

## Guidance on Engaging the Community May 2016

### APPRECIATIVE ICEBREAKER

Answer the following questions about your League:

- Who engages with your League?
- How do you define engagement?
- Who else could benefit from our work?
- How does your League embody our mission?
- What's the relationship between mission and impact?

### GUIDANCE

This month, we want to go back to MLD basics: outreach. Who do we reach in our community? Who does our work touch? Who else could benefit from our work? Who could we benefit from working *with*?

A prime opportunity is voter registration and engagement. This assistance is especially needed in certain segments of our communities. According to the Voter Participation Center, as of 2012,



- 42 percent of young people between 18 and 29 who are eligible are not registered, representing 31 percent of all unregistered citizens.
- 41 percent of Latinos who are eligible are not registered, representing 16 percent of all unregistered citizens.

What's more, millions of Americans miss voter registration deadlines or do not know they need to update their voter registration when they move, change their name, change parties, etc.

In addition, our changing election systems lead to questions from voters of all backgrounds. Voting law changes will affect how many Americans register and vote this year. As a leading organization not only fighting to make voting more accessible, but also get the word out to our communities about such changes, we have a key role to play in helping voters, especially those in traditionally underrepresented communities, navigate the process.

While these statistics are likely not new information to those of us who are so passionate about League and so committed to its mission, we wanted to raise them in the context of outreach and impact. What is the impact of our current outreach? What other outreach opportunities exist in our community?

These are questions that only individual Leagues, who know their own communities so well, can answer. But, regardless of the answer, it is useful to stop and ask the questions – to think about how we are most effective in doing our work.

### **Who better than the League of Women Voters...**

Engaging our full community has many layers of benefit to our democracy and to ourselves as an organization.

The "greater good" is probably very obvious – we fundamentally believe that a more representative and engaged electorate that includes all viewpoints and

***Outreach ...  
is simply taking the message and mission  
of LWV out to where there are points of  
community engagement. It is  
fundamentally relationship building.***

perspectives will lead to public policies that better reflect the needs of all communities.

For League, this type of outreach can have many benefits:

- **More impact!** We are fulfilling our mission in a tangible way by reaching those who need us most! A recent Independent Sector report estimates the value of volunteer time at \$23.07 per hour (national average). We want to be sure that we putting that precious resource to use in way that is effective and fulfilling.
- **More personal fulfillment.** More important than dollars and cents, individuals want to know that their efforts “matter.” They want to be part of something larger than themselves and to put their talents to use in a meaningful way.
- **More diversity.** New voices and new ideas will be brought to the League.
- **More visibility.** New initiatives mean introducing new individuals to the League and our work. When our work is positive, effective and results-driven, the people of our communities, including local media, will take note.
- **More leadership opportunities.** These efforts could be discrete undertakings that offer great leadership development opportunities to members and volunteers.

### What does this look like?

To reach out to new communities or populations, we use the same outreach best practices that we have been discussing over this past year:

- **Assess the opportunities.** Where are the needs in your community? Where does your League have some connections or ties that can be the start of a relationship? Or, how can they build a relationship? In short, find the “who.”
- **Partner with a “local” group already working within the community of voters you want to reach.** Research shows: Peer-to-peer voter engagement works!
- **Keep it relevant and personal.** In our outreach messages, tie voting to a hot issue in the community and frame it in a way that speaks to results.
- **Use Messages that work.** [Use LWVUS’s tested messages to engage voters and encourage them to participate.](#)
- **Engage them.** Keep outreach sessions/opportunities positive, brief and interactive.
- **Be prepared** for questions regarding the registration and voting process in your state.



Evaluate what works and make adjustments for the future.

### RESOURCES

[Engagement for Impact](#) (a webinar by the LWVUS Diversity Advisors)

MLD Guidances on [Engagement](#) and [Allied Groups](#)

[Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow](#) (LWVUS)

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