Data Centers & Tri-County REC

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a data center?

A data center is a facility that houses computer servers and networking equipment used to process, store, and transmit digital information. These facilities range from small operations to large campuses that support cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), data storage, streaming, and other digital services.

Why are people talking so much about data centers lately?

Pennsylvania and neighboring states have seen increased interest in data center development in recent years. These facilities support the computing and data-processing functions that underpin many modern technologies and digital services, including cloud computing, data storage, artificial intelligence (AI), and online applications.

Can Tri-County REC serve a data center?

The ability to serve a data center depends on several factors, including the facility's size, location, electric service requirements, and available system capacity. Each project would be evaluated individually based on its specific characteristics and system requirements. Distribution systems like Tri-County REC's are designed to serve homes, farms, and businesses. A typical hyperscale data center can require 100–1,000 megawatts or more of electricity, far exceeding the capacity of our rural substations and distribution lines, which are typically designed to supply 5–10 megawatts.

How would Tri-County REC respond to a data center request?

As with any request for electric service, Tri-County REC would evaluate the project's electric service requirements and potential impacts on the system. The review process could include engineering analysis, coordination with Allegheny Electric Cooperative and other relevant entities, and consideration of system capacity, reliability, costs, and long-term planning needs.

Would data centers raise rates for members?

Tri-County REC's longstanding practice for large-load requests is to require the requesting party to pay the costs of any necessary studies, engineering, system upgrades, or new facilities needed to serve the load. As a result, Tri-County REC seeks to ensure that costs directly associated with serving a prospective large-load project, including a data center, are not shifted to existing members.

Do data centers benefit communities?

Data centers have the potential to provide economic and infrastructure benefits to a community, but they can also present challenges that must be carefully considered. The benefits and impacts vary widely depending on the size, location, and characteristics of the project. Considerations may include infrastructure needs, electric service requirements, land and water use, and other local factors. Each proposal should be evaluated on its own merits.

Does Tri-County REC support or oppose data centers?

Tri-County REC does not take a predetermined position for or against a particular type of development and evaluates each large-load proposal on its own merits. Considerations include electric service requirements, system impacts, reliability, costs, and our highest priority and responsibility: providing safe, reliable, and affordable service to our members.

Bottom Line

Data centers are complex projects that require careful planning and appropriate infrastructure. Tri-County REC's highest priority is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable service to our members. Large-load projects, including data centers, may present opportunities to generate additional revenue and support investment in the electric system. At the same time, they may present operational, infrastructure, and planning challenges. As with any large-load proposal, each project would be evaluated individually based on its specific characteristics, system requirements, and potential impacts on the cooperative and its members.

July 1, 2026