



Navigating data center expansion: Delivering for customers while building trust and managing risk

The current landscape:

**If you build it,
they won't
come**

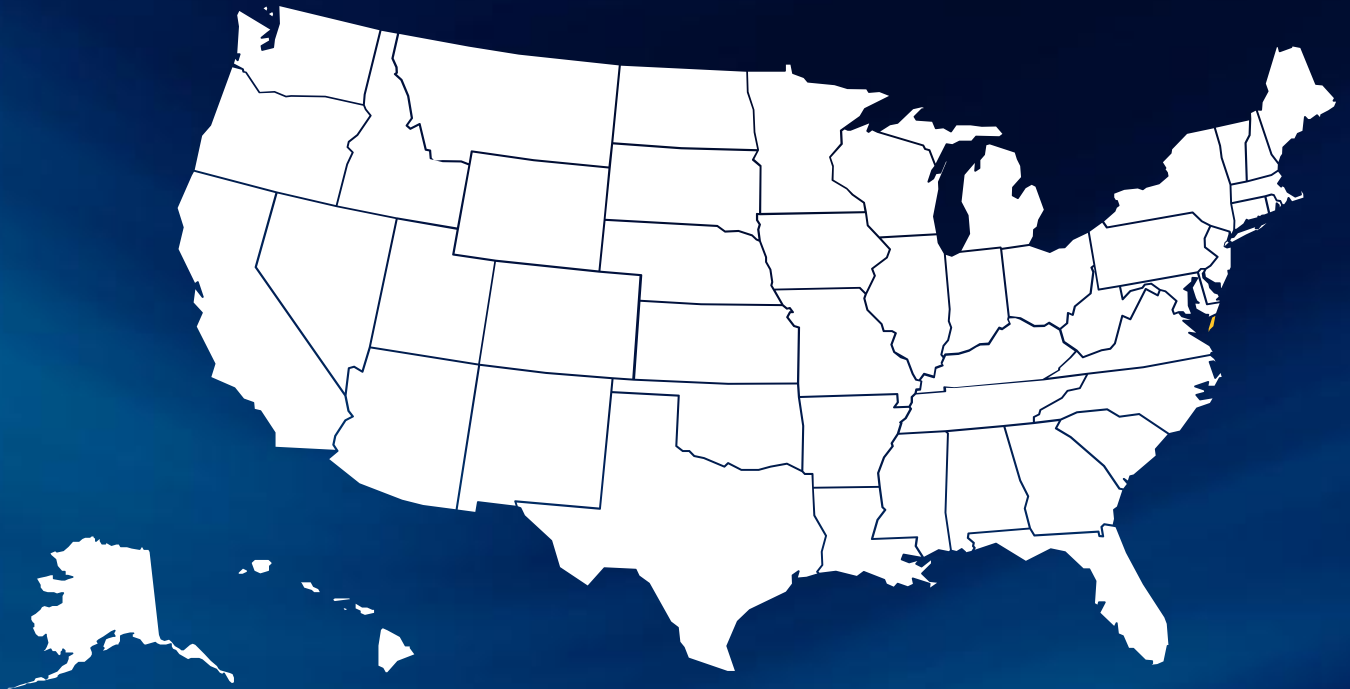


The current landscape:

Data centers have about a **50/50** chance of getting approved/delayed

An estimated **\$64 billion** of data centers projects have been blocked or delayed amid local opposition.

An estimated **\$75 billion** of data centers projects have been approved.



The current landscape:

Engineering can't fix this problem



The current landscape:

This is not business as usual



The current landscape:

Neighbors fight to protect their communities

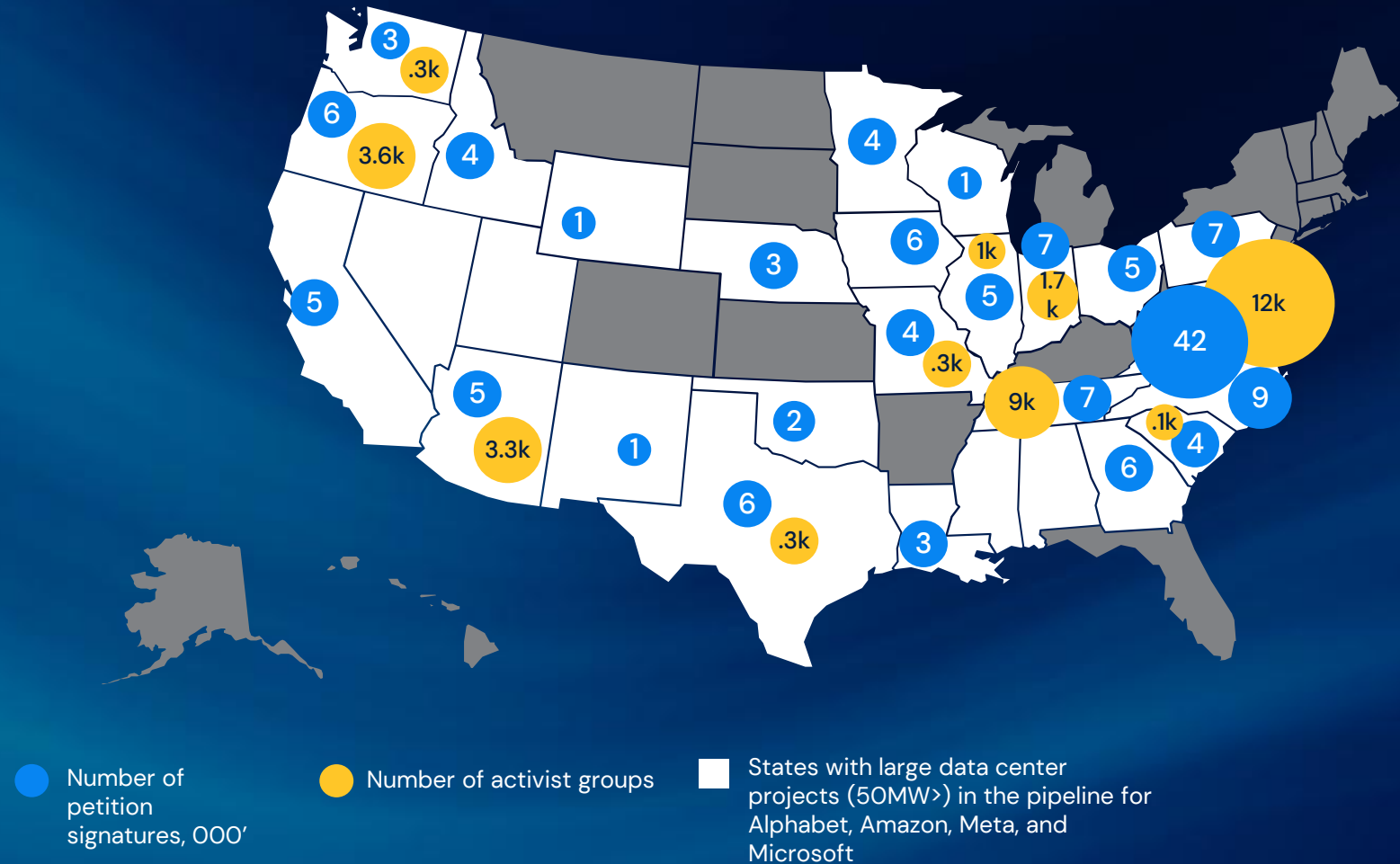


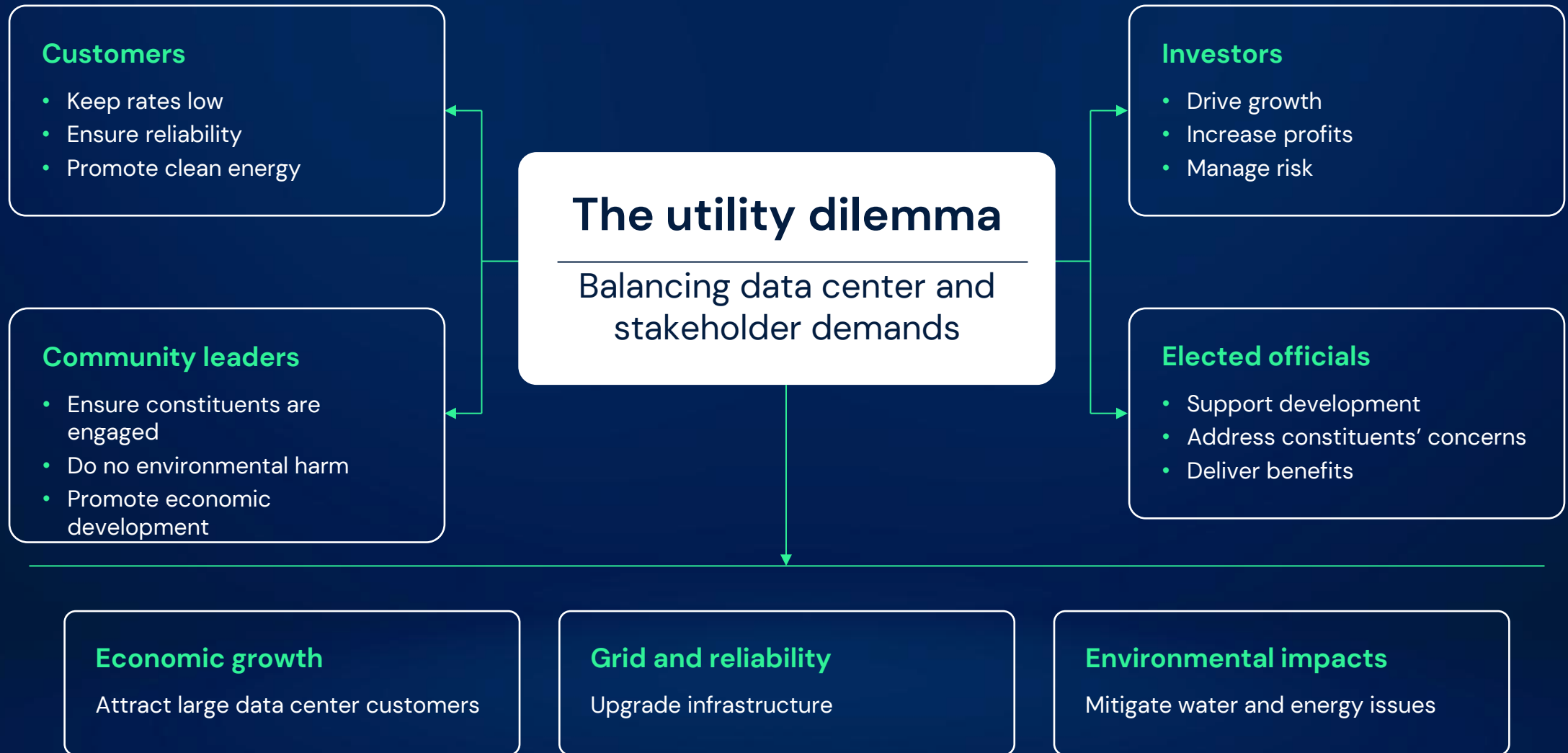
The current landscape:

Opposition groups are active around the country

There are **142 activist groups** across **24 states** organizing to block data center construction and expansion.

Opposition to data center construction is largely motivated by local concerns.



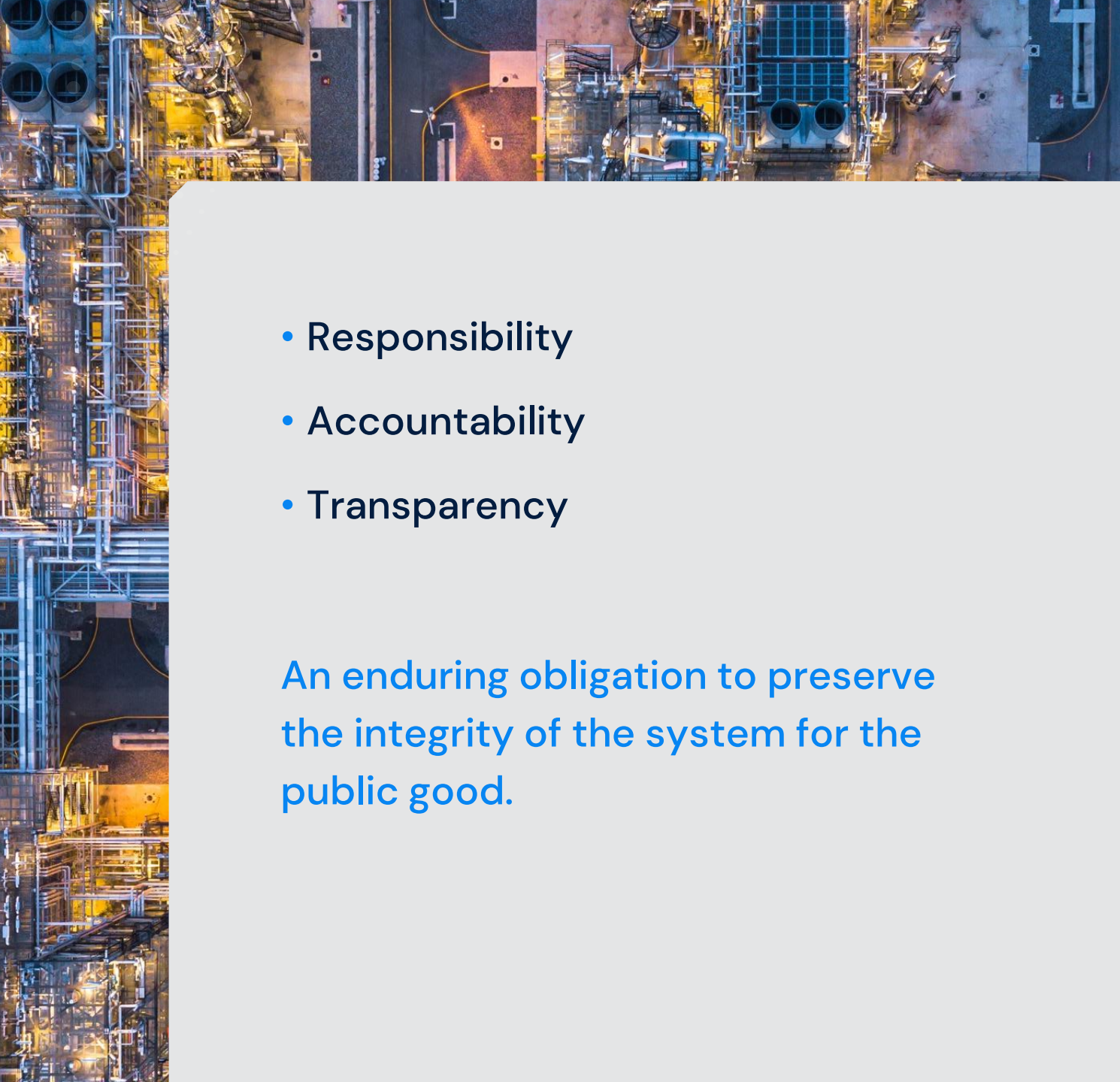


Caught between competing demands

What's your utility's role?

- Data center advocate?
- Growth enabler?
- Neutral party?
- Environmental protector?
- Facilitator?
- Affordability supporter?
- Problem solver?
- System integrator?





Guiding principles

Stewardship in action

- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Transparency

An enduring obligation to preserve the integrity of the system for the public good.

Utility lessons from the battlefield

Drawing on frontline experience, ICF distills how utilities can manage high-stakes, often polarized community conversations—balancing transparency, trust-building, and complex stakeholder dynamics amid rapid data center expansion.



Lessons learned

When defining a unified approach across your utility to address customer concerns:

- Establish an internal leadership group and governance. Combine critical teams such as government affairs, corporate communications, operations, regulatory, legal, security, and customer service.
- Report updates regularly to executives.

Lessons learned

When developing your customer engagement and messaging strategy:

- Don't be too focused on a single stakeholder. Always take a 360-degree view.
- Keep in mind customer engagement requires sophisticated and robust resources.
- You will need more to manage the volume and complexity. (e.g., resources for strategic and executional partners)
- Don't underestimate the passion and influence of community opposition groups.
- Engage advocate groups.
- Safety and security may need to be heightened.

Utility lessons from the battlefield

From the perspective of a utility executive navigating scrutiny and questions from their community:

What surprised you most?

“The level of misinformation and general lack of understanding of how things work.”

Potential data center advocates

Could include:

- Local and state chambers of commerce
- Economic development organizations
- Edison Electric Institute and “We Stand For Energy”
- Major local businesses
- Pro data center coalition

Best practices for community engagement and data center projects

Aggregate internal and external resources to achieve the following in multiple communities

Proactive education to fight misinformation

- Launch communication/education activities early in target communities
- Establish digital hub to contain always-on informational content
- Develop wide variety of materials easy to download and disseminate.
- Define social media distribution plans
- Leverage 3rd parties for distribution
- Activate robust media relations plans
- Seek high profile speaking opportunities/podcasts for PPL experts

Partner to build solutions and alignment

- Work with developers and hyper-scalers
- Engage community leadership groups, such as Economic development and Chambers of commerce
- Engage municipalities, planning commissions, community leaders, legislators, regulators, trade associations

Key Takeaways

- **Actively listen to your customers with an intent to learn and resolve problems. Not just “check the box.”**
- **Seek balance in handling competing priorities.**
- **Act as stewards. Your reputation is at stake.**