

**January 2013 Guidance on Opportunities:  
Building Your League's Leadership Pool**

ICEBREAKER

Review the following quotes from League members:

*"The League focused my life and at the same time magnified it; it took my small talents and increased their impact."*

*"Working with my local league has enabled me to meet some remarkable people, gain leadership skills and become a better public speaker. I wouldn't trade my League experience for anything."*

*"My work in the League has provided me with the skills to take an active, productive part in my community."*

Now, consider the following questions:

- How do these quotes relate to your experiences as a League leader?
- What do you value about being a League leader?
- How can the League be marketed as a place for leadership development?
- How can you foster new League leaders?

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 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. Each Nominating Committee is actively engaged in leadership development as they talk with potential board members. What greater legacy could a leader create than setting up a succession plan?

**The Leadership Ladder**

- STEP ONE: Assess the Current State of Leadership Development in your League  
Take a break from your "usual" and very important League work, and at the next board meeting, discuss the following questions to assess your League's current state of leadership needs and development:
  - 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?
- STEP TWO: Identify Where to Focus Your Leadership Development Efforts
  - 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? Are there key issues that you could address with a new leader?

## LWV Membership and Leadership Development

- STEP THREE: Identify LWV Leaders who can Guide or Mentor
  - Who can mentor or advise new or emerging leaders? Who has League leadership experience that they want to share? What are some of their unique strengths that can be offered to others to learn about what makes them effective leaders?
  - How can you ask these individuals to mentor new or emerging leaders in a positive way?
- STEP FOUR: Develop a list of the Members who are potential Leaders
  - Who are your potential leaders? Who have you seen at recent meetings/events?
  - How do you identify new leaders? Who can assist in identifying them?
- STEP FIVE: Find Out What Interests THEM
  - 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 for an upcoming event.
- STEP SIX: Invite them to Partner on an activity with an Experienced Leader
  - Find a mentor for this individual who can answer their questions and help them through the process. Use the leaders that you identified in Step Three. Match them up according to their interests and skills.
- STEP SEVEN: Offer Special Training and Activities for 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.

### **What about the NOMINATING COMMITTEE?**

Remember that they too care about the League – have had some very valuable experiences in their lives as part of our great organization! Tap into their commitment too to be part of developing/supporting a strong LWV leadership team for a stronger democracy in their community.

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](http://www.lwv.org) (e.g., *The Little Green Book*, webinar).

## LWV Membership and Leadership Development

### Resources/Tools (available in the binder and/or on the Yahoo! Group):

- Focusing Grid
- Leadership Ladder
- Sample interest survey
- Leadership questionnaire
- For Leagues that have the resources and/or capacity, more in-depth leadership tools are available on the Yahoo! State coaches Group. These include:
  - Creating a League Leadership Development Plan & worksheet
  - Individual Leadership Development plan interview questions

### 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!