

Distributed Generation System Checklist

1. Implement energy efficiency.

Completion of a thorough energy efficiency audit is an important precursor to considering distributed generation. Implementing energy efficiency measures in advance of installing a distributed generation system can save you money by reducing your overall energy or water consumption, which subsequently reduces the size of the distributed generation system you'll need to meet your energy needs.

2. Do your homework before you write the check.

First and foremost, if you are considering investing in a distributed generation system, talk to your electric cooperative at the outset of your process. Then, we recommend you also talk to credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals and knowledgeable in distributed generation systems. Once you share some of your preliminary research with them, they can advise you of additional resources to help you understand the economics of a distributed generation system: what type of renewable energy technology would be best for your property; and financing, potential incentives, and other requirements, such as insurance.

3. Home improvement recommendations.

When property owners are considering any type of home improvement or construction project, the Iowa Attorney General provides several [recommendations](#) to help to ensure a successful project completion. These recommendations also are applicable for member-owners who are considering installing a distribution generation system on their property.

4. Know your co-op's interconnection and purchased power polices.

As distributed generation is becoming more common, many electric cooperatives (and utilities in general), including Clarke Electric are examining their rate structure to ensure that its rates are non-discriminatory between distributed generation member-owners and non-distributed generation member-owners. We can help you to understand the rate structure under which you will take service and what type of charges are likely to be incurred, as well as how you will be compensated for the excess energy you don't use that is generated by your distributed generation system.

5. Determine the size of the distributed generation system and where it will be located.

Understanding your electricity use and overall energy needs is one of the first steps in the process of investigating whether a distributed generation system is a good investment for you. By researching when various distributed generation systems produce peak energy, you can correlate that information with your current and expected energy use. You'll most likely still need power from a centralized energy grid, so it's important to realize that distributed generation is intended for supplemental power to meet your own energy needs.

6. Determine the costs upfront.

Clarke Electric does not install or maintain member-owned distributed generation systems. As an individual owner of the distributed generation system, you will be responsible for the initial upfront costs to install the system as well as ongoing maintenance and repair costs. Doing your homework before investing in a system will help you to understand what costs will be involved, such as installation and

interconnection costs, insurance, taxes, etc. Costs will vary if you buy a new or used system, and there are variables such as incentives and tax credits. Your research will help to determine if a distributed generation system is economical for your energy needs.

7. Research potential incentives and tax credits.

It's important to know what types of financial incentives are available to offset your investment costs. Contact the Iowa Energy Center (<http://www.iowaenergycenter.org>), the [Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency](#) for information on incentives and policies that support renewables and energy efficiency in the U.S.

8. Understand responsibilities.

Installing a distributed generation system requires that certain responsibilities are met by all parties involved with the process. For example, the owner of the distributed energy system is responsible for obtaining the proper equipment and ensuring that all requirements of Clarke Electric's interconnection agreement are met, including paying any necessary costs.

9. Contact city, county and state officials.

Local and/or state officials are responsible for conducting safety inspections, but the owner of the distributed generation system must notify the local and state officials in order to set this in motion. Once all interconnection requirements are met and the safety and integrity of the system meet all necessary criteria, then Clarke Electric is responsible for the final stages of interconnection. Ongoing maintenance and system repairs are the responsibility of the generation system owner.

10. Know safety requirements.

All interconnection and safety requirements must be met prior to operating a distributed generation system in parallel with Clarke Electric's electric distribution system. This is necessary to protect other member-owners, cooperative employees, public safety personnel, and the general public from risks that could result from the improper installation of distributed generation.

11. Choose a reputable vendor.

If you have decided to install a distributed generation system, it's important to find a reputable installer who will size the system properly after you have implemented energy efficiency measures and who will give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check online consumer reviews, and ask for third-party input from credible resources. Refer to the Iowa Attorney General's [recommendations](#) for working with a contractor or vendor.

12. Keep thorough records.

Establish a thorough record-keeping process. Retain all data and research that you gather as well as information that is provided by your electric cooperative, vendors and other credible third-party sources. If you proceed with a distributed generation system, you will want to track and compare actual system performance with expected performance based on vendor information.