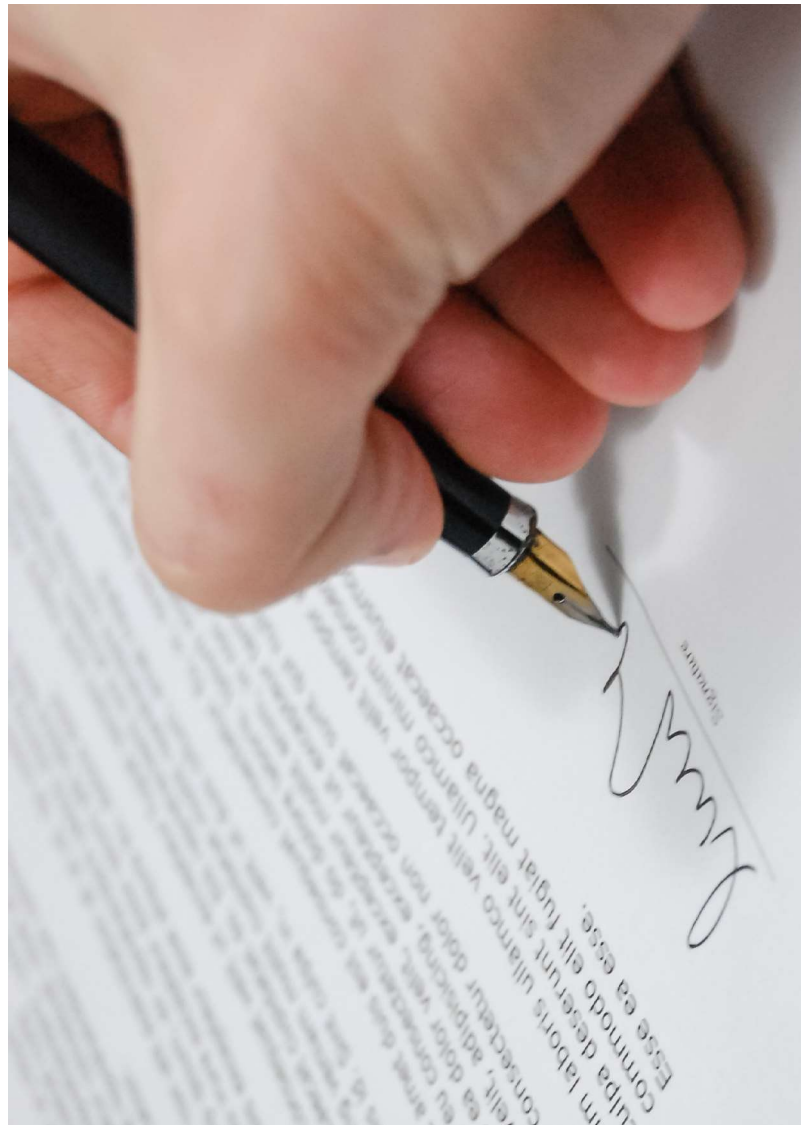
What is the result of activity 22?

- ▶ Draft articles of association have been drawn up and discussed before the civil-law notary.
- ▶ The community energy organisation is a formal legal entity.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent does the energy community have a formal (legal-organisational) status as a business entity?



Activity 23: Activate a broader group of participants

At this stage, it's important that the new legal entity and your project become better known in the community. Attracting and deploying volunteers is crucial. Thanks to these volunteers, the project comes to life and can grow. Ambassadors, for example, ensure that various people come into contact with your project and the community becomes stronger. Energy saving measures are implemented through the energy coaches, and you get to know more and more houses. Community members have substantive discussions about the plans in working groups and at community meetings. The goal is to build up a large membership base in order to enter the preparation stage.

At the same time, the story of your project grows. You are increasingly able to capture local identity and pride, and connect it to your project. More and more people recognise themselves in your expressions. You take up your position in the local community and keep in touch with other energy communities in the region or at national level.

These positive developments are difficult to quantify and differ greatly per project. In addition, the quality of the contact with citizens is central. This determines the trust people have in the organisation. The numbers and percentages therefore serve as a guideline and are not a performance indicator.

Pilot example: Les Economies – Île-de-France, France

To celebrate the first anniversary of our community, we organised – in collaboration with Enercoop and the City of Paris – one of our activities and invited people through different information channels in order to have the most varied audience possible. We implemented our activity as described earlier and focused on explaining to participants that we are willing to recruit new members. This process is repeated each time we organise actions to recruit the maximum number of people.

What is the result of activity 23?

- An increasing number of residents are reading the newsletter, participating in meetings or campaigns, as well as in the activities you undertake.
- You obtain the membership level you think you need to make the investments needed to reach your goal.
- You grow in all dimensions of democratic values.
- Awareness of your project is growing.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- Has a list of members been created?
- How strongly is the number of members fluctuating?
- To what extent is the energy community embedded within the local community?
- Does the energy community have more than 20 members?
- How many households are reached (i.e. persuaded to cooperate or participate in the energy collective) per neighbourhood action?

Activity 24: Reconfirm cooperation contracts with partners as a legal entity

For previous activities, you made agreements with partners on a personal basis. Now you are a legal entity that can commit itself legally to partners. In previous activities, you agreed on the plan and the process. Now, knowing more technical and financial details, it is best to reconfirm the previous agreements and to go deeper into detail with your partners. Agreements and frameworks are established in a cooperation agreement on the basis of which the preparation stage can start. You therefore meet with your partners. In the preparation stage, this can be the municipality, the housing association, building owners, the distribution system operator or other partner(s). This coordination and these agreements are necessary to reach the final milestone of the community energy plan, and to attract financing for the next stage. In the next stage, your hours and capital invested will grow extensively, and you don't want to run the risk of a partner changing its mind halfway through the process, thereby risking the project and its investments.

In order to conclude the agreement, a clear division of roles is needed. You can have the corresponding tasks performed by market parties, or you can accomplish some of them yourself. There is a difference between being responsible for a certain role and doing everything yourself. As an organisation, you can be responsible for certain roles, but hire others to execute the associated tasks. If you do not see a role for yourself in the long term, you can still choose to play an active role in the preparation stage, and then leave control to other parties. During the preparation stage, you have the opportunity to contribute the values and interests of citizens to the design process and realisation of the project. At this stage too, you can be responsible for something without having to know every detail or be able to do it all yourself.

You can form partnerships or purchase support as described below:

- ▼ **001** As an energy community, you initiate a partnership with a project developer. If, as an energy community, you lack the hands-on knowledge that is necessary for the development of the project, you can realise the project together with a project developer. The partnership also includes the element of risk spreading. The partner wants to have the hours paid, but this may also be partly included in the financing of the project at a later stage. This means that the developer assumes some of the risk and you need to have an honest discussion about how the developer wants to be rewarded for this risk.
- ▼ **002** As an energy community you can hire support from a project developer. This can also be another energy community in the region. This means that there is a client-contractor relationship. Here, it's important that the financing

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

Although the Dijlemolens is a project that originated with the City of Leuven, it is now fully supported and run by the association of co-owners (VME) itself and Extraqt, with the city taking on a mere directing role. A cooperation agreement has been established between the two parties to not only ensure smooth cooperation between the two parties, but also to ensure the transfer to the Dijlemolens of the Flemish subsidy that the City of Leuven receives in this regard. The cooperation agreement had to be approved by both the Leuven City Council and the board of the Dijlemolens. In this cooperation agreement, clear roles were distinguished and allocated. E.g. the VME is required to request a minimum of three quotations, and apply for the permits itself, while the cost of these are included in the subsidy and will be covered by the city. Other agreements are defined, such as the amount of the subsidy, invoice details (how and when), committing to sharing with the city the data obtained from this energy system for up to 10 years after installation, and more. This cooperation agreement was made possible by an intensive participatory process with the VME, in which they themselves took an active role and helped shape the project. Also, an energy working group was created (cfr. a delegation of the VME/inhabitants and Extraqt) which met on a weekly basis. In addition, all residents were questioned and informed throughout the process. Other important stakeholders that needed to approve the works were the city council and the Flemish environmental society.

for the preparation stage is available in advance, because the party you work with will have to be paid.

In the cooperation agreement, you also describe which financial resources are being used for the cash flows for the preparation stage. For example, which tasks are covered by the municipal budget and government resources? And what is the financial responsibility of the energy community? Remember to not sign any agreements before proposing the agreements at a general assembly. You should never commit the energy community to any financial obligations without your members' approval.

This cooperation agreement must be in line with principles established by the citizens and must be approved by the citizens (as part of the community energy plan) during a community meeting (Activity 26) or in the process that follows. In addition, the city council must approve the cooperation agreement.

What is the result of activity 24?

- ▶ Clear agreements with partners about the division of roles in the preparation stage, and a collectively shared plan on how the planning costs for elaborating the preferred scenario will be paid for.
- ▶ A cooperation agreement has been approved by the municipality.
- ▶ The cooperation agreement is in accordance with the principles established by the citizens.

Activity 25: Obtaining a financial commitment for the next stage

During the preparation stage, you will work on the community energy project plan. This results in a community energy plan with a technical design and business case that are supported by the local community members and partners. Implementation of this plan requires a budget to cover the costs. The activity plan defined the tasks and roles required to this end. In this activity, the budget is quantified, and the necessary financial coverage is applied for and obtained.

The budget for the preparation stage includes costs for the application of permits, final business case, technical construction calculations, project managers, and community energy process leaders whose work will become more extensive. There are several possible sources for this budget. The municipality is a crucial partner. Municipalities or regional governments often have subsidies available for these kinds of activities. It is crucial that the municipality facilitates the bottom-up initiatives in their community, for example by providing financial resources.

Other sources can be local businesses, sponsoring the initiative either in cash or in kind. Other agreements made are sometimes with local companies or consultants on a no cure no pay basis. If the project becomes a success and is



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent is the energy community depending on public funding (like public funds, subsidies, grants or tax exemptions)?

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

Having formed the legal entity as dictated by law, we set the cooperative's share value at a fixed price in our articles of association and then ask each member to buy one share in order to formalise their membership in the community. Deciding the price of the cooperative share is a calculus that balances the following elements: setting the price low enough to be accessible to all types of households, but also high enough so that individuals who buy a share feel committed to the project. Since Hyperion is (at least for the foreseeable future) working with small-scale solar projects, it is appropriate to have the share set at a moderately low price, like 100 to 150 euros.

financed by members or a bank, you agree to pay the actual cost of the services the companies supplied. If the project fails, they absorb the risk. When making these agreements, make sure you do not lose your autonomy as an initiative by giving these companies a majority vote in the project.

Finally, you can ask your members. However, at this stage of development, the project carries a high level of risk. You do not know all the details, and in most cases your level of professionalism and knowledge of project development is not yet at a high level. When asking your members for a financial investment for the next stage, be very clear that they should see it more as a donation than an investment. If the project is successful, it will be an investment with an equitable return. But at this stage of development, they are donating because they like the project plan and trust the organisation.

What is the result of activity 25?

- A budget for the preparation stage with the financial backing of the municipality, committed partners, members, or a combination of the three.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- To what extent is the energy community depending on public funding (like subsidies, grants or tax incentives)?
- Is there sufficient funds available to start the initial activities?
- To what extent are additional funds available to generate cash flow?
- Has the energy community business case been evaluated and is it considered feasible?
- Does the energy community experience support from local officials and civil servants (i.e. in relation to getting financial support)?

Activity 26: Community meeting: General Assembly

This community meeting will be your first general assembly as a legal entity. Your membership has grown, so remember that there are members who know all the details, and new members who know nothing yet. It is best to inform new members in a separate meeting preceding the general assembly to bring them up to speed. Explain the process you went through, your goals and ambitions, and a general idea of the project. In a second or later part of the meeting, all members are invited to finalise this inspiration stage together, to celebrate all the work you've done, and the fact that you've come this far as a community during the inspiration stage.

There are some important decisions to be made at this meeting. The members of the board have not been officially elected by the general assembly. They have appeared before a civil-law notary as individual persons in order to set up the legal entity. It is now time to confirm the board members with a vote in the general assembly. This gives you an elected mandate from your members.

Outside the general assembly, you have negotiated cooperation agreements with

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

In the General Assembly we discussed all the procedural issues that deal with the community, updates to the current project of collective self consumption, potential new projects, accepting new members into the community, and planning social activities. To do this, we reach our members through email, our dedicated Viber group chat, and through phone calls when needed. We organised the general assembly by finding a date that was suitable for many and communicated it (including the agenda) well in advance so that as many people as possible could attend. We observed a number of formalities regarding the General Assembly (GA) that are stipulated in Greek law, such as that more than 50% of the community's members must be present for the GA to be valid. We also have a dedicated facilitator and a meeting secretary. Tools used for this activity were a Doodle poll to find a suitable date, Google Docs for online sessions, and the minutes that were uploaded to our collective Google Drive.

other partners. In many cases, the mandate of the board is to sign these agreements. But since it is the first time and the agreements were made before the legal entity was set up, it is best to have the partnerships agreed by the members. Of course, all members do not have to know all the details of the agreements. You present what your role is as a community, the responsibilities the organisation is committing to, what the financial implications and commitments are, what the risks are, and how you are mitigating these risks.

Finally, you explicitly request a mandate to take the next step on behalf of the members and enter the preparation stage. If you fail to obtain a mandate, this is not the end. Ask what the main concerns are and how the members would like to see these addressed. You take these concerns back to the designated working groups, the board, or renegotiate the contracts with partners before you make a new proposal to your members. Whatever decision you take at that meeting, it is based on good work and a clear overview of the future possibilities. So celebrate it together!

Milestone C: Community energy project plan with the commitment of citizens and stakeholders

The inspiration stage is concluded with a community energy project plan by and for the community. All that has been learned, collected, agreed upon and decided has been brought together into one comprehensive plan. The knowledge gained about residents, technology and organisational development comes together in the community energy plan. This document defines the focus and guidelines for your project. In addition, this document is used to request the consent of residents and the municipality as well as other stakeholders.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Do you feel that the rules for decision making are clear (e.g. at the General Assembly)?
- ▶ To what extent do members of the energy community participate in the annual General Assembly?
- ▶ Do you feel that your General Assembly membership turnout representative to the total membership of your energy collective?
- ▶ To what extent are decision making rules regularly evaluated and updated?
- ▶ To what extent have rules been defined that limit the number of Board members?
- ▶ To what extent is decision-making within the energy community held in an effective way?



MILESTONE D
DESIGN PLAN AND
ORGANISATION



Activity 31

Community meeting:
presenting draft
business case



Activity 28

Draft
business case



Activity 27

Detailed
community
energy plan

Activity 30

Create underlying
participation regulations
for members



Activity 29

Apply for all
necessary permits



MILESTONE E
PROPOSITION TO
THE COMMUNITY



Activity 36

Community meeting:
approving the project
proposal



Activity 35

Create and present
a final proposition to
the community



Activity 34

Final
business case



Activity 33

Work out details
with community
energy groups



Activity 37

Set up a process of participation, financing or activity



Activity 39

Prepare your organisation for the next stage

Activity 38

Finalise contracts with suppliers

Activity 40

Community meeting: go/no go for implementation stage

Activity 41

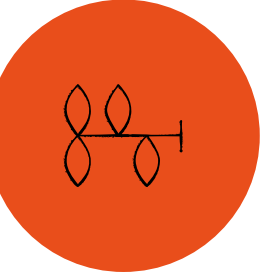
Communicate the proposal to the community

Activity 42

Obtaining a financial commitment from stakeholders for the next stage



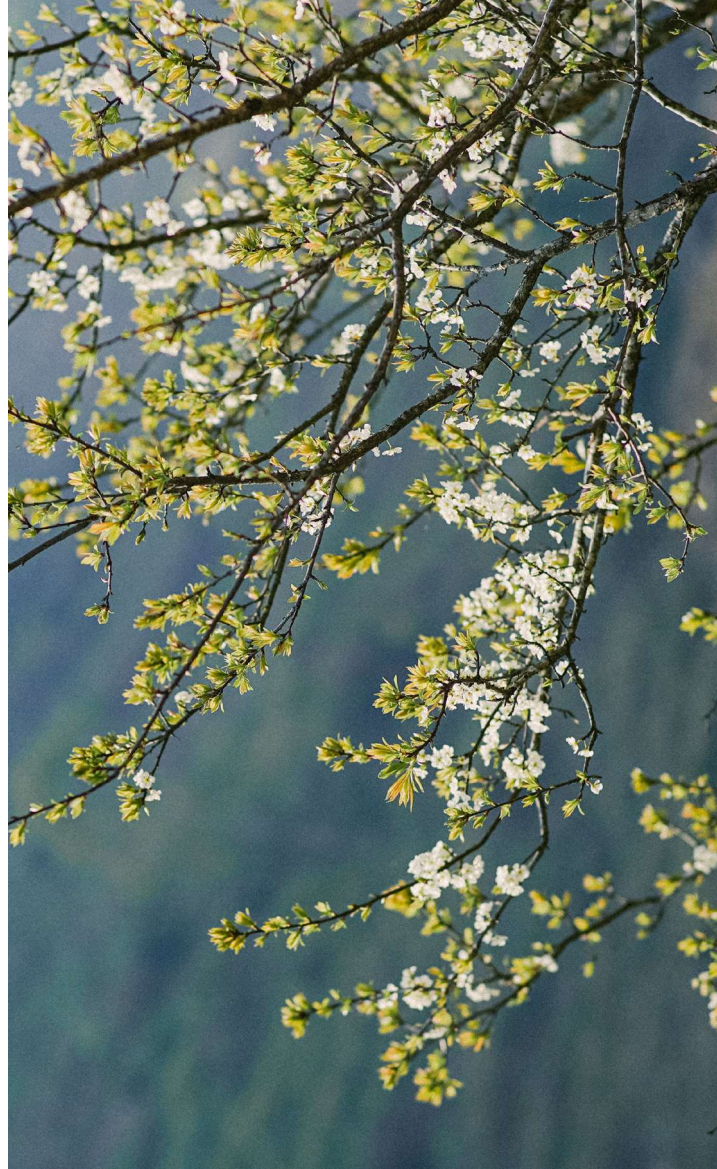
MILESTONE F
INVESTMENT/
ORGANISATION
PLAN COMMITTED
TO BY CITIZENS
AND
STAKEHOLDERS



4. Preparation

Working towards a professional community energy project and organisation

Congratulations! You have reached the preparation stage of your project. This is the stage where you develop your project in such detail that external investors and your members have all the securities they need to actually transfer their investment into your organisation. This means that you get all the details of the business case in order. Besides, as an organisation you need to grow in order to handle the investment. Furthermore, you need to be able to manage and build the project for a long period of time. By the end of this stage, you have reached such maturity in the process, that general guides like these will no longer be sufficient enough to support you. You have built up the capital and expertise to self-sufficiently run your project and your energy community.



Activity 27: Detailed community energy plan



The goal of the preparation stage is to acquire the financing needed to realise your project. For example, this can be energy saving actions, building a wind park or solar installation, constructing a district heating network, or implementing any other community energy concept. The idea is to make a detailed plan that will convince others to put their money or time into the project. You will continue with the plans you've made in the previous stage. However, during this stage you need to focus specifically on the details that still need to be filled in, so that others will be willing to invest in the plan.

This means that you will carry out several rounds with potential investors. In the first case, these are your own members. Not all members need to be involved, but the working groups 'business case and technology' and 'organisation' will be involved the most. You will need to find out what the hard and soft preconditions are for these members. I.e. under which circumstance will they be willing to invest.

While talking to other partners, you can work on concluding a term sheet agreement. This is a document that includes all these hard preconditions. The term sheet explains what the preconditions are and how they can be met. It also includes what the energy community will do to meet these conditions. For example, a bank or a municipality will demand that all necessary permits are acquired and stipulate the level of cash flow security the business case needs to have. Grid operators also have their demands: i.e. whether deposits are needed or other specific technical demands.

Members will also have their demands concerning how to invest. Here again you can collaborate with the working groups and your members to work out the initial details. Another possibility is to conduct a survey from among a larger group of

members. There will be many things that need to be discussed, for example what is the minimum dividend level the investment will yield? Also, what will be done with any extra profits if there is a conflict between the member and the energy community about the investment? How will this be resolved?

Finally you will need input from any supplier that is involved in the project and you will need to know under what conditions they are willing to supply what you need and at what cost. For example, if you need consultants to carry out the application for all the permits, you need to know what the costs are and what is expected of the energy community. Another example, when implementing a retrofitting project or energy savings project for which you need progress tools, you will need to know what the costs of the material or the costs of the tool licence are. For large production installations you will need to ask for an estimate of the costs of a wind turbine or solar installation, stipulating the conditions that you are able to offer at that time.

When you know all the detailed conditions, you can discuss with your members all actions in the new detailed community energy plan. You can allocate this work to a working group or a responsible member of the board in order to make sure you can meet all the preconditions. This must be done prior to securing the financing needed for the implementation stage.

What are the results of activity 27?

- ▶ All the hard preconditions of potential investors are known.
- ▶ You have a clear estimate of the cost of the supply and how to influence this cost.

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

The content of the plan was a general description of energy communities. Specifically, Hyperion and the proposed first project: a 500-kWp solar park for use by the collective. The financial, social and environmental benefits of participating in the project are outlined, as are the steps required for a member to join the community. The plan also involved clear and attractive graphics. The board of directors were involved in making the plan. Eventually the plan was communicated by email to the members and citizens.

Activity 28: Draft business case

As soon as you know all the preconditions of your partners, potential investors and your members, you can draw up a new detailed business case. You can work with the estimates of suppliers.

If this is your first project as an energy community and it is a larger project (> 1 million euro investment), it is advised to work with a professional consultant or somebody from the community with experience in acquiring large investments. This is especially the case since you will need external financing. It often becomes a lengthy or costly procedure if you create a business case that is not recognised by these investors. Institutional banks in most countries are not experienced in financing community energy. In this case it is better to work within the format and financial language they are familiar with than to explain your home-made Excel sheet and terms.

In most cases, you will not be able to exactly know all the expected income or costs. The suppliers will give estimates under certain conditions. You need to make a risk analysis on how these conditions can change and what the financial implications are. In this case you can make a best- and worst-case scenario of your business case. When both cases yield a viable business case, you can proceed with making investments. If the worst-case scenario means that the project is not financially viable, you have two options. The first option is that you need to work with your members to reduce this risk. The second option is to ask your partners and your members whether they are willing to take on this risk and if

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

Hyperion has a board of directors with 5 members. They were involved in preparing the business case. We also had some help from and consulted with members and external partners. The citizens provided input in this activity.

they wish to proceed with further investments, hoping that the worst case does not happen.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent do energy community operations result in a healthy financial-economic business model?



Activity 29: Apply for all necessary permits

At the inspiration stage you analysed all the permits you need, you contracted with a partner that can realise the full application, and you know the cost. Now it's time to actually apply for all the permits. In most cases, at this stage this is the costliest activity before implementation starts. The larger the projects, the more costly the permit applications are. Therefore, invest time in the organisations that grant the permits. In most cases this will be the municipality, but it can also be national governments. Many projects run into delays during this part of the development. This is because reports do not have the information needed to proceed. The specifics of what you need to submit to receive a permit isn't clear in every country. In some countries, everything is codified and well organised. Regardless, you need to be precise when applying for the permits. There isn't much room for error in the procedures and supplying information when applying for permits. A good and personal relationship with the organisation that grants the permits can help prevent errors or surprises during the process.

If the permit relies on a public decision by governmental bodies such as a municipal council, it is wise to inform members of the council during this process. For example, what are you researching? What extra steps are you taking to safeguard people or the environment? What will be the consequences if you do not receive the permits?

Expect this to be a long process with a lot of waiting. This is due to the bureaucracy involved. Look at what you can do with your community members in the meantime to bridge this time gap. If there is no news because you are still waiting for answers, you can develop small activities such as energy savings advice or you can start to think about new projects or about the future of your organisation. This will keep members active during the process of applying for permits.





Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

The project LICHT Leuven required an environmental permit. The permit application was submitted to the city at the end of 2022 and is pending. In the context of this procedure, the necessary advice will also be obtained (in this case, we need advice from the Flanders Environmental Agency/VMM).

The first step in applying for the permits was of course the feasibility study to decide which technology will eventually be implemented. Once the technicalities of the installation have been decided and thus prior to submitting the permit, there was a consultation with the VMM, including about the turbine (one of the possible scenarios for this project), but this turned out not to be feasible in the end for several reasons (economic but also ecological, e.g. due to fish migration routes). This advice therefore meant that the technology finally used had to be adjusted. As you can see, obtaining advice, in this case from the Dijlemolens, the VMM, or other institutions, before submitting a permit is a very important step.

In the first place, the energy working group, with Extraqt playing a continuous advisory role in the group and acting as liaison with the City of Leuven, was involved in the application. The weekly meetings were a very important tool in the process.

What are the results of activity 29?

- ▶ All needed permits are obtained.
- ▶ Members are engaged to think of new activities and projects.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ To what extent do REC operations result in a healthy financial-economic business model?

Activity 30: Create underlying participation regulations for members



When you set up the legal entity, you only define the structure of the organisation. The articles of association stipulate the basic rights and obligations of the members. As your organisation grows and you begin to ask members to participate financially or to participate in activities, you will need underlying agreements with your members.

Internal regulations are created for this purpose. All that is not contained in the articles of association but has become common practice in the energy community can be included in these internal regulations. Good internal regulations contribute to a smooth and verifiable functioning of your cooperative. In addition to the internal regulations, in many cases the internal operation of working groups and their relation to the board, the general assembly or committees are regulated. Other matters include the rules to follow when there are complaints.

You can also define other regulations, for example concerning the board. These regulate the internal operations of the board, for example the procedure for voting at meetings. Other regulations can contain the rights and obligations of members in more detail. For example, the kind of information the board is obliged to report to the members, and if there are important decisions to be made, how many days prior to the meeting this must be announced. This is often called 'a membership regulation'.

Important regulations that are often also a part of a separate agreement with your members concern investment. These investment regulations govern the investments of your members. For example, it regulates the duration of the investment, what happens when a member dies, what rights a member has when

he or she wants their investment back immediately, it also regulates how the interest or dividend is determined and what level of access a member can have to the documents of the cooperative at any time.

Finally, it is important to have clear regulations concerning who gets paid, who doesn't get paid and what the procedures are to establish this. A great risk when moving from a volunteer organisation to a hybrid organisation where some people are paid and others are volunteers, is that the procedures and decisions concerning who gets paid and who doesn't are unclear. In many cases, either volunteers expect to be paid or they stop their volunteer work because there are people now getting paid to do the work. It is important to be very clear and transparent to your members about this.

Don't overregulate your energy community with hypothetical situations. Consider carefully if such regulations are really needed at this time. The best way to settle this is to decide that when something is functioning properly in your organisation, you maintain it. At this point you have already been functioning as an organisation. Look at what works and what can be improved. Translate these things into regulations. The regulations help your organisation to grow: when new people participate as members in your organisation, it helps if there is a clear structure of how the organisation functions.

It is important to create these regulations together with your members. To accomplish this, you can either operate in a working group or present semi-finished regulations at a meeting for discussion. At this meeting, members can participate by asking questions and raising their concerns. You can then address these concerns in the final regulations before you propose them to an official general assembly of members.

What are the results of activity 30?

- ▶ You have established internal regulations with your members.
- ▶ You know all the details concerning the financial participation of your members.



After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▶ Do you feel that the rules for decision making are clear (e.g. at the General Assembly)?
- ▶ To what extent have rules been defined that limit the number of Board members?
- ▶ Have rules for selecting leaders been defined?
- ▶ To what extent are decision making rules regularly evaluated and updated?



Activity 31: Community meeting: presenting draft business case

This community meeting is about establishing all the internal regulations of your organisation and the draft business case. The goal is to gain the trust of your members that everything is being handled professionally and that you know what you and the working groups are doing. This is important in the run-up to a broader proposal to the community. Your members will be your ambassadors for the proposal.

Discuss all the necessary permits you applied for. If you received the necessary permits, celebrate the progress with your members. Receiving your permits can be an important milestone in your project. Obtaining permits is often a long bureaucratic process with a significant risk of failure. It also gives a clear starting point for continuing the project. This major risk should be very clear in the communication to the community.

Your members are engaged in the development of the project and its organisation. All of this should be in place before you make a public proposal to the broader community. As we will see in the following activities, this is mostly about communication and trust. Obtaining the input of an active group of members will give you the answers that other people who are new to the energy community will ask. All that input and engagement on the part of citizens' will ensure that your organisation is well thought out and strong. New members will be joining an organisation that is ready to invest. These members are a second group of people who do not want to participate actively but do want to know exactly what they are receiving in return for their investment. At this point, there is little room for telling them: 'We haven't thought this through, we'll get back to you when we have an answer'. Especially in regulations that concern investments on the part of new members, the organisation needs to be watertight.

At this meeting you present the internal regulations, and you will have your members vote to accept these regulations. This establishes a strong and structured organisation. Your partners will view this as positive, as will your future members when making a proposal. You will also present the newest version of the business case. It is important to show the best case and the worst-case scenarios, and how you think to mitigate the risks contained in the business case. Explain the new insights from the previous plan. This will demonstrate that you are constantly making progress in your financial knowledge about the project. This will give new and future members who haven't seen the process of development, trust and confidence in your organisation. Remember that an investment or any other form of participation in retrofitting, energy savings or energy monitoring using district heating, will be largely based on whether a person trusts the organisation.

What are the results of activity 31?

- ▶ You have established an energy community with structure and regulations.
- ▶ You have made people feel proud of the achievements so far.

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

We used a mix of available published materials (articles, video etc.) to communicate to them our articles of association and the legal text on energy communities. Greek law on energy communities clearly stipulates the rights and responsibilities of members of energy communities. These are also reflected in the articles of association of an energy community. However, to make these complicated and long legal texts easily accessible to prospective members, we also sent them a number of simple graphics, articles and videos – some of which created by us – so that they could immediately and quickly understand the rules of their participation. We also created a "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet that addresses some of the issues that keep coming up. In order to reach citizens, we used direct one-to-one lines of communication (phone calls, word-of-mouth, online calls), and also published relevant materials on our website.

Milestone D: Design plan and organisation

You have achieved Milestone D: Design plan and organisation. Your project plan has been worked out in such detail that all the required permits are applied for. In addition, your organisation has been developed in such detail that you can promote your plan to a larger group of people who do not necessarily want to contribute to setting up an entire organisation. You have removed a lot of obstacles for a new group of members. You will now continue to communicate your plans to the community.

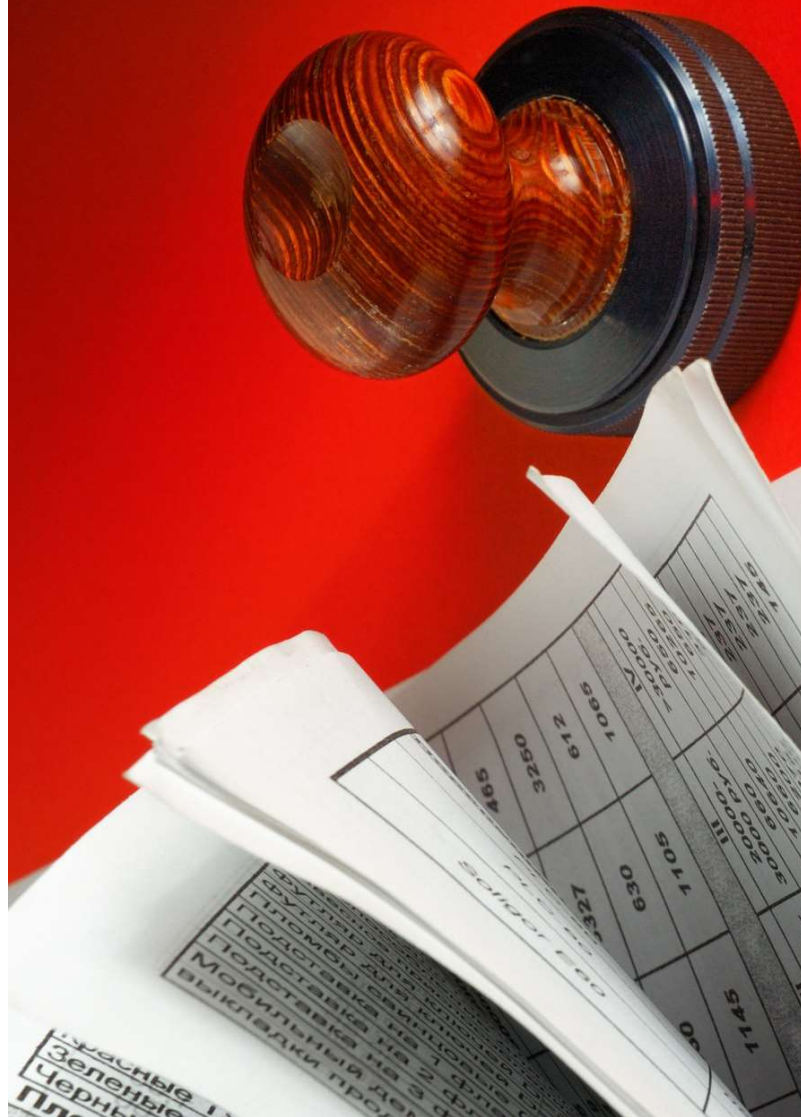
Activity 32: Create a proposition to the community



The following activities focus on going public with your proposal. Until now, you have been communicating internally with members who signed up knowing that they were part of a co-creation process and that they were contributing to making the project better. All members have some degree of knowledge of what you have realised until now. Now you need to focus on a new group of people in the community that have not heard about your project and do not know that you exist. This means you need to look for different channels and forms of communication.

This proposition can take many different forms, depending on what your project is about. When focusing on energy savings and awareness raising, your proposition targets people measuring their energy use and attending meetings or webinars to understand what they are measuring and what they can contribute. Other proposals are focussed on investing in a solar or a wind project. Or when working in the context of district heating, the proposal is very specific: participation of a household in the district heating network. In all cases, you need to think about how to reach a broader group of people.

You need to think about which people you want to reach and why you haven't reached these people until now. The main barrier to the growth of your energy community will be that you don't reach people in your community other than your small group of insiders. You can conduct a public survey to ask people about what they think is important in the community. Other ways include creating different personas and then designing a communication package for these. For example, young parents are not really inclined to go to evening community meetings. You have to think about how to reach them in other ways. How do you reach other cultural communities or lower income groups? The language you use



to address these groups is important. In making the proposal to the community, you can focus on different aspects of the benefits for individuals or the community. Some people are not as interested in investing in renewable energy but want to do something good for the community. Others see it as a sustainable investment and are interested in the financial returns.

In order to cover all groups of people, make sure you have an extensive question-and-answer section (FAQ) on your website. From Activity 6 on, you should have recorded all questions asked via email or at meetings. So your FAQ should be a continuously growing document.

What are the results of activity 32?

- ▶ You have a clear and understandable proposal to the community, targeting different kinds of people in the community.
- ▶ You have a communication strategy to reach a broader group of people in your community with your proposal.

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

The proposition for the residents consists of the following five elements:

- ▶ The membership fee: this is paid by the municipality of Groningen from the PAW funds.
- ▶ The heat tariffs: these are set by Warmtestad.
- ▶ Representing the interests of residents: this is a role for Grunneger Power
- ▶ Transition to induction cooking: because the gas connection will be removed, residents must switch to cooking on induction. This is also a role of Grunneger Power.
- ▶ Customization in the homes: Grunneger Power has devised the role of 'project leader behind the front door' for this. The project leader behind the front door supervises the entire process of connection and adjustment of the house.

The proposition has been worked out in the working group with the residents. It was then presented at two meetings. A physical meeting and an online meeting to also reach owner landlords who live elsewhere. In addition, many individual conversations were held with the residents in the summer of 2022. In the end this led to 125 declarations of intent from the 200 residents.

Activity 33: Work out details with community working groups

At this point, you are working on the final parts of developing the proposal. In the following milestones, you will be negotiating with external partners to finance or supply the project. During these negotiations, internal matters cannot shift. It is important to carry out a last round with the working groups to finish and establish all the details of your project. Also use this process as a celebration of all the input obtained from your working groups. Finish this activity with a joint meeting with all working group members to celebrate the last stretch of development.

Remember that even if you work with external consultants to finish these details, it is important to involve the member-based working groups or reflection groups. The goal is to build up an organisation that is carried by your members. They will need to know as many details as possible. This will make it possible for them to explain these details and carry out the project. If you don't do this, your organisation will depend on a small group, mostly board members, that will carry the project and its organisation. There is a risk when people resign from their position. In most cases, if you have active members in working groups, you also have people who are able and willing to step up when people need to withdraw.

The fact that the project and proposals are developed by a group of members from the community, also gives confidence in the proposal and your energy community. You can even choose to have spokespeople from the working group present their results at meetings, even if they were only in a reflective role. As mentioned before, the engagement of members who are not as involved in the energy community will rely on whether they have confidence in others in the community to make a proposal that benefits them and the community.



Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

In the Selwerd-Zuid district, a working group of residents was formed, in which all relevant topics were discussed. The themes that were discussed include:

- ▼ **001** The proposition for the residents.
- ▼ **002** The technical design of the heating network and the connection of the homes.
- ▼ **003** The planning of the work.
- ▼ **004** Communication to the residents.
- ▼ **005** The way in which the pipes along the façade of the houses are finished.

Grunneger Power brings in the themes and prepares the meetings. The residents review the proposals and provide their feedback. This does not lead to major changes in the plans, but sometimes to adjustments so that the solution is better accepted by the residents.

What are the results of activity 33?

- ▼ You have a strong group of people with detailed knowledge of the project and the organisation.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ▼ What governance and operational circles does your energy collective use?



Activity 34: Final business case

Now the time has come to finish the business case before you make the proposition to your members. After you have had conversations with suppliers, and with the correct revenue calculations, you will be able to calculate the benefits for individual members and for the energy community as a whole.

The final business case always contains a margin of error. You take this into account and make sure that what you can promise to your members is on the safe side of the business case. The business case is developed with the input of the partners that are financing the project. This can be your members, the municipality or external financiers such as banks. The outcome of this business case cannot come as a surprise to these organisations. You will use the outcome of the final business case to make the final proposition to your members.

Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

We worked with a lawyer and the founding members, all of whom have knowledge of the electricity market, the relevant policy and legal landscape. The project is being financed almost exclusively by its members, except for a number of small external crowdfunding donations we received to support energy poor households. Firstly, an analysis was made to understand the business activities and the support schemes that Greek law on energy communities allows for. This also involved acquiring feedback from our members and external stakeholders/experts (such as people who had previously worked at the Ministry of Energy or the DSO). After that, we entered external expenses into the formula (land rent, office rent, accountant's fee, and other expected operational expenses). Then we made a number of assumptions about 1) the average electricity consumption of Greek households and 2) the projected price of electricity over the next few years. We then presented the data in a simple table explaining the energy, CO2, and euro savings due to a member's participation in a collective Virtual Net Metering scheme. We used an online Excel sheet that allows the members to enter their electricity consumption data. This Excel sheet then calculates the amount that each member needs to invest to cover their own electricity consumption, the expected savings, and the timeline for remuneration.

After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.

- ✔ Does the energy community's business case run break-even?
- ✔ Has the energy community business case been evaluated and is it considered feasible?



Activity 35: Create and present a final proposition to the community



Once the final business case is complete, you know exactly what you can offer to your members. Moreover, you know exactly what it will cost them and what they will receive in return. The proposal does not necessarily have to be about only financial returns. Your proposal can include all the other benefits. For example, in the case of retrofitting, this could be comfort, in the case of renewable energy, this could be cheaper electricity, and in the case of heat sources, this could be cheaper heating. Also include the benefits to the community as a whole, such as the reduction of CO2 emissions or extra activities you are undertaking that will benefit the local environment while realising your energy project.

Also talk about the risks. At this point you know the risks inherent in the project and what you will do if these risks manifest themselves. Proposals that only mention the benefits are never trusted by the community. Risks are inevitable and people

Pilot example: LICHT Leuven – Leuven, Belgium

The project was initially focused on the needs of and risks to the residents and users of the Dijlemolens. Accordingly, attention has been paid to the business case, including the financial implications for the owners, the return on investment, and so on. Since October 2021, an intensive participatory project has been underway with the VME (homeowners association), in which the homeowners themselves play an active role. For this purpose, the working group was established, which came together each week. In the working group, 5 technical scenarios were elaborated to work out the business case. Subsequently, a comparative request for proposal was started for the different scenarios, trying to collect enough offers to be able to compare both price and quality. This phase was completed in the fall of 2022. Based on these results, the final scenario was chosen that was decided on by the VME itself (the final proposal had to be approved at the general meeting of the VME). This was done in consultation with the city and continuously supported by Extraqt, which has in-house expertise. The installation will proceed in 2023.



want to be sure you have considered them. People are happy to take a risk in exchange for benefits, and therefore it is important to be transparent in the proposal.

Another essential part of the proposal is the description of the organisation itself. You have structured your organisation as a legal entity with internal regulations including a board and possibly working groups. Make sure people know that this proposal is only the start of the long-term development of the organisation and that they can play a role in it. Pay special attention to the governance structure and the rights and obligations people have in the organisation. This demonstrates that they are not just handing over their money, without a say afterwards. The fact that they can elect a board, join working groups or reflection groups, will give them confidence they will have a say in the future of the organisation.

Activity 36: Community meeting: approving the project proposal

The aim of this community meeting is to have a proposal that is approved by the community. As an organisation, you will legally bind yourself to what you propose. This will have a long-term effect on the financial and organisational obligations of your energy community. It is important to give your members a vote on this proposal.

The meeting can also be used to mark the milestone you have reached as a community. With the approval of your members, you can now work with confidence on the final part of the preparation stage. You can finish the contract with your partners and work towards what is called the 'financial close of the project'. This means you will have all the financing required to build or execute your project.



Pilot example: Hyperion – Attica, Greece

Having designed the business model, we also created some explanatory materials that visualise and easily explain the expected benefits of participation. The moment we also secured prospective land for the installation of the collective solar park, we convened a general assembly. Here we presented the model to the members and initiated a vote about proceeding with the installation. The citizens (members) were consulted for their input during the process of formulating the business plan. They then were able to vote on 1) whether the project should continue, 2) whether the project should be financed with self-funding (or a crowd-investment instrument), and 3) the choice of the engineering firm to manage the installation/construction. We used Viber (online chat service) and email for communicating with the members. Zoom was used for the online general assembly.

Milestone E: Proposition to the community

You have reached Milestone E: Proposition to the community. You are ready to make a proposition to the community and start collecting the needed investments for the project from your members. After offering the proposal to the community, there is little to no room for changes to the proposal. So, the moment you finish the proposal is an important milestone in the development of your project.



Activity 37: Set up a process of engagement, financing or activity



Whatever you do – energy savings or investments in renewable energy – there will be a customer journey for people wanting to participate. Up to now, you functioned as an organisation in which members were aware of being in a development stage, and they accepted a number of flaws that they could help alleviate as a member. Now, people will come to you in the first instance as a customer. They will buy a product, make an investment, or receive information. This process needs to run smoothly. Otherwise, your organisation will leave a bad first impression.

It should be clear who in the organisation does what when a new member signs up to accept the proposition. Create a customer journey with the people in your organisation. This way, new members are easily onboarded and get the response they need to start participating in the organisation.

Make sure there is a dedicated person in the organisation to deal with all the questions. This person does not necessarily have to know all the answers, but makes sure that the response time to questions is no longer than two days. Especially during the initial contacts with your organisation, quick response times demonstrate your professionalism and give the impression that you are in control. Even the following answer gives confidence that you are on top of things: "This is a question we have not had before. We cannot come back to you within two days, but we will work on getting you an answer as soon as possible."

Finally, it is known that some people prefer to speak about the proposition in person. Create moments such as information gatherings, or set fixed times of availability for questions somewhere in the neighbourhood. Or even create the opportunity to speak to people one-on-one at home. Again, keep a log of all

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte

Grunneger Power supports residents to the maximum in the preparation, installation and delivery of the connection to the district heating network. Grunneger Power also supports making the home gas-free, in order to lower the threshold for participants. The position of 'project leader behind the front door' was created for this purpose. The project leader behind the front door has the following tasks:

- Recording the situation in the house and seeing what work needs to be done prior to the connection
- Coordinating agreements with the executing parties and the homeowner. The executing parties are:
 - The installer of the electrical installation and induction cooking
 - The contractor for removing the existing central heating boiler and connecting to the heating network
 - The utility company for removing the gas meter and gas piping
- Being present and standing-by during execution of the work in the neighbourhood
- Making agreements with the installer and contractor within frameworks agreed in advance with the project team and heat supplier
- During preparation about implementation method
- During execution of planning and any extra and reduced work

received questions, and extend the frequently asked questions and answers (FAQ) section of your website.



- After this activity is finished, answer the following questions in the development tool and monitor your progress toward a successful energy community.
- To what extent is the local community aware of the existence of and participating in the energy community?
 - Are local community members engaged to participate in your energy collective (e.g., via open events or local newsletters)?



Activity 38: Finalise contracts with suppliers

In the previous activities you have had extensive contact with your suppliers and partners. You have agreed on a term sheet with most suppliers. In this term sheet, you agreed on the process of establishing a price for future materials or services that are part of the business case. This means that prices that can be determined at this early stage in the process are included in the term sheet. For prices that cannot yet be determined due to external factors, you agree on a formula to set these prices. For example, the delivery time of materials can depend on the time of the year the order is placed. You agree on the conditions for delivering the material, but you leave open the delivery time in the term sheet. This way you don't have to enter into extensive negotiations at the end.

At this stage, you finalise all agreements with your partners as explained. However, the project can only start if you have a sufficient number of participants that either invest or buy the service you are going to supply. Also, you will receive no financing for the next stage from your members or from a bank if you lack participants or customers. You do not want to sign contracts whose provisions you cannot meet. So, be sure to include the precondition of receiving the financial commitment from your members or from an external financier. In most projects, this is called the financial close of the project.

If the project is large, it is wise to make use of a consultant who has experience with these kinds of contract negotiations. The consultant knows how to negotiate the best price, whether it is with suppliers of material or financing. In addition to saving time, it saves a lot of money in many cases. Engaging in this kind of negotiation for the first time will most certainly be a learning experience. Better to learn from an experienced contract negotiator and pay less.

Activity 39: Prepare your organisation for the next stage

The next stage will be the implementation stage. At this stage, you often need other skills and capacities than in the preparation stage. This means you need to re-evaluate the role of all active members. In the implementation stage, you often move from volunteer activities (using volunteer time) to daily paid work. This requires you to see whether your current project team has the commitment and the expertise for the next stage. In some cases, this means that you start paying volunteers as employees. In other cases, volunteers are given a more supervisory or reflective role, while you hire employees or consultants to run the project's daily activities. The process of this change needs to be done carefully in order to not lose your volunteers and people who have done so much for the project already.

Make a specialised action plan for the implementation stage. In case of large projects, these are often made in partnership with your suppliers. Determine the responsibilities of the energy community and the supplier. Once you have determined the activities and roles, examine your current project team and see if it contains the right expertise and capacity. If not, create a job opening.

Volunteers in the working groups may be interested in obtaining a paid position in the energy community. In other cases, you will need to find people externally.

During the preparation stage, the board members are often very hands on. They often organise things themselves and are very active in the execution of the plans. During the implementation stage, the focus shifts to the project team working to implement the project. The board members will play a supervisory role. As a representative of all members, they make the final decisions. But the execution is done by a project team. If board members continue to work in the implementation stage, you should consider allowing the board member to join the project team and to step away from the board. This keeps the supervisory and executive tasks in the organisation separate.

In most cases, the roles of the working groups also change. In the preparation stage, a lot of work has been spent on developing the project. Now, it must be implemented. Members and volunteers can contribute, but during the implementation stage most work is done by paid employees or consultants. If you do not reconsider the role of the working groups, there will be no more activities for them, and you will lose the knowledge that has accumulated in them. One possibility is to assign a different role to the groups. People implementing the project can use their knowledge and local expertise. Often, they are reframed as a reflection group that evaluates the work done by those implementing the work, and as a source of information concerning the reasons behind certain agreements made in the preparation stage. Often, the rationale behind agreements is missing in contracts. Therefore, it is helpful to be able to ask people why certain things were agreed the way they were.

Finally, think about how you will involve your members in the next stage. The main decisions have been made. You have structured your organisation and you have a clear proposal. All the main agreements have been concluded with the partners. Think about the minor milestones in the implementation project that you can communicate and celebrate with your members. Include them when communicating the project's progress. When constructing a wind turbine or a solar installation, give a weekly update with pictures. For example, the first one hundred households that were connected, or the 100th house to be retrofitted. In the further process of development, think about how you can make use of their experience as a consumer of your product in order to improve your proposition the next time. This can be done with surveys or reflection groups.

Activity 40: Community meeting: go/no go for implementation stage

You are in the final stretch of the preparation stage. To wrap everything up, you need to involve your members in a decision whether to continue. In the first place, you have finished all contracts, and you have prepared your organisation for the next stage.

With the contracts come financial obligations. It is wise to put this to a vote. You don't have to put all the contract details to a vote. This is the board's mandate. You present a budget for the next stage in which you clearly state the obligations you are planning to commit to. Explain that all these obligations are subject to the condition of reaching financial close. Meaning that your members, a bank, or other partner will provide you with the financing needed for the project. Nonetheless, regardless of what happens as an organisation, you have acquired a debt with all its responsibilities. These are important decisions to be made by your members.

In addition, you have prepared your organisation for the next stage. It is quite possible that your board and working groups are assigned a different role. When the role of the board changes, explain what the agreements are between the project team and the board concerning clear decision-making. As a representative of your members, they need to know who is responsible for what. Usually, the board no longer takes day-to-day decisions. The project team will receive a mandate, a budget and an action plan. Only changes or unforeseen activities in either the budget or the action plan are decisions that need to be made by the board. If the role of the working groups change, this is also something to clearly communicate to your members. Some from the community may want to join a working group if the work becomes less in the next stage. A new look and new expertise can be helpful.

Also, some volunteers might get paid. If you have not regulated this in Activity 33, then now is the time to transparently propose who is going to get paid, what is volunteer work, and how the remuneration is established.



Activity 41: Communicate the proposal to the community

For every community energy project, you need participants. In some cases, you will have built up a strong membership throughout all your activities that is sufficient to start or to finance your project. However, the goal is to involve as many community members as possible. You do not want to remain with an exclusive group. Your goal is to have an open membership in which you strive to be as inclusive as possible.

After a positive vote by your members, and after you have organised the customer journey for participants, you can communicate that you are looking for new members to participate in your project. Think beforehand about how to communicate this. You have explored different channels to reach members in previous activities. When your project has become very concrete, you can attract the next group of people to community energy. There will be people that are happy to support the project, but as a consumer. Joining or participating as a local resident should be an accessible and easy process.

Often, there is no need for a marketing budget. Your current members are your best ambassadors. Ask your members to get their neighbours or family involved. Give them the tools, such as flyers, booklets or other material, to make communication as easy as possible. A community energy project is probably unique in your community, so it's easy to get free publicity. Contact the local newspaper, radio or TV station. Tell your story in an understandable way and let people figure out the details on your website and via the specific proposition.

Pilot example: Buurtwarmte – Groningen, the Netherlands

In the summer of 2022, the residents were approached by Grunnege Power with a final proposition for connection to the district heating network. Prior to the communication of that proposition, the various motives among residents concerning whether or not to participate in the district heating network were identified. In the messages communicated, a connection was always sought to these different motives. Three types of motives were distinguished as to why people would or would not participate in the district heating network:

- ▼ **001** Financial motives: what will the supply of heat cost and how does that relate to the current situation?
- ▼ **002** Convenience and comfort: how is the transition made easy for me?
- ▼ **003** Contribution to sustainability: what is the environmental impact of the district heating network compared to the current situation of heating with gas?

Answers to these three questions were addressed in the communication. For the future, Grunnege Power is working with Warmtestad and the Municipality of Groningen to further develop this communication method. The aim is to reach all residents in the city who will have to deal with a district heating network in the future. That's why personas were created. A persona is a detailed characterisation of a specific user who represents a certain target group. This makes it possible to properly tailor the message to those target groups.

Activity 42: Obtaining a financial commitment from stakeholders for the next stage

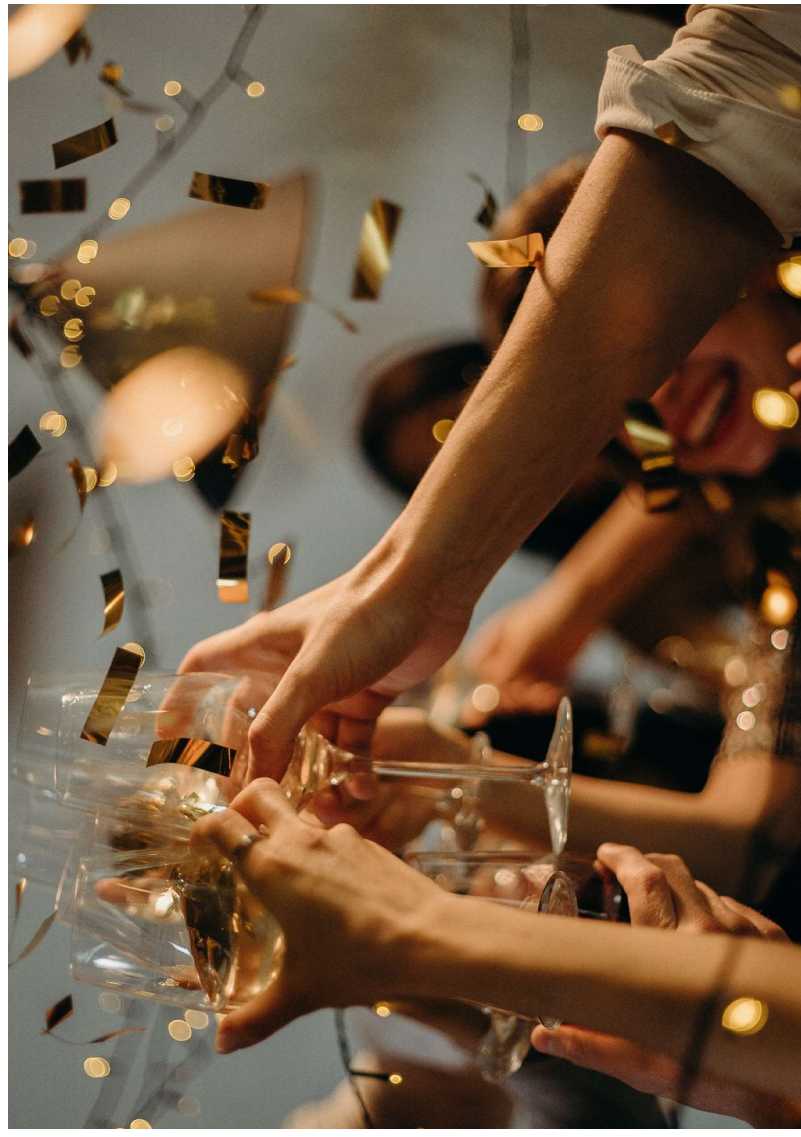
After sharing the proposal with the community, you know if you have reached the participation level required to successfully finance and execute the project. When financing a wind or solar project, you will have a commitment from present and new members that responded to the proposal by investing in your energy community. In the case of retrofitting and energy saving activities, you have a sufficient number of people signing a contract or agreeing to participate in the actions. The level of participation gives stakeholders such as banks, investors or municipalities the guarantee that you are ready for the next stage, and that the project does not risk a lack of participation and commitment on the part of the community. This is one of the most important milestones to reach in a community energy project and a reason to celebrate with your members.

With this commitment of your members, you secure the financial commitment of other stakeholders for the next stage. This may be a bank providing debt financing. But it can also be a municipality granting subsidies to execute the project. In previous activities you secured a commitment from these stakeholders by drawing up term sheets or other forms of contracts on the condition that you secure sufficient equity or participation from your members. When securing a bank loan, especially when you need large amounts, it is advised to use experts for negotiating these contracts. They will save you a lot of money and prevent you from making expensive mistakes in these contracts.

Milestone F: Investment/organisation plan committed to by citizens and stakeholders

Congratulations! You have reached the final milestone of the preparation stage. You have set up the organisation needed to implement your community energy project, and you have acquired the capital needed to finance it. Everything you need to implement the project is ready. This is a reason for celebration with your members. You and the project will now move into a different phase as an energy community. The activities become more professional, and your organisation is strong enough to successfully finish the project.

Congratulations, you have reached the implementation stage! This means you have built the organisation and acquired the capital needed to implement your





5. Implementation and maintenance

Working towards a professional design and organisation

project. This also means that your energy community has reached a level of organisation and professionalism that has most likely included access to the needed knowledge and expertise at a local level. The professionals or experienced volunteers no longer obtain knowledge from a generalised methodology guide. In addition, the implementation of different kinds of technological projects will diverge at this stage in such a way that it is impossible to continue following generalised methodologies. That is, the activities of implementing a district heating project cannot be compared with the activities of a small solar project or energy savings project. Therefore, in this final part of the methodology guide, we will present a number of general ideas and tips about citizen engagement during the implementation stage.

Celebrate successes

One way of keeping your members involved is to celebrate successes during the implementation stage. Your implementation planning can define clear milestones. Organise a small celebration with your members when you reach these milestones. Especially in large projects, where implementation can last over a year, it is important to celebrate the project's successes. They are, after all, the successes of your members. For example, in a wind project you celebrate the lifting of the turbine rotors. It's an impressive sight and an important milestone in

the construction of your wind farm. In a solar project, you can celebrate the first 1,000 panels installed or connected.

Involve your members in making plans for the future

We assume that your energy community won't stop after the success of one project. You have developed so much knowledge and expertise it would be a shame to stop now. During the implementation stage, you can involve your members in thinking about the future of your organisation. Will the organisation pursue multiple similar projects, and what will the organisation look like? Or will it expand into different areas of renewable energy? Some energy communities set up a specific committee, or appoint specific members, to find new locations once the implementation stage of the first project has finished. By then, your organisation has all the experience they need to scale up their activities. At the finish of your first project, you are in a position to continue on a larger scale than before. Another interesting discussion is to revisit Activity 2 with your members to see if your vision and scope are still what they should be after the implementation stage. Or, you may want to expand your vision and scope.

Set up operational committees

During the implementation stage, you need to consider the operational stage and the involvement of your members. First, you can make an analysis of what activities need to be done in the operational stage. What activities do you outsource, and what will the energy community do themselves? The activities carried out by the energy community themselves can be divided into two kinds: (1) Activities that will be carried out by the organisation (i.e., employees or paid

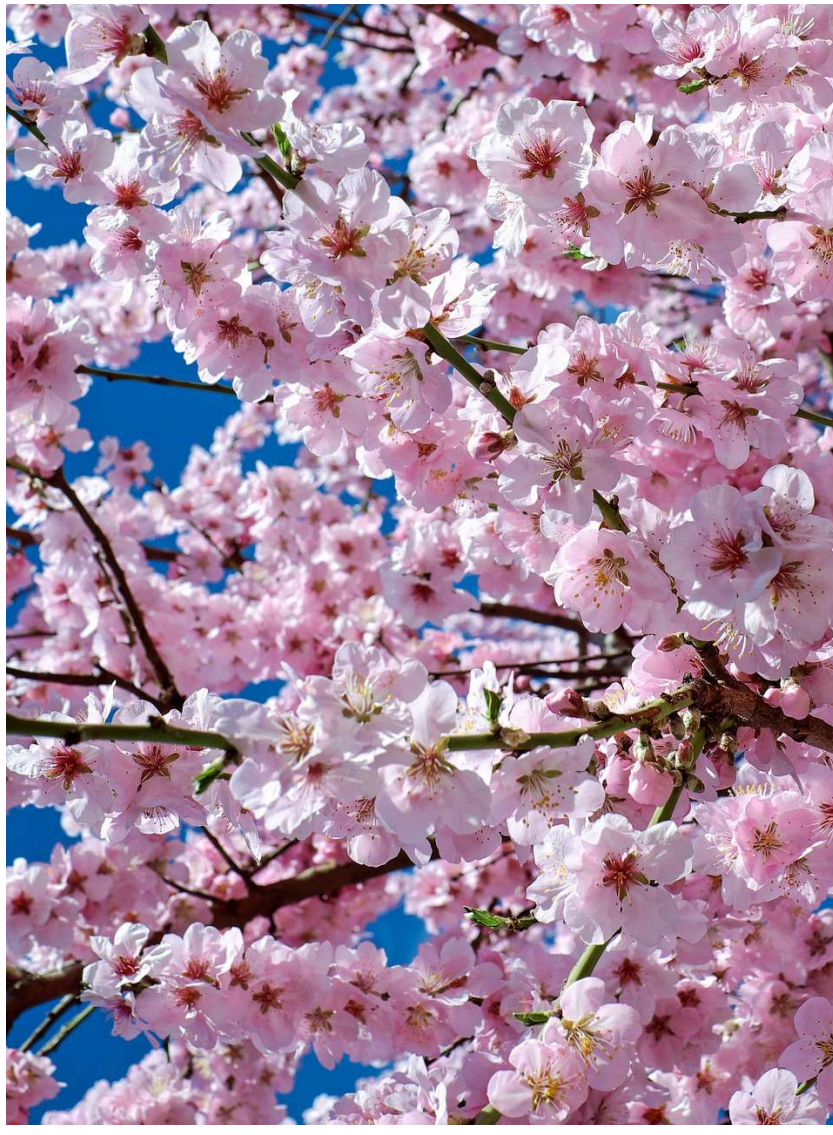
volunteers), and (2) activities that can be carried out by volunteers. In the case of large installations, members living close by can be the first to contact if there might be something wrong with the installation. This saves the partnered installation maintenance company a trip to the installation if there is something that can be solved by the local members themselves. Also, you can extend the activities of your ambassadors to be the first point of contact in the neighbourhoods when there are questions about the energy bill or energy installations. To share the work and the burden during the operational stage, you can create committees of volunteers for all activities.

Communicate frequently through different channels using different tools

To keep your members involved, it is important to not only involve the active members, but to reach all members. Make sure you have a communication plan to make sure citizens can follow the progress. This keeps your members up-to-date, and helps to attract new members. Make sure you set up a routine newsletter that fits the speed of the implementation either weekly or monthly. Use social media to update everybody on the progress of the implementation with pictures and short stories.

Besides, you continue the community meetings. Even though there are no collective decisions to be made, it does not mean you do not organise any meetings anymore. Meetings can be organised to explain the progress of the implementation. And, celebrating successes are important to keep the members involved who visit these offline events. During the operation stage, you can update your members on the performance of your project. For example, how much

energy did the solar installation produce? What are the aggregated results of the energy monitoring in an energy savings project? In most cases, energy communities use an app that can be used by members to follow the results on a daily basis, and that they can show their friends and family.



6. Definitions

Keywords in the methodology guide

Methodology

The study of citizen engagement methods. However, the term can also refer to the methods themselves.

Methodology guide

The study of citizen engagement methods from which we distilled a general SCCALE methodology from 5 pilot sites.

Method

Structured process for reaching certain milestones. In the context of citizen engagement, this milestone is usually something that records the end of a process with citizens. This normally involves various activities, such as organising a meeting to discuss the general plan or obtaining a mandate to set up a legal entity.

SCCALE methodology

Process of citizen engagement that results in achieving 12 milestones. To reach these milestones, a number of activities need to be carried out. These activities are a combination of the activities and methods used at different pilot sites, combined into one methodology.

Tools

Techniques or tools to support the project leader in executing their activities of engaging citizens.

In this context:

A method is a structured procedure for bringing about certain milestones. In the context of citizen engagement, this milestone is usually something that records the end of a process with citizens. This normally involves various activities, such as organising a meeting to discuss the general plan or obtaining a mandate to set up a legal entity. The methodology guide involves a detailed description and analysis of these processes. It includes evaluative aspects by comparing different methods in order to assess their advantages and disadvantages relative to different activities, milestones, and situations.

This way, this methodology guide can help project leaders make the citizen engagement process efficient and reliable. These descriptions and evaluations of methods often depend on the project's specific situation. Projects are implemented in different contexts, such as the focus on a different technology, or being located in different countries. To make sure the methods are applied in the right way, we give concrete examples when and in what context the methods are used.



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