

TWENTY THREE POINT FIVE INSIGHTS

Case Study (Anonymized): Multi-State Stakeholder Engagement and Digital Grassroots Mobilization



23.5
STRATEGIES

Executive summary

A large, multi-state energy infrastructure project (repurposing and expanding an existing corridor with new facilities) faced heightened scrutiny, fragmented stakeholder expectations, and organized opposition amplified through modern digital advocacy. The sponsor needed more than messaging: it needed a disciplined operating system that could (1) build a broad coalition of credible supporters, (2) respond quickly to misinformation and issue spikes, and (3) activate third-party voices to keep the conversation balanced during key regulatory and political milestones.

What we delivered

- A campaign operating model built around three concurrent workstreams: Promote, Respond, and Counterweight.
- A research-led stakeholder map and a “logical supporters” matrix to identify both obvious and non-obvious constituencies with a reason to engage.
- A digital advocacy “Action Center” that served as the program hub (petition + story capture + social sharing + event registration at launch; expandable to direct policymaker/regulator advocacy).
- A recruitment and lifecycle communications engine (segmented email as the primary mobilization channel; social + retargeting + partner toolkits + offline capture).
- A rapid response protocol, critical events calendar, and always-on monitoring to anticipate and manage reputation risk across earned, owned, and social channels.
- Data governance and privacy controls appropriate for U.S. requirements (CAN-SPAM, TCPA for texting, and state privacy regimes where applicable).

Why it mattered

- Created a durable, measurable grassroots asset (“owned” advocate community) rather than one-off, transactional bursts of outreach.
- Reduced permitting and political risk by ensuring decision makers saw authentic support—especially from affected communities and credible third parties.
- Improved speed-to-response and internal alignment through a single integrated campaign calendar, clear escalation paths, and repeatable workflows.

Project context and challenge (sanitized)

The sponsor pursued a significant interstate infrastructure project involving the repurposing of an existing corridor and the addition of supporting facilities (e.g., pump/compressor station modifications, terminals, and related site work). The scale, visibility, and cross-jurisdiction complexity created predictable friction:

- Multi-layer permitting and oversight: federal, state, and local approvals and consultations.
- Intense public attention on safety and environmental risk (spill/rupture concerns, water crossings, sensitive habitats, emergency response readiness).
- A narrative environment shaped by NGO advocacy, social media dynamics, and episodic incidents in the broader sector.

- Stakeholder fragmentation: what resonated with labor differed from what moved landowners, local officials, or national commentators.

U.S. regulatory and stakeholder landscape (illustrative)

- Federal: FERC (where applicable), PHMSA (pipeline safety), EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Clean Water Act permitting), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and NEPA process participants.
- State: environmental agencies (e.g., DEQ/DEP), state siting or utility commissions (PUC/PSC), state historic preservation offices, emergency management agencies.
- Local/Regional: county commissions, municipal councils, planning and zoning boards, water districts, tribal governments, first responders.
- Opinion leaders: local media, regional business press, academics, faith leaders, and community organizations.

Objectives and guiding principles

Business objectives

- Increase informed, affirmative support—especially among affected communities—so decision makers could see credible “permission to proceed.”
- Generate visible stakeholder actions that matter: supportive public comments during hearings, letters/calls to electeds, attendance at forums, and public narrative participation.
- Mitigate the effects of organized opposition by correcting misinformation rapidly and ensuring balanced media and online conversation.

Program design principles

- Coalition-based: assemble a diverse set of supporters who coalesce for different reasons (jobs, reliability, energy security, safety, community investment).
- Permission-based: transparent opt-in, clear privacy disclosures, and consistent fulfillment of commitments to supporters.
- Measured and optimized: recruitment and engagement treated as a performance system (cost, quality, action rate, retention).
- Integrated: grassroots program synchronized with government relations, community relations, legal, and corporate communications.

Campaign operating model

The program ran as a disciplined campaign system with three workstreams executed concurrently. The critical insight: no single lane is sufficient—proactive narrative-building must occur alongside rapid response and credible third-party activation.

Workstream	Purpose	Representative components
Promote	Proactively build understanding, credibility, and positive sentiment.	Narrative and message architecture; storytelling; speaker opportunities; community investment visibility; proactive media

		outreach; content strategy; SEO-friendly long-form content; paid amplification of earned wins.
Respond	Anticipate and respond quickly to misinformation, allegations, and issue spikes.	Always-on monitoring; critical events calendar; rapid response protocol; community management; “dark” content readiness; digital reputation management; paid search defense and contextual display when necessary.
Counterweight	Activate third parties and ensure accountability for opposition claims.	Ally identification and vetting; influencer briefings; partner toolkits; op-eds/letters-to-editor support; publicly sourced opposition due diligence to inform strategy and prepare factual context.

Governance and cadence

- Campaign management team accountable for objectives, the integrated campaign calendar, and cross-functional coordination.
- Weekly review of the critical events calendar (permitting milestones, hearings, media moments, community events, opposition actions).
- Defined escalation paths and decision rights for rapid response (legal + GR + communications coordination).

Promote components (what we did, specifically)

- Editorial calendar alignment: mapped priority storylines to long-lead editorial plans of key outlets to secure timely opportunities.
- Speakers bureau: placed credible spokespeople and subject matter experts at reputable venues in priority markets.
- Community investment visibility: identified and promoted tangible community investments that reinforced “local benefit” credibility.
- Proactive media outreach: built a journalist database, pitched fresh storylines, produced press materials, and conducted desk-side/roundtable briefings to address common criticisms early.
- Social media strategy: established a consistent presence on priority networks, deployed an evergreen + campaign content library, and amplified long-form content to improve reach and search visibility.
- Digital grassroots advocacy: built the Action Center hub, recruited supporters in priority segments/regions, and maintained an email-driven engagement cadence with clear calls-to-action.

Research and insight synthesis

The team synthesized polling, stakeholder listening, media analysis, and message testing to identify what drove support, what triggered opposition, and where the project could build surprising coalition strength.

A consistent finding: once people understood concrete benefits, favorability increased—but only if consultation, safety, and environmental protection were addressed credibly.

Representative insights (generalized)

- Economic benefits moved opinion—especially jobs, local tax base, and supply reliability—when backed by credible proof points and localized relevance.
- The #1 “permission” factor was meaningful local consultation and responsiveness, not top-down persuasion.
- Fear of leaks/ruptures remained a major concern; safety competence and emergency preparedness needed to be visible, specific, and repeated.
- Pipelines were often viewed as safer than alternatives (rail/truck), but comparisons required care to avoid appearing dismissive or opportunistic.
- Trusted messengers varied by region: academics/technical experts and local leaders often outperformed corporate spokespeople in perceived credibility.

Stakeholder coalition architecture

A core deliverable was the “Logical Supporters” matrix: constituencies with a plausible reason to support, the message that motivates them, and the channel most likely to reach them. The matrix intentionally included non-obvious supporters whose participation signals breadth and reduces the perception of a manufactured effort.

Supporter segment	Connection (benefit/concern)	Core message	Primary channels	Example activation
Company employees	Jobs, pride, local presence; desire to defend the organization.	“This project supports long-term jobs, safety, and reliability.”	Internal email, intranet, town halls.	Opt-in advocacy sign-up; sharing content; event attendance.
Contractors, suppliers, customers	Work volume, revenue continuity, regional investment.	“Local businesses benefit from predictable project demand and investment.”	Partner toolkits; co-branded landing pages; direct outreach.	Employee activation; letters to officials; community testimonials.
Building trades & unions	Skilled jobs, safety standards, community wages.	“Union jobs with strong safety and training standards.”	Direct outreach; labor councils; targeted digital.	Public statements; turnout at hearings; earned media.
Landowners & farmers	Property rights, compensation, safety, stewardship.	“Respectful routing, clear compensation, and robust safety practices.”	Email/phone database; local meetings.	1:1 engagement; story capture; public comment support.
Affected communities	Tax base, infrastructure investment, local input.	“Community benefits + transparency + responsiveness.”	Local events; geo-targeted digital; local media.	Event attendance; local endorsements; community letters.

Energy consumers	Reliability, affordability, regional supply.	“Reliable supply supports affordability and resilience.”	Targeted digital; community forums.	Petition, social sharing, letters.
Economic development voices	Growth, competitiveness, manufacturing.	“Infrastructure enables economic competitiveness.”	Chambers, trade groups, newsletters.	Op-eds; coalition letters; board resolutions.
Investors & shareholders	Risk management, disciplined execution.	“A de-risked project with strong governance and safety.”	Investor communications; owned channels.	Public statements; thought leadership.

Supporter progression and lifecycle model

The program treated engagement as a relationship lifecycle, not a one-time transaction. Two processes ran in parallel:

1. Convert average citizens into activists through phased engagement: recruit → engage/educate → mobilize.
2. Deepen individual commitment over time (supporter → activist → champion) using behavior tracking, targeted messaging, and progressively higher-commitment actions.

Action Center and action toolkit

The digital Action Center served as the program hub: it hosted actions, captured opt-ins, and enabled rapid deployment of new calls-to-action aligned to the permitting and political calendar.

- Launch actions (low friction): petition/pledge of support; social sharing; story capture; event registration.
- Expandable actions (higher impact): submit comments during NEPA and state-level comment periods; contact elected officials; letters to the editor; attend hearings; testify/meet with decision makers (as appropriate).
- Always-on engagement: periodic updates, short surveys, and educational content to maintain momentum between high-stakes moments.

“Recency” sequencing principle

Advocates were presented with immediate follow-on actions after completing a step (e.g., petition signature → social share; story submission → invite friends). This sequencing increases multi-action completion rates and identifies champions for deeper mobilization.

Digital program build-out

Advocacy hub options and selection

- Option A: build within the existing corporate/project website CMS.
- Option B: launch a standalone advocacy microsite at a complementary domain.

- Option C (selected): a visually integrated but technically distinct subdomain (e.g., action.projectname.com) to maximize speed, control, and security separation.

Information architecture and content sections

- About the program: purpose, sponsorship, and how advocacy fits the broader project and community process.
- What you can do: clear expectations for supporters (how to engage, what participation looks like).
- Take action: a modular library of actions that can expand over time without re-platforming.

Recruitment system (internal + external)

- Internal recruitment: employee opt-in through internal channels; integration of contacts captured through community events and open houses.
- External recruitment: performance-tested paid acquisition across social and contextual placements; landing pages tailored by audience/message; ongoing optimization based on cost-per-acquisition and advocate quality.
- Organic recruitment: outreach to aligned organizations, trade groups, blogs/newsletters, and community partners.

Paid recruitment optimization loop (how it ran)

- Launch multiple channel tests to establish baseline cost-per-acquisition (CPA) and advocate quality.
- Shift spend quickly to top-performing placements and creative variants.
- Continue iterative testing (creative, message, landing page) to improve CPA and downstream action rate.

Issue management and rapid response system

- Ongoing monitoring of traditional and social media with synthesis of drivers, outlets, influencers, and emerging narratives.
- Critical events calendar updated weekly, spanning permitting milestones, hearings, community events, and known opposition actions.
- Rapid response protocol: assess credibility, potential impact, response threshold, response level (direct, indirect, third-party), and response timing.
- Digital reputation management: conversation audit, review of owned/reserved domains and social handles, and identification of “dark content” locations for rapid activation.
- Community management workflows to maintain productive dialogue and avoid unmanaged comment threads becoming narrative liabilities.
- Paid defense as appropriate: search capture for high-intent queries and selective social/contextual display to counter misinformation and redirect to authoritative sources.

Using the supporter community for response (what we built)

- Action Center updates that directly addressed circulating misinformation with clear, source-backed facts.
- Email mobilization to champion supporters with a menu of online/offline options (share content, comment, write letters, attend events).

- Pre-drafted content snippets for supporters to use, reducing friction and improving message consistency.

Third-party activation and coalition amplification

The sponsor could not—and should not—be the only voice. The program built a pipeline of credible third-party messengers and gave them usable materials.

- Ally identification and vetting: local leaders, subject matter experts, academics, pro-infrastructure voices, and community organizations.
- Influencer outreach strategy: structured information-sharing relationships with issue experts (academics, former officials, policy voices, industry and safety professionals) to extend reach and strengthen defense during crises.
- Opinion content enablement: op-ed drafting support, letters to the editor, and spokesperson placement where appropriate.
- Partner toolkits: co-branded landing pages, email templates, social posts, and talking points to activate allied organizations.

Opposition due diligence (publicly sourced)

To anticipate tactics and protect the project from avoidable surprises, the team conducted publicly sourced research on key opposition organizations. The goal was strategic clarity—not retaliation—and the ability to equip third parties with factual, defensible context.

- Operating and financing structure; key local affiliates; prior campaign history and tactics.
- Leadership and spokesperson profiles; public positioning patterns and vulnerabilities.
- Funding streams and political activity (where publicly disclosed); litigation history; lobbying patterns.
- Coalition ties (nonprofits, advocacy groups, consultants) and recurring narrative themes.

Technology, data governance, and compliance

- A CRM-based advocacy platform (Salesforce-class) integrated with mass email, event registration, and an advocacy action engine.
- Tagged tracking of each advocate by acquisition source, message stream, geography, and action history to enable segmentation and performance optimization.
- Security controls aligned to enterprise expectations (role-based access, encrypted transport, audit logs, backups, disaster recovery).
- Compliance by design: clear opt-in language; unsubscribe handling; and U.S. legal review for CAN-SPAM (email), TCPA (SMS/phone outreach), and state privacy requirements where applicable.

Sample opt-in language (illustrative)

“Sign up to receive email updates about the project and related energy and community issues. You can unsubscribe at any time. We will handle your information in accordance with our privacy notice.”

Resourcing model (indicative)

- Executive sponsor: ensures fast internal alignment and timely approvals.
- Client-side program lead (0.25 FTE typical): coordinates internal stakeholders and supports execution.
- Campaign strategy lead: accountable for outcomes, integration, and decision support.
- Program manager: day-to-day execution lead; maintains the integrated calendar and deliverable pipeline.
- Advocacy copywriter: direct-response writing, email cadence, and action framing.
- Data/analytics lead: segmentation, testing, optimization, and reporting.
- Content/creative support: modular assets for ads, landing pages, and explainers.

Phased execution plan (what got built, in what order)

Phase	Primary outputs	Typical duration
Discovery	Stakeholder mapping; message architecture; risk review; calendar alignment; initial IA decisions.	2–4 weeks
Development	Action Center build; CRM configuration; landing page templates; initial creative and email streams.	4–8 weeks
Targeting & launch	Internal + external recruitment pilots; CPA benchmarking; initial advocate onboarding; launch actions live.	2–6 weeks
Operate & optimize	Ongoing engagement; new actions aligned to milestones; monitoring + rapid response; coalition activation; measurement.	Continuous

How we would enhance this approach for 2026

- Stronger first-party data strategy: tighter consent management, preference centers, and privacy-by-design aligned to the patchwork of U.S. state privacy laws.
- Higher-fidelity geo-targeting and micro-segmentation using platform-safe signals (without alienating audiences).
- Faster content operations: modular content libraries + pre-cleared response templates to reduce response-cycle time during spikes.
- Modern creator ecosystems: identify credible local micro-voices (community leaders, small business owners, engineers, safety professionals) with authentic reach.
- More resilient channel mix: email remains foundational, but integrate SMS (where compliant), WhatsApp (where relevant), and community platforms where audiences actually live.
- AI-assisted monitoring and summarization to shorten the signal-to-action loop (human-in-the-loop governance maintained).

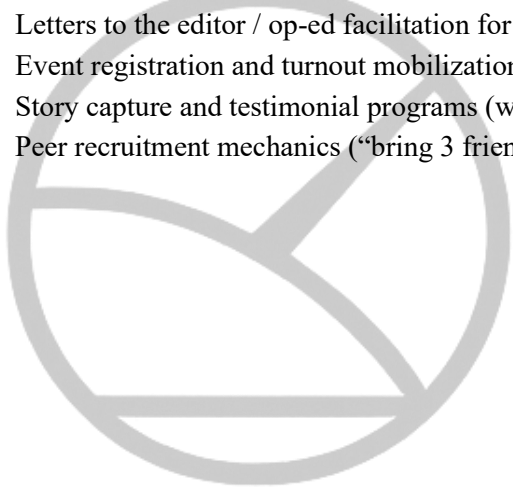
What 23.5 brings to clients

23.5 brings a SEAL-team style operating mindset to stakeholder engagement: precise, disciplined, and execution-forward. We integrate strategy, operations, and measurement so engagement becomes a controllable system—not an ad hoc scramble when the next issue spike hits.

- Campaign operating model and governance (Promote–Respond–Counterweight).
- Stakeholder intelligence and coalition architecture.
- Digital Action Center design/build and CRM-based mobilization systems.
- Lifecycle communications (email/SMS), recruitment, and optimization.
- Issue management, rapid response protocols, and narrative defense.
- Third-party activation and partner toolkits to scale credible voices.

Appendix: Action types library (expandable)

- Petitions and pledge campaigns (support, safety commitments, community benefits).
- Public comment mobilization aligned to NEPA and state-level comment periods.
- Elected-official outreach (letters, emails, calls) segmented by district and issue.
- Letters to the editor / op-ed facilitation for community voices.
- Event registration and turnout mobilization (town halls, open houses, hearings).
- Story capture and testimonial programs (written + short-form video).
- Peer recruitment mechanics (“bring 3 friends”) with simple share flows.



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