

Guidance on Engaging the Community II June 2016

GUIDANCE

Last month, we asked some key questions:

- Whom do we reach in our community?
- Who does our work touch?
- Who else could benefit from our work?

While these are questions that only individual Leagues, who know their own communities, can answer, there are some common themes in how we are most effective in our outreach. Recently the LWVUS Diversity Advisors and Shur Fellows discussed some of these best practices, and several major topics regarding how to engage others emerged from their conversation:

- **Power of Personal Relationships.** Reach out to individuals in a personal way and build relationships. Generic offers or requests are not going to yield the same results as the personal ask. This is especially true as we look to build our talent pool of new leaders.

Relationships, whether with an organization or an individual, are dynamic. They require interest and curiosity as well as listening and follow through. What do we offer as an organization to attract others? How are we aligning our goals with the needs of the community? And, how are we setting up ourselves (as well as those who are interested in joining us) to succeed in achieving them?

- **Unique Opportunities.** As League leaders, we know the power of the League. Our work is unparalleled and our brand is universally respected. That can open doors and provide us many unique opportunities that individuals can only find with the League. These include networking with community leaders, bringing together top experts on “hot topics,” civil dialogue on tough issues, and the “know how” to get to advocate for and effect change.

Each of these is ripe with opportunities to engage the larger community –

- a. Partnering with other organizations.
- b. Generating visibility for the work being done.
- c. Giving individuals personally fulfilling experiences – participating or leading.
- d. Providing mentoring to new leaders.
- e. Building trust and furthering our role/brand in our community.

- **Topics Matter.** What we choose to work on determines the level of community engagement. “Hot topics” generate interest. This sounds so elementary, but it is easy to overlook. How do we know what our community cares about? How do we choose where to focus our efforts? How do we evaluate if we are “hitting the mark” with our calendar of activities or events?

Outreach ...

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

While topics matter, format does as well. How are we engaging others in our topic/how are we meeting (online or in person)? When are we meeting (at a time when others can attend)? How are we welcoming in others? Are we letting other voices be heard? How are we making it fun or social?

- **Technology Accelerates the Process.** Technology can help to advance all of the above. While it doesn't always seem "personal," social media expands our personal outreach exponentially. It also is an amazing way to showcase our impact as well as learn about what others are doing. Where are their needs? Where are there synergies? Where are there opportunities to leverage our unique brand?

SUCCESS STORIES:

[LWV of Greater Peoria, IL](#) has a monthly Drinks and Dialogue that covers a wide variety of topics so they can engage with different groups in the community. This helps them reach groups that they might otherwise not have had an opportunity to engage with.

[LWV of Greater Verde Valley, AZ](#) held a Sedona Civics Challenge that engaged with community organizations, high schools and local government in a game structured like a quiz show. This was a fun way to bring people together and gain community attention.

RESOURCES

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

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

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

[Young People's Task Force \(YPTF\) Toolkit](#)

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