

How ONEOK builds trust through local engagement

From the Bakken to local communities, ONEOK integrates engagement into project planning and operations to build trust, strengthen connections, and support responsible energy development

In Montana and across the midstream sector, trust is built over time through safe operations, consistent communication, and visible local commitment. As demand for reliable energy infrastructure continues to grow, so do expectations for companies to operate responsibly and create long-term value in the communities where they work.

At ONEOK, that work begins well before construction and continues throughout the life of an asset. The company's approach is grounded in responsible operations, ethical conduct, and ongoing dialogue with the people, communities, and governments connected to its projects.

In practice, that means engaging early, listening carefully, and maintaining communication to better understand local priorities, identify concerns, and improve outcomes over time.

"Our approach is rooted in the communities where we operate," said Darren Wallis, senior vice president, communications and community relations. "It's about understanding local priorities and building relationships that support long-term success."

ONEOK's local engagement efforts are carried out through three connected areas: community investments, community relations, and government relations, including work with sovereign tribal nations. Together, these efforts help the company maintain a consistent local presence and strengthen relationships with landowners, emergency responders, schools, local leaders, regulators, and tribal governments.

In Montana and the broader Bakken region, that presence matters. Community investments are guided by local priorities and supported by regional committees and employees who live and work in the areas they serve. Community relations team members help maintain open lines of communication with local stakeholders, while government and tribal government relations provide a framework for coordination, dialogue, and long-term alignment.

"Our goal is to understand what matters most in each community and support those priorities in a way that is practical and lasting," said Heather Steffes, community relations coordinator, who supports ONEOK's northern region, including Montana operations. "Because many of us live and work in these regions, we

bring local perspective and a strong sense of accountability to the people and places we serve.”

In 2025, ONEOK contributed \$9.5 million to more than 500 organizations and recorded more than 27,000 volunteer hours in support of initiatives aligned with local needs. These efforts include advancing STEM education through partnerships with schools and regional organizations, employee volunteerism, and targeted programming designed to expand access to learning opportunities. Supported by regional investment committees and local engagement teams, this approach helps strengthen community partnerships and align local investment with priorities identified by the communities themselves. In the Bakken region, these investments focus on education, community programs, essential services, and emergency responder grants, all identified by local stakeholders.

ONEOK’s tribal government relations work reflects the company’s commitment to respectful, direct, and sustained dialogue with sovereign tribal nations across its operating footprint. Formalized in 2022 with the addition of a dedicated tribal government relations role, this work helps inform project planning by creating space for discussion around cultural, community, and regional priorities. In some cases, those conversations have influenced project design and routing to avoid areas of cultural significance or support tribal objectives.

That approach is especially important in a region where responsible development depends on trust, consistency, and a willingness to listen. “Our focus is on building relationships and making sure the perspectives of tribal nations are considered in our work,” said Wes Pebsworth, director, tribal government relations. “That requires listening, consistency, and a long-term commitment to collaboration.”

For Montana’s oil and gas industry, long-term success depends not only on the infrastructure companies build but also on the trust they build alongside it. At ONEOK, local engagement is part of how the company plans, operates, and invests in the communities connected to its work.

“Because our employees live and work in many of the communities we serve, we bring a strong sense of responsibility to that work,” said Randy Lentz, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

“Our infrastructure may run through a community, but our reputation lives there.”

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ONEOK employees participate annually in Refresh Richland, a community cleanup event held around Earth Day and during National Volunteer Month in Sidney.