The Atlantic Gas and Electric Company (AG&E) is considering a massive update of their local utilities infrastructure for the purpose of improving service and lowering costs for their industrial and residential customers. Their plan includes a blueprint for a “smart grid” consisting of three major changes: (1) the replacement of aging transmission lines and switching equipment with more efficient and reliable technologies, (2) the implementation of two-way distributed connectivity to the grid, allowing customers to sell wind- or solar-generated electricity back to AG&E, and (3) the creation of an information communication technology (ICT) network that will match each customer’s power demand with supply in order to improve efficient use of energy resources. AG&E is hoping to secure $5.5 million from the recently passed Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund the project over a 3-year period. Their ability to carry out the plan depends upon receiving this funding. A local congressman has agreed to attend a town-hall meeting with constituents and has agreed to back the request for federal funds, but only if the community supports it.

Pro Group: You are a senior officer of AG&E. You are excited about the benefits that this project will provide to the community, but you also realize that there are major concerns from the community. Your goal is to gain the community support that is necessary for funding, but to do so you must address and alleviate concerns and convince the community that this project is in their best interests in the long-run. AG&E is not likely to receive the funding and will not be able to carry out the plan if the community is against it.

Con Group: You are a member of a group of deeply concerned citizens who live in the area serviced by AG&E. You are worried about the privacy, security, and access issues that this project represents. Your group includes consumer rights advocates, low-income residents without broadband access, and “preppers” concerned that a smart grid infrastructure would increase our nation’s vulnerability in the event of a nuclear attack from a hostile country.

Jury Group: You are the Congressman who is considering taking AG&E’s plan to the funding agency overseeing financing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. You must decide if this is in the best interests of the community before you offer your support.