

# USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY

Social media can be a powerful tool for advocacy because of the potential to reach a large, diverse audience. It provides an opportunity to be innovative and creative with your communications and engage in a dialogue with others, rather than just sharing information. Following are a few tips for engaging audiences in advocacy and action through social media.



## ► *Know your audience*

In order to best engage others in advocacy through social media, it is important to first identify your audience. You may have messages that will be better suited to a broader group of people and others that are more targeted based on the particular goals, the call to action, or the platform you're using. Consider what a message or ask might look like for the public, colleagues, neighbors, close friends or family, or even an elected official.

## ► *Determine the actions you want your audience to take*

Based on your goals, platform, and audience, determine what your call to action will be: what are you asking people to actually *do*? It can be anything from sharing a post, visiting a website, responding to a question you pose, writing to or calling a legislator, attending an advocacy event, canvassing for a candidate, protesting, boycotting, or donating money.

## ► *Use the appropriate platforms*

Know your platforms! There are new social media platforms being developed all the time, and some of have had more staying power than others. Determine which platforms will be most effective for your particular advocacy goals. Who are you more likely to reach on Facebook versus Twitter? When are Instagram, YouTube, or Periscope appropriate? Which platform is more likely to yield a response to a more involved call to action? How can you best reach elected officials and other public figures on social media?

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### ► *Engage in a dialogue*

Try to engage your followers in a dialogue rather than simply sharing information. For example, pose a question, ask people about their experiences with an issue, what they're doing to change it, and how others can be part of the solution. Activate people's interest in being part of the larger social fabric on and offline. Social media, especially Twitter, is also one way to engage elected officials in a public conversation.

### QUICK TIPS

- Be genuine and accurate with your message, especially in the age of "fake news."
- Get to the point. Short posts from a few words up to a short sentence generate the most engagement, so keep your posts brief when possible.
- A picture is worth a thousand words. Visuals are by far the most engaging content on social media, and for some platforms, the main content. Avoid text-only posts. (Explore resources like Canva for templates and ideas.)
- Sharing is caring. Encourage followers to share and/or comment on your posts. This will allow your message to reach a wider audience.
- Use relevant hashtags. This will also help your message have a wider reach.
- Use platforms to engage in dialogue with followers, asking them to comment on or respond to specific questions or issues.
- Use pop culture or funny current events references when appropriate, or things tied to specific holidays.
- Post advocacy updates and show your encouragement to keep followers engaged, especially after a big ask or call to action.

### ► *WHAT NOT TO POST*

- Be mindful of anything that could reinforce prejudice on the basis of race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, or other identities.
- Be intentional and consider whether posting something particularly provocative or not from a legitimate source will serve your advocacy goals.
- Determine when engaging in a conversation on social media is no longer productive.