

Outreach Overview

The target audience is not concentrated in one location; they are everywhere in the community. The local League knows their community best, and part of this initiative is designed to help focus their attention and outreach on where to find and how to attract this target demographic (recently retired or about to retire, women - ages 50-65). Through the MRI, we will work together to identify key organizations, media outlets and events where retirees or recent retirees are likely to be found. There is no one way to reach all of them and there is no magic bullet. To gain new members, Leagues must conduct consistent and constant outreach in order to promote the value of membership in the League. By being a part of the membership recruitment initiative, the League is being proactive in attracting these new members.

Three outreach methods are outlined in this section. These outreach methods are designed to cast a wide net to deliver the League membership message to our target demographic, where ever they are. The main outreach methods are listed below and further defined in the following pages:

1. **Direct outreach** – outreach on a one-to-one basis or directly to a group of people
2. **Allied outreach** - reaching out to partner with groups or allied organizations
3. **Ongoing outreach** - incorporate the membership messages into everything the League does

In order to maximize the League's continuous presence in the community all three must be done in coordination with the membership recruitment initiative program components and with all League activities. This is essential in order for the League membership message to breakthrough and be effective.

In addition to these three main outreach methods, there is a fourth large component of outreach that combines direct and ongoing outreach strategies. This is the League's media outreach. Media outreach is a critical component of the membership recruitment initiative and an important piece of all program components.

Media outreach essentially is about forming a relationship with the local press to heighten the League's visibility in the community. Because it uses both continuous and direct outreach methods to establish, Media outreach is the most difficult to realize. However, it has the greatest rewards and is a crucial piece of the membership recruitment initiative.

Outreach takes time and patience. Leagues may be discouraged if initially unsuccessful. However, if Leagues persistently are proactive in all outreach efforts, the rewards will be great. A longtime friend may finally decide to join the League after long debating it; an organization in your community may see the mutual benefits to hosting an event together; or a reporter may attend and cover an event because he/she received multiple invitations from the League throughout the year.

Direct Outreach

Direct outreach is simply communicating the message to the target audience. It is outreach on a one-to-one basis or directly to a group of people. Below are examples of how Leagues can accomplish direct outreach.

One-to-One Direct Outreach

- ASK people to join! Ask your neighbor, your friends, members of other clubs or organizations you belong to. Just ask everyone you know to join the League.
- Carry a membership brochure or flyer with you at all times. That way you can give it to the next person you meet that is interested in joining the League. Purse sized membership brochure folders are available from the LWVUS store.
- Collect contact information at events (as simple as a sign in sheet). Follow up with non-members a few days later either with a phone call, e-mail, or letter and ask them to join.

Group Direct Outreach

- Deliver the message and ask to join from the podium at a League debate, forum, or event.
- Insert the message and invitation to join into remarks for the League's speaker bureau or if the League has a representative participating in a panel discussion or their community event.

Other Direct Outreach

- Insert the message into press releases and media advisories. Use the message and invitation to join in statements and quotes given to the media or in an op-ed or letter to the editor.
- Place a membership ad in all of your League publications - study reports, Voters Guides, newsletters, etc. A membership ad can be placed in your education fund publications if purchased with your League's general funds. (refer to "Tools for Leaders" section of LWVUS web site for additional information if you have question)

Allied Outreach

While there are many ways to reach our target audience, as was stated earlier in the handbook, participating local Leagues the second area is through reaching out to partner with groups or allied organizations. This section is meant to help with the reaching out to allied organizations.

Many organizations and groups in your community may work on issues and activities that are similar to or related to those of the League. These organizations can offer opportunities for local Leagues to reach potential new members. It's important that local Leagues consider how to best connect and work with other organizations that have the attention of individuals who would be great League members!

While much of this might seem like common sense or be part of some best practices that Leagues already employs, the main things that we want to stress throughout this initiative are **to be proactive and to be consistent**. Even if you have an existing relationship with an organization, look to see if there are new ways to partner with them or to promote our core value messages with them. If an organization has not been open to partnerships before, think of new ways to approach them. Be consistent and *persistent*, and **ask** for opportunities. You know better than anyone that League has a lot to offer!

Establishing these connections with allied organizations is what we're calling "allied outreach." This section outlines key steps to reach out to allied groups that have similar interests or activities that may provide the League with an opportunity to speak to potential new members. In addition, make sure to ask your contacts at allied organizations to become members of the League.

Research & Identify Targets

Hopefully through the application or community asset process, participating local Leagues have already done some thinking about organizations in their communities that have overlapping interests, and many may have worked with them in some capacity already. Brainstorm with your local Leaders about opportunities to interact with potential members that are offered by these and other organizations and decide which opportunities will be most valuable to the League in its membership recruitment efforts. When evaluating an opportunity, consider some of the following:

- What specific opportunities can be pursued to talk about the value of League membership? These could range from a linked Web site, to a brochure distributed at an event, to a co-hosting a major event!
- What is the size of an event? If the request is to cosponsor an event, are there likely other benefits (e.g. media coverage)?
- How many members does the organization have that League might reach?

But local Leagues can't wait for opportunities or "asks" to come to them. Local Leagues need to identify the specific opportunity for League involvement and ask for it! (e.g. sitting on a panel, displaying a booth at their convention or conference, sponsoring a table at their annual fundraiser). If the Chamber of Commerce is holding a meeting about revitalizing the downtown area Leagues should ask to be a part of the panel. A seat on the panel will provide the League with an opportunity to express the contribution of the League to the community and the value of League membership.

Making Contact

Local Leagues should identify the individual at the organization who can say yes to their request. Schedule a time to connect with the individual either by setting up a phone call or meeting to discuss ways in which the League would like to work with the organization.

When speaking with a representative, prepare yourself and know exactly what you're asking them for, and be thoughtful about how you present your request. Are you asking to set up a booth at their regional convention? Or are you calling to see if the League might participate in advancing a shared goal of the two groups by participating in the regional convention?

Much the same way local Leagues have messages designed to resonate with potential members, your communications with allied organizations should be customized according to their interests/shared organizational interests. Local Leagues should look over the values and messages and tailor their pitch to the organization by telling them why it is mutually beneficial for them to partner.

After you've made initial contact, reach out again to the organization or group via phone, in person, etc., at an appropriate time – 5 to 7 days. The key to reaching your target audience is developing partnerships with the people and organizations where they get their information.

Fine Tuning the Target Audience

Finally, you've identified the group you are going to reach out to and the opportunity that you would like to take advantage of. You've secured your booth at the convention, seat on the panel, or invitation to an event. Now is the time to add on membership recruitment initiative, think about the messaging and develop our key points for communicating with potential new members.

As you know, the audience targeted for this initiative is women, ages 50-65, but you have the opportunity to define this even more clearly. Consider things like the professional background or interests in key issues, and work to fine-tune your messages and talking points to resonate most directly with the audience that you *know* you'll be speaking to.

Follow-Up

The last thing to do is to make sure that you are maintaining your new relationship with the allied organization. Send thanks to your contact for their assistance and consider and suggest future opportunities to work together!

Allied Outreach - Examples from MRI Year One**Great Success Story - Palm Beach County**

LWV of Palm Beach County thought outside the box and looked for organizations and activities that would have the biggest return on investment for their outreach. The League started buying congratulatory pages in event programs when members of LWV are recognized by other organizations. They invited all allied organizations to their League Annual Meeting, an event that was traditionally thought of only as an internal activity. The MRI coordinator also spoke at the Business and Professional Women's state convention and hosted an hour workshop on Women and Politics.

One of their more inventive strategies, was reaching out to the Junior League. In Palm Beach County, the LWV and the Junior League have a healthy competition for members, and many residents believe LWV worked like the Junior League and you had to be invited to become a member. The coordinator looked at the Junior League's massive outreach campaign for their signature award program at the height of the county's social season and thought, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." The League nominated her for the Junior League's annual award. To maximize their visibility, LWVPBC bought a table at the event, secured an ad in their program, and if any member who wanted to go, the board supplemented 50% of the ticket price. Even though the coordinator didn't win the award, the visibility got the League's name out to a whole new audience of Palm Beach County residents primarily using the Junior League's PR mechanisms.

Additional Examples of Allied OutreachGreater Omaha, NE

- Omaha conducted continuous outreach to teachers, hosted a special breakfast event for retiring teachers in the city and emailed invitations to League events to this group throughout the year.
- They sent Making Democracy Work award solicitations to all schools, BPW, AARP, AAUW, National Coalition of Jewish Women, the Republican Party, the Commercial Law League of America, and the Democratic Party. Also, they asked organizations to put MDW Award nomination information in their bulletins. The winner of the award was head of the Women's Fund.

Oakland, CA

- Letters and emails soliciting nominations for the MDW Award went out to East Oakland Rotary Club, Oakland Black Caucus, and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Alameda County, among others.

- As they dealt with a setback that they couldn't show *Iron Jawed Angels* at the Parkway Theater, Oakland's coordinator contacted a local community college about showing it in their auditorium. They received an enthusiastic welcome and were put in contact with a group on campus with an interest in women's history. They did additional outreach to allied groups about the showing of the film.

Saginaw County - MI

- Saginaw County partnered with the NAACP to take action against a local government agency that was skirting sunshine laws.
- The coordinator invited herself to the Republican and Democratic Party Women's Club. She pitched each of their planning committees to cosponsor their Running for Office event in order to get both to promote to their members. In all, six allied organizations agreed to be a part of the Running and Winning Event (which will take place this fall).

Spartanburg County, SC

- For Earth Day, the coordinator in Spartanburg contacted ten neighborhood organizations, one church and two "natural resources" organizations to invited them to participate in an Earth Day event that was planned around their League's ongoing recycling project.
- The League co-sponsored a meeting on land use planning with Upstate Forever and with the PRIDE Task Force with whom they have not collaborated with before.

Ongoing Outreach

Ongoing Outreach ensures that every activity is a membership growth opportunity. Ongoing outreach is the way Leagues incorporate the membership messages into everything they do - in an intentional and consistent way. These ongoing outreach opportunities are just as important as the big components and other outreach strategies outlined in this handbook.

For example, ongoing outreach opportunities include:

- Updating your League membership brochure to reflect the messages and be more inviting to non-members.
- Using the message in internal League communication so that members are reminded of the messages, get familiar with them, and in turn repeat them to potential new members that they encounter.
- Updating your League Web site to include the membership message and ask to join. (Tips on how to update local League Web sites are included in this section)



Membership Recruitment Initiative - Year Two

- Including an ask to join in a Voter's Guide. Or including in fundraising materials that is sent out to non-members. If they have given money in the past but aren't members yet, there is a golden opportunity to recruit them now.

Ongoing outreach opportunities never cease and it is the local League's responsibility to constantly strive to include the membership message and ask to join in everything the League does and says. All committees and members should look at their activities through an "ongoing outreach" lens and apply the message. No opportunity is too large or too small.