

## CASE STUDY · COALITION COMMUNICATIONS

# The Southeast Hydrogen Hub coalition

Building a communications function and a unified brand from nothing, across five utilities and six states, under a federal deadline.

The U.S. Department of Energy opened an eight-billion-dollar hydrogen hub programme. Duke Energy, Dominion Energy, Southern Company, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and LG&E and KU Energy formed a six-state coalition to compete. There was no governance structure and no communications function. I was asked to build both.

### THE CHALLENGE

- Five major utilities and multi-state stakeholders with genuinely competing priorities.
- No pre-existing governance or communications structure of any kind.
- Complex hydrogen and infrastructure concepts requiring translation into a compelling public narrative.
- A fully integrated platform to be delivered inside compressed federal proposal timelines.

Five utilities with separate brands, boards and regulators had to present as one credible applicant, on a federal clock.

#### SECTOR

Multi-utility, federal programme

#### TYPE

Competitive federal application

#### ROLE

Coalition communications lead

#### RESULT

Not selected; model adopted

WHAT I DID

Led end-to-end communications across the coalition

- Built and led a ten-person cross-company communications team.
- Established governance, decision-making frameworks and alignment processes from scratch.
- Developed a distinct coalition identity balancing five individual utility brands against one shared regional narrative.
- Built the complete communications platform: executive messaging, media and announcement strategy, government and stakeholder communications, internal alignment tools.
- Designed a scalable operating model enabling rapid decisions across multiple independent organizations.

THE HONEST OUTCOME

The coalition was not selected

The bid did not win. That is worth stating plainly, because the communications platform was nonetheless recognized by executive leadership across the participating companies as a best-in-class model for cross-organization alignment, and the participants have carried the operating model into later joint work.

What that demonstrates

Communications infrastructure built from zero to fully operational under a hard external deadline, across organizations with no obligation to cooperate. The competitive result was decided on factors well outside the communications function.

OUTCOME

|                |                                                                                                                    |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ALIGNMENT      | Five-utility communications alignment across Duke Energy, Dominion Energy, Southern Company, TVA, and LG&E and KU. |
| SCOPE          | Six-state coalition positioning under a unified regional narrative.                                                |
| TEAM           | A ten-person cross-company team built and operationalized under compressed timelines.                              |
| INFRASTRUCTURE | End-to-end communications infrastructure created from scratch: governance, messaging and execution systems.        |
| RECOGNITION    | An executive-validated model recognized across participants as a benchmark for collaboration.                      |

WHAT THIS TRANSFERS TO

Joint agencies, regional authorities, mutual aid arrangements and any grant application involving several organizations face this problem. Several boards, several brands, one voice, one deadline. The scale was unusual; the structural problem is ordinary, and most small organizations meet it with no framework.