

Recognizing and Selecting Allies*

What are allies?

To have allies is almost as important as to have a cause to fight for. If you're the only one believing in and fighting for your cause, it's still a noble thing to do, but you probably won't go far with your ideas. You need people to support you, believe in a common cause and help to make it succeed.

Allies are people, or groups of people, who have the same interests as you, or the capacity or resources to help you. You may be thinking, "But few groups are completely in tune with our interests; how can we identify our real allies?" The sections below are designed to help you answer that question.

Why do you need allies?

The simplest answer is because allies can help you achieve your mission. Allies may be willing to share their resources and information with you in order to achieve a common goal. With more people working together for an issue or goal, the community or those you want to change are more likely to pay attention.

Let's suppose you are the quarterback during a football game and it's a tie game so far. Who would you pay more attention to--one person cheering for you in the stands or a whole crowd of people, yelling, screaming and generally making a lot of noise? When it gets right down to it, the more help and support you have--the more allies--the more you can get accomplished.

How do you find allies?

The easiest way to start recruiting allies is to see who is already out in the community--either those working directly on your specific issue or those working on similar or overlapping issues--who might be interested in working together with you on your issue. One method to help you find out who those groups might be is to request copies of local community resource directories from organizations such as United Way, a local social service organization, city government departments, the Chamber of Commerce and neighborhood assistance programs. If you can't find an existing resource directory for your issue, your group can begin to create your own customized directory, using the

*Adapted from "Community Toolbox: Recognizing Allies" (Part I, Chapter 30, Principles of Advocacy). © 2000, KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, University of Kansas. Retrieved 8/20/02 from the KU web site: http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/part_1009.htm. Used with permission.

yellow pages and city and county government pages of the local phone book and Tool #1 below ("*Community Resource Inventory for Recognizing Allies*"). In creating an inventory of potential allies, some of the questions you will need to address are:

- Who is doing something about this issue in the community already?
- Who is working on a closely related issue in the community already?
- What are they doing?
- How is it going?
- Which strategies are they finding to be effective?
- In what ways could you collaborate and work together?
- Who else might be interested, even if they're not already working on the issue?

To expand your inventory list further, you can use the "snowball technique." Starting with one of your known allies, ask them to list several other groups that either are already working on your issue or who might be interested in helping your group. Continue this process, asking each of the allies to identify more potential allies until you have a large enough pool of prospects.

An alternate method is to write down various sectors of your community--businesses, faith communities, health care organizations, educational institutions--and then identify one or more organizations or groups within each sector to contact as potential allies.

Do you and your allies care about the same things?

When you first begin searching for allies, you may feel lost. You know from your resource inventory that there are a few groups out there working on the same or similar issues but you may feel you need to know more about them before you recruit them as allies or collaborators on a project or campaign.

The first question to ask in selecting potential allies is, "Who cares about the issue enough to join in and help me?" The people and groups who care about your issue are people who face the same problem. They are the ones who are likely to approve or to benefit if you are successful in achieving your aims. Usually, the more a group has to benefit from your success, the more willing they will be to help or cooperate with your group. Likewise, a group with a lot to lose will often do their best to oppose your aims.

In reality, outside groups often have both something to gain and something to lose by helping you. Often, a critical factor in determining whether or not a potential ally is willing to join or support your efforts is whether or not the benefits outweigh the costs. Costs are not just money; many other less tangible factors such as prestige, group identity, time constraints, competing goals and interests, and staffing resources may enter the equation.

To help you decide whether or not to approach a potential ally about joining your group, you can conduct a preliminary risk/benefit analysis using Tool #2 below ("*Potential Allies' Risks versus Benefits Table*"). Conducting a risk/benefit analysis involves brainstorming answers to three sets of questions:

1. Whose problem is it? Which groups or stakeholders are likely to be affected by the problem or issue your group has identified?
2. What are the potential benefits for each stakeholder? What will they gain by helping you?
3. What are the potential risks each stakeholder faces? What might they lose by helping you?

Outlining the potential benefits and risks for each stakeholder provides you with a framework for identifying potential allies and developing a strategy for soliciting their support or cooperation. In general, a stakeholder with more benefits than risks will be easier to recruit as an ally. A group that will not benefit from helping you should probably be avoided, at least early on in the process of building alliances. For those with mixed benefits and risks, you may be able to find a way to eliminate or minimize the risks the group faces or to maximize the benefits they will receive by joining your group or supporting your efforts.

Which ally should you contact first?

As you develop your list of allies, you may discover there are more potential allies than you can even begin to contact. How will you decide which group(s) to contact first?

One way to prioritize your list is to rank them by the amount and kinds of strength or power they can potentially bring to your group or your cause. Tool #3 below (the "Types of Power Chart") offers a list, explanation and examples of some of the types of power allies may possess. You can use the "Types of Power Chart" to complete an "Ally Power Grid" (Tool #4) for each of potential allies on your resource list. Analyzing a group's power gives you an approximate measure of how useful or effective that group will be in helping you to achieve your goals.

Using the Ally Power Grid involves three steps:

1. Complete a separate grid for each ally whose power you wish to examine.
2. For each type of power listed in column one, assess how much of it your ally possesses (e.g.--none, a little, a lot) and then list out specific events, facts, evidence or examples that demonstrate the ally's power.

- Determine the most effective allies for your group by looking at which have more types of power overall or which have the kinds of power most relevant to your needs. That is, if you really need an ally with money, then an ally with special appeal may not be particularly useful at this stage.

Sample Entries for Ally Power Grid

Type of Power	Power Appraisal (How much of this power do they have?)	Example, Evidence, Supporting Facts
Members	They have a lot	The group has 200 active members.
Financial/practical resources	Have little money to donate but offer free meeting space.	The organization has declined to donate money for the last three years but lends its conference room free of charge to community groups in the evening.
Credibility	Very credible	The group has an excellent reputation among local agencies and its trainings are always well attended.
Skills	Excellent technical skills	They offer free consultation on using e-mail and Internet resources for campaign organizing.

Is it necessary to complete an Ally Power Grid for every ally you want to consider? Probably not. But if you have the time and sufficient group members to work on it together, it can be a great advantage. If your time is limited, you can complete the grid only for potential allies about whom you are uncertain or when you are looking for an ally with particular strengths or types of power. As your project or campaign progresses, you may find that you need additional allies with special kinds of expertise or with unique bargaining skills. You can always go back to your Community Resource Inventory and pull up the names of groups you may not have had time to consider fully in the past.

Tool #1: Community Resource Inventory for Recognizing Allies

Source of Allies	Potential Allies	What are they doing? (or what could they be doing on the issue?)	Contacted?
Groups already working on the issue in your community			
Groups working on related issues.			
Phone book			
Local government offices and directories			
Social service directory			
Business or Chamber of Commerce directory			
Neighborhood assistance groups			
Friends, family, work colleagues			
Other sources			

Tool #2: Potential Allies' Risks versus Benefits Table

Whose Problem Is It?	What are the benefits? What do they gain if you succeed?	What are the risks? What might they lose if you succeed?
Stakeholder 1		
Stakeholder 2		
Stakeholder 3		

Tool # 3: Types of Power Chart

Type of Power	Rationale	Example
Members How many members or volunteers does the group have?	The more members a group has, the less likely it is to be ignored.	A group with 500 members shows up at a school board meeting.
Financial/Practical Resources Will they contribute money or other tangible resources?	Donated funds and other resources are needed to achieve community goals.	The local teachers' union donates funds to your program.
Credibility Are they considered trustworthy and credible advocates for your issue?	A group with enduring ties and positive recognition within the community will help bring credibility to your group and deflect opposition.	A faith community group invites your group to speak to their members about violence prevention.
Network Are they part of a large, organized network?	A group already connected with other groups will have financial resources, credibility and access to power that single groups don't have.	A broad network of diverse communities of color lobby state legislators for policy changes to support women's and immigrants' rights.
Skills What special skills do they offer?	A number of different skills (technical, legal, advocacy, business, organizing, etc.) are needed for community action and change.	A local advertising firm offers to donate their services in designing a brochure or creating PSAs for your group.
Newsworthy Are they newsworthy or well connected to attract favorable publicity?	Some groups may have connections with the media that can help attract positive attention to your cause as well.	An activist group for children's rights that recently won a special human service award offers to hold a joint fundraising event.
Other		

League Day 2019

D. E. & I. and Allies Cluster Break-outs

LWV is an organization fully committed to **diversity, equity, and inclusion** in principle and in practice...
...Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

What are Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

DIVERSITY

Diversity includes all of the similarities and differences among people. It refers to population groups that were historically underrepresented in socially, politically, or economically powerful institutions.

A team can be diverse and so can an organization. Diversity is about a collective or a group and can only exist in relationship to others. *We commit to increase diversity in the recruitment, retention, and retainment at the national, state, and local level, and in the leadership and executive roles.*

EQUITY

Equity is an approach based in fairness to ensuring everyone is given equal opportunity; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person has a fair chance to succeed. Equity takes into account that people have different access to resources because of system of oppression and privilege. Equity seeks to balance that disparity. *We commit to prioritizing equity in the work of the LWV staff, board, and members.*

INCLUSION

Inclusion is an ongoing process, not a static state of being. Inclusion refers to the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes within an organization or group. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.

While an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group is not always inclusive. Being aware of unconscious or implicit bias can help organizations better address issues of inclusivity.

- Excerpted from the LWVUS website: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/leadership-development/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

What is a Diversity Ally?

A diversity and inclusion ally is someone who is willing to take action in support of another person, in order to remove barriers that impede that person from contributing their skills and talents in the workplace or community. - Simma Lieberman



League Day 2019

D. E. & I. and Allies Cluster Break-outs

Applying DEI:

- Divide into groups of 2 or 3 participants
- Review the definitions on the previous page. Ask each other what they mean to you personally, whether you've had any experience with DEI and Allies, examples of DEI and Allies in practice, etc.

- What possible DEI actions could your local LWV take to 1) reach out to diverse groups and/or 2) attract diverse members?

- What actions could I take to become a better ally to diverse groups?

- What commitments will I make to realize at least one of these actions? Who can I ask to help me?

Would you be interested in participating in a Bay Area LWV learning event on Allies and Ally-Building?

____ Yes

____ No

eMail ID: _____

Please print clearly: Tear this off and turn it in before you leave. We will contact you with information.



Sample Letter to new allies, coalitions and partners

Dear _____,

I am writing to share with you my personal admiration for your organization's advocacy for (social justice/environmental/voting rights/_____) issues. Your hard work and leadership has truly made a difference over and over again.

I am _____ of the _____ League of Women Voters. The League cares deeply about your mission and I am hoping we can meet to discuss with you how the League can help champion your cause.

Please let me know when you are available. I look forward to getting to know you and learning how we can best work together.

You can find more information about our League on our website _____. Feel free to call me at _____ or email me at _____.

In partnership,

Name
League
Phone number
website



League of Women Voters of the Bay Area

Listening Session Survey

Below is a short survey for your local League or organization to use in an interview introduction meeting or “coffee” with potential allies, coalitions and partner organization or to use to clarify opportunities for existing allies, partners or coalitions. ***A “coffee meeting” with existing partners will create a deeper relationship by understanding who they are, what they do and the clients they serve.*** The survey will assist you in creating structure to this low risk, informal exploration of common areas of interest. Remember, the “coffee meeting” is meant to be a short introduction, approximately 40 minutes. It is not necessary to ask all questions.

Be sure to set up your next meeting at the end of the first this meeting. Invite your guest to your next meeting or ask if you can visit their site or attend one of their regular meetings. If your guests say they do not want to partner with the League, ask if you can add them to your mailing list in case they further interest in future events and activities. Always leave the door open for the future collaboration.

It’s important to bring along a few written items to create a packet about the your League or organization such as voter outreach items that you’ve used in the past. Those could include materials such as an Easy Voter Guide, Voters Edge Bookmark, a membership form or any unique items you use for outreach. Most important bring something that has your written contact information.

Write your thoughts shortly after your meeting to remember important thoughts.

After the meeting follow up with a thank you email or hand written notecard.

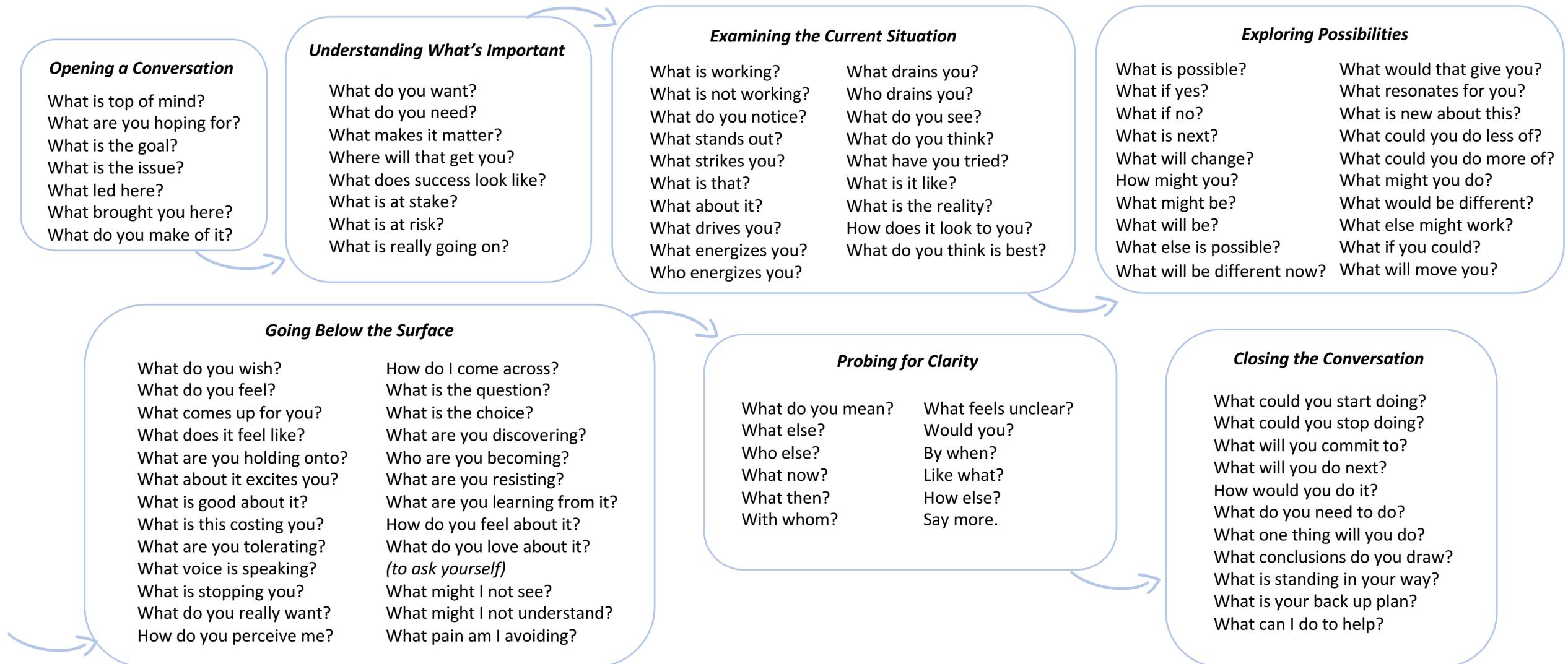
Ally, Coalition and Partner Building Survey

- Tell me about your goals or mission?
- What type of services do you offer?
- What’s unique about the people you work with?
- What are some top priorities (or needs) for increasing awareness, civic engagement amongst your staff, clients, or members?
- What are some examples of your most successful partnerships?
- What should the League know about you and your group?
- Would your constituents be amongst those considered to be under-served or under-represented?
- Does your organization consider itself "non-partisan"?
- Do you sometimes endorse or oppose candidates, or sometimes endorse or oppose ballot measures?
- How are decisions (about partnering or co-sponsoring) made in your organization?
- How can I learn more about you and your group?
- What stands out to you about the League of Women Voters?
- Would you like to receive voter information from the League?
- How can we start working together? Where shall we begin?

Powerful Questions

While many of us value having the right answers, consider what becomes possible if we shift focus to being curious and asking questions that expand our understanding. Powerful questions are open ended and empower the person responding to choose the direction they take. They create possibilities and encourage discovery, deeper understanding, and new insights. They are curious and non-judgmental as they seek to further learning and connection.

There are an infinite number of powerful questions available to you. Below is a brief selection to support your practice in communicating across difference as you get started.



LWVC Coalition Advice & Policies

Local Leagues frequently ask the state League about partnerships. Are there trusted partners that we can endorse? Do we have a list of recommended partners?

As with most League responses, we begin with “there’s no simple answer”. We can’t give you a list of organizations that are great partners for every potential League project. In the end, each partnership or coalition needs to be evaluated separately.

There are organizations we partner with frequently—but we don’t join them on every issue or every campaign. While our mission and work overlaps with that of other organizations, there is never a 100% correspondence.

Coalitions: Partisanship, League Reputation, and More

Joining coalitions is one of the ways that we are able to magnify our League voice, and increase the number of issues on which we can be active. Coalitions offer the prospect of greater clout and of greater member participation, can often accomplish what the organizations working separately cannot.

We have specific guidelines about how and why the LWVC join coalitions. You can find these in [How to... Take Action](#).

Though the LWVC policies are aimed more at advocacy coalitions, these partnerships may be for advocacy or for voter service work. In either case, working in coalitions raises broader questions about partisanship, League reputation, and the League’s role in the coalition. Here are some specific thoughts on these issues:

League Role & Reputation

The League has two distinct roles—codified into two distinct corporations. One is what we’ve come to call our voter service role—registering voters, educating ourselves and others about issues of importance to the community. In this capacity, we provide all sides of the issue and refrain from advocating for any specific issue or policy. This work is conducted through the League’s Education Fund.

Our other role is to influence public policy through grassroots advocacy and lobbying. In this role, we use the positions—stemming from the League’s study and consensus—to improve the policies, laws, and regulations in California. Sometimes this involves influencing decision makers, at other times the public. In both cases, we use persuasive language designed to win hearts and minds. That language is, by design, not balanced. It is, however, never misleading. The focus of all this language is to provide enough information to persuade others of the rightness of our position.

The two roles (Voter Service and Advocacy) sometimes get confused—both by the public and by League members. This confusion frequently leads to people attacking us for taking positions

LWVC Coalition Advice & Policies

on ballot measures, for participating in campaigns, and for speaking strongly about issues we care about.

Despite this confusion, the League has survived for almost 100 years doing both jobs. We intend to keep doing both.

When we join a coalition, we need to be clear about which role we are in. Is it a voter service role—one in which we want to provide unbiased information to the public? Or is it an advocacy role—one in which we want to persuade the public about an issue?

Advocacy vs Voter Service Language

Language used when we do advocacy work is designed to persuade and change minds; it is consciously persuasive.

When we're involved in a campaign, language is carefully crafted and tested with a goal to persuade a particular audience. It is clear that different messages work for different parts of our community, and not infrequently, League messages are somewhat different from other coalition partners. This works best when we are all clear about the overall goal, and who is speaking to which audience. This all part of how campaigns work.

Partisanship

Nonpartisanship is a core tenant of the League. That said, we remain in control of what we mean by “nonpartisan”; we don't allow others to define that for us. ***The League neither supports or opposes candidates or parties.***

Campaign Coalitions—a.k.a. Advocacy Coalitions

We are careful about when and how the League name is used—but we can't control all of the campaign rhetoric. Nor honestly, would we choose to. The League is not the sole arbiter of messaging—especially in a state as diverse as California. Our goal is to win the fight; we need to listen to the experts about what will both persuade people, and motivate them to vote. We also need to be respectful of other members of the coalition and allow for a variety of messages that work within various segments of the community.

Inflammatory language is not always bad. Advocacy campaigns generally carefully craft language, with a specific goal in mind. This can include inciting (motivating) segments of the community to care about an issue—people who otherwise might not listen to our message or act on an issue.

The League's role in an advocacy coalition should be to help ensure that the language is truthful, compelling, and strong—and, at the same time, ensuring that we avoid being hyperbolic or uncivil.

LWVC Coalition Advice & Policies

Learning More

If your local League is interested in learning more about how the League conducts advocacy campaigns, we're happy to arrange an in-person workshop or discussion about these issues.

Guidelines for Assessing Potential Partner—Voter Service

The coalition policy for LWVC Voter Service is written in the context of candidate forums. You can see the full policy [here](#).

Guidelines for Assessing Potential Partner—Advocacy

- Will the collective group efforts be more persuasive than operating separately?
- Will the coalition be able to finance the activities necessary for success?
- Does the League have resources other than monetary to contribute?
- Are the goals, if not the motivation, of the member organizations compatible?
- Do League members feel a commitment to join?
- Are there League members who have the time and the personal commitment to provide leadership in a coalition?

Depending on the issue/activity, LWVC has worked with the following. These don't represent endorsements for all work. These organizations may also be found listed in the [LWVC Resource Directory](#)

Groups we partner for voter service work:

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - California (AAAJ-CA)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Law Caucus
CalPIRG
California Calls
California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP)
California Common Cause
California Forward
California Voter Foundation
Disability Rights California
Future of California Elections (FoCE)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Mi Familia Vota
National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
Rock the Vote

LWVC Coalition Advice & Policies

Groups we partner with for advocacy work:

ACLU
California Calls
California Clean Money Campaign
California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom -- CCRF
California Forward
CalPIRG
Common Cause
Evolve California
Green California
PTA
Sierra Club
Natural Resources Defense Council - NRDC
Voices for Progress

Sources of Reliable Information

EdSource
California Budget & Policy Center
PPIC
California Water Foundation
California Healthcare Foundation
Institute for Governmental Studies -- IGS
California Civic Engagement Project



VOTING

AAPD will advocate for policies that allow people with disabilities to fully participate in the political process, including ensuring the accessibility of polling locations and through promoting the availability of accessible voting technology.

[Support AAPD's work](#)

REV UP: Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power

The REV UP Campaign aims to increase the political participation of the disability community while also engaging candidates and the media on disability issues. REV UP stands for Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power!

National Disability Voter Registration Week (NDVRW) each year on the **third week of July**

to increase the political power of people with disabilities while also engaging candidates and the media to recognize the disability community.

This is the perfect partnering opportunity for your local League.

LWV US is a partner – WHY NOT YOUR LEAGUE?

Mark your calendar for the third week of July, 2019.

Find information:

<https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/national-disability-voter-registration-week/>

AAPD provides tool kits for League to use:

- **National Disability Voter Registration Week Toolkit**

The NDVRW Toolkit includes: a guide on how to organize voter registration events, ideas on other ways to participate in NDVRW, sample social media posts and graphics, and other resources. If you are planning voter registration events or other activities, please keep the REV UP Campaign updated on your efforts.

- **Statement of Support for the REV UP Campaign and National Disability Voter Registration Week**

We are collecting sign-ons from organizations (national, state, and local) to show their support for the REV UP Campaign and National Disability Voter Registration Week. Supporting organizations will have their name and logo listed on the REV UP website to show the vast support behind the Campaign. View the list of REV UP partners.----> **LWV!**

- **2018 NDVRW Flyer – English & Spanish (Regular | Easy-Read)**

The 2020 Census Should

Count Everyone



Be Transparent, Easy and
Accessible



Reflect the Diversity of our
Communities



5 Actions Toward a Better Census

1. Join a state or local Complete Count Committee.
2. Using demographic information, identify the communities in your area that are likely to be undercounted.
3. Engage with partners and allies and assess entry points into undercounted communities.
4. Launch community education forums for the public and elected officials.
5. Conduct letter-writing campaigns focused to your local papers and elected officials underscoring why a full count benefits your area.



lww.org/voting-rights-tools/census-action-kit

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Partners Play Pivotal Role in Increasing Census Response Rates

JASMINE PRIDGEN

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/08/census-2020-partnerships.html>

|
AUGUST 21, 2018

In the runup to the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will conduct the most robust marketing and outreach effort in its history.

This will include calling on community partners to help increase participation in the 2020 Census and to eliminate undercounting among vulnerable populations.

[The Census Bureau's Integrated Partnership and Communications](#) (IPC) program is responsible for conveying the importance of the 2020 Census to the entire population of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas.

Setting Priorities

The IPC team focuses on three priorities:

- **Educating** people about the 2020 Census to improve the effectiveness of enumerators.
- **Encouraging** and motivating people to respond to the 2020 Census on their own.
- **Engaging** grassroots organizations to encourage hard-to-count groups and those who are not motivated to respond.

For the 2010 Census, the partnership program included both a national and regional focus, building ties with more than 300,000 state, local, and tribal governments, community-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations and advocacy groups, and the private sector.

More Partnership Specialists

The Census Bureau is seeking even more support for the next decennial census. For 2020, the Census Bureau plans to hire 1,500 partnership specialists at the local level, up from approximately 800 partnership specialists hired during the 2010 Census.

In addition to the added partnership specialists encouraging census responses, the 2020 Census will also have the most accessible survey in census history.

For the first time, the 2020 Census will feature an internet self-response option, making it easier for anyone, anywhere to respond at any time.

Other technological advancements will include leveraging digital and social media to tailor and direct messages, often times in multiple languages.

Overall, the Census Bureau will spend \$480 million on marketing and advertising for the 2020 Census, up from \$376 million in 2010.

Real-time Information Online

The [Partnership website](#) will provide information and tools, as well as a listing of existing partners (with their consent) for collaboration opportunities.

The website will provide near real-time updates to the database of partners and stakeholders, media, and self-response progress monitoring at the local level.

The Census Bureau plans to cultivate important partnerships with numerous national and Federal organizations, representing a host of industries, sectors, and interests, with reach across various programs that provide services to hard-to-count populations.

Through the new enterprise partnerships framework, the Census Bureau is improving upon its outward focus and technological advancements to keep in line with industry, academia, and local communities' best practices for community engagement and outreach.

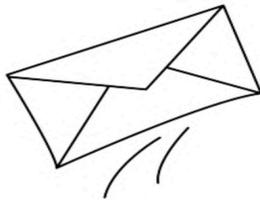
“The Census Bureau will be utilizing technology like never before for the 2020 Census,” said Kaile Bower, chief of the Integrated Partnership and Communications Branch at the Census Bureau. “We are excited about these innovations and look forward to seeing an increase in response rates.”

Other opportunities to partner: <https://www.census.gov/partners.html>

Learn

Partners are critical to the success of all U.S. Census Bureau surveys and censuses. Do you know how participating can help your community and the economy? Learn more here.

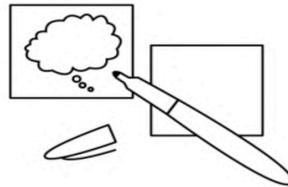
HOW TO PARTNER



Join Us

Sign Up >

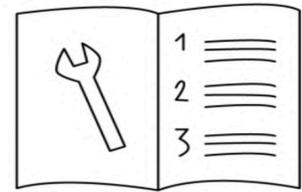
Sign up here to get updates for supporting current Census Bureau efforts and programs.



Take action

Few Simple Ways >

We have outlined a few simple ways you can start engaging with the Census Bureau, even if you only have five minutes.



Use our tools and resources

Tools and Resources >

We have tools and best practices to help you increase participation in Census Bureau surveys and to increase data awareness.

1. SIGN UP: <https://www.census.gov/partners/join.html>

2. TAKE ACTION

Engage

You can make a difference whether you have just a moment to spare or can commit to a sustained effort.

ACTIVATE

Make a difference in under five minutes!

Follow @uscensusbureau

Stay up-to-date with Census Bureau [news](#) and share our content through social media channels.



Sign up

[Join](#) the effort to support and help increase awareness of Census Bureau data and activities in your community, and let us know what aspects of the census are of interest to you.

Spread the word

Share or download Census Bureau data products, [visualizations](#) and [infographics](#).

3. ENGAGE

Library

- About the Library
- America Counts: Stories
- Audio
- Infographics & Visualizations**
- Interactive Gallery
- Photos
- Publications
- Reference
- Videos
- Working Papers

Infographics & Visualizations

All **2018** 2017 2016 2015 2014 2013 2012

2018

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GET IN TOUCH

We are counting on you!

Help us build the partnership experience by [sharing your interests](#) or sending feedback to census.partners@census.gov.



Informing the nation through quality data

Federal funds, grants and support to states, counties and communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, race, ethnicity and other factors. Your community benefits the most when it has access to accurate demographic and socioeconomic data through an accurate count of population, households and businesses.

The Census Bureau provides statistical snapshots of demographic and economic trends used by organizations, businesses and individuals. We partner with the public and private sector, nonprofits, community-based organizations and academia to harness the power of our data, support each other's mission and co-create solutions to increase the use of data and participation in surveys and programs.

League Submits Comments Regarding Citizenship on 2020 Census

The League submitted organizational comments regarding the inclusion of the citizenship question on the 2020 Census.

August 2, 2018

Ms. Jennifer Jessup
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer
Department of Commerce
Room 6616
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Submitted via <http://www.regulations.gov> (Docket # USBC-2018-0005)

RE: Comments on Proposed Information Collection on 2020 Census

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of the United States, we write to offer comments on the 2020 Census proposed information collection. We urge the Department of Commerce to remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census form, as it will jeopardize the accuracy of the Census in all communities – an outcome that the nation will have to live with for the following 10 years.

Simply put, a fair and accurate census is essential for all basic functions of our society. That is why including a citizenship question on the 2020 Census, when the weight of scientific evidence indicates the question will undermine a successful count of our nation's people, is a grave mistake.

We believe in a full, fair and accurate census. The collection of useful, objective data about our nation's demographics, housing, economy and communities is vitally important. Not only is a nationwide census required by the Constitution, it is integral to our democracy, ensuring that district lines are fairly drawn, and appropriate resources are allocated. The federal government uses census-derived data to direct at least \$800 billion annually in federal assistance to states, localities and families. The data also guides important community decisions affecting schools, housing, health care services, business investment and much more. A Census undercount or miscount will compromise the lives of millions of people and will cost more money to rectify in the long run.

The League believes including a citizenship question in the 2020 Census will cause participation to plummet and threaten the accuracy of the Census. Census data is not only used to draw state and congressional districts based on population, but it is also used by local governments to plan for public safety and make investments in the future of their communities. An undercount of persons in any given area could result in inadequate disaster responders, insufficient resources for transportation and education and will impact the overall health and safety of communities. An accurate Census is critical to all American communities. An accurate count is too important to risk the negative results with this political move.

The last time the Census included a question about citizenship was in 1950, well before the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA). There is no justification to the Department of Justice's claims that adding a citizenship question is necessary to enforce the VRA.

The harm from this decision would be irreversible. Communities that are already at greater risk of being undercounted – people of color, young children, and low-income rural and urban residents –

will suffer the most. Including a citizenship question on the Census will undermine participation and threatens the overall Census process that is vital to our democracy. A full, fair and accurate census is critical for our communities.

The League of Women Voters strongly opposes asking about citizenship status in the 2020 Census and we urge the Department of Commerce to remove the proposed citizenship question from the data collection forms.

The Census Bureau has a statutory obligation under the Paperwork Reduction Act to minimize the burden of information collection on the public. The clear standards for including topics and questions in the census, described in numerous bureau documents, have not been met and there is evidence to suggest intentional circumvention of those standards. Therefore, the proposed citizenship status question does not have practical utility and should be removed from the 2020 Census questionnaire.

The Census Bureau should remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census form and consult further with the Secretary of Commerce and with career professionals in the Justice Department about ways to produce data that clearly and demonstrably meet the bureau's own standards, as well as broader federal standards and guidelines, for collecting data from the American public in federal surveys and censuses.

On behalf of our more than 750 state and local affiliates and our 300,000 members and supporters across the country we respectfully submit these comments. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the questions to be asked in the 2020 Census. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Celina Stewart, Director of Advocacy and Litigation, at 202-843-0433 or cstewart@lww.org.

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Resources

- Showcasing Our Strengths: Telling Our Collective Story PowerPoint slides
- Research Based Peer Review Articles
- D.E. & I. Learning List – Articles, Books and Ted Talk Links