

Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme

Guidance for applicants (mentees)



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Are you an existing community business in England? Looking for help with your community energy project? Looking to develop new business models and technologies? This programme is delivered by Co-operatives UK in partnership with Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE). It is part of Power to Change's Next Generation programme, which is empowering community energy organisations to take ownership of local renewable energy assets.

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About this guidance

This guidance will help you decide whether the Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme is right for you.

Part one: Provides information about our eligibility criteria

Part two: Provides information about the application process and decision making

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Part four: A preview of the application form and the information you will need to answer the questions.

Get in touch

If you have questions at any point during the application process, you can get in touch with us for free advice and guidance.

cepeermentoring@uk.coop

Need assistance?

If you require this guidance to be sent to you in large print, Braille or an audio transcript, please get in touch by email: comms@powertochange.org.uk

Welcome

About the Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme

The new Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme will support up to 40 community energy groups in England to help them share their learning and experience.

Funded by the independent trust Power to Change, the peer support programme will encourage shared learning in order to replicate business models and support genuinely sustainable, financially viable and innovative community businesses focused on locally-led solutions to net zero.

This new initiative builds on the Next Generation programme, which is supporting 11 new schemes <https://www.next-generation.org.uk/innovation>, which include community smart lighting, harvesting solar power to charge electric vehicles, and a dedicated energy saving service for local schools.

How can I get involved?

We are looking to support up to 40 community energy groups to develop and test new business models on behalf of the community energy sector. To be eligible for support through the Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme, your project or community energy business must

demonstrate how they are guided by four principles:

- ▶ **Innovation:** Each project is exploring a new direction in which the community sector could evolve in a post-subsidy landscape.
- ▶ **Business models:** The mentoring support aims to help test ideas which are not yet proven to work and get them off the ground, however the resulting projects aim to be self-sustaining business models which are not dependent on grants.
- ▶ **Community Impact:** The projects encapsulate the Power to Change vision of creating better places through community business by benefiting and engaging local people.
- ▶ **Replication:** business models and the associated learnings must be captured and disseminated for advancement of the community energy sector as a whole.



Photo: Tim Mitchell

Welcome

How will it work?

Running a community energy business is a challenge. Even with the right group of people in place, there will always be unknown issues and challenges ahead. Meeting other community energy groups through peer mentoring is a learning opportunity for both parties. Mentors are facilitators/convenors and are able to widen/test knowledge and understanding.

Mentoring is a two way process, and can be as beneficial to the mentor as it is to the mentee. You will be matched with an experienced community energy mentor. We anticipate the mentoring will be on a 1 to 4 basis i.e. 1 mentor and 4 mentees. Mentoring will be around the topics identified in the match making process. This will maximise the reach and enhance the conversations.

You will receive up to 4 days of peer mentoring support. The mentoring sessions will take place between March and September 2021. The pace, number and length of sessions will be flexible and client-led.

Mentoring support is currently limited to phone/video calls and email due to COVID, but does not impact the quality of support being delivered. We also anticipate that the

mentoring will include discussions and Q&A via a platform such as Loomio.

Wider impact and outcomes

As well as the direct benefits to mentors and mentees, the Next Gen Peer mentoring programme is looking to achieve wider impact:

- ▶ Increased confidence and know-how in the sector to take forward new projects. New projects develop because less time is spent reinventing the wheel.
- ▶ Provide an evidence base for funders to further scale and develop the mentoring programme.
- ▶ Continued improvements in early stage funding. Enabling the development of innovative projects and new community-led business models.
- ▶ Better information and knowledge sharing. Communities will be able to make informed decisions and access to emerging opportunities.
- ▶ Capacity building. Provide greater support for expertise development and knowledge sharing. Reducing time and capacity barriers, promoting professionalisation and

increasing long-term impact.

- ▶ Better impact assessment. Provide effective methods to quantify the social value and impact of community energy.



Part One | Can you apply?

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for mentoring support through the Next Gen Peer Mentoring Programme your business must be based in England, and will need to clearly evidence how you meet each of our criteria below:

1. Power to Change only funds community businesses.

Community businesses are run by local people for local people. They can revive local assets, protect the services people rely on, and address local needs.

There are many types of community business. What they all have in common is that they are inclusive and give decision making power to local people and that the profits they generate flow back into the community to deliver positive local impact. Most of the applications that we reject fail to evidence in their application form how they meet the four key features of a community business set out on this page.

Before applying, please think carefully about whether you can demonstrate strong evidence for these four community business features:

- **Are you locally rooted?**

Community businesses are rooted in a particular geographical place. They build on the strengths and assets of that place to address community needs.

- **Are you accountable to the local community?**

This can be demonstrated in many ways (e.g. membership structure, ownership, broad range of local trustees) but you must have evidence of regular community influence in decision making.

- **Are you trading for the benefit of the local community?**

Community businesses have a clear trading model and sell services and products in and around their local area. Community businesses create benefits for the local community with their profits and through the way the business is run.

- **Do you have a broad community impact?**

Community businesses engage with a variety of different groups in their community and deliver impact against a range of different community needs.



Part One | Can you apply?

Eligibility Criteria

2. Charitable purpose

You must have a charitable purpose at the heart of what you are asking us to fund, which meets charitable needs in your community.

This does not mean that you have to be a charity as we will fund a variety of legal structures, but we cannot fund activities which don't further a charitable purpose.

Power to Change will fund the following charitable purposes:

- the prevention or relief of poverty
- the advancement of education
- the advancement of health or the saving of lives
- the advancement of citizenship or community development
- the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science
- the advancement of environmental protection or improvement
- the relief of those in need because of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage
- the relief of unemployment
- the promotion of urban and rural regeneration
- the promotion of social inclusion

3. Public benefit

For an organisation to be charitable, it needs to have both a charitable purpose and to be for public benefit. This means that your organisation must create benefits for a sufficient section of your community, including people who are experiencing disadvantage. If your activities are for private benefit and will only benefit a few people in your community or will only provide benefits to people who aren't experiencing disadvantage, we will not be able to support your organisation.

4. Share our impact goals

Your project must be able to demonstrate at least one of the seven core impact areas below. If your application is successful, at the end of your project you will be asked to report against the impact area(s) you selected.

1. Reduce social isolation
2. Improve health and wellbeing
3. Increase employability
4. Create better access to basic services
5. Improve local environment
6. Enable greater community cohesion
7. Foster greater community pride and empowerment

If your application is successful, at the end of your project you will be asked to report against the impact area(s) you selected and share your learning to help evaluate the programme overall.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CHARITABLE PURPOSE?

You can find more information about charitable purpose on the Charity Commission website: <https://www.gov.uk/setting-up-charity/charitable-purposes>

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PRIVATE BENEFIT?

Any personal benefits people receive through the community business must be no more than a necessary result or by-product of delivering public benefit.

Personal benefits could include financial payments to the owners of a property that an organisation uses or membership benefits. These private benefits need to be incidental in both nature and amount. Returns from community shares are allowable. Find out more: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examples-of-personal-benefit/examples-of-personal-benefit>

Part Two | How to apply

How we assess applications and make decisions

You can apply for up to 4 days of peer mentoring support using the online form [here](#).

Applications open on 22 February and close on 15 March 2021.

All final decisions relating to applications to the Next Generation Community Energy Peer Mentoring programme, are made by our assessment panel.

Applications will be appraised by the panel including Co-operatives UK, Next Generation programme partners and Power to Change. Appraisal criteria will be against key eligibility criteria for community businesses.

Assessment will also be based on the:

- viability and sustainability of the business model
- community impact
- innovation
- opportunities for replication

Applicants will be advised if they have been successful within 2 weeks of their application.



Part three | Other useful information

Data protection

We will use the information you give us during the assessment and during the life of the peer mentoring programme to administer payments, and for our own research purposes.

All information gathered in connection with your application, including a record of any correspondence, will be available to Co-operatives UK. Your information will also be shared with our programme partners, Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Power to Change (funder) and all other members of the Next Generation consortium.

Confidential information you provide, such as personal details and commercially sensitive data, will not be made public in any way, except as required by law. We may use non-sensitive data about awarded grants, including statistical data about applications, to promote the programme.

The personal data collected via the application form will be held securely and will only be used for administration purposes. We will only store your information for as long as is necessary and will delete your information

when there is no further legitimate, legal or contractual reason to keep it.

Co-operatives UK is committed to processing information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in line with our [privacy policy](#). You are welcome to contact us to discuss the data we hold on you at any time.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Power to Change is committed to the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion. We seek to be a genuinely inclusive organisations by taking an equitable approach to how we design and implement our policies and practices.

Across all our funding activities, we encourage and welcome applications from community organisations which meet our eligibility criteria and which can clearly demonstrate how their work promotes inclusion.

Inclusive practices are designed to promote participation by people with a wide range of human experience including different race/ethnicity, genders, sexualities, ages, religions and disabilities or lack thereof. To learn more

about making your community business more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities, please read our [Accessibility and Inclusion Guidance](#).



Part four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

In this section you will find all the questions from the mentee application form. This includes information about why we ask specific questions and tips to help you answer them. We've tried to keep the form simple, while collecting all of the information we need to make decisions about which applications to take further. We ask direct questions wherever possible to gather factual information (on your organisation, or on finances), while leaving free text for you to describe your project and the difference it will make in your own words.

Contact details	
Your organisation name	
Primary contact name	
Job role within organisation	
Email address	
Region	
Your website/social media links so we can follow/engage with your organisation on your journey through this process	Website Facebook Twitter LinkedIn
Are you currently a member of Co-operatives UK?	Yes/No
Are you currently a member of Community Energy England?	Yes/No

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

<p>What is your organisation's legal status?</p>	<p>Charitable Incorporated Organisation Community Interest Company Company LLP Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Society Unincorporated Don't know Registration details</p> <p>Please provide details of your applicable registration number e.g Company, Society, Registered Charity number etc. If you are not a registered organisation, please provide further details.</p>
<p>When was your organisation established?</p>	<p>Month/year</p>
<p>Number of employees</p>	<p>If applicable, please indicate the number of FTE employees</p>
<p>Number of members</p>	<p>If applicable, please indicate the number of members your society has</p>
<p>About your community energy business (max. 100 words)</p>	<p>Please briefly introduce your community energy business or project and what you do.</p>
<p>Community energy project aims (max. 300 words)</p>	<p>Please describe your community energy project's overarching aims. Please describe any community energy assets you currently own. If you are not yet trading, describe your aims and what work you have undertaken to develop your project.</p>
<p>How is the project innovative? (max. 300 words)</p>	<p>Please describe how your community energy project is innovative. What technologies are involved? Are you testing ideas which are not yet proven to work? Are you looking to develop a self-sustaining business model which is not wholly dependent on grants? What learning are you likely to be able to share and is it likely to be replicable?</p>

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

Support requirements	
Community energy technologies	<p>Please select the specific Community Energy Technologies where you would benefit from peer mentoring support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy storage Energy efficiency Fuel poverty alleviation Microgrids / Peer to peer trading (P2P) Smart energy data / carbon tracking tools Low Carbon transport Electric vehicles and car clubs Electric vehicle charging Community transport Flexibility and network services Onshore wind Solar projects Low carbon heating Retrofit Smart-lighting installations (LED) <p>We will use this list to 'match' you with our community energy mentors. You can select more than one option.</p>

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

<p>Business support and development</p>	<p>Please select the specific areas where you would benefit from peer mentoring support. We anticipate that mentors will not be expected to provide technical or professional advice which the mentee relies on. This is about sharing the mentor's experience and knowledge and sign-posting to further technical support. You can select more than one option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal / Governance Funding and financing Community shares Community engagement How not to burn out and organisational mental health New business models Asset management Power Purchase Agreements PPAs Regulatory environment, working with FCA Working with Schools and Universities Working with Community Buildings Working with Local Authorities and climate emergency declarations Working with new housing developers
<p>Support needs (max. 200 words)</p>	<p>Please explain how the peer mentoring support will help you to develop your community energy business/project?</p>

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

Your eligibility	
Please briefly describe how the group is locally rooted (max. 100 words)	<p>Please describe the geographical area(s) your community business serves. Please describe both your area of benefit and your area of trading. Your area of trading may be the same as your area of benefit.</p> <p>Please read the Power to Change guidance to find out more about community business criteria. https://www.powertochange.org.uk/get-support/</p>
Please briefly describe how the organisation intends to trade for the benefit of the local community (max. 300 words)	<p>How is your community business or community energy project sustainable and financially viable? Have you produced a business plan, financial forecasts? How are you raising funds? Are you planning a community share offer? What is the current trading performance of your community business, this can be about earning income through the sales of energy, goods and/or services. How does this trading benefit your local community? How much trading income over the past 12 months (excluding grants)? You can attach relevant documents at the end of the application.</p>
Please briefly describe how the group is accountable to the local community (max 200 words)	<p>Power to Change funds organisations that are run by and accountable to their local community. Tell us about how your organisation actively engages local people in decisions about your project and your organisation. This can be about membership and board/committee representation.</p>

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

<p>Power to Change Impact goals</p>	<p>We are interested in knowing the outcomes you are working on as part of your project. In particular, we would like to know whether your project fits with one of our 7 core outcome areas, listed below.</p> <p>Please select the Power to Change impact goals that you will contribute towards.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce social isolation 2. Improve health and wellbeing 3. Increase employability 4. Create better access to basic services 5. Improve local environment 6. Enable greater community cohesion 7. Foster greater community pride and empowerment
<p>Charitable purpose</p>	<p>Please indicate the primary charitable purpose that your community business addresses. Please select one option from the list below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prevention or relief of poverty The advancement of education The advancement of citizenship or community development The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science The advancement of amateur sport The promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity The advancement of environmental protection or improvement The relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

How did you hear about the Next Gen Community Energy Peer mentoring programme?	Select an option: CSE communications Community Energy England communications Power to Change communications Co-operatives UK communications Next Gen website Event Social media Word of mouth Other (please specify)
Documents and additional information	Please attach any relevant files such as a business plan, financial accounts etc

Part Four | Application form

A preview of the mentee application form

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Confidential information you provide, such as personal details and commercially sensitive data, will not be made public in any way, except as required by law. We may use non-sensitive data about awarded grants, including statistical data about applications, to promote the programme.

Your information and submitted documents will be stored on a secure network administered by Co-operatives UK. This information will be retained for 7 years following the end of the programme. After this time, the data will be destroyed by Co-operatives UK.

Co-operatives UK will retain any information on financial transactions through the fund for the necessary period in order to meet the requirements of our accountants.

I have read and understand this data protection and privacy notice and agree that my personal details can be stored and processed.