

TOP 10 GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED

CREATED BY

Lancashire
County
Council



COMMUNITY
ENERGY
SOUTH



Community
Energy
England

COMMISSIONED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

MIDLANDS
NET ZERO HUB

north west
net zero hub

Greater
South East
Net Zero Hub

South West
NET ZERO
HUB

north east & yorkshire
NET ZERO HUB

Please be aware that most of the resources in this guide are free to access but some are available only to members of Community Energy England. The Guide is collated by Community Energy South and Net Zero Hubs who recognise the importance of CEE as the national voice of the sector. Membership begins at £28 / year, to help groups get started. See the CEE website for more information.



GET INSPIRED

The best way to get started is to set your goals and see all that exists around you. A good place to start is CEE's **State of the Sector Report**. This gives the latest updates and some great infographics showing the impact and power of the sector. Page 17 of the latest report (2022) will also help you prepare for Step 2 - with a focus on best business models and options out there.



KNOW YOUR PROJECT OPTIONS

The next step is to get more specific. There are some project types that are easier as a new community energy group and in particular locations and regions of the country. We suggest having a look at **CEE's NEW National Map** - the most comprehensive database of community energy projects nationally - to see what's around you. You may also want to check out the **Business Models & Technologies** pages available in the **How to Pages** of CEE's website.



FIND THE RIGHT SUPPORT

You'll quickly realise you cannot do this alone, and need good support around you. Thankfully there are lots of key institutions to help. This Guide recommends checking out the latest updates on CEE's **Networks and Key Partners page** (available in the website's **Networks and Learning area**). These key partners have the potential to offer you essential resources, support and even funding for your work but first - you will need to reach out to them, and make yourself known.



CONNECT THROUGH LOOMIO

Don't forget you are also part of a nationally connected network of groups with decades of expertise and skills! You can tap into this network through **CEE's Online Practitioner Forum for community energy nationally, known as Loomio**.

This is an e-platform that helps connect directly with each other, ask questions, work through issues and challenges, and feel part of a community!

A note: Loomio is a membership feature of CEE, so if you are interested in looking into joining, you will need to consider the £28 starter fee offered for new groups.

For more information, you can email members@communityenergyengland.org

Remember: your local Net Zero Hub may also be able to put you in touch with groups in your area!



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LEGAL SET UP & FUNDING

A key question you may come across as you begin is what legal entity you need to become to access funding, or if you need to become one at all? This will be dependent on the goals and projects you would like to pursue, and requirements of what funding you are looking to access. To help with this, CEE hosts **two recently revamped pages on obtaining funding and investment, and registering as a legal entity** - including deciding between different legal structures.

Both pages are free to access in CEE's How to Guide, available in the Networks and Learning section on the CEE website.



A NOTE: COMMUNITY SOLAR & LEGAL SET UP

Did you know? It may not always be needed to become a legal entity...

There are a number of larger community energy organisations who often partner with new groups and can offer funding to projects without a legal organisation being needed. **This is particularly common in one of the strongest area's of the sector, community solar.**

If you want to find the organisations that could help you fund your first projects - with no legal set up or grants needed - visit CEE's specific page on Solar in the Networks and Learning section.

FIND ADDITIONAL SKILLS

As well as features like the National Map and Loomio, if you feel you need to find more skills and expertise, you may wish to check out the CEE pages on new **Jobs & Volunteering in the sector**, and their overview on **Skills & Mentorship**. These pages are free to access and at the top of the CEE website (so easy to find).



GET INVOLVED IN EVENTS

Events - local, regional and national - are great ways to connect and find out the latest tips, funding and other information in the sector.

As the voice of the sector, CEE hosts various events throughout the year, responding to the most urgent needs of the sector.

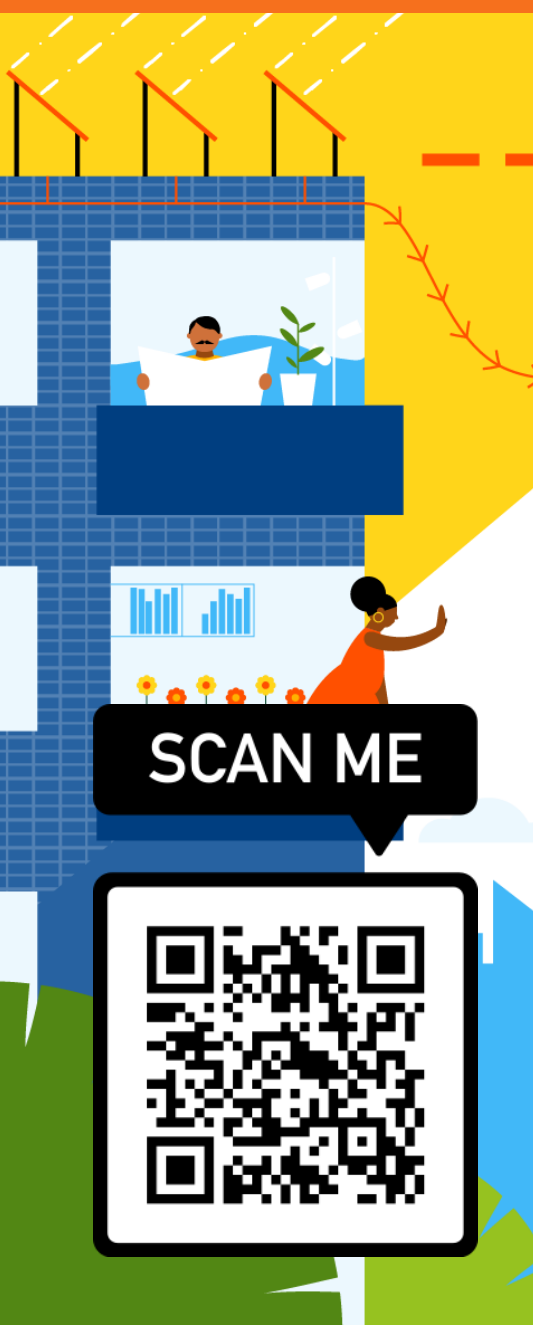
You can email CEE to find opportunities to showcase your work or announce your ambitions to find new partners at events such as:

- CEE's **Quarterly Conferences for the sector**,
- The **Annual Community Energy Awards**,
- The national celebration of community energy which happens every summer, **Community Energy Fortnight**.

A note: that while attendance is open to all groups, speaking at events is a membership feature so groups may need to consider this when emailing.

A NOTE: PUBLICISING YOUR EVENTS

As a member of CEE, you can also use the national network to help spread awareness of any events you are hosting. Many groups often put on events during **Community Energy Fortnight** (each summer), also submit events throughout the year to CEE's **Members & Friends Events page** to gain national publicity and easy marketing!



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MEDIA RESOURCES

Sometimes it can be hard for organisations to help spread the word and create attractive resources within your community. CEE hosts a slowly growing **Media Library**, with resources to help you find:

- powerful data & impactful infographics
- templates for social media and online posts
- templates for presentations and speaking events
- videos and visual images

To find these downloadable packs, visit CEE's **Media Library** in the **Network and Learning** section of the CEE website.



KEY RESOURCE BANKS

CEE also collates wider resources from partners and organisations, in their How to Guide. Some are especially useful for new and starting groups, including:

- **Community Energy London** - Getting Started, Developing Projects, and 5 key technologies (step by step guides)
- **Next Generation** - learning and case studies from one of the most recent community energy innovation funding programmes
- **Centre for Sustainable Energy** - easy introductions to technologies and a national funding database
- **Electricity Networks Association** - updates on large scale innovations and grid operator resources for group (including grid capacity, energy data tools, and funding)
- **The Net Zero Energy Hubs** - invaluable places for finding resources and opportunities more specific to your area and region, including support for initiating new and early project ideas.
- **Community Energy South** - support for groups across the south east, and Pathways - a six step mentoring programme which brings Local Authorities and new groups working together across the country.

FINALLY, LOOKING AHEAD

While issues are likely to come up in every project, thinking ahead will help you feel more supported when hard times come. Here are some top tips that this Guide recommends:

FORWARD PLANNING TOP TIPS!

Get ahead of Grid connection issues and don't miss DNO funding - get to know your regional Distribution Network Operator early, using CEE's page on Key Networks and Partners.

Make connections straight away with your Local Authority - this will help you with funding and getting ahead of potential or landlord consent issues, which often come up with Local Authorities and much more. CEE has a page on Local Authorities in the Key Networks and Partners area.

Finally find planning, legal, and contractor expertise you trust - whether it's looking at learning from the 200+ projects recently finished in the groundbreaking Rural Community Energy Fund programme, reaching through Loomio or CEE's National Map, finding trusted contractors through direct recommendation is essential for you to build trusted work in your area. Begin with the **RCEF programme in CEE Networks and Learning Section**, then never stop asking for recommendations through wider CEE tools and channels!



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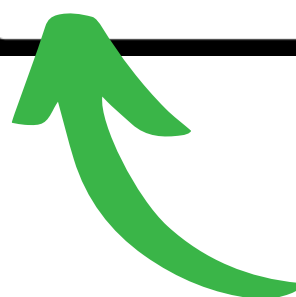
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FINAL REFERENCES & WHERE TO FIND THEM ON CEE'S WEBSITE

In order of mention:

National Map for the sector
own section (Main page)

Business Models and Technologies pages
own section (in the How to Guide)

How to Pages and Guide
own section (Networks and Learning Section)

Loomio, the online practitioner forum
own section (Networks and Learning Section)

CEE Funding database
own section (Main page)

Key Networks and Partners
own section (Networks and Learning)

RCEF Resources Bank
own section (Data & Research Section)

Action on solar
Business Models and Technologies (in the How to Guide)

Events
own section (Main page)

Legal set up and registration
getting started section (in the How to Guide)

Media Library
own section (Networks & Learning Section)

Jobs and Volunteering
own section (Main page)

Skills and Training
own section (Networks & Learning Section)

Networks and Learning
own section (Main page)