

How to complete your Social DSO Fund application form

A step-by-step guide for applicants:

1. Before you start

Time needed: 2-3 hours (if you have all the information to hand)

What information you will need:

- Your organisation details (name, address, registration number and a lead contact)
- A simple delivery plan and timeline (projects need to be completed within a 12-month period)
- A short description of your project, the aims, who benefits and details of how you will manage risks within your project
- A clear budget, details of any match-funding as well as quotes (at least three) for any planned spend that is over £500.

Eligibility checks:

Before beginning your application, please check that you meet all the eligibility requirements below. We can only assess applications that pass these eligibility checks.

- Your organisation is legally constituted and registered on Companies House or the Charities Commission and is a community or public sector organisation.
- Your proposed project is located within SP Electricity North West's DSO licence boundary. (Use this [postcode checker](#) if unsure)
- Your project will deliver social and/or environmental benefits for local people or communities.
- You can provide match funding for your project (there is no minimum requirement).
- Your funding request is for eligible activities only.

If you have any questions while applying, please email SocialDSO@enwl.co.uk — we're happy to help.

2. How your application is assessed:

We check basic eligibility first, then a panel assesses eligible applications against set criteria such as strategic alignment, social and financial benefits, inclusion of at-risk groups, ability to deliver and risk management, using consistent guidance. Our funding is competitive and subject to available budget.

3. Step-by-step guide to completing the application form

Section 1 – Contact & organisation details (Q1–Q15)

Q1-Q4: Lead contact (name, role, phone and email) Tell us the person who knows this project best and can respond quickly to questions during assessment and delivery. It doesn't have to be the most senior person.

Q5–Q9. Organisation details (name, address, website, main phone, general email) Use your official details as they appear in your governing/registration documents or bank statement. If there's no website, leave that box blank.

Q10. Organisation incorporation date

Enter the date on your registration record. If unincorporated, use the date your group formally adopted a constitution or started operating.

Q11. Organisation type

Pick the option that best matches your legal status (e.g., charity, CIC, CIO, community benefit society, co-op, company limited by guarantee, parish/town council, school, housing association, unincorporated group). If you're unsure, email us - we welcome a wide range of community and public-sector applicants.

Q12. Registration number

If registered (Companies House / Charity Commission), enter the number exactly as shown; otherwise write "Not applicable".

Q13. Part of a larger organisation?

If you're a branch/subsidiary, name the parent body and explain the relationship (e.g., who signs the grant, who holds the bank account).

Q14. What your organisation does (100 words max)

In plain English: who you support, where, and how. A good structure is "We support...", "We do this by...", "This matters because..."

Q15. Project partners (if relevant)

List partners who have a defined delivery role and what each will do. (No need to list general supporters here.)

Section 2 – Your project (Q16–Q24)

Q16–Q19. Project name, one-sentence summary, duration, main postcode

- Keep the name short and recognisable.
- One sentence that says what you'll do and who benefits.
- Duration: projects should complete **within 12 months** of your start date.
- Postcode must be within our distribution area (use the postcode checker if unsure).

Q20. Project description (≤500 words)

Tell us: the need you're addressing, what activities you'll deliver (with a simple timeline), what

you'll produce (deliverables), and key risks with mitigations. Use dates/months to set out your plan.

Q21. How your project meets the Social DSO Fund objectives (≤200 words)

Be explicit about which objectives you meet and how (copy the objective wording and show the link). Focus on inclusion, measurable benefits, innovation/partnership, and (where relevant) enabling flexibility.

Q22. Impacts table

List your main activities, the impacts they create (i.e. savings on bill savings), and the rationale — why those benefits will really happen. Keep claims realistic and measurable.

Q23. How you'll measure ongoing success

Explain your approach to monitoring, outcomes and evidence (e.g., attendance data, simple surveys, energy/billing data, short case studies). Choose methods you feel you can deliver.

Q24. Your community and how they're involved

Use the table to show who you'll involve (especially at-risk groups such as low income, renters, rural, low digital confidence), how many (estimates are fine), and how you'll remove barriers (timing, access, translation). Use the at-risk groups list for consistency.

NB: For a worked example of Questions 20-24 please see page 5 of this document.

Section 3 – Flexibility services (only if you're installing Low Carbon Technologies) (Q25-Q26)

Complete this section only if your project is installing low-carbon technologies (LCTs) (e.g., solar PV, batteries, heat pumps). Check if you're in a Constraint Management Zone (CMZ) and list your LCTs and their power in Kilowatts (kW). Minimum thresholds: Low Voltage installations ≥ 5 kW, High Voltage installations ≥ 10 kW; multiple LCTs can be aggregated to meet the threshold. See our Flexibility Hub and postcode tools for details.

Section 4 - Project finance (Qu27-Qu30)

- Amount requested: state the total grant request (in £,000s).
- If not funded: say realistically what would happen (delay, scale-back, match elsewhere).
- Budget breakdown: list all items/activities and costs; totals must add up; attach three quotes for items >£500.
- Match funding: there is no minimum requirement, but assessors consider the overall level and realism of match (cash or in-kind).

Section 5 – Additional information (Qu31-Qu31)

- Conflict of interest declaration: list all board/committee members and any connections with SP Electricity North West or its employees.

- **Supplier quotes:** confirm the additional documents you're submitting (e.g., "3 quotes for solar PV install attached").
- **Permissions & privacy:** tick the permission box to allow us to assess your application; see our privacy policy for how we store and use data.

What makes a strong application (What the assessors are looking for)

- **Clear need and audience:** Use this application to show *who* benefits and *why* (use local facts, not just general statements).
- **Direct fit with Fund objectives:** explicitly reference the objectives and how your project advances fairness and participation.
- **Deliverable plan:** a simple timeline (maximum 12 months), milestones and named roles; risks with sensible mitigations.
- **Credible benefits:** practical financial benefits for people, wider social value, and a light-touch plan for evidence (data you can collect).
- **Inclusion by design:** how you'll reach at-risk groups (e.g., renters, low income, rural, low digital confidence) and remove barriers (timing, access, translation).
- **Proportionate budget and match:** costs add up; quotes are included; match is realistic (no minimum).
- **Flexibility-readiness:** Only relevant if you are installing Low Carbon Technologies (LCT) in a Constraint Management Zone (CMZ), remember to note if you might meet the LV/HV thresholds, either now (if for example you already have some technology installed) or later (your proposed project will see the installation of new Low Carbon Technologies).

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

We recognise that applying for funding can take time, particularly for volunteer-led organisations. We encourage you to focus on clearly explaining your project, who it will benefit, and how you will deliver it.

If you have any questions about the Social DSO Fund or need clarification while preparing your application, please contact the Social DSO team at SocialDSO@enwl.co.uk. We are happy to help.

WORKED EXAMPLE – ABC village hall

24. Please provide a description of your project (500 words max)

Your answer should include:

- the aim or issue your project is addressing;
- the key activities you will undertake (please include timeframe for each);
- the key deliverables you expect the project to achieve.
- Identified risks and mitigating steps.

Please include a timescale for each activity e.g. Submit grid connection application for EV chargepoint (April 2026).

Aim: Rising energy costs and brief outages affect our local village hall and its ability to function as a hub for the community. We want to generate and store renewable energy onsite to reduce energy bills and increase reliance against future outages.

Activities:

Pre-installation checks (Month 1-2): Confirm the final design and costs with the chosen supplier, carry out any final site checks or permissions and agree a clear delivery plan and installation dates

Installation (Months 2–6): Install the solar panels and battery system, test the system and make sure it is working safely and brief staff or volunteers.

Close project (Months 6-9): Close project, finalise monitoring report, monitor impact.

Key deliverables:

- Installed solar panels and battery storage system installed and working
- Reduced energy bills for the village hall
- Completed final monitoring report

Key risks and mitigating steps:

No.	Risk	Mitigating steps
1	Delays to installation: The installation could be delayed due to supplier availability or poor weather.	We have discussed timescales with the installer in advance and will build in some flexibility. If needed, installation dates can be moved without affecting hall activities.
2	Costs increasing unexpectedly: Costs could increase after the project starts.	We have obtained three quotes in advance and agreed a fixed price with the chosen installer. We will only proceed with work that fits within the agreed budget.
4	Disruption to hall users: Installation work could	We will schedule works outside of peak booking times where possible and give hall users clear advance notice.

	<i>disrupt regular hall bookings.</i>	
5	System not performing as expected <i>The solar panels may generate less electricity than expected.</i>	<i>We have chosen a reputable installer and will monitor the system regularly. Any issues will be raised with the installer under warranty.</i>
6	Lack of confidence in using the system <i>Committee members may not feel confident monitoring or explaining the system.</i>	<i>The installer will provide guidance, and responsibilities will be shared among committee members rather than relying on one person.</i>
7	Volunteer capacity changes <i>Key volunteers may step back during the project.</i>	<i>More than one committee member will be involved in overseeing the project, and progress will be recorded in meeting notes to ensure continuity.</i>

21. How does your project meet one or more of the Social DSO Fund objectives? (200 words). Please include the number of which criteria your project meets in your answer.

Social DSO Fund objectives:

1. Enable community and public sector organisations to play an active role in the energy transition.
2. Increase participation from under-represented groups.
3. Deliver measurable social and environmental value.
4. Support innovative and collaborative solutions.
5. Facilitate community-owned flexibility assets and services.
6. Support projects that broaden access to net zero benefits in marginalised areas.

For more information on how our Social DSO Fund supports our wider Social DSO aims please read our [Social DSO strategy](#)

Q21 – Fund objectives

- **(1) Enable public sector/community action:** *The village hall hosts community-owned generation that reduces costs and helps to demonstrate net-zero action.*
- **(2) Increase participation of under-represented groups:** *In power-outages we can support at-risks groups by providing heat and power.*
- **(3) Measurable social/environmental value:** *bill savings support; cleaner air; skills gains.*
- **(6) Broaden access in marginalised areas:** *Our ward has lower incomes and lower digital access; the project brings tangible benefits to people otherwise missing out.*

22. What impacts is your project likely to have?

Please use the table below to tell us what positive changes your project will make. This can include changes that happen directly because of your project and changes that happen indirectly (as a secondary effect). We will use this information to:

- understand the value your project could create for local people
- assess the social return on investment
- help us track your progress during the project

Below are some examples of the types of benefits we are looking for. If your project will create other benefits, please add them in the extra rows. Example impacts:

- **Financial benefits for local people:**
For example, helping people reduce their energy bills or save money (£).
- **Benefits for the wider community:**
These might include better health and wellbeing, more local jobs, reduced pressure on local services, or cleaner, safer environments.

For more information about the types of impacts we aim to support through the Social DSO Fund, please see our [Social DSO Strategy](#).

Project activity	Impacts	Rationale for delivery of impacts
Installation of Solar PV and battery storage system.	Financial benefits i.e. reduction in energy bills, freeing additional income for other services.	Financial savings can be evidenced through bills
	Health savings: i.e. Local air quality and resilience.	On-site generation/storage displaces imported energy
	Increased employment	The project will use a local provider to install solar PV and battery system.

<i>Public dashboard</i>	<i>Helps to engage at-risk groups</i>	<i>Visible, local feedback builds agency and participation</i>

23. What processes will you have in place for measuring the ongoing success of your project?
Please describe how you will monitor progress, measure outcomes, and collect data (e.g., surveys, interviews, energy data, participation numbers, case studies). This information will help us understand whether your project has achieved its intended impact and what evidence may be available.

We will keep track of the project by:

- Checking that the solar panels and battery are installed and working as planned*
- Looking at electricity bills before and after installation to understand any cost savings*
- Using the basic monitoring information provided by the installer to see how much energy is being generated*
- Reviewing progress regularly at village hall committee meetings to make sure the project is on track and completed within the agreed timescale.*

24. Tell us about your community and how they are involved in the project.

If your project engages groups that are often underrepresented or face barriers to participation (e.g., low income, rural, ethnic minorities), please describe how. Use the table below to indicate which groups you will involve, provide estimated numbers (if available), and explain how they are included.

See Appendix 1 for definitions.

At-risk community groups	Estimated numbers	Rationale for inclusion
No off-road parking		
Above average power cuts		
Ethnic minorities		
Low confidence (with digital technologies)		
<i>Low disposable income</i>	80	<i>Lower running costs help keep hall hire affordable for local groups.</i>
No internet		
No off-road parking		
Renters		
<i>Rural</i>	150	<i>The hall is an important shared space in a rural community with limited services.</i>
Single person households		
SMEs		
<i>Vulnerable (Extra care register)</i>	20	<i>The hall can continue to act as a warm and safe space during colder periods or outage</i>