FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT - COMMUNITY BATTERIES FUNDING ROUND 1

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

APRIL 2023





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COMMUNITY BATTERIES FUNDING ROUND 1

The October 2022 Federal Budget provided \$200 million for the Community Batteries for Household Solar Budget Measure (Budget Measure) to deploy 400 community batteries across Australia. Of this, \$171 million was allocated to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to deliver at least 342 batteries.

This Funding Announcement sets out the process under which ARENA seeks proposals to deliver community battery Projects under the Advancing Renewables Program (ARP). This process is referred to as the Community Batteries Funding Round 1 (Round 1).

This Funding Announcement should be read in conjunction with the <u>ARP Guidelines</u>, which apply to Round 1. Definitions contained in the ARP Guidelines also apply to this Funding Announcement, unless otherwise provided. The technical configuration of a community battery in Round 1 is set out in Section 3.

1. ROUND 1 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The Round 1 Objective is to fund Activities that contribute to one or more of the following Outcomes:

- a. improve the economics of community battery projects through the reduction in, or removal of, barriers to large-scale deployment;
- b. build industry capacity to deploy community batteries at scale; and
- c. support the Budget Measure by:
 - > putting downward pressure on household electricity costs;
 - > contributing towards lowering emissions;
 - > providing a net benefit to the electricity network, having regard to matters such as network constraints; and
 - > enabling storage of distributed solar energy for later use or sharing and supporting further distributed solar installations.

2. FUNDING ALLOCATION

ARENA has allocated \$120 million (Total Funding Allocation) for Round 1, which will consist of two funding streams (Streams): Stream A and Stream B. ARENA expects to allocate \$60 million to each stream.

ARENA reserves the right to allocate an amount of funding that is lower than the Total Funding Allocation or to reallocate funding between the two Streams if there is an insufficient number of high merit Proposals received under one or both Streams. ARENA may, at its discretion, allocate an amount of funding greater than the Total Funding Allocation if it considers this to represent value for money.

ARENA intends to allocate remaining funding to a second Round to accommodate projects that have longer development times and will incorporate learnings from Round 1.

3. SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

Round 1 is open to Proposals that align with the Objective of Round 1 described in section 1. ARENA expects:

- a. Proposals will involve the deployment of community batteries, which are chemical batteries of at least TRL 9, in the range of 50 kW to 5000 kW nameplate capacity, connected in the Distribution Network. Batteries that are co-located or share a connection point will be considered a single community battery, with a total size equal to the aggregate nameplate capacities. Batteries at individual households will not be eligible for Grant Funding.
- b. The amount of Grant Funding requested will range from \$3 million to \$20 million and ARENA's funding will not exceed 100% of Battery Capex Cost¹.
- c. Proposals will deploy at least five (5) batteries.
- d. Proposals will align with one of the Streams outlined in section 4.
- e. Proposals that receive funding under the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's Community Batteries for Household Solar Program Delivery of Election Commitments grant opportunity will not receive funding under Round 1.
- f. Proposals may be co-located with other generators or loads; however, Grant Funding would only be provided for the community battery component.

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants under Round 1 are required to meet all Eligibility Criteria as outlined in the ARP Guidelines as well as the following additional criteria:

TABLE A - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	STREAM A	STREAM B
Eligible Applicant	An Approved DNSP as set out in Appendix A. Applicants that are not listed in Appendix A are not eligible.	Any applicant eligible under the Advancing Renewables Program, excluding the DNSPs listed in Appendix A.
Eligible Activity	Batteries connected in a front of the meter (FTM) configuration, that meet the requirements of the Scope of Activity.	Batteries connected in a front of the meter (FTM) or behind the meter (BTM) configuration, that meet the requirements of the Scope of Activity.

¹ ARENA will assess Proposals for overall value for money, as set out in section 3.1 of the ARP Guidelines.

5. CLARIFICATION OF MERIT CRITERIA

The Merit Criteria for Round 1 includes all criteria in clause 3 of the ARP Guidelines, with additional considerations relevant to Round 1, as set out in the table below. Round 1 will not be a Competitive Process as defined in section 4.27-4.32 of the ARP Guidelines. Proposals will be assessed against the Merit Criteria on an individual basis.

TABLE B - MERIT CRITERIA

ARP MERIT CRITERIA **MERIT CRITERIA GUIDANCE** A - Contributes to This criterion assesses how well the project contributes to the Program Outcomes and the the Funding Round Objective of this Funding Announcement. objectives ARENA will assess this criterion in accordance with the ARP Guidelines. In addition, the following matters specific to Round 1 will be considered as part of this criterion: the alignment of the Activity to Round 1 Objective. Proposals that have a greater ability to contribute to the Round 1 Objective will be considered higher merit under Merit proposals that feature large volumes of batteries and faster deployment timelines will be considered higher merit under Merit Criterion A; proposals submitted under Stream A that include provisions for public dissemination of network opportunity information that assists non-DNSP led development of community batteries will be considered higher merit under Merit Criterion A. B - Applicant capability This criterion assesses the capability and capacity of the Applicant and Activity Partners and capacity to deliver the project. ARENA will assess this criterion in accordance with the ARP Guidelines. C - Activity design, This criterion assesses: methodology, risk and > how well designed and planned the project is, including whether it has clearly defined compliance objectives and methodology, as well as the approach to identifying, managing and reporting the personnel, delivery, technical and financial risks of the project; > project risk in terms of the likely success of the project, the achievement of intended outcomes that align with the Program Outcomes, investment focus areas in the Investment Plan and any relevant Funding Announcements: the risk of negotiating and executing a Funding Arrangement which is acceptable to ARENA. The extent of proposed departures from ARENA standard funding agreement terms will be considered at the Full Application stage; > compliance with any other requirements outlined in Part 5 of the ARP Guidelines. ARENA will assess this criterion in accordance with the ARP Guidelines. In addition, the following additional matters will be considered as part of this criterion: > the quality of the Community Consultation information; > the quality of the Risk Management information with particular consideration of risks associated with this form of public infrastructure, such as noise, vandalism, fire, damage,

Note that the EOI stage, community consultation and risk management information should be included in the Project Plan. At Full Application stage, a separate Community

Consultation Plan and Risk Management Plan are required.

ARP MERIT CRITERIA	MERIT CRITERIA GUIDANCE
D - Financial viability and co-funding commitment	This criterion assesses financial capacity to deliver the project; whether the project is commercially viable without ARENA funding; whether the amount of ARENA funding sought (and the form in which it is to be provided) and the total cost of the project is appropriate. In doing so it assesses:
	 whether you and any Activity Partners have the financial capacity and appropriate levels of co-funding commitment to deliver the project successfully;
	the extent to which you or other Activity Partners are providing funding or in-kind support for the project;
	> relevant industry benchmarks for the economics of a particular project;
	> whether the project could likely proceed in the absence of ARENA funding.
	ARENA will assess this criterion in accordance with the ARP Guidelines, and the following additional considerations specific to Round 1:
	> the amount of Grant Funding requested as a proportion of the Total Project Cost;
	> the amount of Grant Funding requested per kW and/or kWh of installed battery capacity;
	 supporting information for revenue and cost assumptions, such as source of modelling data and evidence of supplier pricing;
	> amount of contingency and plan for managing cost overruns;
	> evidence of a clear financing strategy for all capital required for the project.
E - Knowledge sharing	This criterion assesses:
	the value of the knowledge generated by the project in contributing to the Program Outcomes;
	> how well that knowledge is targeted to specific audiences; and
	> how you will capture, store and disseminate the data, information and lessons learned from the project.
	ARENA will assess this criterion in accordance with the ARP Guidelines. Refer to section 9 for further details on ARENA's approach to knowledge sharing.

Proposals must include the following mandatory attachments:

EOI STAGE

At the EOI stage, Applicants must provide the following:

- > Project Plan: In addition to the requirements specified in Table B Merit Criteria, the Project Plan (of maximum 20 pages) document should include (at a minimum):
 - a. Summary of the project.
 - b. List of key Activity Partners and their proposed roles and responsibilities.
 - c. Status of any development, planning and environmental approvals, permits and/or licenses required for the project.
 - d. Approach to grid connection.
 - e. Approach to land access for the proposed project location(s).
 - f. Timeline for the project, including key milestones.
 - g. Approach to managing potential cost overruns, and amount of contingency allowed.
 - h. Evidence to support budget estimates.
 - i. An outline of key risks and approach to management and mitigation.
 - j. Approach to community consultation.
 - k. Status of Ring-fencing waiver (for applications under Stream A, where required).
- > Financial Model: A dynamic financial model in excel format or similar that includes (at a minimum):
 - a. expected revenues over the life of the project, including the source of these revenue projections.
 - b. expected costs over the life of the project, with a clear breakdown of cost categories.
 - c. All assumptions to be clearly labelled and dynamic.
 - d. Ability to sensitise the model to view the project returns with and without Grant Funding.
- > List of Batteries: A list of batteries using the template provided on the Round 1 website.

FULL APPLICATION STAGE

At the Full Application stage, Applicants must provide the following:

- > Project Plan: In addition to the requirements specified in Table B Merit Criteria, the Project Plan document should include (at a minimum):
 - a. Summary of the project.
 - b. List of key Activity Partners, their proposed roles and responsibilities and details of their relevant experience of successfully delivering battery or related energy projects.
 - c. Status of any development, planning and environmental approvals, permits and /or licenses required for the project and anticipated pathway and timing to finalisation.
 - d. Status of grid connection application(s).
 - e. Status of land access for the proposed project location(s).
 - f. Timeline for the project, including key milestones.
 - g. Approach to managing potential cost overruns, and amount of contingency allowed.
 - h. An outline of key risks and approach to management and mitigation.
 - i. An outline of the sources of funds required for the lifetime of the project.
 - j. Evidence to support budget estimates.
 - k. Details on the proposed operations and maintenance regime for the lifetime of the asset.
 - I. Demonstration that the project would not be able to proceed without the requested Grant Funding.
 - m. Evidence of appropriate insurance for the project activities.
 - n. Status of Ring-fencing waiver (for applications under Stream A, where required).
 - o. An appendix noting responses to any EOI stage feedback.
- > Financial Model: A dynamic financial model in excel format or similar that includes (at a minimum):
 - a. expected revenues over the life of the project, including the source of these revenue projections
 - b. expected costs over the life of the project, with clear breakdown of cost categories.
 - c. All assumptions to be clearly labelled and dynamic.
 - d. Ability to sensitise the model to view the project returns with and without Grant Funding
- > Risk Management Plan: A detailed risk management plan (including work, health and safety issues) including management and mitigation strategies. The plan must address risks specific to battery storage and public infrastructure, such as fire, damage, noise, vandalism, cybersecurity, and natural disasters.
- > Community Consultation Plan: A Community Consultation Plan for the project as set out in item 3.2 of Schedule 1 of the Funding Agreement.
- > Knowledge Sharing Compliance: A statement of acceptance of the requirements of the Knowledge Sharing Plan as set out in item 4 of Schedule 1 of the Funding Agreement.
- > Funding Agreement Compliance: A statement setting out any proposed departures from the standard terms and conditions contained in the Funding Agreement template.
- > List of Batteries: A list of batteries using the template provided on the Round 1 website.
- > Any letters of support of commitment from Activity Partners.

6. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The application and assessment process will be as set out in the ARP Guidelines, and this Funding Announcement.

a. Evaluation of Proposals

ARENA will assess Proposals against the ARP Merit Criteria and the additional criteria set out in this Funding Announcement.

As set out in Section 6.7 of the ARP Guidelines, ARENA may (in its absolute discretion) reject, refuse to consider, or cease evaluating an EOI or Full Application at any time if ARENA determines (in its absolute discretion) that the EOI or Full Application is unlikely to be successful. An application that does not meet the requirements as set out in the Scope of Activity (Section 3) is unlikely to be successful.

ARENA reserves the right to apply a portfolio approach when offering funding under Round 1 (as set out under ARP Guidelines clauses 4.23 and 4.24).

b. EOI stage

Applicants that intend to submit an EOI must submit an application through <u>ARENANet</u> no later than the EOI Due Date. Assessment of proposals at EOI stage will not commence until after the EOI Due Date. ARENA aims to issue invitations to submit a Full Application within 8 weeks of the EOI Due Date. Unsuccessful Applicants will also be notified within this timeframe.

EOI Proposals must clearly address each of the Merit Criteria. Only Proposals assessed as being of high merit against the Merit Criteria may be invited to submit a Full Application.

ARENA does not intend to collaborate with Applicants at the EOI stage but will maintain a public FAQ document to provide guidance to Applicants. Queries can be emailed to batteryround@arena.gov.au and the FAQ document may be updated by ARENA throughout the process.

ARENA may publish the list of Applicants that have been invited to submit a Full Application, as well as a brief project description.

c. Full Application stage

A Full Application will only be accepted from Applicants invited by ARENA to submit a Full Application following the assessment of EOIs. Full Applications must be submitted through <u>ARENANet</u> by no later than the Full Application Due Date.

ARENA may issue an Updated Funding Announcement at the commencement of the Full Application stage, which will be published on the Round 1 website.

As Round 1 is not a Competitive Process as defined in the ARP Guidelines, ARENA may collaborate with Applicants and work up applications at the Full Application stage at its discretion, as set out in sections 4.20 - 4.22 of the ARP Guidelines.

Only Full Applications that are assessed as being of high merit against the Merit Criteria will be considered for funding.

d. Changes between EOI and Full Application Stages

To ensure accurate Proposals at both the EOI and Full Application stages, and to ensure fairness in the assessment, no material changes to the Proposal will be permitted between the EOI and Full Application stages.

ARENA reserves the right to decline to assess Full Application Proposals where a material change is observed from the EOI stage. ARENA will determine, at its discretion, whether any such change is material in nature.

A material change may include:

- > a decrease in the number of batteries to be installed of more than 25%
- > a decrease in the aggregate capacity (MW) of the project of more than 25%; or
- > an increase in the size of the grant request greater than 25% of the grant request at the EOI stage.

Similarly, no material change to the Proposal is expected between the Full Application and execution of a Funding Agreement. ARENA will determine, at its discretion, whether any such change is material in nature. If a material change occurs, ARENA reserves the right to decline to proceed to an executed funding agreement.

e. Publication of information

At the conclusion of the EOI and Full Application stages of Round 1, ARENA may publish aggregated and non-identifiable data² from the Proposals received to provide information on the range of Proposals received. This may include information on any or all of the following:

- > Proposed Activity sizes (kW, kWh).
- > Total Activity cost (actual and normalised per kW, kWh).
- > Grant Funding amount (actual and normalised per kW, kWh).
- > Grant Funding as a percentage of total Activity cost.
- > Total Activity cost and/or Grant Funding by state.
- > Other information relevant to supporting the community battery market.

7. OFFER TO NEGOTIATE

ARENA will issue a non-binding letter of offer to negotiate a Funding Agreement (Offer to Negotiate) to Applicants that are successful at the Full Application stage of Round 1. The Offer to Negotiate will outline the terms under which ARENA is prepared to enter into negotiations for a Funding Agreement for the Proposal and will outline:

- a. the amount of Grant Funding that is being offered;
- b. the development milestones that the Applicant is required to meet;
- c. the terms under which ARENA may withdraw the offer of funding; and
- d. any other relevant information, including additional conditions of funding.

Consistent with the ARP Guidelines, ARENA retains the right to offer an Applicant an amount of funding that is less than the amount of funding requested in the Full Application.

ARENA, at its discretion, may increase the amount of Grant Funding if it is considered to represent value for money and in line with Round 1 Objectives.

8. FUNDING AGREEMENT

The Funding Agreement provides the legal framework for the obligations of each party and terms of payment for each successful Full Application under Round 1.

The <u>Funding Agreement template</u> is provided on the <u>Round 1 Website</u>. ARENA may issue a revised Funding Agreement template at the commencement of the Full Application stage. At the Full Application stage, compliance with the Funding Agreement will form part of ARENA's assessment of project risk under ARP Merit Criterion C.

² Where relevant, ARENA expects to present data and information on the basis that it has been received.

9. KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLAN

ARENA's standard Knowledge Sharing Plan template is provided in schedule 1 of the <u>Funding Agreement</u> template. ARENA may issue a revised Knowledge Sharing Plan template at the commencement of the Full Application stage. At the Full Application stage, compliance with the Knowledge Sharing Plan will form part of ARENA's assessment under ARP Merit Criterion E.

Applicants are required to provide a response to the Knowledge Sharing Plan (in conjunction with the Funding Agreement) with their Full Application. Applicants are encouraged to include any knowledge sharing outputs that it considers to be valuable to the market.

10. TIMETABLE

ARENA reserves the right to not accept an EOI or a Full Application submitted after the relevant Due Dates specified below (or as amended).

The below dates represent the current timetable for Round 1. ARENA retains the right to amend proposed timelines and stages or alter any element of Round 1 at its discretion. If ARENA, at its discretion deems it beneficial to achieving the objectives of Round 1, ARENA may extend or change the timetable for Round 1. Any such changes will be published on ARENA's website.

The indicative timetable for Round 1 is presented in the table below.

EOI STAGE	OI STAGE		
EOI Open Date	4 April 2023		
EOI Due Date	30 June 2023 by 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)		
EOI outcomes	ARENA aims to issue invitations to submit a Full Application within 8 weeks of the EOI Due Date. Unsuccessful Applicants will also be notified within this timeframe.		
FULL APPLICATION STAGE			
Full Application Due Date	Full Applications may be submitted at any time once ARENA's feedback at the EOI stage has been addressed, and no later 29 March 2024, 5PM Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT).		
	Unless otherwise notified, ARENA will assess Applications on a monthly basis as they are received.		
Offer to Negotiate or communication of outcome of the Full Application stage	ARENA aims to assess Applications and issue outcome letters from the Full Application as they are received until available Grant Funding has been allocated.		

11. GLOSSARY

\$	All references to dollars or \$ are to Australian Dollars.
Activity	has the same meaning as in the ARP Guidelines.
Activity Partners	has the same meaning as in the ARP Guidelines.
AEDT	Australian Eastern Daylight Time
AEST	Australian Eastern Standard Time
Approved DNSPs	The Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) listed in Appendix A.
ARP	Advancing Renewables Program
Battery Capex Cost	The cost of acquiring and installing the batteries, inverters and ancillary equipment, including installation costs, but excluding development costs and other 'soft' costs. This may include:
	purchase of community battery equipment including battery energy storage systems and essential components
	installation and connection of community battery including earthworks, construction and installation of essential ancillary structures and services by licensed tradespeople
	purchase and/or development of information technology systems essential for the operation of the community battery
	measures to address public safety, such as mitigations for fire, noise, or damage.
Behind the Meter (BTM)	Connected behind a customer meter, and generally located on the premises of the customer. This configuration would typically connect into the existing customer switchboard.
	The following examples of settings could be considered suitable for BTM community batteries:
	Retirement villages / housing developments / social housing
	Council buildings (depots, aquatic centres)
	Hospitals and schools Community infrastructure (sports facilities, community halls, bus depots)
	Regional shopping centres
Commissioning Date	The date at which all testing, permits, approvals and other requirements to energise and operate the battery have been met.
Distribution Network	Per the National Electricity Rules, a distribution network is a network which is not a transmission network. A transmission network is a network within any participating jurisdiction operating at nominal voltages of 220kV and above plus:
	 a) any part of a network operating at nominal voltages between 66 kV and 220 kV that operates in parallel to and provides support to the higher voltage transmission network;
	 any part of a network operating at nominal voltages between 66kV and 220 kV that is not referred to in paragraph (a) but is deemed by the AER to be part of the transmission network.
Eligibility Criteria	The criteria set out in Part 3 of the ARP Guidelines and clarified in this Funding Announcement.
EOI Open Date	The date when ARENA will begin accepting EOI submissions for Round 1.
EOI Due Date	The date when ARENA will cease accepting EOI submissions for Round 1.
Front of the Meter (FTM)	Connected directly to the Distribution Network. This configuration is expected to require a new main switchboard and metering enclosure connected to distribution infrastructure.
	Examples of FTM configurations may include batteries connected to distribution substations (such as pole-top or kiosk transformers), or zone substations.
Full Application Due Date	The date when ARENA will cease accepting Full Application submissions for Round 1.
Funding Agreement	The agreement between a Recipient and ARENA for funding under the ARP. A template will be available on the ARENA website.
Grant Funding	Grant funding to be provided by ARENA under this Funding Announcement
Knowledge Sharing Plan	Template plan setting out the minimum knowledge sharing deliverables expected to be provided by the Applicant.

Merit Criteria	The assessment criteria set out in Part 4 of the ARP Guidelines and additional considerations set out in this Funding Announcement.
Offer to Negotiate	ARENA will issue a non-binding offer to negotiate a Funding Agreement to those Applicants that are successful at the Full Application stage of Round 1.
Project	involves deployment of community batteries and has the potential to contribute to the Program Outcomes.
Proposal	Has the same meaning as in the ARP Guidelines
Round 1	The process that will be used by ARENA under the ARP to fund community battery projects as set out in this Funding Announcement.
Total Funding Allocation	The total amount of Grant Funding allocated to Round 1.
Total Project Cost	All costs incurred to construct and finance the project including costs incurred during the development stage.
Updated Funding Announcement	Updated version of this document to be published at the commencement of the Full Application stage to provide additional guidance on Round 1.

APPENDIX A APPROVED DNSPS UNDER STREAM A

For proposals submitted under Stream A of the funding round, applicants must be one of the following Distribution Network Service Providers:

- > Ausgrid
- > Ausnet
- CitiPower
- > Endeavour Energy
- > Energex
- > Ergon Energy
- > Essential Energy
- > Evoenergy
- > Horizon Power
- > Jemena
- > Power and Water Corporation
- > Powercor Australia Ltd
- > SA Power Networks
- > TasNetworks
- > United Energy
- > Western Power

For the avoidance of doubt, where a DNSP identified above is structured as a partnership or a trust, the entity contracting with ARENA must meet the requirements of Eligibility Criterion A as set out in the ARP Guidelines.

Further information is available at arena.gov.au

Australian Renewable Energy Agency

To explore potential for funding visit: arena.gov.au/funding

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