

8. The LWV “Making Democracy Work” Award: Work plan

Establish an Award Committee and Timeline

Leagues should form a committee and select a group of League members to sit on that committee. They can be emerging leaders, a new member, or even past board members. Committee members will be responsible for drafting the specific award application guidelines and reviewing the applications. The committee will also be responsible for selecting the award winner. To preserve the League’s ownership of the award, we recommend that the award committee members should all be existing League members.



A recommended timeline of activities which will surround the Making Democracy Work Award application process and event is included.

Nomination Process

Each League will need to actively solicit nominations for this award from non-members within the community. Opportunities for soliciting nominations include:

- Announcing the call for nominations in a press release to the local media – newspaper, TV and radio;
- Announcing the award in League publications (and encouraging members to do outreach to non-members);
- Posting the call for nominations on your League’s web site;
- Reaching out to organizations in your community who share similar missions/values as the League and encouraging them to nominate candidates;
- Promoting the award through personal contacts; and
- Request that area employers, libraries and community centers post a request for nominations at their place of business.

A sample press release calling for nominations, a sample letter to community leaders, and PSA script are included in this manual.

Sample Guidelines and Application Questions

The award is a way to generate visibility for LWV. As such, it is important that it appeal to your League’s target recruitment audience. These sample guidelines and questions were written with LWVUS’ recommended target audience (women between the ages of 50 and 65) in mind. They can and should be amended to reflect the needs of your League.

The general guidelines of the award should state that any woman between the ages of 50 and 65 who is/has been part of the work force and contributed to the community in a meaningful way is eligible for the award.

Below you will find sample application questions you may wish to use when drafting your MDW Award application.

Screener Questions

These questions are simply designed to collect the information necessary to determine an applicant's/nominee's eligibility:

- 1) Name:
- 2) DOB/Year of birth:
- 3) Address:
- 4) Profession (current/previous):
- 5) How long has this individual been active in her community?

About the Nominee

Applications can be completed by the nominee or by another nominator.

- 1) In one sentence, tell us why you would like to be considered for the Making Democracy Work award or why you are nominating an individual for the award.
- 2) The League of Women Voters celebrates community leaders: individuals who have envisioned a way to improve the community and have mobilized others to work with them to effect a change that has benefited the broader community.

How do you/does the nominee exemplify leadership?

- 3) Please describe in detail what impact this individual has had on our community? What population/organization/event has benefited from her efforts?
- 4) How does this individual stand out from other leaders in the community?
- 5) Do you/does the nominee exhibit leadership qualities in her career, at home, and in her community? Please provide examples of all three.

Nominators Only

- 6) What is your relationship to/with the nominee?

Community Outreach - Pre-selection

It is vitally important that Leagues do community outreach. Incorporating the membership messages in all outreach materials and activities around the MDW award is critical to the success of this venture.

There are press opportunities at every stage of the program. This is especially true as you solicit nominations. (State Leagues can work with local Leagues to maximize media coverage.)

Outreach efforts to members of the press should include specific pitches to reporters covering community affairs. Press releases should go out to the complete media list that each League has already developed through the asset survey and Leagues should follow up with pitch calls to the major media outlets in the area.

Besides engaging the media, Leagues should explore other types of community outreach. This is a great way to involve allied organizations—ask them who they would nominate. This outreach will not only assure that there is a vibrant pool of nominees but it will introduce League to more potential members. Even if individuals do not apply for the award, they will have a better understanding of the organization and its members. They will understand the value of membership, and when asked, hopefully will join the organization.

Presenting the Award

As was noted earlier, the MDW Award can be presented in a variety of settings -- at a true “event” (e.g. luncheon) or by creating a more intimate “photo-op” (e.g. presentation of the award by a local elected official). Regardless, Leagues should publicize the fact that an award winner has been selected. Whatever is done, this is a media opportunity.

If Leagues do choose to host an event, it is recommended that the presentation of the award be scheduled to take place at an event hosted by the LWV that provides a forum for highlighting the exceptional work accomplished by both the League and the winner of the MDW Award. Because this event is intended to highlight the value of membership in the League, we do not recommend partnering or co-sponsoring the event with another organization.



The recipient of the award will be invited to speak at the event and will receive both the public acknowledgement of her work, an award/certificate of some kind and an invitation to work with the League for one year to leverage their work being accomplished in the community.

To improve media outreach on the local level, Leagues should conduct work with the award winner to schedule and prepare for media interviews by drafting sample talking points, which should include general League information, and allowing the winner to ask any questions that she may have in advance. In addition, the League should consider inviting broadcast media to the award event/presentation and ensuring that the venue can support video and audio equipment.

Alternatively, if Leagues choose to present the MDW award privately, we recommend promoting the award to the local media via a press release. Leagues should provide the press with information about the award and the recipient, and make follow-up calls to selected contacts. The recipient of the award would serve as the spokesperson, in addition to League spokespeople, and both can be pitched to the media for potential interviews.

As an additional method to get visibility, the League also may consider having a local governing body (e.g. city council) issue a proclamation about the award. Sample proclamations are available in this section.

Post-presentation follow up

After the award is presented, there are still opportunities for your League to do outreach. Most immediately, Leagues are encouraged to follow up with the award nominees and potentially their nominators. This follow up should restate the values of League membership and include an invitation to join LWV.

League also may want to consider sending a similar letter that announces the winner to the leaders of community organizations that were contacted during the nominating process. Ask them if they want to join LWV to come work along side your newest League member/leader, your awardee. Sample letters are provided.

If the awardee is part of another organization, ask about a “second” presentation at their home organization. Again, this gets the League before a new pool of potential new members.

Leagues also will need to do follow up with their awardee. League leaders will want to establish some ways that you can work together over the year. As these efforts unfold, you may wish to reengage the local media to let them see how this relationship is blooming, what work the awardee is undertaking, your joint successes, etc.

Timeline of Activities

This is a *suggested* timeline, and should be adjusted based on each local League’s current calendar, as well as other external factors.

Questions? Need additional resources about the award? Contact you coach or LWVUS.

Task	Recommended Timing
Select members who will sit on the Making Democracy Work Award application, drafting and review committee.	<u>At least</u> three months prior (earlier if possible)
Draft application for Making Democracy Work Award.	<u>At least</u> three months prior (earlier if possible)
Issue Making Democracy Work Award application to League members (post on the Web site) and distribute to allied organizations, local businesses and post around the community.	Three months prior
Draft and issue a media release announcing the award and call for applications to members of the local press.	Three months prior
Choose and secure location of event (community center, steps of city hall, private venue, etc.).	At least two months prior
Application Deadline.	Two to one month prior
Select Finalists.	One month prior
Select and inform the winner.	One month prior
Draft and produce award ceremony materials (program, finalist profiles, and winner profile).	Month of event
Work with the winner to prep for, conduct and set up press. Interviews after the award.	Weeks before event
Draft and issue media alert about the event and invite local members of the press.	Week of event
Conduct media outreach around the event and schedule interviews with the award winner.	Week of event
Host event and present award.	
Follow up with membership invitations to all nominees and finalists.	Post event
Follow up with award winner to establish ways to work together over the year.	Post event
Conduct ongoing outreach to local media to highlight winner of the award and the League.	Post event