

Allied Outreach

Many organizations and groups in your community may work on issues and activities that are similar to or related to those of the League. These organizations can offer opportunities for local Leagues to reach potential new members. It's important that local Leagues consider how to best connect and work with other organizations that have the attention of individuals who would be great League members!

While much of this might seem like common sense, we can't stress enough the importance of being proactive and consistent.

Even if you have an existing relationship with an organization, look to see if there are new ways to partner with them or to promote our core membership messages with them. If an organization has not been open to partnerships before, think of new ways to approach them. *Be consistent and persistent, and ask for opportunities.* You know better than anyone that League has a lot to offer!

Allied outreach is simply establishing and growing these connections with other organizations. While building a relationship with an allied group takes some effort, Leagues have found this to be an effective way to gain visibility and introduce the value of League membership to a large pool of prospective members. It also can be a great way to increase the efficacy of our programmatic work by strengthening our breadth of influence and by sharing the costs/burdens of the workload to achieving our programmatic goals.

When working with allied groups:

- **Be persistent.** Just as League leaders are busy, so are the leaders of other community groups. Once you have identified a group that your League wants to work with, follow up with them – and expect that it may take more than one contact to establish the kind of relationship that you would like.
- **Be specific.** Know specifically what you hope to achieve or do. Do not vaguely discuss “working together.” Have a concrete proposal in mind when you contact a group. Think about the benefits to them as well as to the League.
- **Be strategic.** Maximize your efforts by prioritizing which organizations and opportunities to pursue. Take into account your target audience and what other groups to which they might belong or associate with.



Research and Identify Targets

Brainstorm with your local League leaders about opportunities that are offered by community organizations and institutions and prioritize which opportunities will be most valuable to the League in its membership recruitment efforts. (Use the Asset Survey in the “Tools You Can Use” chapter to start the discussion with your local Board.)

Sample Allied Outreach Opportunities include:

- Local AARP Chapter Events
- Meetings of Retired Teachers, Librarians, and other retired professionals
- City Council Meeting
- Seasonal Fairs/Festivals
- Chamber of Commerce
- Book Clubs
- University Alumni Event
- Local Business Events and Conferences
- Town Hall Meetings
- Community Fundraisers
- Church Bake Sale
- YWCA Volunteer Events



Leagues may have the opportunity to share information about the value of membership here.

While the sample list contains some of the more obvious groups/opportunities, there are a variety of additional local allies to tap for this effort as well, including local health care associations, academic institutions, local political organizations, and adult education providers and programs. Review the community calendars in local newspapers and local news outlet websites to identify additional opportunities that may exist for the League to connect with potential members. Think about your target audience. And, explore connections that League members may have (e.g., they sit on the board of another organization).

If you don't have relationships with other groups—choose 2 or 3 and start!

We recognize that Leagues may have relationships with many of the organizations listed above, but we urge you to look at these opportunities differently than you may have before – this time, through a membership lens. Interactions with these organizations provide an excellent opportunity for you to directly interact with potential new members.

Look specifically for opportunities to insert membership messages and ask potential members to join the League.

Regardless of which organization or event a League decides to pursue, local coordinators can't wait for opportunities to come to them. Leagues need to identify the specific opportunity for League involvement and ASK for it (e.g. sitting on a panel, displaying a booth at their

convention or conference, sponsoring a table at their annual fundraiser). If the Chamber of Commerce is holding a meeting about revitalizing the downtown area, Leagues should ask to be a part of the panel. A seat on the panel will provide the League with an opportunity to express the contribution of the League to the community and the value of League membership.

Don't forget the *intention* behind your request. You want to partner with another group. On one hand, you want to make sure that the League is visible, recognized, and staying true to its nonpartisanship. On the other hand, you want to make the partnership comfortable and enjoyable for the other organization.

If this is not a League event, do not expect to dictate what will happen. In a partnership, there should be some give-and-take. Listen to what the other organization wants and has planned, and remember that other organizations may have different ideas about how to run a certain event. Leagues must be open to new ideas and the sharing of information in a friendly way in order to create lasting partnerships.

Making Contact

Local Leagues should identify the individual at the organization who can say yes to their request. Schedule a time to connect with the individual by setting up a phone call or meeting to discuss ways in which the League would like to work with the organization.

When speaking with a representative, prepare yourself and *know exactly what you're asking them for*, and be thoughtful about how you present your request.



Check out the "Tools You Can Use" section at the back of the manual for a worksheet to help you and your League evaluate an opportunity for allied outreach!

Are you asking to set up a booth at their regional convention? Or are you calling to see if the League might participate in advancing a shared goal of the two groups by participating in the regional convention? Know this ahead of time.

Much the same way local Leagues hone their membership messages to resonate with a given audience, your communications with allied organizations should be customized according to their interests. Local Leagues should tailor their pitch to the organization by telling them why it is mutually beneficial for them to partner with us.

After you've made initial contact, reach out again to the organization or group via phone, in person, etc., at an appropriate time – about 5 to 7 days. The key to reaching your target audience is developing partnerships with the people and organizations where they get their information.

Fine Tuning the Target Audience

Finally, you've identified the group you are going to reach out to and the opportunity that you would like present to them! You've secured your booth at the convention, seat on the panel, or invitation to an event. Now is the time to remember the membership recruitment best practices,



think about the messaging and develop your key points for communicating with potential new members.

Consider things such as the professional background or interests in key issues, and work to fine-tune your messages and talking points to resonate most directly with the audience that you *know* you'll be speaking to.

Follow-Up

The last thing to do is to make sure that you are maintaining your new relationship with the allied organization. Send thanks to your contact for their assistance and consider and suggest future opportunities to work together!

SUCCESS STORY:

The **LWV of Orange-Durham-Chatham (NC)** celebrated Women's History Month by hosting two separate screenings of *Iron Jawed Angels*, the HBO film that chronicles the struggle of women to secure the right to vote. One screening was held at UNC Chapel Hill and was co-sponsored by the UNC General Alumni Association. The second screening was held in Durham at the North Regional Library and was co-sponsored by the Durham County Library. Their events were well attended and the addition of co-sponsors added an entire new guest list of prospective new members!

Some food for thought. . .



No! The League is different from other organizations and gives members new opportunities they might not find elsewhere. Working with allied organizations also exposes our members to new opportunities and experiences, which will help to further endear them to LWV. By working with other organizations, we expose a pool of busy, engaged individuals (i.e., potential members) to the value of being a League member. And, we all know the wisdom in the old adage, "If you want something done, ask a busy person." In short, building relationships with other organizations is a win-win situation for all involved!