

Small Utilities, **BIG DATA:**

Tips for Leveraging New Levels of Intelligence

To date, [meter data management \(MDM\)](#) has been adopted primarily by larger investor-owned utilities. Now, many municipal-owned utilities and rural cooperatives are looking to implement MDM systems as well. According to a recent study by GTM Research, 70% of the approximately 2,000 municipal-owned utilities, which serve about 13% of U.S. energy customers, could have smart meters by 2017.

GTM Research also forecasts that rural cooperatives will be investing heavily in smart grid technologies, with a major focus on investments in AMI, followed closely by distribution automation technologies.

“Over the past 100 years, as electricity became available to rural areas, meters were read once a month,” says Lisa

Fennell, Director of Sales Engineering, MDM Division, Landis+Gyr. “Later, they were read once a day. Today, data is captured every 15 minutes and, in some cases, voltage values are read every five minutes. That’s 96 intervals a day. Even if the utility has only 30,000 meters, that’s a lot of data. Small utilities need to decide where to expend their resources in leveraging that data.”

According to Fennell, there are two areas in which small utilities can immediately benefit from smart meter data. “Small utilities know that they may soon need to define rates that are amenable to end-use consumers and to prevent the need to purchase energy. Capturing, storing and using interval data is a good thing to be doing right now, while waiting for billing programs to fall into place.”

Real-time data can also help engineers understand how energy is demanded by type of property. With all that data, engineers can understand how to more efficiently design the network, thereby enabling the utility to enjoy significant savings with the infrastructure they deploy.

¹ “70% of Muni Utilities Could Install Smart Meters by 2017,” Greentechgrid, <http://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/70-of-muni-utilities-will-install-smart-meters>

² “The RuralSmart Grid 2013: A Survey of Utility Deployment, Expenditure and Strategy,” <http://www.greentechmedia.com/research/report/the-rural-smart-grid-2013>

Best Practices

Here are some data management tips:

-  Select software that conforms to standard integration practices. You need to be able to easily get data into the system and out again to third-party applications.
-  Focus on applications that save consumers money, such as outage management and voltage conservation.
-  Consider Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions from smart grid vendors. You don’t need to take on the entire burden yourself.
-  Look at a total solution platform that will grow with your needs. In other words, don’t use a limited CIS system as an MDM that accommodates billing, but does not accommodate voltage data. ■

Options for Utilities

Landis+Gyr offers many options for the small utility taking the first step toward leveraging the power of big data. Whether the utility wants to own and manage the infrastructure or outsource any part of the data management universe, [Landis+Gyr can help](#). It’s all about flexibility in how the data is provided.