



Utility Executive Summit 2026

Utility readiness in an era of large-load growth and operational complexity

Key takeaways from the AVEVA Utility Executive Summit

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The utility industry is entering an era where growth, reliability, resilience, affordability, and decarbonization are becoming increasingly difficult to manage independently. Throughout the AVEVA Utility Executive Summit 2026, leaders described a sector facing rapid load growth, increasing penetration of distributed energy resources (DERs), aging infrastructure, extreme weather events, rising customer expectations, and growing pressure to leverage data, digital technologies and innovation more effectively.

The current moment is not only about expanding infrastructure, accommodating unprecedented load growth, or complying with evolving policy requirements. It is also about ensuring operational readiness. Utilities are being challenged to make faster, more informed and more transparent decisions across the enterprise—from planning and engineering to operations, asset management, market participation, customer programs, and regulatory engagement—often while balancing competing priorities and rising stakeholder expectations.



01

Large-load growth is changing the planning equation

Data centers, electrification, industrial development, and economic growth are reshaping load expectations faster than traditional planning cycles can easily absorb. The uncertainty is not only in how much demand will materialize, but also which requests are real, where infrastructure constraints exist, how customer flexibility should be valued, and how costs should be allocated.

For utilities, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the operational, financial, and reliability implications of large-load growth before decisions become difficult to unwind. This places greater emphasis on connecting customer commitments, interconnection requests, asset constraints, capital plans, market impacts, and operational risk into a more consistent decision-making view.



Forecasting data centers is still a bit of an art more than a science.



02

Reliability is becoming more dynamic

Reliability remains the industry's core obligation, but the operating environment is becoming more complex. Resource adequacy now sits alongside ramping capability, inverter-based resource behavior, voltage and frequency performance, wildfire and weather resilience, outage planning, asset condition, and restoration readiness.

Utilities often need stronger alignment between planning models and actual system behavior. As the grid becomes more distributed and more exposed to extreme weather, operational data, disturbance data, asset data, and engineering models become more valuable when they can be viewed in context and applied across both planning and operations.



There is a huge modeling gap in our industry right now.



03

Flexible resources need operational visibility

Storage, DERs, EVs, virtual power plants, and demand response are becoming central to utility strategy. Yet their value depends on whether planners and operators can see them, forecast them, coordinate them, and verify their performance after events.

Flexible resources deliver more value when their availability, location, behavior, and constraints are visible in an operationally meaningful way. This level of visibility depends on granular insight at the portfolio, circuit, asset, customer, and event level. Important metrics for this insight include state of charge, charging behavior, DER performance, customer participation, weather impacts, and local grid constraints.



Storage is wonderful. It doesn't solve all the problems.



04

AI readiness starts with data readiness

AI was a recurring topic, but it was not framed as a standalone solution. The stronger message was that AI depends on the data foundation beneath it.

Data quality, governance, ownership, stewardship, operational context, and clearly defined business outcomes all matter. The most relevant AI opportunities appear to be grounded in utility operations: forecasting, anomaly detection, asset performance, outage response, scenario analysis, customer programs, and decision support.

For utilities, AI readiness starts with industrial data readiness. Data that is reliable, contextualized, governed, and accessible across teams can make AI use cases easier to scale and more directly relevant to operational decision-making.

“ It all lands on the quality of that data. ”



05

Affordability and trust require clearer benefit traceability

As investment needs rise, affordability and public trust are becoming central to execution. Utilities need to explain not only what investments are needed, but why they are needed, who benefits, and how those benefits will be measured.

This is especially important as utilities pursue projects tied to reliability, resilience, wildfire mitigation, decarbonization, economic development, and customer service. Stronger traceability between plans, projects, assets, operations, and outcomes help utilities build confidence with regulators, customers, and communities.

“ If we can't afford it, unfortunately we can't do it. ”



Strategic implications

Many of the most urgent priorities discussed depend on the ability to connect data, models, systems, and workflows across functions. Yet the information needed to support decision-making is often distributed across operational systems, asset records, engineering models, customer programs, market signals, weather risk, and planning assumptions.

“ We can’t do things in silos anymore given this new reality. ”

For utility leaders, this raises a few practical considerations:

1. Trusted operational data is becoming a prerequisite for scale. AI, forecasting, asset performance, DER integration, digital twins, and resilience planning all depend on reliable and contextualized data.
2. Planning and operations may need to move closer together. Large-load growth, storage, DERs, wildfire risk, and reliability planning all require stronger alignment between long-term models and real-world operating conditions.
3. Decision-making will need to become more traceable. As utilities make larger and more complex investments, leaders will need to show how those investments connect to reliability, affordability, resilience, sustainability, and customer value.

The industry’s challenge is not only to manage change, but to make change operational. Utilities will be better positioned for what comes next when they can turn complexity into shared visibility, trusted insight, and more confident action.

Making utility readiness operational

As utilities move from strategy to execution, the priority is not only to define the right strategies, but to put them into practice with greater clarity, coordination, and confidence. AVEVA brings a long-term commitment to the power and utilities sector, and a practical understanding of the digital foundations needed to support operational readiness at scale. In an era of rising complexity, AVEVA will continue to support utilities as they move from insight to action and from readiness to measurable progress.

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