

March 2014 Guidance on Opportunities: Building Your League's Leadership Pool

ICEBREAKER

- What do you value about being a League leader?
- What makes a good leader?
- How can the League be marketed as a place for leadership development?
- How can you foster new League leaders?
- How does succession planning fit into successful leadership models?

GUIDANCE

While the Nominating Committee for your League board may have yet to meet and your annual meeting is still likely several months away, NOW is the time to start thinking *intentionally* about your League's leadership needs and how to best develop and/or find the right leaders to successfully fulfill our mission. It's a great time to introduce the steps or rungs of the Leadership Ladder (MLD Handbook, Chapter 7) to your board and to your Nominating Committee so that an action plan for getting new leaders is in place for this year and beyond. What greater legacy could a leader create than setting up a succession plan?

The Leadership Ladder

- STEP ONE: Assess Your League's Membership
Take a break from your "usual" and very important League work, and invite your Nominating Committee to your next Board meeting. At the meeting, discuss the following questions to assess your League's current needs:
 - What are your League's top priorities? Do you have enough League leaders to be successful at each priority?
 - Who else can you cultivate to be a part of achieving these priorities?
 - What else would you like to do (e.g., start a Facebook page, begin an Observer Corps) that you haven't been able to do yet because of a lack of leadership?
 - What skill sets (e.g., social media expertise) are missing from our board?
 - How can you start to engage new leaders from within League? *Outside* of League?
 - How do you set others up to succeed?
 - Where do you need leadership so that your League can be one of the most active organizations in your community?
- STEP TWO: Focus on a Couple of Potential Leaders
 - Make a list of potential leaders. (Who have you seen at a recent meeting? Who has expressed interest in a given topic or demonstrated a given talent?)
 - Pick a few emerging leaders and make a personal contact with potential leaders to find out what they would like to do (e.g. phone call or survey).
 - Brainstorm with the individual about topics/projects with which they can get involved.
 - Create a specific plan for the individual, assigning him/her simple tasks (that relates to their interests) for an upcoming event or program.
- STEP THREE: Select Mentors Who Can Guide Emerging Leaders
 - Find a mentor for this individual who can answer their questions and help them through the process. Mentors can be current or past leaders. Match them up according to their interests and skills.

LWV Membership and Leadership Development

- Encourage mentors to build a relationship with their mentee with frequent contact and encouragement.
- STEP FOUR: Identify Activities where New Leaders can become Engaged
 - Invite emerging leaders to partner with a current leader to learn a specific job or role.
 - Respect the availability and interests of the emerging leader.
- STEP FIVE: Train Emerging Leaders
 - Keep it simple: ask past leaders to share what they know in an informal setting, let them shadow a leader doing a specific job or meet with a leader who has special expertise.
 - Remember that the training might give someone a new skill or just enhance an existing one.

What about the NOMINATING COMMITTEE?

The board should engage the Nominating Committee in this process where appropriate – sooner rather than later. At a minimum, the brainstorming discussion about priorities, needs, and resources to develop new leaders would be invaluable information for the Nominating Committee. Any mentoring or training opportunities that are identified (as well as the names of new or emerging leaders from within the League or outside of it, of course) also are valuable tools for the Nominating Committee. Think about an ask for help that comes with built-in support. How attractive is that to a new leader?

The Nominating Committee can build on leadership development by keeping track of the interests and skills of all the members that they contact. Someone may not be available or ready for a board position but would welcome another opportunity to lead in another capacity, e.g. committee chairperson.

Consider sharing some of the Leadership Development and other materials provided through the MLD program with the Nominating Committee, as well. And, remind them that resources designed for their work are available on www.lwv.org (e.g., [The Little Green Book](#), [webinar](#)).

Resources/Tools (available in the binder and/or on the MLD Coaches Forum):

- Leadership Ladder (chapter 7)
- Sample interest survey (chapter 10)
- Leadership questionnaire (chapter 10)
- Five Simple Steps to Leadership Development handout (in the MLD Coaches Forum under Leadership Materials)
- For Leagues that have the resources and/or capacity, more in-depth leadership tools are available. These include:
 - Creating a League Leadership Development Plan & worksheet
 - Individual Leadership Development plan interview questions
(in the MLD Coaches Forum under Leadership Materials)

FINAL THOUGHTS!!!

- **Don't forget that your best tool is ASKING emerging League leaders to get involved.** Start with something easy, concrete, and small to build their confidence and competency. Continue asking that individual to do more. Remember it should always be on the League member's terms. Don't push too hard and remember to pose your ask positively – e.g., “This is a great opportunity.” vs. “It's overwhelming and must be done!” Also, think about looking for teams to head up a program or activity. While someone might not want to be in charge of an event all by themselves, they may be willing to work as part of a team. Be open to doing things in new ways. Fresh eyes are always helpful!