

**Turning New Members into New Leaders  
June 2017**

*Here's the good news:  
We have lots of new people coming to us, wanting to engage with LWV!*

Our new members are eager activists and we have reached out to them to become involved with us. Now, we want to create an easy path for them to create their leadership opportunities within the League. Let's adapt the steps we know develop leaders to the individuals who are engaging with us today.

**1. Identify and connect with the potential leaders**

*Who has been the most enthusiastic and ready to do something?*

Recognizing and training new members and leaders about the League in a fun and welcoming way will help your League create informed, confident leaders from the beginning. After an orientation meeting for new members, you could hold trainings for new League leaders about topics that are of interest and will help them one day lead the League, such as a training session on event planning, on running a candidates' forum, etc. Don't have the resources for a full-fledged orientation or training? Meet over lunch with interested individuals.

These new members may not have the time to attend weekly meetings, but by offering them the chance to engage in small capacities now, you will be sowing the seeds for the next generation of League leaders. Small measures, such as being active through Facebook and Twitter, can help young people feel a connection to your League, even if responding to the occasional Facebook action-alert is all they have time for right now. This "thin engagement" can lead to "thick engagement" down the line.

Some League leaders may find some resistance by their members towards embracing these young "thin engagers." Some may feel that if an individual isn't "all in" they shouldn't be in at all. However, especially after this tumultuous election, many people are looking for a way to help in whatever capacity they can, and the League of Woman Voters must be ready to embrace them with open arms.

This doesn't mean that we cannot ask our new members to get involved right off the bat, it just means that we may need to approach things a different way. When planning an event, always think, "Who else?" It is tempting to just reach out to your veteran League leaders, but creating strong, long-standing leadership hinges on our ability to recruit new talent.

**2. Connect with their passion**

*What gets them going?*

Always look for ways to involve potential League leaders and ask them to help you plan an event in a friendly, upbeat way. There is most likely a motivating reason that they joined the League. Usually it is an issue that they care deeply about, find out what that passion is and invite them to help make the League more visible on that issue. Contact them and connect them with a committee or other League members who are working on that area.

Consider having a seasoned League leader partner with a new League leader to help answer any questions and create a less intimidating experience. Be open to new ideas when planning an event. One of the great things about new leaders is that they bring fresh eyes to long-standing issues and new perspectives to the group. Is there a different way to get this person

involved? Can you incorporate some of their new ideas? Is there another way we can use this new leader's creativity?

### **3. Develop succession and retention plans for these new leaders**

*What are the usual leadership roles? Do we need to rethink them and create new ones that will serve these new leaders and the League better?*

Don't leave leadership development just to the Nominating Committee to think about once a year. Examine your current leadership structure and determine if it is working as you would like it to. What types of leadership are needed for your League to be successful. Where are the leadership gaps? Does the leadership structure help us achieve our goals?

Apply your answers and implement them to keep your new leaders interested. Make sure they feel that they are needed and heard. And, of course, appreciated!

### **Next Steps**

If you are looking for more information, you can always turn to the Membership and Leadership Development Handbook. Chapters six through nine have plenty of specific guidelines to help you take these ideas and implement them into your local League.

The best ideas for member and new leadership engagement come from the local level! If you have success stories that you would like to share, do not hesitate to share them with your national coaches.

By creating a path for new members to become incrementally more and more involved, and by giving them the mentorship and training they need, you will be creating a dynamic, diverse, and sustainable League for generations to come. Thank you for your hard work, and tireless commitment to Making Democracy Work.™

### ***League Spotlight: Cincinnati, Ohio***

In 2013, The LWV of Cincinnati started a program called Act One. This program was born out of the question, "How do we ensure our work will be passed along to the next generation of leaders?" Act One took concrete steps to engage young members, through an emphasis on their ideas and needs. They focused on resume building and leadership training for their new members, and provided support and mentorship along the way. Congratulations to all Act One members for your hard work and success!

