How to Hire Finance and Commercial Talent for Battery Energy Storage Projects

Hiring for battery energy storage projects means finding people who understand both the technical side of renewable energy and the financial structures that make these projects viable. The market for finance and commercial professionals in this space is competitive, and getting it wrong can delay project milestones or create compliance gaps. Below is a practical sequence of steps to follow, with what to watch for at each stage.

Step 1: Define the role in project terms

Before you write a job description, map out where the hire sits in the project lifecycle. A battery storage project moves through development, construction, operation, and eventual repowering or decommissioning. Each phase demands different financial expertise.

During development, you need someone who can model revenue stacks, negotiate power purchase agreements, and structure project finance. During construction, the focus shifts to cost control, progress payments, and managing contractor claims. In operations, the role becomes about revenue optimisation, asset management, and compliance with grid codes or market rules.

Be precise about which phase the role covers. A candidate who is excellent at financial modelling for a greenfield site may not enjoy the operational demands of a live asset. If the role spans multiple phases, state that clearly so candidates can self-select.

Step 2: Look for sector-specific financial literacy

General finance experience does not always translate well into renewable energy recruitment. A commercial manager from a manufacturing background may not be familiar with the risk profile of a battery storage project, where revenue depends on market dispatch and battery degradation over time.

When reviewing candidates, check for direct experience with project finance in energy. Look for familiarity with offtake agreements, availability payments, and the way lenders assess technology risk for battery systems. A candidate who has worked on pumped hydro or green hydrogen projects will often grasp the commercial logic faster than someone who has only done corporate finance.

What to watch: candidates who talk only about general financial analysis without showing awareness of the specific revenue models in battery storage. Ask them to explain how they

would model the impact of battery degradation on a ten-year revenue forecast. Their answer will reveal whether they understand the asset.

Step 3: Prioritise commercial instinct over pure accounting

Finance and commercial roles in BESS projects are not just about keeping the books. They involve negotiating with suppliers, managing joint venture partners, and structuring deals that balance risk across multiple parties. A strong accountant may lack the negotiation skills or commercial awareness to push a deal through.

Look for candidates who have worked in deal environments. Experience in HV transmission or HV substations can be a sign that someone is used to managing large capital projects with long lead times. Data centre power procurement is another adjacent field where commercial professionals learn to negotiate power supply agreements and manage counterparty risk.

What to watch: candidates who default to "that is not my job" when asked about negotiation or stakeholder management. The best hires in this space see commercial strategy as part of their role, not an add-on.

Step 4: Assess their understanding of the regulatory landscape

Battery storage projects sit within a complex regulatory environment that varies by region. Grid connection rules, market participation requirements, and environmental compliance all affect the financial viability of a project. A finance professional who does not understand these constraints may build models that assume conditions that do not exist.

During interviews, ask how the candidate would structure a project finance proposal for a battery system that participates in frequency response markets. Listen for awareness of connection agreements, revenue stacking rules, and the risk of regulatory changes over the life of the asset.

What to watch: vague answers about "working with regulators" without specifics. A candidate who can name the key regulatory bodies and describe how their decisions affect project returns shows real sector knowledge.

Step 5: Use behavioural interviewing for collaboration skills

BESS projects require close collaboration between finance, engineering, and project management teams. A commercial manager who cannot communicate with engineers about technical risk will create friction. A financial analyst who cannot explain a model to non-finance stakeholders will slow down decision making.

Ask candidates to describe a time they had to explain a complex financial concept to a technical team. Listen for how they adapted their language and whether they used examples the engineers could relate to. Also ask about a time they disagreed with a project manager on a budget decision and how they resolved it.

What to watch: candidates who blame others for past conflicts or who cannot give a concrete example. Soft skills matter more in this field than many hiring managers assume.

Step 6: Check for long-term thinking on talent and culture

Renewable energy recruitment is not just about filling a role today. The BESS market is growing, and the people you hire now may become your future leaders. Look for candidates who show interest in mentoring, who have built teams before, or who can talk about how they would develop junior staff.

Vinova Australia works with organisations that finance and build battery storage projects, and the talent they place often grows into broader commercial leadership roles. A candidate who sees their career in the energy transition is more likely to stay and invest in your organisation over the long term than someone treating it as a stopgap.

What to watch: candidates who have moved between industries every two years without a clear reason. Sector commitment matters because the regulatory and technical knowledge takes time to build.

Step 7: Partner with specialist recruiters in the sector

Generalist recruitment agencies rarely have the depth of network to find the right finance and commercial professionals for BESS projects. The candidate pool is small, and the best people are often not actively looking. Specialist recruiters who focus on renewable energy can identify passive candidates and understand the nuances of each role.

Vinova Australia is one example of a specialist in this space. When you engage a specialist, you gain access to a network of professionals who have already been vetted for sector fit. This can cut the time to hire and reduce the risk of a bad placement.

What to watch: agencies that promise a large database but cannot discuss the specific commercial models of battery storage. A good recruiter should be able to challenge your job description and suggest refinements based on market reality.

Putting it together

Hiring finance and commercial professionals for BESS projects requires a deliberate process that goes beyond standard recruitment. Define the role by project phase, test for sector-specific financial knowledge, prioritise commercial instinct, and assess regulatory awareness. Use behavioural interviews to gauge collaboration skills, and think about long-term cultural fit. Finally, consider working with a specialist recruiter who understands the market.

The energy transition depends on getting these hires right. Battery storage projects need people who can structure the deals, manage the risk, and keep the project moving through a complex regulatory environment. With a careful process, you can find the professionals who will help your projects succeed.