

**Resilient Hills and Coasts Community Energy Program
Community Engagement Strategy for
Expressions of Interest in Community Energy Project**

Engagement objectives and guiding principles

This engagement strategy is designed to:

- Obtain support from elected members
- Effectively engage with potential households interested in participating in the Community Energy Project, to explain what we are asking and why
- Obtain a list of at least 750 households expressing interest in participation, in order to present a case for funding to councils that are part of Resilient Hills and Coasts
- Ensure that disadvantaged households and engaged households are equally offered an opportunity to participate
- Highlight and explain the potential benefits of collecting expressions of interest, to form the basis for a Request for Quote (RFQ) for retailers in the market
- Highlight and explain the potential benefits of a community energy program to signatories and their communities
- Highlight the possible economic and environmental benefits of the program, as well as potential personal gains for each household
- Build trust and confidence in council, RH&C, the program and services that will be procured
- Foster trust in procurement processes and offer reassurance that providers (i.e. energy retailers) will provide a service in line with the desired outcomes of the program
- Cementing external relationships
- Offer households an incentive to sign the EOI
- Case studies will be a key component to the communications strategy – people like you have taken action, you can take action too
- Be transparent with the community about how their participation will influence the decision or project, by reporting back and closing the loop with them
- Provide an opportunity for community feedback or questions

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The strategy aims to:

- **INFORM:** providing reliable, balanced and objective information about the project and potential benefits. Information needs to be readily available for people to access.
- **SUPPORT PARTICIPATION:** support households in uploading billing data and signing EOI
- **ASSIST:** ensure that households feel some immediate value e.g. energy saving tips, understanding of power bills and possibly local discounts, to foster trust and demonstrate that the program is being designed to help people

Key messages:

- Personal benefit – e.g. reducing energy bills, accessing clean energy at a fair price
- Community benefit – keeping money in the local economy, supporting less privileged neighbours in the region, and
- Environmental – support the uptake of renewable energy, purchase renewable energy

Each council may wish to amplify one of the above messages, depending on their local demographic, engagement with renewable energy and council priorities.

Communication and engagement methods

A number of engagement and communication methods will need to be utilised, to deliver the engagement component of the project.

Councils have existing communication channels, which will need to be leveraged as much as possible, in order to get the message out to as many people as possible.

Wherever possible low to no cost communication channels should be utilised.

Where possible council officers are encouraged to get support from elected members and communications teams within their council.

A webpage will need to be created with information about the background of the project and a portal for uploading billing data. Households that sign up will have to opportunity to download an energy saving booklet. Local businesses will be invited to offer discounts and incentives to participants, which will be included in the booklet.

Council help desk staff will need to be notified that people may request support if they are not able to access the internet or upload their bills.

Once the EOI period has closed a decision will need to be made about whether or not the portal remains open, to continue gathering interest and data.

Households that sign the EOI and upload data should be contacted at the end of the EOI period with an update and timeline of planned next steps.

Collateral	Distribution channels	Advantages	Cost implications and considerations
<p>Printed/ printable collateral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochure/Flyer Copy (design / layout to be developed by relevant marketing teams) • Poster copy (design / layout to be developed by relevant marketing teams) • FAQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyers and information at council service centres, libraries, community centres and other council owned facilities (e.g. child care centres) • Real estate agents (to target renters and people who have moved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports people not accessing information on line • Potential to reach people who may not otherwise be aware of the program e.g. renters, who will not be reached by marketing through rates data 	<p>Medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and printing • Potential to also train service desk staff to support people in uploading data and completing on line information. • Real estate agents may not support this engagement
<p>Video case studies</p>	<p>On line – council websites and social media</p> <p>Social media promotion i.e. paid boosted posts, which can be targeted to particular demographics</p> <p>Utilise councils' existing social networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies of people that residents can relate to – ideally real people from the community, ensure outcomes are tangible and advantages are clear 	<p>High. However can be distributed widely at low cost</p> <p>Low cost version of case study is a photograph and copy without video</p>

<p>Web content and printed collateral.</p> <p>Easily shareable posts for community groups and organisations.</p>	<p>Accessing local groups and organisations, to share messaging, promote website and support uploading of data. E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churches • Local Residents or Area Based Groups • Communities of Interest • Faith Based Groups • Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Groups • Local Community and Voluntary Groups • Web Based or Virtual Groups • Community groups • School communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organisations and groups will utilise their own networks to promote engagement • May support harder to reach members of the community • Can tap into existing values supported by groups and organisations e.g. being part of something that supports the local economy 	<p>Low – Medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web portal will be set up for accessing and downloading content • Content for sharing through channels digitally low cost (and can be emailed) • Low- medium if printing collateral for groups to share hard copies
<p>Printed local media advertising</p>	<p>Local newspaper</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily available to all • Local papers are often read in more detail by remote residents and those who do not rely on digital media for information 	<p>Low- High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some councils may have an existing regular media presence • Some councils will need to pay for local advertising <p>Needs council communications teams to support if utilising existing media presence</p>

<p>Web portal with information and area to upload data</p>	<p>Ensure web portal is easily found and navigable from all participating council websites.</p> <p>The link to the portal can be shared through all communication channels and will be where interested households can fill in the EOI and upload their billing data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows people to engage when and where convenient to them • Useful for those who may be homebound e.g. carers, elderly people, parents with young children, rural residents • Can reach large numbers of people • Easily shared • Less time consuming than attending a workshop or public meeting 	<p>Low (after initial set up)</p> <p>Needs council communications teams to set up on council websites and council social media</p>
<p>On hold messages (to be recorded as per council process)</p>	<p>Councils typically have on-hold messages on their phone lines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures all residents that phone council have the opportunity to hear about the program • Enables harder to reach households the opportunity to hear about it 	<p>Low (will need council communications team to facilitate)</p>

<p>Surveys</p>	<p>Surveys can be provided (on line and to council staff and community organisations), to gauge interest in community energy programs. A survey could also be completed after the end of the EOI period, to identify if the ways to save money and energy PDF booklet had been helpful and if any households had started taking action to reduce energy consumption and/or costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will help with planning for future activity of the proposed energy foundation • Post EOI surveys will demonstrate value that has been realised through this engagement, as well as reinforce the opportunity for households to engage in the next steps 	<p>Low</p>
<p>Letter or DL flyer mailed directly to households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral / CEO Letter Copy (to be put on each councils letterhead) • DL flyer in rates notice 	<p>Mailed through council rates database</p>	<p>Reach all rate payers in municipality, including those who do not live full time in the area</p>	<p>Medium- high</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates notes flyer lower cost than letter mailed separately • Printing and design costs • Need to coordinate with rates team. In most cases enclosing a flyer will be easier than individually mailed letters, as no data will need to be shared
<p>Community event</p>	<p>Local town hall or community centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to answer questions • Opportunity to help people upload data and complete on line information 	<p>High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue hire, refreshments • Child care • Staffing • IT to support people with on line elements

Stall or similar at existing community event	e.g. farmers market, stock and feed, existing council community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to speak with harder to reach members of the community 	Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff costs Printed materials
Energy saving tips PDF to download on completion of uploading billing data	In order to demonstrate immediate value (and keep households engaged) energy saving tips and advice, specific to certain groups e.g. renters, holiday home etc, can be downloaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If local traders are able to offer additional incentives by way of discounts and offers this will increase the benefit to households 	Low – Medium AEF to provide content. Design and uploading. Engaging businesses to offer incentives requires staff time (council economic development support, local chamber of commerce etc)

Timeline of key activities

Activity	Weeks 1&2	Weeks 3&4	Weeks 5&6	Weeks 7&8	Weeks 8-10
Engage elected members					
Distribute collateral through council owned buildings					
Design and print promotional collateral					
Design on line content					
Design and create web portal					
Ensure privacy policies in place					
Engage local businesses for promotion and any offers					

Design and upload downloadable PDF					
Engage council staff					
Engage local groups and real estate agents and provide with collateral and on line content					
Pre-program survey					
(if applicable) Plan and deliver 'town hall' event					
Collate EOIs and data and present to councils					
Agree timelines for next steps					
Review opportunities for future board members/ community leaders					
Evaluate engagement and downloads of information PDF					
Post sign up survey					

Deliverables

- Database of a minimum of 750 EOs
- Database of a minimum of 750 household energy billing data uploaded
- Database of interest in particular community energy models
- Database of potential board and community members for an energy foundation
- Energy advice delivered – energy saving, understanding your bill, getting a better deal

Risks

Success of this engagement will require time and money, as well as support from council communications teams and community members.

A number of risks have been identified (as per the proposal) for the engagement phase, as outlined below.

1. Unable to gain participation from stakeholders including elected members
2. Timeframe of engagement – availability of stakeholders within timeframe of the project
3. Inability to obtain billing data
4. Lack of investment to establish foundation and/or implement phase two (obtaining quotes and selecting a retailer for PPA)
5. Households will need to see a clear benefit in order to engage and, until we have support for the next phases the benefits may not be clear. That is why we will offer tips and advice – i.e. 'download your guide to energy saving', once billing data has been uploaded
6. Lack of support through council communication channels, council helpdesk and community groups and organisations may mean that engaging 750 households will take longer than outlined in the timeframe above

RH&C need to ensure that people are comfortable with sharing billing data and how their privacy will be protected.