

**April 2014 Guidance on Opportunities:  
Engaging Members = Moving Individuals Onto & Up the Leadership Ladder**

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Consider this historical quote:

*Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.* – Booker T. Washington

Discuss the following questions --

- What does this quote evoke in terms of leadership development?
- How does this quote relate to your League experience?
- What is the smallest change that a League could make to have the greatest impact on member engagement?

**Guidance**

Think back to when you were new to the League. Were you given tasks and projects that were engaging to you and made you feel like your skills were useful? Did members ask you about what types of work you were passionate about? We all know that first impressions mean a lot. Creating positive initial experiences for new members—and new and potential leaders—is crucial to the success of the League.

**HEALTHY ORGANIZATION LIFE CYCLE: MEMBERS → LEADERS**



A member’s early experiences with the League will determine whether they will stay a member and whether they will feel empowered to start into a leadership role in the organization. Leagues are encouraged to *intentionally focus* on the first impressions that they are creating. Ensuring that members are engaged with the League in ways that they find interesting and exciting will lead to better events, happier members and a more positive League. Being welcoming and engaging should be a priority for every League before, during and at each event. Use the “Direct Outreach” and “Leadership Development” columns of the Event Planning Checklist to ensure that your League is building in opportunities for new members so that they can feel like they are part of the League. In short, we want to move them from “me” to “we” – to get them to feel ownership of the organization, its mission and its future; we want them to step onto the leadership ladder.

## **How to engage new members:**

### ASK THEM

While a personal ask is always best, there are other ways to think about Steps 2 and 4 of our leadership development model (i.e., efforts to engage new leaders):

- Create an online interest survey for members or potential members to complete. Find out what they are interested in, when they are available, or even how they learned about the League. Any information that is collected can be downloaded as a spreadsheet – ready to use and to share with other League leaders! It could include questions like –
  - *What are the most important issues you see in your community?*
  - *What specific type of events would you like the League to be part of?*
  - *What is the best way for you to continue being involved with the League?*
  
- Create an online survey as a follow up to a League event. Online survey services like Surveygizmo and SurveyMonkey are platforms that allow you to easily create online surveys and distribute them to League members to gauge their interest in various League programs and projects. The most basic package of tools is FREE on SurveyMonkey! Information about how to use their application is available on their site at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). In short, it is a very easy-to-use method to collect feedback in a professional way at no cost to the League. Send out a simple survey asking them about the event they attended. It could include questions such as –
  - *How did you hear about the event?*
  - *What were your impressions?*
  - *What type of event (or topic) would you like to see at an upcoming meeting?*
  - *What issues are important to you?*

ALWAYS FOLLOW UP IN SOME WAY AFTER EACH SURVEY WITH THE PARTICIPANTS.

### GIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Ask new members to volunteer at the next League event.** What is a small task that you might ask them to assist with? Welcome people? Help set up the room? Collect questions from the audience? After the event, what they thought and what would interest them about the next event?
- **Call them to action:** Ask them to take some kind of action. Take a friend to vote! Become a fan of the League’s Facebook page! Follow us on Twitter! Send us a donation!
- **Connect them with a League “buddy” or mentor:** Recruit League members who will stay in touch with them for the upcoming months. This gives them a contact and someone to ask questions, go to meetings with and generally provide a friendly welcome to the League. The mentor could be someone who works on an issue of interest to them. This can be a good way to retain new members by keeping them linked to what is happening.
- **Thank them:** Everyone appreciates being thanked. Acknowledge their time and effort in participating in the event they attended.

Remember to share your own experiences to show them the possibilities! What has the League meant to you? What experiences have you gotten because of League? How has League empowered you? What impact has the League had on an issue and how did that connect you more to your community?

### Resources

In the binder, there are several important resources:

- Chapter 7 discusses the leadership ladder
- Chapter 6 has tips on being a welcoming League
- Chapter 10 has the Event Planning Checklist (tool 1) and “Being a League Leader Activity” sheet (tool 13)

The March 2104 guidance included the 5 Steps to Leadership Development.