

Sustainability and Government Affairs: Best Practices for Collaboration

DC Climate Week: Environmental Defense Fund and Pure Strategies Roundtable
U.S. Corporate Leaders | Climate & Sustainability Strategy

POLICY ALIGNMENT

Align lobbying with climate goals to speak with one voice.

CEO-Driven or Board-Driven Mandate

Empower sustainability and government affairs teams with clear, top-down direction to align on climate policy.

- **Example:** WRI's "[Seven Barriers](#)" report highlights the need for executive mandates to overcome internal misalignment.
- **Example:** [Trane Technologies](#) has a clear mandate from their Chair and CEO on the importance of sustainability.

Agree on Issue Legitimacy

When considering which sustainability issues to engage on, sustainability and government affairs should first align that the issue is legitimate for the company to address (i.e., there is an authentic basis for engagement), which helps set the stage for effective collaboration.

- **Example:** The Erb Institute's [Principles for Corporate Political Responsibility](#) begin with legitimacy, encouraging companies to articulate an authentic basis for engaging (e.g., contribution, commitments, or consequence).

Audit & Align Trade Associations

Conduct regular reviews of trade group memberships to ensure alignment with science-based climate goals.

- **Example:** [Unilever](#) pledged to exit associations obstructing climate policy; [Microsoft](#) published a trade group alignment scorecard.

Use Proven Frameworks

Apply the "Assess-Govern-Act" model from Ceres to evaluate and align lobbying with climate science.

- **Example:** Ceres [Blueprint](#) guides companies to audit, govern, and act on lobbying alignment.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Bridge silos with shared structures, goals, and accountability.

Cross-Functional Steering Committees

Create joint sustainability-government affairs councils to coordinate strategy and decision-making. Consider the specific barriers to progress both teams face, whether they are political, regulatory, or external. Devise shared strategies for overcoming each. Frequently re-evaluate what policies are external threats to the business versus accelerators for climate progress.

- **Example:** Nestlé's ESG Council includes legal and communications leaders overseeing climate advocacy.
- **Example:** Trane Technologies' CEO chairs a steering committee meeting every quarter. The group discusses existing and emerging policy trends, assesses their importance based on the business, and determines areas of action.

Shared KPIs & Incentives

Embed climate goals into financial and operational performance metrics across departments. Map core business issues (e.g., trade and tax) to climate goals (e.g. how do tariffs impact where we source and, in turn, our Scope 3 emissions).

- **Insight:** The Conference Board's 2025 survey found KPI alignment and steering committees are top governance levers.

Close Knowledge Gaps

Cross-train teams on climate science and policy processes to foster mutual understanding and collaboration. Help the Sustainability team understand what is politically viable and what pathways to interact with the government exist based on the team's capabilities; help the Government Affairs team understand what issues are material to the business and what the specific policies are needed to accelerate towards net-zero or future-looking goals.

- **Insight:** WRI identifies knowledge gaps as a key barrier to effective climate advocacy.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Present a unified, transparent voice to external audiences.

Joint Stakeholder Mapping & Engagement

Collaborate on identifying and engaging key external stakeholders (e.g., regulators, NGOs, investors).

- **Example:** Dow's Blueprint Thinking Toolkit (with Keystone Policy Center) guides teams through stakeholder mapping and external collaboration.

Transparent Climate Advocacy

Publicly disclose climate lobbying positions and trade group affiliations to build trust.

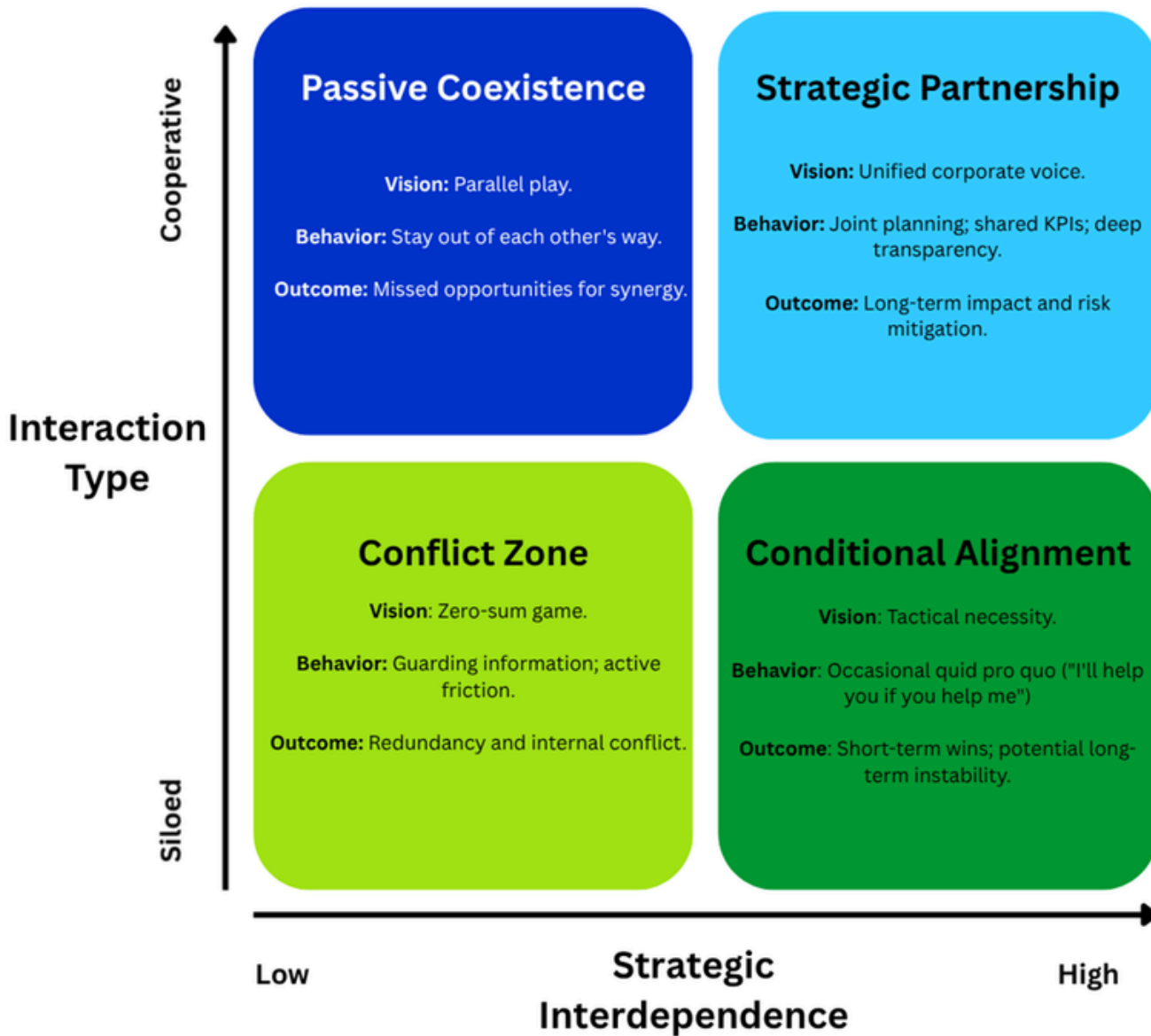
- **Example:** Nestlé and Unilever publish annual Climate Policy Engagement Reports with trade group alignment reviews.

Lead or Join Pro-Climate Coalitions

Align internal strategy to confidently participate in collective advocacy for climate policy.

- **Example:** Unilever and Microsoft co-signed letters supporting clean energy and climate disclosure legislation.

Sustainability- Government Affairs Matrix



EDF RELEVANT RESOURCES

- EDF resource: [Empowering CrossFunctional Teams for Corporate Climate Action](#)
- EDF resource: [Disclose Policy Priorities](#)
- EDF resource: [Assess Your Trade Association](#)
- EDF resource: [Advocate for Public Policy](#)
- EDF resource: [Corporate Climate Action Essentials: An Introductory Series](#) (e-learning course)

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

- WRI: [“Seven Barriers to U.S. Business Leadership on Climate Policy”](#)
- Trane Technologies: [Growth through Sustainability Report](#)
- The Erb Institute: [The Erb Principles for Corporate Political Responsibility](#)
- Trellis: [Unilever pushes trade associations to speak up on climate policy](#)
- Microsoft: [Sustainability Policy Alignment](#)
- Ceres: [“Blueprint for Responsible Policy Engagement on Climate Change”](#)
- Nestlé: [Climate Policy Engagement at Nestlé](#)
- Dow + Keystone: [“Blueprint Thinking Collaborative Toolkit”](#)
- The Conference Board: [“Best Practices for Corporate Sustainability Teams”](#)
- Amazon News: [Unilever, Microsoft, and Brooks are among 13 additional companies to join The Climate Pledge](#)

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