

An environmental organization advocating for the protection of a resource—like air, water, forests, or biodiversity—must overcome several key challenges to gain public support, influence policy, and drive meaningful change. Using examples like the **Children’s Atmospheric Trust cases** (such as *Our Children’s Trust*) provides insight into the complex hurdles organizations face, especially when pursuing legal, political, and social change.

Key Challenges to Overcome

1. Legal and Policy Barriers

- **Complex Litigation:** Legal battles, such as suing the government over climate inaction, are time-consuming, costly, and uncertain. Courts can dismiss cases for lack of standing or claim they are "political questions" outside judicial authority.
- **Weak Environmental Laws:** Existing laws may not be strong or specific enough to mandate government action. Organizations must navigate legal frameworks that might prioritize economic growth over environmental protections.
- **Policy Resistance:** Even when legal victories occur, executive and legislative branches may resist enforcement or delay action, especially under political pressure from industries that oppose environmental regulations.

2. Financial Limitations

- **Fundraising Challenges:** Legal campaigns and large-scale advocacy require significant funding, which can be difficult to secure. Organizations like *Our Children’s Trust* rely on donations, grants, and partnerships but must constantly compete for limited resources.
- **Donor Fatigue:** Sustaining long-term donor interest is tough, especially for complex, slow-moving legal battles where visible progress is gradual.
- **Resource Allocation:** Balancing limited funds between legal fees, advocacy, public education, and operational costs presents constant challenges.

3. Public Resistance and Misinformation

- **Overcoming Climate Denial:** Skepticism or outright denial of climate change is still prevalent. Organizations must invest in public education to counter misinformation and build awareness.
- **Political Polarization:** Environmental protection is often politicized, making it difficult to gain bipartisan support for action.
- **Economic Concerns:** People may resist climate action if they perceive it as a threat to jobs, industries, or economic stability.

4. Media Influence and Outreach

- **Framing the Narrative:** Organizations must craft compelling, relatable stories that resonate with the public and influence policy debates. The way climate change is framed (crisis vs. opportunity) affects public support.
- **Media Competition:** Advocacy messages must compete with the constant flow of media content, making it challenging to maintain visibility and urgency.

5. Mobilizing Grassroots Support

- **Engagement Fatigue:** Continuous calls to action can lead to community burnout. Maintaining sustained, meaningful engagement requires creativity and constant innovation.
 - **Cross-Community Alliances:** Building broad coalitions that cross racial, economic, and geographic lines is essential but complex. Different communities may have different environmental concerns and priorities.
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Strategies to Overcome These Challenges

1. Legal Strategy Diversification

- Pursue both **litigation and policy advocacy** to maximize impact. This includes challenging harmful policies in court while lobbying for new, stronger environmental protections.
- Leverage **scientific data** and human rights arguments to strengthen legal cases.

2. Fundraising and Partnership Building

- Cultivate relationships with **philanthropic organizations**, private sector allies, and international bodies.
- Create **impact-driven fundraising campaigns** that show how donations lead to measurable environmental progress.

3. Public Engagement and Education

- Use **storytelling techniques** to humanize climate issues, showing how communities are affected today.
- Invest in **youth-led initiatives** to engage the next generation and draw media attention, as youth activism has proven to be a strong driver of change.

4. Media and Messaging Innovations

- Craft compelling campaigns with **visual content, personal stories, and data visualization** to simplify complex environmental issues.
- Work with influencers, scientists, and local leaders to reach broader audiences.

5. Building Alliances and Diverse Coalitions

- Partner with organizations that represent **vulnerable or marginalized communities**, ensuring advocacy reflects their unique environmental concerns.
 - Build platforms that encourage **cross-sector collaboration**, including scientists, lawyers, educators, and artists.
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Moving Toward Impactful Outcomes

Organizations like *Our Children's Trust* exemplify how environmental advocacy requires **multi-pronged strategies** that combine legal, social, and financial efforts. To be effective, they must think beyond the courtroom—raising awareness, building community coalitions, and sustaining long-term financial support. The real challenge is in **transforming legal arguments into broader cultural movements**, fostering not just policy change but public mindset shifts.

Would you like to focus on specific strategies for how an environmental organization could strengthen its advocacy, or explore how to design a campaign to overcome public resistance?

Foreshadow how these are all issues that attack us psychologically. And tie it to all the problems the rest of the class gives. Its better to face these things than not to and try to find research that supports this. Give support and different ways to work on being emotionally and psychologically prepared for the issue.

Where do we get the energy and motivation to fight against all of these issues? Climate change, toxics, wild fires, energy, lead .

Wrap up the project basically

Who can we zoom in to speak on

Catherine HayHoe

BU Librarians,

- Psychoanalytic
- Psychology
- Behavioral economics
- Sociological psychology
- Motivational analysis

Reframing things from enforcing, in the sense that we're saying why don't people know and why are you not doing anything in an aggressive way to seeing how we can help

So that we can help people understand why it's important to take action on climate change.

What motivates people?

DON'T POSE IT AS CONFRONTATIONAL, REPHRASE IT AS US GOING THROUGH SOMETHING TOGETHER

Jeremie Nsubayi

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