



C.1 Creating continuous motivation of SMEs

Short description	You support the SMEs to maintain the motivation to continuous and active participation in the activities and services offered, with the goal of implementation of energy measures.
Tools provided	Examples of agendas and content/topics for meetings and networking events (Appendix C.1).

The core of your local SME energy collective is to motivate SMEs to improve energy efficiency and implement renewable energy projects. Motivated SMEs is essential to achieving results and reaping the benefits from a collective approach by having companies that actively contribute to sharing experience and networking. So, how can you best motivate SMEs to stay active in (or to join) your local SME energy collective? Firstly, good and relevant services and activities for the companies are the basis of preserving the interest. Secondly, the collaborative nature of collective approaches can be a source of inspiration. Thirdly, the experience and knowledge which you, Energy Service Suppliers and other stakeholders have can be used to encourage the SMEs. These three approaches will be elaborated on in the sections below.



Figure 1. Three main motivational approaches for operating a local SME energy collective.

C.1.1 Creating relevant services and activities

It is important that your originally planned services and activities (see Section B.3) match the continuously changing needs of the SMEs. For the services and activities to be relevant, you should base the selection and content of the activities on your knowledge of the SMEs. The activities can be tailored to address the ambitions and business targets of the SMEs, as well as support them appropriately in their energy saving strategies. Although your services and activities are energy-related, the ambitions and targets of the SMEs will often be related to their core business and other non-energy topics. Showing the multiple benefits of your energy-related services that contribute to these non-energy ambitions can motivate SMEs further.

The best way to get insights into the ambitions and targets of individual SMEs is by **personal interaction** with the companies, and by continuously developing your



knowledge about the SMEs involved. It requires a dialogue between you and the company. At SMEs, there is often only one person who is responsible for energy related questions, which is why it can be motivating for this person if you can act as a discussion partner. Show your interest in the individual companies and their energy work. There are decisions to be made in several steps after starting a more systematic work with energy efficiency, such as adopting targets and action plans, and investing in energy measures. Ask about the process for taking such decisions in the company.

Knowledge about each individual SME also gives you a picture of the local energy collective as a whole. This can be used for dividing the collective into sub-groups with similar needs in order to address these in a more focused way. The sub-groups could consist of SMEs, which:

- are active in the same business segment;
- are of the same size, for example, micro or small or medium sized;
- use the same amount of energy;
- use energy for the same type of purposes, e.g. production processes or office services;
- are at the same level of energy maturity; and
- have similar experience of renewables.

This means that you have three levels for tailoring the services/activities and information for the SMEs:

- You can address all of them collectively.
- You can target different sub-groups of SMEs (these sub-groups can vary from time to time depending on the subject).
- You can direct your attention to the companies individually.

Before starting the organization of those activities, you could check with your target group if they are interested in the proposed activity. Depending on their response, you can adapt the target group or the activity.

To get further **insights into the interests and desires** of the SMEs, it is also possible to distribute a survey amongst all members. As it is important to receive honest and open answers, a survey can only be applied to local SME energy collectives that have already been working together for some time. In such collectives, one can be more direct and ask about the preferences of the SMEs. As not all SMEs will be motivated to participate in a survey, it could help to distribute the survey during a live event and ask the SMEs to fill it out during a break or a dedicated time slot in the program. Or you could connect it to a joint action, such as the renewal of a waste contract. These activities could be combined with the activities conducted to monitor the impact of the local energy collective (see Section D.1.4).



One way to inspire even more is to **involve the SMEs in planning and performing activities** such as meetings and workshops around interesting themes. Here, the SMEs can act as meeting hosts on subjects that are their expertise, they can lead discussion groups or study visits can be arranged at one or several of the SMEs. Such involvements are a good way for SMEs to get familiar with the activities of the local SME energy collective, to network with other participants or other stakeholders, and to share success stories.

It is important to make sure that the SMEs develop **clear expectations** about the outcome from the initiative they are participating in and what is required of them in terms of allocated resources such as time or money. Misunderstandings are not motivational and should be avoided as much as possible. It is also important that the person with the right skills is chosen for the task and that the decision to participate is well anchored in the company so that performed efforts are appreciated and prioritized.

Finally, in all activities, remember the multiple-benefits approach, and as always, utilize inspirational examples relevant to the subject and preferably with a local connection.

Examples of activities for motivating SMEs to work with energy efficiency

SME engagement can start with the engagement of its employees. One action taken to promote this commitment within the Enterprise Network Motzener Straße (Germany) was to develop an application for smartphones and to organize a challenge so that each employee wishing to participate could enter his or her "good" actions and count his or her score. The actions to be entered concerned various themes such as food, packaging, mobility, energy, etc.

Another example was the organization of Energy Efficiency Weeks, with the possibility to do a complete check up on the SME resources.

C.1.2 Demonstrating benefits of the collective approach

Working together with others can have many inspiring advantages that you as a Trusted Partner can reinforce and make visible. Be responsive to which advantages participating companies seem to appreciate the most. In that way, you and the SMEs create the spirit of the local energy collective together. Below, examples are given of collaborative aspects and actions that can enhance motivation.

One motivational aspect from working together is that the companies can find **support in and learn from each other**. Make sure that there is time set aside at meetings and seminars for the participants to talk to each other and exchange experiences (see suggestions for a meeting agenda in Appendix C.1). Some of the companies might be frontrunners and are willing to show their energy strategy and measures. Note, that this might require that no direct competitors are collaborating on the same activities. Not all SMEs might be willing to cooperate to the same degree, but there should be possibilities for SMEs to cooperate to different extents.



Another important aspect when working together is to strengthen the [sense of belonging in the local SME energy collective](#). To do that:

- [Set targets for the energy collective together](#). It can be to increase the knowledge within the group on specific subjects, to increase energy efficiency by for example 15 %, to do energy audits at the SMEs, to jointly invest in solar panels, etcetera (see also Chapter D for more information about ambitions, goals and targets).
- [Perform regular follow-ups on results](#) for these targets and evaluate these in the collective. Encourage progress and renegotiate unfulfilled targets (see Chapter D).
- [Celebrate and communicate success](#). Make the developments in your local energy collective explicit. Successful projects give inspiration for continued actions. And experience from previous actions provides you with insight in parts of the initiative that require some more effort.
- [Spread the news](#) locally to inform the stakeholder network and to create public awareness.

There are different ways to perform collaborative activities. To utilize the motivational aspects of these, keep the following tips in mind when arranging [network meetings and events](#).

- Always plan meetings, seminars and webinars to include interactive elements.
- Utilize local experience to the extent possible.
- As mentioned above, the participating SMEs can act as meeting hosts or arrange study visits at their companies.
- Include everyone in the meeting conversations and contact the ones that are missing afterwards.
- Make time for the participants to exchange experiences (see also above).
- Decide upon common meeting rules to avoid misunderstandings.
- Provide regular meetings, information, and updates.
- Assignments between the meetings keep the activity up.

Finally, when participating in a collaborative initiative, it is important to consider both the [individual ambitions and the ambitions of the collective](#). Encourage the SMEs to think of why this is motivational for them ('what's in it for me') and why it is motivational for them as a group (now and for other future collaborations).

C.1.3 Involving experienced and knowledgeable stakeholders

Stakeholders involved in the local SME energy collective (see Section B.5) can contribute with knowledge, expertise, and skills. The interest of SMEs can be encouraged by [involving the partners in activities](#) and encouraging them to contribute to the local SME energy collective. Especially stakeholders with high interest in the SMEs and the energy



collective can provide an enthusiastic force. The stakeholders can, for instance, share their knowledge and experience in meetings, seminars and workshops.

You also need to [keep the stakeholders engaged](#) in the local SME energy collective. You can use your knowledge of the stakeholders' interests and interrelations (see B.5.2) in your conversations, and to reflect on their desires of the local SME energy collective. You can organize networking events for SMEs and Energy Service Suppliers to meet. By bringing them together during a network event, you create and intensify the dialogue between the stakeholders and enable them to exchange views on energy issues.

In parallel to keeping the involved stakeholders engaged, you might also [include additional stakeholders](#) depending on the shifting needs of the SMEs. Try to strengthen existing stakeholder co-operations and to mitigate possible conflicts. In this way, you contribute to a sound development of the stakeholder group.

There may also be activities of the collective that can contribute to [increasing the skills of the Energy Service Suppliers](#) and to closing a potential gap between them and the SMEs. One example is enabling activities in relation to utilization of the multiple-benefits approach. Both the Energy Service Suppliers and the SMEs may benefit from Energy Service the Suppliers having a better understanding of multiple benefits and how that affects decision-making about energy efficiency in the SMEs.

And lastly, you as Trusted Partner should also consider [increasing your organizational skills](#). It is important that you stay up-to-date with knowledge on how best to organize the local collective. Contact with other Trusted Partners and other stakeholders might provide some of this knowledge as well as good examples. In addition, it might be valuable for you to participate in trainings and seminars and to keep your knowledge up to date with information from different channels (news, publications, best practices elsewhere, etc.).



APPENDIX C.1: Examples of agendas and content/topics for meetings and networking events

General meeting agenda

Below is an example agenda for a full-day meeting hosted by one of the SMEs in the collective. Most meetings will probably not be full-day meetings. For shorter meetings you would choose to focus on one theme or a more limited aspect. However, try to always include both informational (e.g. presentation by energy expert) and networking (e.g. discussion, exchange of experience) elements. Preferably, they can both relate to a common theme.

Locating the meeting at one of the participating companies that host the meeting and provide a study visit makes the discussions more concrete, increase interaction and the direct involvement of the SMEs. However, in many cases this is not possible – due to the type and size of SMEs involved and their willingness to do this. Then an option is to still include company presentations or concrete examples from participating companies in the agenda.

For digital meetings, the same overall structure is recommended. However, in these cases it takes even more dedication and planning to create interactivity during the meeting.

- Introduction
- Presentation of host company
- At least one networking element, such as a structured discussion for exchange of experiences within a specific area or related to a specific issue (see topic list below)
- One or two informational or training elements (e.g. related to a technology area, or methodology – see theme list below) with lecture/presentation and questions/discussions – e.g. one in the morning and one in the afternoon
- Study visit to see the operations and activities of the host company (ca 1 hour)
- Ample time for lunch and coffee breaks (to create good conditions for further networking)

To further involve SMEs and keep up their motivation, it can be a good idea to include specific points for each SME to report tasks or status updates in the meeting agenda. E.g: - SME A: status, needs, - SME B: status, needs etc. By doing that all the SMEs in the network know that they will be asked to contribute to the meeting.



Meeting invitations

- Information about place and time – possibly with directions
- Agenda and potential background material on specific content
- Information about the theme of the meeting and clarification if the meeting is relevant to attend for someone other than the main contact person at the SME (persons responsible for energy management, finances, or ventilation system)
- Information about when and how to confirm participation – if needed.

Example content for first meeting(s)

The first meeting(s) for the SMEs in the collective serve to introduce the initiative to the SMEs and to further motivate them to participate. Therefore, the content will need to be adapted to specific goals and conditions.

The list presents a number of possible topics that may be more or less relevant depending on the impact ambition and value proposition of your own local SME energy collective. Let it serve as inspiration and select those most relevant.

- Presentations of participating SMEs
- Introduction of the initiative, e.g.
 - its impact ambition and value proposition (depending on how far these have been developed)
 - the core principles of the collective approach you will be taking and your own role (as Trusted Partner) – by relating more or less explicitly to the GEAR@SME methodology, depending on situation.
- Good, inspiring examples of energy efficiency and its multiple benefits in SMEs
- Available services/activities/support, e.g.
 - Available support for financing energy audits
 - How the Trusted Partner can support applying for subsidies, performing simplified energy scans, and/or purchasing audits/contracting auditors
- Discussion activity on needs and expectations of participating in the local SME energy collective
- Potential surveys – explanations and time for filling these out

Examples of informational themes for one or several meetings (a non-exhaustive list)

For presentations or training sessions on these informational themes, you can involve representatives in your network. An energy advisor, energy auditor, equipment provider, the energy company or someone from a university can be invited to hold a presentation.

- Energy audits – purpose, ambition levels, procedures, concrete examples
- Common energy efficiency measures and their (multiple) benefits – best practices



- Setting energy targets for energy efficiency and creating an action plan for implementation of measures
- Evaluating and prioritizing energy efficiency measures based on their multiple benefits and estimated profitability
- Energy monitoring – synergies with energy audits, follow-up and evaluation of implemented measures
- Specific technology areas – e.g. compressed air systems, heat recovery, ventilation systems, lighting, electric motors (pumps and compressors), cooling systems, transport and logistics
- Energy efficiency through changed behaviour, routines and engaged employees
- Working systematically with energy efficiency – Basic principles of energy management
- Financing possibilities for energy audits and energy measures
- Policy developments relevant to the energy area and to the SMEs of the collective

Examples of discussion topics for meetings (a non-exhaustive list)

- Potentials and ambitions – to agree on a common target for the collective (when possible, based on results from energy scans and audits of the companies)
- Drivers and values of the SMEs – why they are participating in the collective and what they benefits they expect to achieve
- Discussions of the SMEs own experience from any of the informational themes listed above.
- Focus areas and common challenges – to guide the services and activities that should be included in the collective and the content of coming meetings
- Results from energy efficiency measures taken and from overall monitoring of the result of the energy collective