

Powering communities

Empowering communities across the province to become more energy autonomous.



Bring on the energy

Community generation refers to renewable or alternative power sources that are connected to the grid and provide benefits to the community. It allows communities and citizens pool their resources to own energy projects and to generate revenue by selling the electricity they produce to the grid. Many communities often find an opportunity to create local jobs through community generation as well.

Over the past few years, Energy Efficiency Alberta has empowered communities across the province to become more energy autonomous. This included not just communities in the traditional sense, but co-ops, condo corporations, irrigation districts, not-for-profits, rural utilities and school boards. The Community Generation

Capacity Building Program provided funding for projects with activities focused on the pre-development of a specific community generation facility or enabling the development of community generation projects through partnerships and tools.

A number of fund recipients, including the Metis Settlement General Council, St. Mary River Irrigation District, North Parkland Power Rural Electrification Association and Alberta Sustainable Goals Cooperative, took the opportunity to build capacity in their communities to understand more about their renewable and alternative energy potential. They undertook studies to understand what types of renewable or alternative energy would be the most feasible in their areas, known as feasibility studies, and what they would need to do to connect their projects to the grid, known as interconnection studies. This also included understanding the economics of various projects, and how it could benefit the communities they served.

Through community generation, communities at large participated in renewable generation projects. Some projects, such as those from the [Rocky Rural Electrification Association](#) in the Rocky Mountain House area and the [Solar Power Investment Cooperative of Edmonton](#) even went as far to begin engagement on renewable and alternative energy projects, in an effort to work towards Community Benefit Agreements.

The CAIRN Housing Society in Grande Prairie took a different approach. They decided to install a [combined heat and power generation unit](#) in their affordable housing complexes. They also took an energy efficiency approach as well, educating residents about ways to reduce energy use to enhance the energy savings. By installing sub-metering systems in each apartment, they can use the data about differences in power use to provide better information to their residents about how they can use energy smarter. The Hutterite Brethren Church of Albion Ridge shared its story with other colonies, using case studies to teach them how to undertake renewable energy development at the individual colony level.

The Environment Lethbridge Council worked with residents of Lethbridge to develop and incorporate the [Southern Alberta Renewable Energy Cooperative](#), (SABRE) and the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley worked with Canmore residents to develop and incorporate the [Bow Valley Green Energy Cooperative](#), which enable the communities to own and benefit from renewable energy projects. Community Generation Co-ops are a business owned and run by its members, that enable the money generated to stay local, for the community to have control of the assets, and for communities to invest in themselves. They also act to enable funding and ownership of any future renewable energy projects. In April, SABRE started its first capital raise, empowering Albertans to invest in local renewable energy projects.

Photo above: Iron and Earth installs solar panels on a Louis Bull Tribe home. Photo credit: Joan Sullivan



A photo of the proposed site of Bow River Irrigation District's Hydropower Project. Having completed an environmental assessment, study of the electrical distribution system and design for the solar and hydro components, they are almost ready for construction.