

## Guidance on the Value of Data September 2016

### Appreciative Icebreakers:

- What is your League's impact?
- How would you describe our impact as an organization?

### Guidance:

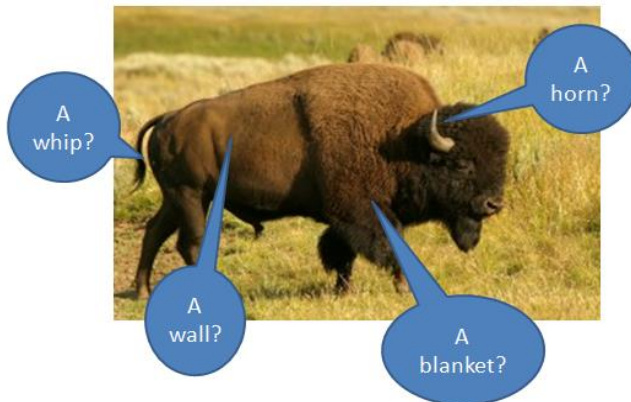
Last month, we shared the 2016 Election challenge with you. We asked every League to take action to empower voters.

This month, we are going to ask you to imagine that every League did! *What would that look like? How great would our impact be? What would that mean for our democracy?*

We may understand the impact of our own League, but what about the organization as a whole? It is reminiscent of the old parable, which we have put an American spin on: "The six people and the bison." Each touches different parts of a bison, and in turn creates their version of reality from that limited experience and perspective.

If each individual who comes in contact with League defined us, what picture or conclusion would they draw?

One way that we can help to create a more complete picture of the



League and to demonstrate our impact is to share what we all are doing. We can aggregate the work that Leagues are doing to generate that image.

As highlighted in recent League Updates and discussed at Convention, LWVUS will be surveying all Leagues post-Election to glean valuable data about the full scope of our work organization-wide. These critical data help us plan and prioritize our work, guide training opportunities, raise needed grant funds to support state and local work, identify trends and partnership opportunities, and quantify our nationwide impact.

What kinds of questions will LWVUS be asking post-Election? Take a look at our data collection spreadsheet: <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/track-your-election-year-impact>

### Steps EVERY LEAGUE Can Take To Empower Voters in 2016

1. Host at least 5 voter registration events
2. Sign up as a National Voter Registration Day partner:  
<http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/partner-sign?source=LWV>
3. Host at least one candidate debate/forum
4. Publish an online voters' guide on [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)
5. Meet with your local elections officials to discuss challenges & provide feedback
6. Identify 5 key media contacts and communicate monthly
7. Get-out-the-Vote!  
Send election alerts to new registrants, volunteers & partners
8. Consider an election observer program
9. Use LWVUS/EF and state League resources, trainings &

This spreadsheet has multiple tabs and can be a way to record a League's data until the survey is posted in November.

### **Why are data important to the League – and to all non-profits?**

"Data." It is the "hot topic" among all non-profits these days. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations are registered in the U.S. This means that, however important the work the League does is, it has to compete with many other organizations for resources. One key to standing out is to use data strategically. Small organizations may not have "BIG DATA," but all of us can and should start to "think big" about our data.

### **What do we mean by "data" and how can we use it?**

Data collection or analysis sounds difficult and all-too-complicated to manage, but it really is a matter of getting into practice of doing it. We deal with data every day, from event sign-in sheets, to membership lists, and social media trends. All of us can employ a simple method/pattern that is easy to navigate:

1. **Gather:** Use the link above to start. Collect data around our work this Election season.
2. **Analyze:** A simple rule of thumb is that you should spend more time learning from your data than gathering it. When you get your data, your goal is to look at what you've collected and generate insights. That requires reflection, not just counting.
3. **Act:** By getting a "big picture" view across your available data, you can use these insights to enhance, revise and innovate programs and services for members, supporters, and the public.

### **How does data make us more effective?**

#### *A. Communicate more effectively.*

By developing a better understanding of your constituents/audience you can:

- Tailor messaging (to potential and existing donors or members).
- Segment your audience for targeted communications.
- Identify the most effective forms of communications/social media for your audience.
- Create online communities and encourage member/volunteer interaction.
- Foster relationships and collaboration with non-members.

#### *B. Enhance, revise, innovate programs and services for members and supporters.*

By taking a close look at programs and/or services so that you can adjust your programming accordingly. For example, review data across a number of events (e.g., attendance of members/supporters; satisfaction data) help you determine how to improve upcoming events (e.g., topics that were effective; dates that worked better; formats that offer increased networking opportunities).

#### *C. Demonstrate openness or transparency.*

Donors, funders and members appreciate transparency; they want to hear the details on the impact their dues or donations are having on the organization's mission. When you emphasize the hard numbers, you make a deeper impression and bigger impact on your audience. It makes the work that you have done stand out, and speak for itself.

### **Resources:**

- ✓ Very useful (and free!) tools: [Google Analytics](#); [Survey Monkey](#)
- ✓ Election tools: <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/voters-service>