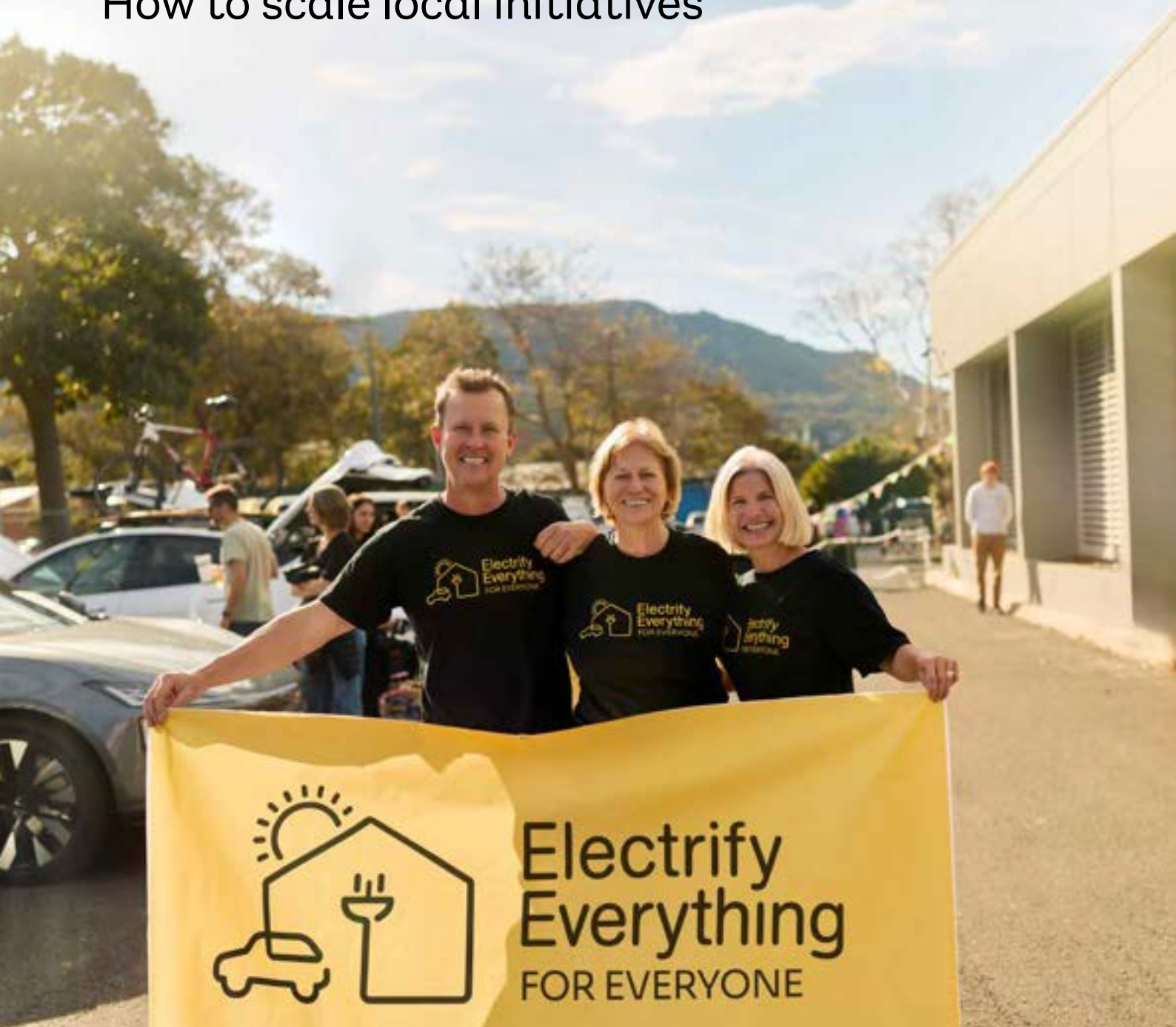


Community Electrification Handbook

How to scale local initiatives



Produced by Rewiring Australia
With support from Energy Consumers Australia
rewiringaustralia.org

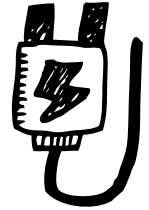


Contents



Introduction	3
Chapter 1: Setting the Foundations	6
Chapter 2: Program Models	12
<i>Model A: Deeper Engagement Program</i>	13
<i>Model B: Coordinated Upgrades Program</i>	22
<i>Model C: Innovative Solutions Program</i>	32
Chapter 3: Engaging Your Community	41
Chapter 4: Measuring Success	49
Resources and Templates	54

Introduction



Why this handbook exists

Across Australia, community groups, local councils and neighbourhood organisations are stepping up to help households get off fossil fuels. They're running events, connecting neighbours, organising coordinated upgrade programs and building momentum for change from the ground up. The energy is real and so is the need.

Many of these groups are volunteer-run with limited time and resources, and often unsure how to take their work to the next level. How do you move from hosting awareness events to driving actual purchases and installations? How do you set up the right structures, reach the right people and access funding?

This handbook is designed to help you answer those questions. It's written for community groups, local councils and allied organisations who want to directly help households electrify their homes, cut energy bills and reduce emissions.

Why household electrification?

Australia has crossed the electrification tipping point. According to Rewiring Australia's 2025 modelling, a typical household running gas appliances and petrol vehicles spends around \$9,200 a year on energy and fuel, compared to just \$1,300 for an equivalent fully electrified home with solar and battery. Even accounting for upfront costs, the electrified household comes out \$4,100 a year ahead on average, while cutting around 9,600 kilograms of CO₂-equivalent emissions every year.



\$4,100

Average annual savings for a fully electrified home with solar and battery, even after upfront costs. The electrified home also cuts 9,600 kg CO₂-equivalent emissions per year.

(Rewiring Australia, 2025)

Electrifying a home means replacing gas appliances with efficient electric alternatives such as heat pumps for space heating and hot water, induction cooktops and adding rooftop solar and batteries, and switching to an electric vehicle. Each of these decisions now saves money compared to the fossil fuel alternative.

Beyond individual upgrades, homes can also work smarter as active participants in the energy system rather than passive consumers.

This means:

- shifting loads to take advantage of cheap, abundant solar energy during the day. Most modern appliances can do this, or a simple timer on your hot water system does the job; from July 2026, even households without solar can access cheap daytime energy through the Solar Saver tariff
- participating in virtual power plants (VPPs), including wholesale electricity markets, earning a return on home batteries and reducing grid pressure at peak times
- connecting with community-scale infrastructure. Community batteries, shared solar and local EV charging networks so the benefits of electrification extend across the whole neighbourhood

Household decisions about how to heat, cook, drive and where to get electricity collectively account for around 20% of Australia's emissions, more than any other sector. These are dinner-table decisions, and communities have a unique role in helping households make them well.

The barriers are real — and addressable

If the economics are so clear, why isn't electrification happening faster? Many critical decisions like replacing a hot water system or buying a car can happen in a moment of urgency, when a like-for-like replacement feels easiest. With over one million new gas appliances sold in Australia each year, education needs to start well before the breakdown point.

Rewiring Australia's research identifies five broad themes that need addressing to ensure electrification happens faster and fairer. Well-designed community programs can address all five at the local level.

Theme	What programs can do
Making electrification affordable and accessible	Make electrification more affordable and equitable for all households by addressing the upfront costs or removing barriers so everyone can access the benefits.
Making electrification work in different contexts	Adapt electrification to suit diverse housing types, demographics and geographies recognising that we need more than a one-size-fits-all approach
Making electrification simple and scalable	Streamline the electrification journey for faster, easier and broader uptake
Integrating and optimising electrification with the grid	Align household and community electrification with broader energy system needs
Aligning regulations to fast track electrification	Address the fragmented government responsibility and unlock policy, regulatory and market settings that accelerate equitable electrification

How to use this handbook

The handbook is structured around the key questions your group will face as you design and grow your program. You don't have to read it cover to cover, dip in where it's most relevant right now, and come back as your program grows.



Need help?

Rewiring Australia's Electric Communities Network connects community groups across Australia doing exactly this work. Visit rewiringaustralia.org/community to access resources, connect with peer groups and find out about upcoming training and events. You can also contact the Rewiring Australia team directly at info@rewiringaustralia.org.



Chapter 1.

Setting the Foundations

The most effective community electrification programs succeed because they're built on a clear understanding of the problem they're solving, the people they want to reach and the goals they're working towards. This chapter walks through the strategic planning steps that form the foundation of any successful program, from simple to complex.

Community groups and councils are typically under-resourced, which makes strategy especially important. Being selective and deliberate about where you invest your time and energy is what separates a program that gains traction from one that stalls.



Creating Your Plan

Step 1: Define Your Problem or Opportunity

Every good program starts with a clear problem statement. Being specific helps you design a program that responds to what's actually happening in your community, rather than one that's too broad to be effective. Your problem statement should answer: what is the issue or gap you've observed? Who is most affected? Why does it matter now?



Example

"In Smithtown, energy bills have increased 30% in three years and fewer than 15% of households have solar. Many residents want to electrify but don't know where to start, can't afford upfront costs, or are renters without access to upgrades. We want to change that."

Step 2: Set your broad goals

Articulate one to three broad goals for your program. At this stage, don't worry about making them specific or measurable; the purpose is to get alignment about the overall direction.



Example goals

- Accelerate solar PV and clean energy adoption in our community.
- Empower and support community members, especially renters and lower-income households, to access the benefits of electrification.
- Build a trusted local voice on home energy that residents turn to for guidance.

Step 3: Conduct an internal analysis

A SWOT analysis helps your group take an honest look at what you have to work with and what might get in the way. It's a practical tool for identifying where to focus energy and how to mitigate risks before you start planning.



Strengths

Internal assets that support your mission. E.g. existing relationships with council, strong volunteer base, local champions.



Weaknesses

Internal gaps that may hinder your mission. E.g. no dedicated budget, no grant-writing experience, limited social media presence.



Opportunities

External factors that could support your goals. E.g. council grants opening soon, strong local interest in energy costs.



Threats

External factors outside your control. E.g. competing priorities for council attention, local media environment, policy uncertainty.

Step 4: Research your community

Good programs are grounded in local evidence. Gathering basic data about your community helps you target the right households, make a compelling case to funders and measure change over time.



Useful data sources

- ABS Census: population by housing tenure, dwelling type, income and languages spoken. Free at abs.gov.au.
- Clean Energy Regulator: solar PV installation data by postcode. Available at cer.gov.au.
- Ironbark Sustainability: LGA-level emissions snapshots including household energy data.
- Your local council: sustainability plans, emissions inventories and community survey data.
- Self-survey: Rewiring Australia has a community survey template available, which is also an effective engagement tactic, email info@rewiringaustralia.org.

Step 5: Map your stakeholders

Mapping stakeholders early helps you identify who you need to build relationships with and who is already in your corner.

Stakeholder	Role and interest	How to engage
Local government	Funding, venues, communications	Meeting with sustainability officer
Energy providers and retailers	Rebates, data, co-promotion	Email or phone outreach
Local businesses (electricians, solar installers, EV dealers)	Advice, partnership, quality assurance	Email or phone outreach
Trusted local voices (GPs, teachers, clergy)	Messenger credibility	Personal introduction or community event
Media (local TV, radio, newspapers)	Amplify your story, promote activities	Media release, relationship building
Community and sporting groups	Reach, trust, access to new audiences	Partnership, co-hosting events
State and federal MPs	Policy influence, profile, event credibility	Briefing meeting, invite to events
NGOs and charities	Peer learning, resources, national profile	rewiringaustralia.org/community
Educational institutions	Reach younger audiences, build knowledge	Partnership, curriculum links
Neighbours who have already electrified	Peer credibility, lived experience	Personal outreach, open home recruitment

Step 6: Define your target audiences

The more specific you are about who you're trying to reach, the more effective your program will be. Aim to identify one to three priority audiences and design your messaging and activities around them. See Chapter 3 for more detail.



Example

Owner-occupiers aged 35–70 in Smithtown with gas heating. Interested in reducing bills but time-poor and unsure where to start.

Step 7: Make your goals SMART

Sharpen your broad goals into SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. SMART objectives give your program direction, help you prioritise activities and make it easier to report impact to funders and partners.

SMART element	Role and interest
Specific	Who, what, where, how? The more precise the better.
Measurable	How will you know if you've succeeded? Define a number, percentage or clear outcome.
Achievable	Is it realistic given your resources and timeline? Stretch, but don't set yourself up to fail.
Relevant	Does it connect directly to your problem statement and broader goals?
Time-bound	By when? Set a clear deadline to create accountability and momentum.



From broad goal to SMART objective

- **Broad goal:** Accelerate solar PV adoption in our community.
- **SMART objective:** Within 12 months, facilitate at least 100 new solar PV installations in Smithtown targeting owner-occupiers, with an average system size of 8.5 kW, through a group-buy partnership with two local installers.

Is your organisation structured correctly?

One of the first practical questions a community electrification group faces is how to organise itself. The right answer depends on where you are in your journey and what you're trying to achieve. Not every group needs to incorporate, and formal incorporation is not a precondition for getting started. But as your program grows, your legal and governance structure becomes increasingly important.

Matching structure to program model

Model	Governance considerations
Model A: Deeper Engagement	Informal groups work well in early stages. Running workshops or home tours doesn't require a legal entity. If applying for grants or opening a bank account in the group's name, you'll need to either incorporate or find an auspisor. Once running regular programs or employing a coordinator, incorporation becomes worthwhile.
Model B: Coordinated Upgrades	Most coordinated upgrade programs, particularly those involving formal agreements with installers, require an incorporated association at minimum. You'll need to enter contracts, hold funds and be accountable to funders.
Model C: Innovative Solutions	Programs seeking large grants (such as ARENA funding) typically require incorporation and a demonstrated governance track record. A company limited by guarantee or registered charity may be appropriate if operating at significant scale or seeking DGR endorsement.

Types of organisation

The four main structures for community groups in Australia are summarised below.

	Informal Group	Incorporated Association	Company Limited by Guarantee	Registered Charity
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free. • No administrative responsibilities. • Less ongoing commitment. • Good for groups fewer than 5. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive. • Legal identity — protection and ability to be sued. • Apply for grants. • Open a bank account, take out a lease. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for organisations operating nationally or across multiple states. • Larger not-for-profit organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax concessions. • Listed on public register of charities — good public perception. • Note: Can't collect tax-deductible donations without DGR status.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members act as individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register with state body (~\$300). • Constitution. • AGM. • Governing board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More complex administration. • ASIC registration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register with ACNC. • Legal reporting obligations.
Best for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage groups running events or workshops before committing to a formal structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups running regular programs, applying for grants, or entering contracts with installers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger programs operating across multiple councils or states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established groups seeking DGR endorsement and tax-deductible donations.

More information: nfplaw.org.au

Roles and responsibilities

If you incorporate, your governing committee will need at minimum a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Beyond the formal committee, common working roles include a Convenor or Coordinator, Communications Manager, Technical Advisor, Finance Officer and Project or Area Managers. Roles like Legal Advisor, Digital Communications Officer and Event Manager can be volunteer or contracted as needed.

Insurance

Insurance is worth sorting out earlier than you might think. Many grant funders require current insurance before approving funds, as do most venues. Some venues will cover groups under their own policy - always check first.

Insurance type	What it covers
Public liability insurance	Covers your group if a member of the public is injured or their property is damaged. Most often required by venues and funders so get this one first. Community groups running regular events typically pay around \$500–\$1,000 per year for a \$10 million policy.
Volunteer insurance	Covers volunteers for personal accident or injury while undertaking activities on behalf of the group. If operating under another organisation's insurance, confirm explicitly what their policy covers.
Management liability / directors and officers	Protects committee members from personal liability for decisions made in good faith. Becomes more important once incorporated and running programs involving significant funds or contractual commitments.

NFP Law's Risk Management and Insurance guide covers all Australian states and territories and is freely available at nfplaw.org.au. The Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA) also runs free webinars on insurance for not-for-profit groups.

Auspicing: a shortcut for early-stage groups

If you're not yet incorporated but need to access grant funding quickly, auspicing is a practical option. It gives you quick access to the auspicator's insurance, infrastructure and grant eligibility without the time and cost of setting up your own legal entity. Some funders also require groups to be auspiced until they have a demonstrated track record.

Potential auspicing partners include local environment centres, sustainability organisations, community foundations or councils. The auspicator will need to be satisfied that your project aligns with their own mission, so approach organisations whose purposes are complementary to yours.



Finding an auspicator

NFP Law's Auspicing Guide provides a detailed overview and a checklist for reaching agreement on the terms. Available free at nfplaw.org.au/auspicing.

Chapter 2.

Program Models

This chapter walks through three program models that community organisations can consider when scaling their local initiatives. Your best model depends on your community's size and demographics, the resources and partnerships available to you, and the specific barriers you're trying to address. Many groups start with Model A (Deeper Engagement) and build toward more complex delivery models over time as they develop relationships, funding and experience.



Model A:
Deeper
Engagement



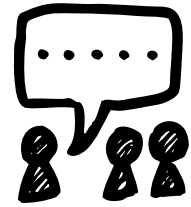
Model B:
Coordinated
Upgrades



Model C:
Innovative
Solutions



Model A: Deeper Engagement



Why choose this model?

Community electrification doesn't happen overnight. Most people move through a journey from barely knowing what a heat pump is, to installing one and telling their neighbours. The Deeper Engagement model is about moving beyond one-off informational activities to encourage concrete action, without requiring outside partners or complex arrangements. It's flexible, low-cost and often a good precursor to Model B once awareness and trust are established, a coordinated upgrade program is a natural next step.

The engagement spectrum

Understanding where your community sits is the essential first step. The right activity for a community just discovering electrification is very different from one that's motivated and ready to act. Good workshops, local media coverage and market stalls do real work in building awareness, the question is simply whether your community is ready to go deeper.

Goal	Level	Example activities
1. INFORM	Initial engagement	Local media; letterbox drops; posters; social media; newsletters; networking events; launch event
2. EDUCATE	Building awareness	Market and festival stalls; surveys; workshops; targeted talks (schools, community clubs); local resource guides; doorknocking with 'to be upgraded' stickers
3. DEMONSTRATE	Deeper engagement	Meetings with councillors and MPs; case studies; open days; house tours; home energy inspections; induction cooking demos; EV test drives; 'ask an expert' sessions
4. MOBILISE	Coordinated upgrades	Coordinated upgrade programs; business partnerships; community funds; home advisory program; council partnerships
5. EMPOWER	Innovative solutions	Community energy projects (batteries, solar arrays); alternative financing models; pilot projects with government and industry partners

Funnelling to action

Think of electrification engagement as a funnel. At the top, you're reaching as many people as possible with accessible, low-barrier activities. As people move through, activities become more personal, more interactive and more likely to result in action. The goal is to empower those people to become advocates, catalysing the neighbourhood effect.

1. Discover

What it looks like Following campaigns; downloading guides; attending talks and workshops; reading media and case studies

Program goal Raise awareness; become the primary trusted source

2. Implement

What it looks like Barriers addressed; increase in solar, appliance and EV installations; rebates claimed; participating in programs

Program goal Encourage, support and coordinate installation

3. Advocate

What it looks like Sharing experiences; signing letters; joining groups; volunteering; meeting politicians

Program goal Build influence and political pressure



Deeper engagement activities

A Deeper Engagement program involves having a clear target and designing activities that make electrification personal, tangible and real rather than abstract and informational. Here are some practical examples.

1. Sharing personal experiences

Nothing is more persuasive than a neighbour who has already done it. Activities highlighting real stories and lived experience are disproportionately effective at converting the 'interested but not sure' into 'I've booked an installer'.

Activity	How it works
Kitchen table conversations	Small, informal gatherings in someone's home where a host shares their experience. Guests ask questions in a relaxed, no-pressure setting. Highly effective for people who find large events intimidating.
Open home and neighbourhood tours	Residents volunteer to open their electrified homes for guided visits. An ordinary house with a heat pump and induction cooktop is often more relatable than a high-end renovation.
Neighbourhood EV days	Invite local EV owners to bring their cars to a public space for an informal show and tell. No agenda, no sales pitch.
Case studies in person or digitally	Invite residents who have electrified and run speed-dating Q&As, or create short authentic video stories of local residents sharing their experience.



2. Practical events with tradespeople and installers

Installers help shift the conversation from 'why' to 'how'. They're particularly valuable because they're inside people's homes at the moment of decision. See the [Resources](#) section for a guide to vetting local tradespeople.

Activity	How it works
Tradie Q&A sessions	Invite a local electrician, heat pump installer or solar provider to an informal Q&A. Frame it as independent advice, not a sales event. Having two or three installers side by side reinforces the independent feel.
Quote review clinics	Residents bring their existing quotes to a session where a knowledgeable volunteer or advisor helps them understand what they're looking at and whether it represents good value.
Library or community centre advisory sessions	Pop-up advisory sessions in accessible public spaces, often in partnership with local councils or libraries. Residents can drop in and get referred to rebate information and trusted installers.



3. Demonstration events

Seeing and touching technology removes the abstraction that keeps many people on the fence. Demonstration events are particularly effective for appliances where there's an ingrained assumption the electric option is inferior, especially cooking.

Activity	How it works
Induction cooking demonstrations	A local chef or food blogger demonstrates induction cooking to a live audience. One of the single most effective activities for shifting attitudes in gas-cooking households. A market stall with a portable induction cooktop is a low-cost version that works anywhere.
EV-powered demonstrations	Use an EV's Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) capability to power something fun such as a smoothie blender, a pancake maker, a movie projector. Starts the conversation about vehicles as batteries and grid stabilisers.
Battery and solar displays	Work with a local installer to display a home battery system or solar monitoring dashboard at an event. Real-time generation and consumption data makes the technology tangible in a way that a brochure never can.



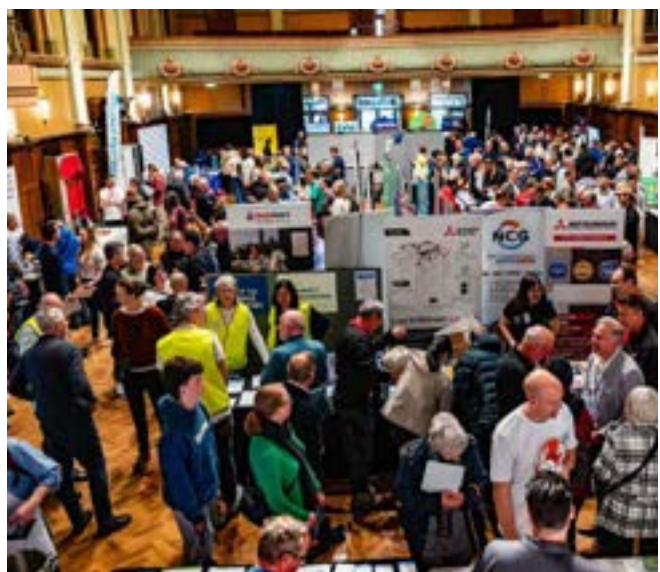
4. Advisory services and personalised guidance

Confusion and lack of trust are among the top reasons people aren't electrifying. Personalised advisory services address this directly, and community organisations play a unique role as independent, local and trusted messengers.

Activity	How it works
Home advisory visits	Trained volunteers or paid advisors visit households to provide tailored advice on the best upgrade pathway for their home. A visit takes 45–60 minutes and typically results in a clear, prioritised action plan.
Bill reading sessions	Many residents don't understand their energy bills, what tariff they're on or whether they're getting a good deal. Bill reading sessions (in person, by phone or online) often reveal quick wins and identify households that would benefit most from specific upgrades.
Rental support services	A program providing renters with support to approach landlords for upgrades with clear evidence of savings, rebates and payback periods. Alternatively, showcase solutions that don't require landlord approval (portable induction cooktops, Solar Saver tariff advice).
Phone, email or in-person advice lines	A simple, advertised contact point for residents to ask questions, staffed by trained volunteers on a roster. Even modest availability for example, Tuesday evenings or monthly library drop-ins can make a big difference.

5. Larger events: expos and electrification festivals

For groups ready to make a significant impact, a large electrification expo brings all of the above together under one roof. These events are significant undertakings but can be genuinely transformational, combining panel discussions, product displays, installer booths, one-on-one advisory sessions, live cooking demonstrations, EV test rides and family-friendly activities. They work best when they offer something for the person just starting to get curious, and something for the person ready to sign a contract today.



Case study: Electrify Boroondara Expo 2025

Scale	1,100 attendees; 350 stallholders, speakers and volunteers; 5+ exhibitors; 32 independent one-on-one advisory experts; 16 EVs; 10 e-bikes; hourly induction cooking demonstrations
Tips from the organising team	Be clear on strategic intent before anything else; aim high with invitations (politicians, ministers, industry experts); treat marketing as 50% of the organising effort; recruit and nurture volunteers well; build a diverse funding mix across sponsors, council partnership, grants and in-kind support
More information	electrifyboroondara.org/expo25



Making deeper engagement work

Principle	Why it matters
Make it personal	Generic information rarely changes behaviour. Activities that connect with a person's specific situation, their home type, their bills, their family's needs are far more powerful.
Create intimacy at small scale	Small, intimate settings are often more persuasive than large ones. A kitchen table conversation with six people can achieve more than a workshop of sixty.
Let people touch and feel the technology	Every opportunity to make technology tangible is worth taking. Seeing a heat pump installed and talking to someone who uses it every day is a different experience from any brochure.
Showcase real stories, not expert lectures	A neighbour who installed solar last year is more persuasive than the best speaker you can find. Build programs around lived experience wherever possible.
Have a clear next step ready	The worst outcome of a successful engagement event is an enthusiastic audience with nowhere to go. Always have a clear, simple next step ready registration form, an advisor to talk to, a link to trusted installers.
Stay current on rebates	Government rebates change frequently. Designate someone to stay across state and federal scheme updates and communicate them clearly to your community.



Funding your program

Principle	Why it matters
Low or no cost	Many workshops and community events can be run on a minimal budget beyond volunteer time. Community halls may be secured free from council. Local experts often present for free. Promotion can happen online and through existing community groups.
Council grants	Most Australian councils have small grants programs, typically \$500–\$10,000. These suit workshops, open home events and smaller expos. Note: many require incorporation, which is a simple process costing around \$250 per year.
State government grants	Programs such as Sustainability Victoria's community grants support outreach and education activities. Check your state government's environment and energy department for current rounds. These tend to be more competitive but can fund larger events and coordinator salaries.
Sponsorship and in-kind support	Local businesses may sponsor events in exchange for a stall or logo placement. Electricity distributors and retailers sometimes provide in-kind support such as promotional materials or help with venue costs.
Event fees and merchandise	For expos and large events, a modest entry fee, donation or pre-registration fee can cover venue and catering costs.

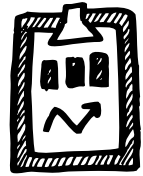


Tips from the field

- Don't underestimate what residents want to hear. Most people aren't looking for polished presentations — they want to hear from neighbours who've made the switch. Real stories from ordinary homes are consistently the most persuasive content you can offer.
- The shift from informing to activating isn't always about bigger events. A round of kitchen table conversations or a neighbourhood EV day can move more people to action with less effort.
- Always have a clear next step ready. The bridge from Model A to Model B works best when residents arrive already engaged and trusting.



Model B: Coordinated Upgrades



Why choose this model?

Households face a range of friction points when considering home upgrades: upfront costs that seem daunting, the time and stress of finding a trustworthy installer, confusing rebate navigation, and not knowing where to start. A coordinated upgrade program addresses these barriers directly by vetting local installers, often at preferential or agreed pricing, and supporting residents through the process.

There is no single way to run a coordinated upgrade program. This section covers three delivery types, from a lightweight community self-managed approach through to a fully outsourced service provider model.

What a program can include

Option	Description
Single product	Focusing on one product (e.g. hot water heat pumps or solar) keeps the program manageable and allows you to develop deep knowledge and strong installer relationships. Recommended starting point for most community groups.
Range of products	More ambitious programs offer a menu of upgrades: solar and battery, heat pump hot water, split-system air conditioning, induction cooktops, EV charging and more. Suits larger organisations with council backing.
Single installer	Simplifies administration and allows for a tighter relationship, more consistent quality and clearer accountability.
Multiple installers	Offering residents a choice of two or three vetted providers increases competition, provides price options and reduces the risk of a single installer being unable to meet demand.
Financing support	Programs can help address upfront costs by negotiating discounts, facilitating integration with government rebates, and supporting access to no- or low-interest loan arrangements where available through councils.

How discounts and commissions can work

Model	How it works
Pass-through discount	The installer offers a discount to participating residents in exchange for the volume of leads the program provides. The community group facilitates this but doesn't take a margin. Simple, transparent and easy to promote.
Referral fee or commission to the group	The discount or commission is paid to the community organisation, funding its ongoing work. This requires clear disclosure to participants. Used by Geelong Sustainability, where local suppliers pay a community donation per installation.
Equity fund	The commission (or a portion of it) is directed into a fund that subsidises upgrades for lower-income households, renters or community facilities. A powerful way to embed fairness into the program from the start.



Three delivery types

	Type 1: Community self-managed	Type 2: Council-delivered or council-partnered	Type 3: Outsourced service provider
Who runs it	Community group volunteers (with possible council funding)	Council directly, or community org funded by council	Specialist social enterprise contracted or funded by council
Products	Typically 1–3 products	Single product or broad range	Broad range
Household support	Referral and basic info; residents self-manage	May include advisory support	Full end-to-end: estimate, advice, quote review, hand-holding
Equity features	Discount pass-through; optional equity fund	Council can offer local rebates; target lower-income or renters	Platform can prioritise CALD, renters, apartment dwellers
Funding model	Referral fees or grants; low cost to run	Council budget or grants	Council funds service; provider earns via commissions or fee-for-service
Best for	Groups with energy, trust and limited admin capacity	Councils wanting scale and quality control	Councils or groups wanting to outsource the complexity
Examples	Electrify 2515 Solar Rollout	Geelong Sustainability; YEF / Hume Home Energy Upgrades	ZapCat / City of Parramatta



Type 1: Community self-managed

Run by your group, on your terms

How it works

In this model, your community group leads on everything: vetting installers, negotiating terms, promoting the program and supporting residents through the process. The key steps are:

1. Choose one to three products to focus on. Keep it simple.
2. Run an Expression of Interest (EOI) or informal vetting process to select one or two trusted local installers (see the EOI template in the Resources section).
3. Negotiate terms: guaranteed pricing or discount level, program duration (typically six months), customer service standards and reporting obligations.
4. Set up an automated registration process. An online form that captures resident interest and forwards leads directly to the installer.
5. Promote through your existing channels: email list, social media, local media, community events.
6. Monitor quality: follow up with residents post-installation, track complaints and measure program statistics.

Case study:

Electrify 2515 — Solar Rollout



Results

87 new installs over 12 months; 51% increase in pace of installs; average system size 9.3 kW (25% increase); 66% of installs from delivery partners.



Goal

Within 12 months, at least 100 new or expanded solar PV systems installed in the 2515 postcode via the project, targeting owner-occupiers. A 50% increase in pace of installs; 25% increase in average system size (from 6.6 kW); and at least 30% of new installs from solar partners.

Model

Two local solar providers selected through a vetting process including EOI, interview and blind reviews. Both offered a 10% discount with two product options (economy and premium) over a six-month timeframe.

Process

Residents applied through survey software that automatically tracked leads and forwarded enquiries to installers. The group also ran information workshops and supported residents through one-on-one phone calls when needed.

Financial Model

Pure discount pass-through — residents received the benefit directly, with no referral fee to the group. This kept the program simple and required no disclosure obligations.



Tips for Type 1 programs

- Time-bound programs outperform open-ended ones. A six-month window creates urgency, simplifies administration and gives you a natural review point.
- Your most powerful asset is trust. Residents will choose your recommended installer over a cold Google search because they trust your group. Protect that trust. If an installer is letting people down, address it quickly.
- Use automation. A simple online registration form that auto-forwards leads to the installer saves dozens of hours of manual work over the life of the program.



Type 2: Council-delivered or council-partnered

Greater scale, broader products, equity potential

How it works

When a council is involved, programs can achieve significantly greater scale, offer a broader product range and include equity components that aren't feasible for a volunteer-run group alone. There are two variants: the council as funder with the community org as deliverer; or the council as promoter with a delivery partner handling the operational complexity.

In both cases, council involvement opens up equity opportunities. Councils can offer additional local government rebates, interest-free loans, or targeted support for concession cardholders, renters and landlords.

Vetting installers: what good looks like

The installer vetting process is the most consequential step. Residents will trust your recommendation — the quality of your vetting determines the quality of their experience.

Criterion	What to assess
Capacity and expertise	Can the installer handle the volume your program will generate? Do they have sufficient staff? Have they delivered programs of similar scale before?
Product quality and warranties	What brands do they supply? Are products from reputable manufacturers with local warranty support?
Customer service	How do they handle high volumes, provide timely communication and resolve issues? Ask for specific examples and check references.
Price and value for money	Are prices genuinely competitive? Do they offer both premium and affordable options? Will they keep to agreed pricing?
Breadth of offering	Can they cover the full product range your program needs, or will you need multiple providers?
Values alignment	Do they share your group's commitment to quality and community outcomes? Are they a local business that will be around to honour warranties?
Verification checks	Installer insurances; industry accreditations (CEC, relevant trade licences); staff qualifications; professional references and customer reviews.

Case study:

Geelong Sustainability — Electric Homes Program



Results

- 1,585 registrations
- 519 home upgrades completed
- 33% conversion rate from enquiry to installation
- 29,919 tonnes CO₂-e avoided (system lifespan)
- \$292,038 collective bill savings



Partnership

Funded by council and community. Geelong Sustainability (GS) acts as recommender and coordinator. GS earns a community donation per installation from participating suppliers.

Products offered

Solar and battery; heat pump hot water; split-system heating and cooling; induction cooktop installation; home insulation; draught proofing; energy audits; EV charging; EVs and e-bikes.

Householde motivators

A mix of bill savings, thermal comfort and emissions reduction. GS found messaging focused on thermal comfort and bill savings rather than 'electrification' as a concept was more effective.

Key Learnings

Resourcing matters — delivery, communications and data management require real time and skills. Leverage community and media over paid advertising. Message to motivations, not ideology. Delivery partner quality is critical.

More information

electrichomes.com.au



Case study:

Yarra Energy Foundation — Hume Home Energy Upgrades



Results

- 1,275 registrations
- 4,555 upgrades completed
- 281 with council rebate
- 14,218 tonnes CO₂-e avoided
- \$1,410 average bill savings for concession households
- \$1.2M invested in clean energy by community



Partnership

Council-funded. YEF acts as recommender, advisor and quality controller. Vetted suppliers deliver installations.

What residents get

Free energy advice; access to pre-vetted suppliers; tailored recommendations; full assistance with rebate eligibility; open communication throughout; bundle discounts; superior warranties.

Equity design

195 upgrades were supported by an additional council rebate demonstrating how council partnership enables equity support that community groups can't provide alone.

More information

yef.org.au/solarelectrification



Type 3: Outsourced service provider

Let the specialists handle the complexity

How it works

For councils or community groups that want to offer residents a high-quality, end-to-end upgrade experience but don't have internal capacity to build and manage it, contracting a specialist service provider is a compelling option. The specialist handles the complexity such as vetting installers, providing cost and savings estimates, reviewing quotes and guiding residents through to installation. The council's role is primarily to fund and promote the service.

Case study:

ZapCat — City of Parramatta



Scale and reach

1,500+ instant estimates delivered; 500 personalised recommendations; 1 in 3 users from CALD communities; 1 in 3 women; 1 in 4 apartment dwellers reaching demographics often underserved by standard programs.

What ZapCat does

Vets suppliers; provides instant cost, savings and rebate estimates online; connects residents to vetted local installers; offers options for low income households and renters, provides communication resources; offers personalised recommendations via email or virtual consultation; provides tailored support for apartment buildings and strata.

What Parramatta Council does

Funds the service as a council-funded third-party 'hand-holding' service. Shares information through council channels.

Products covered

Home solar; hot water heat pumps; induction cooktops; solar batteries; home EV chargers; split-system air conditioning; energy efficiency measures; apartment solar.

Most common enquiries

Home solar (highest demand), hot water heat pumps, induction cooktops. 58% of users want to 'see if it's worth it for me'; 31% want to find a quality provider; 11% want to learn.

More information

zapcat.com.au/parramatta



Tips from the field

- Your installer partners should hold public and product liability insurance of at least \$10–20 million — make this a non-negotiable requirement in your EOI and installer agreements.
- Installer quality is the whole game. Your recommendation is your group's most valuable asset. A single bad installation experience shared on a local Facebook group can undo months of trust-building. Vet carefully and monitor continuously.
- Don't leave equity as an afterthought. If working with a council, raise the question of additional rebates or subsidy support early in the design process, it's much easier to build in from the start.



Funding your program

Funding approach	How it works
Participant funding	The bulk of upgrade costs are paid by participants, minus any rebates or discounts.
Referral fees and commissions	If structured as a commission paid to the community group, the program can sustain itself. Geelong Sustainability uses this model. Be transparent with participants about the arrangement.
Council funding	Councils can fund a community organisation to run the program, fund a service provider directly, or contribute additional household rebates. This is the model behind YEF/Hume and ZapCat/Parramatta.
State government grants	State energy and sustainability departments offer grants for community-led electrification programs. These can fund coordinator time, marketing and program evaluation. Check your state government's current rounds.
No-interest loans and revolving funds	Some councils have established no-interest loan schemes for household energy upgrades. Where these exist, promote them alongside your program to help with upfront cost barriers.

Model C: Innovative Solutions



Why choose this model?

This model is for community organisations and their partners who want to go beyond standard programs to design and run an electrification demonstration project that tests new approaches, generates evidence and opens the door to significant external funding. These projects are ambitious, take time, require strong partnerships and carry real delivery risk. But they are a critical way to generate the proof points that governments and funders need to act at scale. We believe community organisations should be central to the design and implementation of these projects to ensure they best serve the needs of the communities involved.

What is an innovative community electrification project?

An innovative community electrification project is a time-limited, place-based initiative that tests new approaches to accelerating household electrification and gathers evidence about what works. Unlike awareness campaigns or coordinated upgrade programs, these projects are designed to generate knowledge that can change policy, shift markets or be replicated at scale. They require external funding usually from government agencies, energy networks or commercial partners because the costs exceed what community groups can raise themselves.

Why demonstration projects matter

The energy transition is not just a technology problem, it's a systems and evidence problem. Even where households want to electrify, the ecosystem around them (supply chains, network planning, installer capacity, financing) hasn't yet adapted to mass uptake. Demonstration projects can:

- generate technical proof points that governments and regulators need before investing at scale
- test innovative delivery models in live conditions — new financing, digital platforms, installer engagement programs
- create the neighbourhood effect: concentrated electrification signals to nearby residents that change is normal and achievable
- produce research data currently missing — on grid impacts, household economics, installer capacity and behaviour change
- give community organisations the credibility and track record needed to attract further investment

Is this the right model for your organisation?

Readiness factor	What it means in practice
Sustained community engagement	You have been actively working with residents for multiple years and can demonstrate genuine interest through surveys, event attendance or expressions of interest.
A compelling and specific concept	You have identified a gap that existing programs don't address, not just 'more electrification', but a testable innovation with a clear research question.
Delivery partners	You have or can attract organisations with the technical and commercial capability to deliver: installers, financiers, network operators, researchers.
Time and capacity for a multi-year process	Major funding applications take one to three years from concept to announcement. Someone in your organisation needs to sustain this alongside other work.
Tolerance for uncertainty	Projects of this scale involve iteration, setbacks and funder feedback that requires rethinking and revising. Flexibility is essential.



Minister Chris Bowen announces ARENA funding for Australia's first community-led electrification pilot, Electrify 2515.

The four building blocks

1. A convincing concept

Your concept needs to address a genuine unresolved problem and propose a testable approach to solving it. Funders are looking for projects that generate insights they can't get another way. Strong concepts tend to cluster around recurring themes: how electrification impacts local distribution networks; what it costs to retrofit different housing types; how to make electrification accessible to households that currently can't afford it; what role EVs, batteries and flexible demand can play when concentrated in a neighbourhood; how to engage and equip installers as active advocates; and how digital platforms can reduce friction and installation cost.



Practical tip

Write your concept as a research question before you write it as a project description. 'We will electrify 500 homes' is an activity. 'What are the real installation cost structures across different housing types in a typical Australian suburb, and what changes could reduce them?' is a research question. Funders fund research questions.

2. Willing community participants

Funders want evidence that real households will participate. For Electrify 2515, Rewiring Australia spent over two years building community engagement in the Northern Illawarra before ARENA funding was announced. By the time the application was submitted, thousands of households had registered interest, a sold-out community event had been held, and the depth of local commitment was documented — not just asserted.

3. Project delivery partners

Community organisations are essential to the trust, engagement and local knowledge that makes these projects work but they rarely have all the delivery capacity required. You will need partners covering functions you can't fulfil:

Partner type	What they contribute
Project developer and lead applicant	Project management, contract management, legal and financial accountability, funder relationship. Usually a larger organisation (NFP or commercial) that can manage the risks funders require.
Community engagement partner	Local outreach, doorknocking, events, peer support, volunteer coordination — the trust layer that converts interest into participation.
Financial and commercial partner	Revenue collection, payment processing, product sourcing, managing installer payments. In Electrify 2515, this was Brighte.
Technical installation partner	Coordinating installers across multiple trades, quality assurance, managing appliance and equipment supply chains.
Research partner	Data collection, monitoring and evaluation, analysis, knowledge sharing reports. Often a university or specialist consultancy.

Network operator (DNSP)	Installing network monitors, sharing grid data, assessing hosting capacity, planning any network upgrades required.
Government partner	Co-funding, rebate administration, policy alignment and political support state or territory governments and local councils.

4. Funders

Funder	What they fund	What they require
ARENA (Advancing Renewables Program)	Large-scale demonstrations with a clear commercial pathway and grid or market impact. Typically \$1M–\$10M+	50% co-contribution; strong commercial partners; rigorous merit criteria; multi-stage application process
State energy funds (e.g. ACT Energy Innovation Fund, NSW DCCEEW, Sustainability Victoria)	Smaller pilots, research and capacity-building. Typically \$50K–\$600K	Clear research question; demonstrated community need; credible delivery team; knowledge sharing commitment
Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC)	Projects with a financing innovation	Commercial or near-commercial viability; scalability; financial modelling
Local government	Place-based programs aligned with council climate strategies	Council brand alignment; constituent benefit; manageable governance requirements
Private companies and investors	Cash or in-kind from commercial partners who benefit	Alignment with commercial interests; data sharing; brand visibility



What funders often do not fund

- The project design and development phase. You're expected to arrive with a developed concept.
- Community awareness activities as standalone deliverables.
- Projects where a community organisation is the sole delivery partner with no commercial entity involved.
- Payments in advance. Most milestone-based funders pay in arrears, so you need working capital.

Working with ARENA: the Advancing Renewables Program

ARENA's Advancing Renewables Program (ARP) is the primary federal funding pathway for large-scale community electrification demonstrations. It funded Electrify 2515 and the subsequent announcement of community electrification pilots in each state and territory. ARENA funds projects that demonstrate how to deliver household electrification more efficiently, at lower cost and with better grid outcomes and in a way the market can eventually adopt without ongoing subsidy.

The ARENA application process

Stage	What is involved
1. Concept development	Before any formal submission, engage informally with ARENA to test whether your concept fits their priorities. ARENA staff are accessible and will give honest early feedback. This stage can take six to twelve months.
2. Expression of Interest (EOI)	A concise submission (typically 5–15 pages) describing the concept, your consortium, research questions and commercial pathway. ARENA uses this to shortlist projects.
3. Advisory Panel review	Shortlisted projects present to an ARENA advisory panel. Panellists give detailed feedback that must be comprehensively addressed in the full application.
4. Full Application	A comprehensive document (typically 50–100+ pages) covering project outcomes, community engagement, technology approach, merit criteria, risk management, budget and commercialisation pathway.
5. Negotiation and announcement	If successful, ARENA negotiates the Funding Agreement over several months. Payments are milestone-based and paid in arrears.



The five merit criteria

Criterion	What ARENA is really asking
A. Contribution to ARP outcomes	How does your project advance ARENA's strategic priorities? Describe your commercialisation pathway: how will this create a model the market can adopt without ongoing subsidy?
B. Applicant capability and capacity	Can your consortium actually deliver this? Demonstrate track record and governance. Formal partner agreements are far stronger than letters of support.
C. Project design and methodology	Is your project plan credible and rigorous? ARENA expects a detailed Gantt chart, clear milestones, a phased approach, a risk management plan and resourcing plan with FTE allocations.
D. Financial viability and co-funding	Can you demonstrate you have secured the required co-contribution? ARENA requires at least 50% of total project costs from non-ARENA sources. You need a bottom-up budget with evidence for all cost items.
E. Knowledge sharing	How will the project's learnings benefit the broader industry and policy landscape? ARENA expects a detailed knowledge sharing plan: specific reports with audiences and timing, data sharing arrangements and a strategy for disseminating findings.

The 50% co-contribution

ARENA's 50% co-contribution requirement is the most significant practical hurdle for community-led projects.

Key points:

- Household spend on their own installations is the largest and most common form of co-contribution in electrification projects — this was the dominant source for Electrify 2515.
- Cash contributions from commercial partners (technology company investment, DNSP contributions, product discount pass-throughs) are the strongest form of co-contribution after household spend.
- Future projected revenue from profits raised as a result of the project.
- In-kind contributions from partners (staff time, equipment, data) can count, but must be carefully costed and documented.
- State and territory government co-funding counts, but requires its own separate application process and alignment with the state funder's priorities.



Practical tip

Build your co-contribution narrative early. ARENA will scrutinise whether your consortium is genuinely committed. Formal agreements (MOUs, collaboration agreements, signed partnership deeds) are far more convincing than letters of support alone.

Practical project design guidance

Design decision	Guidance
Choose your geography deliberately	Look for housing stock homogeneity; gas network tail-ends (tractable starting points for decommissioning); existing community activation; and statistical representativeness for research generalisability.
Design for research, not just installation	Define specific research questions before designing project activities. Install monitoring equipment, embed data collection in every participant touchpoint, and engage a dedicated research partner who owns the analysis.
Phase your project: pilot before scale	A smaller initial phase (50–60 homes), a review period, then a main rollout (400–900+ homes) de-risks the project and creates a natural milestone structure for funder reporting.
Plan your commercialisation pathway from day one	For ARENA, you must answer: how does this project become self-sustaining without ongoing subsidy? Identify revenue streams (product sales margins, platform licensing fees, certificate trading, white-label arrangements) and how the model could be replicated in other regions.

Risk management

Major funders will scrutinise your risk register carefully. The most commonly identified risks in electrification demonstration projects include:

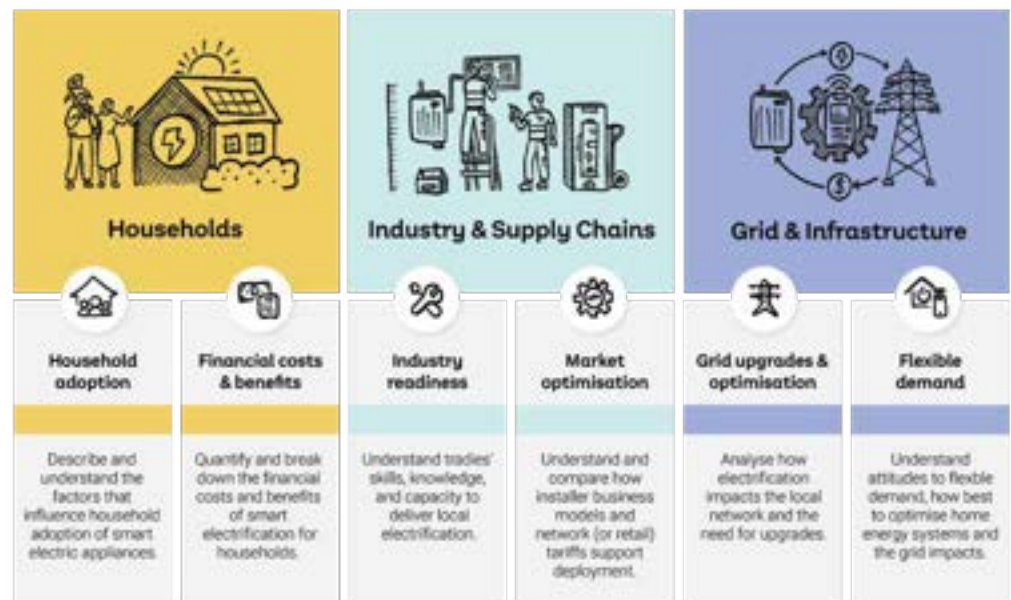
Risk	Effective mitigation
Low household participation	Pre-project EOI process; trusted community intermediary for recruitment; tiered rebate scheme for lower-income households; concentrate in one street before expanding outward
Installer capacity constraints	Recruit and vet installers early; create a managed installer network; build in training time; identify backup suppliers
Cashflow (funder payment timing)	Negotiate staged payments against early milestones; ensure commercial partners can front costs; maintain a financial buffer before launch
Network impacts exceeding expectations	Engage the DNSP early ideally as a formal partner; install network monitoring before installations begin
Research data quality	Use established monitoring hardware embedded in the customer journey; engage the research partner before project start to define protocols
Partnership breakdown	Formal collaboration agreements before the ARENA application; clear RACI for all deliverables; regular steering committee

Case study:
Electrify 2515

Location	Northern Illawarra, NSW (postcode 2515)
Lead organisation	Rewiring Australia
Delivery partners	Brighte (financial and installation management); Endeavour Energy (DNSP and network research)
Funder	ARENA: Advancing Renewables Program (Flexible Demand)
Total project cost	\$11.8 million (ARENA contribution: \$5.4 million, 46%)
Scale	Up to 500 households electrified over two years
Preparation	Electrify 2515 was designed to bring forward in time the future state of a real community, creating a concentration of highly electrified, highly connected homes that does not yet exist anywhere in Australia at scale. Local volunteers formed the community group in mid-2022, more than two years before ARENA funding was announced in October 2024. During that period they held sold-out community events, conducted household surveys across thousands of homes, built trust with local residents and installers, and developed the research and delivery concept. By the time the application was submitted, community commitment was documented not asserted.

Research Design

The project’s research program covered six areas, each with defined research questions, responsible partners, and deliverable outputs:



Key lessons for community organisations



Key lessons

- Recruit a commercial lead early. Community engagement capacity is essential, but the project needs an organisation that can demonstrate the financial systems, legal capacity and commercial track record to satisfy ARENA's requirements.
- Document your engagement history. One ARENA proposal included a detailed timeline of the community group's activities from August 2022 to November 2025. This history was a core part of the credibility case.
- Address ARENA feedback completely. Don't submit a full application until every piece of panel feedback has been substantively addressed.
- Frame equity explicitly. Consider a tiered rebate scheme for lower-income households, engagement with renters and landlords, and partnerships with community services organisations. Equity is increasingly a requirement across all electrification funding programs.

Getting started: a practical checklist

Building block	Questions to answer honestly
Community base	Do you have documented evidence of household interest (surveys, EOs, event attendance)? Can you name a specific geography with a concentration of engaged residents? How many years have you been actively working in this community?
The concept	Can you articulate your project as a research question, not just a list of activities? What gap does your project fill that existing programs don't address? What data will you generate that the sector currently lacks?
Partners	Who will be the lead applicant and contract manager? Do you have a commercial partner with installation or platform capacity? Who will do the research and M&E? Have you spoken with the local DNSP?
Funding readiness	Is ARENA the right funder for your current stage, or should you start with a state innovation fund? Do you have working capital? Can you assemble 50% co-contribution from non-government sources?
Time and capacity	Does your organisation have capacity to sustain a multi-year funding development process? Do you have the governance infrastructure eg. board, financial systems, insurance to manage a large grant?

Chapter 3.

Engaging your community

Community electrification programs succeed when they build a progression: from people who've vaguely heard about it, to people who are genuinely curious, to people who decide to act, to people who bring their neighbours with them. This chapter covers two interconnected challenges: converting the people already in your reach, and growing your reach to reach people who aren't yet.



Part 1:

Converting your reach



Understanding the electrification journey

People don't go from unaware to purchasing overnight. They move through a journey, and at each stage they face different questions, uncertainties and barriers to progressing. Knowing where your target audience sits shapes every decision about program design, messaging and which activities will move the needle.

Stage 1 Discovery – 'I hadn't really thought about it'

People are largely unaware of electrification or its benefits. The challenge is to capture attention and introduce the concept. What works: letterbox drops, stalls at local markets, local media stories, social media content, talks at community clubs. Keep the message simple and benefit-focused.

Stage 2 Interest – 'I'm curious, but I don't know where to start'

Something has sparked their attention — a neighbour got solar, energy bills spiked, or they came across your flyer. They're curious but overwhelmed. What works: workshops, information sessions, how-to guides, explainer videos, Q&A sessions. Be the trusted curator: give people the right next piece of information, not everything at once.

Stage 3 Consideration – 'I think I want to, but is it right for me?'

They're seriously thinking about it but need to validate that it makes sense for their specific situation. What works: kitchen table conversations, open home tours, one-on-one advice sessions, EV open days, induction cooking demonstrations, peer testimonials. Real people sharing real experiences remove doubt far more powerfully than any brochure.

Stage 4 Intent – 'I've decided. I just need to take the next step'





They're ready, but something is stopping them: finding a trustworthy installer, navigating rebates, comparing quotes, or raising the upfront deposit. This is where programs lose the most value. What works: vetted installer referrals, rebate navigation support, coordinated upgrade programs, financing options. Community programs deliver their greatest impact per hour of effort invested at this stage.

Stage 5 Advocacy – 'I've done it and I want others to as well'

They're ready, but something is stopping them: finding a trustworthy installer, navigating rebates, comparing quotes, or raising the upfront deposit. This is where programs lose the most value. What works: vetted installer referrals, rebate navigation support, coordinated upgrade programs, financing options. Community programs deliver their greatest impact per hour of effort invested at this stage.

Make people feel connected

People connect with a cause in different ways depending on their interests and motivations. Offering a mix of engagement modes means more people find a way in, and more stay engaged over time.

 Head	 Heart	 Hands	 Feet
<i>Intellectual engagement</i>	<i>Emotional connection</i>	<i>Practical contribution</i>	<i>Movement-building</i>
<p>Engage through learning & knowledge building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and webinars • Expert panels and Q&A • How-to guides and explainers • Policy briefings 	<p>Engage through shared values & a sense of belonging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gatherings • Celebrating volunteers • Sharing personal journeys • Storytelling events 	<p>Engage through encouraging contribution & ownership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering at events • Running demonstrations • Advising neighbours • Supporting installs 	<p>Engage through collective action & creating a larger impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy campaigns • Training new volunteers • Connecting to national networks • Local lobbying



Part 2:

Growing your reach



Growing your program means going beyond the people who already follow it. Reaching new people comes down to three things: the right message, the right messenger and the right channel.

The right message

Personas and messaging approaches

Personas are fictional profiles that represent common segments of your community. They help you tailor communication and engagement strategies to match the motivations, interests and needs of different groups.

Persona	Profile and messaging approach
<p>The Cost-Conscious Homeowner</p> <p>Wants lower bills and home comfort. Hears about it through a neighbour or rising energy costs. Held back by upfront cost uncertainty and finding a trustworthy installer.</p> <p><i>Lead with: savings, payback period, real examples from similar households.</i></p>	<p>The Climate-Motivated Resident</p> <p>Wants meaningful action on emissions. Already in environmental networks. Limited ways to contribute practically beyond their own home.</p> <p><i>Lead with: collective impact, local progress, volunteer and advocacy opportunities.</i></p>
<p>The Curious Observer</p> <p>Interested but unsure if it applies to them. Enters via local media or a community event. Held back by information overload and uncertainty about the technology.</p> <p><i>Lead with: simple stories from real local people, demonstrations, 'what it's actually like'.</i></p>	<p>The Renter or Apartment Dweller</p> <p>Wants to act but can't control appliances. Uncertain how to approach a landlord.</p> <p><i>Lead with: what renters can do now, how to raise it with landlords, renter-friendly policy advocacy.</i></p>

Key messages

Electrification offers multiple entry points which all can lead to better lifestyles and communities. Choose which message will resonate most with your target audience and lead with that:

- Savings and affordability: lower energy bills, protection against gas price volatility
- Comfort and liveability: warmer in winter, cooler in summer, better indoor air quality
- Resilience: less grid dependence, battery backup, community energy security
- Health: no indoor gas combustion, reduced respiratory risk
- Pride and local identity: being part of a community doing something meaningful
- Climate and environment: reduced household emissions, contributing to the national transition.



Principles for better messaging

- Stories and local people, not stats. A neighbour's quote about cutting their winter bills outperforms a national average. Photos of real local households beat infographics.
- Don't amplify the opposition's framing. 'Do EVs cause fires?' associates fires with EVs even as a rebuttal. Instead: 'How EVs are safer than petrol cars.' Lead with the positive frame.
- Language of choice, not obligation. 'Upgrade', 'comfort' and 'choice' land better than 'transition', 'mandated' and 'future-proofing'. People respond to agency, not inevitability.
- Use faces and voices. Strong quotes and photos from real participants consistently outperform polished professional content.
- Use plain language eg. terms like 'CER', 'VPP' and 'DNSP' are meaningless to most residents.



The right messenger

People trust a message more when it comes from someone like them. A neighbour who mentions their heat pump over the back fence outperforms any expert presentation not because they know more, but because they're more believable.

Your most effective messengers:

- **neighbours who have electrified:** especially those who can speak candidly about cost, the practical experience and what surprised them
- **tradespeople:** inside people's homes, trusted, and often present at the moment of decision; tradespeople who've been through the program themselves become extraordinarily effective advocates
- **community leaders:** councillors, school principals, club presidents, neighbourhood house coordinators
- **lifestyle figures with broad appeal:** local chefs who love induction cooking, renovators, community bloggers whose audiences extend beyond sustainability networks
- **social service workers and health professionals:** particularly effective for reaching lower-income households and those with health motivation
- **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) leaders:** trust is often a bigger barrier than language; partnering with multicultural organisations and bilingual community champions outperforms translated advertising alone

Building local heroes

The neighbourhood effect is powerful: the more people around you who make the switch, the easier it feels to follow. Build a culture of local heroes - everyday people proud to share their story:

- actively recruit case study participants from early adopters and make sharing their story simple
- host open home events where recently electrified households invite neighbours in for a look and a chat
- create short video and photo content featuring real local people, not stock images
- celebrate milestones publicly eg. the 50th household, the first fully electric street



Electrification is an equity issue

The benefits of switching away from gas eg lower bills, better air quality, more comfortable homes are most significant for people who currently spend the most on energy and live in the least comfortable homes. Engaging social justice organisations, health advocates, First Nations community groups and community welfare networks positions electrification as a solution to concerns they're already working on. These partnerships reach people that sustainability messaging rarely does.

The right channel

A program that relies on a single channel will miss everyone who isn't there. Put the right message where your target audiences already spend their time.

Community organisations and gathering places

Going to where people gather is more effective than building new audiences from scratch:

- sporting clubs and social leagues: short talk at training night reaches people who'd never attend an energy workshop
- community centres and libraries: trusted hubs with broad cross-community reach
- schools and P&C associations: parents are a motivated audience; students carry messages home
- faith groups: particularly valuable for older residents and multicultural communities
- RSLs, U3A, bowls clubs and seniors groups: many older homeowners are ideal participants but underrepresented in digital-first recruitment; face-to-face engagement works best here
- social service organisations: for reaching lower-income homes; proactively communicate subsidies, income-tested support and financing options

Media and digital channels

Channel	How to use it
Local print media and magazines	High trust, particularly for older readers. A cover story or regular feature delivers credibility and broad reach. Confirm interest early — local magazines often plan well ahead.
Local radio	Wide community audience and trusted. A guest interview consistently outperforms paid advertising. Build journalist relationships before you need them.
Facebook (community groups)	Strong reach for the 35–65 age group. Local community groups are effective for peer content. Paid advertising allows precise geographic targeting.
Google Search ads	Captures people already looking for information about solar, heat pumps or EVs. Cost-effective for driving applications.
Email newsletter	High engagement from people who've already expressed interest. Build your list early and treat it as a long-term asset.
Letterbox drops and posters	Essential for reaching non-digital audiences. High visibility in dense areas, especially when delivered by local volunteers.
Community newsletters and noticeboards	School newsletters, church bulletins, sporting club circulars — trusted channels that reach beyond sustainability audiences.
Door-knocking and market stalls	High effort, high conversion. Face-to-face conversation from a local community member is the most persuasive engagement of all.



Practical tip

Every communication should end with a single, clear call to action, usually: register your interest, come to a specific event, or get personalised advice. Front and centre, not buried.

Case study:

Electrify 2515 community engagement lessons

Electrify 2515, a community-initiated electrification pilot, has the task of recruiting 500 households to replace gas appliances with subsidised electric alternatives. The lessons below are directly applicable to groups designing their own programs.

Build your foundation before you launch	Before any formal recruitment began, the Electrify 2515 team had spent years building community trust: an initial survey, an email list of people who'd expressed interest, an active volunteer network and established local media relationships. Programs starting from scratch should plan for a longer lead time to build equivalent assets, or anchor the effort in an existing community organisation with established trust.
Agree on principles before you design activities	The project partners agreed on a set of engagement principles that guided every decision: trust and transparency; treating tradespeople as critical partners, not just installers; treating participants as future ambassadors from day one; designing for diversity across age groups, income levels and housing types; and welcoming negative feedback as research data.
Categorise your leads and match activities accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot leads: existing email list, social media followers, and local tradespeople who could act as advocates. • Warm leads: workshop and event attendees, market stall visitors, people reached via local networks. • Cool leads: broader community requiring sustained effort via local media, letterbox drops and real estate agents for the renter pathway. <p>Starting with hot and warm leads allows early momentum to build before scaling broader outreach.</p>
Phase your activities and keep face-to-face support throughout	For initial recruitment: two launch events; a well-designed website with a subsidy calculator; an explainer video; a simple application form; library drop-in sessions; market stall presence. For main rollout: letterbox drop case studies; targeted paid digital advertising; regular local media; induction cooking demonstration events; kitchen table events; open days; an electrification expo. A phone and in-person drop-in support service was maintained throughout is essential for people not confident completing an application online.
Don't use a first-come-first-served model for participant selection	Applications were reviewed against criteria designed to ensure the participant group reflected the real diversity of the community: building types, income levels, household makeup, tenancy status and appliance configurations. Priority was given to homes replacing all gas appliances. This reinforced the trust principle: participants understood they were selected to reflect a representative cross-section, not simply because they applied first.

Chapter 3.

Measuring Success

Knowing whether your program is working and being honest about what isn't is what separates a one-off event from a genuine local movement. Measurement and evaluation help you refine your approach in real time, demonstrate impact to funders and council partners, and contribute to a growing body of knowledge that benefits electrification programs across the country.



Why measurement matters

Measurement doesn't have to be complex to be useful. Even basic data eg. how many people attended an event, how many went on to get a quote, how many installed can reveal patterns that help you work smarter.

Improve your program	Demonstrate impact	Build shared knowledge
Understand what's working and where people are dropping out, so you can adapt activities and close gaps.	Provide evidence to funders, councils and community members that their support is making a real difference.	Contribute to a national evidence base that helps other groups design better programs from the start.

What to measure

A good measurement framework tracks activity across three layers: the engagement activities you run, the progress households make through the electrification journey, and the broader outcomes for households, your community and the environment.

Metric	What it tells you
Event attendance	Whether your format, timing and promotion are working. A well-promoted event that draws a small crowd may signal a mismatch between the topic and what your community currently cares about.
Volunteer participation	The depth of local buy-in. Growing volunteer numbers suggest your program is building genuine momentum, not just passive interest.
Email open and click rates	How compelling your communications are. Low open rates often point to subject lines or send times worth testing; low click rates suggest the content isn't connecting.
Social media reach and engagement	Which messages spread and which formats your community responds to are useful for allocating time across platforms.
Advisory sessions delivered	The volume of one-to-one support your program is providing can be a strong indicator of depth of engagement beyond events.
Enquiries and expressions of interest	The conversion of awareness into intent. Track where enquiries come from to understand which channels are most effective.

Journey progression metrics

These track how people are moving through the electrification decision from awareness through to installation. They are the most important indicators of program effectiveness because they reveal where people are getting stuck. Track the number of people at each stage and, crucially, the conversion rate between stages. A sharp drop between Interest and Consideration suggests your follow-up process needs attention; a drop between quotes and installation often points to cost barriers or installer availability issues.



ZapCat's data from council programs in NSW shows that conversion rates from initial enquiry to personalised recommendation vary from roughly 30% to 60% between different local government areas — meaning the same program design can produce very different results depending on community context.

Outcome metrics

Outcome	Notes on measurement
Number and type of installations	Track by upgrade type (solar, heat pump hot water, reverse-cycle, induction, EV charger, insulation). This reveals which upgrades your community is prioritising and where support is most needed.
Estimated CO ₂ emissions avoided	Can be calculated using standard emissions factors. Present as annual, ten-year and product lifetime figures for maximum impact.
Estimated household energy bill savings	A compelling metric for community members and funders alike. Use locally relevant electricity tariffs and conservative assumptions.
Household satisfaction	Survey participants after installation. What did they find difficult? What would they tell a friend? This qualitative data is invaluable for improving your program and generating case studies.
Return on investment	Where possible, quantify the return per dollar invested including value to local businesses through installer revenue.

Designing for evaluation from the start

The most common measurement mistake is treating it as an afterthought. Programs that measure well tend to have built evaluation into their design from the beginning.

Start with a theory of change

A theory of change is simply a clear statement of what you're trying to achieve, how your activities will get you there, and what assumptions underpin that logic. It doesn't have to be formal, even a one-page diagram helps. Map the causal chain: if we run these events, households will develop awareness; if they have awareness and access to advice, they will request quotes; if they receive trusted support through the quoting process, they will proceed to installation.

Use a funnel to track progression

Think of your program as a funnel: a large number of people enter at the top (awareness), and progressively smaller numbers move through each subsequent stage. Your job is to make the funnel as efficient as possible widening the top through effective promotion and reducing drop-off at each transition through targeted support. A simple spreadsheet updated after each key program activity can tell you a great deal.

Build in participant feedback

Numbers alone rarely tell the full story. Regular feedback from participants eg. through short surveys, brief conversations after events or follow-up calls reveals what motivated people to act, what made them hesitate and what finally tipped them over the line.



Geelong Sustainability's Electric Homes Program found 94% satisfaction among participants — a figure only captured because the program built evaluation into its design. That number has since been cited widely to demonstrate the effectiveness of structured, council-supported electrification programs.

Practical measurement tools

Tool	Best for	Notes
Spreadsheet tracker	Journey progression, installations, outcomes	Simple and flexible. Create columns for each stage of the journey and update after each key touchpoint.
Event registration platform	Attendance, demographics, follow-up	Tools like Eventbrite capture registration data automatically and allow post-event surveys.
Email marketing platform	Open rates, click rates, unsubscribes	Platforms like Mailchimp provide engagement analytics without extra effort.
Online estimate tool	Interest, household characteristics, conversion	Platforms like ZapCat generate automatic funnel data and outcome projections for council programs.
Participant survey	Satisfaction, barriers, case study identification	Short surveys (5–8 questions) sent within a week of a key event or installation capture the most candid responses.
Council dashboard	Real-time KPIs, funder reporting	Where your program runs through a council or program partner, request access to live dashboards that track outputs and outcomes automatically.



Practical tip

Consistency matters more than sophistication. A simple system your team actually uses every month will generate far more useful insights than a complex one that gets updated irregularly.

Learning and adapting

Collecting data is only the first step. The real value comes from acting on it. Many effective programs build in monthly reviews of funnel data and engagement metrics; quarterly reflection sessions with the broader volunteer team; and annual program reviews that assess whether the approach is still well-matched to community needs and context.

When something isn't working, treat it as information rather than failure. A low event turnout might prompt you to try a different venue or time. A high drop-off at the quoting stage might lead you to trial a supported quote review session. A sharp difference in uptake between two suburbs might reveal a socioeconomic barrier worth addressing with targeted outreach.

Reporting to funders and councils

If your program receives funding, you will almost certainly need to report against agreed outcomes. Good measurement practice makes this straightforward rather than stressful. When you accept funding, review the reporting requirements carefully and map them directly to your measurement system from the outset — not six months later.

It's also worth negotiating on outcomes where possible. Many funders are willing to adjust indicator definitions to reflect what is actually measurable in a community program context, particularly if you come to the conversation with a clear alternative and a rationale.

What funders typically want to see

- Outputs: activities delivered (events, advisory sessions, promotional reach)
- Uptake: number of households that progressed to each stage of the journey
- Outcomes: installations completed, emissions avoided, bill savings achieved
- Learnings: honest reflection on what worked, what was challenging and what you would do differently
- Case studies: one or two compelling household stories that bring the data to life



Questions to guide your measurement planning

- What does success look like for your program at 6 months, 12 months and 2 years?
- Which metrics will tell you whether you're on track at each stage of the journey?
- How will you collect participant feedback — and who is responsible for doing it?
- When will your team review data and make decisions about what to change?
- Who needs to receive reporting from your program, and on what timeline?
- What will you document and share beyond your own community — and through which channels?

Resources and templates



The following templates are available to support your program planning and implementation. Links to downloadable files are provided below.

Template	Description
Strategic planning worksheet	A simple template to work through the seven planning steps in Chapter 1, including problem statement, SMART objectives and stakeholder map.
Supplier/installer vetting EOI	A template Expression of Interest document for vetting and selecting local installers. Covers capacity, quality, customer service, pricing and verification checks.
Community survey	A baseline survey template to assess your community's current awareness, motivations and barriers. Contact info@rewiringaustralia.org to request a copy.
Persona builder	A worksheet for developing audience personas based on your community data, surveys and local knowledge.

About this handbook

This handbook was produced by Rewiring Australia with support from Energy Consumers Australia, and in collaboration with the Energy Upgrades for Australian Homes program at RACE for 2030.

It draws on the experience of community electrification groups across Australia and is designed to be updated as programs evolve and new case studies emerge.

For more resources and connections to the national network, visit rewiringaustralia.org/community.

