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Community and Employment Benefit Program Consultation Feedback Report

Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone

July 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

The Energy Corporation of NSW acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Community and Employment Benefit Program Community Feedback Report

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1 Executive summary

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is the NSW statutory authority appointed to lead the delivery of the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. EnergyCo's role includes coordinating benefits for local communities and stakeholders in the REZs who are hosting renewable energy generation and transmission projects.

EnergyCo consulted with stakeholders and communities within the Central-West Orana REZ (the REZ) from 5 February to 10 March 2024 about the Community and Employment Benefit Program (the Program). A total of 147 people responded to the survey, 63 stakeholders participated in facilitated workshops and 98 attended community drop-in sessions.

Out of the 147 respondents, 108 were located within the Central-West Orana REZ.

Overall, there is strong overall alignment between the six identified priority areas and the benefit priorities raised by Central-West Orana REZ communities in this consultation. Other findings include:

Issues and priorities

- New benefit priorities were identified relating to the strategic visioning of the Program. This includes ensuring initiatives are strategic, long-term and provide meaningful legacy, as well as ensuring equitable benefits that are fair and locally appropriate.
- New issues were identified across all communities, including concerns over cost of living and retaining local populations.
- Issues and priorities differed between locations within the Central West-Orana REZ and between stakeholder groups and communities.

Design and delivery of the Program

The following feedback was identified by respondents across all locations and consultation forums:

- need for training and support
- involving the community throughout the process
- aligning funding decisions with the needs of communities
- ensuring benefits are delivered in collaboration with communities
- accessible and appropriate application processes
- enabling community members to be part of assessment panels
- strong administration and governance of benefit funding allocations.

Important differences emerged between locations and between stakeholder groups and communities. This related to the design and implementation of the Program and the outcomes it would deliver.

Snapshot of consultation statistics

Consultation activities from 5 February to 10 March 2024:



176 people attended an online briefing



76 questions received from the online briefing and answered during the briefing and via a Q&A document [insert link to Q&A document]



63 stakeholders attended six facilitated stakeholder workshops



98 people attended eight community drop-in sessions



104 people attended our pop-up stands at community-led events



147 people completed an online survey.

Consultation promotion:



450 flyers and posters distributed



Project email to 677 subscribers

Emails to 150 stakeholders



7 social media posts



122 radio advertisements aired across 3 radio stations



11 newspaper ads published across 5 newspapers



Project website updates.

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this Report

The **Community and Employment Benefit Program Consultation Feedback Report** (the Report) outlines the consultation approach and consultation activities that have been undertaken as part of the Community and Employment Benefit Program (the Program).

This Report summarises:

- the program of activities and how consultation was carried out
- communication channels and feedback mechanisms
- promotion of consultation opportunities
- identified audiences and stakeholders
- response statistics and analysis
- next steps.

The outcomes of this consultation have informed the Program funding priorities, helped identify new initiatives for consideration and informed EnergyCo of the ways in which communities hosting Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) infrastructure would like to see benefits delivered.

The key findings have been considered in finalising the Program’s policy framework and Grant Guidelines.

2.2 About the Community and Employment Benefit Program

In November 2020, the NSW Government released the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap) to secure cheaper, cleaner and more reliable electricity for NSW households and businesses.

The Roadmap identifies community benefit sharing schemes as a key mechanism for delivering enduring benefits to communities that host new energy infrastructure. This is supported by the Roadmap’s enabling legislation, the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act), which requires a minimum component of access fees be allocated to “community and employment purposes” and provides EnergyCo with a function to administer, manage and make payments for these purposes.

EnergyCo is developing the Program to deliver benefits to regional communities hosting new energy infrastructure. The Program will continue for many years after the REZs are delivered and will invest millions of dollars into regional communities to share the benefits of the renewable energy transition.

In October 2023, the Minister for Energy announced \$128 million to forward fund and accelerate the delivery of community and employment benefits in the Central-West Orana REZ over the next four years.

The Program will provide funding to local community groups, councils, First Nations organisations and other key stakeholders to contribute to the long-term prosperity of regional communities and ensure that communities that host the new energy infrastructure are left better off than they were before.

2.3 EnergyCo's consultation to date

EnergyCo commenced community consultation in mid-2022 to identify key initiatives to be delivered through the Program and has sought feedback through various channels, including:

- initial consultation with key stakeholders including the Central-West Orana Community Reference Group (CRG), First Nations stakeholders, Councils, government agencies and elected representatives (Mid-2022 to early 2023)
- information arising from studies undertaken by EnergyCo to investigate cumulative impacts and opportunities with a summary available here (late 2022 to early 2023)
- consultation with REZ communities via survey and information sessions (January to March 2023). The findings were released as a Community Feedback Report, available here.

Through these activities, EnergyCo identified six community priorities, including: housing and accommodation; local roads and transport; economic participation and development; environmental delivery coordination (waste management and water); social infrastructure and services; and improved telecommunication connectivity.

3 Consultation overview and approach

3.1 Consultation objectives

The communication and consultation objectives for the Program included:

- **Raising awareness** about the Program, the work undertaken to date and how community members can get involved in its development
- **Shaping Program design** by using community feedback to refine a list of priorities for further assessment within the Program's policy framework
- **Providing opportunities** for community and stakeholders to verify the types of community benefit projects proposed, explore new initiatives for consideration and provide feedback to further inform allocation of funding and design of grant guidelines.

3.2 Consultation approach

EnergyCo's consultation approach involved building on the consultation outcomes to date and was underpinned by two key components:

- broad public consultation involving an online briefing, online survey and community events for local input (5 February to 10 March 2024)
- targeted stakeholder facilitated workshops focusing on informing program design, community priorities and other matters (6 to 13 February 2024).

EnergyCo's initial approach was to deliver a series of facilitated workshops for both stakeholders and community members. The community-led sessions would cover similar topics to the stakeholder workshops and were designed to encourage participation and deliberative discussion from a diverse range of people.

EnergyCo received feedback from the community that the format and delivery of the workshops was not the right approach. In response to this feedback, the community workshops were changed to be similar to the community drop-in sessions that EnergyCo has previously held in the Central-West Orana REZ. This alternate format allows as many community members to participate as possible. EnergyCo also listened to feedback requesting greater notice to attend and scheduled the drop-in sessions to begin in late February.

EnergyCo also received requests from the community to host drop-in sessions at Cassilis and Elong Elong. In response to this feedback, EnergyCo held sessions at both of these locations.

3.3 Participants

A stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out to identify community organisations and groups that would likely seek to participate in the program, including applying for funding and delivering community and employment benefits.

This sought to identify potential applicants that may seek funding under a community grant program ensuring EnergyCo could consult with them on how to design Grant Guidelines, application process and support for applicants. EnergyCo also sought further information about funding priorities and the capacity of stakeholder groups to participate in the Program.

These stakeholders included, but were not limited to:

- Development groups, progress and business associations, including:
 - Coolah District Development Group
 - Cassilis District Development Group
 - Dunedoo District Development Group
 - Wollar Progress Association
 - Gulgong Chamber of Commerce
 - Dubbo Chamber of Commerce
 - Business Mudgee.
- Central-West Orana REZ First Nations Working Group
- Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group
- Renewable Energy Alliance (RE-Alliance)
- NSW Farmers Association
- Local community members impacted by the REZ transmission project, including local landowners and businesses and First Nations communities
- Community members within the Central-West Orana REZ.

4 Consultation delivery

4.1 About the consultation

From 5 February to 10 March 2024, EnergyCo conducted focused consultation with Central-West Orana REZ stakeholders and community members to inform the development of the Program.

The consultation focused on confirming the priorities that were identified from previous consultations and ensuring the identified priorities still reflected the views of Central-West Orana REZ communities.

These priorities included:

	Housing and accommodation		Roads and transport (condition, capacity, and traffic)
	Training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities		Environmental programs, water and sewerage infrastructure, and utilities
	Social infrastructure and services		Telecommunications

The consultation also focused on exploring new initiatives for consideration and gathering feedback to further inform allocation of funding and Program design.

4.2 Consultation activities

Table 1 below outlines the key activities undertaken throughout the consultation period and the level of consultation¹ across each activity.

Table 1: Overview of consultation activities

Consultation activities	Audience	Overview	Number of attendees/completions	Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum				
				Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Online briefing	Central-West Orana REZ community	Online briefing and Q&A	176	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stakeholder Workshops	Key stakeholders	Six facilitated workshops with key community stakeholder representatives	63	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online survey	Central-West Orana REZ community	Public survey	147	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community drop-in sessions	Central-West Orana REZ community	Eight community drop-in sessions	98	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pop-up stalls	Central-West Orana REZ community	Four pop-up stalls at community-led events across the region.	104	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2.1 Online briefing

EnergyCo held an online briefing and Q&A session on 5 February 2024 from 12:00pm to 1:00pm, with 176 people attending the briefing. EnergyCo presented an update on the Program, the priority initiatives identified to date and answered questions from the public. It was also an opportunity for EnergyCo to promote the community drop-in sessions and the online survey.

The briefing was recorded and made available [online](#) (copies were also made available on USB for community members without internet access). A frequently asked questions document was developed to respond to the questions received during the live Q&A and was made available on the [EnergyCo website](#).

¹ IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. More information can be found [here](#).

4.2.2 Stakeholder workshops

EnergyCo delivered six facilitated workshops from 6 to 13 February 2024. Participants included members of community groups, local organisations and First Nations representatives that had been actively engaging with EnergyCo about the Program. A total of 63 stakeholders attended the sessions.

Organisations were invited to nominate one representative to attend a session to ensure equal representation of views and feedback from a diverse cross-section of stakeholder groups. The invitation was extended to a number of individuals who had actively expressed interest in contributing to the Program.

The workshops were structured as two-hour sessions, with participants separated into table groups, each with a facilitator. The first part of the session was a presentation by EnergyCo about the Program, the broader consultation process and how feedback would be used to refine the Program design. The second part of the workshop was interactive and facilitated discussions designed to:

- validate benefit categories and identify gaps
- seek input to the Program guidelines
- provide opportunity for specific benefit ideas to be discussed.

A total of 28 people attended workshops at Dubbo, Dunedoo, Mudgee and Coolah at an observing capacity. This included council representatives who listened to feedback, but did not participate, as the workshops were designed to gather insights from community representative groups. Interested community members attended the Dunedoo session to observe discussions and the majority did not participate in the workshop activities. A bespoke letter was also received from a community member during this session.

4.2.3 Online survey

From 14 February to 10 March 2024, an online survey was made available on EnergyCo's Central-West Orana REZ website for community members of the Central-West Orana REZ to have their say on the types of benefits they think should be delivered in their community. A total of 147 people completed the survey.

A link to the survey was emailed to 677 registered stakeholders and promoted in the flyers that were distributed to localities where sessions were being held.

The survey was also made available at each community drop-in session, where attendees could complete the survey via iPad or take-home printed versions (with return-paid envelopes) and send back via post.

4.2.4 Community drop-in sessions

EnergyCo hosted eight community drop-in sessions across the Central-West Orana REZ from 26 February to 1 March 2024. As outlined above, the session format was redesigned to be flexible and enable community members to arrive and talk with the project team at a time that suited them. A total of 98 people attended these sessions.

By attending the sessions, community members had the chance to learn more about the Program, ask questions about the process and provide feedback about the type of benefits they would like to see delivered in the Central-West Orana REZ.

4.2.5 Pop-up events

EnergyCo attended the Dunedoo, Mudgee and Gulgong Agricultural Shows and the Dunedoo Markets throughout February and early March 2024. This was another opportunity for stakeholders and community members to speak to EnergyCo and they were encouraged to attend an upcoming drop-in session and complete the survey. EnergyCo engaged with 104 people when attending these events.

4.3 Consultation promotion

Consultation was promoted to stakeholders through a number of communication channels including; direct emails, online newsletters, radio, print media, posters, flyers and social media. All promotional materials included information about the Program, the upcoming consultation activities and a link to the online survey.

5 Analysis of responses

5.1 Online survey

5.1.1 Overview

The online survey was open from 14 February to 10 March 2024. Survey responses were collected via the Have Your Say online survey platform.

A total of 147 valid survey responses were received, noting that not all respondents completed every question. Invalid or duplicate responses were removed from the final survey count and were not included in the data analysis.

Percentages are based on the total number of respondents who answered that particular question (the base is shown as 'n' below each figure/table).

5.1.2 Survey respondents

Where they live

Of the 126 people who answered this question, half of the respondents indicated they were from Mudgee, Wellington and Gulgong. Refer to Figure 1 below.

WHAT IS YOUR POST CODE? (N= 126)

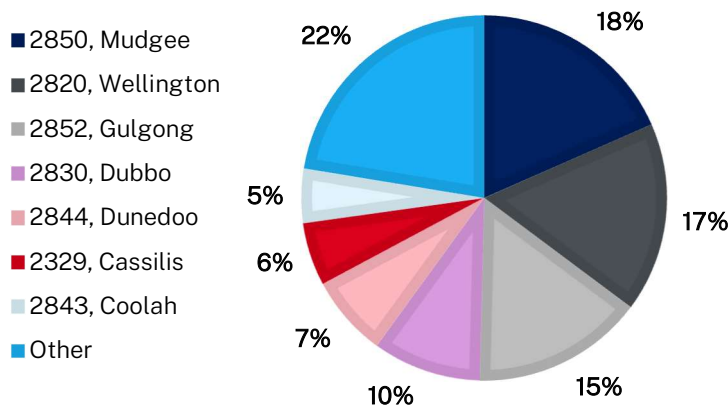


Figure 1: Respondents by Post Code

Postcodes categorised as 'Other' include responses received outside of the REZ.

Age groups

A total of 144 people answered this question. The majority of respondents (72.9%) indicated their age was 45 years or older. The remaining respondents (27.1%) indicated they were under 45 years old and no one younger than 25 years old completed this question. Refer to Figure 2 below.

HOW OLD ARE RESPONDENTS? (N=144)

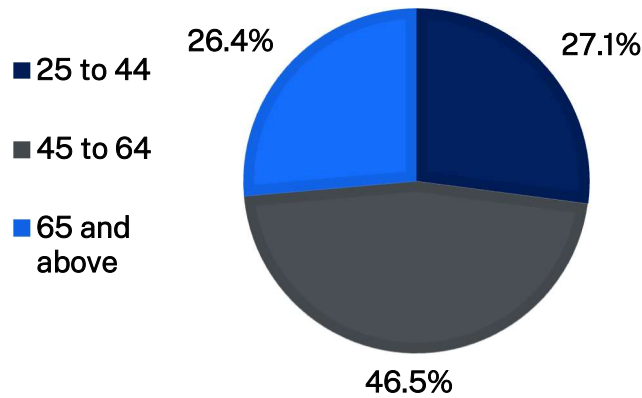


Figure 2: Age of Respondents

Gender identification

A total of 144 respondents answered this question, almost two thirds of which identified as female and almost one third male. Just over 4% preferred another term or not to say. Refer to Figure 3 below.

GENDER OF RESPONDENTS (N=144)

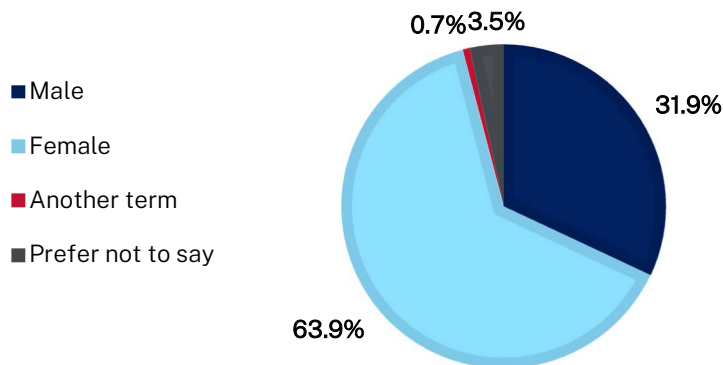


Figure 3: Gender of Respondents

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification

Of the 146 survey respondents who answered this question, 7.5% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while 11.6% preferred not to say. Refer to Figure 4 below.

DO YOU IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER? (N=146)

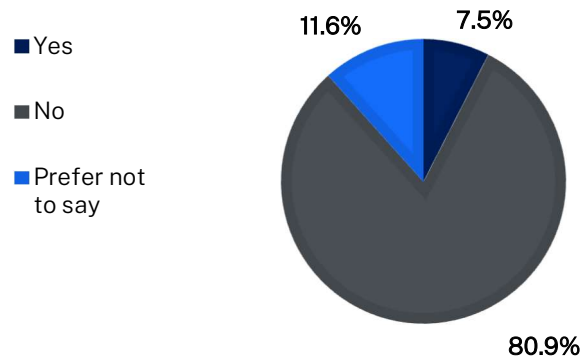


Figure 4: Respondent identification

5.1.3 What we heard

Social issues and concerns

When respondents were asked to identify the top five most important social issues or concerns the Program should address from a list of 17 potential issues/concerns, the most selected results from 146 respondents were:

1. Insufficient Health Services (57.5 %)
2. Poor transport infrastructure (47.3%)
3. Housing affordability/housing choices (42.5%)
4. Poor telecommunications (39.7%)
5. Degradation of local environment (37%).

Figure 5 provides a summary of the outcomes for all potential social issues and concerns.

What are the top five most important social issues and concerns you think the Program should address? (n=146)



Figure 5: Important social issues and concerns that the Program should address, as ranked by those living in the Central-West Orana REZ region

Results from responses to Question (1) were further analysed by those living in

- the Central-West Orana REZ (N = 108) and
- seven of the eight locations that were the focus of the consultation activities (there were no responses to the online survey from those living in Elong Elong).

Analysis of these responses were also aggregated around six identified priority areas.

Table 2 shows that over 40% of respondents residing in the REZ identified issues and concerns that fell under the “Social infrastructure and services” priority area. The other five priority areas received the following proportions of aligned issues and concerns responses in order of highest to lowest:

- Environmental programs, water and sewerage infrastructure and utilities (14.8%)
- Training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities (14.3%)
- Roads and transport (condition, capacity, and traffic) (10.9%)
- Housing and accommodation (10.4%)
- Telecommunications (9.1%)

Table 2: Most important social issues across the benefit priority areas that the Program should address, identified by those living in the Central-West Orana REZ region (N=108)

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Cassilis	Mudgee	Gulgong	Dubbo	Total CWO
Environmental programs, water and sewerage infrastructure, and utilities								
Degradation of local environment	10.3%	4.3%	17.6%	8.8%	9.4%	4.9%	6.1%	9.1%
Waste and water management	5.1%	8.7%	1.1%	8.8%	7.1%	7.4%	4.5%	5.7%
Total	15.4%	13.0%	18.7%	17.6%	16.5%	12.3%	10.6%	14.8%
Housing and accommodation								
Housing affordability / housing choice	12.8%	4.3%	3.3%	8.8%	14.1%	13.1%	12.1%	10.4%
Total	12.8%	4.3%	3.3%	8.8%	14.1%	13.1%	12.1%	10.4%
Roads and transport (condition, capacity, and traffic)								
Poor transport infrastructure (for example roads, footpaths, public transport)	7.7%	13.0%	7.7%	20.6%	11.8%	13.9%	4.5%	10.9%
Total	7.7%	13.0%	7.7%	20.6%	11.8%	13.9%	4.5%	10.9%
Social infrastructure and services								
Crime / community safety	7.7%	4.3%	9.9%	5.9%	4.7%	2.5%	9.1%	6.1%
Impact of drugs / alcohol	0.0%	4.3%	4.4%	0.0%	1.2%	0.8%	7.6%	2.6%
Insufficient community infrastructure (for example community meeting rooms or shared community space)	2.6%	0.0%	2.2%	11.8%	0.0%	3.3%	3.0%	2.8%
Insufficient community services	2.6%	13.0%	5.5%	0.0%	5.9%	2.5%	3.0%	4.1%
Insufficient health services	17.9%	13.0%	8.8%	8.8%	18.8%	15.6%	9.1%	13.5%
Mental health	5.1%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	8.2%	4.9%	7.6%	4.8%
Not enough for young people to do	0.0%	4.3%	4.4%	2.9%	3.5%	8.2%	3.0%	4.6%
Social isolation	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	2.9%	0.0%	1.6%	7.6%	2.0%
Total	35.9%	39.1%	38.5%	32.4%	42.4%	39.3%	50.0%	40.4%
Telecommunications								
Poor telecommunications	15.4%	8.7%	8.8%	17.6%	4.7%	9.0%	7.6%	9.1%
Total	15.4%	8.7%	8.8%	17.6%	4.7%	9.0%	7.6%	9.1%
Training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities								
Education and training opportunities	2.6%	4.3%	6.6%	0.0%	2.4%	6.6%	4.5%	4.6%
Lack of business opportunities	0.0%	4.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	3.0%	1.5%
Limited availability of quality jobs	5.1%	4.3%	2.2%	0.0%	2.4%	1.6%	3.0%	2.4%
Limited number of local employment opportunities	5.1%	8.7%	11.0%	2.9%	5.9%	3.3%	4.5%	5.9%
Total	12.8%	21.7%	23.1%	2.9%	10.6%	12.3%	15.2%	14.3%

Figure 6 shows, however, that these priorities differed between locations within the REZ. For instance, the following population centres had above average results around the six priority areas:

- Social infrastructure and services (40.4%):
 - Dubbo (50%)

- Gulgong (42.4%)
- Environmental programs, water and sewerage infrastructure and utilities (14.8%)
 - Wellington (18.7%)
 - Cassilis (17.6%)
- Training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities (14.3%)
 - Wellington (23.1%)
 - Coolah (21.7%)
- Roads and transport (condition, capacity, and traffic) (10.9%)
 - Cassilis (20.6%)
 - Mudgee (13.9%)
- Housing and accommodation (10.4%)
 - Gulgong (14.1%)
 - Mudgee (13.1%)
- Telecommunications (9.1%)
 - Cassilis (17.6%)
 - Dunedoo (15.4%).

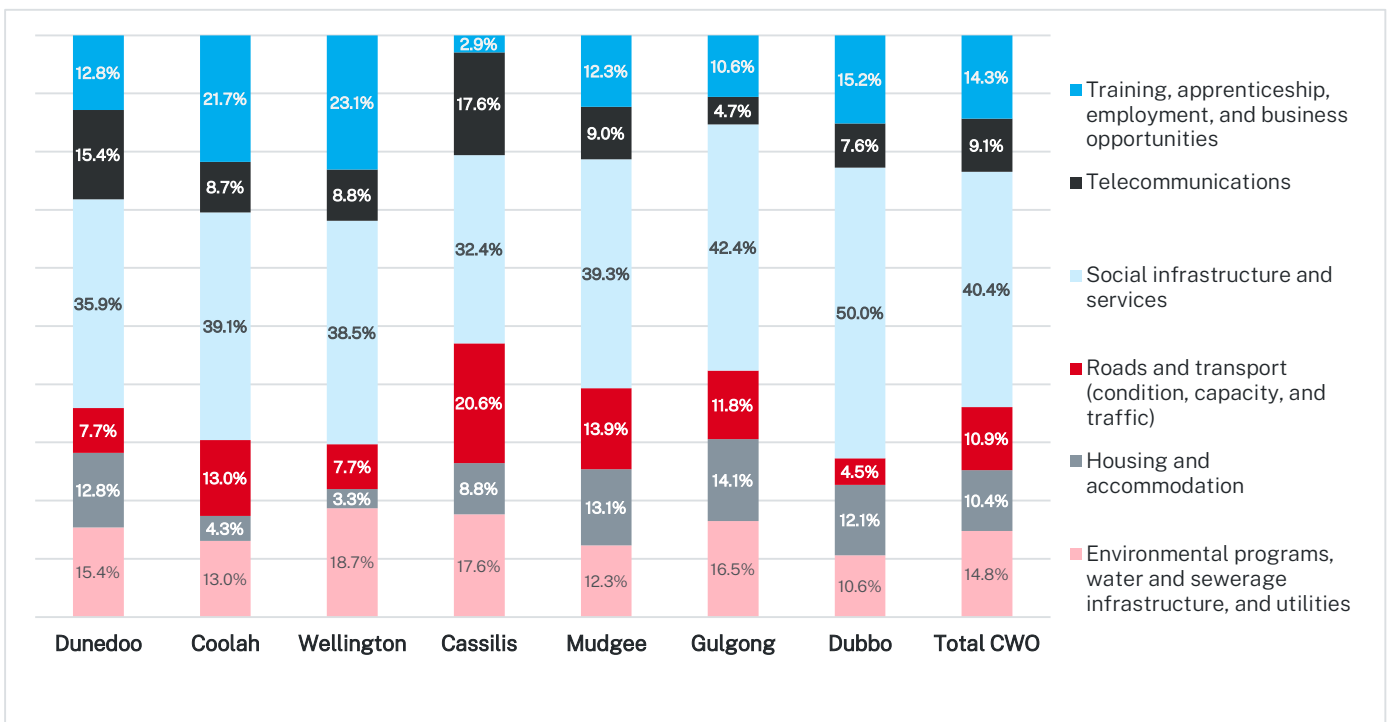


Figure 6: Most important issues across benefit priority areas as categorised by Central-West Orana REZ locations

For the 15 respondents who selected ‘other’, the issues and concerns they identified included those that were already part of the six identified priority areas:

- training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities:

- jobs and training
- training and support.
- social infrastructure and services
 - access to social infrastructure and other services.

The qualitative responses for this question also revealed other priority issues identified by respondents specifically:

- retaining local population
- cost of living
- large, long-term legacy benefits.

Preferred benefits

Respondents were invited to identify the top five (from a list of 10) most important benefits they would like to see funds directed to (see Figure 7). Out of 146 respondents, the five most identified ‘priority’ benefits by respondents were:

1. Health services and infrastructure (68.7%)
2. Public or community services or infrastructure (61%)
3. Parks and recreational infrastructure (47.3%)
4. Accommodation or housing (45.9%)
5. Environmental programs or infrastructure (41.1%).

What are the top five most important benefits you would like to see funds from the renewable energy generator access fees be used for? (n=146)

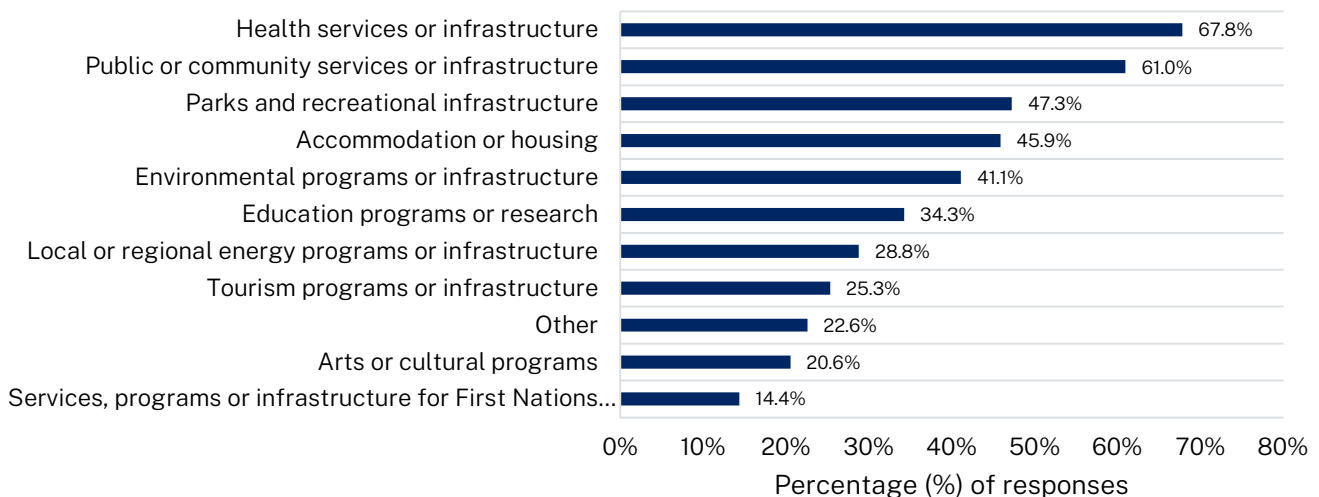


Figure 7: Most important benefits to be funded by access fees

Results from responses to Question (2) were further analysed according to place of residence:

- the Central-West Orana REZ (N = 108)
- seven of the eight locations that were the focus of the consultation activities.

Figure 8 shows that as a percentage of the total 551 benefit rankings made by the 108 respondents from the REZ, the Top-5 benefits identified were:

1. Health services or infrastructure
2. Public or community services or infrastructure
3. Parks and recreational infrastructure
4. Accommodation or housing
5. Environmental programs or infrastructure.

Analysis also found that how benefit priorities were ranked was influenced by respondents' place of residence within the REZ. Those living in the larger regional centres of Dubbo and Mudgee identified their top two benefit priorities to be "Health Services or infrastructure" and "Public or community services or infrastructure". While smaller towns also identify in their top two benefit priorities:

- parks and recreational infrastructure (Cassilis and Dunedoo)
- accommodation or housing (Coolah and Gulgong)
- environmental programs or infrastructure (Wellington).

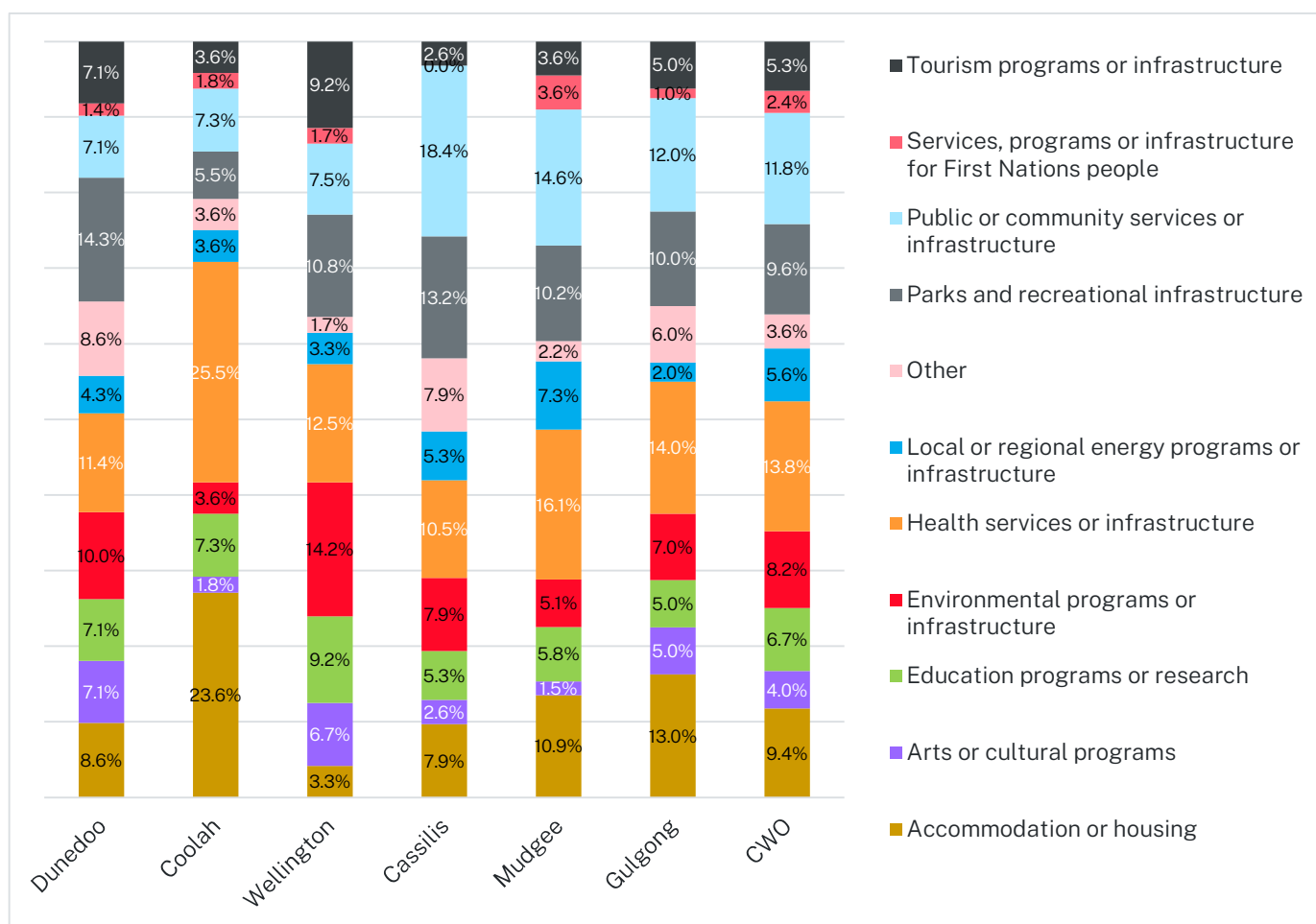


Figure 8: Most important benefit priorities by Central-West Orana REZ location

For the themes identified as ‘other’, the additional priority benefits identified still exhibited strong alignment to the identified priorities of:

- Training, apprenticeship, employment, and business opportunities:
 1. Jobs and training (14.3%)
 2. Local economies (7.1%).
- Social infrastructure and services:
 1. Community infrastructure (7.1%)
 2. Access to social infrastructure and services (7.1%).
- Roads and transport (7.1%).

Responses to this question also identified the following additional benefit priorities that would be suitable for integration into the strategic visioning that underpins the Program:

- large, long-term, legacy benefits
- equitable benefits
- alternative solutions
- retaining local population.

Benefit prioritisation

Respondents were asked to rank five factors that could be used to prioritise benefits. A total of 131 people responded to this question. The most critical factor reported by 63% of respondents (53% most important, 10% important) was ensuring that benefits are delivered to directly impacted communities, see Figure 9.

Rank from 1-5 the factors you think are most important when deciding which benefits should take priority over others? (n=131)

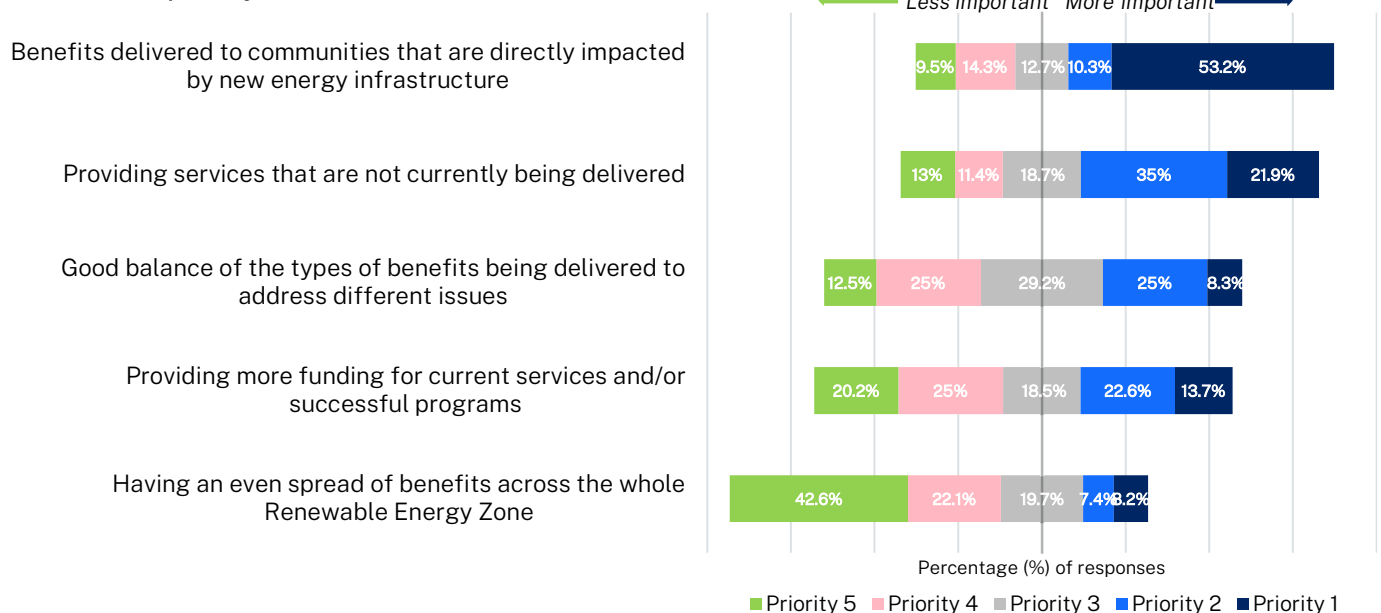


Figure 9: Key factors when deciding benefit prioritisation

Providing services that are not currently being delivered was considered the next most important factor by 57% of respondents (22% most important, 35% important). Having an even spread of benefits across the REZ was the lowest ranked factor for benefit prioritisation.

Important factors

When asked if there were any other important factors that should be taken into account when benefits are made available across the Central-West Orana REZ, 67.9% of 140 respondents answered yes. The qualitative responses identified a range of factors respondents felt important. More than one-quarter (27.4%) of respondents identified the “environment” as being an important factor, see Figure 10. This was followed by:

- equitable benefits (19.2%)
- housing (13.7%)
- community involvement (6.8%)
- healthcare (6.8%).

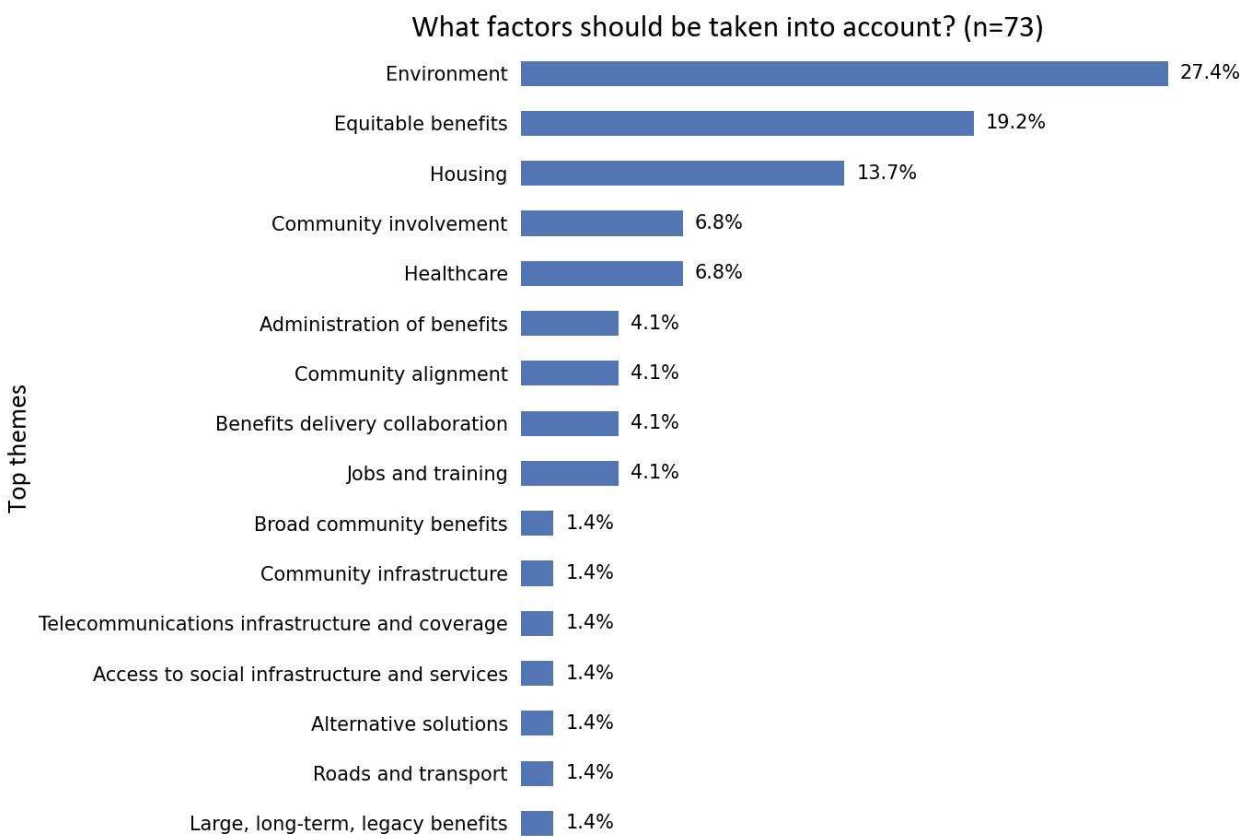


Figure 10: Factors to be accounted for in administration of Central-West Orana REZ Community Benefits Program

When qualitative responses were further analysed around the location of the respondent the following priorities for the **design and delivery of a community benefits program** were found:

- equity
- collaboration and community involvement
- administration.

While the following **community benefit outcomes** emerged as strong themes in the qualitative responses:

- environment
- housing,
- healthcare
- community infrastructure
- jobs and training.

The benefit priorities for those living in the REZ were also analysed at the local level with the Top-3 priorities for the seven key locations presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Top-3 Community Benefit Program design, delivery and outcomes priorities/factors in the REZ

	1	2	3
Dunedoo	Equitable benefits	Administration of benefits	Community involvement
Coolah	Equitable benefits	Environment	Community Alignment
Cassilis	Broad community benefits	Equitable benefits	Benefits delivery collaboration
Wellington	Environment	Equitable benefits	Jobs and training
Gulgong	Equitable benefits	Environment	Healthcare
Mudgee	Housing	Jobs and training	Community infrastructure
Dubbo	Housing	Environment	-

Prioritising communities for benefits

Respondents were asked if there were any communities that should be prioritised for benefits over others and 83.7% of 141 respondents indicated there were. As shown in Figure 11, for the 15 people who shared their reasons for some communities **not** being prioritised over others, the key reasons included:

- the need to deliver broad community and equitable benefits
- to improve access to social infrastructure and services
- to create large, long-term, legacy benefits.

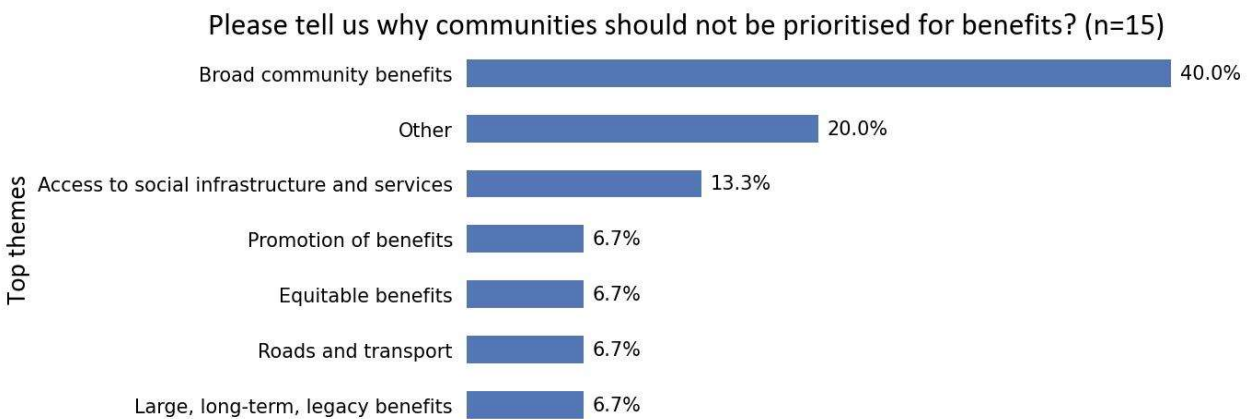


Figure 11: Reasons for not prioritising benefits to specific communities

A total of 117 respondents shared their views on which communities **should be** prioritised for benefits and why those communities should be prioritised, see Figure 12. An analysis of the outcomes indicated that the reasons **for** prioritising communities were similar to those advocating the opposite approach:

- equitable benefits
- community cohesion and wellbeing
- to create large, long-term, legacy benefits.

Other reasons diverged however, for example the need to ensure that the outcomes delivered were aligned to specific communities and their needs.

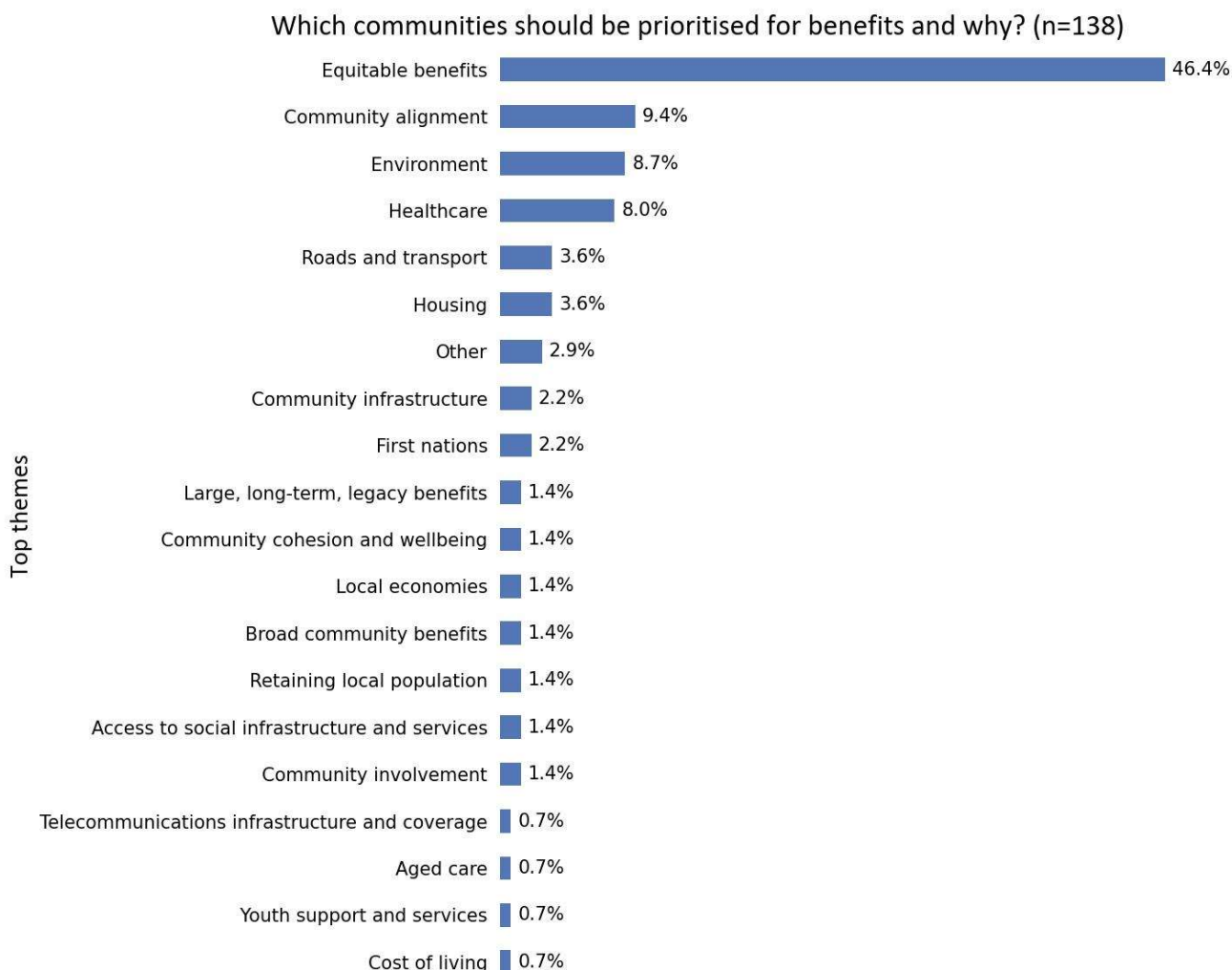


Figure 12: Reasons for prioritising benefits to specific communities

Unlike other questions asked in the online survey, the reasons **for** prioritising specific communities when administering the Program show very little difference between responses from different locations within the REZ region (see Table 4).

Table 4: Top-3 reasons for prioritising specific communities when administering the Central-West Orana REZ Community Benefit Program

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Cassilis	Mudgee	Gulgong	Dubbo
1	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits	Equitable benefits
2	Environment	-	Community alignment	Community involvement	Roads and transport	Healthcare	Community alignment
3	-	-	Environment	Environment	Healthcare	Community alignment	Environment

Participation support

Often community groups and others have ideas for issues that could be addressed through a benefits program but need help to explore and fully develop their ideas so that they can be considered. Of the 129 respondents, 72.9% thought EnergyCo should provide support.

As shown in Figure 13, when asked what type of support EnergyCo could provide, suggestions included:

- training and support
- involving the community and aligning funding decisions with the needs of communities
- providing support and resources for local environmental groups and ideas for sustainability projects/initiatives
- ensuring benefits were delivered in collaboration with communities
- accessible and appropriate application processes
- enabling community members to be part of assessment panels
- strong administration and governance of benefit funding allocations.

What types of support do you think EnergyCo should consider providing to help groups develop their ideas and apply for funding? (n=105)

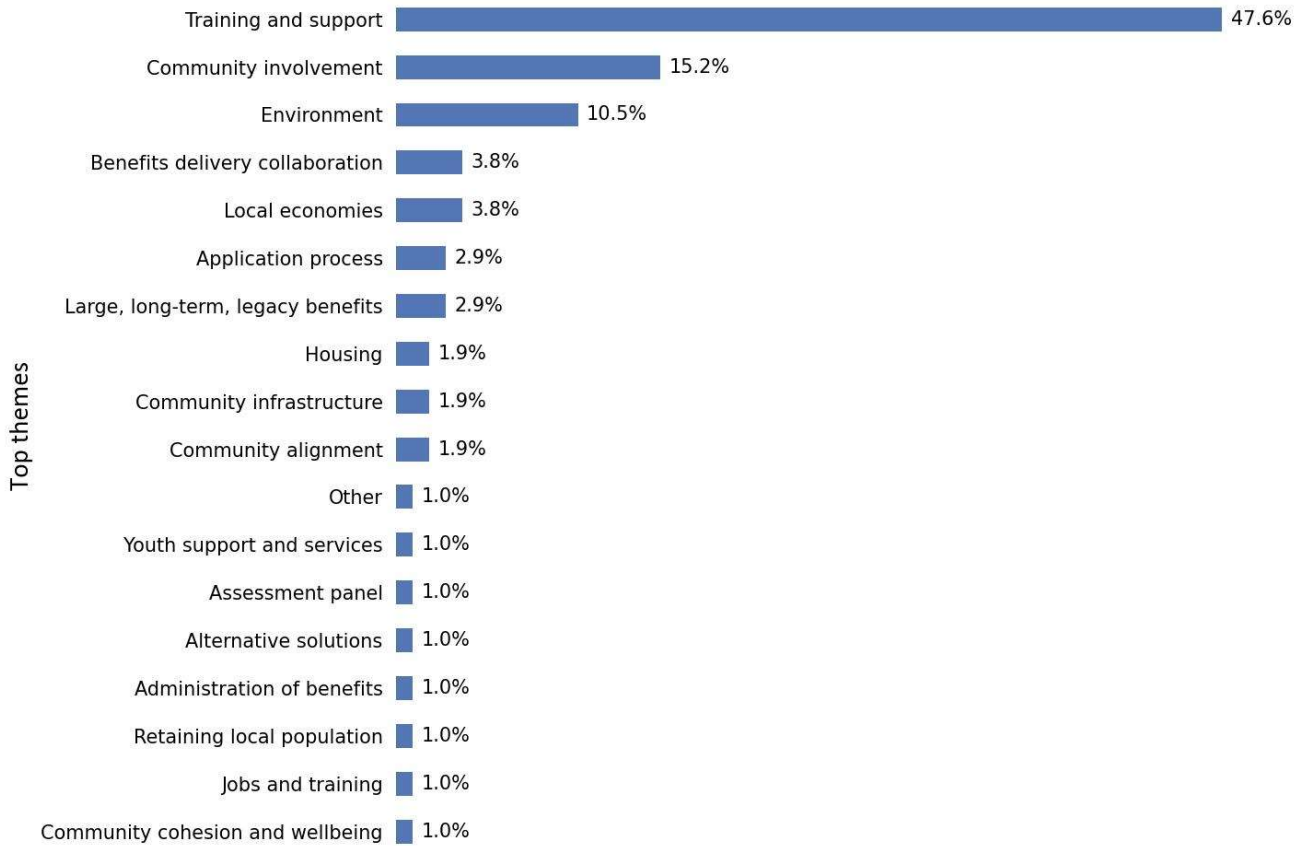


Figure 13: Types of support EnergyCo could provide to help groups develop their ideas and apply for funding

As with the previous question, responses to this question showed very little variation between different locations within the REZ region (see Table 5).

Table 5: Top-3 ways EnergyCo Types of support EnergyCo could provide to help groups develop their ideas and apply for funding

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Cassilis	Mudgee	Gulgong	Dubbo
1	Community involvement	Training and support	Training and support	Training and support	Training and support	Training and support	Training and support
2	Training and support	Community involvement	Environment	Community involvement	Legacy benefits	Housing	Community involvement
3	Application process	-	Community involvement	-	Community involvement	Legacy benefits	Community alignment

Benefits Program design and delivery

A total of 57.4% of 122 respondents indicated there were other elements that needed to be considered when designing or delivering a benefits program.

As shown in Figure 14, these included:

- Design
 1. Large, long-term, legacy benefits
 2. Equity
 3. Aligned to community
 4. Open to and actively supports broad/diverse and innovative solutions/proposals
 5. Supports community cohesion and wellbeing.
- Delivery
 1. Community involvement
 2. Application process
 3. Assessment panel and Program administration
 4. Collaboration with community on delivering benefits
 5. Training and support
 6. Supports community cohesion and wellbeing.

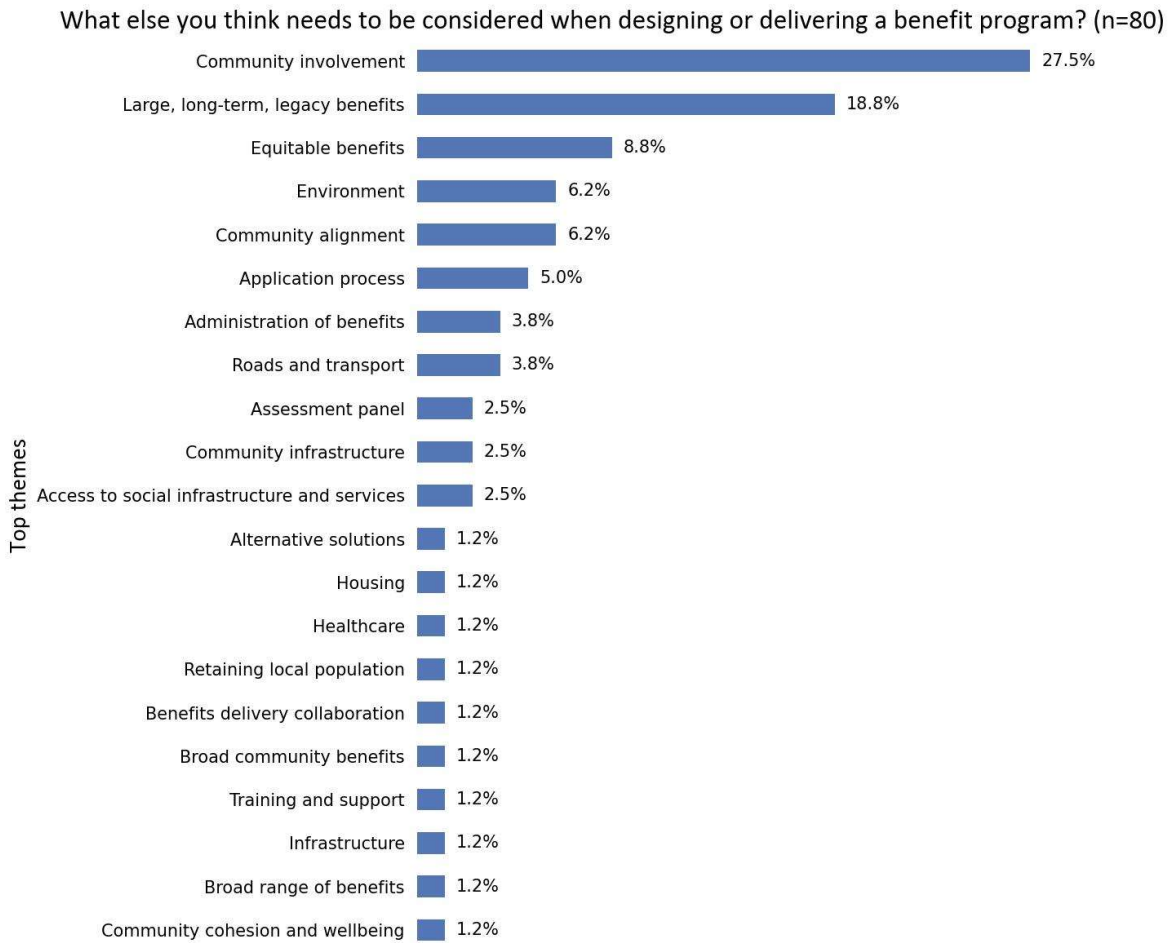


Figure 14: Considerations for designing and delivering the Benefits Program

Validation of key priorities

Feedback from earlier consultation stages had indicated several key priorities for community and employment benefits. Respondents were asked to rank these priorities in order of their importance, see Figure 15.

Feedback from 116 respondents indicated that social infrastructure and services such as access to health services, doctors and nurses was by far the most important priority for 58% of respondents (32% most important, 26% important). Local jobs and business opportunities on renewable energy projects, and other benefits such as telecommunication improvements were considered least important.

Based on stakeholder and community feedback so far, please rank from 1-6 the drafts ideas you think are most important. (n=116)

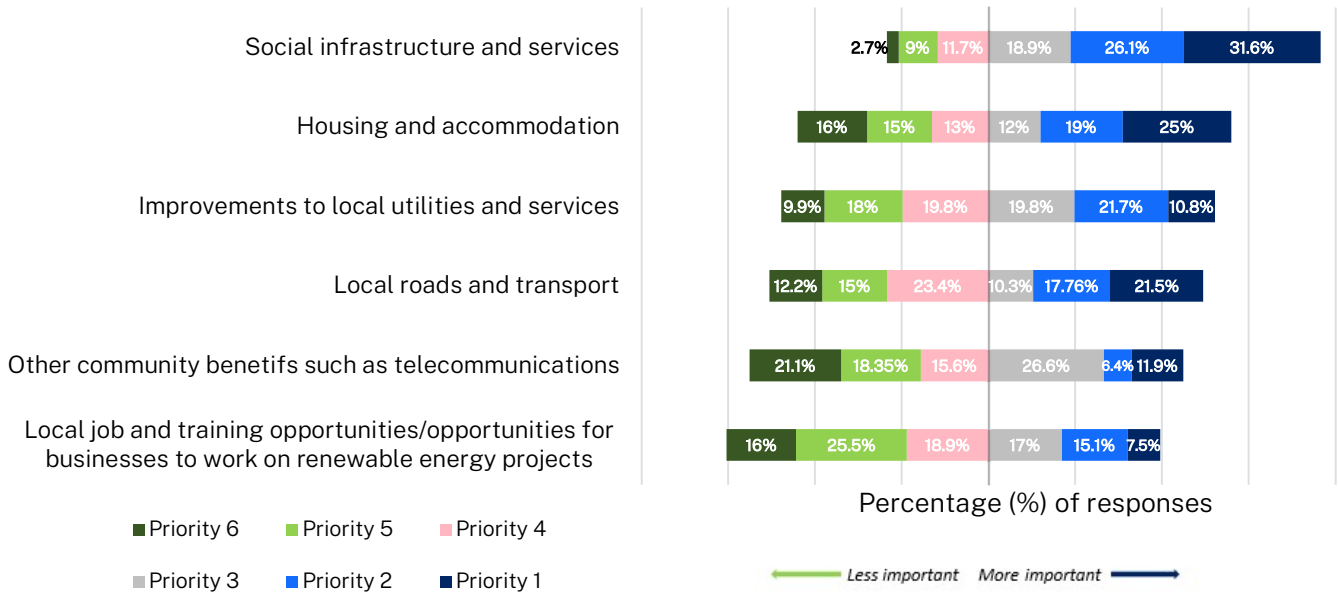


Figure 15: Ranking of preliminary funding ideas

5.1.4 About the survey

When asked about the ease of providing feedback through the survey, 84.2% of 139 respondents agreed it was easy, see Figure 16.

WAS IT EASY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK TODAY? (N=139)

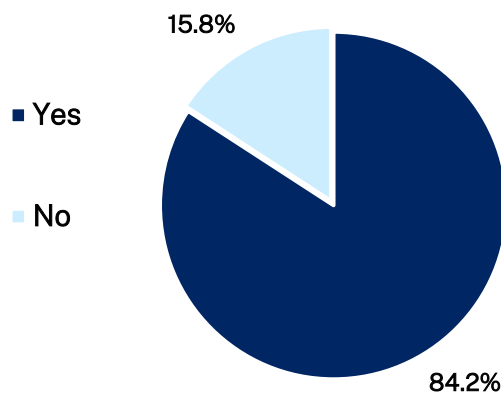


Figure 16: Ease of Providing Feedback

(Q23) When asked what can be done to improve the survey experience, 52.6% of 19 respondents said that the survey was too difficult/unclear.

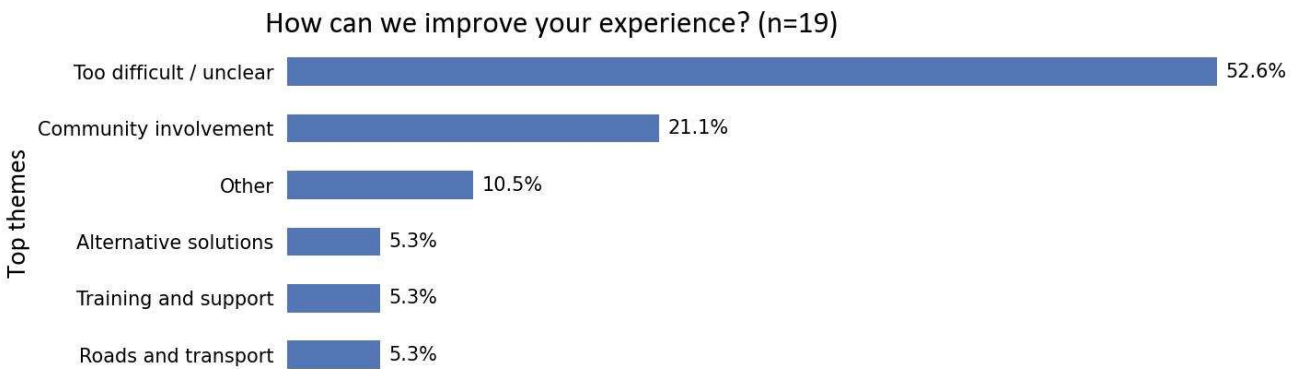


Figure 17: How the survey experience can be improved.

5.2 Stakeholder workshops

5.2.1 Local community and regional issues

During the stakeholder workshops participants were asked what community or social issues they believed to be impacting their local community, see Figure 18. Analysis of qualitative responses collected during the workshops identified the following top-5 issues:

1. Jobs and training
2. Housing
3. Roads and transport
4. Healthcare
5. Access to social infrastructure and services.

All five have strong alignment to the current identified priorities identified by EnergyCo.

What are the community or social issues that may be impacting this local community? (n=191)

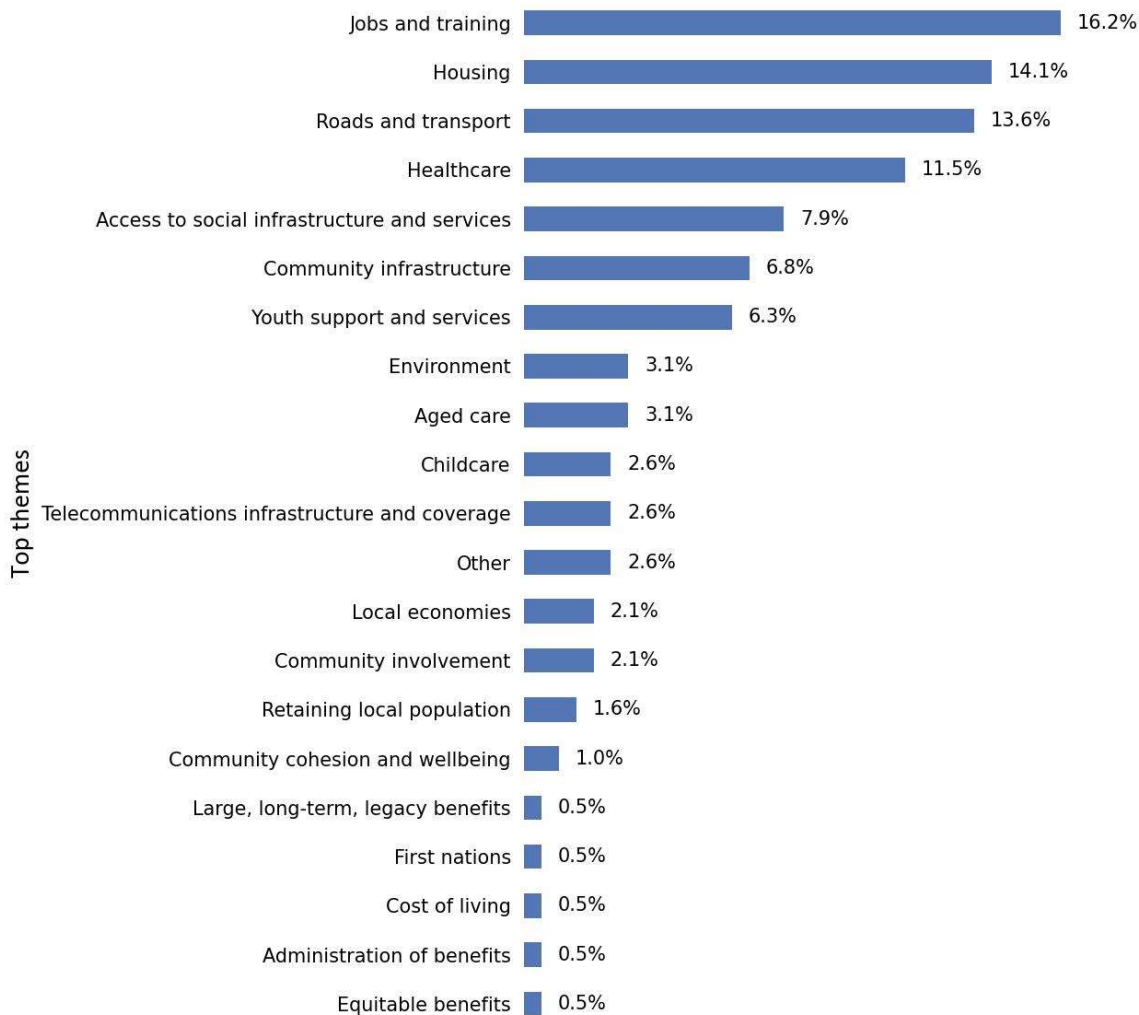


Figure 18: Community/ social issues

The qualitative data from this part of the stakeholder consultation was also analysed further in terms of specific locations within the REZ, see Table 6.

Table 6: Top-3 community or social issues that may be impacting your local community

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Housing	Roads and transport	Jobs and training	Housing	Jobs and training
2	Roads and transport	Jobs and training	Youth support and services	Healthcare	Healthcare
3	Access to social infrastructure and services	Housing	Access to social infrastructure and services	Jobs and training	Community infrastructure

As shown in Table 7, at the local level this thematic consistency continued even if the order of priorities changed.

Table 7: Top-3 regional issues

	Dunedoo	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Access to social infrastructure and services	Healthcare	Jobs and training	Housing
2	Housing	Housing	Healthcare	Healthcare
3	Healthcare	Jobs and training	Housing	Access to social infrastructure and services

5.2.2 Scale of benefits

Stakeholder workshops discussed how the Program could be structured to effectively deliver benefits to communities, see Figure 19. Across all workshop groups participants identified most frequently the importance of:

1. Funding categories
2. Community involvement
3. Equitable benefits
4. Application process
5. Community infrastructure.

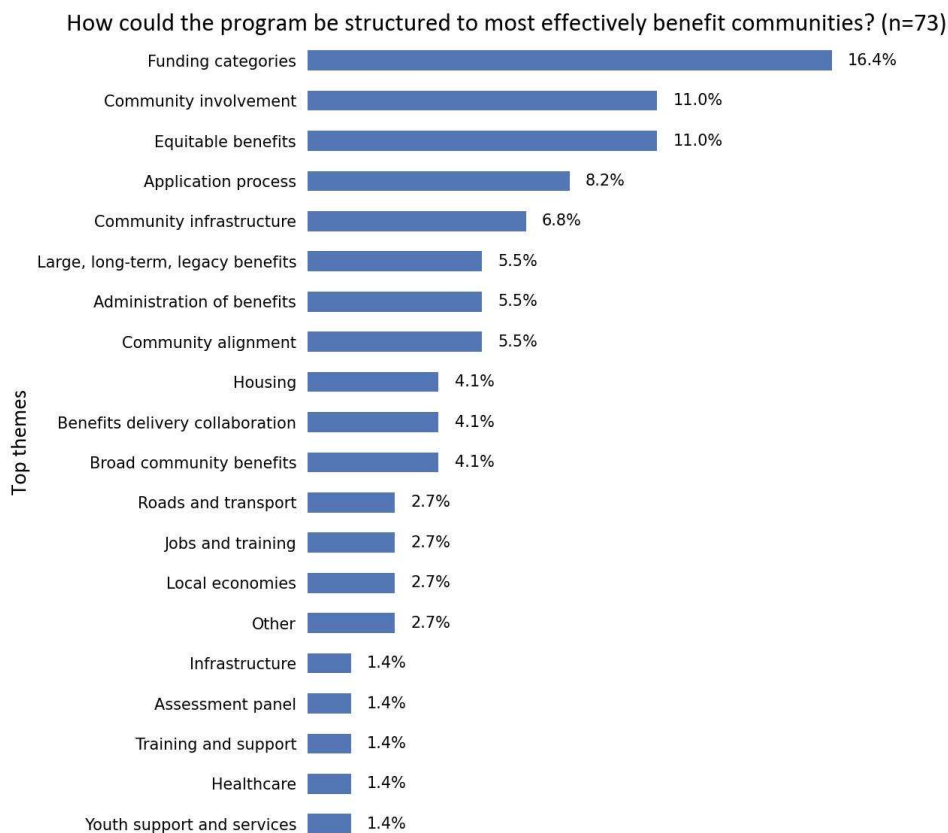


Figure 19: Program structure for benefit delivery

The qualitative data from this part of the stakeholder engagement was also analysed further in terms of specific locations within the REZ, see Table 8. Considerable diversity emerged between locations within the REZ both in terms of whether there was a focus on the **design and delivery (implementation)** aspects of the Program or the **outcomes** the Program would deliver. For example, Wellington focused entirely on the community benefit outcomes (e.g. community infrastructure, housing, and youth support and services) that were key to the Program’s effectiveness, while Dubbo identified important design and delivery features (e.g. funding categories, application process and community involvement) needed to ensure successful outcomes from the Program.

Table 8: Top-3 themes for structuring the Program to effectively deliver community benefits

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Equitable benefits	Funding categories	Community infrastructure	Equitable benefits	Funding categories
2	Community involvement	Equitable benefits	Housing	Funding categories	Application process
3	Funding categories	Large, long-term legacy benefits	Youth support and services	Community alignment	Community involvement

5.2.3 Identification of benefits

The stakeholder workshop discussions then zoomed in from how the Program could be structured to what would the best approaches be to identify ideas for delivering Community Benefits through the Central-West Orana REZ (see Figure 20). Recommendations developed around the following key themes:

1. Community involvement
2. Application process
3. Assessment panel
4. Large, long-term legacy benefits
5. Community alignment.

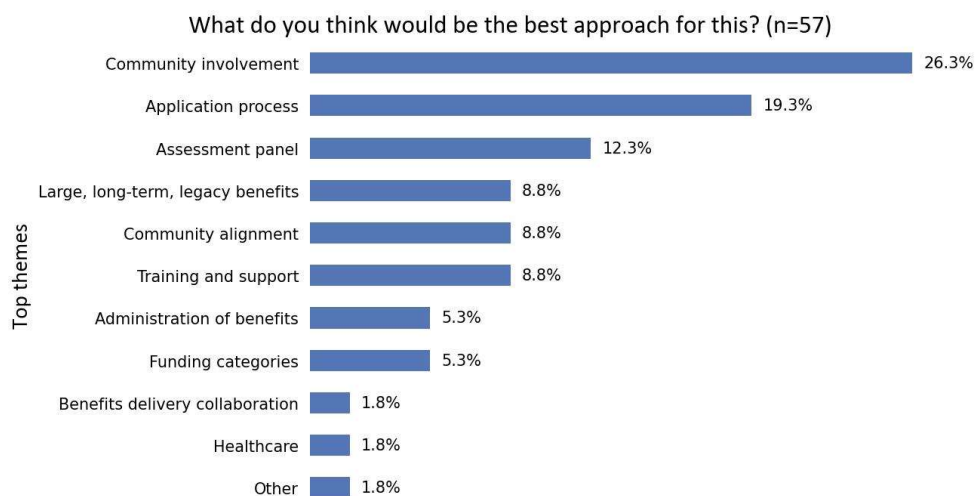


Figure 20: Approach to identifying ideas

At the local-scale there were a number of common themes that focused on aspects moving directly to acquiring funding for example:

- the application and assessment processes
- funding categories.

However, as outlined in Table 9, the workshops also revealed strategic planning/thinking from local communities in terms of recommendations around:

- community involvement
- training and support
- large, long-term legacy benefits.

Table 9: Top-3 themes for approaches to identifying ideas for community benefits

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Community involvement	Community involvement	Application process	Application process	Community involvement
2	Application process	Large, long-term legacy benefits	Assessment panel	Community involvement	Assessment panel
3	Training and support	Assessment panel	Large, long-term legacy benefits	Funding categories	Application process

Drilling further into the design and delivery/implementation of the Program, a strong theme that emerged from the workshops was the importance of involving communities in identifying benefits. Participants were asked how community organisations could be supported to be involved or contribute to the benefit identification process, see Figure 21.

All local areas reiterated the importance of community involvement in this process and raised other types of support including:

- training and support
- benefits delivery collaboration
- application processes
- community infrastructure
- benefits best practices
- promotion of benefits
- assessment panels.

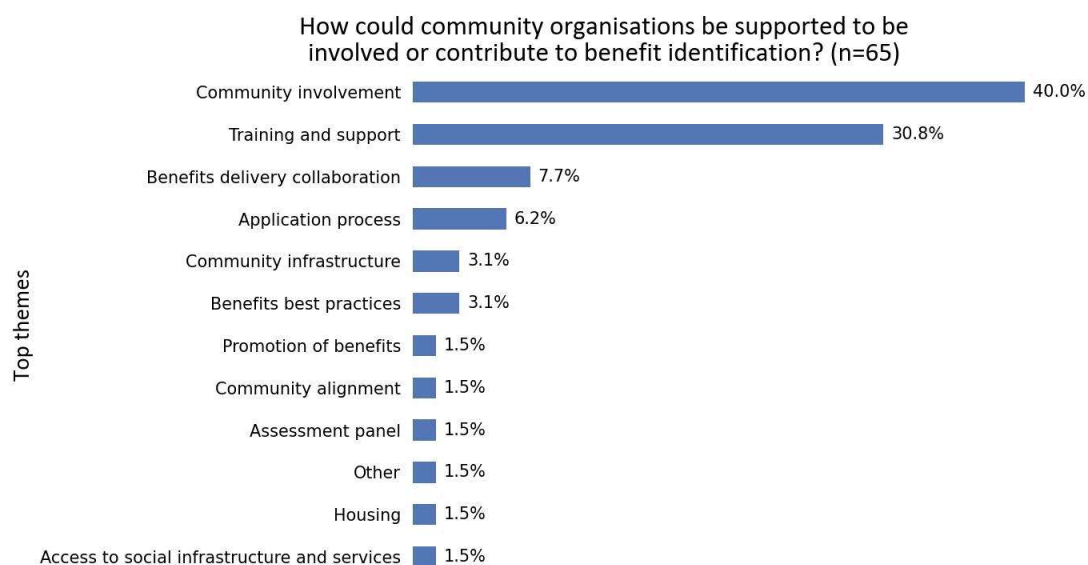


Figure 21: Support for community organisations

There was strong alignment in these recommendations at the local level. All local areas recommended the need for ‘community involvement’, two reinforced this position by also identifying ‘benefits delivery collaboration’ as a core component to success, see Table 10. Four of the five pointed to the need for ‘training and support’, two identified the importance of the ‘application process’, and the one area that did not identify either of these elements (Wellington) was still strongly aligned with its neighbours by prioritising ‘benefits best practices’.

Table 10: Top-3 themes for approaches that will support community organisations to be involved or contribute to Program benefits identification

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Community involvement	Training and support	Community involvement	Community involvement	Community involvement
2	Training and support	Community involvement	Benefits best practice	Training and support t	Training and support
3	Application process	Community infrastructure	Benefits delivery collaboration	Application process	Benefits delivery collaboration

5.2.4 Assessment of benefits/benefits prioritisation and specific benefit priorities

The stakeholder workshops turned next to the elements they believed should inform the assessment of potential benefits, see Figure 22. Recommendations can be grouped in terms of:

- Generalised outcomes to be created from funding:
 1. Large, long-term, legacy benefits
 2. Equitable benefits
 3. Community cohesion and wellbeing
 4. Community alignment

- 5. Broad range of benefits.
- Specific benefits areas to prioritise funding around:
 1. Jobs and training
 2. Infrastructure
 3. Local economies
 4. Environment
 5. Healthcare.
- Practical and procedural elements:
 1. Community involvement
 2. Assessment panel
 3. Application process
 4. Administration of benefits
 5. Promotion (of both funding opportunities and delivery of benefits)
 6. Clear time frames
 7. Collaborative approach to delivery.

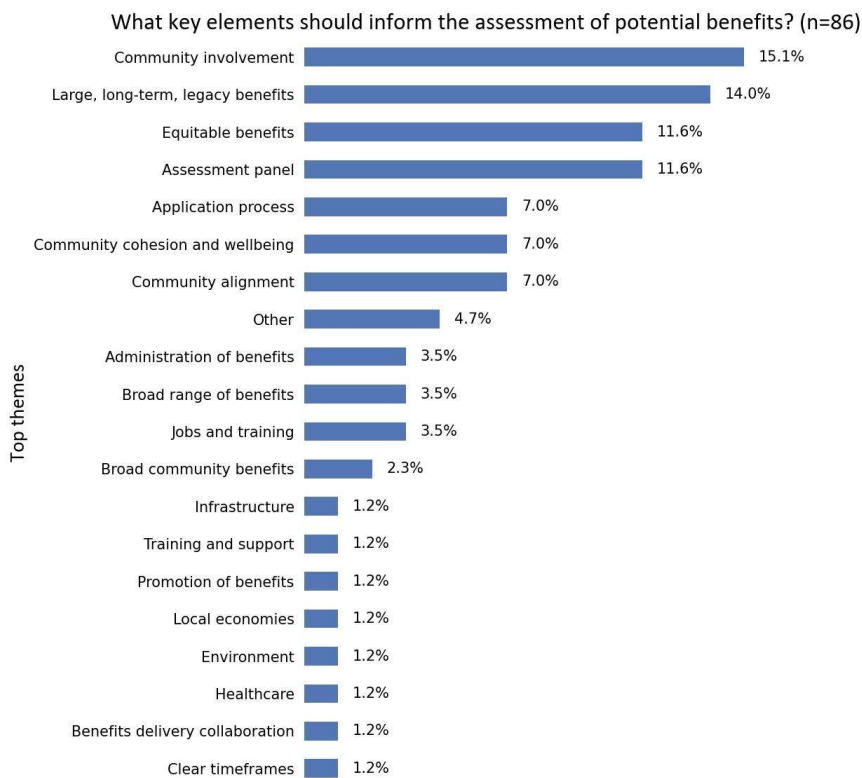


Figure 22: Elements to inform assessment

These recommendations were also analysed at the local level, see Table 11. Smaller centres (Dunedoo, Coolah and Wellington) all placed ‘community involvement’ as their top priority with a mix of strategy (e.g. equitable benefits, broad community benefits, benefits delivery collaboration) and

practical (e.g. assessment panel, benefits best practice) recommendations coming in positions #2 and #3. Meanwhile the larger regional hubs (Mudgee and Dubbo) both identified the importance of 'large, long-term, legacy benefits'.

Table 11: Top-3 elements required when assessing potential benefits

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Community involvement	Community involvement	Community involvement	Large, long-term, legacy benefits	Assessment panel
2	Equitable benefits	Assessment panel	Benefits best practice	Community alignment	Large, long-term, legacy benefits
3	Jobs and training	Broad community benefits	Benefits delivery collaboration	Equitable benefits	Community involvement

Stakeholders were also asked to consider on what basis should potential benefits be prioritised with the following broad principles being recommended during the workshops (see Figure 23):

- community cohesion and wellbeing
- large, long-term, legacy benefits
- equitable benefits
- community involvement/alignment
- diversity of benefits (broad range of community benefits).

Specific priority areas were also identified including:

- jobs and training
- healthcare
- local economies
- infrastructure
- environment
- housing
- social infrastructure and services.

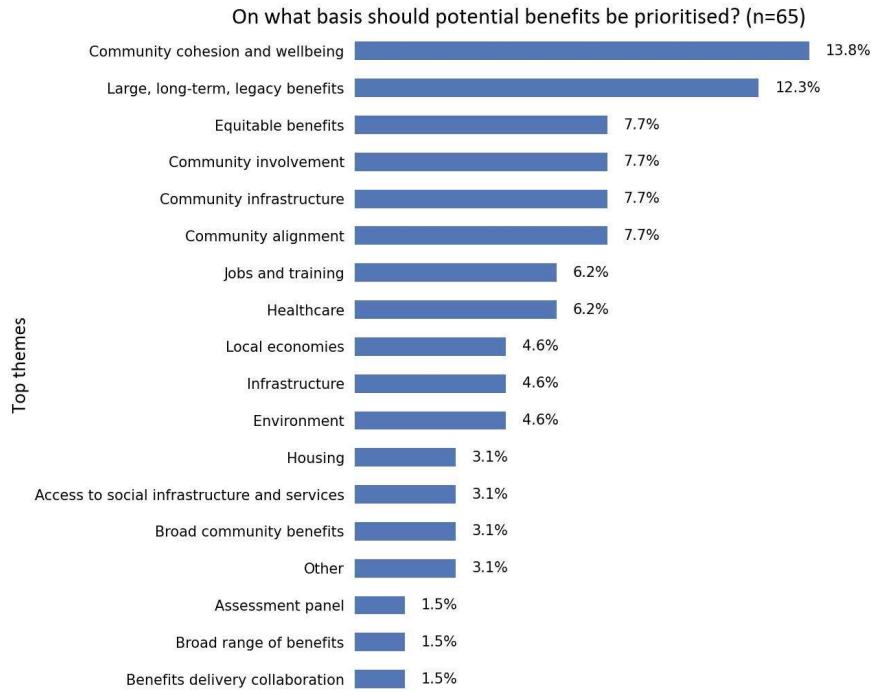


Figure 23: Prioritisation of benefits

Within the Central-West Orana REZ region (see Table 12) a number of common themes emerged around:

- large, long-term, legacy benefits
- equitable benefits
- community cohesion and wellbeing
- community infrastructure
- community involvement/alignment.

Notable was the more specific focus on priority areas that the smaller centres identified:

- healthcare (Dunedoo)
- environment (Coolah)
- jobs and training (Wellington).
-

Table 12: Top-3 elements to use when prioritising potential benefits

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Community involvement	Community cohesion and wellbeing	Community cohesion and wellbeing	Equitable benefits	Large, long-term, legacy benefits
2	Community infrastructure	Large, long-term, legacy benefits	Jobs and training	Large, long-term, legacy benefits	Community alignment
3	Healthcare	Environment	Large, long-term, legacy benefits	Community infrastructure	Equitable benefits

5.2.5 Priority benefits and other Program guideline considerations

Feedback about these topics have shown similar findings to the analysis of other questions in this report. In order to provide new and meaningful data we have provided a summary of the outcomes below.

When asked what types of benefits were more important than others, stakeholders considered benefits that created community cohesion and wellbeing to be the most important. This was closely followed by access to social infrastructure and services as well as large, long-term legacy benefits.

When asked whether there were other elements that EnergyCo should consider in the Program guidelines, stakeholders considered the three most important factors to be a clear and transparent application process, development of an assessment panel and community involvement in the process.

5.2.6 Most impactful benefits

During the workshop, stakeholders were asked to identify what they considered to be the most 'impactful' benefits. As Figure 24 below illustrates those benefits identified to be the most impactful already strongly align to the identified priorities.

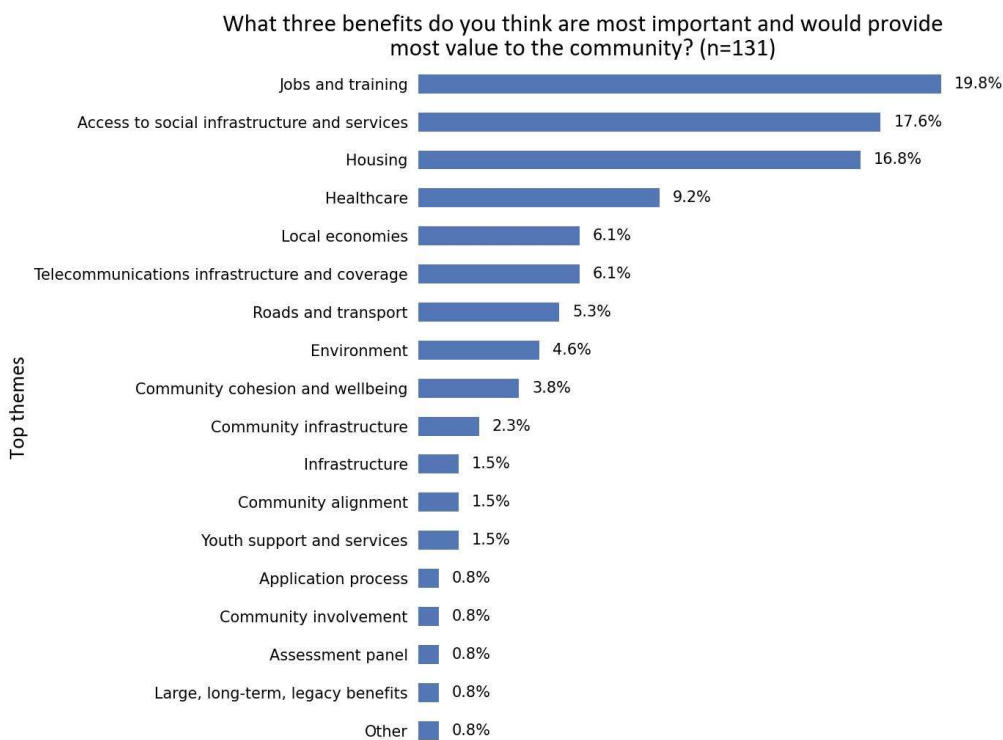


Figure 24: Benefits most valuable to the community

An examination of these priorities at the local level reveals that a priority benefit identified across the REZ region is 'jobs and training', see Table 13. In the larger centres (Dubbo and Mudgee), 'housing' is an important priority while in the smaller centres it is access to 'healthcare', 'social infrastructure and services' and 'telecommunications' that is key.

Table 13: Top-3 elements to use when prioritising potential benefits

	Dunedoo	Coolah	Wellington	Mudgee	Dubbo
1	Access to social infrastructure and services	Access to social infrastructure and services	Jobs and training	Access to social infrastructure and services	Housing
2	Healthcare	Jobs and training	Housing	Jobs and training	Jobs and training
3	Jobs and training	Telecommunications infrastructure and coverage	Healthcare	Housing	Local economies

As with other consultation feedback when taking a place-based approach to community insights we found that the larger centres (e.g. Dubbo and Mudgee) prioritised ‘housing’ and ‘jobs and training’, while the smaller centres identified the importance of ‘roads and transport’, ‘environment’, ‘access to social infrastructure and services’ and ‘telecommunications. Smaller population centres were also more concerned with the process of how funding would be allocated (i.e. ‘application process’) and the strategic visioning that framed and set the direction for the Program (e.g. ‘community cohesion and wellbeing’ and ‘large, long-term, legacy projects’). Refer to Table 14.

Table 14: Top-3 priorities for local area

	Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
Dunedoo	Roads and transport	Environment	Telecommunications infrastructure and coverage
Elong Elong	Telecommunications infrastructure and coverage	Access to social infrastructure and services	Environment
Coolah	Applications process	Roads and transport	Environment
Cassilis	Roads and transport	Applications process	Access to social infrastructure and services
Wellington	Community cohesion and wellbeing	Jobs and training	Large, long-term, legacy benefits
Gulgong	Healthcare	Access to social infrastructure and services	Roads and transport
Mudgee	Jobs and training	Environment	Housing
Dubbo	Housing	Jobs and training	Access to social infrastructure and services

5.3 Community drop-in sessions

The series of community drop-in sessions also conducted as part of this comprehensive consultation approach asked participants a series of questions around:

- top 3 priorities for their local area
- ideas for initiatives
- other considerations.

The Top-3 priorities across the Central-West Orana REZ region (see Figure 25) were:

- roads and transport
- access to social infrastructure and services

- telecommunications and services.

These findings contrast with those identified through the stakeholder workshops, illustrating the importance of ensuring that community consultation in REZ regions has a mixed-methodological approach.

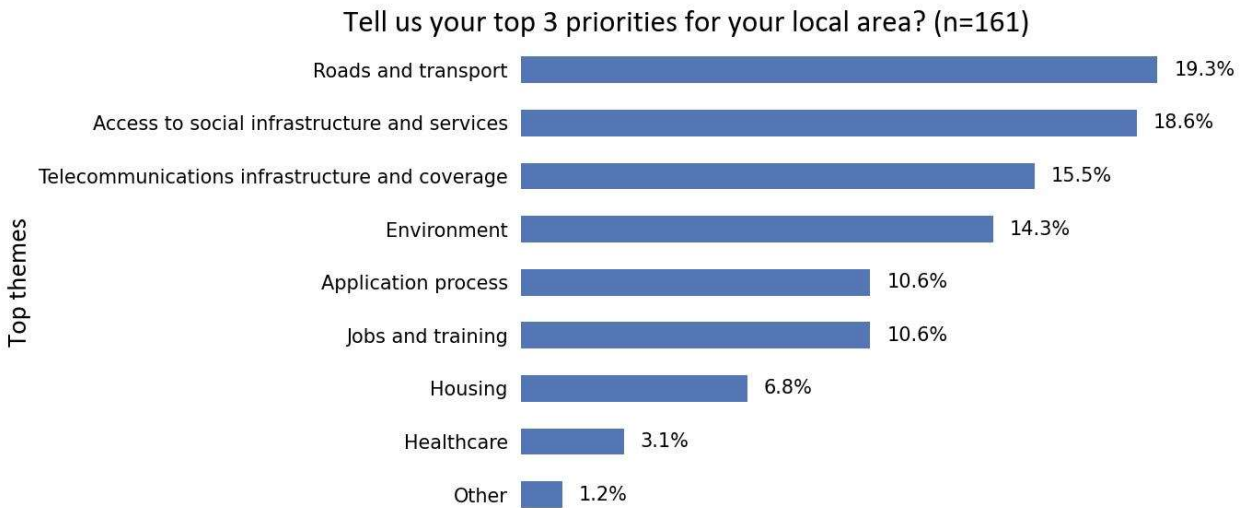


Figure 25: Local priorities

5.3.1 Other ideas or initiatives

As shown in Figure 26, when it came to other ideas and/or initiatives that EnergyCo should consider, community infrastructure, roads and transport and jobs and training were the most commonly raised ideas raised during community drop-in sessions. Other initiatives that were raised included:

- retaining local population
- youth support and services
- aged care
- alternative solutions
- benefits delivery collaboration.

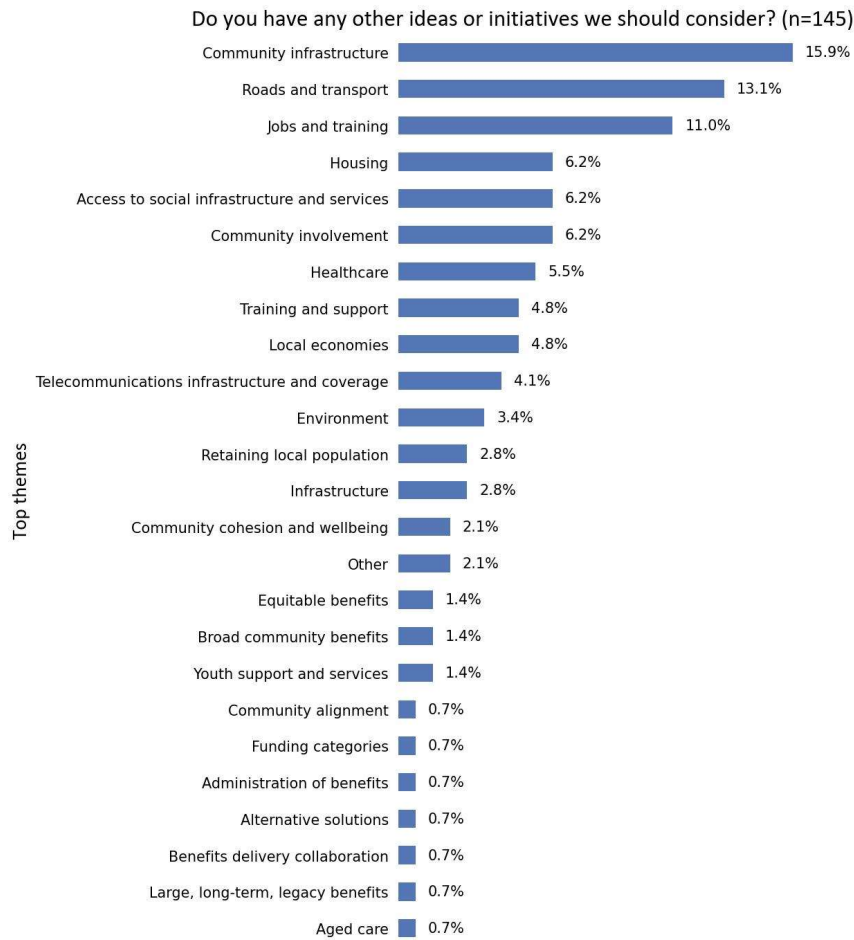


Figure 26: Other ideas or initiatives

Focusing in on specific localities, see Table 15, we found there to be greater alignment across these diverse populations including:

- social and community infrastructure
- economic outcomes (e.g. local economies, jobs and training)
- built environment infrastructure – housing, roads and transport.

Yet there were also some unique outliers depending on of the location of the community drop-in session, for example:

- Dunedoo identified the importance of ‘retaining local population’
- Dubbo highlighted ‘youth support and services’
- Coolah and Cassilis noted the desire to have ‘community involvement’ and ‘training and support’ when the Program was rolled out.

Table 15: Other ideas and/or initiatives

	1	2	3
Dunedoo	Local economies	Retaining local population	Housing
Elong Elong	Community infrastructure	Local economies	Access to social infrastructure and services
Coolah	Community infrastructure	Roads and transport	Training and support
Cassilis	Roads and transport	Community infrastructure	Community involvement
Wellington	Jobs and training	Housing	Access to social infrastructure and services
Gulgong	Healthcare	Access to social infrastructure and services	Jobs and training
Mudgee	Jobs and training	Housing	Community infrastructure
Dubbo	Access to social infrastructure and services	Youth support and services	-

6 Key findings and recommendations

Findings	Recommendations
Issues and priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong overall alignment with the identified six priority areas for both current issues and benefit priorities. • New issues identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ retaining local populations ○ cost of living. • New benefit priorities identified related to the strategic visioning of the Program and included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ large, long-term, legacy benefits ○ equitable benefits (fair and locally appropriate distribution of benefits). • Issues and priorities differed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ between locations within the Central-West Orana REZ ○ between stakeholder groups and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound evidence that the six priority areas are relevant/align with those consulted. • Integrate the following into revisions/changes to the Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ new issues identified (retaining local populations and cost of living) into these categories or create new priority areas ○ new benefit priorities into the strategic visioning of the program and into the design and delivery of the program. • Program should recognise and accommodate differences in issues and priorities identified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ different locations in the REZ ○ stakeholder groups and communities.
Design and delivery of the Program	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following support were identified by participants in all three forums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ training and support ○ involving the community and aligning funding decisions with the needs of communities ○ ensuring benefits were delivered in collaboration with communities ○ accessible and appropriate application processes ○ enabling community members to be part of assessment panels ○ strong administration and governance of benefit funding allocations. • Differences emerged between locations within the Central-West REZ and between stakeholders and communities around focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the design and delivery (implementation) aspects of the Program or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design and delivery of the Program should aim to respond to the identified needs for support (see findings in column opposite). • Program should recognise and accommodate differences in issues and priorities identified by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ difference locations in the REZ ○ stakeholder groups and communities ○ generalised and specific benefits/outcomes ○ practical and procedural elements.

Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the outcomes the Program would deliver. 	

Overall

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there was strong alignment between those consulted and the Central-West Orana priority areas, there was also a strong response regarding the principles/strategic vision that should form the foundation for the design and delivery of the program (see recommendations in opposite column) • Important differences existed between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ locations within the REZ ○ between stakeholder groups and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While high level it is important that communities can see that the design and delivery of the Program is informed by the principles identified in this report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ large, long-term, legacy benefits ○ equity ○ aligned to community needs ○ open to and actively supports broad/diverse and innovative solutions/proposals ○ supports community cohesion and wellbeing. Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ community involvement ○ application process ○ assessment panel and Program administration ○ collaboration with community on delivering benefits ○ training and support ○ supports community cohesion and wellbeing. • Demonstrating how insights have been integrated/used to revise the Program will be key to building social licence in this region.
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6.1 Next steps

EnergyCo has used the feedback received via the community survey, stakeholder workshops and community drop-in sessions to refine the design of the Program guidelines. This includes refining how EnergyCo administers funding to deliver community and employment benefits for energy infrastructure delivered within the Central-West Orana REZ, in line with the EII Act.

Once the program is launched, EnergyCo will provide updates to those that participated in the consultation, information on the program, including eligibility, assessment criteria and other information and opportunities for grant writing support to apply for funding.

If you would like further information or to stay up to date, we encourage community members to subscribe for email updates by contacting our team on 1800 032 101 or by emailing cwo@energyco.nsw.gov.au.