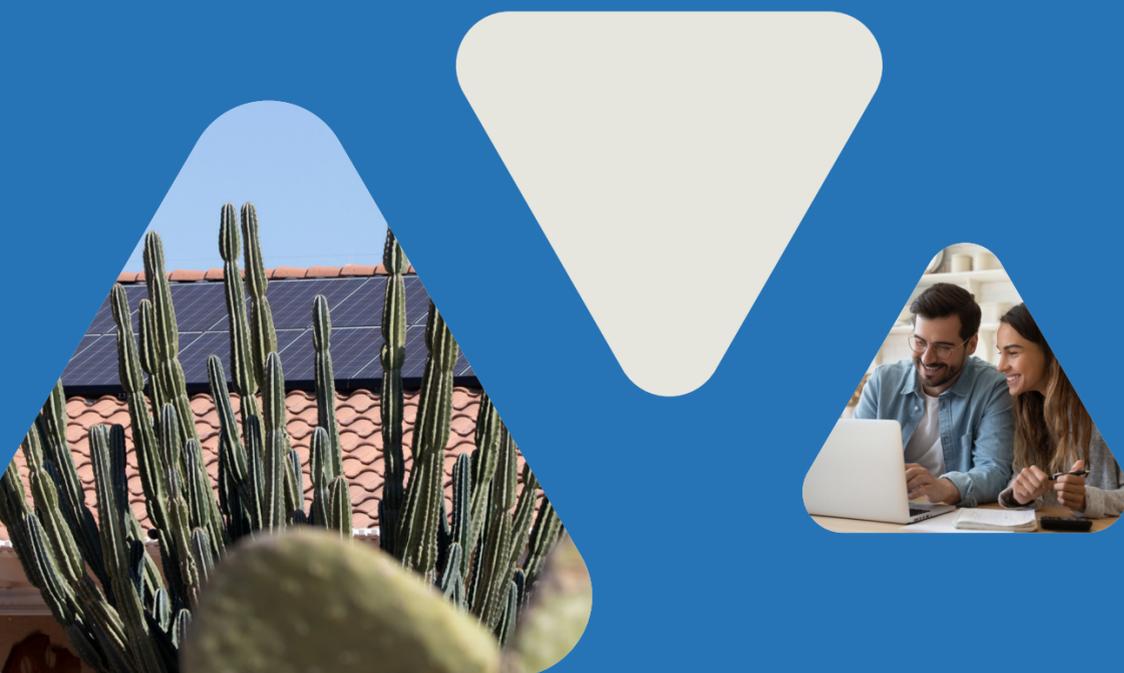


CASE STUDY

Powering Ahead of Demand: Trico Electric Cooperative's Strategic Response to Surging Solar Growth



Trico Electric Cooperative (Trico), located in southern Arizona, faced surging solar adoption, which strained both its call center and employees managing the application process. By implementing WattPlan® and PowerClerk®, Trico empowered its members with reliable, self-service education and streamlined its interconnection application process. This approach accelerated approvals to under seven days, scaled interconnections with a lean team and ultimately enhanced member satisfaction.



Challenges

Trico recognized the urgent need to educate members about solar and battery options and streamline the application-to-approval process. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), rooftop solar interest in Arizona continues to climb—reaching 15% penetration as of December 2025, compared to 7% nationally. The rapid increase created particular strain on two key areas: ensuring members receive accurate and timely education about their solar and battery options, and handling rising interconnection application volumes.

Member Education

High solar interest **overwhelmed Trico's call center** with lengthy, time-consuming conversations. Misinformation from some solar contractors—such as promises of zero electric bills and members being paid for excess power—further fueled confusion. In addition, poorly structured leases and incorrect system sizing eroded member satisfaction. Trico needed a solution that would provide objective, personalized information upfront, before members engaged with contractors.

Interconnection Workflow

Trico's manual interconnection workflows involved spreadsheets, emails and a basic database, which could not keep pace with roughly **500 solar applications per year**. Siloed multi-department hand-offs caused delays. Local contractors sought greater visibility into project status and faster turnaround times, noting that a neighboring utility had a faster digital workflow using PowerClerk. In addition, manual processes threatened compliance with the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) which requires timely, auditable and exportable reports. Trico needed a centralized, automated workflow to reduce processing time, increase stakeholder satisfaction and support compliance.



“WattPlan empowers our members to make informed solar decisions. By simplifying and comparing complex choices, it builds member confidence before they speak with installers.”

Rachel Chester
Manager, Member Accounts and Services



“PowerClerk centralizes our interconnection workflow in one place, automating steps and giving members and installers real-time visibility. This makes the entire process faster and easier.”

Laree St. Onge
Vice President, Member Services and Energy Solutions

Solutions

To meet these challenges, Trico implemented two complementary digital solutions: WattPlan for scalable member education and PowerClerk for workflow automation.

WattPlan + NISC SmartHub® Integration

Implementing WattPlan solved two key challenges:

- 1. Empowering members** with reliable, personalized self-service insights into solar and battery options.
- 2. Reducing Member Service Representative (MSR) workload** by minimizing time spent assisting new and existing members interested in solar.

WattPlan provides personalized estimates for residential solar costs, financing options, break-even points, and optimal system sizing, empowering Trico members to confidently compare scenarios and make informed decisions about their solar investments before engaging with contractors. Trico also offers members WattPlan Rate Comparison, empowering members to choose the best rate for their personal usage, and supports Time of Use signups.

Integrated with Trico's NISC SmartHub®, WattPlan leverages AMI data for greater accuracy and provides seamless access through a single login. Members can download a detailed PDF before speaking with a contractor, while MSRs proactively guide them to WattPlan—minimizing training needs and freeing staff to focus on broader service priorities.

PowerClerk Workflow Automation

PowerClerk automates the entire interconnection process. By digitalizing applications for solar, batteries, and EV programs, it eliminates manual workflows that lead to delays and compliance risks. Its flexible licensing supports both simple and complex workflows, ensuring Trico can adapt quickly to new program requirements. PowerClerk automates key steps such as:

- Equipment eligibility screening via PowerClerk's detailed equipment lists
- Generating and routing eSignature agreements
- Routing tasks to engineering and metering teams
- Sending status updates to appropriate stakeholders

Trico's interconnection process has become the model for efficient workflow management. Staff often ask, "Can PowerClerk manage this process?" PowerClerk's flexibility gives Trico a centralized platform that meets today's needs and supports future growth.

Results

Trico’s adoption of WattPlan for member education and PowerClerk for workflow automation has delivered measurable operational improvements. With only 1.5 full-time employees managing approximately 500 applications per year, Trico remains a lean team, scaling application processing efficiently as solar adoption continues to rise. Solar interconnection approval is now accomplished in less than seven days.

Trico’s Impact Area	WattPlan	PowerClerk
Stakeholder Satisfaction	Approximately 25 members use WattPlan monthly , empowering them and aligning solar installation expectations, which leads to higher satisfaction.	With online status tracking, inquiries have decreased and satisfaction among installers and members has risen due to greater transparency.
Speed / Efficiency	Scalable, self-service education reduces the number of lengthy MSR calls and manual calculations.	Interconnection approvals are down to less than 7 days (compared to a national avg of 27 days according to NLR (previously NREL)). Post-construction permission to operate (PTO) is also down to less than 7 days .
Cost & Staffing	Educating more members with the existing lean staff. Empowered MSRs with WattPlan, avoiding lengthy and complex rooftop solar trainings.	500 applications per year are managed with the existing 1.5 FTE , avoiding the need to hire an estimated one to two additional FTEs.
Regulatory / Data	Member education supports the ACC’s consumer-protection goals.	The interconnection queue stays at or below 30 projects, ACC surcharge reporting is seamless, and the GIS stays up to date.



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