

Community Energy Resource Toolkit

# Business Planning and Procurement Toolkit



# **Business Planning and Procurement**

## **SEAI Community Energy Resource Toolkit**

**July 2023**

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SEAI is Ireland's national energy authority investing in, and delivering, appropriate, effective and sustainable solutions to help Ireland's transition to a clean energy future. We work with the public, businesses, communities and the Government to achieve this, through expertise, funding, educational programmes, policy advice, research and the development of new technologies.

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# Introduction

→ The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) intends this Business Planning and Procurement Toolkit to be read in parallel with the other toolkit guides that have been prepared as part of its Community Enabling Framework. The Community Enabling Framework provides supports to communities that are interested in developing their own grid scale renewable electricity generation projects.

The Framework aims to provide end-to-end support to create a community energy sector in Ireland that can flourish sustainably over time and one that will deliver meaningful impact to communities nationwide. At the time of the establishment of the Community Enabling Framework, RESS was the intended route to market for the energy generated by community projects. The Small Scale Generation Scheme (SSG), anticipated to provide for projects up to 6 MW, will provide an alternative when launched (expected to be announced in 2023).

This toolkit aims to inform community groups on how to start their renewable energy project journey with a clear picture of what will be required of them from a commercial/business perspective.

For the community group renewable energy project to be successful, the project must be treated as a business opportunity and assessed on its commercial attributes, not just its potential to deliver clean renewable energy.

The business planning section of this toolkit will provide a high-level overview of what is required from a business/commercial perspective. The procurement section will outline the types of services that may need to be procured and how to do it.

# How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be used online. Links are [highlighted in blue](#) and denoted with this symbol:  Click on the highlighted text to activate the link.

Navigation buttons are displayed at the bottom of every page.  
The navigation symbols are:



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# Develop the vision

→ Renewable electricity is a central element of Ireland's action on climate disruption as set out in the Programme for Government, the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030.

The concept of renewable energy communities emerged as a key function of the European Union's (EU) 2018 recast Renewable Energy Directive (now part of the Clean Energy Package).

Broadly, the Directive recognised that there was great value in local communities and local authorities participating in renewable energy projects. The Directive also stated that EU member states should help communities participate by providing the necessary supports to allow them to compete with large participants on an equal footing.

In 2018, the Irish Government approved the high-level design of the RESS, which included community provisions in line with Directive requirements.

The RESS aims to promote investment in renewable energy through the provision of a supported tariff for electricity produced from renewable sources. It is a competitive auction-based, cost effective framework to help Ireland achieve its renewable energy targets – 80% renewable electricity by 2030. The first onshore RESS auction took place in 2020 (RESS 1). The second auction (RESS 2) took place in 2022. Two more onshore auctions are expected before 2025 – RESS 3 in 2023 and RESS 4 in 2024.

As stated in the introduction to this toolkit document, these toolkits aim to provide guidance and support to communities interested in developing renewable electricity generation projects in Ireland through state-sponsored schemes. Notwithstanding this, there are alternative routes to market such as Corporate Power Purchase Agreements (CPPAs). A CPPA is where a corporate body agrees to purchase the electricity generated by a project for a set fee and a set term. Many steps outlined in this toolkit and others in the suite will also apply to that route to market.

It is crucial that community groups interested in undertaking a renewable energy project journey develop a vision for what they want to achieve. Part of developing that vision is asking the following questions:

- Who are you and who do you need to be?
- Why do you want to develop a community renewable energy project?
- What do you want to develop?

## → Who are you and who do you need to be?

To participate in the community aspects of both state sponsored support schemes and the grid connection process (please refer to the [Grid Connection Toolkit](#)) it is likely that your group will need to be a Renewable Energy Community (REC). Within the RESS 2 terms and conditions, a REC means a legal entity:

- (a) which, in accordance with applicable law, is based on open and voluntary participation, is autonomous, and is effectively controlled by shareholders or members that are located (in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or local authorities) or resident (in the case of natural persons) in the proximity of the RESS 2 Project that is owned and developed (or proposed to be owned and developed) by that legal entity;
- (b) the shareholders or members of which are natural persons, SMEs, local authorities (including municipalities), not-for-profit organisations or local community organisations;

- (c) for any shareholder or member (with the exception of 'Sustainable Energy Communities' as registered with SEAI), that shareholder or member's participation does not constitute their primary commercial or professional activity;
- (d) the primary purpose of which is to provide environmental, economic, societal or social community benefits for its shareholders or members or for the local areas where it operates, rather than financial profits;
- (e) in respect of which, each shareholder or member is entitled to one vote, regardless of shareholding or membership interest; and
- (f) which is, or which has at least one shareholder or member that is, registered as a 'Sustainable Energy Community' with SEAI; and

all of the above criteria must be evidenced to the satisfaction of the Minister.

It is important to bear this requirement in mind as you form your group and as you pass through the various development phases/stages. The definition of an REC may change slightly depending on the specific scheme, such as the Small Scale Generation Scheme (SSG) due to be launched in 2023.

Many groups that are starting on their REC journey will have experience of the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) programme. As part of the establishment of a SEC, SEAI recommends that groups establish a steering committee. It is also important for your REC to establish a strong team to assist in the development of the community renewable energy project.

## **Renewable Energy Community team**

The role of the REC team is to deliver the vision and targets of the community group. The REC team should typically comprise different representatives from across the community who can contribute various expertise, skills and experience to the community whilst also representing the wider interests of the community. The REC team can ensure that the voices, needs and experiences of all members and the wider community are considered, and their interests represented, thus involving the community from the outset, resulting in a greater chance of successful project development.

Typical members of the REC team should include:

- SEC representation
- Representation from local community groups – Tidy Towns, GAA, Soccer, Scouts, parish groups, resident associations, etc.
- Local farming representation
- Local business representation.

Each individual's experience and knowledge should map their role in the REC team and identify any potential gaps. Beneficial experience includes:

- Accountants
- Solicitors
- Planners
- Technical experts – Contractors/Engineers
- Community advocates and volunteers
- Business owners.

Whilst SEAI will provide some support as a Trusted Advisor (TA), team members with these skill sets will be better able to navigate the various project stages required to develop a successful renewable energy project. Further details on project development stages are available in the Community Energy Resource Toolkits – [Solar PV](#) and [Onshore wind](#).

Your group can start small and grow as your project progresses.

Note that, to access the funds associated with the SEAI Community Enabling Grant, your REC will need to be established as a legal entity. Further guidance on forming a suitable legal entity can be found in the [Community Groups and Governance toolkit](#).

## → Why do you want to develop a community renewable energy project?

Why are you starting on this journey? To bring a renewable energy project through the various stages of development requires not only ability but also staying power. It could take at least two years to get to where you are ready to actually build your project and, despite your best efforts in terms of community inclusion, there may still be opposition to the project. There will also be bumps on the road to navigate and sometimes these bumps may derail your renewable energy project aspirations.

Therefore, it is very important for you to outline at the outset why you want to begin this journey – what is your vision. Reviewing the other [Community Toolkit Guides](#) available will help you firm up your vision. During the more difficult times of project development, you can revisit this vision to keep momentum and drive the project forward.

Some reasons a community may wish to develop a renewable energy project include:

- Becoming energy independent
- Reduction in greenhouse gases
- Develop sustainable community revenue streams which can benefit the community in a variety of ways
- Develop community cohesion and general advancement
- Develop a local circular economy and local employment opportunities

## → What do you want to develop?

Once you have established your committee and set out your vision, you will need to decide what kind of renewable energy project you wish to develop. Key aspects to work through when making this decision are:

- Technical aspects
- Stakeholder aspects

### Technical aspects

- Where is your community located? Upland areas may be more suitable for wind, whilst low-lying areas may be more suitable for solar.
- Where are you in your future grid connection? Wind projects may tolerate further distance from the grid than solar projects from a cost perspective.
- Do you have community land available? Is this more suitable for a solar project or a wind project?
- What are your delivery targets? A wind project may take longer to deliver than a solar project.

- What is the planned route to market? RESS has been the main route to date; however, the SSG (anticipated in 2023) will be an alternative.

Further information to consider as part of this technical assessment can be obtained from the Community Energy Resource Toolkits – [Solar PV](#) and [Onshore wind](#).

## Stakeholder aspects

A key stakeholder aspect will be what kind of development is more likely to be accepted by the community. As outlined in previous sections and in the [Community Energy Resource Toolkit – Community and Stakeholder Engagement](#), it is very important to have the broader community behind the project from the outset. Potentially review previous development activity in the area and the response it received from the wider community at planning and development stage. If the group feels that the environmental and planning obstacles may be too arduous then it may be wise to avoid such a project. Note that the project should be developed to optimise the viability and bring all stakeholders along – this may mean that the project output or size or design is reduced or changed to reflect the situation. In general, a 5MW wind project will be more financially lucrative than a 5MW solar project because of a higher capacity factor with wind projects in Ireland. Capacity factor is a ratio of the average delivered power to the theoretical maximum power, i.e. your renewable energy project will not generate its maximum power at all times. This is simply because the resource that the project is dependent on is variable. The [SEAI Renewable Energy in Ireland Report 2020](#) details a capacity factor for wind in Ireland of circa 30% whilst the CRU Remuneration of Renewables [Self Consumers for Exported Electricity: Clean Export Guarantee](#) (December 2021) sets a capacity factor of just circa 10% for solar.

# Seek advice and case study analysis

→ There is a lot to consider when starting and progressing through the renewable energy project journey. As referenced earlier, the [Community Energy Resource Toolkits](#) developed by SEAI and hosted on the SEAI web site ([www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie)) should be the first reference point for your community group.

Besides the toolkits, SEAI has established a Community Enabling Framework which comprises a panel of competent professionals appointed as Trusted Advisors to provide support to community groups. The scope of support to be provided includes:

- Provide training and webinars
- Undertaking project feasibility studies
- Provide ad-hoc guidance and support

To access some/all of the supports, communities should contact SEAI by emailing [Communityress@seai.ie](mailto:Communityress@seai.ie).

Time spent researching and obtaining relevant advice where available may help you reduce project costs associated with external services and will help to set your community on the right path from the outset. In the words of Sir Francis Bacon – knowledge is power.

Besides SEAI, regional LEADER companies, Local Enterprise Office and local authorities may also provide some assistance, so advisable to also reach out to these entities.

## → Case studies

Given the level of community activity that we have seen in the community categories of the RESS and ECP 2 process, we expect to see significant growth in community renewable energy projects. Therefore, we anticipate a greater number of community renewable energy project examples soon.

We encourage community groups embarking on their renewable energy journey to reach out to and engage with like-minded communities that are at various stages of their journey. Attending SEAI REC events and SEC events will introduce your community group to others who could provide valuable insights and lessons learned from their own journey.

# Communicate

It is a requirement of the planning process in Ireland that appropriate consultation happens regarding any proposed development that may impact the community. This consultation ranges from simply posting a site notice and advertising the application (e.g. one-off house) to a requirement to undertake meaningful community engagement and submit a community report with the planning application. However, consultation is not only a requirement, it is absolutely crucial to project success. This is even more true for community-led projects which will directly depend and rely upon community support to develop a successful project.

## → When should you undertake your first engagement?

When you have established REC team, you have agreed your vision, you know what you would like to develop and have gained the knowledge through research and engagement, you are ready to conduct your first community engagement. Note that you must present a coherent and appropriate community engagement plan as part of the supporting documents for entry to the Enabling Grant Framework.

This is the first opportunity to:

- Inform the wider community of your vision and project plans.
- Potentially identify a landowner interested in providing land for the project.
- Gain support for the project.
- Identify other persons in the community that could contribute – through participation on the committee or through community engagement and messaging.
- Identify any potential community-related risks.
- Outline to the community what the likely next steps will be and when you are likely to engage again.

It is important to set out clear terms of reference for the meeting – this can be as an agenda. This will keep the meeting on point and ensure that the meeting is productive.

It is important to keep a written record of all meetings and note feedback, both positive and negative. Assign an REC team member to chair the meeting and a separate member to take notes.

Continue community engagement throughout the project and community meetings at various project development phases to keep the project on track and maintain community support.

Further information on effective community engagement can be found in Community Energy Resource Toolkits – [Solar PV](#), [Onshore wind](#), [Planning process](#) and [Stakeholder and Community Engagement](#).

# Evaluate initial risks

→ At this early stage of project development, following on the previous steps outlined in this toolkit, your REC team should take time to review its plans and evaluate initial risks associated with it.

Project risks would generally fall under the following headings:

- **Community/Stakeholder risks** – List any issues identified at the community engagement event under this risk heading.
- **Steering Committee risks** – Is there the right skill set in the group? Are there time constraints associated with individuals' participation? Is there succession planning – if a member retires, how will you replace them? How will the steering committee operate into the long term? The project may take several years to develop but will continue in operation for circa 30-35 years.
- **Programme risk** – Will the project be ready for the next grid connection window? What RESS auction will the project be ready for? Grid assessment period – what work must happen within the two-year window?
- **Funding the project** – Renewable energy projects require €Ms to develop and construct. Planning alone – excluding initial feasibility studies – can cost circa €40k-60k for a 5 MW solar/wind project (excluding any potential Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirement). Notwithstanding the introduction of the Enabling Grant Framework, your group will be required to part-finance the project through all development stages.
- **Project risk** – Is there a planning risk associated with the project? Is there a land control risk associated with the project? Is there a construction/design risk associated with the project? What is the risk associated with the grid connection?

You should collate these risks into a Risk Register (see [Appendix: Sample Risk Register](#)). This Register will become a valuable project management and planning tool to assist the steering committee as it moves through its project development phases.

Apply a rating to each risk as a function of the potential impact of the risk times the likelihood of that risk occurring. Identify a mitigation measure for the risk – this is a measure that can be applied to control/reduce the risk. You should assign responsibility for each risk to an individual steering committee member.

# Project management and planning

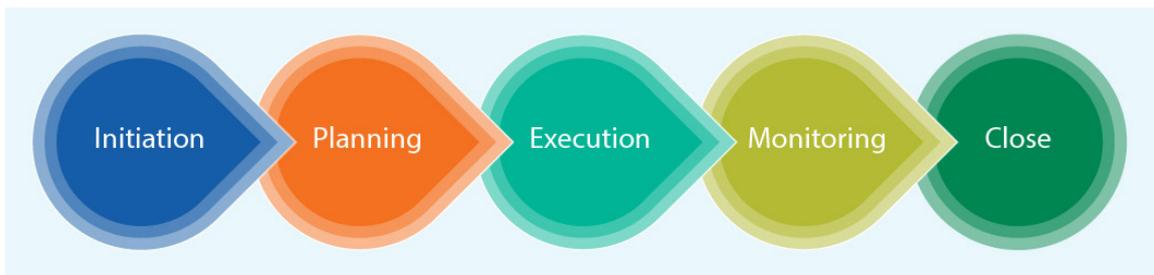
→ The Risk Register is a dynamic project management tool and you should update it as the project progresses. There may ultimately be some risks that the project cannot tolerate and may result in the project being discontinued – it is as important to understand the reasons why a project stops as much as to why it should proceed.

To enable the steering committee to properly manage the project through all the project stages, you must adopt effective project management techniques. Using techniques such as these will help you to:

- Keep the project on track
- Review what you have done and what you have yet to do
- Ensure you meet key dates
- Ensure you manage project risks
- Identify when you require additional support.

Figure 1 shows the five key stages of project management as developed and defined by the Project Management Institute (PMI)<sup>®</sup>.

Figure 1: The five key stages of project management



**The initiation stage** includes the development of your project vision and your initial team establishment, as outlined in the previous sections of the toolkit.

**The planning stage** expands on aspects undertaken at initiation stage and sets a formal structure around how you intend to execute and monitor your project.

**The execution and monitoring stages** run largely in parallel until the project close-out phase is reached.

**The project close-out phase** could indicate a handover stage from one entity to another – i.e. handover from the REC steering committee to the relevant team taking the project through to the next stage of development. Close-out can also indicate the termination of the project.

## → Project planning, execution and monitoring

A key element of effective project management is the preparation, use and update of a Project Execution Plan (PEP). The PEP will set out how the project will be undertaken and managed.

There are many sources of information and guidance on how to prepare a PEP. The Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) has developed specific project management guidance documents to support the delivery of large capital works projects that are financed by the Irish Government [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/](https://www.constructionprocurement.gov.ie/) [↗](#). These documents are referenced in [Procurement key considerations](#) [↗](#) and [Typical procurement process](#) [↗](#) later in this toolkit.

The PEP:

- Sets out the overall project vision/description – discussed in the [Develop the vision](#) section of this toolkit.
- Identifies the project roles and responsibilities – discussed in [Develop the vision](#).
- Identifies the project stages and their associated key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Includes the project programme (later in this section).
- Includes risk management (discussed in [Evaluate initial risks](#)).
- Sets the project budget (discussed in [Funding your project](#) and [Procurement key considerations](#)).

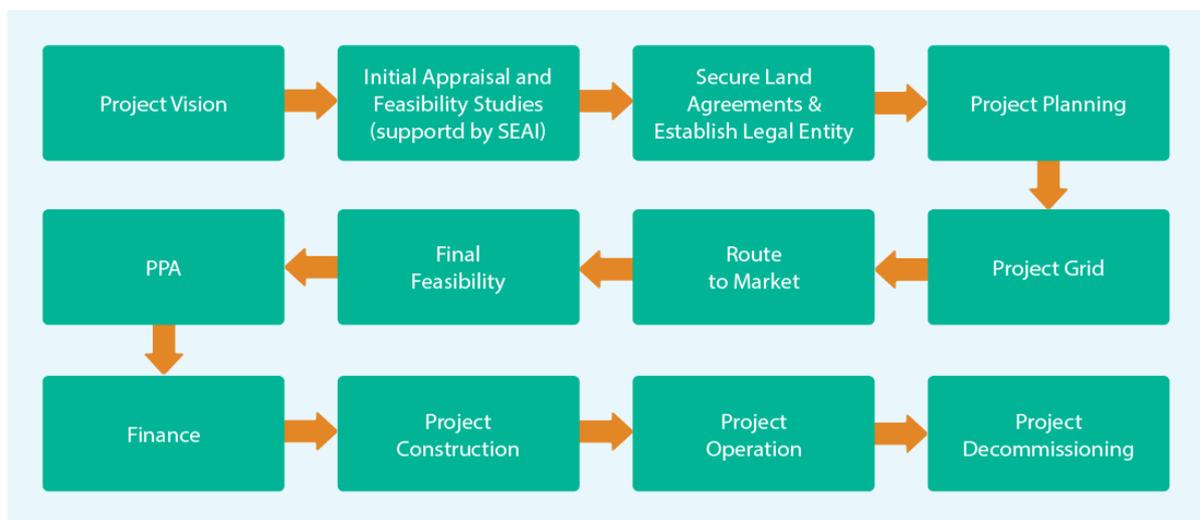
A detailed PEP template is available to review as an appendix to the [CWMF Project Management Guidance Note GN 1.1](#). You can modify this template to suit the REC needs.

## → Identification of project stages and associated review points

The five key project stages from a project management perspective are outlined above. The relevant stages for developing a renewable energy project are outlined in the SEAI toolkits for [Solar PV](#) and [Onshore wind](#) – with more detail on specific phases being provided in the [Grid Connection](#) and [Planning process](#) toolkits.

Generally speaking, the stages are the same whether you are developing a solar project or a wind project, with the key differentiator being the surveys that are required for wind projects.

Figure 2: Project stages for developing a renewable energy project



Communication and stakeholder engagement is a key project stage, but do not consider it as standalone. It is vital to project success that you continue communication and stakeholder engagement (particularly before key stages) throughout the project life cycle.

Procurement is also another relevant project stage not expressly listed – you will need to undertake key activities as part of the appointment of expert consultants and contractors to facilitate the delivery and development of the renewable energy project. This is particularly relevant if you use state grant funding. Procurement is discussed in more detail in the later sections of this toolkit.

There is also a 'pre-construction stage' which involves preparation and submission of planning compliance documentation and also the application to the CRU for the relevant authorisations to construct the project and to generate electricity.

### Grid first or planning first?

At the time of preparing this toolkit (2023), there was no requirement for community projects to have a valid planning application to apply for a grid connection. Therefore, the project planning and grid stages may be reversed or run in parallel.

However, if your project has been planned prior to applying for a grid connection as a community project, it will be prioritised ahead of projects without planning.

It is important to note that the Initial Appraisal and Feasibility studies carried out by the TAs include as standard an assessment of the potential project grid connection method and cost. Therefore, at a minimum, we recommend that a TA is engaged and carries out the reference studies before a grid connection application is made.

There are full details on the grid connection process and the planning process in the SEAI toolkits for these subjects. These toolkits, together with the wind and solar toolkits, should be referenced as part of the development of the project stages to include in the PEP. This will ensure that the community group has a clear understanding of the fundamental requirements for each stage.

### → Stage review points

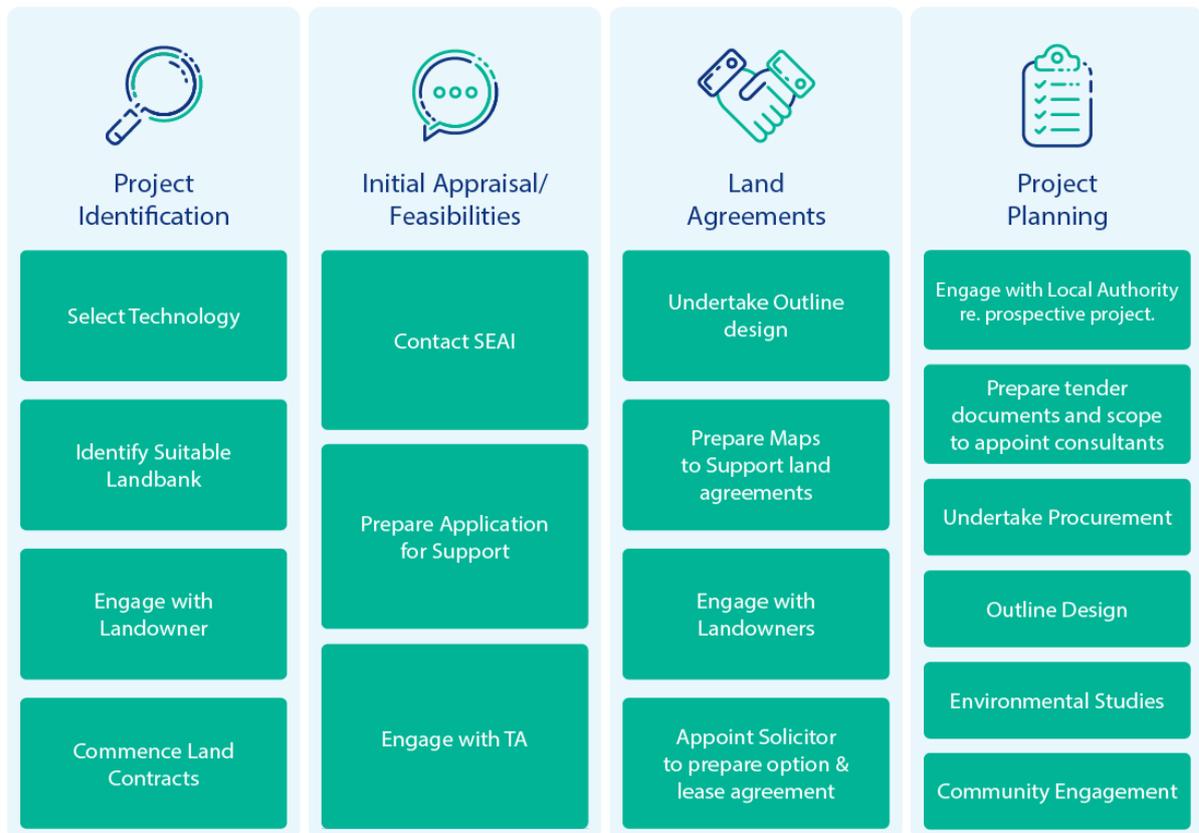
The community groups should review the project development stages (outlined above) at each project meeting to confirm the current project stage and that you have met the project requirements before moving to the next project stage.

The PEP should provide a high-level summary and an outline of the required tasks of each stage, the documents required and the KPIs/ acceptance criteria to be met prior to moving to the next stage.

You should use the information provided in the SEAI toolkits to populate this information. In particular, the [Onshore wind](#) and [Solar PV](#) toolkits detail project break points to consider as end of project stage assessment points, to determine whether the project should move to the next phase of development or whether the project should close.

Separately, prepare a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for the project. This will detail the required tasks at each stage and the member of the steering committee responsible for each identified task. An example of a WBS (populated with tasks only) for early project development stages is provided in Figure 3. Please note, it is just a sample WBS and is therefore not exhaustive. There will be break points, as discussed in earlier and outlined in the other community toolkits available, where the project is reviewed and a decision made as to whether the project should move to the next stage. The decision to move to the next stage will be subject to the KPIs/ acceptance criteria that have been set in the PEP. Therefore, it is unnecessary to populate a WBS for a complete project lifecycle at the start of the project; Just ensure early stages are well populated and populate later stages as the project progresses.

Figure 3: Sample Work Breakdown Structure



## → Project programme

When you have reviewed all the relevant reference documents as outlined in this toolkit, familiarised yourselves with the project stages and identified the stage the project is at, you should develop your project programme.

The project programme identifies the timeline for executing the project. When developing a renewable energy project in an Irish context, there are a few key milestone dates that all other project dates will derive from. These are dates that are fixed and include:

- **Grid connection windows** – As outlined in the [Grid Connection Toolkit](#), the window to apply for a grid connection is only open for certain periods. Please refer to the relevant terms and conditions for the grid connection process to which your project will apply. The process applicable at the time of writing this toolkit was ECP 2.
- **Grid assessment window** – If a community renewable energy project has applied for a grid connection without planning for the project, then a grid assessment period will apply during which the project is required to obtain planning or else lose the capacity it has been assigned (unless you decide to pay the grid connection contract fees without planning). At the time of writing this report, the grid assessment window was two years.
- **Route to Market** – For example, RESS auctions – these open for prequalification on a set date (published on the [DECC](#) and [EirGrid](#) websites) and run to a prescribed programme. The relevant dates are published at the time the terms and conditions are published. Any project seeking entry to the auctions will be required to meet these dates and the auction requirements. Other schemes may or may not have set application windows.

- **Planning** – The date when your project submits a planning application is determined by the key milestone dates outlined above. Once you submit your project for planning, the local authority has eight weeks in which to decide (unless it issues a request for further information). Note that this is very much a best-case scenario from a programme perspective. Even if your project is successful in receiving a grant of permission from the local authority, it may be subject to appeal to An Bord Pleanála – there is no statutory timeline associated with this appeal process and it may take in the region of 12 months to receive a decision from An Bord Pleanála. It should be noted that only parties that submitted an observation with respect to the original project planning application are permitted to appeal a planning decision to An Bord Pleanála.
- **Met mast (wind developments only)** – Typically, financial institutions require at least 12 months of wind resource information for a project prior to issuing finance. This data needs to be recorded using a met mast on site, and a professional consultant should collate the recorded data, to provide an overall summary of the wind resource on site. Therefore, you should start met mast studies at least 18 months prior to seeking project finance for construction.
- **Dates for project grid connection** – There are key dates in terms of payment and connection that you must meet as part of the acceptance of the grid connection offer. Carefully review the grid connection assessment/offer when received and adjust the programme for these dates.
- **Dates for overall project development financing/funding** – Dates by which you will need to secure funding/financing to move the project into the next stage of development.
- **Compliance** with public procurement tendering and appointment timeframes when appointing consultants and contractors where relevant.
- **Application for licence to Construct and licence to generate** – Prior to construction it is a requirement for the project to apply to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) [cru.ie](http://cru.ie) for its licence to construct the project and its licence to generate electricity. These applications can take a number of months to process.
- **Power Purchase Agreement** – A Power purchase agreement will need to be negotiated with a registered off-taker to purchase the power generated by the project.

A sample project programme for a solar project is provided in Table 1. Please note that a wind project programme will be substantially longer as a longer period of environmental surveys is required to support the planning application (up to two years of bird surveys potentially). Also, a minimum 12-month period of on-site resource measurement (measurement of wind speed using a met mast) will be required prior to project financing, therefore potentially adding up to three years to the project programme outlined in Table 1.

***Overall, a renewable energy project can take around two to six years to reach the point of energisation and start exporting electricity to the grid.***

## → Risk management

The Risk Register, as referred to in the [Evaluate initial risks](#) section, should continue to be reviewed and updated by the project steering committee as the project moves through the stages as outlined. As the project progresses, some risks will fall away and new risks will arise.

Table 1: Sample solar project programme up to planning application submission

TASK	MONTH																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Establish Community Team	█	█																				
Project Vision		█	█																			
Select Project Technology				█																		
Identify Project Land					█	█	█															
Engage with SEAI – TA								█	█	█	█	█	█	█								
Secure Land Agreements										█	█	█	█	█	█							
Establish Legal Entity										█	█	█	█	█	█							
Project Outline Design and Planning preparation														█	█	█	█	█	█			

# Continuous Viability Assessment

→ As the community renewable energy project progresses, it is important that you continuously assess the viability of the project.

To ensure that this is happening in a structured manner, and having prepared the documents as outlined in earlier sections of this toolkit, the REC team should hold at a minimum a monthly project meeting. A sample agenda for this meeting is:

1. Confirm current project stage.
2. Review and update of project Risk Register.
3. Review of project programme and key milestone dates.
4. Project budget review.
5. Identify the key work items for the coming month and assign responsibility for same.
6. Project break point review (if applicable).

You should document meetings and circulate a list of actions after the meeting.

When a project has reached the break point, it is important that you undertake a stage review and decide whether to proceed or close-out, which should be documented in the minutes. You should detail the key requirements/ acceptance criteria to be reviewed at these break points in the PEP.

# Funding your project

→ As your project moves through the various stages of development, it will require funding to support its development. Some of this funding will be as grant funding (generally LEADER and SEAI Enabling Grant Framework). Besides the grant funding, the community will need to provide an element of project funding themselves. This can be through equity funding (through community shares), a private partner supporting the development in exchange for payments once the project is operational and external debt/finance. There is further information on funding community projects in the [Financing Community Projects toolkit](#). The requirements for accessing the Enabling Grant Framework are outlined later in this section.

Besides these elements of funding, support is available through the SEAI TA network. This is at no cost to the REC and will support the preparation of the initial appraisals and feasibility studies.

Table 2: Finance and funding requirements and sources for project stages

Stage	Finance/ funding required	Source
<b>Project appraisal and feasibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost covered by SEAI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered through SEAI Trusted Advisor support</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. €40-60k (excluding EIA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling Grant Framework (SEAI)</li> <li>Local Enterprise Offices</li> <li>Community Benefit Fund associated with nearby Renewable Energy Project</li> <li>Community contributors<sup>(a)</sup></li> <li>Private community partner<sup>(b)</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Grid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c.€2k (grid assessment) – c. €37k</li> <li>Stage payment thereafter linked to grid connection costs – refer to <a href="#">Grid Connection Toolkit</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community contributors</li> <li>Enabling Grant Framework (SEAI)</li> <li>Private community partner</li> </ul>
<b>Route to market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. €10k to support the development of a detailed financial model to inform auction bid price</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling Grant Framework (SEAI)</li> <li>Community contributors</li> <li>Private community partner</li> </ul>
<b>Met mast (wind)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. €100k - €150k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling Grant Framework (SEAI)</li> <li>Community contributors</li> <li>Private community partner</li> </ul>
<b>Construction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C. €1M - €6M</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community equity</li> <li>Private community partner</li> <li>Bank debt</li> </ul>

**Notes:**

- (a) A community contributor can be funds raised by the REC team by targeted fund raising or the sale of project shares to members of the community.
- (b) A private community partner can be a private individual/organisation that provides some form of service/asset to the project in exchange for payments once the project is operational.

Costs not included in Table 2 are those associated with the effort of the REC who will undertake the project voluntarily. As stated in previous sections of this toolkit, taking a project through the various stages of development will take a lot of time and commitment from the REC team. This effort adds significant value to the project but is not necessarily in receipt of financial remuneration.

Also not included are the ongoing operational costs once the project is energised, such as:

- Land lease costs
- Operation and maintenance (O&M) costs
- Maintenance reserve account set aside – monies set aside to detail with equipment repair and replacement that fall outside the remit of the O&M contract
- Asset management fees – cost associated with the management of the solar PV, management of contracts, payment of fees and distribution of shares
- Cost of finance – where raised, external debt has an associated cost.

Note that where external funding, support or finance is required, this will take time to put in place.

For this reason, as part of the development of the PEP, prepare a budget for the project and identify key dates in the project programme when funding, support or finance is required.

## → Requirements for accessing the Enabling Grant Framework

At a high level, the minimum requirements for accessing the Enabling Grant funds are as follows:

- A detailed application is required to be submitted.
- The REC Legal Entity has to be established.
- The project has to have passed the relevant stage of feasibility study (undertaken by the Trusted Advisor).
- The REC are required to provide details of project finance/funding – the Enabling Grant monies will not cover 100% of eligible costs. In addition, communities are required to pay first and claim after.
- The REC is required to have a bank account in place.
- Landowner consent must be in place for the project.

For full details on the requirements, please refer to the application guidelines as referenced above.

The total grant available is €180,000 or 80% of eligible costs (whichever is the lesser). This is broken up into three stages and projects may enter any of the stages depending on their progress.

Table 3: RESS Enabling Grant Application stages and requirements

Stage	Amount available	Grant requirements
<b>Early stage</b>	Max €75k or 80% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved detailed feasibility study</li> <li>• Demonstrated REC status</li> </ul>
<b>Mid stage</b>	Max €130k or 80% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser (minus any previous drawdown at early stage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive decision to grant planning</li> <li>• Approved detailed feasibility study</li> <li>• Demonstrated REC status</li> </ul>
<b>Late stage</b>	Max €180k or 80% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser (minus any previous drawdown at early / mid stage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A route to market Offer</li> <li>• Grid connection assessment/ offer from ESNB</li> <li>• Approved detailed feasibility study</li> <li>• Demonstrated REC status</li> </ul>

We anticipate further schemes will be launched to support community renewable energy projects with particular reference to the SSG, which is due to be announced in 2023. We advise community groups keep up to date with current schemes via the SEAI website.

## Next steps

- All community groups that are interested in the development of a community renewable energy project, if they have not already done so, should contact SEAI by emailing [communityress@seai.ie](mailto:communityress@seai.ie) or completing the Enabling Supports Application form available on the SEAI website ([www.seai.ie/community-energy/ress/enabling-framework/](http://www.seai.ie/community-energy/ress/enabling-framework/)). We will determine if your project is ready to move to the first stages of appraisal with one of our Trusted Advisors.

If you have already started your renewable energy project development journey, review this document to determine your stage of development and then retrospectively review the key actions of previous stages to ensure you have completed all key actions. You should also contact SEAI by emailing [communityress@seai.ie](mailto:communityress@seai.ie) so we can appoint Trusted Advisors (if appropriate) and undertake a feasibility study.

# What is procurement?

→ Procurement is the act of obtaining goods or services under agreed terms. Conducting a robust procurement process is important to ensure that the best quality goods/services are procured at the best price.

It is also important that community organisations procure goods and services transparently.

Where state finances are supporting the delivery of the goods/services, you must follow public procurement guidelines where the finances received are 50% (or more) of the cost of said goods/services.<sup>1</sup> RESS community enabling grants can be up to 80% of eligible costs (up to a maximum cap depending on the project development stage) and therefore, depending on the service procured, the 50% threshold may be breached.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Procurement Guidance for Goods and Services.

# Typical types of services to procure

→ SEAI has established the Enabling Grant Framework to support renewable energy communities and has established a team of Trusted Advisors. The Trusted Advisors are industry experts that can assist and advise you on your renewable energy project journey. This will include providing feasibility studies and advice and guidance on conducting compliant procurement processes.

Your community group may have professionals with the skills and expertise to carry out certain aspects of the project development. However, it is important that you procure a competent professional to create technical documents and drawings to support planning applications and grid applications. The main reason for this being that these documents will need to be relied upon by third parties as part of the project financing exercise. Apparent cost savings at an early stage could result in significant losses at the later stages of development.

The typical services to procure fall into three distinct categories: development services up to the point of finance, construction services (inclusive of goods) and operational services.

Table 4 details the typical services to procure – for further information on these services please refer to the [Solar PV](#), [Onshore wind](#), [Grid Connection Toolkit](#) and [Planning process](#) toolkits.

Table 4: Typical services to procure

Development	Construction	Operation
<p><b>Grid connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grid Consultant – to carry out grid feasibility and/or assist in grid application</li> <li>Land Agreements</li> <li>Solicitors</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Consultant – to manage &amp; compile planning application</li> <li>Ecologist</li> <li>Traffic and Transport Consultant</li> <li>Renewable Energy Project Consultants/Engineers to support design process</li> <li>Noise Consultant (wind only)</li> <li>Telecommunication expert (wind only)</li> <li>Glint and Glare Assessment (solar only)</li> <li>Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment incl. photomontage</li> <li>Archaeologist</li> </ul> <p><b>RESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicitors – to assist with declarations</li> <li>Commercial consultants – to assist with development of financial model to support auction submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewable Energy Engineers/Consultants – to prepare the tender documents and specification for the procurement of a contractor to execute the works</li> <li>PSDP – Project Supervisor Design Process</li> <li>PSCP – Project Supervisor Construction Stage</li> </ul> <p><b>Solar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, an EPC is the form of appointment for the build out of a solar project, whereby the procured contractor carries out the detailed design for the project, procures the goods (panels, inverters &amp; transformers) and builds the project</li> <li>Grid connection contractor – to execute contestable aspects of the grid connection</li> <li>Owner’s Engineer – acts on behalf of the client (the renewable energy project commercial entity) to ensure that the project is executed in accordance with the required specification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>O&amp;M Engineers</li> <li>Asset Managers – to manage asset during the operational phase</li> </ul>

Development	Construction	Operation
<p><b>Surveys</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure/lease met mast equipment</li> <li>• Wind report prepared by competent expert</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrical Balance of Plant Contractor – to carry out all electrical works</li> <li>• Grid Connection Contractor – to execute contestable aspects of the grid connection</li> <li>• Civil Works Balance of Plant – to carry out civil aspects of projects (access roads, drainage, foundations)</li> <li>• Turbine Contract – to supply and install wind turbines</li> </ul>	

Further information on these services can be found in the currently published toolkits.

# Procurement key considerations

→ There are several key aspects that you should consider when developing a procurement process. These include:

- The **specification** for the works/ services to be procured should be well thought out and clearly outlined. When appointing professional consultants to assist with project outline design and planning, the SEAI Trusted Advisors will assist you in developing the specification for services. Once you have a Renewable Energy Project Consultant on board, they can develop the specification and technical details for the construction elements of the project.
- **Key deliverables and performance criteria** should be clearly outlined.
- The **contract** under which the works or services will be executed should be selected prior to tendering. Contracts for the provision of works/services are available from the CWMF website [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/](http://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/) . These are unlikely to be fit for purpose for the procurement of renewable energy project works contractors. The appointed Renewable Energy Project Consultant/Engineers can advise on the appropriate form of contract to use for the works aspects.
- Understand the **budget** for the works or services – please refer to the full suite of SEAI toolkits available to determine the likely budget for your project.
- Consult current public procurement **thresholds** to understand which timelines and advertising requirements will apply to your procurement process. This is relevant if the procured works/services will receive at least 50% grant funding from a state organisation.
- **Award criteria** – set out the criteria by which you will assess the received tenders to determine the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT). These criteria can and should be based on quality and also price. Quality criteria can cover an organisation’s experience and expertise, the experience of personnel assigned to the project, methodology for delivering the project, demonstrating an understanding of what is being asked in the tender documents, and their programme for delivering the project.

Table 5: Sample contract award criteria

<b>Quality</b>	<b>60%</b>
Organisation experience	10
Proposed project team experience	10
Understanding of the requirements	20
Proposed methodology	20
<b>Cost</b>	<b>40%</b>
Lowest cost tender	40
All other tenders	$40 - 100 * (1 - (\text{Lowest Cost} / \text{Cost of Tender}))$

- **Green procurement** – it is important that you integrate aspects of green procurement into the procurement process. Consult the green public procurement guidance document when developing the procurement process [www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/green-public-procurement-guidance.php](http://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/green-public-procurement-guidance.php) .

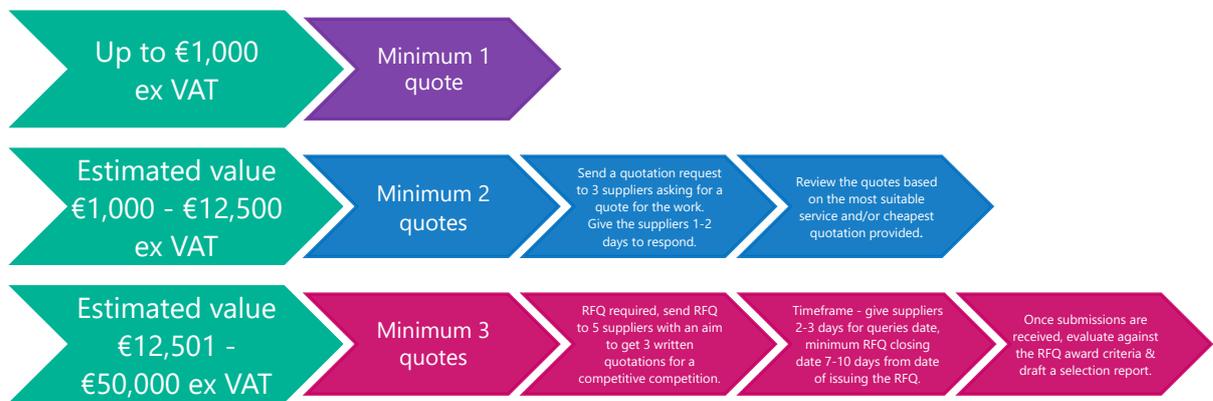
# Typical procurement process

→ The typical process for procuring good and services to support the delivery of a community-led renewable energy project, as outlined in this toolkit, is in line with the current Government guidance on public procurement – Office of Government Procurement’s [Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services](#). Usually, most single action tenders for the provision of goods and services will be below the EU procurement threshold. Therefore, generally the national guidance can be followed. Current EU public procurement thresholds are:

- Works contracts: €5,382,000
- Supplies and Services Contracts: €431,000

Updated thresholds are available here: [ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/legal-rules-and-implementation/thresholds\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/legal-rules-and-implementation/thresholds_en).

Figure 4: Standard procurement steps



Source: Public Procurement Guidance for Goods and Services

Typically, you will provide the following documents/information as part of any tender process, known collectively as the Invitation to Tender (ITT):

- Instructions to Tenderers, specifying:
  - how communications will be managed and clarifications will be issued
  - how the tenderer should submit their tender
  - the minimum requirements for the tender
  - the deadlines for clarification questions and tender submission
  - how the tender will be awarded (award criteria)
  - the programme for the award of the Tender
  - that failure to comply with the requirements of the ITT will result in disqualification.
- Scope of works/services – clearly detail the scope of works/services to be procured.
- Form of Contract to be executed – if known at the time of tender.
- Invitation to Tender letter – which details the documents issued as part of the tender and the source of funding that will finance the project (this can also be included in the ITT document).
- Preliminary Health and Safety plan (typically only required for works).
- Form of Tender (which the tenderer will need to sign as part of their submission).

The SEAI TA will assist your REC in preparing its procurement documents and conducting the process. Once the REC has consultants appointed, these consultants (provided it is part of their service agreement) will assist in further procurements.

A full suite of guidance notes and template documents to support the REC in developing their procurement documents are available for review on the CWMF website [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/](https://www.constructionprocurement.gov.ie/) .

# Reference material and further reading

→ Green Tenders – An Action Plan on Green Public Procurement. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government: [www.gov.ie/en/publication/74075-green-tenders-an-action-plan-on-green-public-procurement/](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/74075-green-tenders-an-action-plan-on-green-public-procurement/) 

US Department of Energy – A guide to community solar: [www.nrel.gov/docs/fy12osti/54570.pdf](http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy12osti/54570.pdf) 

SRMI – A sure path to sustainable solar: [documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/244251575642432241/a-sure-path-to-sustainable-solar-solar-deployment-guidelines](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/244251575642432241/a-sure-path-to-sustainable-solar-solar-deployment-guidelines) 

CARES Community and Renewable Energy Scheme Project Development Toolkit Procurement Module: [localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/cares-toolkit-procurement-module-v5.pdf](http://localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/cares-toolkit-procurement-module-v5.pdf) 

CARES Community and Renewable Energy Scheme Project Development Toolkit Solar PV Module: [localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/cares-toolkit-solar-pv-module-dec-2020.pdf](http://localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/cares-toolkit-solar-pv-module-dec-2020.pdf) 

Community Energy – A practical guide to reclaiming power. Friends of the Earth Europe, REScoop.EU, Energy Cities: [www.rescoop.eu/toolbox/community-energy-a-practical-guide-to-reclaiming-power](http://www.rescoop.eu/toolbox/community-energy-a-practical-guide-to-reclaiming-power) 

SEAI Community Energy Resource Toolkit – Grid Connection: [www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Grid-Connection.pdf](http://www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Grid-Connection.pdf) 

SEAI Community Energy Resource Toolkit – Onshore Wind: [www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Onshore-Wind.pdf](http://www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Onshore-Wind.pdf) 

SEAI Community Energy Resource Toolkit – Planning Process: [www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Planning-Process.pdf](http://www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Planning-Process.pdf) 

SEAI Community Energy Resource Toolkit – Solar PV: [www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Solar-PV.pdf](http://www.seai.ie/publications/Community-Toolkit-Solar-PV.pdf) 

Capital Works Management Framework Guidance Note, Project Management GN 1.1: [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.1-v1.0-28-07-09.pdf](http://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.1-v1.0-28-07-09.pdf) 

Capital Works Management Framework Guidance Note, Procurement and Contract Strategy for Public Works Contracts GN 1.4: [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.4-v1.2-04-09-18.pdf](http://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.4-v1.2-04-09-18.pdf) 

Capital Works Management Framework Guidance Note, Project Definition and Development of the Definitive Project Brief GN 1.2: [constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.2-v1.0-28-7-09.pdf](http://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/GN-1.2-v1.0-28-7-09.pdf) 

EPA – Green Public Procurement, Guidance for the Public Sector: [www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/GPP-Guidance-for-the-Irish-Public-Sector.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/GPP-Guidance-for-the-Irish-Public-Sector.pdf) 

Local Energy Scotland – Energy Systems Toolkit – Developing a project idea module: [localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/developing-a-project-idea-module-2.pdf](http://localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/developing-a-project-idea-module-2.pdf) 

Local Energy Scotland – The project roadmap: [localenergy.scot/resource/the-project-roadmap/](http://localenergy.scot/resource/the-project-roadmap/) 

Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services Version 2. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/> 

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/2001 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast): [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2018.328.01.0082.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2018.328.01.0082.01.ENG) 

Terms and Conditions for the Second Competition under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, RESS 2, October 2021. Government of Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7f0bb-renewable-electricity-support-scheme-2-ress-2/> 

Shaping our electricity future, Executive summary, EirGrid: [www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Shaping-Our-Electricity-Future-Technical-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf](http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Shaping-Our-Electricity-Future-Technical-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf) 

Climate Action Plan 2021, Securing our Future. Government of Ireland: [www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/224574/be2fecb2-2fb7-450e-9f5f-24204c9c9fbf.pdf#page=null](http://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/224574/be2fecb2-2fb7-450e-9f5f-24204c9c9fbf.pdf#page=null) 

DCAE RESS timetable: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8b63a-renewable-electricity-support-scheme-schedule-of-future-auctions/> 

CRU Remuneration of Renewables Self consumers for Exported Electricity: Clean Export Guarantee (December 2021): [www.cru.ie/publications/27028/](http://www.cru.ie/publications/27028/) 

The SEAI Renewable Energy in Ireland Report 2020: <https://www.seai.ie/publications/2020-Renewable-Energy-in-Ireland-Report.pdf> 

CRU Enduring Connection Policy Stage 2 (ECP-2) - Decision: [cruie-live-96ca64acab2247eca8a850a7e54b-5b34f62.divio-media.com/documents/CRU20060-ECP-2-Decision.pdf](http://cruie-live-96ca64acab2247eca8a850a7e54b-5b34f62.divio-media.com/documents/CRU20060-ECP-2-Decision.pdf) 

Wind Energy Ireland/ IONIC Consulting – Life-cycle of an onshore wind farm: <https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/iwea-onshore-wind-farm-report.pdf> 

# Glossary

→	<b>CEG</b>	Clean Export Guarantee
	<b>CPPA</b>	Corporate Power Purchase Agreement
	<b>CRU</b>	Commission for Regulation of Utilities
	<b>CWMF</b>	Capital Works Management Framework
	<b>DECC</b>	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
	<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
	<b>EPC</b>	Engineer Procurement Contract
	<b>ESBN</b>	ESB Networks
	<b>ITT</b>	Invitation to Tender
	<b>KPI</b>	Key performance indicators
	<b>MEAT</b>	Most economically advantageous tender
	<b>O&amp;M</b>	Operation and maintenance
	<b>PEP</b>	Project Execution Plan
	<b>PSCP</b>	Project Supervisor Construction Stage
	<b>PSDP</b>	Project Supervisor Design Process
	<b>PV</b>	Photovoltaics
	<b>REC</b>	Renewable Energy Community
	<b>RESS</b>	Renewable Electricity Support Scheme
	<b>SEAI</b>	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
	<b>SEC</b>	Sustainable Energy Community
	<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
	<b>SSG</b>	Small Scale Generation
	<b>TA</b>	Trusted Advisor
	<b>WBS</b>	Work Breakdown Structure

## Appendix: Sample Risk Register

Risk ID	Category	Description	Likelihood of occurrence (1-5)	Impact of occurrence (1-5)	Risk rating	Mitigation	Post-mitigation likelihood	Post-mitigation impact	Risk rating	Assigned manager	Notes
1	Project	May not be able to secure land lease on desired land.	2	5	10	Continued engagement with landowner & solicitor to secure land.	1	5	5	John O'Sullivan	
2	Programme	May not secure planning within the 2-year Grid Assessment period.	3	4	12	Ensure clear community engagement so it is fully informed about the project. Engage regularly with Planning Authority on project progress – get a local authority champion on board?	2	4	8	Mary Thompson	
3	Community	Concern that the development might impact on a local heritage spot.	1	3	3	Ensure appropriate separation distance from the heritage spot and screen project from view.	1	1	1	Eileen O'Leary	
4	Finance	Might not be able to raise the balance of funding for project planning.	4	5	20	Engage with the community regularly – make them aware at an early stage of the financial contribution that the community will need to meet.	2	5	10	John O'Sullivan	
5	Steering committee	Steering Committee will need to transfer to Board to manage the project through finance, construction and operation. May not be possible to establish such a Board?	4	5	20	Ensure from the outset that all members of the Steering Committee are aware of the progression. Speak to local co-ops/ community Boards of Management that have managed this issue.	1	5	5	Eileen O'Leary	



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