

How one webinar turned \$13K into \$1M+ in public-sector pipeline.

FEMA Fireside Chat with fmr. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell · AidKit × NACo · March 2026

\$1M+

marketing-attributed pipeline

245

registrants (deduped from 319)

93

leadership decision-makers

~\$13K

total campaign cost

The spark — the insight nobody was looking at

The idea didn't come from a brainstorm. Our SDRs were quietly dropping conference and meeting notes into a folder, so I pointed AI at them to surface the questions, fears, and hot topics buyers kept raising. One theme kept coming up: **FEMA rollback**. Counties were anxious about shifting federal policy and funding, and nobody was speaking to it. So we built the campaign around that exact fear, while it was still live in the news cycle.

The play — an engineered trust stack

We paired an **authority** (former FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell) with a **distribution partner** (NACo, the National Association of Counties), then ran it across LinkedIn, email, website, and partner channels. The messaging led with the buyer's real problem, "what county leaders can control right now," instead of abstract disaster stats.

The curveball — and why it didn't matter

Five days before the event, NACo pulled out. The FEMA topic was too politically hot for them. I rebuilt the whole thing on Zoom and hosted it myself, on schedule. The result held: **245 registrants, 50%+ live attendance, and 50+ minutes of retention**. For a public-sector audience, that is exceptional.

"We will see change, but that doesn't mean we have to wait to see what it is. The time to do this work is today." Deanne Criswell, fmr. FEMA Administrator

The juicy learnings.

A campaign is only useful if it teaches you how to do it cheaper next time. Here's what this one proved.

A high-quality room, not a vanity crowd

The room was **45% government** (counties + FEMA), with **93 leadership-level** attendees: directors, chiefs, and managers. The milestone: **AidKit's own channels drove 60% of registrations independently**. We didn't need to rent someone else's audience to fill the room.

\$34

AidKit / registrant

vs

\$79

partner / registrant

Less than half the cost. Our own channels ran 2.3x more efficient than the partner's.

THE FLOP

Google paid burned \$519 per registrant



I called it up front: nobody searches for a category this early. Google paid drove 231 clicks and just 5 registrations. Chasing intent that doesn't exist yet is how budgets die.

THE SURPRISE

A free website banner out-drove paid



The website banner (137 clicks, 20 regs) and LinkedIn organic (100 clicks, 36 regs) were the top drivers, at zero media cost. When a category is early, you create demand. You don't buy it.

THE CREATIVE TEST

Message beat format

A/B

Across LinkedIn tests: **FEMA framing** beat the '10-day stat' angle. Carousels won engagement (2.53% CTR); single images won efficiency (\$1.27 CPC). The problem statement did the work.

THE BRAND SURPRISE

The startup out-pulled the association



To county buyers, **AidKit's brand outperformed NACo's** in ads (2.06% vs 1.75% CTR). The trusted national logo wasn't the draw. Relevance was. Co-branding only lifted the HHS/nonprofit segment.

The insight that changed the strategy

The Q&A gave away where the market really was. Attendees weren't asking bottom-funnel questions like "why are you pricier than X?" They were asking **"is this even possible? who would run it? where does the money come from?"** They weren't in the funnel yet. That single read told us to pull messaging back toward education and awareness, and it reshaped the whole content plan. Reading the room is a deliverable.

This wasn't luck. It was engineered.

The insight, the trust stack, the channel mix, the creative tests: every piece was deliberate. If you sell software into the public sector and your pipeline isn't converting, I can help you engineer the same.

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Dimitry Manousevich · publicsectorleadgeneration.com · manousevich@gmail.com · linkedin.com/in/dimitrymanousevich