



The Energy  
Charter

# Regional Energy Collaboration Framework

Our toolkit for co-designing  
collaboration between  
energy organisations to  
deliver shared benefits  
for regional Australia

[theenergycharter.com.au](http://theenergycharter.com.au)

# #BetterTogether

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**We are The Energy Charter: a one-of-a-kind, CEO-led coalition of energy organisations united by a shared passion and purpose: delivering for customers and empowering communities in the energy transition.**

Our vision is that together, we can create a better energy future for all Australians.

We empower one another across the energy ecosystem to deliver better energy outcomes for customers and communities. For us, the opportunity is to keep humans at the centre of the design and delivery of energy solutions, to navigate the changing needs of customers and communities as we transform to a cleaner energy future.

There is no other collaboration like us and the work we do together has never been more important than it is today.

We are #BetterTogether.

**For further information on the Regional Energy Collaboration Framework, please contact [director@theenergycharter.com.au](mailto:director@theenergycharter.com.au).**

## Acknowledgement

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We proudly acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the Land upon which we live and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We also acknowledge the significance of Country for First Nations peoples and recognise that energy infrastructure impacts First Nations peoples and their lands, waters and skies.

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# About this Regional Energy Collaboration Framework

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## Purpose

This Regional Energy Collaboration Framework is the result of an Energy Charter #BetterTogether collaboration. It was co-developed in May-June 2025 by a group community representatives and energy businesses based on the important pioneering work in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Collaboration in 2024-2025.

## Who was involved?

An essential part of developing this Regional Energy Collaboration Framework has been reviewing and reflecting on the Wimmera Southern Mallee Collaboration which included collaboration across:

- Wimmera Southern Mallee Development
- Industry Collaborators: AusNet Services, Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), Transmission Company Victoria (TCV), planning authority VicGrid, renewable energy developers: BayWa r.e., Cubico Sustainable Investments, RES Group, RWE Renewables Australia, Squadron Energy and WestWind Energy.
- Co-design process supporters: Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action (DEECA), Nexa Advisory, Nine Creeks Consulting, RE-Alliance and Regional Development Victoria.

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**Thank you to our collaborators in co-developing the Regional Energy Collaboration Framework including Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, ACERESZ, ACEN Renewables, Ark Energy, AusNet Services, The Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Australian National University, EnergyCo, Essential Energy, Energy Estate, Kate Hook, Nine Creeks Consulting, Powerlink Queensland, RDA Orana, The Next Economy and Uralla Shire Council.**

## The vision

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**When energy organisations work together, they can collectively deliver benefits for regional communities to realise the community's shared vision. We're seeing this happen in the Wimmera Southern Mallee as a pioneering collaboration.**

With an estimated \$1.9 billion in benefits from the transition to renewable energy flowing to regional communities by 2050 (Billions in the Bush Report, 2024), the Regional Energy Collaboration Framework (the Framework) is a pathway for energy organisations to collaborate, partnering with each other to meet the expectations of regional communities to deliver co-designed and meaningful shared benefits.

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**This isn't just another guideline or consultation process. This is an opportunity for businesses to work together and deliver more effective, long-term benefits through a unified partnership with the community.**





# What is the Regional Energy Collaboration Framework?

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The Framework is a practical pathway, developed and facilitated by The Energy Charter, to help energy organisations (including those developing wind, solar, battery, pumped hydro, distribution and transmission projects) to work together more effectively during Australia's ongoing shift to clean energy. The collaboration aims to build trust in the industry by providing better outcomes to impacted communities and reducing negative experiences such as consultation fatigue, by streamlining discussions and finding efficiencies.

Through a series of facilitated, tailored and place-based collaboration workshops, delivered by the Energy Charter, the Framework enables energy organisations to:

- **Collectively work with regional leaders**, such as RDAs, local councils or informal local leaders to better understand the region and identify community co-design representatives
- **Co-design a shared vision for their collaboration**
- **Agree priorities for regional co-ordination**, management of negative impacts and community benefits after working with impacted communities to ensure alignment with community goals and principles
- **Tailor an approach for ensuring expected outcomes are delivered** with transparent commitments and accountability

- These workshops create the foundation for a co-developed, place-based **Regional Energy Collaboration Agreement** outlining agreed values, commitments, collective action, investment priorities, roles and responsibilities, governance for ongoing energy industry collaboration and transparent accountability. The Agreement would be between a community (whether a town, locality or region, as defined by the community) and the developers in their vicinity who have agreed to collaborate under the Framework and partner with the community to achieve their vision.

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**The Framework isn't just about having meetings or signing pieces of paper—it's about creating a structured and collaborative ongoing process for energy organisations to collectively understand local needs and priorities and agree to collective commitments and outcomes through a signed Agreement.**

## Why this, why now?

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In the necessary transition to renewable energy, Australia is embarking on projects the scale of which have not been seen in most people's lifetimes and a growing number of landholders are being approached to host renewable energy infrastructure on their land.

These renewable energy developments, as well as the maintenance of existing infrastructure, can impact the operations, lives and livelihoods of landholders, neighbours, Traditional Owners and First Nations communities, Local Governments and their communities.

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**As an industry, all have a responsibility to recognise and minimise these impacts and to ensure that the projects bring shared value outcomes for everyone, in particular for communities experiencing the greatest impacts. Although one developer might feel confident that their approach to a community has been well-received, the data shows that the general public views and judges the renewable energy industry as a whole.**





# What we're hearing

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Energy organisations are each separately engaging with the same community – leading to consultation fatigue, lack of cohesion and missed opportunity for collective, long term benefits. For example, Council staff describe having eight identical conversations about water supply with 8 different developers, each unaware of the scale of the cumulative ask for water supply.

Community organisations consulted separately might miss the opportunity to negotiate for resources that they could more efficiently share between them, ensuring that benefits go further and are used smarter.

Regional communities are calling for support and a framework to engage with energy organisations as a “collective” with a genuine seat at the negotiating table

The energy industry needs a framework and facilitation to collaborate effectively to deliver better outcomes – for everyone.

As Chris Sounness, CEO of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development says:

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**Let's be honest — the renewable rollout is wearing people down....**

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Communities are burnt out. Companies are frustrated. Engagement feels like an endless loop: consultations, submissions, promises... and very little clarity about what sticks or who decides.

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**The Regional Energy Collaboration Framework isn't about doing more of that.**

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**It's about replacing fragmented engagement with something structured. Something that's predictable, transparent and—importantly—mutually governed. This isn't just a new way of talking to each other.**

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**At the moment, both companies and communities feel like they're being carved up and served on someone else's platter. This framework is about getting both off the menu — and at the table, where the decisions are made and the benefits are shared.**

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**It's not a consultation process.**

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**It's a collaboration framework.**

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**We're not asking you to endorse a finished product. We're asking you to shape a shared process. Because if we want trust to return to this space—on all sides—we have to build something that people believe in. Something that gives everyone the ability to say: “this is fair and it's ours.**

## What's in it for you?

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When you collaborate through the Framework you'll be co-designing a place-based agreement that:

1. Clearly reflects **community needs and priorities** agreed to be energy organisations working in the region, drawing on work done by the community itself and bodies such as Regional Development Australia (RDAs)
2. Provides an agreed **pathway for respectful, meaningful and collective engagement** around energy projects in the region, avoiding over-consultation
3. Creates a platform for **collective commitments** across energy organisations to deliver real, tangible benefits for the community
4. **Manages cumulative community** impacts through agreed better practice commitments
5. Highlights better outcomes through **transparent tracking, impact measurements and regular review** of collective commitments from energy organisations
6. **Builds trust** between energy organisations and the community enabling smoother project delivery on the ground.

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**We believe that these features of the agreement can lead to happier communities around your project, increased community trust in the industry broadly and greater levels of support for your project.**

## Risk reduction

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Working together through the Framework addresses risk – both for energy organisations in the region and for the community itself. When there is fractured or overly intensive and disjointed consultation taking place in a region, community resistance grows and solidifies.

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**When this happens, the community can also miss out on some of the genuine opportunities and benefits of being a partner in the energy transformation.**



## Structured pathway to achieve transition goals

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The Framework provides energy businesses with a structured pathway to achieve the fundamental principles of whole-of-government economic development and equitable benefit sharing that are essential for sustainable energy transition. By facilitating collaboration between energy businesses and regional communities, the Framework enables companies to work #bettertogether to ensure long-term community benefits are delivered, directly supporting the Federal Government's vision of coordinated economic development strategies.

Through its emphasis on collective action and shared commitments, the Framework helps businesses move beyond traditional project-by-project approaches to embrace holistic regional planning that maximises economic opportunities for local communities, including First Nations enterprises.

Critically, the Framework operationalises equitable benefit-sharing principles by enabling energy businesses to collaborate and align and coordinate investment in projects that deliver tangible and lasting community benefits.



# Improving trust

For energy organisations, it's important to remember that, even if you're engaging in better practice consultation and engagement, if others in the region aren't you could all be tarred with the same brush in the eyes of the community. Working together to lift practices, consolidate and share knowledge makes good commercial sense, as well as reducing the burden on the community.

For governments and regulators, the Framework creates structure and reduces risk in regions undergoing energy development.

Old approach	Framework benefits
Unpredictable community opposition	Structured engagement reduces delays and opposition
Ad hoc commitments that are hard to track	Clear, measurable commitments built into a regional framework
Multiple conflicting engagement processes	One regionally aligned process across multiple projects
Reputational risk from unmet expectations	Transparent tracking builds trust with communities and stakeholders
Short-term approvals focus	Long-term stability and social licence across project life
Engagement seen as sunk cost	Engagement reframed as trust building, risk management and assurance process
Scrambling to fix issues post-approval	Proactive collaborative before approvals de-risks delivery
No clear rules of engagement	Shared expectations from day one with resolution options



## What's in it for the community?

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The benefits for a community impacted by renewable energy developments when projects collaborate for better community outcomes are too numerous to list! Some examples are:

- Reduced general anxiety if change is seen to happen “with us, not to us”
- The knowledge that there is a way to be “heard” by all developers around the community
- Opportunity to create a “good news story” (and reality) for communities that might otherwise struggle for services, local employment and economic diversity
- Ability to provide input on how negative impacts are managed, ensuring local knowledge is valued and where possible, impacts are managed to become benefits to the community (eg. housing solutions)
- The ability to have ongoing dialogue and relationships over the long-term since projects are also long-term.



## Our role

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We have piloted this pioneering Framework in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region (see Case Study below). This has created a clear, replicable process to design benefits, pool resources and share information to ensure a cohesive, transparent dialogue between the energy industry and community leadership, such as RDAs or local government.

We bring a strong signatory base nationally and expertise in facilitating collaboration between energy organisations to ensure that the Framework will be a success in your region too. This Framework can also be taken and used by other community organisations and businesses.

The role of the facilitator includes:

- Assessing the readiness of a region for a Regional Energy Collaboration Framework
- Identifying and bringing together motivated energy organisations working in the region
- Facilitating a series of bespoke collaboration workshops with the aim of creating a place-specific Agreement between energy organisations that includes community participation
- Ongoing support as required, including capacity building within your energy organisation, to turn commitments into action.

We also provide additional services you can tap into for ongoing learning and support:

- Energy organisations will have access to a wealth of shared knowledge, detailed learnings and resources through our online portal 'The Source'
- We have extensive experience bringing together and facilitating lived-experience panels involving regional voices that provide unique insights and opportunity for energy professionals to deepen their understanding. Through our extensive connections with regional Australia, we can facilitate a tailored panel in your region and on specific issues
- Twice a year our National Landholder + Community Engagement Training provides a 3-day immersive event hearing from local voices and learn how energy professionals can deliver better outcomes for communities
- Through our online Communities of Practice (Social Licence and First Nations Better Practice Engagement) you can discover real-life case studies, share insights and build networks.

# Case Study: What's happened in the Wimmera?

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Back in late 2023, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development invited representatives from renewable energy and transmission energy organisations working in the Western Victorian region to come together. The ask was whether these organisations would be willing to work together and with the Wimmera Southern Mallee community to create genuine partnerships that ensures the region benefits directly from the shift to clean energy. The answer was a resounding yes! Check it out here.

During the 12-month co-design process in the Wimmera Southern Mallee we:

- **Supported** existing community leadership + vision
- **Brought together** renewable energy developers + transmission businesses
- **Facilitated** co-design of commitment for industry collaboration on initiatives enabling collective benefit sharing + better community outcomes.

Together, community leaders and energy collaborators co-developed an agreement providing the structure and foundational commitments needed to enable energy organisations to collaborate - and work with the Wimmera Southern Mallee communities - to ensure long-term community benefits are delivered.

As a result, the Collaboration Agreement has delivered:

- ✓ Commitment to collective action initiatives, with alignment of benefits e.g. Youth, Fire Risk, Mental health and RD&E
- ✓ Commitment to better practice operations and key areas of community concern
- ✓ Established a Regional Partners Forum for ongoing listening and co-design

- ✓ Energy collaborators now engage early and more honestly with community
- ✓ Deep-dive workshops on local issues e.g. Succession Planning, Floodplain Management, Ag Tech impacts and Agrijustice
- ✓ Pooling of resources and shared information to ensure a cohesive, transparent dialogue between business + community.

The success of this partnership, an Australia-first initiative, provides a replicable process for energy organisations working in other regional communities across Australia.

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**“Partnerships are challenging and this Collaboration Framework encourages energy organisations to reflect on their engagement practices and, more importantly, improve them. We know that progress can be made and all partners are committed to working together to make this happen. This exemplifies how effective collaboration can create better outcomes, garner respect and empower communities as equal stakeholders in Australia’s energy future. A partnership done well means we are #BetterTogether.”**



Chris Sounness, CEO,  
Wimmera Southern  
Mallee Development



## Why are we doing this?

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We want to facilitate regional collaborations across energy organisations nationally to deliver better outcomes for regional communities.

To do this we will:

- Work with and support existing community leadership and momentum
- Provide a clear and transparent process for energy organisations to come together and collectively collaborate with regional communities
- Build industry understanding of regional Australia, its challenges and local priorities

- Facilitate a collaborative process that works with the community to design outcomes that make sense locally
- Facilitate partnerships on agreed local priority initiatives, enabling meaningful cumulative benefits to be shared with regional communities as a result of the energy shift.

We don't want to replicate the good work of others or impose new practices in areas where there's already collaboration. Neither does the Framework replace the project engagement work that needs to be done by energy organisations around individual projects.

## How's this different to the work going on in community?

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This framework aims to support community leadership and at the same time, strengthen the other side of the equation – by encouraging developers to see how their collaboration can better support a community's existing work or vision.

There are many great community organisations working with regional communities to identify place-based priorities for investment in their region and aligning expectations for how the energy sector will engage and do business with them. This important work builds local preparedness for the transition and strengthens and elevates the collective voice of community.

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**Our Framework does not replace this critical community-focused work but will support existing community collaborations and leadership. Our Framework brings the energy sector organisations together to effectively engage and collaborate with regional leadership bodies on their terms.**

# What does the Framework look like?

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Overview of how our Framework works on the ground

<b>Phase A: Collaboration Readiness</b>
<b>Step 1:</b> Engaging with community leaders
<b>Step 2:</b> Identifying energy collaborators
<b>Phase B: Collaboration Workshops</b>
<b>Step 3:</b> Establishing foundations for collaboration
<b>Step 4:</b> Co-designing through the Framework
<b>Step 5:</b> Develop Agreement for long-term collaboration
<b>Step 6:</b> Commitment to the Agreement
<b>Phase C: Collaboration Implementation</b>
<b>Step 7:</b> Actions on the ground
<b>Step 8:</b> Transparency and impact
<b>Step 9:</b> Continued collaboration

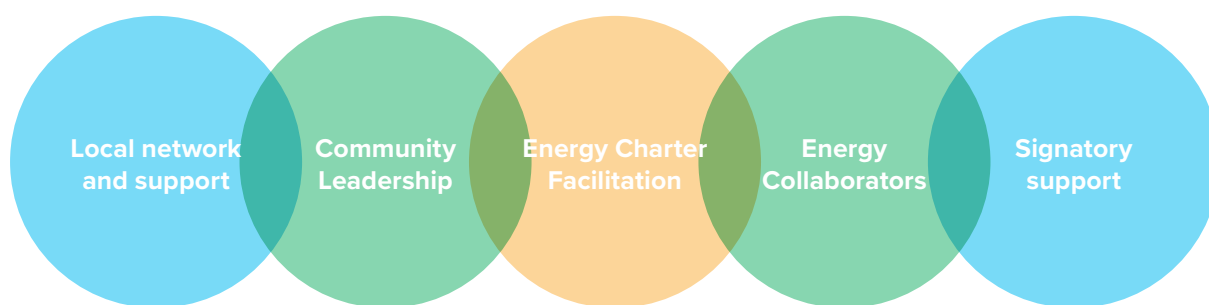


Wimmera Southern Mallee Collaboration pictured above

## Phase A: Collaboration readiness

The key to a successful Framework is the motivation and readiness of local **community leadership** and **energy organisations** to collaborate and partner with each other.

Check out **Appendix A** for who may need to be invited to collaborate in the Framework across community leaders, energy organisations and stakeholders in the region.



### Factors to be considered for a community leader

Taking on the role of community leader is no small task. The most appropriate organisation to represent the community in this collaboration process will vary from region to region. The most important factor is that this organisation meets the following criteria:

- Has the capability and resourcing to shape a collaborative process, managing inputs from both business and community
- Has appropriate governance and authority to handle funds and contracts
- Is recognised and trusted by both the community and stakeholders



- Recognises that, as an organisation, they will never “speak on behalf of the community” but rather, facilitates the community’s goals and vision to be heard collectively.

If this leadership doesn’t yet exist in a region, there are a number of community development organisations such as RE-Alliance, Community Power Agency and The Next Economy who work with communities to develop regional leadership capacity.

## Step 1: Engaging with regional leaders

Local community leadership leading a Regional Energy Collaboration Framework must have a positive vision for their region and be able to build trust with the community, with an established network of support for an energy collaboration.

The community leadership may come from an organisation supporting regional community collaboration such as a Regional Development Agency or an Economic Development Director on the local council, depending on capacity, resources and the level of in-depth local knowledge.

An important role for the regional leader is to carefully select community representatives to support the workshop process, to share their local insights with the energy collaborators and to participate in workshop discussions and outcomes.

### Outcomes:

- ✓ Community leadership, supporters and organisations identified.

### Lighthouse Tip: involve First Nations Representatives

Having First Nations representatives participating from the beginning is integral to ensuring local voices and priorities are represented throughout the Framework process. How representatives engage in the process will be tailored to their preferences and needs: it needs to be a safe place where people feel supported to collaborate and share their views.

## Step 2: Identifying energy collaborators

A willingness and readiness from energy organisations to collaborate is critical for the success of the Framework.

Drawing on our deep industry connections, we engage energy organisations working in the region and invite them to be part of the collaboration as “energy collaborators”. We’ll also engage signatories working in the region to play a leading role in the Framework process.

As part of our engagement with energy collaborators we’ll ensure the right energy organisations are invited – those who are aligned with the vision and have leadership support to engage genuinely and are empowered to make decisions.

### Outcomes:

- ✓ Energy organisations identified and invited to join collaboration process
- ✓ Energy collaborators contribute funding for the Collaboration Workshops.

### Lighthouse Tip: present the challenge and opportunity

Ahead of a Framework process, bring energy organisations together to explore the challenges being experienced by community. The forum could include a panel of community representatives sharing their local lived experiences of engagement with energy organisations, which can be an eye-opening listening opportunity.



## Phase B: Collaboration workshops

Working closely with regional leadership and collaborators, we will tailor the series of Collaboration Workshops to fit the needs of the region. Involving at least three face-to-face facilitated workshops over several months, the Collaboration Workshops will progressively build deep insights and co-designed outcomes to tailor a bespoke regional approach to collaboration and an Agreement outlining the ongoing commitments made by the energy collaborators.

These workshops should be physically hosted in the region, to build familiarity and hands on-experience of the regions that will be changing as a result of energy infrastructure.

### Series of tailored collaboration workshop



## Step 3: Establishing foundations for collaboration

The focus of the first collaboration workshop/s is for the energy collaborators to build a deep understanding of the region, through insights shared by locals. Through this exploration, energy collaborators will gain insights into the local dynamics and the economic, social and community aspects of the region. This will set the stage for an informed, inclusive and community-centred approach to collaboration.

Importantly, we'll co-design a collective vision for the energy collaboration, ensuring it reflects the collective aspirations and goals of the community and energy collaborators. Actively shaping the vision will create a shared roadmap for initiatives, ensuring they align with community values and expectations.

### Outputs:

- ✓ Energy collaborators understand the local context thoroughly
- ✓ Connections are developed between energy and community, particularly key regional leaders
- ✓ Goals and topics for future collaboration workshops are co-designed
- ✓ A shared collaboration vision is co-designed.

### Lighthouse Tip: networking dinner

A networking dinner the night before the first workshop allows energy collaborators to meet each other and the local representatives participating in the workshop. The dinner can also be an opportunity to include a presentation from the local First Nations community, providing valuable insights into local Indigenous perspectives and enriching collaborator's understanding.

## Step 4: Co-designing through the Framework

The workshop focus is the co-design of the core elements to be included in the place-based Agreement. As a minimum, we recommend including Collective Actions, Better Practice Commitments and Ongoing Collaboration.

**Collective Actions:** Using the insights gained from the workshops, collaborators identify **community priority issues**. These can then be agreed areas for industry to deliver co-ordinated actions and/or investment. This could include, for example:

- Local workforce development
- Infrastructure investment
- Environmental outcomes
- Long-term regional economic growth.

See **Appendix B** for further examples of what we've seen on the ground.

**Better Practice Commitments:** Energy collaborators identify industry impacts of concern to the community that can be mitigated through improved collective performance. By aligning with better practices energy collaborators commit to responsible and ethical conduct. This alignment builds trust and confidence among communities, further strengthening relationships.

**Continued Collaboration:** Energy collaborators co-design how they continue collaborating with each other and with community leaders. This could involve:

- Further workshops on topical issues or specific Collective Action initiatives
- Regular meetings with community leaders to share commitment progress.

### Outputs:

- ✓ Identify regional priorities and focus areas for Collective Action
- ✓ Identify agreed Better Practice Commitments
- ✓ Co-design an approach for on-going collaboration.

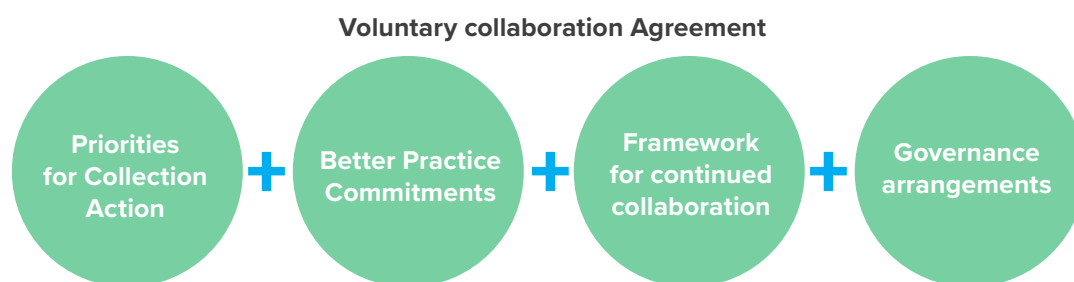


### Lighthouse Tip: improving collective community engagement

A co-designed communications and engagement strategy for all energy organisations can provide greater consistency of information between collaborators and identify opportunities to engage community together (such as regional energy information sessions).

## Step 5: Developing the agreement for on-going collaboration

The co-developed elements for ongoing collaboration are brought together into a formal multi-year Agreement between the energy collaborators and the community leaders.



We work closely with the Community Leadership and the energy collaborators to co-develop the content of the Agreement, which would include:

#### **Collaboration commitments:**

- Priority areas for Collective Action to deliver shared benefits
- Better Practice Commitments for managing industry impacts in the region
- Framework for ongoing collaboration during the life of the Agreement.

#### **Governance structure:**

- Identifying the roles and responsibilities of parties to the Agreement
- Agreed collective performance tracking and accountability reporting.

#### **Financial structure:**

- Agreed funding contributions from energy collaborators over the period of the Agreement. This may include costs associated with the community administration and staffing to oversee the Agreement, organisation of ongoing collaboration workshops, seed funding for Collective Action projects, or anything else agreed to by the community and energy collaborators.

#### **Outputs:**

- ✓ A final co-designed Regional Energy Collaboration Agreement.

### Lighthouse Tip: set collective targets

Without clear commitments, trust can break down. Collective commitments must be specific and measurable e.g., X% local jobs, \$Y million investment in housing or infrastructure or avoided X% of water usage. These should be clear and trackable, whether it's local jobs, investment in infrastructure or long-term community programs and impact management.

## Step 6: Committing to the agreement

Now is time for the energy collaborators to commit to the Agreement they have co-developed. Together with the community leader, we engage with each of the energy collaborators to gain their commitment to the Agreement.

#### **Outputs:**

- ✓ Secure commitment from energy collaborators to the Agreement
- ✓ Secure ongoing pooled funding for its implementation in the region.



## Phase C: Collaboration implementation

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**“Without action, the best intentions in the world are nothing more than that: intentions.”** Jordon Belfort

Now the Agreement has been made it's time to turn words into on-the-ground actions and bring the commitments to life.

### Step 7: Actions on the ground

During the Collaboration Workshops a wide range of potential initiatives will be discussed that are aligned to the agreed Collective Action priority areas. Community leaders and energy collaborators select and develop the initiatives / projects to be actioned. We can facilitate further deep-dive workshops, bringing additional local and expert insights, assist with the development of project plans and engagement of professional services.

Energy collaborators embed the agreed Better Practice Commitments into their own operations and project delivery plans. The timing of when these actions are implemented depends on the individual collaborator and the stage / timing of their project in the region.

We will continue to provide advice and tailored ongoing support to meet your collaboration's needs.

**Outcomes:**

- ✓ Detailed plans to deliver Collective Action initiatives
- ✓ Implementation of Better Practice Commitments by the energy collaborators.

## Step 8: Transparency and impact

On-going governance of the Agreement ensures accountability and transparency to the community. The community leader oversees the functioning of the Agreement, holding the energy collaborators to account and administering processes and tools to track performance.

Identifying carefully considered metrics to measure collective impact demonstrates the short, medium and long-term impact of the collaboration. We support the collaboration to embed The Energy Charter's Impact Framework, a simple way to define, measure and communicate the impact of Collective Actions and other commitments made in the Agreement.

Transparency is critical – everyone needs to know what has been committed to and what outcomes and impacts have been collectively achieved for the benefit of the community.

**Outcomes:**

- ✓ Collective performance and impact of the collaboration is reported transparently.

## Step 9: Continued collaboration

Over the life of the Agreement relationships, practices and projects will mature. Energy collaborators may leave (e.g. if a project is discontinued) and new energy organisations may be invited in. Local priorities may shift and Collective Action initiatives may need to adapt. By continuing to collaborate with and deeply listen to community leaders, the energy collaborators can ensure the collaboration remains relevant and is delivering co-designed shared benefits.

We can continue to strategically support the community leadership and the energy collaborators. The very nature of the collaboration provides ongoing opportunity to review and update the Agreement so it can be a success in your region.

**Outcomes:**

- ✓ The energy collaborators continue working together to progress and identify opportunities to collectively deliver better outcomes for the regional community.

### Lighthouse Tip: be transparent

Being transparent about the impact of the Agreement is essential for building trust with community. How information about collective performance is shared will need to be tailored to the local context. In the Wimmera Southern Mallee Collaboration, a Public Commitment Register is being considered as a transparent, accountable way to track impacts.



## Wrapping up

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By fostering trust between regional communities and energy organisations, encouraging collaboration and tailoring a framework that prioritises community values and expectations, our Framework can create an aligned approach to community engagement and benefit sharing expectations. A co-designed Agreement between energy collaborators provides a structured yet flexible approach to ongoing collaboration, recognising each region has unique characteristics while following common principles for successful engagement.

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**By supporting energy organisations to collaborate collectively with regional communities, our Regional Energy Collaboration Framework leads to enhanced shared benefit outcomes, a deeper level of community engagement, and the establishment of a sustainable foundation for ongoing collaboration, ultimately benefiting both regional communities and energy collaborators who get on board.**



## Appendix A: Who needs to be involved?

<b>Community Leader</b>	<p>Trusted local leadership, maybe through a community agency, local government or regional development organisation.</p> <p>The Agreement between the energy collaborators is best made with a local community leader (organisation), representing the commitment being made to the regional community. This community leader needs to be able to hold and manage the funds for the purpose of implementing and governing the Agreement.</p> <p>Supported by The Energy Charter, the role of the local community leader is to co-design and manage the Regional Energy Collaboration Agreement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating activities and managing finances</li> <li>• Helping different groups connect with each other</li> <li>• Sharing community research and insights</li> <li>• Supporting community leadership</li> <li>• Holding energy organisations to agreed outcomes and impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Energy collaborators</b>	<p>Energy organisations operating in the region, including renewables developers (wind, solar, battery), networks (distribution and transmission) and energy planners.</p> <p>Energy organisations collaborate in the co-design of the Regional Energy Collaboration Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The co-design of the Framework and Agreement</li> <li>• Financial support for the Community Leader to manage the Framework</li> <li>• Internal resources to coordinate commitments, including Collective Actions and handle communication</li> <li>• Support for local projects.</li> </ul> <p>Energy organisations are encouraged to commit to participating for at least three years.</p>
<b>Community supporters</b>	<p>Community leaders and organisations are invited to participate without having to contribute financially. It's especially important to involve Traditional Owners and First Nations representatives and agricultural representatives early in the process.</p> <p>Community partners can get involved as advisors, facilitators, trainers, researchers, co-investor and project partners.</p>
<b>Supporting Organisations</b>	<p>Organisations that support the Framework and Agreement can help by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and insights</li> <li>• Tools and templates</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Coordination or communication support.</li> </ul>

### Additional Note:

In facilitating the implementation of the Framework in your region, we will work with community leaders and energy collaborators to define the scope of our services to suit the needs of the local context. Our approach is that there should be no additional financial burden to community participating in this process and the energy collaborators contribute to (and collectively cover) the costs associated with the Framework and the Agreement.

## Appendix B: Examples of collective actions on the ground

### Example: Community + Energy Forums

**What are they:** regular, local meetings that bring community leaders and energy organisations together in the community – based in the region where they're planning to develop energy projects. Organisations need to meet communities on their own ground and demonstrate their commitment to genuine local engagement.

**Why it matters:** to build trust, we leverage spaces where people can listen to each other, share ideas and develop relationships. It's also a great opportunity for "out-of-towners" to learn more about the community, including its history and stories.

**What happens at these Forums:**

- Relationship building: facilitated introductions and networking opportunities
- Knowledge sharing: insights and research from different perspectives
- Issue resolution: open discussions to identify and solve local challenges
- Priority setting: agree on key areas for collaborative action
- Progress reporting: updates on commitments and success stories. People get to know each other and build networks.

### Example: Better ways of working

**What are they:** commitments from energy companies to improve how they work with the community individually and collectively, following established better practices.

**Why it matters:** trust is built when energy organisations show they're willing to improve, be transparent on their impact.

**Focus areas could include:**

- Cultural Safety: practices that respect local traditions and First Nations peoples
- Inclusive Employment: initiatives for women and marginalised groups
- Community-Specific Initiatives: tailored initiatives based on local needs.

**Commitments:**

- Transparency on outcomes, impacts and commitments to do better
- Adoption of our Better Practice Social Licence Guidelines or the CEC Best Practice Charter.



## Example: Working together in action

**What are they:** local initiatives that deliver real benefits to the community, with energy organisations working together rather than separately.

**Why it matters:** actions speak louder than words. Energy organisations can show they're serious by working together on initiatives that matter genuinely to the community.

**Initiative criteria:**

- Locally relevant: must address priorities identified by the community
- Co-designed: developed jointly with local leaders
- Measurable impact: clear metrics to track shared benefits for the community.

**Examples:**

- Biosecurity protection: safeguarding local agriculture
- Youth employment: pathways and training for local young people
- Housing solutions: addressing worker and community accommodation needs
- Mental health support: services and initiatives for community well-being
- Indigenous engagement: projects that respect and integrate First Nations leadership.

# About The Energy Charter

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We are the Energy Charter: a unique coalition of like-minded energy organisations with a shared purpose and passion for customers and communities.

While we're all part of the same ecosystem, the way we work is not always as connected or as cohesive as it could be. But the reality is energy customers rely on all of us. Energy is something we use every day; it's essential to our lives and livelihoods.

Our purpose is to empower one another across the energy supply chain to deliver better energy outcomes for customers and communities. Our vision is that together, we can create a better energy future for all Australians.

For us, the opportunity is to keep humans at the centre of the design and delivery of energy solutions; to navigate the changing needs of customers and communities as we transform to a cleaner energy future.

There really is no other collaboration like us; and the work we do, together, has never been more important than it is today.

Our strengths are our CEO-led guidance and our diverse representation across industry, customer and community groups. But what gives us power, is our ability to take a whole-of-sector view; to collaborate, innovate and strive for better. To share knowledge and connections from all sides and, importantly, to proactively co-design solutions.

There is no doubt that transitioning to a clean energy future needs collaboration. Our role is to encourage the difficult conversations and to amplify the customer and community needs. To bridge the gap between 'hard-to-do' and 'can-do'; to go beyond what any one of us could achieve alone.

Together, we are the Energy Charter.

Empowering one another to deliver better energy outcomes for all.

