

Apply for RP₃ Status — It's Easier than You Think

Hometown Connections Guides Applicants through Valuable Process

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By [Paul H. Allen, P.E.](#)

From May 1 through September 30, 2019, public power utilities may apply online for designation by the American Public Power Association's [Reliable Public Power Provider \(RP₃\) program](#). As a career public power professional involved in the program since its founding in 2005, I can attest to the value of the RP₃ designation and reassure potential applicants about the process. With a little outside support, your utility is more likely to succeed than you may expect and the staff time to complete the application is less than you might think.

RP₃ designation represents a distinguished achievement in public power. Being recognized by the RP₃ program demonstrates a utility's commitment to excellence to customers, community leaders, governing board members, suppliers, and service providers.

The RP₃ Application Process

Registration for the 2019 RP₃ application is open. Utilities may [click here](#) to complete the registration survey. Utilities wanting the RP₃ designation must complete the online application between May 1 and September 30.

Developed in 2005 by the Association and several utilities, the RP₃ program is based on industry-recognized leading practices in four important disciplines:

- Reliability
- Safety
- Workforce Development
- System Improvement



The RP₃ application asks about 37 questions divided between the four disciplines, for a total of 100 points. Through the online system, applicants explain their practices and accomplishments for the three years prior to their application. Because the RP₃ program recognizes the differences between small, medium, and large utilities, there are different expectations for several of the responses. If successful, the utility will receive the RP₃ designation (valid for three years) at the American Public Power Association's Engineering & Operations Technical Conference. They receive a Diamond,

Platinum, or Gold level designation. The RP₃ process operates on a three-year cycle, and this year's application pool has the potential to have the largest number of re-applicants of any cycle to date.

This [application guide](#) explains the details. You may view the current list of RP₃ designated utilities [here](#).

Hometown Connections RP₃ Services

Since 2012, through my affiliation with [Hometown Connections](#), I have been assisting public power utilities of all sizes with their RP₃ applications. I evaluate their RP₃ readiness and review their applications. While I don't prepare the applications entirely, I suggest responses that reflect each utility's specific operations.

My support (either on-site but primarily off-site) includes the following:

- Review of a utility's draft responses to the application questions, making sure there's a good understanding of the intent of the question.
- In the event of a negative response (i.e. "we don't do that, we don't have that"), I ask probing questions directed to specific procedures. In many cases, the utility is doing what is necessary to provide a positive response but simply has not documented the process. As an example, smaller utilities may not maintain a documented succession plan, but most managers have an unwritten plan for these situations, and I help draft an appropriate response for the question.
- Review attachments supporting RP₃ responses.
- Submit to the utility a final review of the application several weeks before the application deadline.
- Provide additional assistance should the RP₃ review panel request additional information during the scoring process.
- Address the staff and/or governing board about the RP₃ application and issues the process may uncover.

The list of utilities I have helped with their RP₃ applications includes:

- Lodi Electric Utility, CA
- Benton Public Utility District, WA
- Columbia Power & Water Systems, TN.
- Greenville Light & Power System, TN
- Morristown Utility Systems, TN
- Nashville Electric Service, TN
- Knoxville Utilities Board, TN
- North Attleborough Electric Department, MA
- Norwich Public Utilities, CT
- Opelika Power Services, AL
- City of Troy, AL
- Weatherford Municipal Utilities System, TX

In total, I have supported twenty RP₃ applications since 2012, with nearly all utilities receiving the Platinum or higher designation. All have shown significant improvement of their RP₃ scores over time.

About the Author

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Following a distinguished career as a public power leader, Allen brings to the Hometown Connections team expertise garnered from his considerable involvement with the development of the RP₃ program. While with the Nashville Electric Service, he participated in the RP₃ program pilot and led the preparation of NES's successful applications, resulting in Platinum and Diamond designations. Allen also brings to Hometown Connections his broad knowledge of the public power industry, including engineering operations, finance, and legal issues.



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