

It seems that every day there is a new digital platform for connecting with others.

These platforms introduce ever-evolving methods of sharing our thoughts and experiences and, when utilized properly, can be an extremely effective way of advocating for policy change. Because digital platforms have the potential to reach many people with relatively low effort, they can be a good option if you are trying to produce grassroots support for your cause. Additionally, since many digital platforms are so widely used, it's important that your voice is present among all of the others.

Let's look at some of the different forms of digital advocacy!

Digital Action Alerts

"Digital Action Alerts" are calls to action sent directly to the inboxes of constituents. They can be used most effectively to mobilize fellow advocates to take a specific action to influence a certain policy. Digital action alerts should be concise (about 200–250 words) and they should make it abundantly clear to recipients what it is you want them to do.

Steps to follow when constructing a digital action alert:

1. Include the name of the bill you are advocating for (or against) in the first sentence of the action alert.
2. State your specific call to action (contact a representative, etc.)
3. Follow with a brief explanation of why your issue of focus requires urgent action, including:
 - Consequences (positive or negative) of this bill passing
 - Consequences (positive or negative) of this bill not passing
 - Why the representative should care about this issue
 - Final statement on why you do/don't support this bill

TIPS:

- Consider working with other organizations when crafting your Digital Action Alert. A coalition with reputable partners will demonstrate a unified message and expand the reach of your call to action.
- Ensure recipients can easily access any forms you want them to fill out after reading your alert. The less the reader is redirected, the more likely it is that they will answer your call to action.
- It is also helpful to include a pre-drafted message for people to use. This makes it extremely easy for them to take action.
- [Here](#) is an example of a SIECUS Digital Action Alert for your reference.

4. Repeat your specific call to action.
5. Thank the reader for their time in advance of taking action.

Social Media

Billions of people have social media accounts, and many of them view these accounts every single day. Social media can therefore provide you the opportunity to reach many people very quickly.

Social media can be used for a variety of purposes: to inform on the need for policy change, to call followers to take action for/against a specific policy, to update followers on a meeting with a representative, and much more. Your specific intentions and desired audience might influence the social media platform you choose to utilize.

It's important when using social media to be intentional with the information you share. By positioning yourself as a voice for a cause, you are taking on the responsibility of sharing accurate information that uplifts the voices of those you are advocating for.

Effectively using social media to advocate for policy change:

Social media can serve a variety of purposes for advocates. You may want to use your platform to inform people about events, such as a rally on the Capitol steps, or you may want to direct people to a Digital Action Alert depending on your identified goals. Reflecting on your (or your organization's) call to action will help you determine how to approach social media and identify what kind of information you want to prioritize.

Activism and advocacy efforts are most often seen on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Different social media platforms have different features that, when used effectively, can aid your effort to spread the word or organize with fellow advocates. For example, hashtags on both Twitter and Instagram can be used to start or contribute to movements on these platforms. You may choose to create your own unique hashtag, but there are benefits to using one that already exists. Using an existing hashtag can associate you with other movements or causes similar to your own and can capture the attention of users who follow those topics. Examples of existing sex ed hashtags include:

- Sex education: *#SexEd #RealSexEd #SexEducation*
- Supporting pregnant and parenting teens: *#NoTeenShame*
- Supporting funding for sex education: *#EvidenceOverIdeology #NayToSRA*
- Birth Control: *#ThxBC #BirthControlHelpedMe*
- Consent Education: *#TeachThem*

Connect to others and form coalitions:

Social media is an excellent way to find other people with similar interests—and this includes advocacy efforts! When used effectively, social media can be a great place to announce events, form relationships, and bring you closer to your goals. Hosting events like Q&As or live chats on social media can help make people feel like they are a part of something without worrying about barriers to involvement posed by in-person gatherings.

Gaining a social media following:

Building an online community takes some effort! More followers can mean greater support in your advocacy efforts. Here are a few tips for gaining a following on social media:

1. Engage with other users.
 - To expand your platform, your social media activity will need to go beyond making your own informational posts every now and then.
 - Easy ways to engage with other users includes: following accounts with similar goals/messages, sharing posts from other accounts, and responding to comments.

TIPS:

If you are using social media to update followers on a meeting with a representative, consider these tips:

- Share how the meeting with the elected official went.
- Keep posts positive or neutral in tone.
- Use the elected official's name in your post (and tag them if they have an account on that platform—make sure it is their official social media account and not their campaign account!)
- Request permission before sharing any photos of other people.
- Include a relevant hashtag.

2. Post frequently.

- You will want to post frequently enough where your followers can rely on your updates or commentary (depending on your platform’s purpose), but you are not flooding their feeds with information.
- Most popular platforms have added different methods for posting on your account. For example, Instagram offers the option to add a temporary (24 hour) post to your story, rather than a permanent one on your page. Stories can be a great way to increase your engagement (sharing posts for other users/reminding followers of event dates/etc.) without overpopulating your followers’ feeds. Stories can be saved to a “highlight” which will permanently be featured on your Instagram profile. This is a good way to feature an event, project, or other item your organization would like to show off.

Social Media Campaigns

Social media campaigns—or movements—use digital platforms to organize and advocate for a collective goal. They often use hashtags as a means of bringing together contributions to the movement. Social media campaigns may be used to raise awareness of an issue, advocate for a particular policy change, share personal experiences, spread critical information, or all of the above.

When leading a social media campaign, consider:

1. What are you advocating for?
 - The answer to this question may determine the content you want to prioritize in your posts. For example, if your ultimate goal is a specific policy change, you will want to share information and stories that convince followers of its necessity.
2. Whose support do you need?
 - Local? National? Identifying your target audience will help you determine how to approach your campaign and more effectively gather support.
3. What is the call to action?
 - You will want to ensure that your posts make it clear to followers what it is you are advocating for and how they can contribute to the cause.

EXAMPLE:

[Here](#) is an example of a sex education social media campaign.

Meet the Strengths of Different Social Media Platforms

In addition to considering hashtags and the types of posts you may want to share, different social media platforms have different strengths you should consider when planning social media campaigns.

Twitter

Twitter’s fast-paced nature makes the platform ideal for short, to the point messages. This platform works well if you want to post about your campaign goals, uplift messages from other accounts through retweets, reach your decision makers in a way that allows for public engagement from multiple users, or host a “tweet storm”. Tweet storms are a scheduled period of time in which several twitter accounts tweet at the same time about a single issue or event and use the same hashtags so the tweets can be identified as part of the same social media campaign. This allows for increased visibility about your message across several Twitter accounts.



Instagram

Instagram's platform, based on visual images that have an accompanying message, is ideal for sharing graphics and short messages about your campaign or issue. You may want to create a 3–5 image graphic explaining why your issue is important and share it on your account. You can also follow peers, community members, decision makers, or popular figures to draw further attention to your account and issue. Through Instagram, you may also post graphics that contain information about in-person or virtual events you are hosting. Sharing particularly engaging images and infographics encourages users to share the post in their story and spread awareness about your account and campaign.

Similar to Twitter, you may coordinate to post the same image or message with several other accounts to gain visibility about your campaign and goals.

Facebook

Facebook's broad popularity makes the platform great for reaching audiences of all ages. Through Facebook, you can share longer posts with detailed messages about your campaign and issue. Having a visual aid attached to the message often makes the post more engaging. The Facebook Live feature also allows you to use the platform to schedule events, stream live videos or webinars directly to your followers, or share posts of users who have similar messaging or advocacy goals.

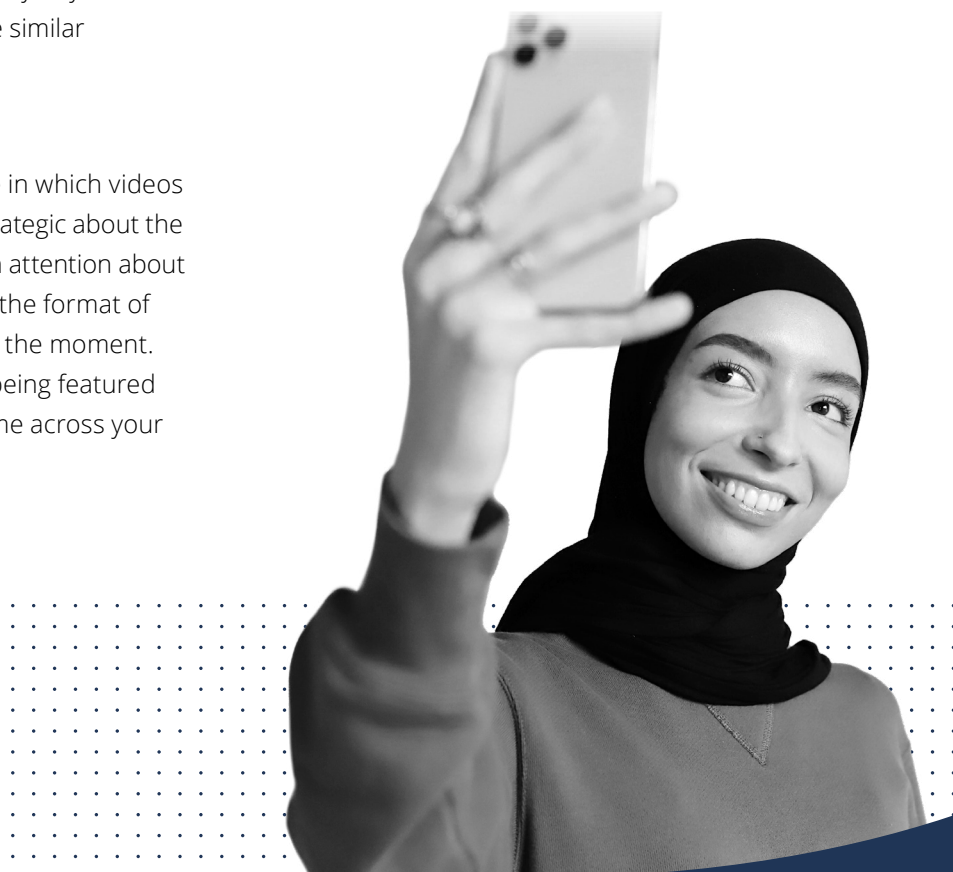
TikTok

TikTok videos are appealing due to the ease in which videos attract viral attention, but you have to be strategic about the way in which you're creating content. To gain attention about your issue or campaign, consider following the format of popular trends and hashtags being used at the moment. This increases the likelihood of your video being featured on the "For You" page where users may come across your video and account.

Digital Press Releases

Consider a press release about your campaign to pitch to local press and media to gain further attention from community members and additional state residents. A press release should be written in third person, read like a news piece, and include all relevant contact information. The goal of the release is to pique the interest of the media or journalist so they can create a news piece to publish for the general public. The press release should elaborate on:

1. What your campaign is about and why the press should care
 - Explain briefly what your campaign is attempting to highlight and a few strong quotes from fellow advocates.
 - Consider including quotes from experts, references to evidence that supports your cause, and/or other resources that support your message.
2. How someone can participate in the campaign
 - Clearly state your call to action and provide any links or resources that would make it easier for readers to join the movement.



Emailing Representatives

Contacting your representatives directly can be an effective way to enact policy change. You can find a sample letter [here](#).

When constructing an email to your representative:

1. Include the bill number of concern in your opening sentence.
2. Keep it concise.
 - Briefly introduce yourself and make it clear you are a constituent. Representatives want to hear from people who live in their district.
 - State why you support/oppose the bill.
 - State why the representative should care about this issue.
 - Tell the representative exactly how you want them to vote on the issue.
3. Say everything in the body of the email—don't include attachments.
4. Don't copy multiple representatives on the email or send a mass email. Instead, send individual emails directly to targeted representatives. ■

This handout is an excerpt from our Community Action Toolkit. For more information on creating change in your community, get the full guide!

[Download the Toolkit →](#)

