



**TRUSTED. CONNECTED. FIELD-SMART.**





## ABOUT VERSANT

### **Versant knows how to harvest victory.**

Advancing client agendas in today's public policy arena requires an involved support team who can effectively map a clear path, efficiently open the right doors, and ultimately lead initiatives to success. As advocacy experts and active community members, Versant Strategies understands the nuances involved in public policy engagement. Versant's unique approach activates grassroots participation in the field, while concurrently conducting grassroots efforts on Capitol Hill. This powerful combination has yielded countless positive results.

### **Versant is practiced – and persistent.**

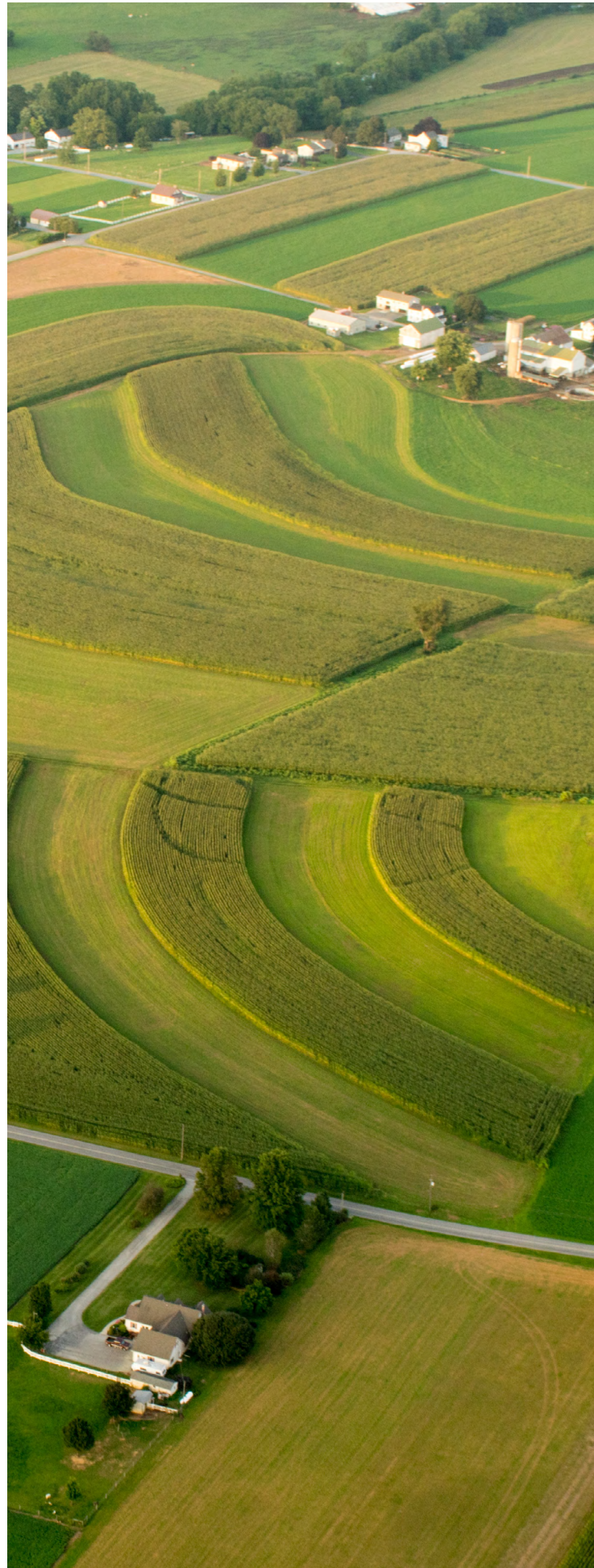
Versant team members know what victory takes: a sound strategy and plain hard work. We help clients refine their messages to target audiences in the Governor's office, Senate, House, and any number of agencies, bureaus, and commissions. With eyes on the prize and ears to the ground, Versant continually educates, listens to concerns, answers questions, monitors media outlets, disseminates timely information, and clears away obstacles so clients can accomplish set goals.

### **What makes us Versant?**

Versant is derived from "conversant" meaning well informed. Versant clients, ranging from small farms and businesses to Fortune 500 companies, benefit from skill sets resulting from decades of experience in state government.

### **Versant is WBENC certified.**

Versant Strategies is certified by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), the nation's largest third-party certifier of businesses owned and operated by women in the U.S.





## SERVICES

**Versant understands and anticipates our clients' needs.**

### **Governmental Relations:**

At Versant Strategies, our passion for victory is matched by an equally relentless dedication to strategy and detail. We understand the importance of first preparing the field by using clients' stated needs along with the team's collective experience. We know that every legislative or regulatory initiative can somehow, somewhere along the way, get derailed by unforeseen actions and opposition. In anticipation, the Versant team spends time analyzing clients' issues, designing effective messaging, and identifying other supporters. We then develop a winning playbook to successfully get over the goal line. Along the way, team members identify concerns, educate, advocate, and remain alert until the predetermined goal has been achieved. Tracking legislative and regulatory actions, drafting potential bill and amendment language, and preparing associations for legislative visits are all in a day's work for Versant Strategies.

### **Organizational Support:**

Versant Strategies provides services that enhance client communications and connections. Versant's portfolio of current and former clients, and insights into where interests may align, enables the team to make connections between companies and associations to partner on projects or advocacy campaigns.

Versant also recognizes that packaging and promotion are part of building message momentum. Our supporting services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Manage organizations from membership to conference planning.
- Facilitate strategic planning sessions.
- Provide keynote speakers for events.
- Develop and distribute press releases.
- Design, edit, and manage production services for advertising, promotional materials, and publications.





## Regulatory Affairs Work:

The Versant team has successfully helped clients, some representing the most regulated industries in the Commonwealth, circumnavigate the often-complicated realm of regulatory affairs in Pennsylvania. Clients look to Versant to help cut through red tape, facilitate continued communication with agency staff, secure special use permits, resolve eminent domain disputes, and lead the charge for regulatory reforms. No regulatory task is too big or too small for Versant Strategies. Team members roll up their sleeves and tackle the task at hand.

## Economic Development:

Finding financing for clients has become a favorite mission for Versant Strategies. Our team can quickly assess a project and match potential sources of funding. Additionally, Versant's technical writing experience allows our staff to successfully prepare grant applications for a myriad of sources. Whether it be a low interest loan, matching dollars, or pure grant, Versant is here to help. Researching opportunities to bring dollars to worthwhile programs is a Versant specialty.

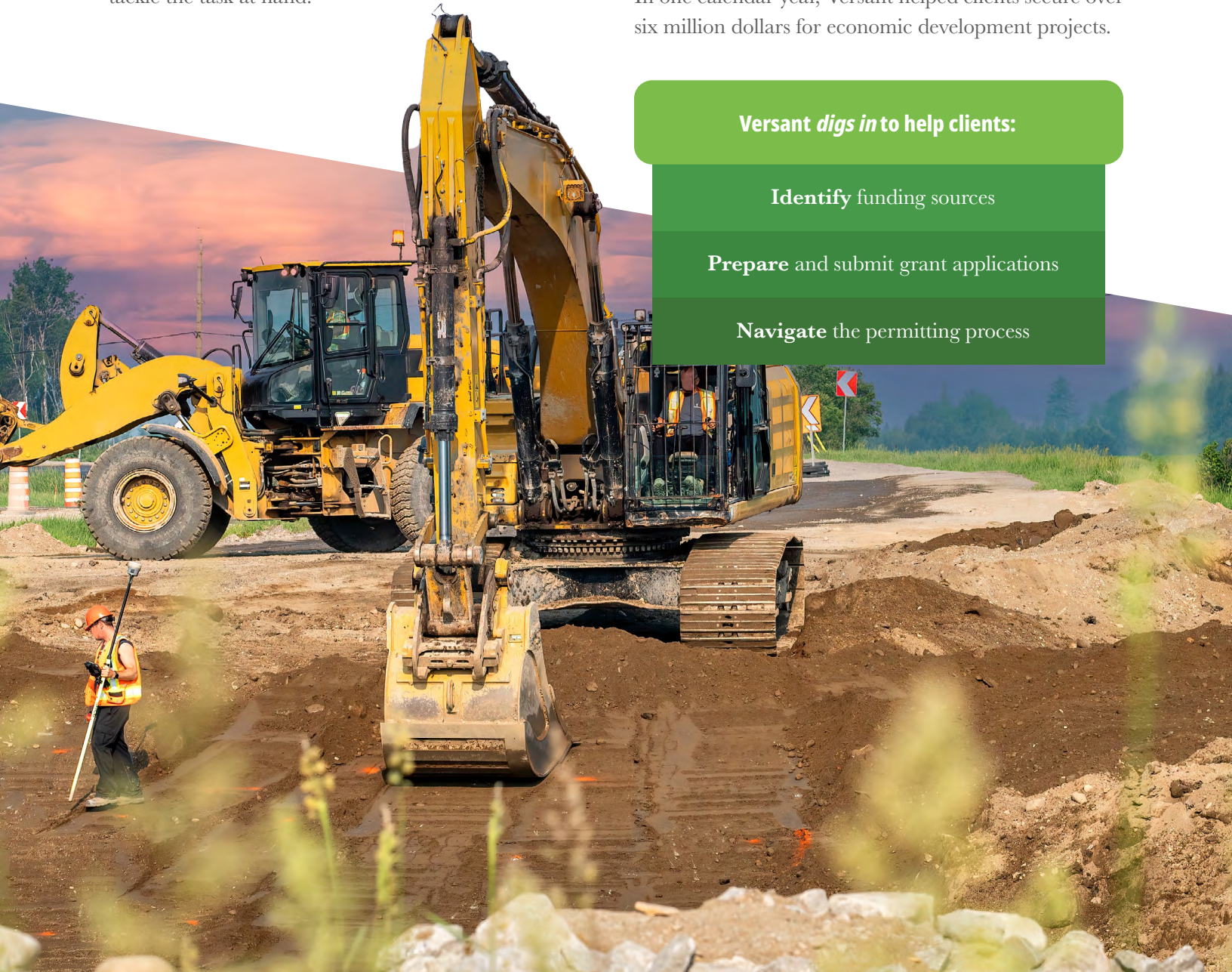
In one calendar year, Versant helped clients secure over six million dollars for economic development projects.

### Versant *digs in* to help clients:

Identify funding sources

Prepare and submit grant applications

Navigate the permitting process





## PEOPLE

**Our team offers a bumper crop of collective experience.**

**MeeCee Baker, PhD | President/CEO**

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MeeCee's years of experience, technical knowledge of client issues, and homegrown commitment to their concerns have made her name synonymous with agricultural and rural issues in Pennsylvania. In sum, she is credentialed and connected.

Dr. Baker owns Versant Strategies, a premier governmental relations firm focused on agricultural, environmental, and rural issues. Versant has represented dozens of clients in the Harrisburg and DC marketplace ranging from small farms and businesses to Fortune 500 companies. Baker's networking skills allow her to efficiently and effectively move client messages to advocate on their behalf.

Previously, Dr. Baker served in the executive office of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. While there, she directed the educational outreach for the Department using the knowledge, skills, and traits she perfected during her 20 years behind a teacher's desk at secondary and post-secondary institutions. Baker served as a faculty member at Penn State, an adjunct professor at North Carolina State University, and was the first woman elected president of the National Association of Agricultural Educators. She is known nationwide as a published author and columnist with frequent engagements as a motivational keynote speaker and workshop presenter.

Dr. Baker was named an Alumni Fellow at Penn State University and delivered the commencement address at the College of Agricultural Sciences spring graduation. She also received the prestigious Medal of Honor Award from the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture (PSPA), the oldest (1785) continuously operating agricultural society in the country. PSPA was involved in establishing the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. In addition, Baker was honored with the esteemed Jefferson Award by the Penn Ag Democrats. She holds a master's degree in agricultural economics and a PhD in agricultural education.

Baker was named number three on City and State's Power Ag 100 and one of the 50 over 50 by the same group. She also was recognized as a top 30 Lawyers and Lobbyists by the Central Penn Business Journal and was pleased the firm was recognized in the City and State Top 50 Lobbyists.

MeeCee and her husband, Jim Garofalo, a retired PA State Police Major, live on the Baker homestead farm in Juniata County. Her daughter Libby, a Lutheran Pastor, was a former State FFA President.



## Ron Raymond | Chief Legislative Officer

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Ron's service as an elected Representative provides inside the Capitol knowledge of the legislative process. This experience and his ongoing relationships with elected officials and staff give Versant's governmental relations practice an edge in client service.

Ron's extensive experience in state and local government helps Versant's clients set strategies to achieve their legislative and regulatory goals. Ron served in the PA House of Representatives for over 20 years and was an active member of the House Consumer Affairs and Rules Committees. Ultimately, he was named Secretary of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee and became Chairman of the House Liquor Committee. Prior to his election to represent the 162nd House District, Ron served as Mayor of Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania. More recently, he worked in governmental affairs, serving a myriad of interests in the State Capitol. His ability to navigate the political system and develop game-day style contingency strategies affords Versant clients elevated service.



## Ryan Smith | Chief Marketing Officer

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Ryan's extensive experience in small business, political strategy, and service to his community allows him to impact government officials while growing our client's influence in the Capitol and beyond.

Smith grew up in Northeastern Pennsylvania, deeply influenced by his family's restaurant business, where he worked throughout high school and college. Soon after, he honorably served for six years as a Military Police Officer in the Army Reserves. During that time, he engaged in local, state, and federal political campaigns, paving the way for a meaningful career with the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Ryan then became political director for Governor Josh Shapiro's successful Attorney General campaign. He later consulted on multiple statewide races before joining the Pennsylvania Democratic State Party as deputy executive director/political director, where he helped secure victories for Pennsylvania House, Senate, Gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate and Congressional campaigns.

Following successful campaign cycles, Ryan served as deputy campaign manager for Governor Shapiro's Attorney General reelection and Gubernatorial races. He then served the Shapiro Administration as special assistant to the PA Secretary of Agriculture, where he advised on policy, legislation, communications, and stakeholder relations. These experiences deepened his appreciation for rural and agricultural policy, specifically the importance of supporting small, diverse, and innovative businesses and the significance of increasing economic development in our rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Throughout his career, Ryan has built strong relationships with elected officials from both parties, business organizations, community leaders, and professional associations. His extensive network and insights reflect his unwavering commitment to public service and improving the lives within our commonwealth.

Ryan, his wife Stefanie, daughter Ava, and dogs Abbey and Leila live in Cumberland County. He enjoys golfing, skiing, and spending time with his family.





**Derek Snyder | Chief Managing Officer**[dsnyder@versantstrategies.net](mailto:dsnyder@versantstrategies.net)

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Derek Snyder's upbringing in rural Pennsylvania, affection for government, and desire to make a positive change allow him to efficiently and effectively serve clients' needs.

From a young age, Snyder developed a love of agriculture and advocacy, with his first childhood job being a door-to-door fruit salesman for an Adams County orchard. Prior to joining Versant Strategies, Snyder worked as a reporter for Pennsylvania Legislative Services and served as a legislative aide for State Representative Torren Ecker.

In college, he completed an internship with the UK Parliament in the House of Commons where he worked for MP Paul Maynard, who was Rail Minister in Prime Minister Theresa May's and Boris Johnson's Cabinets. Snyder graduated from Penn State University with a Bachelor of Science in corporate innovation and a Bachelor of Arts in economics. Derek is the grandson of the late Luther Snyder, who was elected President of the Pennsylvania State Grange and appointed as Deputy Secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Derek continues his grandparents' Grange involvement as a 5th generation member, holding various leadership positions in the Pennsylvania State and National Granges. In his free time, Snyder volunteers for the board of a local non-profit that helps individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries.

He enjoys hiking, Philadelphia, and Penn State sports, traveling with his fiancé Melissa, and spending time with family and friends.





## Caleb Wright | Chief Strategist

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Caleb's organizational skills, impassioned advocacy, and governmental relations savvy allow him to activate client audiences and attract the attention of decision makers. Caleb has become a go-to source for both industry personnel and legislative staff.

Chief Strategist Caleb Wright's roots run deep in Pennsylvania's agricultural community, and accolades earned during his career have marked him as a rising voice of rural America.

Raised on a Huntingdon County sheep and goat farm that has borne his family's name for over a century, Wright grew up as the grandson of the region's renowned veterinarian, Doc Kyper. Prior to joining Versant Strategies, he taught high school agriculture in New Holland, PA, and in his early youth was a state FFA (Future Farmers of America) officer and national FFA officer candidate.

Wright graduated from Penn State with a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural and extension education. Further, he was named one of the "30 under 30" (the only Pennsylvanian) by AgGrad, and a "40 Under 40" by City and State PA. Caleb was also listed on City and State's PA Ag Power 100 List. Wright has served on numerous boards in leadership positions, including President of the PA FFA Foundation, and President of the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Alumni Society Board. Wright volunteers to support the National MS Society.

Wright advocates both in Harrisburg and Washington and is the firm's foremost Farm Bill expert. He and his husband Ryan Osborne co-own Armstrong Valley Winery located in Halifax.





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