



Community Grant Guidance Notes

These guidance notes accompany the application form* to apply for a community grant of **£500 to £1,000** from Westmill Solar Co-operative Ltd. Please read these guidance notes and check your eligibility before completing the form. There are alternative documents* for grants of over £1,000 up to £5,000.

* All forms and guidance are at <http://westmillsolar.coop/westmill-community-funding/>

Calendar

Applications open: July 2024

Applications close: 12 noon, Friday 13th September 2024

Aims of the scheme

From the beginning, the Westmill project aimed to combat climate change by financing a reliable source of renewable energy, provide local people and other investors with a stable, reliable source of income, and help the area transition to a low carbon future economy.

To slow and then reverse climate change, we need to switch to renewable energy sources, be more efficient in our energy and resource use, and find ways of taking greenhouse gases out of our atmosphere. It is important everyone can access and afford the energy they need and finding solutions to climate change is an opportunity to make our energy systems more local and fairer.

Westmill Solar Cooperative Ltd (<http://westmillsolar.coop>) was founded on the belief that individuals can come together to make a substantial difference. With the full support of its Members, Westmill Solar commits a portion of its financial surpluses to activities designed to benefit our communities. This grant scheme is one means of distributing funds towards our aims. We encourage Members of Westmill Solar, our partner organisations, and other entities with similar goals, to submit proposals so we that may support causes that align with our ethos and values.

The Westmill Solar Board is keen to involve more people in the Society's business and to increase the Society's social and environmental impact through expanded community funding arrangements. We encourage and support community action on reducing greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, and/or making energy more affordable. In doing so, we may also gain further benefits such as slowing the decline of biodiversity or helping disadvantaged members of our communities.

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Who can apply?

The following types of entities are eligible:

- co-operative
- community interest company
- community benefit society
- school, college or other educational body
- faith organisation (e.g. church, mosque)
- charity (registered with the Charities Commission and/or recognised by HMRC as a charity for tax purposes)
- charitable incorporated organisation
- unincorporated club or association
- other not-for-profit voluntary or community group, or social enterprise.

You must be:

- Based in Oxfordshire, or
- Based within 25 miles of the Westmill Solar site (Watchfield SN6 8TY), or
- Energy4All Limited, or
- Community Energy England.

We have a strong preference for funding communities in our local region. Our partner organisations Community Energy England and Energy4All are special cases, whose work benefits the community energy sector nationally.

You must have a UK bank or building society account in the name of your organisation. *We will ask you to provide evidence of such a bank account if your application is successful.*

We encourage co-operation and accept applications from a consortium, but one organisation must take the role of lead applicant, to co-ordinate the process. Local Councils are not eligible to apply as lead applicant, but we welcome their involvement in a consortium with one or more eligible organisations.

What can you apply for?

Applications must address one or more of the following three bullet points. This should not be merely an incidental element of the proposal.

We can all make a difference in tackling climate change, in improving sustainability, and in promoting fairer access to energy. Our community grants will support projects that aim to:

- Raise awareness of climate change, its solutions and how to reduce its impact. *This includes public outreach through talks, workshops, campaigns, and social, arts or sports activity.*
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions of individuals, organisations and communities either through energy generation, energy efficiency, or through more efficient use of resources. *Projects with clear aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be preferred. This could include energy efficiency in community buildings, transport*

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projects (e.g. encouraging cycling and public transport use), seasonal local food growing projects (which reduce our use of food transported long distances), horticultural projects (e.g. planting trees and plants which absorb carbon), activities to reduce waste of food or other consumables, community sharing and networking (e.g. lift sharing, projects to spread good ideas), and IT (e.g. harnessing social media).

- Reduce fuel poverty to ensure everyone can access and afford the energy they need. *This could include helping people on low incomes to understand their energy bills and how to reduce them, and accessing grants to improve the energy efficiency of their home.*

Emphasis will be on practical projects that lead to real community benefits.

A grant from Westmill Solar can contribute to a variety of costs relating to a project or activity, including project costs (e.g. venue hire, project worker) and capital costs. We encourage applications for the funding of innovative ideas, including pilot projects, as well as for the development and growth of existing projects.

Exclusions

We will not fund:

- Activities or expenditure that have already taken place
- General running costs of organisations
- Work promoting religious or political ideologies
- Sponsorship for fundraising events
- Travel, except as an inherent part of project activities
- Individuals

What are we looking for?

Questions on the form are designed to help us evaluate how well your application fits one or more of our values and principles.

- We look for requests that align with the principles of the International Co-operative Alliance, in particular:
 - concern for community and sustainable development;
 - co-operation between co-operatives and similar social enterprises; and
 - education, training and sharing information.
- We take a concentric approach to “community”, focussing on local and regional, but also considering national and international scales.
- We like to contribute funds along with others, or provide seed funding, where this will achieve greater impact.

Guidance on filling in the form

Additional guidance is given below, for questions or boxes where more information might be useful.

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Part A: About Your Organisation

A1. Lead organisation name: If you are applying as a consortium, one organisation must take the lead in the application process and be responsible for disbursing funds if awarded. Give the name of that organisation here. Any other organisations should be named in box B12.

A4. Address for written correspondence: This is where we will write to you if needed. If another address is relevant to the application – for example that of a community building for which you are requesting funds for energy efficiency improvements – provide those details in the relevant box, e.g. B6 or B9-12.

A7. Email will be the principal method of communication. Please provide email addresses of all members of your organisation who should be involved in the correspondence.

A8. What type of organisation? Please tell us what kind of entity this is (for example, one of the types included in the eligibility list above). If you have an official registered number, it can help us confirm your identity, but that is not essential.

Examples:

- *A “bona fide” co-operative society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registered Number 31265R.*
- *Community Benefit Society (Registration number: 1234)*
- *Scout group – part of XYZ district Scout Council, which is a registered charity number 123456*
- *Community action group (unincorporated)*

A9. Briefly, what does your organisation do? For some organisations this will be obvious and you won't need to write much here. This overview should help us to understand what you are about.

Examples:

- *Our scout group covers the area of ABC and the surrounding villages. We have two thriving Beavers Colonies, two Cub Packs and a Scout Troop, all of which meet at our Scout Hut at XXX, during term time. All the leaders are volunteers, with occasional support from parents.*
- *This CBS was set up by the ABC Community Partnership Group, in association with ABC Town Council, and issued a community share portfolio to encourage the town's residents and businesses to take ownership of a project to increase the number of visitors to the town thus enhancing the economic prosperity of the High Street.*
- *XYZ is an independent charity that gives grants and funding to the voluntary sector and charities across Wiltshire and Swindon, and also runs its own fund-raising campaigns to address issues such as fuel poverty.*

A10. We encourage our Members to engage actively with Westmill Solar's activities and we hope that a number of grant applications will be initiated by our Members spreading the word. We are interested to learn what sorts of organisations and/or projects they favour. If a Member of Westmill Solar is recommending your

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application, give their name and email address so that we can thank them. Make sure you have their permission before providing personal data. If you heard about our grants scheme from another source, you may just leave this box blank or marked “not applicable”. It is not necessary to have a Member recommend you; we might take it into account as a kind of “tie break”.

Part B: About Your Project or Activity

B1. Project name: Your project doesn't have to have an official name. Write something that will help us refer to this application, and distinguish it from other proposals, during the assessment process and panel discussions.

B6. Give a summary overview of the activity you wish to carry out. Be as specific as you can. (Approximate guide: up to 120 words.)

Examples:

- *ABC CBS is undertaking a project to create a visitor information centre and museum in the former XXX on the High Street. We have a substantial donation from a local Trust, and money raised from a share issue by the CBS (see B7). We are also looking for grant funding to cover the capital costs of setting up the centre and its museum. We estimate these start-up costs to be in the region of £xxxx to £xxxx. We are seeking grants for furniture and fittings for the information centre and display cases and modern technology for the museum. We aim to source these items locally as far as practical, and to use sustainable materials and environmentally-friendly providers where possible.*
- *An energy audit of the Village Hall was carried out and a number of measures were recommended. All were presented with estimated installation costs, financial savings and pay-back-periods, allowing us to prioritise which actions we want to take. Many involve little or no cost, and work is in progress on those. A key priority is replacement of inefficient water heating, and we are applying for funds to install two instant water heaters in the toilets, which should result in reduced carbon emissions and in cost savings.*

B7. If the funds sought are towards the cost of a larger project, how do you anticipate the additional costs will be met? If you are seeking or have secured other funding for this activity (including from your organisation's own internal resources), please provide details, and indicate the sources and amounts, and dates of funding decisions. If the viability of the project is dependent on raising sufficient funding, Westmill Solar might offer a grant conditional on matched funding being obtained - let us know if such an offer letter would help you raise that additional money.

B8. What lasting impact do you hope your project will deliver? You might like to comment on how you see this project/activity developing after this funding comes to an end, if it not seen as a one-off. Is this a feasibility study, that will enable you to plan and design a viable project and provide evidence to convince local residents and others to support it? Do you intend to pursue any further community energy or energy saving projects or activities? Could your project inspire and inform others who wish to try something similar?

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Questions 9 to 12 in Part B are designed to assess to what extent your application aligns with our values and the Co-operative Principles.

B9. COMMUNITY. In which community is it proposed that the activity will take place? Who will benefit from your proposed activity – directly and indirectly? (Approximate guide: up to 150 words)

Points to consider in answering this could include:

- Is this community very local to the Westmill site? Or will benefits be spread broadly in our region (Oxfordshire, or within 25 miles of the site) or beyond?
- Does your activity target a particular group of beneficiaries? If so, how will you make it as inclusive as possible?
- How many people are likely to be involved and in what capacity? For example, volunteers, event attendees, school students.
- Will the activity help attract further resources into your community, or result in cost savings? If so, how?
- Will your project address fuel poverty and/or energy equity? If so, how?
- Describe any other social, economic, or health benefits you anticipate.

B10. SUSTAINABILITY. How will the project contribute towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions? What environmental benefits will you achieve? (Approximate guide: up to 150 words)

Points to consider in answering this could include:

- Will your project be creating new renewable energy generation, or increasing the capacity or productivity of existing generation?
- Will your project directly or indirectly reduce, or encourage reduction of, consumption of fossil fuels for heat, light, travel or transport?
- Will your project result in less waste, or encourage re-use, recycling or re-purposing of items?
- If applicable, you might be able to quantify the amount of carbon savings you estimate will be achieved as a result of the funded work (for example, from results of an energy audit), or the amount of clean energy you estimate will be produced.

Examples:

- *The new reception desk will be made bespoke by a local craftsman, from FSC certified wood, and collected by our volunteers. This reduces transport emissions and generates income in our local economy.*
- *We will replace three existing radiators with more efficient ones. Lighting will be LEDs throughout.*

B11. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION. How will individuals and/or organisations benefit from learning generated by this project? How will you share any information you generate? (Approximate guide: up to 100 words)

Some projects and activities inherently involve educating or training children or adults. The sharing of information can achieve wider benefits indirectly. If your project or activity is an innovative pilot scheme, how will you share the lessons learned, about what worked and what didn't work so well?

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Examples:

- *This website is a key support tool. Community groups need access to success and failure stories, good practice and technical information if they are to engage their communities and implement community energy projects successfully. There are many experienced practitioners who are keen to pass on their knowledge and experience for the benefit of new groups.*
- *Organise a workshop to demonstrate what has and can be done and invite representatives of schools (public and private) across the county to participate.*
- *Hold a public event at the Town Hall to show our results and engage residents of this area to help decide which actions to prioritise.*
- *Summarise the results of the survey in our local newsletter (distributed at the village hall, shops, cafes and pubs), and suggest simple actions for readers to undertake.*
- *Provide an example letter for people to write to their Local Councillor / MP.*

B12. CO-OPERATION. How will you co-operate with other like-minded organisations to help achieve shared goals? Tell us about any other organisations that will be involved in the delivery of the activity, and their role. What other ways might you be able to work with Westmill Solar, now or in future? (Approximate guide: up to 100 words for a sole applicant, up to 150 words for a consortium)

Points to consider in answering this could include:

- If you are part of a larger network, such as Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxfordshire, would you expect to disseminate skills, templates, documents, etc among such a group?
- Do you contribute advice and resources to a website designed to share experience and tips?
- Are there other, non-financial ways, that your organisation and Westmill Solar might support each other?

Examples:

- *The Visitor Centre will display information about local attractions, and we will be happy to advertise events and tours of the Westmill site organised by WeSET.*
- *Many of our members are also members of Westmill Solar. We helped to advertise your 2019 Bond Offer in our local community.*

Part C: Completing your application

C1. How will you publicly acknowledge this funding?

Our community benefit payments are made from funds that would otherwise be members' interest, so it is important that we can demonstrate that these are being spent effectively, and publicly acknowledged. Please indicate how you can help us demonstrate that this grant has helped to achieve the scheme's aims. Would you be willing to attend our AGM (usually in June), as one of our exhibitors, and showcase your work to our members? Are you willing to share images (with permissions) and success stories with Westmill Solar Co-operative? These can be very effective on our website or in communications with our members.

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Examples:

- *We will display a plaque on the purchased equipment.*
- *We produce three reports a year on this programme. Those reports will acknowledge funding from Westmill Solar.*
- *We will liaise with your team about the possibilities for engaging the local press.*
- *All donors are listed in our annual report, which is available from our web site.*

C2. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

It is possible that we've omitted from our forms a place for you to tell us something vitally important about your proposal, in which case this is your opportunity to do so. Please do not use this box simply to have more space to answer other questions! We would like our system for distributing funds to achieve community benefit to be efficient, effective and user friendly – if you have any suggestions to improve our grant application process, please write them here. If you are a Member of Westmill Solar Co-operative and would like to volunteer to help assess grant applications in a future round, you could either tell us here, or email info@westmillsolar.coop and include “Community Funding” in the subject line.

Submitting your application

Please send your completed form to info@westmillsolar.coop including “Community Funding” in the subject line. Do not attach any supporting documentation, and do not include any vital information in a covering email (or letter) – if it is important, include it the relevant section of the application form.

We prefer to receive electronic applications. You can also submit your application by post to Westmill Solar Co-operative Ltd, c/o Energy4All, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE.

You will receive an email acknowledgement within 7 days. If you do not, we strongly recommend that you follow up using a *different* email address, as it has been said our spam filter can be over-zealous!

We have a formal process for assessing the applications. A panel of volunteers, all Members of Westmill Solar Co-operative, will assess the applications and make recommendations to the Board to consider at their meeting near the end of October. You should expect to learn the outcome of your application by the end of November. Please be patient and do not email or call asking for an earlier response.

Feedback will not be given on individual applications.

Data protection

The data you provide will be used and stored by Westmill Solar Co-operative and our partners (including Energy4All), grant panel members and others involved in the grant allocation process. Our data protection policy may be downloaded from <http://westmillsolar.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Westmill-Solar-Data-Protection-Policy-240518.pdf>. The Company Secretary at Westmill Solar Co-operative is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and the relevant legislation.

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Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge forms, guidance notes and examples generously shared by Low Carbon Hub CIC (<https://www.lowcarbonhub.org/>), Bristol Energy Cooperative (<http://www.bristolenergy.coop/>), Community Energy England (<https://communityenergyengland.org/>) and Visit Highworth Ltd (<http://www.visithighworth.co.uk/>). We also drew on other publicly available materials, and we thank the community energy sector in general for inspiration and for the good work they are doing to benefit their communities and to produce clean, community owned renewable energy.