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New funding for renewable energy in First Nations communities

On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency has today opened the Regional Microgrids Program, with \$125 million in funding allocated to develop and deploy microgrid technologies across regional and remote communities.

The new Program will allocate \$75 million for microgrid projects in First Nations communities.

Electricity provision in remote First Nations communities is often heavily reliant on diesel which is unreliable, expensive and emissions intensive.

The First Nations Community Microgrids Stream aims to deliver cleaner, cheaper and more reliable energy and empower First Nations communities to participate in their electricity supply arrangements and the development of energy infrastructure.

The funding follows amendments to the National Agreement for Closing the Gap to include new standards for the provision of essential services.

Applications will be assessed in two stages, with initial Expressions of Interest followed by Full Applications. The Program will be delivered on an ongoing basis and ARENA will be able to collaborate with applicants and provide feedback on applications.

Microgrid projects under the First Nations Community Microgrids Stream will be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, First Nations renewable energy experts and state and territory governments across Australia.

Program guidelines have been developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and other First Nations group representatives.

Both Streams of the program will aim to resolve remaining barriers to final investment and full deployment of microgrid solutions.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said the funding will help First Nations communities access renewable energy and build on ARENA's existing and ongoing work in renewable energy microgrids.

"It's vital we make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote communities are able to participate in the electricity transition and share in the benefits of Australia's renewable future," Mr Miller said.

Remote communities relying on fossil fuels like diesel have unique challenges in transitioning to renewables and this new funding will help overcome barriers to broader deployment of microgrid solutions.

ARENA's strong track record in supporting the deployment of complex and emerging renewable energy projects means we are well placed to work with developers and First Nations communities to bring the energy transition to remote Australia."

The Program also incorporates ARENA's former \$50 million Regional Australia Microgrid Pilots Program (RAMPP), bringing the total of the Regional Microgrids Program funding pool to \$125 million across both streams.

Applications are open now, with the program to run until December 2025 or until funds are exhausted.

For more information about the Regional Microgrids Program, including eligibility and how to apply, please visit <https://arena.gov.au/funding/RMP/>

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For more information
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