

Direct Outreach

Direct outreach is communicating a message to an individual or a group of people. For the League, it is communicating a membership message to the League's target audience on a one-to-one basis.

Put simply, direct outreach is ASKING potential League members to join!

To be welcoming to potential new members, every League member must act as a *membership ambassador* for the League, using straightforward language to describe what we do and why we love doing it. It's not about "dumbing down" the explanation of our work—it's about opening it up so that others can understand it, find it relevant and interesting, and . . . join us!

We have heard consistently from Leagues that while making The ASK may be difficult at first, it becomes easier with practice. More importantly, Leagues have also reported that **IT WORKS!** It sounds very simplistic, but we need to ASK people to join to bring in new members.

Remember that every activity is a membership growth opportunity. Local Leagues should constantly strive to include the membership message and an invitation to join in everything the League does and says. All committees and members should look at their activities through an "ongoing outreach" lens and apply the message. No opportunity is too large or too small.

As simple as it sounds, ASKING is THE most effective recruitment tool.

Ways to ASK individuals to join:

- Ask your neighbor, your friends, members of other clubs or organizations to which you belong.
- Carry a membership brochure or flyer with you at all times. Give it to the next person you meet that is interested in joining the League. Purse-sized membership brochure folders and membership brochures are available from the LWVUS store at www.lwv.org and from LWVUS MLD program support staff.
- Use a sign-in sheet at all League events to collect the names and contact information at of participants. Follow up with non-members a few days later either with a phone call, e-mail, or letter and ASK them to join.



Check out the "Tools You Can Use" section at the back of the manual for a sign-in sheet template your League can use!



Chapter 3: Outreach Best Practices

- Insert a membership message and invitation to join into remarks for the League's speakers' bureau or if a League representative is participating in a panel discussion or their community event.
- Insert a membership message into press releases and media advisories.
- Include an invitation to join in statements and quotes given to the media or in an op-ed or letter to the editor.
- Deliver a membership message from the podium at League debates, forums, or events.
- Place a membership ad in all of your League publications including study reports, Voters Guides, and newsletters. A membership ad can be placed in your Education Fund publications if purchased with your League's general funds.
- Update your League website to include the membership message and an ASK to join. (Tips on how to update local League websites are included in this chapter.)
- Go to Chapter 5 to learn how to use your personal League story to make an even more effective ASK to join!
- The “Tools You Can Use” section at the back of the manual also has activities to help League members practice ASKING people to join, as well as a Sign-In Sheet you can print and use at upcoming League events to collect participant information and follow-up with them.

Direct outreach isn't just for recruiting members!

The same skills honed by practicing asking individuals to join can be applied to asking members to take on leadership roles and donors to support LWV!

Here's a helpful acronym to help you remember how to make the ASK.

A: Always be prepared! Keep brochures in your purse or briefcase and always be ready to tell someone about the League and how they can join.

S: Show your enthusiasm! Let the other person know why you love the League and let them see how excited being a League member makes you. Enthusiasm is catching!

K: Know your audience. Remember to use the phrase “join the League” often and speak to your audience. Let individuals know how they can make an impact in their community by being a part of the League. Let them know about the opportunities available to them as a member of the League.

(Acronym courtesy of Kay Brodbeck, MS State Coach)