simpleSUB water

Step-by-Step Checklist for

Implementing a Water Submetering System

💡 **Before you dive in:**

This isn't a rigid, one-size-fits-all checklist. It's a big menu of steps and ideas you can choose from.

> Small property? You might only use a couple of these

> Larger or more complex property? You may need to implement many parts of the checklist

> Either way, the goal is to make submetering simple while also giving you visibility into the things you might need to think about.

Think of this as your "choose what you need" guide, not a list of hoops you have to jump through.

If you're managing multifamily apartments, condos, HOAs, mobile home parks, retail centers, or commercial buildings, you've probably felt the frustration of rising utility costs and uneven water use.

Submetering solves that problem by making tenants accountable for their own usage. It creates fairness, reduces disputes, helps detect leaks early, and improves your NOI (Net Operating Income).

But here's the reality: rolling out a submetering program isn't just about bolting meters to pipes. It requires planning, compliance, tenant communication, and ongoing support.

That's where this guide (and SimpleSUB Water) come in.

We've built this checklist to cover every step you may want to consider for a smooth rollout, and SimpleSUB is designed to make the process faster, simpler, and easier to manage. Whether you're retrofitting an older property or planning new construction, this guide will help you avoid surprises and move forward with confidence.

☑ Step-by-Step Checklist for Implementing Water Submetering

☐ **Step 1: Plan & Prepare**

- ☐ Assess Feasibility and Goals
- ☐ Conduct a Property Audit to Assess Property Infrastructure
- ☐ Understand Legal and Regulatory Requirements
- ☐ Build Your Financial Model

☐ **Step 2: Choose your System and Partner**

- ☐ Choose the Right Submetering System
- ☐ Select a Submetering Partner

☐ **Step 3: Roll it Out**

- ☐ Plan the Rollout
- ☐ Install and Test Meters
- ☐ Set Up Billing and Software Platforms
- ☐ Communicate with Tenants
- ☐ Train Staff and Management

☐ **Step 4: Keep it Running Smoothly**

- ☐ Monitor, Maintain, Audit, and Optimize
- ☐ Leverage Advanced Insights
- ☐ Expand and Scale
- ☐ Stay Compliant and Future-Proof

Ready to streamline water billing for your property? SimpleSUB can help.

Provided by **simpleSUB** water

Step 1: Plan & Prepare

Assess Feasibility and Goals

Before you dive in, step back and clarify why you want to submeter.

Ask yourself:

- ✓ Do you want to reduce operating expenses by passing utility costs through to tenants?

- ✓ Do you want more accurate data to manage water leaks and conservation efforts?

- ✓ Are you preparing for regulatory compliance where RUBS (Ratio Utility Billing System) is no longer allowed?

- ✓ Do you hope to attract sustainability-minded renters and commercial tenants?

Clearly defining your goals will set the foundation for your plan and will help you measure your success.

> 💡 **Pro Tip:** Involve your asset manager or HOA board early. Aligning goals keeps the project moving smoothly.

Conduct a Property Audit to Assess Property Infrastructure

This is your blueprint for the project. A property audit identifies where and how meters can be installed. Not every plumbing system is immediately ready for submetering.

- ✓ Identify where the main water line enters the property.

- ✓ Map distribution lines and branch connections to each unit or space.

- ✓ Determine if meters can be installed at unity entry points, building risers, or branch lines.

- ✓ Look for accessible, secure spacers with minimal disruption for tenants.

- ✓ Determine whether individual shut-off valves exist for each unit (for ease of installation and maintenance).

- ✓ Assess water pressure and flow rates. These factors determine meter size and technology selection.

- ✓ For mobile home parks, note outdoor lines, frost-proofing requirements, and underground piping.

Pro Tip: Document everything. Your photos, notes, and diagrams will be invaluable when working with installers and vendors!

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your property has older plumbing, it might need upgrades to support submeters. Think of this stage as creating your property's water "blueprint."

Understand Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Rules for water submetering differ by state, municipality, and property type. Staying compliant is critical. So, before installing, thoroughly review the following.

- ✓ Research state and local laws. Some areas allow ratio utility billings (RUBS) while others require submeters for tenant billing.

- ✓ What are the accepted billing methods (some places restrict pass-through admin fees or allow only direct cost recovery)?

- ✓ Check tenant disclosure requirements. You may need to provide written notices, lease addendums, or public signage.

- ✓ Check the installation codes for backflow prevention or meter accuracy certification.

- ✓ What are the protections for tenants (grace periods, billing dispute processes, etc.)?

- ✓ Stay ahead of changes. Water-use regulations evolve, especially in regions facing drought or conservation mandates.
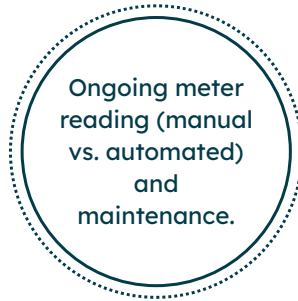
Pro Tip: Partner with a submetering vendor familiar with your state's regulations. They'll help you avoid costly mistakes.

Build Your Financial Model

Submetering is an investment. One that can greatly improve cash flow.

Run the numbers:

- Hardware and installation costs.

- Optional costs for software platforms or billing services.

- Ongoing meter reading (manual vs. automated) and maintenance.

- Expected monthly recovery from tenants.

- ROI timeline (most operators see payback within 12–24 months).

Be transparent. You're not just passing along costs, you're creating awareness and accountability. Data shows tenants use 15–30% less water when individually billed. That's money back into your NOI.

Step 2: Choose your System and Partner

Choose the Right Submetering System

This decision has long-term impacts. Therefore, you need to give this a considerable amount of research and thought. Not all meters are created equal. Mechanical meters are cost-effective, and smart meters offer wireless reads, leak detection, and integration with software.

In-Line Meters

These are installed on the inside of the pipe. They are highly accurate but costly and disruptive, and require manual reads if not internet-connected (see "smart in-line meters, below). Probably best suited for new builds.

Smart In-Line Meters

These are installed inside the pipe as well, but offer connected capabilities that make them easier to track and manage than traditional in-line meters. These generally use a radio system to connect to a central hub and send the information to the cloud.

Over-the-Pipe Wired

These are mounted on the pipe's exterior. They are less invasive than in-line meters, but they require wiring, a power source, and may or may not be connected to the internet.

Over-the-Pipe Wi-Fi

These are also installed over the pipe and are quicker to install since no plumber is required. However, they depend on both strong Wi-Fi coverage and power availability, which can limit reliability.

Over-the-Pipe Cellular

These are installed over the pipe as well, but instead of relying on wiring or Wi-Fi, they are battery-powered and use cellular data transmission. This makes them far easier to deploy in real-world conditions. They're ideal for retrofits, mobile home parks, and a variety of other applications. SimpleSUB Water is a leading example, combining cellular technology with a streamlined design that makes installation fast and scalable.

Factors to consider:

- ✅ Building density and layout (retail strips differ from high-rise multifamily)

- ✅ Do you need monthly, daily, or real-time reads?

- ✅ Tenant communication preferences (digital portals are now expected).

- ✅ Integration with your existing rent roll and accounting software. Can the system connect with your property management or accounting software?

- ✅ Maintenance and warranty support.

Pro Tip: If you manage multiple properties, standardize your technology. It simplifies training, billing, and vendor relationships.

Select a Submetering Partner

The right partner can make or break your project. So, don't just look at price. Evaluate the long-term value as well.

- Experience in your type of property (e.g., mobile home parks have unique challenges).

- Licensed and insured installation teams.

- A turnkey solution (installation, software, billing, compliance support).

- References and case studies from similar portfolios. Talk to other property owners or managers about their experience.

- Clarity of pricing. Avoid vendors who bury hidden fees.

- Evaluate support. Will you have a dedicated account manager or just a generic support line?

Pro Tip: Look for a partner who simplifies complexity. This will allow you to focus on property performance, not plumbing.

SimpleSUB was built with exactly this in mind — over-the-pipe meters that install quickly, a transparent pricing model, and ongoing support designed to make submetering easy for owners, managers, and residents alike.

Step 3: Roll it Out

Plan the Rollout

A clear rollout plan keeps the project on schedule and minimizes tenant disruption. So, once you've selected your vendor, map out the implementation timeline.

- ✓ Communicate with tenants early about what's changing and why. Explain the benefits (fair billing, conservation) and give advance notice of any service interruptions.

- ✓ Schedule installations to minimize disruption (vacant turnovers are a good opportunity).

- ✓ Document all meters with photos and unit associations.

- ✓ For new construction, work with developers and plumbers to integrate submeters during build-out.

- ✓ For retrofits, coordinate around tenant availability and plumbing access.

- ✓ Coordinate with vendors. Ensure your installer, utility billing provider, and property management team are aligned.

- ✓ Schedule in phases. For large properties, phase the installation building by building or floor by floor. And, if you manage multiple properties, pilot the rollout at one site before expanding portfolio-wide.

💡 **Pro Tip:** Provide FAQs or a handout for tenants. Clear communication reduces friction and complaints.

Install and Test Meters

Installation is the turning point. Do not skip testing. A few hours upfront will prevent headaches later.

Installation should follow these strict quality checks.

- ✓ Verify equipment delivery. Confirm meter quantities, sizes, and specifications before work begins.

- ✓ Installation should be performed by certified plumbers or licensed contractors only.

- ✓ Proper placement and orientation to avoid inaccurate readings.

- ✓ Waterproofing and installation for exposed meters.

- ✓ Testing initial reads to verify that each unit line is correctly assigned.

- ✓ Labeling and inputting meters into your data management or billing platform. Document each meter. Record the unit number, serial number, and installation date.

Pro Tip: Consider installing leak-detection meters in high-risk areas. Early alerts save thousands in water damage.

Set Up Billing and Software Platforms

Once your meters are live, you need a billing workflow.

- ✅ Choose a billing provider. Decide if you'll manage in-house or outsource to a utility billing company.

- ✅ Integrate the billing with your property management software. Automation reduces errors and saves time.

- ✅ Set billing policies. Outline due dates, late fees, and how disputes are handled.

- ✅ Hybrid approaches. Some owners prefer to keep collections in-house but rely on third-party meter reading data.

- ✅ Make sure tenants receive clear, itemized bills showing actual usage, rates, and dates. Transparency reduces disputes and builds trust.

Pro Tip: Provide tenants with a sample bill before the first cycle. This helps build trust and reduces confusion.

Communicate with Tenants

The success of submetering depends heavily on tenant buy-in. So, communicate early.

✓ Explain why submetering is being implemented (fairness, conservation, cost transparency).

✓ Provide simple guides showing how to read bills.

✓ Highlight the benefits (tenants control their own costs, leaks are detected faster).

✓ Offer customer support channels for billing questions.

A well-structured onboarding process avoids friction and positions your business as aligned with sustainability and fairness.

Pro Tip: Frame submetering as a fairness issue. Residents only pay for their own use (not their neighbor's).

Train Staff and Management

Your onsite teams and managers should be trained and understand the following issues.

ow to access the meter data.	How to troubleshoot basic issues.	How the billing cycle works.	Who to escalate problems to (vendor support vs. internal maintenance).

Staff training ensures consistency across sites and prevents errors in tenant communication.

Step 4: Keep it Running Smoothly

Monitor, Maintain, Audit, and Optimize

Submetering is not a "set it and forget it" system. Regular monitoring and maintenance will maximize long-term value.

After launch, collect data and measure benefits.

- ✓ Track monthly water usage trends.

- ✓ Schedule routine maintenance. Clean, calibrate, or replace meters as needed.

- ✓ Run quarterly audits comparing meter data against utility bills.

- ✓ Watch for anomalies that signal leaks or faulty meters.

- ✓ Compare recovery rates against projections.

- ✓ Adjust admin fees, billing styles, or tenant communications as needed.

- ✓ Evaluate ROI. Compare the pre- and post-submetering expenses to track savings.

- ✓ Continuous monitoring drives maximum ROI.

Pro Tip: Use data insights to budget more accurately, set sustainability goals, and strengthen investor reports.

Leverage Advanced Insights

If you've invested in smart meters, use those insights for the following.

- ✅ Benchmark properties in your portfolio.

- ✅ Detect hidden leaks across buildings.

- ✅ Improve tenant satisfaction by resolving concerns with data-backed evidence.

- ✅ Document sustainability results for investors, lenders, or ESG reporting.

This data will provide you with more than just billing accuracy. It also gives you visibility across all assets!

Expand and Scale

Once you've successfully implemented submetering at one property, replicate the process across your entire portfolio.

- ✅ Standardize processes. Create a repeatable checklist for future installations.

- ✅ Negotiate vendor contracts. Volume agreements often lower costs.

- ✅ Leverage portfolio-wide data. Benchmark performance across properties.

- ✅ Stay flexible. Technology evolves. Leave room for upgrades like real-time dashboards or AI-powered leak detection.

Pro Tip: Think of submetering as infrastructure for smarter property management, not just a billing tool.

Stay Compliant and Future-Proof

Regulatory environments change.

Follow these recommendations to protect your investment.

- ✓ Regularly review state and municipal submetering laws.
- ✓ Ensure meters remain calibrated as per standards.
- ✓ Stay updated on reporting requirements for ESG disclosures.
- ✓ Work with your vendor to implement software updates or API integrations.

Future-proofing ensures your submetering investment scales with your portfolio.

A Practical Example Timeline

For a 200-unit multifamily community, here's what a rollout might look like, both using SimpleSUB's over-the-pipe cellular meters and using traditional water submeters.

With SimpleSUB (3–4 Months, often even faster):

Month 1: Vendor selection + installation scheduling

Month 2: Installation, testing, and resident notifications

Month 3: Sample bills sent (tenants spot leaks and adjust usage)

Month 4: True billing begins

Month 5 - 12: Monitoring results and finalizing ROI models

SimpleSUB Rollout (3-4 Months)

Vendor Selection	Installation & Testing	Sample Bills	Billing Live	Monitoring & ROI

Months
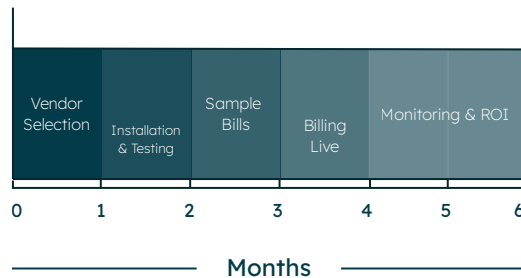
With SimpleSUB's over-the-pipe cellular meters, you don't need major plumbing changes, Wi-Fi setup, or long compliance reviews to get started. Installations are quick, scheduling is streamlined, and tenants can begin seeing sample bills almost immediately. That means leaks get caught early, water use starts dropping, and property owners recover costs in just a few months instead of waiting nearly a year.
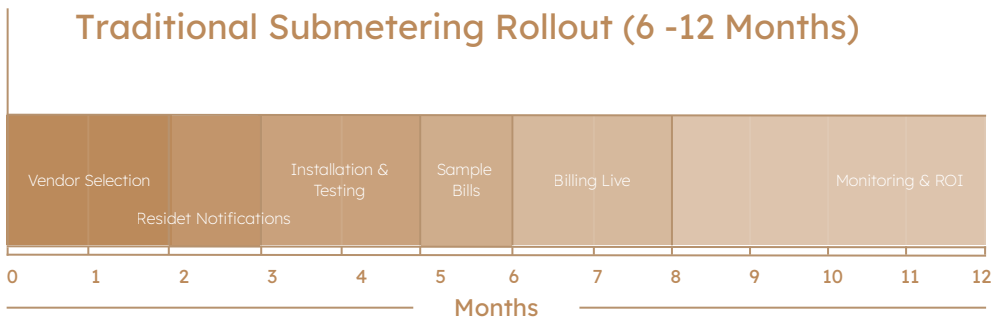
Traditional Rollout (6–12 Months)

Month 1 - 2: Infrastructure assessment, compliance review, vendor selection

Month 3: Resident notifications and scheduling

Month 4- 5: Installation and testing

Month 6: Sample bills sent to residents

Month 8: Billing goes live

Month 7 - 12: Monitoring results and finalizing ROI models

Traditional submetering typically requires extensive property audits, infrastructure upgrades, and plumbing modifications. Compliance and vendor selection take longer, and installations can be disruptive and phased out over months. As a result, residents don't see bills until well into the first year, leaks go unnoticed for longer, and owners have to wait much longer to start recovering costs and realizing savings.

Traditional Submetering Rollout (6 -12 Months)

| Vendor Selection | | Installation & Testing | Sample Bills | Billing Live | | Monitoring & ROI |

Residet Notifications

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12

Months

Wrapping It All Up

Water submetering is no longer just a "nice-to-have" feature. It's quickly becoming a necessity for property managers, owners, HOAs, and developers who want to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and build trust with tenants. When implemented thoughtfully, submetering delivers the following.

Fairness	**Savings**	**Sustainability**	**Scalability**
Tenants pay only for their own usage.	Reduced utility expenses and better budget control.	Conservation driven by real accountability.	A system you can expand across properties.

Implementing water submetering is more than an operational upgrade. It's a long-term investment in profitability, sustainability, and transparency. By following this checklist, you'll move from uncertainty to clarity, with a clear, proven roadmap for success.

What's Next?

Take the first step by evaluating your property and engaging with the right partner like SimpleSUB Water. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll unlock the financial and operational benefits.

Contact SimpleSUB Water to get started today!

simpleSUB water

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