

# Guide to a successful **business network**



Starting and running a business network for  
local authorities and trade councils in Denmark

**Go'Energi**

Danish Energy  
Saving Trust

# Introduction

Businesses consume huge quantities of energy – often too much. Local authorities, trade councils and other bodies wanting to disseminate information on how to reduce energy consumption can optimize their efforts by focusing strongly on the energy consumed by businesses. This is one way of providing both a service to businesses and cultivating and expanding relations.

For most companies, there is no legislation that lays down requirements for how much energy businesses use. Therefore, asking the business community to work with energy initiatives is a completely new departure for many local authorities and trade councils in Denmark. Experience shows that one of the most appropriate ways of putting the focus on energy consumption is to establish a dialogue-based partnership with companies by establishing a business network, or by utilizing an existing network.

Many local authorities and trade councils in Denmark are already in the process of establishing businesses networks. The purpose of this guide is to help you establish and run a network.

Use this guide for inspiration. We hope you will find it useful!

Go' Energi

Danish Energy Saving Trust

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# Define the overall purpose of your **initiative**

## Set specific goals

Business initiatives undertaken by Danish local authorities are often based on climate action plans, CO<sub>2</sub> action plans, energy action plans and the like. If you have such a plan then you will probably already have goals that set out what the results of initiatives for business should be.

If not, it is important to establish not only what the results of initiatives for companies will be, but also that the goals are specific, and therefore measurable. In this respect it may be relevant to investigate the level of prospective participation by looking at the structure and types of businesses in your area.

## Suggested goals

- Recruit 50 member companies before the end of 2013
- Hold 10 themed meetings in 2012
- Advise at least 20 companies in 2013

Our experience is that many local authorities or trade councils have problems if they set businesses targets for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because it is extremely difficult to measure the reduction.



### **“KlimaKlar” (Climate aware) business network in the Municipality of Gladsaxe**

- In 2010, the Municipality of Gladsaxe near Copenhagen established its “KlimaKlar” business network in order to involve and motivate local companies to take part in energy initiatives
- The “KlimaKlar” project is part of the Municipality’s CO<sub>2</sub> action plan which includes targets for businesses to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- Gladsaxe used 1 full-man year to run the network in its first year
- One of the goals of “KlimaKlar” was to have 50 members in its first year
- The network motivated its members by holding themed meetings which were hosted by different companies

# Set the project **framework**

## Establish the project team and fix the budget

Once you start establishing your network, it's a good idea to plan who is responsible for what. Letting a permanent member of staff or a group be the overall contact for the network can be advantageous.

Also clarify how many hours, and how much money you will use on the initiative, and consider where in the local authority the trade council or network should be based.

It may be worth writing a project summary describing your target group for the business network, its milestones and finances. Having a description of the project ensures that all the parties agree on the scope.

## Find partners

Investigate potential partners who may be able to help finance the project including, for example, local companies or others in the local authority with expertise in the energy sector.

It's also a good idea to thoroughly discuss what the network will actually do, and which competences the person(s) running the network should have. Consider whether they should be energy consultants and will therefore be able to advise companies about the technical aspects of the energy initiative, or whether you wish to buy in professional services such as presentations at the themed meetings.

## The following must be in place

- Project management, project group, the person(s) responsible for the network and their competences
- Finances
- Project description
- Possible partners
- Areas that the network will work with

# Prepare your **offer** to companies

## Consider external offers

Decide what you want to offer companies that join the network. It's important not to use too many resources developing all the offers yourself. There are many other actors that have offers that are cheap, and sometimes free. Some of the relevant actors are:

- Climate Compass
- Energy services
- Energy companies

As the person(s) responsible for the network you will have to spend time running the network and keeping companies motivated. Never underestimate the amount of work required in this respect.



## Focus on cash benefits

It's important to point out the benefits for companies joining the network. Experience shows that companies are not motivated simply by meeting other companies, having a closer relationship to a local authority, business secretariat or trade council, or by having access to free themed meetings. Companies are mostly focused on cash benefits, so it is essential that you have a specific, value-added offer package in place from the start.

The package can be continually tailored and developed based on your resources and the needs of the companies. Find inspiration in Go' Energi's library of case stories.

## Consider a focus group

Consider whether you should invite a group of selected local businesses to take part in a focus group with a view to receiving input on their requirements, as well as any missing areas, before they start working on energy savings.



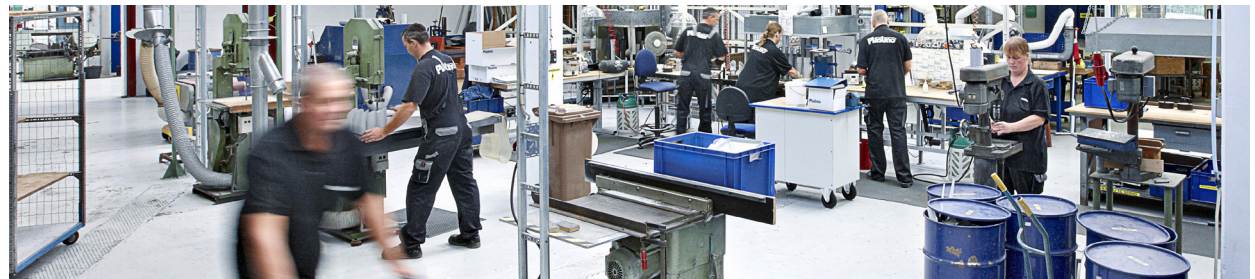
# Prepare your **offer** to companies

The offer package should include one or several of the following benefits:

- Free membership of the network
- Offer of 1–3 free themed meetings a year with the focus on energy, case stories, etc.
- Offer of 2 members' meetings a year, with the focus on 1 case story and with the possibility that members can make savings by drawing on the experiences from other companies
- Provide news with information on how savings can be achieved, etc.
- Give companies that have registered a certificate and have their names listed on the website in order to publicise their efforts
- Include relevant material on your website, e.g. links to energy actors

Depending on your resources it may be possible to include the following offers:

- Help individual members of the network to work with the environment, climate and energy
- Provide a subsidy to members of the network to carry out an energy review
- Send members of the network marketing material that they can use to publicise their involvement in the network, e.g. a web banner for their website or a logo for their energy accounts, etc.
- Contact members of the network on a regular basis with a view to including them in PR material



# Use Go' Energi's **checklists and specifications of requirements**

When presenting offers to companies consider using Go' Energi's checklists and specifications of requirements. Go' Energi has prepared a number of checklists to ensure that an energy review is carried out correctly in different areas of a company's operations.

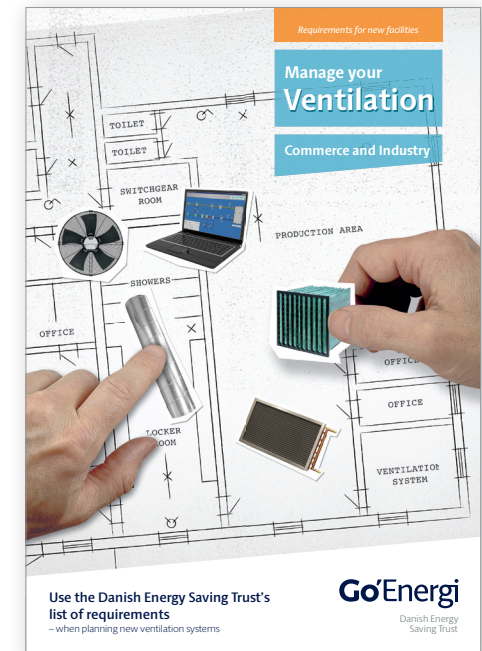
Checklists are available for the following areas:

- Ventilation
- Cooling systems
- Heating system
- Compressed air, fans and vacuum systems
- Building envelope
- Automatic control equipment
- Waste heat
- Lighting
- IT and server rooms
- General overview

Specifications of requirements are available for the following areas:

- Ventilation
- Cooling systems
- Heating systems
- Buildings and building envelopes
- Lighting
- Refrigerated displays
- Machines and motors

See more information at the end of this guide.



# Planning the first **themed meeting** in the network

## Get a company to host the event

Holding the first meeting at a company is a good idea. It sends the right signal and gives those attending an opportunity to hear about a local company's experiences on a first-hand basis.

Find a company that will carry out an energy check and use it as the theme of the first event. Consider paying for this energy check

Our experience is that companies will prioritise coming to a themed meeting if they receive information about a specific issue that makes it easy for them to attend.

Plan the programme so that the energy adviser that carried out the energy check at the company gives a speech, possibly combined with one from the company. Allow time for questions. Keep the programme to a maximum of 2 hours and plan it as an afternoon meeting. Together with the company, invite relevant companies to the event.

## Ask the local Mayor to give a welcome speech

It's important to signal that the content of the network meetings is both serious and useful. Inviting your local Mayor, trade council chairman or CEO to give a welcome speech at the first meeting is a good idea. Typically, this will increase the level of interest in working with energy optimisation.

Set aside time on the telephone to follow up the invitations that you sent out to the network if not enough companies sign up for the event.

Consider the benefits of copying the above process for a second energy subject, and with another company. For example, the focus could be on ventilation, lighting, IT/server room, etc.

### **Ventilation check-up results in more bottom line profit at Bording A/S**

For many companies, a ventilation check-up can provide a financial boost. Bording A/S checked one system in a storage and distribution unit near Copenhagen and then carried out a simple refurbishment. Now the company can look forward to saving over DKK 200,000 a year. This case story is a good example of how companies can look forward to large savings by carrying out a relatively simple energy check. There is little doubt that cash benefits are the strongest argument when it comes to establishing a business network and creating the interest in it.



# Planning the first **themed meeting** in the network

## Vary the subjects at the meetings

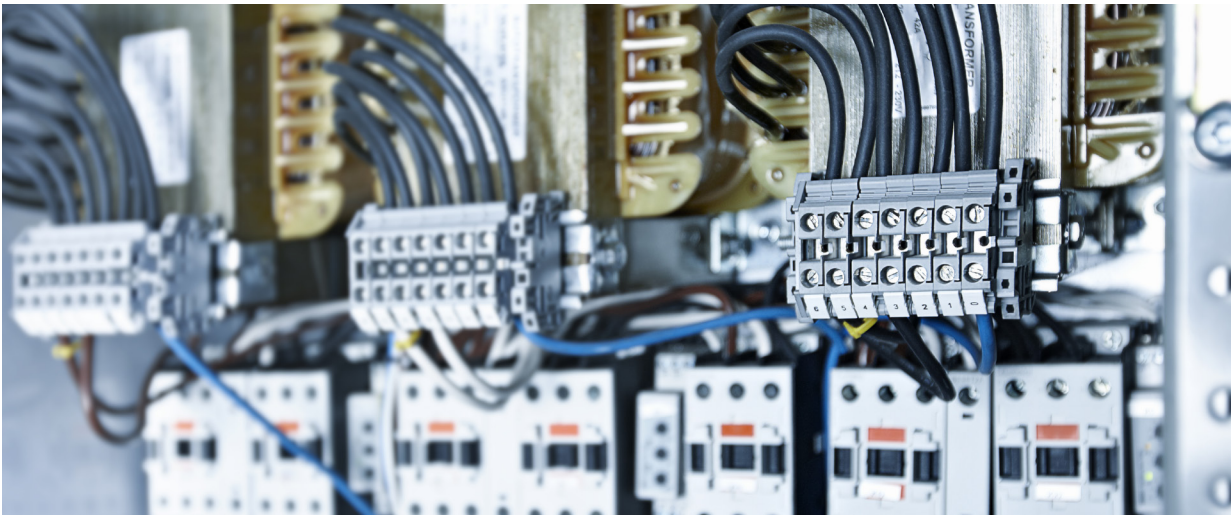
Once you establish a routine for planning the activities. It's important to vary the subjects at the meetings and continually check what meetings are being arranged by other actors. Also, listen to what the companies want.

Start with a subject that interests many of the companies. Allow the hosting of the meetings to rotate between different companies so the participants in the network can come out and see how other companies manage their energy requirements.

## Start with the key energy subjects

Experience shows that it makes sense to start with the key energy subjects – for example, a general check-up, ventilation, heating system, cooling system, insulation of the building and behaviour.

Keep an eye on the latest developments, and preferably also hold meetings about electric cars, district heating or climate-friendly food if these are topical. Be careful not to hold events that only have large companies as the target group.



# Planning schedule for a themed meeting

It helps to start planning the meeting in good time. A planning schedule before the first meeting can look like this:

## 4–5 months before

- Plan the time and location of the themed meeting – preferably agree with a company to host the meeting. Tuesdays and Thursdays are generally the best days on which to hold afternoon events. Start with an afternoon meeting then ask the companies which time of day they would like to meet in future. Some companies will prefer to participate in such meetings during working hours or early in the morning if they are in the retail sector
- Make it easy for companies to register for the event. Use your website for this purpose, and preferably create a dedicated e-mail address
- Prepare a programme – put it on your website, produce press releases and advertisements, and print the programme so it can be handed out in your reception area, at meetings, open days, etc. Clarify with the persons giving the speeches how much time they have on the day. Remember to have breaks, when the participants can exchange experiences
- If you decide to contact companies by telephone, make a list of “sales arguments” that you have ready when attempting to create interest in the network/themed meetings. Start with the benefits of membership which should be formulated as one element of the offer to companies

## 2 months before

- Send out the invitations – address them to a director, and decide whether to invite them via a standard letter or by e-mail. Write a follow-up letter and attach the programme for the day
- Consider placing an advertisement in your local newspaper. Advertising can achieve two things: Publicising the event to the business community; and publicising your initiative as a local authority/trade council to local residents and potential partners, etc.

## 1 month before

- Send a reminder via e-mail

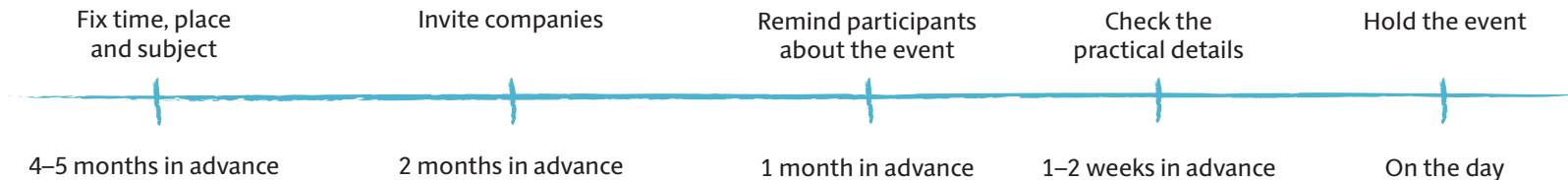
## 1–2 weeks before

- Follow up the original invitations by telephone if you think too few companies have registered
- Don't expect to get 100 companies to register, but set your sights on a realistic level. 20–25 companies is a decent number of delegates if you are in a local authority with a lot of businesses in your area
- Make sure that you check all the practical agreements to do with the event (meeting rooms, food and drinks, etc.)

# Planning schedule for a themed meeting

## On the day

- Print copies of the programme and a list of those attending to hand out on arrival
- Possibly also print slides from presentations, or upload them onto your website so delegates and other interested parties can find them there
- Make sure that the technical equipment you need is working, e.g. PC and projector
- Consider whether to hand out a brief one-page questionnaire for evaluating your event
- Produce name tags to make it easy for the delegates to network. Produce an attendance list
- Serve food and drinks
- Stick to the schedule – start on time
- Arrange tables and chairs in groups where possible – this encourages delegates to speak to each other
- Take pictures. It can be useful to have photos for sending out with press releases, or for use with other events
- Listen to what the companies want – talk with them in the break



# How to run a network

## Maintaining the network

You have now taken the first steps in a voluntary partnership with the business community. Next it's about getting more companies to join and keeping the existing members interested in order to get the business community to implement energy savings. It's important that members and other interested parties see that the network takes root and creates positive changes in the energy area.

There are two things in particular that you should note:

- How much work you want to put into selling the network to potential members?
- How much you want to do to motivate and involve existing members?

## Running the network

Running a business network involves different types of tasks. This means that as the person responsible you should cast your net wide, or establish a partnership with others who can help with the work.



### “KLIMAVÆRKET” (Climate network) in Odense

- In November 2011, Odense Municipality and Miljø- Forum Fyn (Funen Environment Forum) established the “KLIMAVÆRKET” business network
- By the end of 2012 the network will have 120 members ranging from relatively small businesses, such as hair-dressers, to building and construction companies
- The “KLIMAVÆRKET” business network has something to offer to all types of companies depending on what level of ambition they choose, i.e. whether they want to be a “KLIMAKVIK” (climate quick) or a “KLIMAKOMET” (climate comet) member. Individual companies can involve themselves as much as they have time for, or want to
- The “KLIMAVÆRKET” network is a win-win situation for both Odense Municipality and the member companies because:
  - The members exchange experiences, find partners and get ideas for their own projects; and
  - Odense benefits in the long term from an overall reduction the amount of energy used in the municipality

# How to run a network

## Tasks in connection with potential members

- Issue press releases on a regular basis featuring, for example, good case stories
- Mention the network in speeches (e.g. speeches by the Mayor)
- Publicise the activities, before and after you hold them – possibly invite the local press to events
- Ask the members to publicize their participation in the network in their own companies, such as via their websites, environmental statement, etc.
- Consider whether you can benefit from using other forms of media

## Tasks in connection with existing members

- Start with the offer you have made and ensure that the basic organisation of the network is in place
- Keep the focus on subjects that are up to date, and make sure that the content of the network meetings is tailored on this basis – and meets the wishes of the participants
- Keep a continuous eye on the partnership opportunities with other players





# Developing the network

Working with a business network should preferably result in a return for both the participants and you as the leader of the network. Your return is presumably to encourage businesses to be more energy efficient, but in overall terms it can be said that the participants derive four types of benefits.

## Use the network compass

In order to align the participants' expectations of the benefits with your own, thereby creating a common basis and goal for your network, you can start with the network compass.

Companies participating in your network will mostly want to learn and get information from the network. However, focusing on one of the points in the network compass does not mean that the other three focus areas are not in play.

Most companies want to save money which they can do by becoming smarter at saving energy.

This is the focus that should be reflected in your offer to the network.

### Network compass

#### Cooperation

Participants become co-owners of a cooperation in which they provide support, identity and personal sparring. The agenda is typically rather thin in this area because the fact of being together means that this is already in focus.

#### Accessibility

Participants get input on solving their problems better and more efficiently via the input of the other participants in the network. Here the agenda is primarily something that the individual can create, and the goal is to find others with a similar agenda.

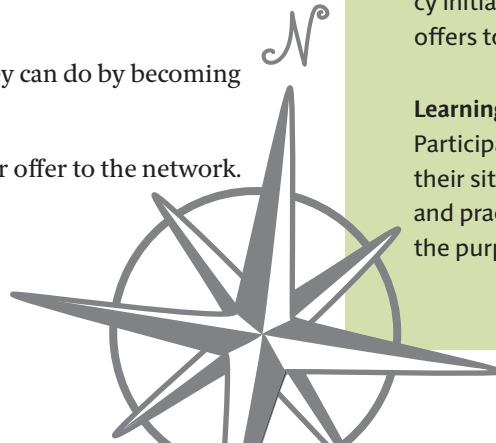
#### Influence

Through the network, participants have the option to position themselves and influence decisions in the organisation. For example, companies are able to influence the energy efficiency initiatives undertaken by a local authority or Go' Energi's offers to companies.

#### Learning

Participants can learn, get personal inspiration, or improve their situations by mirroring and reflecting their experiences and practises with others. The agenda is organised here with the purpose of being inspired or learning from.

*Source: Djøf (Danish Association for Lawyers and Economists), etc.*



# Remember to **publicise** your activities

You should be visible both externally and internally.

Companies often look for information via the Internet or their network, and therefore it helps to be visible.

It may be worth considering the benefits of creating some routines in connection with making the network or themed meetings visible.

## Advice about communication

### Internal communication

Establish meetings with relevant interested parties.

Involve potential partners. These can be entities such as the business secretariat of the local authority, the boards of businesses in the local authority, the local trade council, business consultants, etc. A good idea is to hold a quarterly sparring meeting at which you offer mutual advice and commit yourselves to reciprocal PR.

Involve the local authority's supervisory staff who routinely visit companies under their jurisdiction. They can be good ambassadors for the network.

Publicise the establishment of the network via relevant internal channels. For example, write about it on your Intranet, prepare a briefing document for politicians, your Board of directors, the local trade council and business consultants, or tell the Mayor about the initiative. In reality, other people will be able to advertise the network better than the person who is running the project.

### External communication

A good idea to draw attention to your network and its work in connection with the climate is to use part of your website to display a description of your initiatives, the good case stories, advertisements for the events, names of members, news items, etc.

Produce an A4 folder or a sales brochure about the network in which you describe briefly what a company will get out of being a member, and whether it costs anything, etc. Remember to write the brochure in a way that allows its long-term use. Refer readers to the website rather than include dates of events, etc. in the brochure.

Place your advertisements in local newspapers and preferably prepare press releases or invite the press to your events.

## Where to get **help**?

You can get help free from many sources – including your energy company.

Companies and those responsible for the networks can get help with an energy check by using Go' Energi's checklists.

- [GoEnergi.dk](http://GoEnergi.dk)
- [energitjenesten.dk](http://energitjenesten.dk) (in Danish)
- [climatecompass.dk](http://climatecompass.dk)

**You can also get help from three business networks that are working with local businesses on environmental initiatives:**

- Read more about the Municipality of Gladsaxe's "Klima-Klar" network at: [gladsaxe.dk/klimaklar](http://gladsaxe.dk/klimaklar) (in Danish)
- Read more about Odense Municipality's "KLIMAVÆRKET" network at: [odense.dk/Klimanetvaerk](http://odense.dk/Klimanetvaerk) (in Danish)
- Read more about Furesø business Curve Breakers at: [fureso.dk/energiogerhverv](http://fureso.dk/energiogerhverv) (in Danish)

## Contact

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# Go'Energi

Danish Energy  
Saving Trust

Go' Energi is an impartial public organisation under the Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Building.