Our Own Power

350's COMMUNITY-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY TOOLKIT

Build renewable energy projects to turn the fossil fuel industry obsolete and create the world we want to see!

350

Across the globe, people are reclaiming their electrical power. Communities are charting their own future by producing clean, renewable energy.

In Chad, people are putting solar panels on schools and small businesses where there is no electrical grid. In the Amazon, indigenous communities are using solar to stay independent from fossil fuel dependence. In South Africa, communities are planning transformations of old coal mines into shining solar fields that power homes and model a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Our Own Power is a network of people increasing our own power in our communities. We are rejecting the primary driver of the climate crisis: the fossil fuel industry. Instead, we are redesigning structures and turning to community-driven solutions. **Join the movement!**

The road to Our Own Power is not always easy. It takes time to build connections in many of our communities. There are technical and financial challenges — the tips in this booklet can help. And there may be national or local regulation that cannot be overcome by a single community effort. Like in Turkey, cooperatives preparing to build out solar projects found burdensome regulatory hurdles. So they are tackling not only the task of building a community plan but also bigger policy battles. **Find other allies and network on the Our Own Power website.**

Creating these community energy projects has huge benefits. Communities get cheaper, stable electricity. Projects generate positive health impacts — reducing pollution from diesel generators or coal-fired power plants. The community is stronger, more educated, and grows in its sense of pride.

Providing a direct service that benefits your community can speak louder than any rhetorical argument. This can build lasting public support for more substantive changes for a low-carbon energy landscape against fossil fuels and pro-new renewable energy projects.

And this is why we do this together. Our Own Power is a network of people working on this together. Our local scale may not be big enough to change the entire world's energy systems on our own, but as a global group we are a force to be reckoned with.

You can contribute to overcoming energy poverty, stabilising electrical prices, reducing pollution, fighting climate change, and bringing your community together for a project they can be proud of —

If that sounds like a good plan, then read on and join Our Own Power!

"As they go lower and lower, we need to shoot higher and higher."

- Naomi Klein,
No Is Not Enough:
Defeating the New Shock Politics

We hope this inspires and supports you to build your own local renewable energy projects. You can do it — but it's hard work!
The toolkit is divided into different phases to implement community-led renewable energy projects. You can start at any of the phases, depending on where you are.

Introduction

COMMUNITY-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

"Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

Arundhati Roy, War Talk

Articles / Resources

- The power of the fossil fuel industry
- The basics to know about fossil fuel pollution
- Our work feels small — but why it matters!

Trainings

- Online Course: Climate Change Science 101
- Mother-May-I? RE Edition

Everyone has a role in the fight against climate change and we need to create ways to bring our communities to the fight of our lives. We need to build life-changing solutions with people from around the globe that have a real impact on averting the worst climate scenarios. And we can work from where we are, with our communities, with our people.

WHY COMMUNITY-LED?

The more that neighbourhood associations, cooperatives, schools, religious institutions, municipalities, or other community groups take control of the energy system, the more we collectively shift power from the fossil fuel industry's polluting influence on our politics and make it clear to politicians that they need to be accountable to their citizens in planning our energy future.

Community-led renewable energy can contribute to decarbonising our energy system, but also decarbonising our political system.

The benefits of renewable energy projects led by communities are countless:

Environmental Benefits

- Lifts the environmental burdens placed on communities by the traditional fossil fuel-based industry
- Helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and related climate change impacts
- Increases energy efficiency and minimises the loss of electricity through long-distance transmission
- Increases community awareness of energy use and its localised impacts
- Greater conservation and sustainable energy behaviour
- Reduces impacts of the extractive energy industry by decreasing or eliminating fossil fuel energy use.

Economic Benefits

- Price certainty and stability, since renewable energy like wind and solar are zero-cost fuels
- Economies of scale; community-scale renewables are less costly per Watt of capacity than individual arrays
- Helps keep money invested in the local economy
- Job creation in the host community
- Adds new technical skills to the community skill base
- Reduces local economic dependence on dirty energy sources.

Social Benefits

- Gives community members the opportunity to take control of the planning, development, and maintenance of energy
- Ensures that energy systems are designed to maximise public and community benefit
- Improves community resilience and gives the community control over their own energy production and distribution
- Increases energy accessibility
- Advances community self-determination and allows community members to advocate on their own behalf
- Increased democracy by shifting revenue from fossil fuel companies that have used profits to suppress civil rights into the hands and control of communities.
- Adds new technical skills to the community skill base
- Reduces local economic dependence on dirty energy sources.

Bullet list edited from NAACP Toolkit: Just Energy: Reducing Pollution, Creating Jobs Toolkit

Accelerating a just energy transition

Putting our communities at the centre of building our own renewable energy projects implies updating the way we produce, distribute, store, and use our power as part of a bigger change in the social, political, and economic system, by offering an unprecedented opportunity to simultaneously tackle the climate crisis and reduce inequality.

The climate crisis is intensifying. More frequent and intense extreme events are devastating millions of lives, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities and social groups who have contributed the least to the climate crisis. A just energy transition is urgently needed to reduce carbon emissions and prevent the impacts from worsening.

We need to shift from an economy heavily reliant on fossil fuels to one that is based on renewable and sustainable energy sources in a manner that is equitable, inclusive, and considers the needs and rights of all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Our Own Power is rooted in the understanding that transitioning to a low-carbon and sustainable energy system is not just an environmental imperative but also a social and economic one.
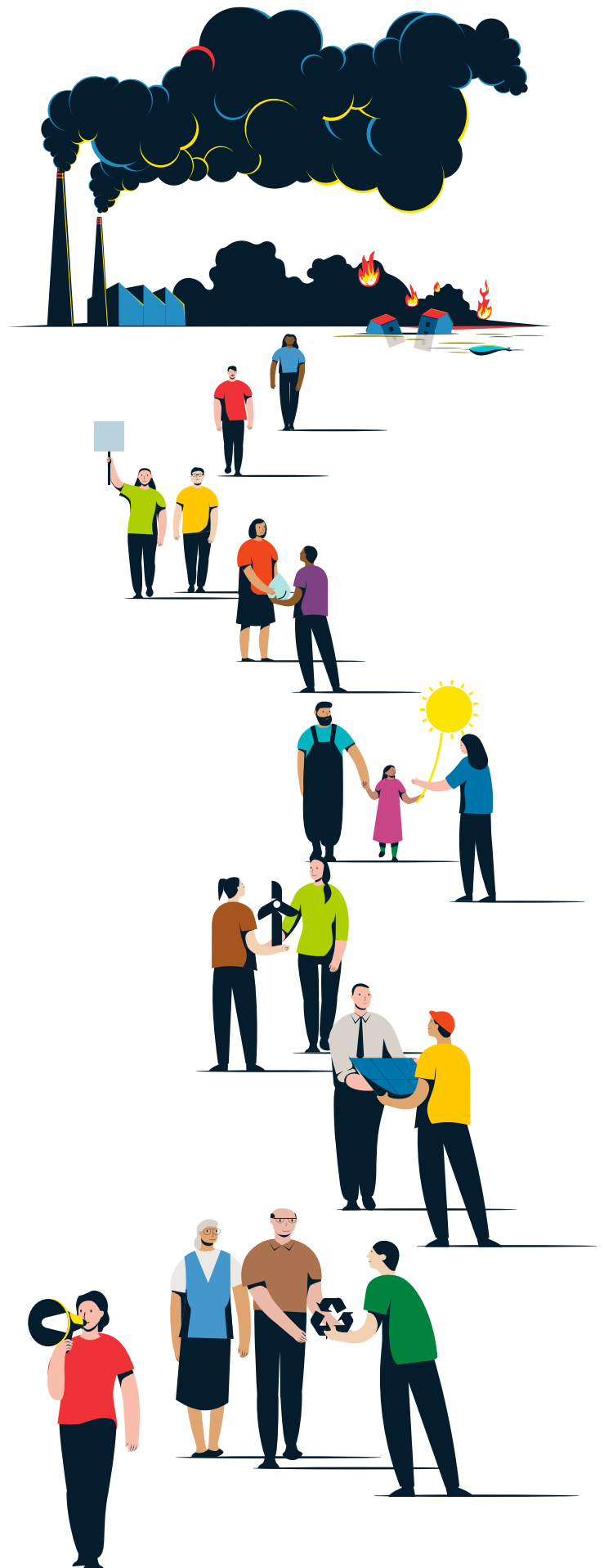
These are some of the key principles and guardrails to ensure just and equitable renewable energy:

Energy Justice:

Addressing energy poverty and ensuring that energy access is not only universal but also gender-sensitive, equitable, and sufficient to meet the basic needs of all people.

Efficiency and Equity:

Curbing wasteful and excessive, unnecessary energy use, while providing sufficient energy to all people within and across countries – across production and consumption.

Transparency and Inclusion:

Crafting energy systems that are transparent, democratic, and free from discrimination while championing energy sovereignty, local ownership, and the fostering of dignified employment.

Sustainable Resource Stewardship:

Upholding well-managed usage and safeguarding of land, water, and marine resources. Recognizing and safeguarding ecologically sensitive areas, as well as prioritising and establishing policies around prime agriculture and water resources for food and health. Addressing any harm through remediation and responsible governance.

Mitigating Resource Extraction Impact:

Diligently working towards minimising the necessity for, and consequences of, extracting critical minerals indispensable for the renewable energy transition through policies and regulatory systems over the extraction, mining, processing, and trade. Upholding principles of circular solutions and reducing raw materials usage.

Guardianship of Rights and Participation:

Upholding and preserving essential human rights, including the Right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and facilitating participatory decision-making.

Safeguarding Ecological Vitality:

Ensuring ecological preservation, regeneration, and restoration of biodiversity and ecological integrity by recognizing ecologically sensitive areas and prioritising sustaining essential ecosystems of conserved areas above energy generation, conducting regulatory environmental impact assessments of areas for energy development, and when unavoidable impacts occur, set mechanisms to regenerate and restore ecosystems.

Financial Equity and Climate Responsibility:

Ensuring adequate and just climate financing from wealthier nations, without burdening lower-income countries with new debt stemming from investments in renewable energy. When private funds are mobilised, regulations to ensure transparency, fairness, adherence to social and environmental principles, and affordability must be in place.

The pressing need for renewable energy

The implementation of new renewable energy projects and energy efficiency are the most vital alternatives, by far the largest short-term and mid-term technological cost-effective options,

to substitute fossil fuels to prevent ever more dangerous climate impacts.
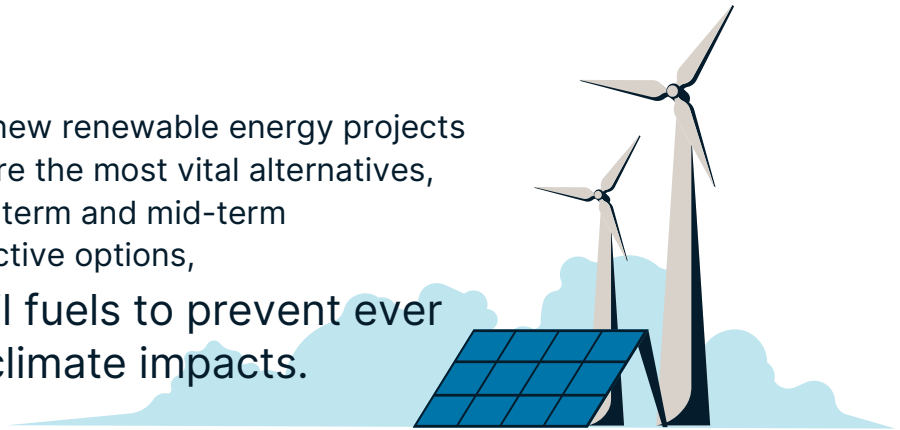
More than 80% of the world's energy still comes from burning dangerous fuels like coal, oil, and gas despite the growing momentum behind a fast and fair transition to 100% renewable energy economies.

Globally, we need to reach a yearly instalment of, on average, at least 1.5TW renewable energy from 2030 onwards to keep global temperature at 1.5°C, which represents a threefold increase from 2022 levels.

1.5°C
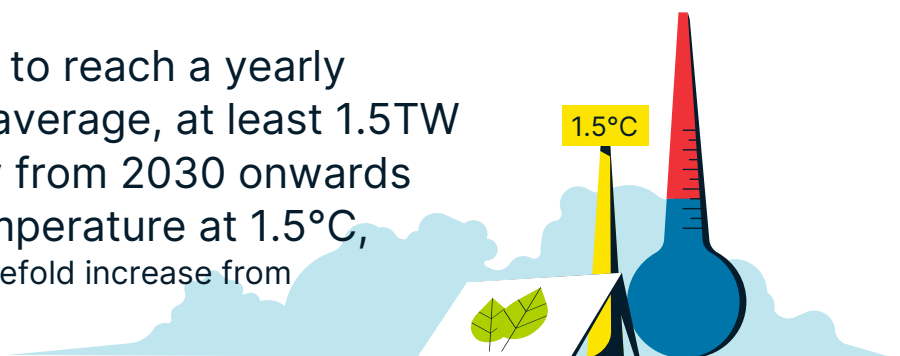
Fighting for renewable energy projects is crucial to avoid worsening climate change due to a list of reasons:

Significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions limiting the global temperature rise and alleviating the climate impacts on vulnerable communities. Solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions during their operation.

Ensuring energy security and access since these resources are abundant and locally available in most regions.

Contributing to better public health by significantly reducing air pollution from burning fossil fuels as the major cause of respiratory illnesses, heart diseases and premature deaths.

Stimulating the emergence of a regenerative economy by developing technologies and creating greener jobs, and also influencing various other sectors.

Helping governments meet their international commitments like the Paris agreement, which would lead to more pressure on other countries.

To build the renewable energy infrastructure, firmly rooted in the context of climate justice, we have to work on mutually reinforcing strategies on several levels:

Building community-led initiatives
Putting the community in the driver's seat of the solutions most needed and into the hands of people across the globe

Building local adaptation projects
Following the leadership of communities bearing the brunt of the climate crisis to prepare for the changing climate

Campaigning for national policies
Bringing moral and political weight to leadership to create and implement ambitious policies and generous subsidies for the expansion and growth of RE

Creating visionary narratives
Showing what we are "for" and not just against — by lifting up the solutions that bring us closer to justice

Campaigning for international policies
International stakeholders getting pressured to make their statements meaningful granting the conditions for greater implementation and funding of RE globally

Confronting false solutions
A framework to confront the false solutions that are running around and to recenter movement energy on the solutions that matter

Stopping the bad (keep it in the ground)
A wide set of actions to keep fossil fuels in the ground and making them unprofitable and morally unacceptable — from lobbying, persuasion, to direct action

To make this pressing need for renewable energy a reality, we need:

Visionary political will and ambitious policies

- for creating generous subsidies and regulations for the expansion and growth of wind and solar power (i.e. lowering the upfront costs of RE implementation and costs of maintenance);
- for promoting energy efficiency standards;
- for raising carbon taxes to make fossil fuels more expensive.

Investment in technological innovation and expanding access

- for the development of new technologies for solar and wind power, which helps drive down the costs of RE, create a reliable supply chain, and new jobs;
- for creating smart grid technologies allowing the integration and storage capability of large amounts of wind and solar power without disrupting supply
- for resources to expand access to renewable energy projects.

Community involvement
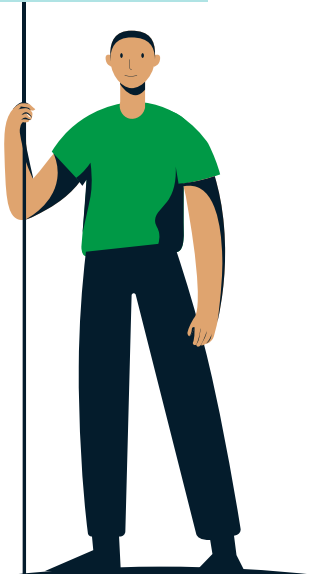
- for communities leading the implementation of RE projects and getting direct benefits from the power they generate;
- for building public support for a larger RE infrastructure and increasing the number of new projects.

And we cannot do it all!
Each of us selects what pieces we want to tackle.

The aim of this toolkit is on building community involvement and power coming out of the communities to create local renewable energy projects and put pressure on the other aspects to promote a large-scale rollout of renewable energy from a climate justice perspective across the globe.

phase 1

BUILD A CORE TEAM

Community is the spirit, the guiding light of the tribe, whereby people come together in order to fulfil a specific purpose, to help others fulfil their purpose, and to take care of one another. The goal of the community is to make sure that each member of the community is heard and is properly giving the gifts that they have brought to this world. Without this giving, the community dies. And without the community, the individual is left without a place where they can contribute. And so the community is that grounding place where people come and share their gifts and receive from others.

Sobonfu Somé, The spirit of intimacy: ancient teachings in the ways of relationships

Articles / Resources

- 350 Organising Principles
- How to build one-on-ones
- How to get others involved

Trainings

- TRAINING: Building an effective team
- TRAINING: Make decisions, together

You can't do this challenging work alone

You need more people. With a dedicated group of people - a core team, you can pool together diverse skills, knowledge, and resources necessary for planning, outreach, fundraising, and managing your renewable energy project to win. The core team provides the backbone for your work, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the goals, coordinating efforts, and sustaining momentum throughout the project.

A core team is a group of people who can meet locally and regularly to move your chosen project through. Local scale means you can meet face to face as a group, and work to change the institutions within your immediate reach: whether that's your neighbourhood, village, town or city.

When building your core team, you'll want people with a range of diverse and complementary skills and experiences, with a commitment to do the hard work to achieve your goals, and a curiosity to learn and grow.

As you start setting up your group, invite people who will bring commitment and curiosity. Most local groups start out with a minimum of 3 people (depending on your goal you may have a much bigger team!).

Ensure that your team shares the same goal

Our goal is simple: building renewable energy projects, like solar panels and wind turbines, that are led by the communities.

Make sure everyone is behind this goal and ready to focus on this big challenge! The shared goal is the cornerstone of any effective teamwork. It provides direction, motivation, and a sense of unity, which are all essential for your team's success.

When working towards a common goal, there is less room for conflicting priorities and more clarity on what the team is trying to accomplish (why we are working together) and the needs to reach its success (what each team member can contribute in terms of skills, knowledge, experience, resources).

As important as having clear goals is knowing what values guide our collective and collaborative efforts. Core values provide a framework for team behaviour, decision-making, and interaction. They help create a strong, cohesive, and principled team that is better equipped to navigate challenges and achieve its goals. The reason why you'll want to find people who overlap on the core values of your project:

We are a global movement of citizens working to address the climate crisis. We are global citizens organising to transform our local communities. Working in solidarity across languages and continents, we form a powerful worldwide network united by our common humanity and our commitment to solving the climate crisis.

We strive to build an inclusive and empowering movement. From the local to the international, we are open and receptive to new ideas and initiatives, foster broad participation and collective decision-making at all levels of organising processes, and empower new leaders. From faith groups to business leaders to schools and more, we work with a diversity of groups and individuals because we urgently need everybody's ideas and commitment to create the change we need. The relationships we build with one another and partner groups; the leadership we grow; and the stories we tell are all part of building our people power – this is key to how we create change.

We work across movements, with justice at the core. We recognise the linkages between issues of climate justice, economic justice, racial justice, gender equality, workers rights and more, and strive to build a movement that works in common cause with allies for shared impact.

We stand in solidarity with communities most impacted by climate change and fossil fuels. Many of these communities are the least protected from climate change, due to historical inequalities, and the most impacted by it. We support their demands for their survival, and the rights of future generations.

We are committed to real action, not just talk. We're built on collective brilliance, not on individual personalities. There's no place for ego in organising, and we say "yes" as much as possible (while respecting our limits). We strive to stay flexible, nimble and to do a lot with few resources, so we can focus on taking action to serve our communities.
We think and act to scale with the problem. Thinking big and being ambitious is how we inspire people to get involved and act with the necessary urgency.

Creativity is the touchstone of our work. Through symbols, art and creative actions, we help visualise both the problems and the solutions to climate change. Creative ways of communicating often speak more directly to our hearts, and provide a beautiful reminder of what we strive to protect.

As organisers, we connect with the heart and soul as much as we connect with the brain. The climate crisis is an ethical issue; taking action in a meaningful way brings moral weight to our work and deepens our commitment to the cause and each other. Through this connection we are better able to cope with our dramatically changing planet, and imagine the world we want to build.

Any movement that isn't fun isn't worth being a part of. We dance, sing, eat, play and tell jokes together because it lifts our spirit, gives us hope, and keeps us motivated for the many challenges (and victories) ahead of us on the road to a sustainable, clean energy future.

We creatively use technology to support organising in the real world. We realise technology is not a replacement for real relationships or time-tested organising techniques, but it allows us to see, understand and act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters facing climate change around the world; we are a community linked by technology.

We're not experts, but we know enough about the climate crisis and the fossil fuel industry to speak the truth. We keep up with the science, economics, and the politics as best we can, but we also know we don't need to know every bit of information to stand up for our future. Speaking the truth on science and injustice is both our responsibility and our most effective strategy.

While science is important, stories make our movement powerful and human. We all have our own compelling stories, and communicate with stories to gain mass media coverage, to multiply our movement, and to reaffirm our common humanity. Whether it's a lone brave protester in Iraq or a community coming together to stop a coal plant in Kenya or fracking in Brazil, shared stories inspire our movement.

We use non-violent means to achieve change. We are committed to nonviolence, inspired by the spirit of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and other peaceful movements before us. No violence, no property damage. In the face of the climate crisis, fossil fuel extraction, and the repressive practices of the governments and corporations that benefit, we recognize strategic nonviolence as the most effective means of creating a just and healthy world.

Some 350's Organising Principles

Many people may join for multiple reasons — they want a just energy transition or they want to take on the fossil fuel industry (The basics to know about fossil fuel pollution or The power of the fossil fuel industry). And they may join for reasons far away from climate — saving money, community control and power, distrust of big corporations...

Aligning with a common set of values ensures that everyone is working towards the same goals and it is crucial for achieving a unified vision no matter what was their initial motivation to join. It helps the team to make choices that are consistent with its core values, even in complex or ambiguous situations, and creates a stronger sense of teamwork.
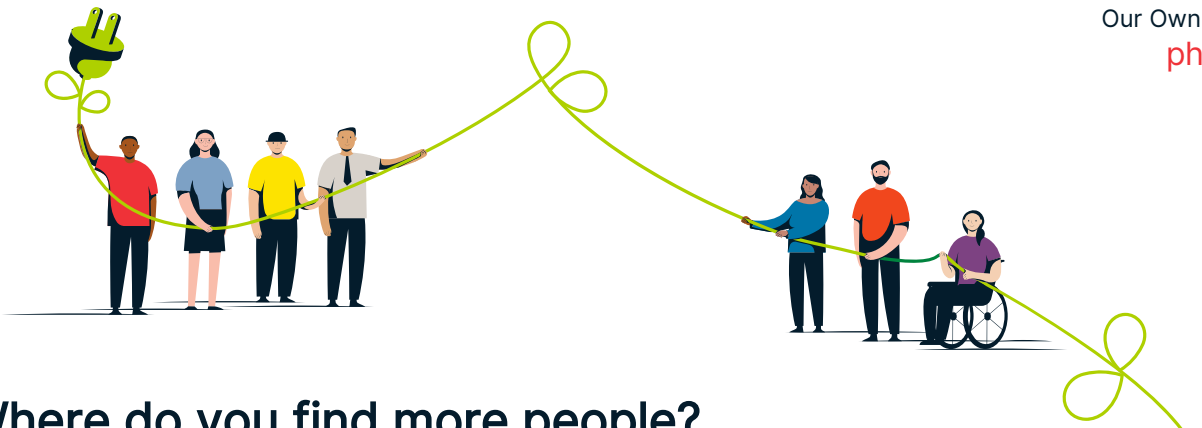
Where do you find more people?
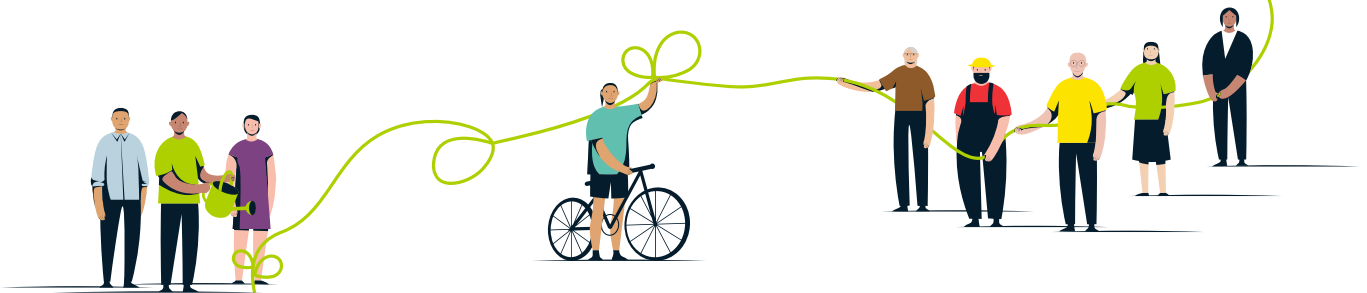
If you're alone, finding your core team may take some time. You might look for people by reaching out to organisations to find partners:

- Asking 350 or other climate groups for local contacts in the area
- Organisations working on related issues (renewable energy, energy poverty, energy democracy, energy transition)
- Local environmental or climate justice organisations
- Universities, colleges, and high schools
- Local grassroots groups and nonprofits
- Places of worship
- Labour organisations and unions
- Public housing organisations
- Neighbourhood groups
- Finding neighbours, especially if you have a specific community in mind
- Posting "are you interested" signs on coffee shops and local businesses
- Looking on social media for people who have shown interest in the subject in your region
- Ask a local friendly journalist — they often know who is active on an issue.

One way to spark interest is to consider hosting an event — such as a movie screening or potluck. Make sure to circulate a sign-in sheet to get people's contact information for following up. This is a good way to get a feel for people and see who you "jive" with — and all of the people can be followed up with in the future for your work.

Other ideas:

- Invite a special speaker (such as a group who has succeeded in building a renewable energy project or some topic related to climate justice);
- Organise a webinar on energy justice or how to replace the fossil fuel industry with renewable energy projects
- Invite people to collectively go through an online course on Climate Change Science 101

What kind of team do we want to be?

It will be important for you to create a core team that is the kind of warm, welcoming team that you want to work with. Consider the following three sorts of leadership structures for a group.

"I'm the leader"
Dependent

"We don't have leaders"
Structureless

"A leadership team"
Interdependent
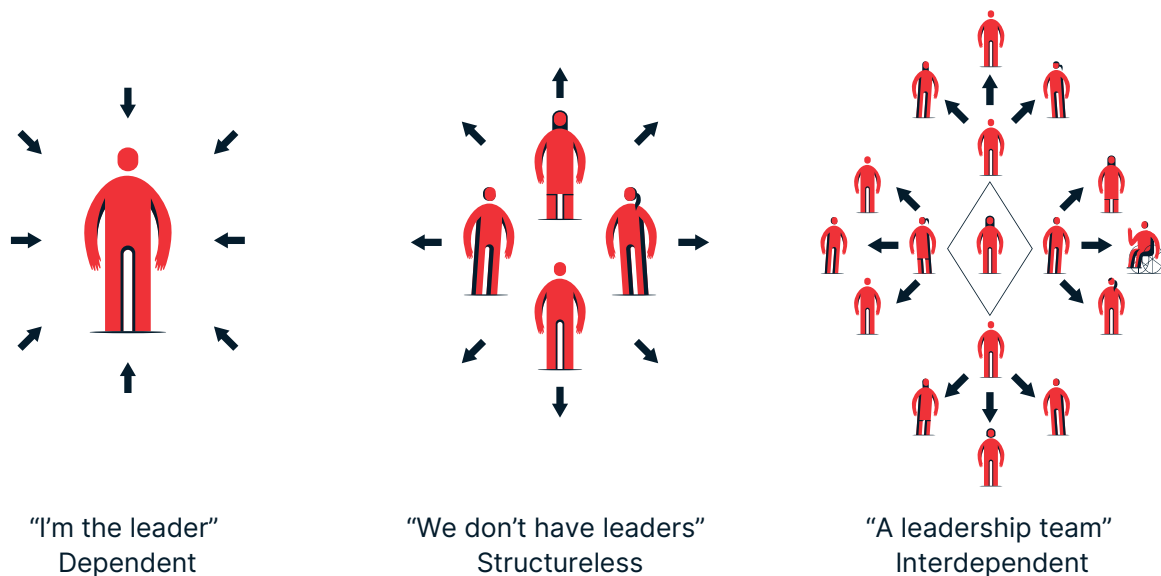
We have found that when people share clear leadership roles and responsibilities in an interdependent leadership team, groups are more likely to grow over time and to be effective. The models of "I'm the leader" or "We don't have leaders" may work for a short period, but their stability and potential for growth is limited.

We recommend an interdependent team model.

We recommend that a "core" leadership team be responsible for:
- **Group hosting:** convening meetings of the group of organisers, ensuring that roles and decision-making is clear and that everyone feels included.
- **Helping your group come up with clear goals, a strategy, and a plan** that everyone has a role in. And regularly evaluate progress against the plan.
- **Identifying spokespeople and key messages** - especially for media work.

Working groups - smaller teams within your larger group - may form organically as your group evolves, based on the interests and skills of the people in your group.

The core leadership team helps all those sub-groups stay connected and coordinated. In the early stages, stay flexible and adaptable as you learn and experiment - some sub-groups might thrive, others might fail, and that's OK!

Your role as leaders

In Interdependent leadership, leaders accept responsibility for the functioning of a "whole" (a whole team, a whole project, a whole job) while other organisers accept responsibility for a "part" of the work.

Leaders help others find (or create!) roles and working groups with real responsibility and purpose, where people feel purposeful - like they can make a difference, by contributing to the work of the whole.

Your group's structure

If your group doesn't have a clear structure yet, it can be a nice exercise to get everyone in your group to draw what they imagine the structure of your group to be already, and then to imagine what it should be or could be. Compare notes and see if it's possible to reach a common understanding.

Strengths and Weaknesses

As you reflect on your team's structure, think about the strengths and talents of individual members, and what responsibilities they might be given in order to feel most effective. Also think about weaknesses - what other skills do we need in our team, to meet our goals? Do we need to recruit new people with specific talents, or by training our existing members, to develop those skills?

Having a strong team dynamic

In your collective journey working together, your team will have to make hundreds of decisions, big and small. People in your group may have different ideas about what roads to take. And sometimes you can't get all the information you want, before you need to choose a path. This is why it is so important to have group agreements (how you work together), simple rituals (how you open and close your meetings), and a decision-making process (how decisions are made).

Group Agreements

'Group Agreements' are a list of commitments that group members make to each other, about how they will work together within their group, to achieve shared goals and build the team. They can also be called Communication Agreements, Norms, Ground Rules, or, more formally, a Code of Conduct.

Agreements support everyone to feel included and safe to express their opinions. It is a part of building internal democracy, and enables full participation in the group.

Some examples include:

- We treat each other with respect.
- We welcome different experiences and ideas.
- We are curious: we seek to understand each others' perspectives.
- We start and end meetings on time.
- We are present and focused when we meet, minimising distractions.
- We put digital devices away during meetings.
- All our meetings start with a clear goal, and end with clear next steps.

Group rituals!

A ritual is a repeated pattern of actions, performed for a purpose.

All groups - formal or informal, spiritual or secular - develop habits and patterns, either purposefully, or by accident. These rituals define a group's culture, or "way of doing things". Some groups develop unhelpful rituals without thinking about it: leaders routinely arrive late and apologise, or the meeting ends in a rush as people run out of the door, or the group regularly grumbles when someone suggests a new idea and immediately shuts it down.

We've found that groups who choose their rituals intentionally, to build community, will develop a stronger sense of solidarity, have more ease in decision-making, and have more impactful work.

Examples of simple opening or closing rituals your group might use:

- Singing, drumming, or silence
- Passing an object around a circle
- Reading a poem, prayer, or short verse
- Sharing food or drink
- Joining hands and sharing silence
- Reading over the Group Agreements.
- Sharing celebrations and challenges
- Playing a game, dancing, stretching

Making decisions together

Each time your group meets, you will make decisions together. The way we make decisions is critical for the success of our groups and of our movement!

There are many ways to make decisions as a group. For example:

- Discussing to building alignment, until there is consensus
- Voting with 'majority' or 'supermajority' thresholds
- A smaller project group being empowered to make a decision, or to make a recommendation that your group decides upon.
- A person with expertise is empowered to decide - within certain bounds.
- An individual may take initiative and make a decision without consultation
- Your group may use all of these methods for decision-making, at various times.

For example, your group might:

- identify a skilled spokesperson to speak to the media on behalf of your group, according to an agreed communtions plan,
- take a majority vote to decide between two different group names or logos,
- gradually build consensus around a campaign strategy
- task a project group to decide on a venue and agenda for an event
- have an individual who takes initiative and orders pizza for a group meeting.

Choosing the right decision-making method for each decision is a skill - it takes practice, and you won't always get it right. That's OK!

Social movements succeed when lots of people volunteer their time and energy to work towards a shared vision for the future. We risk losing people from our movements if people feel like their voice doesn't matter in your group's decision-making, or if too much time and energy is spent making decisions that people don't find important.

Our challenge is to make sure that our decision-making is inclusive: ensuring that people feel heard, and that everyone's time and energy is respected and used effectively. Inclusive, efficient decision making keeps people motivated to stay with your group, and helps to grow our movements for change!

phase 2

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

We are living now inside the imagination of people who thought economic disparity and environmental destruction were acceptable costs for their power. It's our right and responsibility to write ourselves into the future.

Adrienne Maree Brown,
Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds

Articles / Resources

- Money, money, money: where do we find the money
- Mapping: How to source community knowledge for our project?
- 350 Energy Justice Scorecard

Finding the right renewable energy project for your community can be a challenge. It may take some time until you learn what is needed and you'll have to become a bit of an expert about renewable energy and how the energy system operates. Building a renewable energy project in your community requires careful planning, coordination and a thorough understanding of why you're doing what you're doing, what needs to get it built, and what can get in your way — like the regulatory requirements.

During this analysis work, you'll want to be able to answer three key questions:

WHAT	**WHAT'S**	**WHERE**
does the community want?	the type and size of the project to address the needs of the community?	do we find the money or its implementation?

What does the community want?

Thankfully you don't have to answer these questions alone. Harvesting your community's needs to build a renewable energy project involves engaging and mobilising community members effectively. The community has abundant wisdom — farmers know land that gets the best sun, bankers know how local projects are typically funded, neighbours know which land has been abandoned for decades, you likely even have renewable energy experts or people that may know them...

This appreciative view of your community, working with the potential that each person can offer to your project, creates a scenario of abundant resources and opportunities. This nurtures the relationships between people and helps strengthen the communal space with trust and mutual care. The job of the core team is reaching out to those people who may have the knowledge that you're looking for and turning that knowledge into actionable steps so a community dream can come to fruition.

So, before you even start to look for those people, you'll have to prepare the space and host a conversation that will allow the emergence of the best and deepest dreams that your community may have about its energy landscape. Creating an image of the very best we want to accomplish, overcoming the habit of identifying the problems only.

Ways that people have inspired community input has included:

- Organising informational sessions about the social, economic and environmental benefits and advantages of renewable energy projects
- Engaging with local and community leaders who can inspire and mobilise others
- Open community meetings and conversations to address concerns and gather ideas
- Hosting townhalls, including experts and city officials
- Sharing success stories of similar projects from other communities
- Showing the financial benefits (potential cost savings, job creations)
- Soliciting proposals and exploring funding options for renewable energy projects
- Getting students classes to lead interviews and generate proposals from those
- Having 1-on-1 meetings with experts and community leaders to solicit their knowledge and insight

Each of these inputs has the chance to expand beyond the initial core team and bring in new energy, input, and wisdom.

Each project possibility will need to be different and speak to different aspects of the needs of the community. Assessing the community's electrical needs is a crucial step in planning and implementing a renewable energy project that meets the specific needs and expectations of the community.

Some considerations:

- Are you focusing on residential, business or communal energy needs?
- Do you have specific areas/ groups of people you want to provide electrical power to?
- What's the current energy consumption patterns, types of energy sources currently used, specific energy needs for different purposes, and existing challenges and concerns related to energy use.
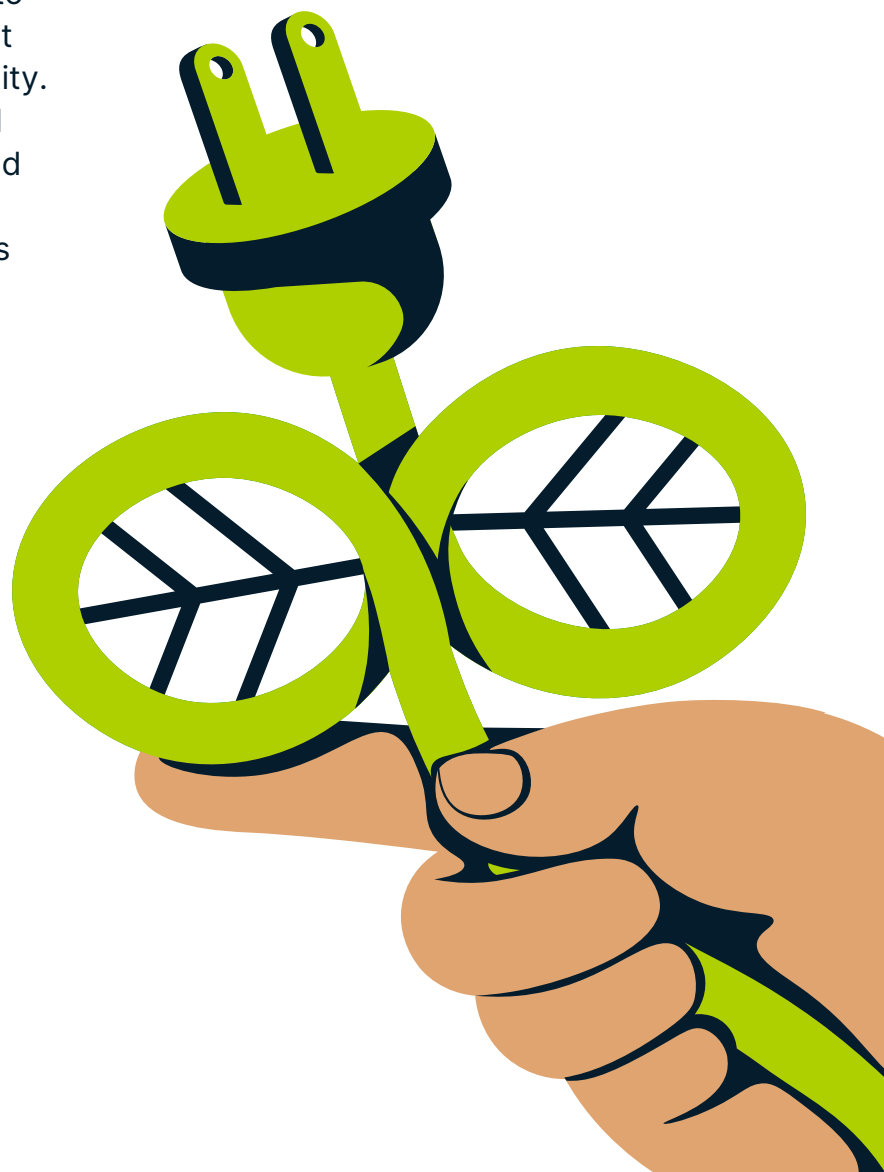
Having strong community participation from the beginning helps ensure the project's success. Key community members can provide valuable inputs around much of this information.

You'll start to weave these into some specific proposals and options. To assist, we recommend using a scorecard to look at the quality of different projects and their upsides-and-downsides:

Generic Scorecard

|			
	Protecting the climate. Does the project build on renewable energy that produces effectively zero carbon dioxide in its normal operation? Does this project reduce a lot of carbon dioxide emissions (relatively to the size of our group/effort)?	1 to 5	<<Insert number 1 to 5, with a brief sentence why>>
	Procedural Justice. Have impacted and previously locked out communities had chances to meaningfully participate in the process and honor the decision-making processes of the stewards of the land? Does it follow proper consultation with other impacted communities? Is there a grievance process in place?	1 to 5	<<Insert number 1 to 5, with a brief sentence why>>
	Restorative Justice. Does this help to right past wrongs? Does this project provide for people who are most impacted by the climate crisis? Does this project minimize harms from the production in other far away places? Does this project restore land or at least not destroy old growth or high biodiversity places?	1 to 5	<<Insert number 1 to 5, with a brief sentence why>>
	Economic Justice. Does ownership of the project and its profits flow away from multinationals towards local communities? Does it benefit the community and the community? Does the policy make energy more available to marginalized communities? Does this project ensure nobody is displaced from their lands? Does this project use energy close to the source (as opposed to far-away extraction)?	1 to 5	<<Insert number 1 to 5, with a brief sentence why>>
	Organising justice. Does this project provide inspiration likely to result in more? Does this project have a way to organise the communities who benefit to be involved in more advocacy?	1 to 5	<<Insert number 1 to 5, with a brief sentence why>>
	TOTAL SCORE	_ /25	<<Insert total>>

The 350 Energy Justice Scorecard

The scorecard is a tool to assess your project on multiple levels. We strongly encourage you to do a scorecard for a couple of projects to help you decide which ones you want to support.

What's the type and size of the project?

By knowing what you want to accomplish, and the needs you want the project to meet in your community, help you think about the type and size of your project – go solar or wind, go big or start small?
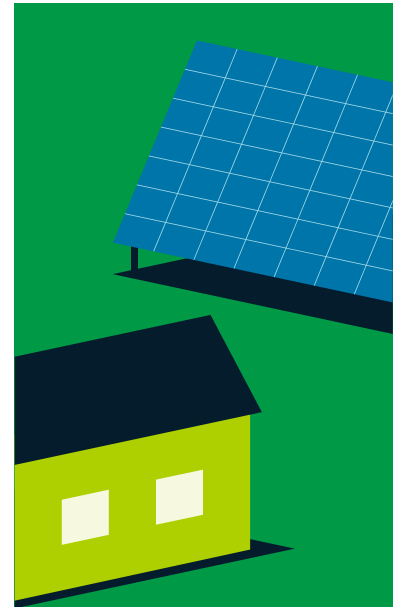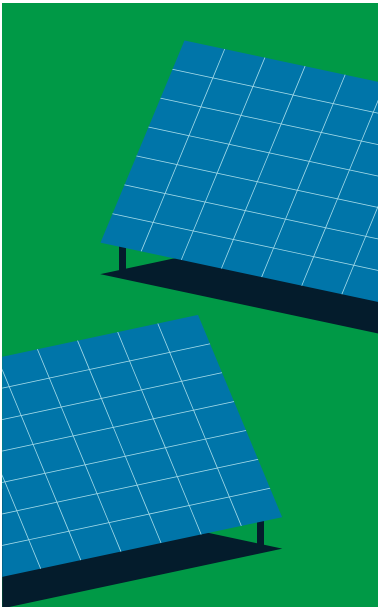
In Fort Chipewyn, Canada, three indigenous communities partnered with the government to build a large 2.35 megawatt project — enough to meet 25% of the 1,000+ people's total energy needs. At the time, it was the largest solar photovoltaic system in a remote Canadian community.

In Singapore they started with installing thin solar panels on two buses. That was their "proof of concept" so that when it was successful, 2 years later they could add solar panels on 50 more buses — with plans to expand.

On Brazil's Negro River the community tucked inside the Amazon started with 132 solar panels, 54 lithium batteries, and 9 inverters as an initial pilot, powering a church, school, and a dozen homes in the village.

Knowing the electrical needs of the community and the technical possibilities available can inform what can be the best project for your community. The most common community renewable energy projects are wind and solar, like installing solar on low-use land such as abandoned fields, car parks, capped landfills, or flat industrial buildings.

SOLAR ENERGY

Solar energy systems use radiation from the sun to produce heat and electricity. There are three basic categories of solar energy systems:

Solar thermal systems use solar collectors to absorb solar radiation to heat water or air for space heating and water heating.

Solar thermal power plants use concentrating solar collectors to focus the sun's rays to heat a fluid to a high temperature. This fluid generates steam to power a turbine and a generator.

Photovoltaic (PV) systems use solar electric cells that convert solar radiation directly into electricity. Individual PV cells are arranged into modules (panels). PV systems may have a single module to large power plants with hundreds of modules generating large amounts of electricity.

WIND ENERGY

Wind turbines use blades to collect the wind's kinetic energy. Wind flows over the blades creating lift, which causes the blades to turn. The blades are connected to a drive shaft that turns an electric generator, which produces electricity.
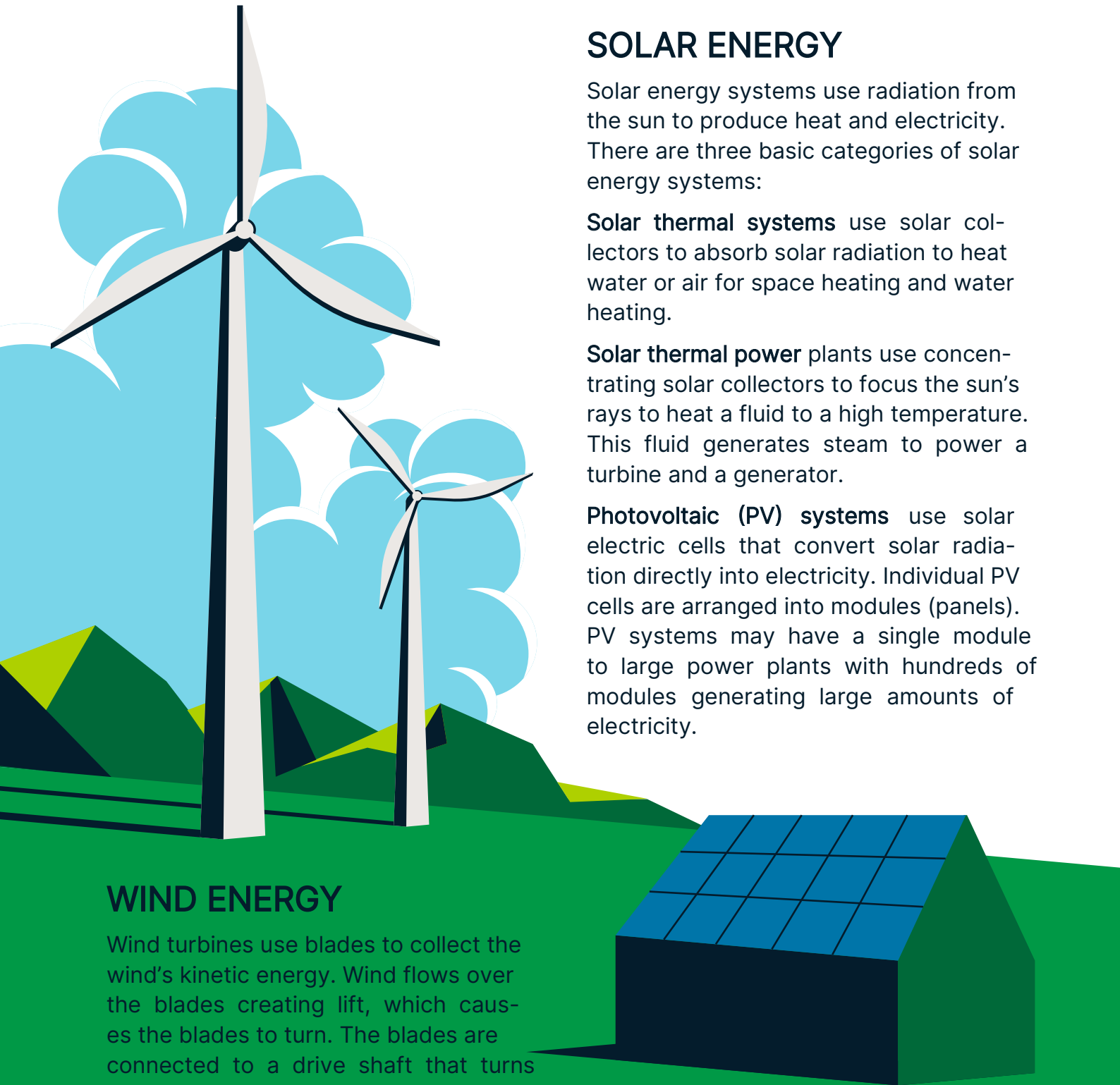
You might consider other community-owned renewable energy options:

solar on electric buses (e.g. public bus operator Go-Ahead in Singapore)

large-scale solar field (e.g. Fort Chiepwyan residents in remote Canada [page 18])

micro hydro (e.g. in Nagaland, India rural communities are setting up micro hydro to power their villages)

thermal solar water on individual houses (e.g. Israel has installed solar water on nearly all residential houses)

solar photovoltaic mini-grids (e.g. Sosai Renewable Energies for Nigeria [page 40])

medium-sized wind turbines (e.g. Energcoop, the France's largest cooperative renewable energy supplier which has a mix including wind [page 28]).

solar Street Lights: Replacing traditional street lights with solar-powered lights, reducing energy consumption and providing lighting in public spaces.

community Battery Storage: Installing energy storage systems, such as large-scale batteries, in the community to store excess renewable energy and provide back-up power during outages.

Some guiding questions for you to decide based on the needs of your community about the renewable resources potential available in your community:

What is the purpose and scale of the initiative?

For example, a community wishing to primarily produce energy to meet its own energy needs vs. a community wishing to become an independent power producer will likely pursue projects of different scales. Communities may also look at other purposes beyond generation and supply (e.g. distribution, heat, self-consumption, storage and transport)

What is the renewable resource potential in the area and where will the project be sited/installed?

The renewable resource potential (i.e. wind speed, solar radiation) and location will determine the technology options available to a community. For example, solar photovoltaic (PV) is often most suitable for urban applications because panels can be installed on the roofs of buildings.

Should the system be grid tied?

Connecting to the grid may promote reliability and keep power active when the renewable energy system is not producing enough power to match demand. In some countries, connecting to the grid offers financial incentives. However, the community may not be connected to the grid, a lack of incentives may make it faster and easier to do a microgrid, or technical barriers may exist (some countries have a backlog of grid-tied proposals).

Are local parts and labour easily accessible?

The availability of local parts and labour reduces challenges associated with operating and maintaining renewable energy installations.

Which renewable resource encourages the broadest participation?

Some technologies may be more accessible in terms of financing, operation and maintenance to a broad range of community members, including women and youth.

Does the community have the skill set to build, operate and maintain the technology?

Communities wishing to take an active role in the project's construction and operation maintenance may want to assess the community's existing skill sets to determine whether an investment in training to build capacity is needed.

Adapted from Best practices for broadening the ownership of renewables by IRENA

There are other important things for you to consider that can help you when doing your research about what can be the best project for your community. We suggest creating three maps to help your analysis:

Map #1: Geographic Mapping to identify possible locations for the project

Map #2: Community mapping of allies and potential partners

Map #3: Points of renewable energy intervention

In some cases it's possible you can find partners or public institutions for their support in those mapping exercises (or simply to do it for you).

Get more details about structuring the community-led projects. This requires going out to your community and meeting many, many people:

Mapping: How to source community knowledge for our project?

Where do we find the money for its implementation?

Once you know the size and type of renewable energy project your community wants to build, you'll need to make a financial assessment of your project costs. This will give you an estimate of how much you'll need to raise to get the project implemented, and so mapping which financial resources are available is an important next step.

We urge caution around this period. You're going to want to get quotes from a number of different installers. Those quotes may vary quite a bit, as they'll make different assumptions and have a range of different access to cheaper products and experience, especially if your project is rural or mountainous or has other special challenges. Getting someone who knows your situation may indeed cost more. But also notice ways you might reduce costs by getting the community to be involved in parts of the installation appropriate to skills or obtaining the materials through other channels.

We also encourage caution at the point when a quote arrives with a big number and a lot of zeroes. The upfront costs can be daunting. Allow the feelings to wash over you — "we don't have that money... we can't do this..." Let it roll around until you can get back into a mindset that a determined community can find what it needs.
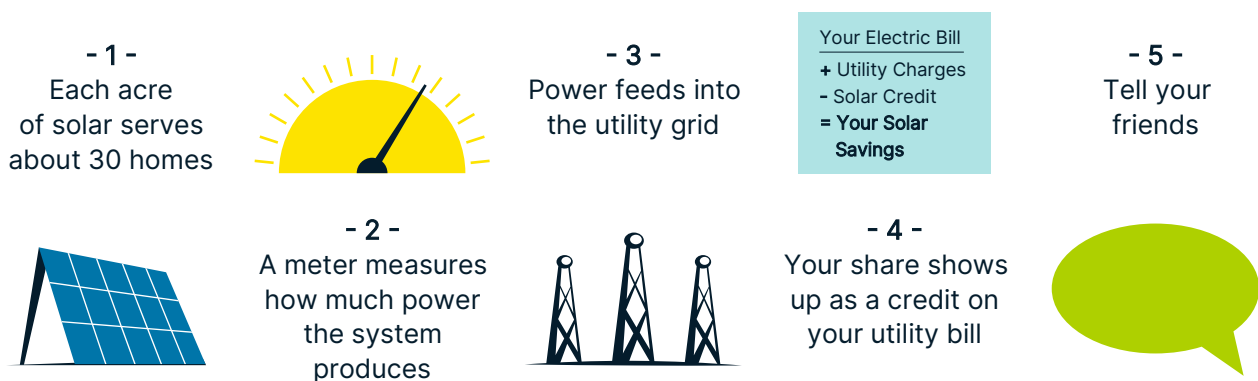
Securing financing for renewable energy projects can be challenging, especially for smaller or newer projects, due to perceived risks, lack of familiarity and unfriendly government policies and regulations.

There are a variety of different sources. And we want to start by looking within your community. For inspiration:

In Uganda access to solar funding is very low. So Power for All's Utilities 2.0 came up with a plan that brings together a coalition of the large-scale utility company and the smaller, more nimble renewable energy programs. Their first concrete step was running a pilot project to support new small businesses with a solar micro grid. The revenues of the "new businesses created rose by 68 percent during the pilot period." This made it easier to pitch businesses to help put money into the grid — which then benefited regular citizens unable to otherwise afford the upfront costs. ("Those benefiting including students at the local school, which now uses an electric pump to save pupils from long journeys to collect water. The village also has streetlights for the first time, and a community-based milling and drying machine to support its many local farmers.")

In Australia, they've set-up a funding structure called Citizens Own Renewable Energy Network Australia. In this, funds are donated by NGOs, businesses and local citizens, and all the money is given as interest-free loans to the large upfront costs of renewable energy. After a renewable energy source is set-up, part of its energy "profits" go back into the revolving fund.

In many countries you can set up variants of "Community Solar" programs. The community benefits from the reduction in solar energy bills Community projects allow members of a community to share the benefits of solar power even if they cannot (or prefer not) to install solar panels on their own property, for example:

- 1 -
Each acre
of solar serves
about 30 homes

- 3 -
Power feeds into
the utility grid

Your Electric Bill
+ Utility Charges
- Solar Credit
= Your Solar
  Savings

- 5 -
Tell your
friends

- 2 -
A meter measures
how much power
the system
produces

- 4 -
Your share shows
up as a credit on
your utility bill

Even if your community can't raise all of the funds internally, starting with the community at any level helps show determination and buy-in — which will matter to a prospective funder/banker. In one low-income Polish apartment building, tenants all contributed a small down payment to the project. The collective contribution was very low but significant for the individuals. This helped leverage the landlord to buy-in to the concept and put in a small amount themselves. This then helped leverage external funding (a mix of government and private).

Renewable energy's upfront cost has to be put into perspective. There is tremendous cost to the current electrical system: air pollution, financial dependency, uncontrolled inflation as energy prices soar, and more.

Each community will have different opportunities available to it. Broadly, there's a range of places where the money comes from for individual projects.

From within the community	From the old infrastructure	From government	From external actors
• **Revolving funds** (the project starts small, people who benefit pay a percent of the benefits to support the next step…) • **Using money from local businesses** who benefit from the energy • **Philanthropy** • **Sliding scale** (people put in money according to how much they can afford)	• **Polluter pays** (forcing the fossil fuel industry to pay)	• **Grants and subsidies** (tax credits, direct funding, rebates), possibly funded by Fossil fuel subsidy reform (e.g. moving from that previously subsidised the old infrastructure) • **Public/Private partnerships** • **Energy Performance Contracts** (contracts with energy service companies sharing the cost savings or production revenue)	• **Venture capital** • **Green bonds / Grants / Foundations** • **Development Bank loans / project finance** • **Crowdfunding** • **Carbon credits**

Knowing your local context will be very helpful in assessing which of these is more viable and how.

Governments can play a crucial role in fostering a supportive environment for renewable energy projects by providing financial incentives and creating favourable policies. You may need to advocate for it. And this may become the first battle you'll have to pick to build the viability of your project.

Get more details about financing community-led projects: Where do we find the money

Tips to not get lost

Get things going. Be patiently impatient. There are lots of new pieces to learn about: new terminology, new people, new institutions and new technologies to understand. It can be tiring and intimidating about how much you need to learn. You know most of what you need to know: the climate is changing rapidly, and we have to implement new technology that works for our communities.

Keep your mind open and ears open. Be ready for some community members who will try to convince you that nothing can happen — stay resilient because the only way things happen is that people believe they can happen. The reason why having a strong core team is so important, someone has to play the role of conductor of the orchestra and keep the flame of the shared vision alive.

Current technology can do this. Reports come out daily of new, exciting-sounding technology. Many investors are trying to get money for their inventions by telling us we need their new innovation. Unless you're an expert in this field, you don't need to get into any of that. All the technology to solve the climate crisis exists. We just need to use the ones available that are aligned with our values.

Everyone is a potential ally. At the early stage of research, do not write anyone off. Some people will tell you "it can't be done" — but once it's shown to be feasible they might be an ally. Some people might not care about climate change — but they might be sold for other reasons. So keep a good relation and ask if you can go back to them later with questions.

You will hear a lot of conflicting opinions. Some people will believe in one route. And others will believe in another route. Your group will have to make up its own mind. But do not despair — keep listening.

Every problem is solvable. Hold onto the mindset that no problem cannot be solved. When you talk to people, sometimes people will say "that's not possible." If you don't have the knowledge, you don't have to talk them out of that position — but it's always okay to say "I hear you, and I'm gonna keep looking into this."

Hold each conversation lightly. Every group will have its own analysis. Listen to it — but do not rely too much on your initial conversations. Don't get too sold on any one idea too quickly — check it out with others.

Each specialist has their own technical language. Do ask and learn — but remember you do not have to become an expert about all the things they are experts in. Keep notes — so you can share with your team.

Stay rooted in your own values. You don't have to agree with everyone. You don't even have to persuade them of yours (especia

When you have done a lot of community meetings and your core team has filled in the maps, you'll have a good sense of some different options. This is a good time to return to the Scorecard and assess which project your team wants to get behind. This will be an important decision — but the knowledge you will have gained will be invaluable for the next steps ahead.

When your core team has made a decision, you're ready for the next phases. You have a shared vision and main goals defined, what you need now is a good work plan.

phase 3

DEVELOP A WORK PLAN

What can we do now in order to be able to do tomorrow
what we are unable to do today?

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Articles / Resources

• How to create momentum– some tips for thinking about action design,
  and especially how to energise a base of supporters
• How to create actions that will get media
• How to create a campaign plan: the paper plate challenge
  (the simplest way for a small group to create a basic campaign timeline)
• Recruiting outside your social circle
• How your solutions campaign deals with bureaucracy

Trainings

• TRAINING: Build your strategy
• TRAINING: Create your campaign timeline
• Online Course:
  Introduction to Campaigning

You have done your research and have a sketch of your analysis (the community, its needs) and your vision of a doable renewable energy project. Strategy is the bridge that carries you from your analysis to your vision.

Strategy is knowing how to turn **the resources you have** (people, tools, skills, time) into **the power you need** to achieve **the change you want**.

Your strategy will guide you when deciding how to organise actions, how to prioritise your work, and how to allocate your resources. How can we make sure each action moves you closer to your destination? Which path will get you there faster, and more securely?

Your strategy isn't set in stone: it's important to remain flexible and reassess regularly. If a new path for action appears that you hadn't foreseen, your strategy can help you decide whether to take the new shortcut or not.

Your strategy will help you avoid spreading energy among many different actions that don't achieve concrete gains: a good strategy will make your group focus on its goal.

Build a project proposal

Renewable energy projects need an array of resources. You can use the list below to help you design your plan: what needs to happen before and what needs to happen after, who will be responsible for each thing, when it will be done and what resources are needed for it to happen.

☐ **Ensure the project aligns with the community's needs and values**, building strong support and avoiding potential oppositions. Gaining acceptance and support from the local community is essential for a smooth project development process and addressing its concerns can foster positive relationships. Keep the conversation going with the community throughout the planning, implementation and operation phase of the project.

☐ **Build a detailed technical plan for the project**, including a viability assessment to determine the most suitable renewable energy technology for your community (solar, wind). Experts will support you in the definition of the layout, equipment specifications and system integration with the existing power grid or the development of a microgrid to ensure that protocols are being followed and also to give proper support during the life cycle of the project and later on for maintenance purposes.

☐ **Finding a proper site location (preferably an abandoned/low-use land).** You want a location with effective sun exposure or wind speed or adequate water flow for a micro hydro project. Solar projects need access to areas with ample sunlight, and wind projects require areas with consistent wind speeds. An equally important aspect is to design a project that minimises negative impacts on the environment and increases the community benefits. For that reason, we encourage looking for low-use land such as abandoned fields, car parks, and capped landfills.

☐ **Act in accordance with local regulations** to know what permits and approvals will be needed. Obtaining necessary permits is critical for establishing your project. This involves navigating through various environmental, legal, and community considerations. Government policies and regulations can play a significant role in promoting or impeding RE projects to happen.

☐ **Identify local partnerships** that can provide political, technical and financial support to your project (local governments, environmental and climate organisations, energy utilities, potential investors and renewable energy service providers).

☐ **Secure reliable access to renewable energy equipment and materials** is crucial for project implementation. This includes solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal systems, biomass generators, etc.

☐ **Secure financing** to cover the project implementation costs and maintenance (grants, loans, crowdfunding, public investment). Sufficient funding is essential for the development, construction, and maintenance of your project. This includes capital for equipment, installation, operation, and ongoing maintenance.

☐ **Identifying potential risks and developing mitigation strategies** is crucial to ensure the long-term success and viability of the project. Establishing systems to monitor the project's performance and evaluate its impact over time allows for ongoing improvements and adjustments.

Your core team does not have to know or have done all these things! But this can be the basic structure of your project and writing these down will be the basis of pitches/funding proposals. For each of these topics, a list of actions needs to be taken. And for this, it is important to put them in a proposal sequencing the actions that need to be done, who will do it and when.

Each renewable energy project is unique ("one size does not fit all"), and the specific requirements may vary based on the type of technology, scale, location, and local context. Properly addressing these ingredients can help ensure the success of your RE project.

Create a basic campaign timeline

In order to make your community-led renewable energy project viable, you will eventually need political support, the financial and logistical hurdles figured out, and the support of the community. A campaign is a series of events to help build power, create a feeling of consensus (and isolate detractors), and keep momentum for your project to succeed.

Your campaign is like a pathway drawn on a map - an idea of how to get from where you are now, to a future where your target agrees to - and implements - your demand. The timeframe for your journey should be both realistic and dynamic: you won't get there overnight, but your campaign won't last for decades.

To achieve your project goals you'll want to pick a range of actions that might help you achieve those ends (we call them "tactics"). You want to start with the size you are — if you're small, do small and get bigger (don't pretend to have all the community support behind you if you don't). You order a range of different tactics in a way that creates momentum, allows your group to grow, and is within the capacity of your team to organise.

Some tactics include:

Community Meetings: Organise public meetings or town halls to introduce the campaign, share information about renewable energy, and engage with community members. Provide opportunities for questions, discussions, and feedback.

Door-Knocking and Leafleting: Mobilise volunteers to go door-to-door in the community, distributing campaign literature, and engaging in conversations about the benefits of renewable energy. This personal approach allows for direct interaction and the opportunity to address individual concerns.

Online Presence: Establish a strong online presence through a dedicated campaign website, social media platforms, and email newsletters. Utilise these channels to share campaign updates, educational content, success stories, and opportunities for involvement. Encourage supporters to share the campaign's online presence with their networks.

Create factsheets on how the current system does not work and how the solution benefits the community. Give examples of how the community has previously made changes. Include frequently asked questions to address common opposition points. Share these fact sheets at community events, townhalls, etc.

Partnerships and Alliances: Collaborate with local organisations, environmental groups, schools, and businesses that share similar goals or have an interest in renewable energy. Leverage their networks and support to amplify your campaign's reach and credibility.

Media Engagement: Draft press releases, reach out to local newspapers, radio stations, and TV channels to raise awareness about your campaign. Offer to provide interviews, write op-eds, or host media events to generate media coverage and increase visibility.

Educational Workshops: Conduct workshops or informational sessions to educate the community about renewable energy technologies, their benefits, and how individuals can implement them at home. Empower community members with the knowledge and tools to take action.

Local Events and Festivals: Set up information booths or host workshops at local events, farmers' markets, or community festivals. Engage with attendees, distribute materials, and create interactive displays to spark interest and initiate conversations about renewable energy.

Collaborative Art and Awareness Projects: Consider using art installations, community murals, or creative awareness projects to draw attention to the campaign. Art has the power to inspire and engage people in meaningful conversations.

Engage Local Leaders: Reach out to local government officials, community leaders, and influential figures to gain their support and endorsement for the campaign. Their involvement can lend credibility and help navigate potential hurdles.

Volunteer Recruitment: Actively recruit and engage volunteers who are passionate about renewable energy and community activism. Provide them with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure smooth campaign operations.

Then order those tactics in a way that:

• Shows growing support;
• Keeps persuading the people you will need over time (e.g. Mayor, City Council);
• Identifies the challenges and calmly explains how they will be overcome ("where will we find the money?" or "where do we find the land?")
• Reaches out to groups that might be likely to oppose the campaign early on (What opposition might surprise you — and how to counter it)

Before you start planning your tactics, it is good to write down your shared vision and goals. They will help you think about coordinated tactics so that you can achieve your goals.

If your team comes from climate campaigning where you were often stopping pipelines, you'll note that campaigning for is very, very different than campaigning against.
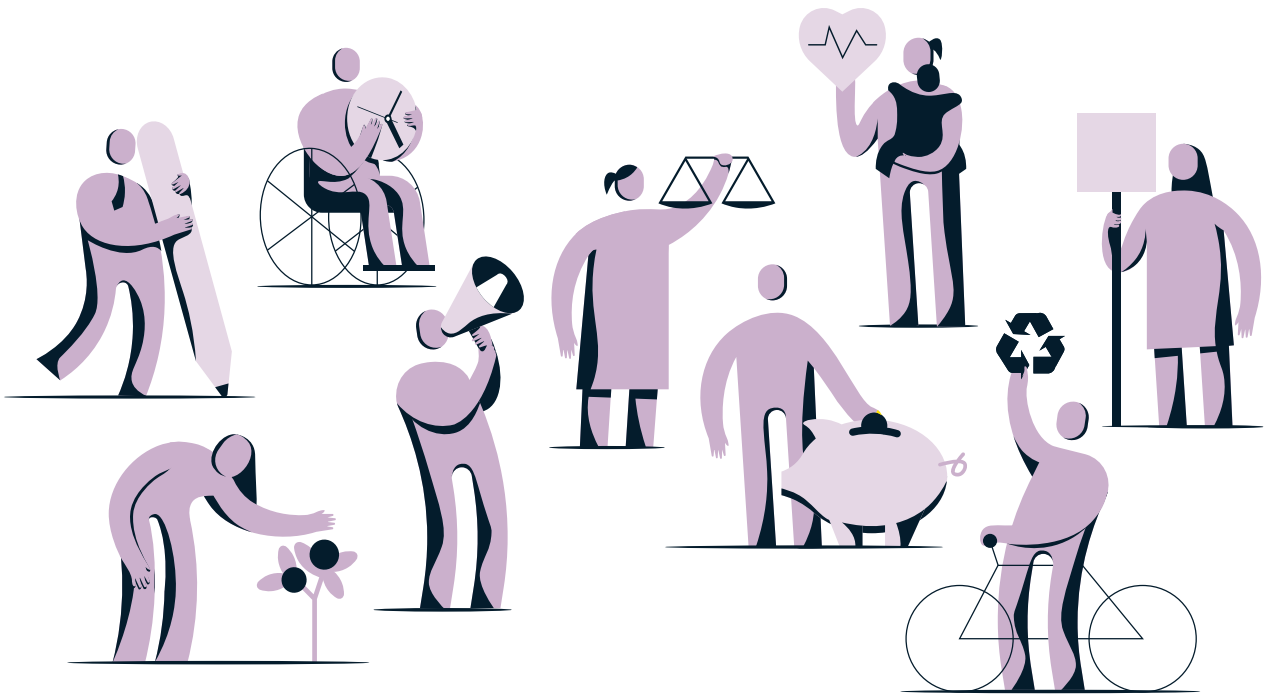
Tips for climate campaigners who are campaigning for.

A lot of climate campaigners have worked on stopping bad projects. You poke holes in the project. You slow it down. You use different talking points to turn people against a project.

This is different: you have a project you want to support. You are building a positive Campaign.

So let's acknowledge some tendencies from climate campaigners that are not effective.

#1: It's not just climate, be flexible in why people love the project

We run campaigns because of our values. But when campaigns are most effective they link with widely-shared values.

One Brazilian campaigner describes it this way:

> We were discussing getting solar on our apartment. I care deeply about the climate and kept making the climate argument. But even while some people said they cared, that argument did not win the day. What won the argument was the economic one: "Will I have to pay more?" They needed to see the economic argument: the building will increase in value, our energy bill will be reduced…
> We won our campaign when we spoke to people's needs.

We encourage people to remember
Why Community-led?.

#2: Don't escalate to protests too fast

A second tendency for climate campaigners is getting combative too quickly. People can be so impatient that we don't appreciate that winning these campaigns can take years of hard work – and despite the urgency of the issue, we still have to win over a bureaucracy. You can't win a bureaucracy if you only dismiss it and attack it. You'll have to also be persuasive.

Climate campaigners sometimes start attacking people who aren't doing what they want (or are only half-doing it). But when you escalate, you may end up only undermining your internal advocates and further isolating them from their more mainstream colleagues (Their colleagues say: "See? They won't even support you! I told you they're unreasonable.") Don't undermine your allies — even if they aren't all you want from them — in public.

Start slow. Our experience is that the best campaigners set up reasonable timetables and don't use escalated actions until much later.

At the same time, it's good to keep alerting people that you can do direct action. Creative groups have signalled their direct action prowess by:
• Publicly doing direct action with other groups to keep their skills up and a show of force about of what they can do);
• Doing high-profile nonviolent direct action trainings

Read more about tips about working with bureaucracy:
How your solutions campaign deals with bureaucracy

#3: Don't rely on your traditional allies

In many cities you may have your "climate-minded" politicians. These are not necessarily the people you want to be aligned with. Take this strategy from one US campaign:

> We want to get a resolution introduced. So we called up our two Progressive Councilmembers and urged them to not introduce the resolution. They were a little surprised, but we told them we wanted time to build community power — and we were worried that if they introduced it, it would be as marginalised as most of their bills. We organised for 6 months until other Councilmembers contacted us about introducing a bill. At that point, we looped in our Progressive Councilmembers and, buoyed by the Centrist councilmembers, the bill passed unanimously.

In other words, keep your traditional allies close — but keep broadening your political support base.

Public launch

Your community needs to know about your campaign. Up until now you have had a small core team meeting with many stakeholders, experts, and maybe even some key political supporters. You've figured out your campaign ask — the demand and a basic chart on how you'll get it.

Now you tell the world. You make it public for everyone.

Here's an important reminder: Once you "launch" there will remain many community members who don't know about the campaign. But it's still a good idea to have a "launch" moment — for your psychology and for the community.

This may take different forms: it may include a website where people can sign up for the campaign, a public press conference where you invite press to talk about the coalition's aims, a delivery of a petition from the community showing support for this project.

Since it's a community-driven project, you might want to turn towards more community-minded events::
- Invite the neighbourhood to a "pre-dig" ceremony on the piece of land
- Host a party!
- Host a contest/giveaway
- Involve a local school — connect it to the annual science fair or climate event in the area

This is typically the time to initially bring in Media (see the above resources). Don't be discouraged if the press don't jump on this right away — they are busy and may want to see if this a "realistic" project before covering. You have time to convince them.

This is also a good moment to bring in political allies — local mayors and others to talk about why they're excited to support this project.

The goal is to make a splash — to make it possible for supporters to show their support and to create a positive atmosphere around this project.

At the event, make sure to get people's contact information for follow-up later.

phase 4

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

It always seems impossible until it's done.

Nelson Mandela

Articles / Resources

- What tactics to keep momentum on my solutions campaign?
- How your solutions campaign may stall out — and the antidotes
- What opposition might surprise you — and how to counter it

Trainings

- TRAINING:

  Build People Power with Digital Tools
- Online Course:

  Advanced Campaigning Lessons

Our Own Power
phase 4

43 / 56

Keep up the pressure

Once your campaign is launched — you have to keep the pressure. We recommend identifying who the various players are that need to be convinced and constantly assessing how you are doing towards those goals.

This phase can be very long (decades!) or short (months!). Each campaign is different.

During this, you'll want to keep experimenting with different tactics to persuade your targets and get more public support.

Campaigns require momentum. People have to see how putting in their time is important. But while campaigns are sometimes a waterfall of actions and breaking news, sometimes they are slow, slow pushes. What to do in those slow times to keep your momentum from halting entirely?

The course of your campaign may vary widely. We have found four common road bumps to persuade:

1- It can be hard to keep the energy going over multiple months or years.
Here are some tips:
How your solutions campaign may stall out — and the antidotes

2- Campaigns can get stuck in tactical ruts — meeting follows meeting with little progress to show for it. Varying up with public pressure and generating buzz can often help:
What tactics to keep momentum on my solutions campaign?

3- Banging your head against a bureaucracy can really slow a project down and decrease morale. Here are some tips:
How your solutions campaign deals with bureaucracy

4- Opposition can show up from surprising locations. As you build your campaign, it is helpful to keep reaching out to new communities that might show opposition if they are not brought in. Here are some tips:
What opposition might surprise you — and how to counter it
(including arguments that solar panels are destructive:
What about the human rights and environmental problems with solar?)

What are tactics to keep up momentum?

Most targets are going to need a real push, and at some point it may be appropriate to escalate the campaign – from soft creative actions through to office occupations.

If your team thinks only about soft actions, some advice:

Do incorporate the possibility of escalation into your campaign. The principle of escalation is that you can give decision makers numerous chances to concede to your demands in response to increasingly disruptive tactics which make it more and more difficult for them to reject you.

A practical way to do this is to bring in someone to do a training for your group who had to escalate (or didn't and lost) — and to talk about how escalation can be helpful.

Every time you expect a decision from management, plan for the possibility they might just sit on it for an extended period of time. They might meet all of your demands, none of them, or any number in between. Each possibility may require a different response in message and level of disruption.

Disruption may mean many things in different contexts. Sometimes a simple banner can get attention to the issue. Tactics used are always nonviolent.

If your team thinks only about soft actions, some advice:

A common way to lose a "yes" campaign is to lose your allies too early. You don't want to turn off internal allies — or isolate them. Keep your powder dry as long as possible.

So plan for a period of non-escalation by setting some internal timelines.

For both groups a piece of advice:

Set a reasonable timeline for your target — so your team has agreed when you'll escalate if they don't take meaningful steps forwards. For example, "Our insiders say they could make this decision in 6-months. So we'll do this campaign without any escalation for 10-months. We'll let them kindly know if things don't start moving in 10-months, then we'll be forced to escalate…"

Here are some example tactics you might use:

Create a homework dilemma

In places where homes and schools are not connected to energy supply, suffer repeated blackouts, or parents are struggling with unaffordable energy prices, and the goal is to get support for renewable energy to be built for schools and homes, hold an action where students do their homework or study for exams in the local government building, mayor's building or townhall.

The aim is to create a dilemma for the local government, who would be seen as mean for evicting peaceful students who want to study but can't due to lack of energy supply, but who also can't let the students stay there in their local government building indefinitely. This may help polarise public opinion, to pick a side, of the peaceful students demanding renewable energy for their schools, or local government who aren't tackling the lack of energy problem, hopefully increasing public support for the campaign and its goal.

For this to work, students must maintain non-violent discipline: for instance it can help if they conduct themselves politely, quietly, are dressed in uniform or the smartest clothes they have, and that their only action is to sit and study their books. They can hand out leaflets quietly explaining their action and their demand. This action could be repeated week after week to increase pressure, and could be carried out in multiple locations by self-organising student groups across a city or country.
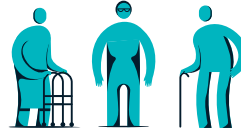
Host an "elders" awards ceremony

Ask for people to submit names of "elders" in the community who have helped the community. Then give a celebration where you give awards to some of those who support your project — give them an award, invite their network, and use the moment to advance your cause with new people.

Hold a pollution die-in

Hold a "die-in", where you lie on the ground to symbolise the tragic impact of fossil fuel pollution. This could be in a central public space, at the location of a target, like outside a mayor's office or school, or it could temporarily block city traffic. You can wear dust, pollution or gas masks to add visual impact. If you are blocking traffic or commuters from passing, you may like to consider how to keep their sympathy with your cause. For instance, you might like to hand out information leaflets to people driving cars or commuting, explaining how they are affected too and explaining your purpose, and promise to keep the disruption short until you get the images and media coverage you desire. Make sure you have signs explaining your key messages on the problem of pollution and the solution of clean green transport.

Plant pinwheels:

To represent the awesome power of the wind, plant hundreds of pinwheels in a central public location where many people will see, or even outside your local target that you're requesting to pledge to switch to renewables, like outside the town hall or in the ground of your university or school (they could be handmade). They can easily be cleared away again after your action, leaving no damage.

Hold a candle-lit event to symbolise our energy struggle

Many of our communities face unaffordable energy bills while energy companies make big profits, repeated blackouts, or are not yet connected to electricity. Hold a candle-lit event in a public space, or at the location of your local target, calling for the renewable energy future that they could support. Candle-lit lanterns could light the way on a night-time march. Candles are often symbols of hope against the darkness.

Party at a green energy carnival:

Hold a street carnival, parade, party, gig or concert, on the theme of "green energy", where people are invited to have fun by dressing up or making beautiful props to carry that represent the power of the sun, wind, or tidal energy. Great for kids, students, and all adults that love to play. You can add music, food, spoken word, and games. It can be as family-friendly or as playfully disruptive as you like. Perhaps occasionally the party of sun, wind and tide costumes will momentarily blow through the offices of your town hall, or through a dirty piece of fossil fuel infrastructure.

Show faith in a better future

Hold a prayer meeting at the location of your local target, together with your community of worship, an interfaith group, a ceremony with traditional leaders, or a contemplation circle with friends, reflecting on the threat to our communities and cultures, and our strength together and hope through action. You could find religious or spiritual passages or poems on how the earth is blessed with resources and our responsibility to protect it. These could be held more disruptively by occupying a local target's space temporarily.

Play leapfrog

The world is ready to jump from the dirty fossil fuel era to a clean energy future. Organise a game of leapfrog (see how to play) - no resources needed, just a couple of friends! The world's largest game of leapfrog was 1,348 young students in New Zealand and took just 9 minutes, and the world's fastest game of leapfrog took just 2 people jumping 57 times in a single minute. Can you beat their record?! It might get media attention. This could be a great challenge for a university campus, school, or outside the town hall.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Spell out what you want

Build words in solar panels and take photos and videos for social media and media coverage. This could be in the location of your target.

Hold a kite festival

We know wind power is fantastic. But demonstrations can be boring, or unsafe. Make yours more colourful and fun. Paint messages and decorate kites with your messages, and fly them outside the location of your local target, like a town hall.

Hold a mock auction or court

Our communities should have more say over our energy supply, but governments are bypassing them. Governments are granting licences and selling off communal land for destructive, dirty gas, oil and coal infrastructure. Give people the chance to publicly debate and demonstrate their choice would be for renewable energy, by holding a mock auction or court. A mock auction could sell example locations for solar, wind or tidal installation, to the highest bidder. A mock court could go through the evidence against dirty energy and for renewables, drawing in testimony by affected people and expert witnesses, and a mock judge could pass sentence banning fossil fuels. This can draw attention to and educate the community on the issues, give them a space to be heard, produce powerful testimony, and get media coverage. The hearing could take place at the location of the target like a local government office, or even within a fossil fuel auction disrupting the main meeting.
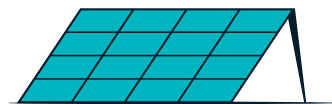
Start a solar rebellion

Put up solar panels disruptively in central locations or at the site of dirty fossil fuel infrastructure.

Fighting bad policy: dual track activism

During your campaign you're going to become experts in your local policy related to renewable energy. Local, regional, national, even international policies — all of them matter to your campaign.

Some government incentives and policies can be supportive and make a huge difference in our campaigns. Take a few examples:

> Facing frequent outages and a lack of a national power strategy, Chad has been investing in off-grid solar kits to support health clinics and small businesses with reliable energy.

> The US Inflation Reduction Act offered a range of incentives, including guaranteeing federal credits worth 30% off the cost of installing solar on their homes until 2032.

> 40% of Nigerian homes are dependent on gasoline generators (costing nearly USD $14 billion per year). Solar had a very slow start. When Nigeria removed a gasoline subsidy, the demand for solar power skyrocketed — even though the government does not have any incentives that promote solar.

> Uruguay has been a pioneer in renewable energy independence with a host of policies that led it to have 98% of its energy sourced from renewable energy. Its policies have included big projects like electric highways (for electric charging along the highway). But its strength has been local energy production, like its Solar Thermal Law, which required certain new construction to have 50% of its water heating from solar or exempting wind power equipment from its value added tax.

To see incentives, compare them with other countries, and see incentives that could support it, you can use a handy tool from RISE: https://rise.esmap.org/

By this point in your campaign, you'll know a lot of policies that get in the way of your campaigns. Some you can work around. Others you'll have to take on directly.

Let's acknowledge the challenge. It's hard to work on a local renewable energy project and a policy-level fight. It's also hard because they have different approaches:

Be local, relatable, and solve problems: If you ask people, they have problems in their lives. An abstract, far-away solution doesn't move them. You speak to them by offering them something to make their life better: getting their home power or offering solar panels that reduce their energy bill.

But the people who focus solely on policy might argue:

The problem is too big. It's too easy to blame individuals for their 40 kilowatt light bulb. But focusing on a local home or even a whole city leaves off-the-hook the terawatt decisions of the fossil fuel industry to continue to promote its product. The obvious answer is to change policy. When the US made laws against incandescent light bulbs they estimated savings up to 569 TWh annually by 2035! This is why it is better to change policy.

Instead of an "either/or" — we suggest an "and" approach:

"Dual track activism" is about combining two ways of making a difference – changing big rules (policies) and doing small things in our own lives. When we put these two approaches together, we can make the largest impact — one that speaks to where people are and builds change at scale.

Admittedly, this may become a whole additional level of your campaign. Here are examples of how that might look.

You might need to connect up with local activists —

In the US, a medium-sized solar project in Media, PA had been stymied by the electrical supplier PECO slow-walking hooking up the solar project. The community connected up with local activists who were protesting other aspects of PECO. They showed up at a local protest and told their story during the action. The utility was scared enough about the growing radicalization of seeing community members doing protests, the project was fast-tracked and got hooked up.

Or you might need to connect the people who are impacted by the policy —

With over 40 renewable energy cooperatives in Turkey, only 3 are active. This is due to a regulatory barriers to establishing renewable energy cooperatives, including legislation that ties electricity to a single common electricity meter. Due to legislative changes in 2019, the energy market is under the control of private companies. The solution is to bring together these cooperatives and those who want change.

Or you might need to grow out an entirely new group —

Take Alva Feldmeier, an activist for 350 in New Zealand. She saw local groups building dynamic community-owned energy systems, such as Raglan Local Energy or Energise Ōtaki The local groups were striking a blow against the grip of the fossil fuel industry — they were often led by Māori groups or well-resourced, middle class groups. The need remained to expand more widely to work at scale.

She realised a bigger campaign needed to weave together their work — and she ended up launching a "Homegrown energy campaign in New Zealand." Its goal was to get the government involved in funding community-owned projects — "By 2035, we should be generating 750MW and by 2050, that should be at least 1.5GW."

She described the campaign, "We know that for the big picture change that we are aiming to achieve with this campaign we need the central government to act and change policies that will fundamentally change how we generate, receive, and consume energy. But this is a long journey that will be filled with many small wins (and losses) along the way.

"A huge part of the success of this campaign lies in the public outrage we can build against our conventional energy system and the public support we can build for local community energy projects. The easiest way we can connect and engage people is on a local level as people deeply care about their community. This counts for both individual people but also decision makers."

Because they were rooted in local community groups already, they started with local power — getting petitions to pressure local councils to endorse the campaign goals. Their theory was to build power and pressure from below, before launching a large petition drive at the national level.

Every effort may be different — but oftentimes during this part of a campaign people realise they need to be part of a bigger network of groups to fight bad policy. It can be a challenge because there are so many things to do — but this step is often critical to the success of projects.

Keep growing and connecting

People make these projects happen. While some projects simply dance through all the right protocols, others win because of chance matters, new alliances, escalated efforts, or joining with larger groups and networks.

As you go through the routines of city planning meetings and filings, remember each moment is a chance to connect with humans — to get inspired about the vision you are building. You never know who of those you touch along the way will be critical in implementing the plan.

Being open to connecting with other people is a valuable skill that can enhance your campaign. New ideas, perspectives, resources, opportunities may emerge out of it. By truly listening to what others are saying to you, showing genuine interest and actively engaging in the conversation, can help build a great foundation for connection that may end up helping your work.

Remember that building connections is a gradual process, and not every interaction will result in a deep connection. Keep being human. Keep networking outside your campaign.

phase 5

EXPAND ACCESS & TELL YOUR STORY

The revolutionary days I have been outlining are days in which hope is no longer fixed in the future: it becomes an electrifying force in the present.

Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark: The Untold History of People Power

Articles / Resources

- Writing Media Advisories and Press Releases
- How to Write Letters to the Editors and Opinion Pieces
- Creating your own Online Media
  (also see the Trainings website's resources on Media)
- Evaluation
- #WhenWeLose

Trainings

- Media 101 Training Agendas
- TRAINING:

  Share your Story
- Online Course:
  How Social Movements Win

Debrief with your core team

You've fought for your project. Maybe you've won. Maybe you've lost. Maybe you're stalled out in a long-term holding position.

No matter what happens you have one more key job to do: debrief with your core team, analyse what political situation would have made it easier to win/lose, and widely share your lessons.

When debriefing a campaign or project, it's important to reflect on the process and outcomes to gather insights and identify areas for improvement. Here are some key questions to consider during a debrief:

Did we achieve our objectives? Evaluate whether the campaign successfully met its goals and objectives. Assess the extent to which the desired outcomes were achieved and if any adjustments were necessary during the campaign.

What worked well? Identify the strategies, tactics, or activities that were successful and contributed to the campaign's success. Recognize the strengths and effective practices that can be replicated in future initiatives.

What challenges did we face? Identify the obstacles, difficulties, or unexpected issues encountered during the campaign. Evaluate how these challenges were addressed or mitigated and consider how they could be better managed in future endeavours.

Did we reach our target audience? Assess the campaign's reach and impact on the intended audience. Determine whether the messaging, communication channels, and outreach efforts effectively engaged the target demographic or community.

What was the level of community engagement and participation? Evaluate the level of involvement and participation from the community or target audience. Assess the effectiveness of community engagement strategies and activities in fostering active participation and building relationships.

How did the campaign impact stakeholders? Identify the campaign's impact on key stakeholders, including community members, partners, or decision-makers. Determine whether the campaign influenced perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors and if it helped build relationships with stakeholders.

What were the key lessons learned? Reflect on the insights and lessons gained from the campaign. Identify what worked well and what could be improved. Consider new strategies, approaches, or tools that could enhance future initiatives.

What were the strengths and weaknesses of our team or organization? Evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the team or organisation involved in the campaign. Identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of skills, resources, coordination, and collaboration.

Did we effectively utilize available resources? Assess how well we used resources such as budget, time, personnel, and technology. Determine whether the resources were effectively allocated and utilised to achieve the desired outcomes.

What recommendations do we have for future campaigns? Based on the campaign's outcomes and lessons learned, provide recommendations for future campaigns or projects. Consider adjustments to strategies, tactics, messaging, or resource allocation to enhance future initiatives.

By addressing these key questions during the debriefing process, you can gather valuable insights and apply them to future campaigns, enabling continuous improvement and success.

Analyse the barriers

Whether you won or lost, you have gained a lot of expertise. One aspect of debriefing is looking at the different barriers that made it possible to win — or made compromises worse — or made it impossible to win.

These conditions — larger than just your local context — are the political context in which you swim. With RE projects, they are often linked to institutional barriers: policies on net metering, access to private funding, bureaucratic support, the grid set-up, etc.

Get your group to look at these and assess if there are a few key changes that need to be made at the policy level. Some people will be done when the campaign is done. Respect that. But others may be ready to take on another struggle — including cam-paigning on these!

As mentioned in the section on "Fighting bad policy" (in the chapter Implement the Plan), you may find groups already working on these policy-levels or may need to build a group to do that. Make it easier for the next group — tear those barriers down!

Share those stories

Every person who benefited from your larger effort to build community-led renewable energy projects can inspire others by sharing their stories. They can tell other neighbours, produce content on social media or even go on a national speaking tour — their story matters and can create a spiralling effect into other campaigns by letting others know about it.

Groups have written key lessons about #WhenWeLose or how their campaign stalled out — and of course many, many groups have written about how they have won. The goal is to transmit lessons across the larger climate movement as widely as possible.

Some groups make this very explicit: after getting hooked up to the new RE project, people receive an "ambassador's packet" which tells them how they can talk about the campaign and makes it easy to share with other people.

One very practical thing you can do: give everyone involved the project an award and a title as an ambassador to the project. The certificate might include specifics on how that person contributed to the effort (and it can be signed by any other person involved in the renewable energy project). The certificate includes what's expected from an ambassador:

- Posting about the project's success
- Presenting to other groups who might be interested in duplicating the project
- Sharing with their friends and community about how the project is helping the community

You can see more about sharing your story: TRAINING: Share your story

And of course post at OurOwnPower.org about your campaign and what you are learning.

We do all this sharing because the overall goal is not just one single project. The vision is our communities growing in their internal strength, not dependent on the fossil fuel industry or outside barons owning our utilities or energy sources. This isn't just a vision for one place — but for the larger world.

Thanks for your work, your courage and your effort for making a better world!

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

This toolkit is just a start. You're going to have to be inventive, creative, determined. But here are some additional resources that might support you along the way.

Key resources linked in this toolkit:

- Why Community-led?
- How do we structure "community-owned" RE projects?
- The power of the fossil fuel industry
- Why fossil fuel production is bad
- Our work feels small — but why it matters!
- 350 Organising Principles
- How to build one-on-ones
- How to get others involved
- Where do we find the money
- Mapping: How to source community knowledge for our project?
- 350 Energy Justice Scorecard
- How to create momentum
  some tips for thinking about action design, and especially how to energise a base of supporters
- How to create actions that will get media
- How to create a campaign plan: the paper plate challenge
  (the simplest way for a small group to create a basic campaign timeline)
- Recruiting outside your social circle
- How your solutions campaign deals with bureaucracy
- What tactics to keep momentum on my solutions campaign?
- How your solutions campaign may stall out — and the antidotes
- What opposition might surprise you — and how to counter it
- Writing Media Advisories and Press Releases
- How to Write Letters to the Editors and Opinion Pieces
- Creating your own Online Media
  also see the Trainings website's resources on Media)
- Evaluation
- #WhenWeLose

Learn more about campaigning via these training agendas/online courses:

- TRAINING: Building an effective team
- TRAINING: Make decisions, together
- TRAINING: Build your strategy
- TRAINING: Create your campaign timeline
- TRAINING: Share your story
- TRAINING: Build People Power with Digital Tools
- Media 101 Training Agendas
- Online Courses:
Climate Change Science 101, Advanced Campaigning Lessons, How Social Movements Win, and more...

We provide these links to additional RE toolkits and other databases that may support your campaigning efforts:

- Renewable Energy Trainings/Toolkits
- Case Studies