

Engaging Your Local League Board

Growing the League’s membership and leadership is not a one-person job. The entire local League needs to view membership and leadership development as a top priority in order for success to be achieved and sustained.

The best way to ensure that membership and leadership development becomes a top priority for your local League is to engage your Board in making intentional and routine use of membership and leadership best practices.

Your local League Board should be engaged from the very beginning of your League’s participation in the Membership and Leadership Development program. Below are a few ways to get started in engaging your Board:

- **Your Board should appoint a primary coordinator for the membership/leadership growth program, and establish a team or committee to implement the best practices.** This team or committee will attend the face-to-face, instate training and work with a state coach. Not only is a team structure a great “training ground” for emerging leaders, but it will help to ensure that Board members maintain a reasonable workload. Remember that this program is not a “one-woman/man show” and will best succeed if a team works together to implement the best practices with the Board. Leagues are encouraged to include off-board League leaders on this team. And, the team can include individuals who work on other League activities, such as voters service and advocacy, to help make sure that membership and leadership growth is included in all activities. Review the **Roles and Expectations** outlined in Chapter 1 to ensure that everyone involved – the coordinator, team members and members of the local Board – understands their respective roles.
- **Your Board should create a calendar of activities for the coming year.** The League's coordinator (and her/his team) will need to know about the League’s events so that they can assess the opportunities for the membership/leadership growth best practices to be incorporated. In advance of setting up your calendar, you may want to complete the **Asset Survey** found later in the “Tools You Can Use” chapter and review the successful program ideas (tried and tested by other Leagues) in **Chapter 4**.
- **Communication is a cornerstone of the MLD program. Local membership/leadership growth teams are encouraged to get to know their state coach as soon as possible and should keep the local League Board up-to-date on their discussions with the state coach.** It is vitally important that your state coaches hear from you – about successes and challenges, progress and concerns. They are your first “go-to” contacts for any questions you have. The state coaches will be in regular





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communication with the national coaches (also known as the Ruth S. Shur Fellows), who are supported by LWVUS Board and staff members. It also is vitally important that the entire Board is kept informed about the best practices – How are they working? What are other opportunities to pursue? Have a standing item on the board meeting agenda: “Membership/Leadership Growth Update.”

The membership/leadership growth program is meant to complement and enhance existing League program, plans and ideas. Let your Board know that it is not designed to “push” Leagues into taking on large new projects.

- **Encourage your Board to ask people to join.** It is critical for all members (especially members of the Board) to develop a ease with “the personal ask.” This is a simple but highly effective way to be sure that your League gains new members. Have your Board members lead by example by having them start to practice and model this technique as soon as possible. Ask your Board for some time at an upcoming meeting and do the **Making the Ask exercise** (available in Chapter 10 -“Tools You Can Use” section under “Practice Your Own League Story”) together. You may want to incorporate other exercises from the regional or instate training into other Board meetings throughout the year to keep momentum for and commitment to the program strong.
- **Ask your Board to begin soliciting stories from members.** There is no better way to explain the benefits of membership than to share stories from current LWV members. The LWV Storybank houses wonderful stories of success and personal growth from League members across the country and is a great resource for state and local Leagues. Stories should highlight the value of membership in the League, particularly personal stories of achievement and leadership (see **Chapter 5**). Stories can be submitted to the LWV Storybank through www.lwv.org. All stories submitted to the LWV Storybank are forwarded to the state and local League presidents so all levels of League have access to and can promote their members' stories. And, of course, Board members should submit their own stories as well!
- **Start doing the “Little Things” to model the best practices.** Give every member of the Board a sense of ownership and partnership in this organizational building effort. Share some of the ideas from the “**Little Things**” document later in this chapter and help them get started in implementing them. Give every Board member a League pin and supply of membership brochures! These essential recruitment tools are available for free from LWVUS.



Check out the “Tools You Can Use” section at the back of the manual for a Local League assessment worksheet – “Asset Form” — to help you focus your efforts and determine your League’s strengths and areas needing improvement!