



# Navigating Advocacy in a Polarized Climate: Strategies for Creating Cross-Issue Alliances and Mobilizing Public Support

In today's polarized environment, organizations advocating for social issues and policies face unprecedented challenges. As new political leaders take office and public opinion remains divided on key issues, it's critical to find common ground that transcends partisanship. This white paper provides insights into building and mobilizing diverse coalitions, harnessing behavioral science to shape effective messages, and leveraging media platforms to connect with audiences in a way that promotes unity and action.

## 1. Understanding the New Landscape

With shifts in political leadership come changes in policy priorities and public sentiment. Advocacy groups must stay attuned to these changes and adapt their approaches. For organizations promoting positive change, understanding the dynamics of public opinion, voter priorities and the motivations of new policymakers is essential. A strategic recalibration will ensure that advocacy efforts remain relevant and resonate with both the public and political leaders.

### Key Considerations

**Monitor policy shifts and public opinion.** Regularly assess policy changes and public sentiment to align your priorities with issues that have widespread support.

**Map the political landscape.** Identify newly elected officials and their stances to tailor outreach efforts to areas where they may be open to partnership.

**Embrace flexibility.** Prepare to pivot based on evolving social and political climates. Staying nimble can help you respond to unexpected changes effectively.

## 2. Identifying Shared Values Across Divided Communities

At the heart of successful advocacy is the ability to connect with people on a values level. By identifying and emphasizing common values, organizations can overcome divides and engage people who may not initially seem like natural allies. Issues such as community health, safety, economic well-being and education often cut across political lines and provide opportunities for unifying messages.

### Strategies for Building Cross-Issue Alliances:

**Use data to identify overlapping priorities.** Public opinion research can reveal areas where various demographics share concerns.

**Focus on people, not politics.** Lead with human stories that highlight the impact of issues on real lives, reinforcing the universal values that underpin your cause.

**Engage trusted community leaders.** Seek endorsements from local leaders who resonate with multiple audiences, enhancing your credibility across groups.

### 3. Leveraging Social Norms and Behavioral Insights

Behavioral science and social norms research offer powerful tools to encourage positive action. Campaigns that highlight positive behaviors and attitudes within communities can help counter polarization by appealing to a sense of shared identity. For instance, by promoting messages like “Most parents in our community support clean air policies,” advocacy groups can foster collective motivation to support environmental policies.

#### Best Practices:



**Promote positive norms.** Emphasize supportive behaviors or beliefs within a community to normalize advocacy for your cause.



**Use “lived experience” data.** Quantitative and qualitative data on constituent experiences can be persuasive, helping people see the real-world relevance of policy changes.



**Encourage small actions that build momentum.** Simplify engagement steps (e.g., signing petitions or attending community meetings) to encourage broader participation.

### 4. Choosing the Right Media Platforms

With so many platforms available, selecting the right channels to reach your audience is critical. Different demographics consume information in distinct ways, and understanding these patterns is essential to maximize engagement. For instance, younger audiences may be more receptive on Instagram or TikTok, while older audiences may engage through email newsletters or Facebook.

#### Platform-Specific Strategies:



**Social media:** Focus on visual storytelling and interactive content, such as videos and polls, to build community support and engagement.



**Email campaigns:** Use personalized emails to reach key stakeholders with in-depth information, including policy briefs and calls to action.



**Media outreach:** Reach out to local and national news outlets to gain visibility for your issue and build credibility.

### 5. Mobilizing Allies and Expanding Reach with Digital Storytelling

One of the most effective ways to mobilize supporters is by sharing authentic stories that illustrate how policies impact individuals. These narratives can build emotional connections and inspire action. With powerful digital tools at hand, organizations can amplify these stories and reach a broader audience through cross-platform content.

#### Tactics for Effective Digital Storytelling:



**Highlight personal testimonials.** Capture and share personal stories that underscore the impact of your advocacy work. Videos, quotes and case studies can be shared across digital platforms to reach a wide audience.



**Engage through live content.** Host virtual events, such as on Facebook Live or Instagram Q&As, with people who have firsthand experience with the issue. This helps to humanize the cause and creates an interactive space for discussion.



**Utilize user-generated content.** Encourage followers to share their own stories or reasons for supporting your issue. This can create a ripple effect, bringing new voices and faces into the conversation.

# How SE2 Can Help

Navigating advocacy during times of polarization is challenging, but it's also an opportunity to drive unity and action. At SE2, our expertise in behavioral insights, strategic communications and cross-platform engagement can help your organization reach the right audiences in the right way. Let us partner with you to create campaigns that break through the noise, resonate with diverse audiences, and drive lasting impact on critical issues.

## Want to Learn More? Contact Us:

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