

**Guidance on Opportunities:
Program Planning to Grow the League**
January 2014

Warm-up activity

Think of a time when you advocated for change using a League position.

Use the following questions to share this experience with other members of your team:

- How did this experience make you feel?
- How did this experience change your connection to League? Your community?
- What was the outcome?
- What preparations did you make before advocating?
- What would have made this experience “better”?
- How can you advocate for positive change in your League? What would the end result look like?

Guidance

While non-members cannot participate in the consensus portion of program planning, they can be part of the meeting. What better way for someone to learn about the wide range of issues that the League works on? What better opportunity to debunk the myth “I thought that you only worked on elections?” What better way to find out what the issues are that non-members are interested in working on?

Below you’ll find tips on how to recruit new members and engage current members, develop new leaders, and engage the larger community while getting the important work of program planning done.

Remember that all national program planning [response forms](#) are due on March 1. A [guide to the program planning process](#) is available [online](#).

Recruiting and Engaging Members

How can you ASK potential members to attend?

- Encourage League leaders and members to personally ask at least one individual they know to attend, especially individuals interested in “hot” issues. This is another way to reach out to those prospects you have on your list.

What language would most effectively “sell” the program planning meeting?

- Remember when asking a friend or colleague to attend to explain to them what program planning is in layman’s terms (e.g. “Program planning, is a three-part process that is a core component of the League’s mission. It is composed of study on issues, consensus on what action to take, and advocating with one voice for that action.”)
- Explain to them why they would enjoy it and why it such a unique opportunity (e.g. that League is a truly grassroots organization unlike any other). Let them know that your League welcomes non-members to participate, and would love for them to take part!

How can your League be more welcoming to potential new members at the meeting?

- Take time to explain the program planning process and any League lingo you use.
- On any fliers for your event, be sure to explain what program planning is and invite politically-minded individuals to attend to discuss the hot topics.

- Remember to look out for individuals who really get excited by certain topics and follow-up with them about getting involved with the League in that specific area!

How can you showcase the value of League membership?

- Bring up how effective your League has been in advocating your positions and in making positive change in the community and the country.
- Have someone share a personal story about how the League has helped them make a positive impact (such as the warm up exercise above).
- Have membership brochures available, membership ambassadors ready to answer questions, and make a public ask to individuals to join the League.

How can you make Program Planning FUN and marketable?

- Plan your program planning event around a social gathering, such as “pizza and program”, a ‘pot luck’ meal or a wine and cheese hour.
- Recognize members of your League who have done a great job advocating League positions over the past year. Have fun awards and give out small mementos in recognition of this good work.
- Celebrate the League’s impact on issues important to our communities and our nation! Celebrating your successes can really bring your group together and can be reinvigorating to your League. It’ll also show potential members that the League is powerful and effective. Why wouldn’t they want to join such a great organization?
- Be open to discussion and to different opinions. Having a robust discussion in which everyone feels heard will make the process more enjoyable to your members and to potential new members.
- Remember some of the Appreciative Inquiry techniques that coaches model with local Leagues each month. Use open-ended questions to help facilitate discussion and allow everyone to have a voice in the conversation.

Developing New Leaders

Who else can you engage in program planning?

- Think about who in your League has a passion for issues and can help assess the following questions: Is there widespread member interest? Is this a timely issue? Is government action the most effective way to address the problem? Members who have answered action alerts or have participated in issue forums are perfect candidates.
- Remember to showcase this as an opportunity to make your voice heard and to generate discussion on issues.

How can you engage them?

- Have members review certain national positions and ask them to report to the group how they thought the position showcased the uniqueness of League, what resonated with them personally, or what they thought was unique about the position itself.
- Ask individuals to lead or co-lead the discussion on specific positions at your program planning event.
- Ask individuals to help with the logistics of the night: copying materials, bringing food, or serving as a notetaker.

How can you thank volunteers to show your gratitude and ensure a positive leadership experience?

- This can be done publicly at the end of your event and/or at your next League meeting. A little Thank You goes a long way!

Reaching Out to the Community

How can you reach out to the broader community before the event?

- Invite your community to “understand more about important issues” by attending this League meeting. Use blogs and community calendars to advertise the event.
- Avoid jargon! “Program planning” does not mean anything to someone not in the League.
- Use your website, Facebook page, and Twitter to engage your members and the community. Advertise the event on your website and Twitter account and create a Facebook event to invite members and the community to program planning.

How can you reach out to the broader community after the event?

- Put out a media release about the event. Don’t forget to ask someone to take pictures of the event to include with your release.
- Post pictures to your website and Facebook page after your program planning is complete with a reminder about upcoming events.

Extra Options

If you already do many of the above ideas, you can try incorporating the following:

- Highlight your issue specialists and/or Observer Corps members by having them contribute to the discussion with their expertise on certain issues.
- Create a survey for your membership and community to submit issues that they would like to see the League study.
- Hold a panel discussion by experts on several important local issues to present for consideration at the Program planning meeting.

Resources Available to You

- **Impact on Issues** includes the official statements of national position for each program area, briefly traces significant past actions and achievements, and indicates links among positions. It is available for sale by LWVUS [here](#) or may be downloaded as a PDF [here](#). In addition, your state League has a state positions publication that you can use along with your local League positions to supplement the discussion.
- **Welcoming League** chapter in the binder has suggestions for engaging new or potential members.