Clarkson and Potsdam to get $381,000 to help develop smarter, more reliable electricity delivery underground

POTSDAM -- Seven research teams, including one from Clarkson University, are getting a total of $3.3 million from the state to find ways to improve the electricity delivery grid in New York.

Clarkson will receive $381,000 to design an underground "microgrid" in the Village of Potsdam.

NYSERDA, the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency, is partnering with Clarkson University, National Grid, General Electric, SUNY Potsdam and other local businesses on the plan, which will distribute electricity Clarkson and SUNY Potsdam, Canton-Potsdam Hospital and National Grid's Potsdam Service Center.

The North Country, with transmission lines primarily above ground, is more susceptible to weather-related power outages than underground systems, so it is reasoned that underground lines would be more resilient and less prone to the problems of an above-ground system. It could also deliver the power more efficiently.

This and demonstration projects elsewhere around the state could bring us closer to what is called "smart grid" technology that would be more reliable and efficient, and allow better monitoring and control than exists now.