



GridReady Guide for Startup Applicants

This document provides more detailed information to help startup companies determine if GridReady could be a good fit for their technology at the current stage of its path to commercialization.

About the Program

To meet the increasing demands for a reliable, affordable, and flexible grid, Minnesota's leading power utilities are actively seeking new technologies to modernize and secure systems, while delivering on the state's commitment to 100% clean energy by 2040.

GridReady bridges the gap between promising energy startups and utilities that are serious about deploying innovative solutions. Through a structured, supported process, we identify the most promising technology startups, connect them with the right utility partners, and provide hands-on support to mobilize pilots that lead to real growth opportunities.

Our Utility Partners



[Great River Energy](#) is a not-for-profit wholesale electric power cooperative that provides electricity to 26 member-owner distribution cooperatives.

Together, their systems provide power to approximately two-thirds of Minnesota geographically and parts of Wisconsin, serving 700,000 families, farms, and businesses.

With \$3.9 billion in assets, Great River Energy is the second-largest electric power supplier in Minnesota and one of the largest generation and transmission cooperatives in the nation.



AN ALLETE COMPANY

[Minnesota Power](#) provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security, and quality of life for 150,000 customers, 14 municipalities, and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. Minnesota Power is part of the ALLETE, Inc. energy company, and is headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota.



[Xcel Energy](#) powers millions of homes and businesses across Minnesota and seven other states. They are the first major U.S. energy provider to set goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all of the ways their customers use energy — electricity, heating, and transportation.

Coupled with their focus on cleaner energy, advancements in technology will help them achieve their vision of being a net-zero energy provider by 2050. They are integrating digital technology into their systems to bring customers cleaner, safer, and more reliable energy. The advanced energy grid will help them restore outages faster and allow customers to better understand their energy use and how they can save money.



[Otter Tail Power Company](#) is an investor-owned electric utility that provides electricity for residential, commercial, and industrial customers in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. They continue to be innovative as they modernize their energy grid, enhance customers' experiences, and work toward a cleaner energy future.

Technology Priority Areas

Our utility partners have identified specific technology areas that are priorities for their operations and for pilot consideration.

Grid Modernization and Grid-Enhancing Technologies

Grid modernization refers to the process of upgrading traditional electric power systems with advanced technologies to create a more flexible, efficient, and resilient grid. Grid-Enhancing Technologies (GETs) are complementary to modernization efforts, addressing constraints in the existing system and maximizing electricity transmission through a family of technologies, including sensors, power flow control devices, and analytical tools.

Collectively, these technologies can improve reliability, reduce outages, enable the integration of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, and help manage changing demand patterns. Ultimately, modernization allows utilities to operate more efficiently, meet regulatory and sustainability goals, and provide better service to customers in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

Grid modernization and GETS solutions of interest include, but are not limited to:

Technologies that enable Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) such as wind and solar, and innovative solutions for Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), SCADA systems, Advanced Distribution Management Systems (ADMS), and Distribution Automation (DA).

Energy Storage

Energy storage refers to systems that capture and store electricity for later dispatch and use. For energy utility companies, these systems help balance supply and demand, store excess energy from renewable sources, and provide backup power during outages. By smoothing fluctuations in energy generation and consumption, energy storage improves grid reliability, reduces the need for costly peak generation, and supports a more resilient and flexible energy system.

Energy Storage solutions of interest include, but are not limited to: Behind-the-meter storage solutions, long-duration energy storage technologies, and storage for resilience and backup.

Electrification

Electrification converts an energy-consuming device, system, or sector from non-electric energy sources to electricity. Electrification is trending across sectors in applications such as building heating (e.g., heat pumps), industrial processes, and appliances, not just transportation. For energy utility companies, electrification can increase the efficient use of energy, leverage distributed energy resources and energy storage, and decarbonize systems. This transition also creates opportunities to better manage load through technologies such as demand response and smart devices, thereby improving overall system efficiency and long-term grid planning.

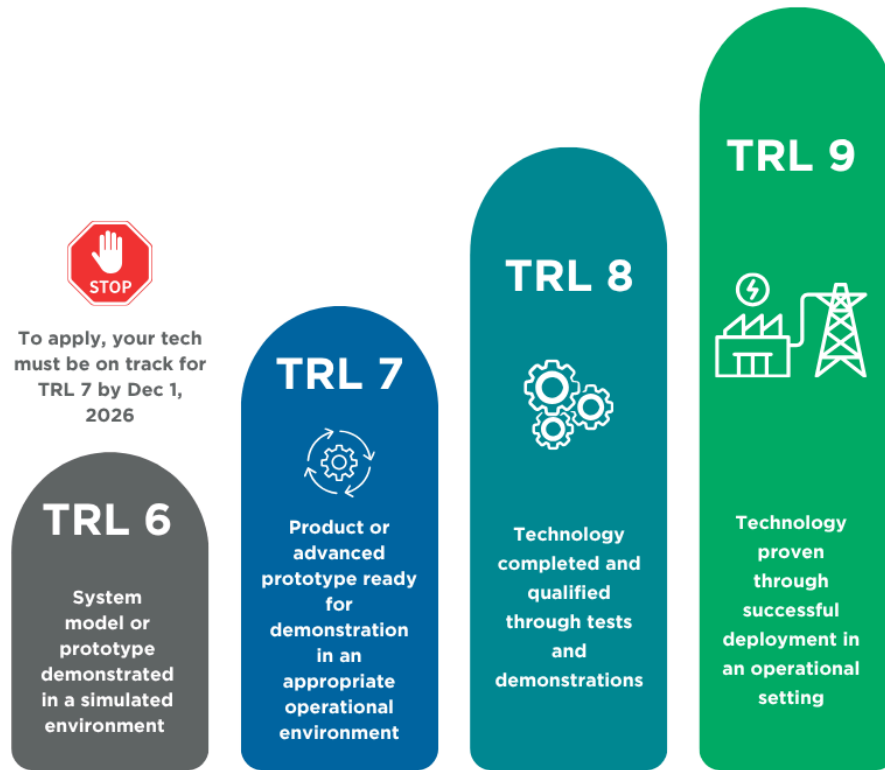
Electrification solutions of interest include, but are not limited to: Technologies that electrify industrial processes and heating systems.

While applications on other utility-relevant topics will be considered, priority will be given to those that address the specified focus areas. Other topics could include, for example, technologies that address commercial and industrial demand response or solutions for integrating electric vehicle (EV) load management into grid operations.

Technology Maturity

We are targeting technologies at a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 7 or higher. For the purposes of this program and to be considered TRL 7, the technology should have been validated in a relevant environment and be ready for a real-world pilot, with little to no technical development or evolution needed to be operationally mature and dependable for a live environment.

Applications for technologies currently at TRL 6 may be considered if the technology will be at TRL 7 by December 1, 2026.



Here are our working definitions of [Technology Readiness Levels](#) as described by Innovation Canada, so you can determine where your technology fits.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)	Description	Appropriate for GridReady?
TRL-6	System/subsystem model or prototype demonstration in a simulated environment. A model or prototype that represents a near desired configuration. Activities include testing in a simulated operational environment or laboratory.	Maybe - must advance to TRL 7 before Dec 1, 2026, and the team can confirm the pathway.
TRL-7	Prototype ready for demonstration in an appropriate operational environment. Prototype at planned operational level and is ready for demonstration in an operational environment. Activities include prototype field testing.	Yes

TRL-8	<p>Actual technology completed and qualified through tests and demonstrations. Technology has been proven to work in its final form and under expected conditions. Activities include developmental testing and evaluation of whether it will meet operational requirements.</p>	Yes
TRL-9	<p>Actual technology proven through successful deployment in an operational setting. Actual application of the technology in its final form and under real-life conditions, such as those encountered in operational tests and evaluations. Activities include using the innovation under operational conditions.</p>	Yes

Non-Technical Market and Adoption Considerations

Moving from a great idea to a commercially viable product requires more than just technology development. The US Department of Energy Office of Technology Commercialization has developed the [Adoption Readiness Levels \(ARL\) Framework](#), which includes value proposition, market acceptance, resource maturity, and license to operate. We strongly encourage all startups to complete the ARL assessment to identify potential non-technical challenges.

For the purposes of GridReady we are most interested in, and will be collecting information on:

1. **Delivered Cost** - How does the anticipated cost of your solution compare to existing solutions?
2. **Functional Performance** - How does the technical or functional performance of your solution compare to existing solutions? Meaningful improvements in performance is especially important if your solution is more expensive than existing solutions.

Financial Security

Our utility partners are serious about exploring pilot projects. As such, we will prioritize finalists who have the highest potential for success from both technical and business perspectives.

Successful applicants will have a proven track record of securing funding from a variety of sources and will be on solid financial footing for the remainder of 2026 and 2027.

The application will include questions about past and current funding sources, the approximate range of funding secured from each source, operating runway, and anticipated fundraising activities in the coming year.

Examples of Funding Sources

- Federal grants
- State grants
- Angel investor
- founders/friends/family members
- Incubators
- Early-stage venture capital
- Private equity

If Selected as a Finalist

Finalists will be notified in mid-August and invited to the GridReady Technology Showcase, to be held in September 2026 in Minneapolis. Showcase dates to be announced by June 1.

At the Technology Showcase, finalists will present their technology to utility partners in a structured two-day event designed for deep engagement. This will include a pitch session, networking with utility partners, and preliminary conversations about a pilot. Hybrid presentation options will be available, but in-person participation is preferred.

After the Technology Showcase, utilities will identify finalists of interest based on technologies that match their operational and budget priorities for 2027. Grid Catalyst will facilitate these conversations between partners, exploring the potential scope of work, timing, costs, go/no-go milestones, and initial hurdles or risks to consider. Utilities are not obligated to proceed if the technology solution, timeline, or budget do not align with their priorities.

Finalists selected by a utility to proceed will advance pilot development, starting with initial scoping, go/no-go milestones, and a project implementation timeline.

How to Apply

For teams with company and technology information readily available, the application should take two hours or less to complete. Key components to prepare for the application:

- Executive summary of the company and technology (1-2 pages)
- Pitch deck (suggested 10-15 slides)
- Team and key personnel summary (less than 1 page)

Applications are due June 26, 2026.

[Access the application here](#)