



## LWVO/EF STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2018 \*

### Introduction

In the spring of 2012, the League of Women Voters of Ohio Board / Education Fund board embarked on a strategic planning process that would define a shared vision for the organization's future and a plan to achieve that vision. The strategic plan would serve as a roadmap to help the League prioritize activities, including making short-term decisions, based on long-term implications and priorities.

The plan is designed to guide our work over the next five years, but to be a dynamic plan that will be adjusted as needed. For an organization that often struggles to be "all things to all people" but has limited resources, the strategic plan will help keep us focused while allowing the staff and board to prioritize their interconnected work and simultaneously support each other.

### Process

The first step in creating the strategic plan was to assess the organization's needs, which involved 30 structured in-depth telephone interviews by an outside consultant. These included a diverse sample of local League presidents; some new members; some members who had dropped out; several elected and appointed state government officials; and representatives of several external organizations who are knowledgeable about LWVO/EF. The persons interviewed were assured that their identity would not be shared and were encouraged to be candid in their assessment. Other state Leagues' and local Leagues' strategic plans were also reviewed.

After assessing the interview data, the LWVO Board devoted its two-day July 2012 retreat to work on the strategic plan. First the Board conducted a SWOT Analysis, identifying internal **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses, and external **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. The Board then used the assessment to create the LWVO/EF Vision, Core Values, and Goals. A smaller team developed Objectives necessary to achieve the Goals.

Following board review of the initial draft, additional input was gained from member interviews and discussion forums at regional meetings in January, 2013. The LWVO Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (below) was adopted by the 2011-2013 state Board in March, 2013.

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\* Although some parts of the plan apply only to LWV Ohio, some only to LWV Ohio Education Fund and some to both entities, both organizations are referenced as LWVO for simplicity.

## **LWVO Strategic Plan 2013-2018\***

A strategic plan is based on the organization's purpose and aspirations—what it does and what it hopes to become. These are stated in the Mission, Vision and Values. The LWVO/EF Board identified these as part of the organizational assessment it performed for strategic planning.

### **Mission:**

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

### **Vision:**

The nonpartisan League of Women Voters of Ohio is the premier provider of balanced, factual analyses of public policy issues and a respected voice advocating for change, and welcomes all to participate in its work to protect voters' rights and promote civic engagement and civil debate.

**Core Values:** Effective organizations identify and develop a clear, concise and shared meaning of values/beliefs, priorities, and direction so that everyone understands and can contribute. Once defined, values impact every aspect of an organization. The values of the LWVO/EF are:

**Integrity**

**Credibility**

**Empowerment**

**Influence**

### **Priority Goals: LWVO Strategic Plan 2013-2015**

The Strategic Plan identifies seven goals:

Goal 1: Increase the membership of LWVO by 50 percent and further diversity....

Goal 2: Development of a stable and diverse financial development structure....

Goal 3: Premier provider of nonpartisan public-policy information (education / voter-service)....

Goal 4: Expand capacity to effectively advocate and lobby....

Goal 5: Effective internal and external communications system....

Goal 6: Strong, mutually supportive connections among LWVO, local Leagues and members.

Goal 7: Align LWVO board and staff responsibilities....

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### **Priority Goals: LWVO Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (continued)**

All seven goals are important to the state League fulfilling its mission, and none can be ignored—but unless there is prioritization, LWVO is likely to spread its resources too thin and not be successful. Based on feedback from regional meetings and further board discussion, in March the state Board approved the following as priority goals for 2013-2018, *though not in any order of priority*: Goal 1 (Membership); Goal 2 (Development); and Goal 3 (Education / Voter Service).

These three goals are seen as fundamental to successfully engaging the community, providing voter services and influencing public policy. All goals and objectives will be reviewed semi-annually to assess progress towards strategic objectives and to revise the plan accordingly.

### **Supporting Strategies, Activities and Timeline**

The 2013-2015 LWVO/EF Board will have the responsibility of finalizing the strategies, activities and timeline for achieving the goals and objectives below.

## LWVO STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, 2013-2018 \*

### **1. Increase the membership of LWVO by 50 percent and further diversify it to more closely reflect Ohioans in terms of age, race / ethnicity, gender, political views, geography, etc.**

- a) Create a dynamic and innovative membership recruitment and retention program that will attract and retain a diverse membership among existing local Leagues.
- b) Create new and effective ways for the state League to grow membership.

### **2. Create and implement a comprehensive, stable and diverse financial development structure and plan that will support LWVO's priorities and priority issues now and provide support for expanded activities in the future.**

- a) Add professional development resources to LWVO.
- b) Expand LWVO fundraising activities.
- c) Incorporate development into mainstream LWVO operations.

### **3. Position LWVO as the premier provider of nonpartisan public-policy information in Ohio.**

- a) Determine 3–5 priority issues for LWVO's public policy focus for the ensuing two years, subject to periodic revision. (Note: The LWVO Board should do this soon after its election to office.)
- b) Establish a public policy committee with members from local Leagues to provide balanced, factual analyses of public policy issues, as identified by the LWVO Board.
- c) Involve local Leagues in developing and promulgating information about public policy issues outside of LWVO's core focus, with a limited supporting role by the state League.
- d) Expand the reach of LWVO public-policy information.

### **4. Expand the capacity of LWVO to effectively advocate and lobby for its positions.**

- a) Establish LWVO Board consensus on which 3-5 issues are core state League issues.

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b) Provide structured opportunities for League members across the state to learn more about and participate in advocacy and lobbying.

c) Increase the reach of LWVO's advocacy and lobbying activities.

**5. Create and implement a comprehensive internal and external communications system that effectively engages local Leagues, members, partners and Ohioans in LWVO's mission and vision.**

a) Establish a committee of state board and local League members to develop this communications plan.

b) Expand the effectiveness of LWVO's communications tools.

c) Establish a marketing function and marketing capabilities for the organization.

**6. Build strong, mutually supportive connections among LWVO, local Leagues and members.**

a) Develop and implement a support system that encourages and supports local Leagues and members seeking to become engaged in both advocacy and voter-service activities in their communities—see Goals 3 & 4.

b) Strengthen information-sharing among Leagues.

c) Implement a recruitment/retention program to support local Leagues—see Goal 1.

d) Develop a comprehensive communications plan that meets the needs of League members for information and support--see Goal # 5

e) Develop and implement an effective liaison system between the state board and local Leagues.

**7. Align the LWVO board and staff responsibilities to effectively and efficiently implement and/or achieve strategic priorities.**

a) Develop a robust LWVO Nominating Committee and process.

b) Ensure a state board member with the requisite skills is assigned oversight responsibility for each major state League activity, e.g., advocacy, voter service, statewide meetings (regional, Statehouse Day, Convention/Council), communications, personnel, etc.

- c) Create and implement a plan to move toward a state board that is focused on governance and staff oversight as the staff grows and it takes increasing responsibility for the management of major state League activities.
- d) Develop a robust plan to effectively utilize off-board members on board committees and for specific assignments.

**For all goals and objectives:** The LWVO Board will conduct a semi-annual review to assess progress towards strategic objectives and to revise the plan accordingly.