



Docket 25366: 2026 Integrated Marketing & Communications Plan

Propane Education & Research Council

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Primary Contact: Erin Hatcher, Senior Vice President, Communications and Marketing
Email: erin.hatcher@propane.com
Amount Requested: \$ 10,030,600

Organization: Propane Education & Research Council
Phone: 202-452-8975
Total Project Cost: \$ 10,030,600

Start Date: 01/01/2026

End Date: 12/31/2026

Additional Vendors: Partners include creative development agency (Elevation Advertising), media buying firm (GRP Media), PR firm (Hahn Public), as well as partners augmenting our content development (Swanson Russell and Iron Markets).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funding Request Priority Area
Communications

Project Summary

- *Briefly describe the proposed product or idea, its importance, its benefits, and the market and/or audience it serves. Briefly outline the scope of work.*

The integrated communications and marketing docket supports 2026 programming for all markets based on the communication strategy and messaging objectives for paid, earned, and PERC's owned media channels. The docket also includes programming for corporate communications, digital content development and strategy, as well as environmental thought leadership.

This docket's net decrease of nearly 18% vs. 2025 is due to shifting communications funding across all markets to support research and development.

The 2026 plan represents a significant pivot from our broad awareness building campaign that has led with environmental messaging, to one that leads with propane's core attributes to address mounting energy challenges facing our country.

The surge in demand from AI-driven data centers, as well as from residential, commercial, and manufacturing on our already fragile electric grid has revealed how vulnerable Americans are to increased power outages. In fact, a recent DOE report estimates that risk will be one hundred fold by 2030. As a result of this impending power crisis, the 2026 plan, developed with the guidance of the Communications and Marketing Strategy Working Group, will use PROPANE Energy for Everyone branded messaging to educate specifiers about the competitive advantages and benefits of propane and propane equipment, most notably the reliability, lowest total cost of ownership, and low emissions profile. Homeowners will receive the message as well, however, there will be a concerted effort to educate business audiences and increase their likelihood to specify propane.

The messaging will be consistent and flow throughout earned media placements and events (PR), PERC's

owned channels (social media platforms, propane.com, and the Path to Zero podcast), business development managers' interviews, webinars, and podcasts, as well as trade show themes and collateral, such as case studies, white papers, and one-pagers.

The campaign will achieve its goals by increasing awareness and understanding of propane's benefits through a national educational campaign, increasing propane's share of voice and positive sentiment nationally through PR efforts, and by driving audiences to our website to engage with educational content.

Strategic Importance

- *Describe how this initiative supports PERC's strategic plan including the strategic pillars.*
- *Describe how this initiative is important to the propane industry.*
- *Describe how this initiative helps achieve PERC's aspiration to increase uses and users.*
- *Explain why this docket is critical to achieving your goal.*

This docket directly supports two pillars of PERC's strategic plan, specifically increasing the perception of propane as an acceptable energy source, not just among homeowners, but among all business audiences which propane serves, and expanding propane's market share by increasing the likelihood of specifiers to specify propane for homes, businesses, and farms.

Each market's plan supports the business development strategy for growing users and uses and the messaging will emphasize the core attributes of propane that make it an ideal solution for our nation's impending energy crisis: reliable, affordable, abundant.

This docket is a critical component of the plan to achieve the the strategic objectives.

DETAILED BUSINESS CASE

Scope–

- *List the activities paid for by this docket only (research, consultants, sponsorships, etc.)*

This docket pays for all paid media placements (digital, print, TV, radio, social, and outdoor), earned media placements and tracking (national and trade media outreach, special events, and tracking), production of creative, advertising, and written and video content, consumer research, website development and deployment, environmental thought leadership earned media, events, and podcast production.

This plan will align with and support the business development plan for each market, focusing on the target audience(s) select applications(s), and key benefits in all messaging.

Vendor Capabilities

- *Does this docket engage external vendors such as research partners, OEMs, Consultants, Subject Matter Experts, PR/Media or Creative Agency Assistance?*

Yes

- *Describe any external vendor's capabilities (if engaged) to produce work that is paid for by this docket. This section should not describe PERC staff nor the project lead's role. Who is responsible for creating deliverables – content/research/data/etc.? What's the review process and who is involved? List any external agencies or outside organizations that will be utilized and identify the purpose for which they will be needed*

Our major project partners include Acupoll, who will conduct the messaging and creative research, GRP Media, who will purchase media, Elevation Advertising, who will develop creative materials, Hahn Public for environmental thought leadership PR, and Swanson Russell for content development. They have demonstrated their ability to deliver results over the past 4+ years of working with PERC.

Industry Engagement –

- *Does this project require propane industry stakeholders' involvement to be successful?*

Yes

- *How will you engage industry stakeholders?*

We engage the Communications and Marketing Strategy (COMS) working group of the Advisory Committee to provide input when developing our programming, vetting partnerships, and identifying growth opportunities. There are five project teams that advise specific sections of our planning process: environmental thought leadership, influencers, National Propane Day, renewable propane activation, and safety messaging.

Cost/Benefit Analysis –

- *What is the potential impact? (i.e., NPV, new gallons, units sold, persons trained, propane industry resource savings, safety, consumer education, etc.)*
- *What are the potential risks to achieving the impact? (i.e. fuel price; regulatory, environmental, or legislative considerations; propane marketer support)*
- *Are other parties or organizations involved?*
- *For products:*
 - *Provide five-year estimated sales projections for the product (if applicable) and a list of factors that may influence the estimates.*
 - *How many gallons of propane does the product use per unit per year?*
 - *Provide best, worst, and intermediate projection scenarios and describe what variables contribute to each scenario*

Among the key messages that we will employ to drive adoption of propane across our markets are propane’s reliability, its ability to increase businesses’ efficiency and lower total cost of ownership, achieve environmental requirements, and to satisfy their customers’ needs.

We will increase the perception of propane as an acceptable energy among our target audiences and increase the likelihood to specify propane which will help business development managers place more propane equipment and help propane retailers gain more customers and sell more gallons.

Risk Assessment

- *Identify 3-5 potential risks to the successful completion of the project or inability to meet outcome targets, how likely those are to happen, impact on the project, and how to resolve those risks.*
- *Indicate low, medium, or high for “Likelihood” and “Impact.”*

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Resolution and/or Contingency Plan
Increased focus on electrification	Medium	High	Continue to educate audiences about the reliability and low emissions of propane, and the importance of energy choice and mix.
Fossil fuel ban	Low	High	Supply content to support associations' advocacy for clean energy choice.
Increased high profile propane accidents	Medium	Medium	Identify and correct misperceptions regarding cause if warranted, reinforce the safe use and handling of propane, and provide incentives for first responder training.
Innovation from competitor energies (less expensive, lighter batteries, less expensive EVs, and faster charging stations)	Low	Medium	Continue to support innovation with OEM partners through grant opportunities and collaboration on commercialization plans.
Negative press coverage about propane associated with problems with wintertime delivery	Medium	Medium	Prepare state executives and marketers with talking points and engage Rapid Response Team to assist in crisis communications when appropriate.
Aggressive responses to our messaging from	Low	Medium	Engage propane allies to act as ambassadors asserting the need for energy choice from a mix of clean options,

journalists, energy competitors, and regulators			respond to prompt, prepare preemptive myth busting content to be tailored for intended audiences, and provide industry with talking points to share with staff and customers.
---	--	--	---

Budget

- *Outline cost per task, including estimated cost share (cash and in-kind).*
- *If applicable, indicate hourly rates, including overhead.*
- *Highlight contractor vs. pass-through costs.*

See attached budget below.

Timeline

- *Provide a detailed timeline of all activities, tasks, and milestones. Include commencement and completion dates. List most responsible person for each task.*

This is an annual plan spanning January - December with programming dates that vary based on market and application. Communications managers are responsible for executing their individual market and project plans. Detailed activities and milestones will be presented at the February Council meeting.

Market

Market – Geographical Reach

- *What is the geographical reach (national/regional?)*

National

Market – Target Audience

- *Who is the target audience?*
- *Why is the target audience important?*

All of our audiences need to be aware of and understand our key messaging.

These audiences include:

Homeowners and prospective homeowners in propane country who are interested in building, remodeling, or adding or replacing appliances.

Eco-inclined and eco-earnest consumers across the nation whose purchasing and business decisions impact the future of the propane industry.

Construction professionals

Commercial building owners, operators, and specifiers.

Agricultural producers and future farmers

Golf course grounds directors

Material handling professionals and terminal operators.

Fleet managers and school transportation directors.

Rental and construction equipment business owners.

Energy and environmental thought leaders, environmental and specifying engineers, scientists, academics, and journalists.

Market – Market Research

- *Have you conducted market research in support of this project?*

Yes

Describe –

Annual omnibus / awareness tracker

Market-based intent to specify study

Consumer segmentation study

We are fielding research now to determine the best messaging for our business and consumer audiences and to refine our language based on the increased concern about energy availability and the environment.

Leverage and Synergies

Other audiences–

- *How could the content be used by other markets or industry organizations?*
- *How could the contents be used with other audiences beyond the target audience?*

This program will build on success and learnings from previous campaigns.

The content can be used by state executives, individual marketers, OEMs, and allied partners including Clean Cities and Communities executives.

Additional audiences could include organizations like the National Recreation & Parks Association.

Development

Delivery

Delivery – Delivery Channels –

- *Describe the distribution channels*
- *What existing delivery channels will be used?*
- *Who is responsible for deploying/delivering product?*

PERC staff and agency partners will be responsible for creating the content needed for this program. We will create a new campaign based on the messaging and creative research results and launch it across all markets in Q1 2026.

Delivery – Allied Partner Participation

- *Are there allied or strategic partners who will be engaged in this delivery?*

PERC's media buying partner, GRP, will place the advertising that supports the markets, and PR partners Swanson Russell and Hahn Public will secure earned media placements to support each of our markets.

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Project Deliverables and Market Outcomes

- *Detail how success will be measured for this project overall and by tactic, what the metric is, and when it will be achieved.*

Goal/Milestone	Project Deliverable or Market Outcomes	Metric	By Date	Tied to Payment Y/N	Payment Due upon completion
Leverage messaging research to launch new messaging campaign	Launch messaging in ads, PR, trade shows, and in all trade shows and collateral materials.	Rollout messaging	2025-02-14	Yes	
Create highly impactful commercial power generation program	Execute program	Progress toward placement of power generation equipment	2026-12-31	Yes	
Increase perception of propane as an acceptable energy	Achieve increase among business audiences	Survey results	2026-05-31	Yes	

Intellectual Property

Who owns the data and or intellectual property generated from this project? Describe:

PERC owns the content developed for the campaign in perpetuity, or in the case of influencers, for a period of months according to the individual contract.

Budget Impact

- *Provide the budget market & activity this project will be impacting.*

Market & Activity	Amount Requested	Year Total	YTD Remaining	Remaining if Funded
2026 > Agriculture > Communications	\$800,000.00	\$800,000.00	\$800,000.00	\$0.00
2026 > Autogas (On-Road) > Communications	\$700,000.00	\$700,000.00	\$700,000.00	\$0.00
2026 > Commercial > Communications	\$1,050,000.00	\$1,050,000.00	\$1,050,000.00	\$0.00
2026 > Material Handling/Industrial > Communications	\$600,000.00	\$600,000.00	\$600,000.00	\$0.00
2026 > Cross Market > Communications	\$1,215,000.00	\$1,465,000.00	\$1,465,000.00	\$250,000.00
2026 > Off Road / Power Generation > Communications	\$500,000.00	\$500,000.00	\$500,000.00	\$0.00
2026 > Residential > Communications	\$4,665,600.00	\$4,665,600.00	\$4,665,600.00	\$0.00
2026 > Cross Market > Digital Strategy & Analytics	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$0.00

2026 > Cross Market > Thought Leadership	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$0.00
---	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------

Does this project have a past funding history? Yes

Describe: It is relevant because it provides a benchmark for how we have funded PR events, new innovation support, and paid advertising.

Funding History for Similar Dockets

- Provide a funding history for similar projects, including the project budget, final or current spend, and project results.

Year	Docket #	Project Budget	Project Spend
2025	24826	\$11,224,600.00	\$10,272,020.00
Results:			

Year	Docket #	Project Budget	Project Spend
2024	24186	\$12,863,000.00	\$8,428,887.00
Results:			

Year	Docket #	Project Budget	Project Spend
2023	23654	\$12,863,000.00	\$12,863,000.00
Results:			

Year	Docket #	Project Budget	Project Spend
2022	23255	\$9,363,000.00	\$9,363,000.00
Results:			

Year	Docket #	Project Budget	Project Spend
2021	22786	\$9,863,000.00	\$9,863,000.00
Results:			

2026 Budget PROPOSED			
Market	Activity	Budget	Total
Homeowner			
			\$4,265,600
Residential Pro			
			\$400,000
Commercial			
			\$1,050,000
Agriculture			
			\$800,000
Autogas			
			\$700,000
Material Handling			
			\$600,000
Off Road			
			\$500,000
Environmental Thought Leadership			
			\$200,000
Digital Strategy & Development			
	Content Strategy + Updates	\$150,000.00	
	Development of Content/ Features/Tools	\$300,000.00	
			\$450,000
Corporate Communications / Cross Market			
	LP Gas & BPN ads	\$101,600.00	
	Annual Report	\$8,000.00	
	Organic Social Boosting	\$15,600.00	
	Consumer Research	\$250,000.00	
	Agency Fees & Retainer	\$620,000.00	
	National Propane Day	\$20,600.00	
	HooteSuite Subscription and Service	\$49,200.00	
			\$1,065,000
		Docket Total:	\$10,030,600