



Community Benefits Guideline for Large-scale Renewable Energy Projects in the South West Interconnected System: Community Benefits Plans Pilot

Overview

Western Australia (WA) is undergoing an energy transition to meet growing demand for affordable, reliable and low-emissions electricity. This modernisation is essential to supporting our local communities, businesses, and industries. The most effective way to meet growing demand is through a combination of wind and solar, supported by energy storage and flexible gas generation. Delivering this transition will require new large-scale renewable energy projects, spread right across the State.

To help ensure these projects deliver meaningful, place-based benefits and maintain community trust, the State Government is driving the initial development of Community Benefits Plans (Plans) through a Community Benefits Plan Pilot (the Pilot).

Purpose

The Pilot aims to:

- Develop effective Plans that align funding with locally identified priorities and deliver measurable and positive social, cultural and economic outcomes, while also:
 - Demonstrating the effectiveness of the Community Benefits Plan model outlined in the *Community Benefits Guideline for Large-scale Renewable Energy Projects in the South West Interconnected System* by developing and delivering the model in priority impacted communities.
 - Generate insights and practical templates (such as plan structures, engagement protocols, governance charters and reporting tools) to enable the consistent, effective, and scalable rollout of Plans across WA.
 - Provide targeted support to impacted communities through independent facilitation, culturally safe engagement and capacity building to participate effectively and confidently in decision-making.
 - Strengthen partnerships between communities, industry and government to support positive outcomes.

Scope

The Pilot will be delivered at a sub-regional level, combining multiple Local Government Authorities (LGAs) within each pilot region. The Pilot will provide a practical, community-centred model for the coordinated and transparent delivery of benefits in locations most affected by renewable energy developments.

Prioritisation and Facilitation

The Pilot will focus on two areas of investigation on the South West Interconnected System (SWIS): the Central Coast area including the Shires of Dandaragan and Victoria Plains, and the Southern Wheatbelt area including the Shires of Narrogin and West Arthur. Areas of investigation were selected based on factors including project progress, size, scale and proximity, ensuring a representative mix of development conditions. This approach provides an opportunity to test a range of scenarios and generate insights that will inform future guidance for communities across the SWIS.

Delivery Approach

The Pilot will apply a collaborative, step-by-step approach:

1. Partnership and Scoping

Identify pilot sub-regions and establish clear governance, roles and engagement protocols.

2. Collaboration Readiness

Assess local priorities, capacity and existing plans; confirm participation commitments and delivery principles.

3. Community Workshops

Convene developers, Traditional Owners, local Aboriginal organisations, LGAs, representatives from relevant union bodies and community leaders to shape priorities, actions and governance.

4. Community Benefits Plans and Advisory Groups

Develop strategic, place-based Plans that align contributions from renewable projects to local priorities. The Pilot will also establish a Community Benefits Advisory Group in each sub-region to guide implementation, ensure accountability and maintain transparent communication.

5. Implementation and Evaluation

Commence actions, track delivery against agreed measures, and report outcomes publicly.

6. Knowledge Sharing

Document lessons learned and produce reusable templates and guidance documents to inform future rollout in additional locations.

Community Benefits Plans

Plans are strategic documents that:

- Direct funding to locally identified priorities.
- Provide a transparent framework for benefit expenditure and accountability.
- Are guided by a Community Benefits Advisory Group comprising of representatives from LGAs, developers, community groups, residents, Traditional Owners, local Aboriginal organisations and relevant unions bodies.
- Are designed and delivered to suit WA's unique regional context, including:
 - Diverse sub-regional geographies and economies.
 - Strong partnerships with Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal organisations.
 - Alignment with local and regional development strategies.
 - Practical mechanisms to reduce consultation fatigue and improve coordination among multiple proponents.

Governance

Independent facilitation: The Pilots will be led by an independent facilitator, engaged by the State Government to ensure neutrality, transparency and community confidence.

The facilitator will convene stakeholders, guide processes, and support consistent, culturally safe engagement across each sub-region.

Community Benefits Advisory Group: Members of the Community Benefits Advisory Groups will be local leaders that participated in the workshops and should be representative of the whole community. The Community Benefits Advisory Group will act as the liaisons between the community and the Regional Development Commissions and will assist with executing the projects based on the place-based Community Benefits Plans.

Evaluation, Learnings and Knowledge Sharing

The Pilots will include an evaluation process to measure outcomes and ensure transparency. Success will be assessed using indicators such as levels of trust,

community participation, project delivery, and the extent of benefits achieved. Throughout the Pilot, methods, tools and templates will be documented to create practical resources that can be replicated in other locations. These learnings will form the foundation for a WA-specific approach, enabling consistent and scalable rollout of Community Benefits Plans across the State. Continuous improvement will be a core principle, with community feedback and lessons learned incorporated into future guidance to ensure the process remains responsive, inclusive and effective.