

Orchard Community Energy: Community Fund Guide for Applicants for 2023-24

Introduction

The fund is donated by Orchard Community Energy (OCE), website www.orchardcommunityenergy.org, a community benefit company that owns and operates two photo-voltaic (PV) renewable energy schemes located in Kent; a 5MW ground-mounted solar farm located at Iwade and a 158kW roof-top solar project in Sittingbourne.

The Community Fund is managed by a sub-committee of the Board of Directors. During the first six years in operation this fund has distributed in total £64,500 to community projects in Swale and Medway. At last September's Annual General Meeting members of OCE approved the allocation of £15,000 for projects to be carried out during 2024. Charities are invited to apply for grants for community projects of a minimum of £2,000 and a maximum of £5,000 for each project.

Funding Priorities and Criteria

The following criteria will be applied when allocating the community fund in the current funding round:

- Projects must benefit the people of Swale and/or Medway districts of Kent. The beneficiary cannot be an individual.
- The applicant must be a charity.
- The project applying for funds must address at least one of the objectives listed in each of the criteria categories {a} & {b} noted in the '**Application for Funding Summary Form: 2023-24**', also as listed below:
 - {a} Biodiversity Net Gain, Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation
 - {b} Alleviation of Fuel Poverty, Support for Vulnerable or Disadvantaged Groups.
- Ideally the application should be to fund a well defined project, possibly as a smaller but specific aspect of a larger ongoing (and higher cost) project.
- The project should be ready to commence in early 2024 and aim to be completed by the end of that calendar year.
- Applications from charities that have previously received funding from OCE will be considered on their merits.

The directors are particularly interested in projects that achieve social goals through environmental means. To see the types of projects that we have supported so far, please check the list of past grants at www.orchardcommunityenergy.org. To date we have funded projects in both Swale and Medway and over time we may seek to achieve an equitable geographical spread of grants across the two areas.

Subject meeting all criteria, applications for one or more projects benefitting people living in the Sittingbourne area may be considered favourably, reflecting the contribution to the community fund from the roof-top solar scheme on the Cook Classic Kitchen site in Sittingbourne which has been operational since spring 2021.

Timetable

- The call for applications will be launched in early August 2023.
- Completed applications must be received by midday on 31st October 2023 via email to grants@orchardcommunityenergy.org
- Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by a committee member to discuss the project and arrange a visit if appropriate.
- It is intended that funding decisions will be made and grants disbursed by 31st December 2023.
- Projects may start from 1st January 2024 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Projects should be scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2024, but a later completion date might be accommodated if necessary.
- Successful applicants will be invited to attend the OCE's AGM in autumn 2024, where a brief presentation on grants awarded by the community fund will be made to members.
- A brief written report on progress will be required prior to the AGM. A final report will be required by 31st December 2024, or the agreed end date if later.

Application Procedure

Applications need to give a strong enough sense of key aspects of the proposal to enable an assessment to be made of the likelihood of the project meeting its objectives.

The single page 'Orchard CE Application for Funding Summary Form: 2023-24' and this document 'Orchard CE Guide for Applicants for 2023-24' can be downloaded from the Orchard Community Energy website (<https://orchardcommunityenergy.org/for-applicants>).

We would prefer to receive an application in MS.Word, but if that is not possible it can be accepted as a PDF file. Your application should consist of a single file containing the completed 'Application for Funding Summary Form: 2023-24' as the first page plus up to three sides of text providing the supporting information listed below. The application should be written in Arial font size 11pt, margins should be at least 1cm and pages should be numbered. **Please note that the text written in *Italics* in the various entry boxes of the summary form is for further guidance only in completing this form and may be deleted.**

The project should have clear aims. There is no set format but the application must provide information on all the elements listed below:

- The case for the importance or need for the project.
- Information on how the project will meet at least two of the criteria for funding, to include at least one criterion from each of the lists {a} & {b} noted above and on the 'Application for Funding Summary Form'. For example, for a LED lighting installation project, how much carbon emissions will be saved per year (criteria category {a}) while at the same time reducing building or housing running costs and helping alleviate fuel poverty (in criteria category {b}).
- Who will benefit? Which group(s) of people? Where do they live? How many will benefit?
- Specification of the budget. List how the grant will be spent. Specify if the budget is based on firm quotes or estimates. How will any additional costs of the project, not funded by the grant, be met? How will any unexpected additional costs of the project be met? It is appreciated that some fraction of the funds applied for may be budgeted to cover a charity's various overheads and administration costs associated with organising and running the project.
- Please consider and give information on the wider environmental impact of the activity that is to be funded. For example the consideration of funding to carry out the refurbishment of a building using vinyl flooring would give OCE concerns on environmental grounds, whereas a request for funding to supply office equipment to help facilitate home-working of charity employees might be looked on favourably, as this would lower that charity's 'car-miles' and overall carbon footprint in addition to reducing its running costs.
- Please provide a planned timeline with a start date, end date, and the timing of key steps or milestones in the delivery of the project.
- Please provide sufficient background information about your organisation and the key people who will deliver the project so that we may judge how likely the project is to be successfully delivered. For example, a track record in past delivery of similar projects or brief CV of key personnel.
- Please provide the name and contact details of a referee, to whom we may refer for an opinion on the application.
- Regarding the completeness of the information requested on the Summary Page, please fill in all boxes as applicable, including the anticipated start and end dates for utilisation of the grant and the consent information requested in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations.

Completed applications must be received, by email to grants@orchardcommunityenergy.org, by midday on 31st October 2023.