

Entergy Arkansas expects load to grow more than 35% in five years. Your capital plan is where that gets built.

Four hyperscale data centers, a US-record solar build, and two coal plants heading for retirement are all landing on Arkansas grids at once — while long-term demand could double. Every one of those forces reshuffles the projects on your list. Invizion helps electric utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click — and defend every decision.

+35%¹ Entergy Arkansas's projected power-needs growth over five years — with long-term needs potentially doubling.	~\$12B² Investment across four hyperscale data centers planned for Arkansas, beginning operations in 2027.	1,824 MW³ Arkansas Nuclear One — roughly 56% of Entergy Arkansas's energy comes from these two units.	2.5 GW⁴ Steel River Energy Center in Mississippi County — billed as the largest solar array in the U.S.
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THE ARKANSAS LANDSCAPE

Four forces are moving your project list at once

None of these is theoretical, and none of them waits for your next budget cycle. Together they mean the capital plan you approved last year may already be the wrong plan.

DEMAND — LOAD GROWTH

Gigawatts of new load, arriving fast

Entergy Arkansas projects power needs up more than 35% over five years, with long-term demand potentially doubling, while Arkansas's generation cooperatives are weighing roughly 4,000 MW of prospective new load.¹ Four hyperscale data centers — about \$12 billion of investment — are set to begin operating in 2027.²

AVAIO's \$6 billion Project Leo south of Little Rock has contracted 150 MW and anticipates up to 1 GW — roughly 5% of the state's generating capacity on its own^{5,2} — and Google's \$4 billion West Memphis campus is the first advanced data center of its kind in Arkansas.⁶ Each large new customer is a capacity commitment competing for the same capital as Entergy Arkansas serves its 738,000 customers across 63 counties.⁷

RELIABILITY — SUPPLY GAP

Retiring baseload as demand climbs

Two Arkansas coal plants are slated to stop burning coal in 2028 and 2030 — pulling firm baseload off the system exactly as load surges, a gap that has to be filled to keep the lights on.¹ Arkansas Nuclear One (91% capacity factor for nuclear, versus 25% for solar) still supplies about 56% of Entergy Arkansas's energy, so the margin depends on new resources landing on schedule.¹³

The state has been here before: Arkansas cooperatives had to impose emergency power curtailments during the extreme cold of February 2021.⁸ Entergy Arkansas plans in MISO; SWEPCO, OG&E, and the cooperatives operate in SPP — both regions are absorbing record demand forecasts at once.

GENERATION — THE TRANSITION

Coal out, solar and gas in — on a capital clock

Entergy Arkansas's White Bluff and Independence coal units — which won air-toxics exemptions in 2025 — are on track to cease coal operations by 2028 and 2030.⁹1 Filling that gap is a build-out at unprecedented scale: the Steel River Energy Center will pair 2.5 GW of solar with 2.9 GWh of storage and complete around 2029.⁴

The cooperatives are moving too — AECC broke ground on an 850 MW facility in 2026, announced a 900 MW gas plant, and built a 122 MW solar site in Woodruff County.⁸ SWEPCO still runs the ultra-supercritical Turk and Flint Creek coal units in the state.¹⁰

CAPITAL — GRID & TRANSMISSION

Build generation and the wires to move it

New load is not just megawatts — it is substations, transmission, and interconnection. Entergy Arkansas is planning an additional 420 MW to serve Project Leo alone.² and recently energized the new Frazier Pike Substation at the Port of Little Rock to carry industrial growth.¹¹

Financing structures are shifting with the load: Google's West Memphis contract is expected to deliver about \$1.1 billion in customer benefit and roughly \$2.1 billion in Google payments over 20 years, including \$443 million upfront.¹² New obligations don't replace the backlog — they stack on top of it, and something on the list has to move.

WHO RUNS ARKANSAS'S GRID

Investor-owned utilities, a large cooperative footprint, and SPP/MISO

Arkansas's grid is carried by APSC-regulated investor-owned utilities and an unusually large network of member-owned cooperatives supplied by AECC. The pressures are shared; the accountability path differs.

Investor-owned utilities

Rates & capital recovery regulated by the APSC

Entergy Arkansas 738,000 customers · 63 counties ·
MISO⁷

SWEPCO (AEP) 556,100 customers across AR/LA/TX ·
SPP¹⁰

Oklahoma Gas & Electric (OG&E) 913,000 customers, incl. western
Arkansas · SPP¹³

Entergy Arkansas expects power needs up more than 35% in five years and is planning an additional 420 MW for one data center alone.¹²

Cooperatives & wholesale power

Governed by boards & members, not APSC base rates

Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp. (AECC) G&T for 17 distribution coops ·
~1.2M members⁸

AECC generation build-out 850 MW facility (2026) + 900 MW
gas + 122 MW solar⁸

17 distribution cooperatives Statewide rural & suburban
service territory⁸

Arkansas's electric cooperatives contribute about \$1.93 billion to the state economy each year.⁸

Every capital dollar has to be defensible

Whether you answer to the Public Service Commission or a cooperative board, the question is the same: why this project, why now, why at this cost?

Arkansas Public Service Commission (APSC) regulates rates, capital recovery, and resource planning for the state's investor-owned utilities — Entergy Arkansas, SWEPCO, and OG&E¹⁴

Special data-center contracts are the new frontier: Entergy Arkansas and Google sought APSC approval of a contract under which Google covers the full energy cost of its West Memphis facility, with a decision requested by December 2025 — a template for keeping large-load costs off other ratepayers¹⁵

Faster permitting. Arkansas's 2025 energy legislation cut the regulatory timeline for new energy projects by more than half and added data-center incentives — speeding approvals, and the capital decisions behind them.⁵

Cooperatives set their own rates through member-elected boards rather than APSC base-rate cases — but AECC's multi-plant build-out still has to pencil out for 1.2 million members⁸

The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Arkansas utilities are attracting more grid and generation capital than they have in a generation. The constraint is readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, and how the timing lines up.

Hyperscaler capital: Google's West Memphis contract is expected to bring about \$1.1 billion in customer benefit and roughly \$2.1 billion in payments over 20 years, including \$443 million upfront¹²

Steel River Energy Center: 2.5 GW of solar and 2.9 GWh of storage, anchored by a Google power-purchase agreement and expected to generate about \$300 million in local tax revenue over its life⁴

Cooperative generation investment: AECC's 850 MW facility, 900 MW gas plant, and 122 MW Woodruff County solar site are member-financed capital serving 17 distribution coops⁸

Inflation Reduction Act credits — including elective (direct) pay for cooperatives and public power — are helping put utility-scale solar and storage in reach across the state's clean build-out⁴

ARKANSAS'S GRID, IN BRIEF

Questions Arkansas utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we dig into with utilities looking at their capital programs.

How fast is Arkansas's electricity demand growing?

Entergy Arkansas projects power needs up more than 35% over five years, with long-term demand potentially doubling, and four hyperscale data centers representing about \$12 billion of investment are set to begin operating in 2027¹²

What's happening to Arkansas's coal plants?

Entergy Arkansas's White Bluff and Independence coal units — which won air-toxics exemptions in 2025 — are on track to cease coal operations by 2028 and 2030, removing firm baseload just as load climbs⁹¹

Do data centers raise costs for other Arkansas ratepayers?

The model taking shape is that large loads pay their own way: Entergy Arkansas and Google sought APSC approval of a contract under which Google covers its full energy cost, expected to deliver about \$1.1 billion in benefit to other customers³⁵¹²

What new generation is Arkansas building?

The Steel River Energy Center will pair 2.5 GW of solar with 2.9 GWh of storage, while AECC has an 850 MW facility under way plus a 900 MW gas plant and a 122 MW solar site.⁴⁸

Who regulates electric rates in Arkansas?

The Arkansas Public Service Commission regulates rates and resource planning for investor-owned utilities such as Entergy Arkansas, SWEPCO, and OG&E. The state's electric cooperatives set their own rates through member-elected boards¹⁴⁸

How does Invizion help Arkansas electric utilities plan capital?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for utilities. It lets you model how a data-center load surge, a coal retirement date, or a new generation project reshuffles your whole project list, re-sequence the portfolio automatically, and keep a defensible record of every decision for the APSC or your board.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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ABOUT INVIZION

Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

See how utilities keep capital plans current and defensible with Invizion.

Explore Invizion →