

TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

Update April 2018

Recognizing the changing external environment -both in the nature of volunteerism and the growing number of competing organizations in the democracy space- the League of Women Voters of the United States, with input from state and local Leagues around the country, has been working over the past several years to ensure that the League enters its second century strong, visible, and relevant. We've been referring to this as our "transformation journey."

As the next step in that journey, LWVUS has published a "Transformation Roadmap" that includes specific action steps to be implemented. It is a synthesis of many threads of work, including input from Leagues across the country, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, review of the larger non-profit environment and the professional expertise of consulting firms. The action steps will help us achieve the vision of a network of vibrant Leagues that are powerfully communicating our story consistently at all levels; engaging and welcoming new members, supporters, and volunteers; embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion; and has the resources necessary to support our core work and have a meaningful impact for the next century and beyond. In short, it is a way forward to ensure the successful future of the League.

The Roadmap, which is some 41 pages long, is an important analysis and resource for the entire organization. With that said, it presents some hard truths and does require all of us to embrace some amount of change. At times, change might feel uncomfortable, but it is important to remember that all levels of the organization are partners with the same goal. We all have a deep love of and loyalty to the League and wish to see it succeed for another 100 years.

What follows is an executive summary of the Roadmap – how it evolved, analysis of the work done, and next steps. We hope that the summary will give you a flavor of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead and how we will take advantage of them together. The full document is available by emailing membership@lww.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assessment and Transformation Roadmap

Over the past two years, in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the League's founding, national and state leaders have engaged in a process of self-reflection, environmental scanning, hard discussions, and tough decisions related to the continued relevance and health of the League network. Common challenges identified include: membership that is not reflective of our communities, a lack of tools to more effectively carry out the mission of the organization, and our inability to demonstrate our collective impact as an organization. Participants at every level have embraced the need for change, and now we are at a critical place of taking action to ensure the efficacy and impact of the League in its second century.

Following Convention 2016, conversations began including representatives from state and local Leagues. These meetings included a cross-section of the country, large and small states, urban and rural Leagues. The various summits, meetings (including National Council), calls and committee work led to the creation of a ***Transformation Roadmap***, a 41-page document that is an analysis of internal and external stakeholder interviews and, most importantly, a series of recommended action steps for LWV moving forward.

The League undertakes this Transformation process at a critical time. There is an opportunity for greater mission impact given an energized public, the League's sound reputation, and the compelling need for its work. Taking advantage of the opportunity requires the League to look both within and outside itself to understand the operating (and competitive) environment in which it works along with its own capacity and will to change.

What will NOT change are the core elements of who we are as an organization:

- **The League will continue to focus on our mission impact work.** All of this transformation work stems from the desire to be a more effective and impactful organization.
- **The League will remain nonpartisan.** This is 'the' non-negotiable statement and a crucial part of our brand. We will look at ways we can use our nonpartisan positions with new and different organizations to be stronger advocates at the local, state and national levels.
- **The League will remain a membership organization.** We will explore different ways that individuals join and engage with us.

This document summarizes the four critical priorities affirmed by the national board and the recommendations for transformation: Advancing a clear strategic focus; building a more inclusive culture; building a healthier League network; and increasing capacity at all levels. Under each category there is the assessment from the larger document, recommendations moving forward, and proposed next steps. LWVUS is committing to those listed for the "national organization," and we hope that local and state League leaders will join in the transformation process by committing to those marked for state and local Leagues.

1. ADVANCING A CLEAR STRATEGIC FOCUS

Assessment: The League struggles to successfully tell its story. The organization lacks the proper story collection channels to demonstrate relevance and impact.

Recommendations: The programmatic strategies under the Campaign for Making Democracy Work offer the League an opportunity to leverage the competitive advantages of the organization, including its trusted brand, nonpartisan stance, and on-the-ground network for greater mission impact. Telling a stronger story will increase our visibility, relevance and funding opportunities. It also leads to more engagers in our mission; future leadership of the organization; and, most importantly, increased social impact.

As part of this process, the national board adopted the following mission, vision and value statements:

- Mission Statement: Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.
- Vision Statement: We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.
- Value Statement: We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

The mission, vision, and value statements guide the League in our core mission work of what we do and why we do it.

Next Steps:

- The national organization will continue its focus on the goals set in the strategic plan and the Campaign for Making Democracy Work®:

- Voter protection and mobilizing
- Election reform
- Money in politics, constitutional amendment and redistricting
- State and local Leagues commit to at least one of the programmatic strategies under the Campaign for Making Democracy Work®.
- The national organization will begin to utilize the new mission, vision and value statements adopted by the national board in more communications.
- State and local Leagues should adopt the use of these statements.
- State and local Leagues should embrace reporting programmatic data, both quantitative and qualitative, to the national office in order for all to measure our collective impact and tell our full story.
- The national organization will upgrade VOTE411.org, our core one-stop election information tool, over the next biennium to improve the function and reach more voters.

2. BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Assessment: The League has failed to adapt to current trends in volunteerism and embrace diverse populations. The “League Way”—a longstanding, commonly held set of rules and practices—is often regarded as “unwelcoming to new members” and an “orientation toward the past,” slowing progress on new challenges and opportunities.

Recommendations: Create a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, trusting and attuned to the needs of today’s volunteers so that we grow our organization and have a greater impact.

- Commit to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The League has identified its lack of racial, economic, age and social diversity as an impediment to achieving its mission and as a barrier to greater impact and growth. Equity prioritizes efforts to ensure the most under-served and marginalized among us has as much of an opportunity to succeed as the most well-served and advantaged.

Many state and local Leagues have taken steps to build a more diverse membership. The national organization has committed resources and expertise to apply throughout the League network. Going forward, the League will need to adopt a bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom action agenda to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in its own ranks as well as in its core work.

Next Steps:

- The national organization will provide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion tools and training for League leaders at Convention 2018.
- State and local Leagues should commit to sharing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion tools with their members.
- The national organization will use allocated resources to develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan for the entire organization.
- State and local Leagues should welcome new volunteers, even if those individuals do not want to become traditional members.

- The next class of Shur Fellows will focus their efforts on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion implementation.

- **Adapt to Modern Nonprofit Best Practices**

Despite some modest recent upticks, League membership has steadily declined by almost a third over the past few decades. Current volunteers are looking for ways to engage that might not be traditional dues-paying membership. While the nature of volunteerism in the US has changed, there are other ways for people to participate in the League as “engagers.” This group includes donors, those who opt-in to emails from LWV, social media followers, and advocacy action takers. The League must meet these new engagers where their interests lie.

Next Steps:

- The national organization will revamp the board nominations process, using explicit criteria in addition to the current apparent emphasis on League tenure.
- State and local Leagues should structure opportunities and communications with individuals to facilitate their entry into leadership roles and embrace new ideas about the way League operates.
- State and local Leagues should take advantage of the Student PMP Membership pilot program by reducing or eliminating student dues or PMP charged to local Leagues.

3. **BUILDING A HEALTHIER LEAGUE NETWORK**

Assessment: The three-tiered structure of the League is cumbersome and has become an impediment to effective, efficient operations, decision-making and impact. Priorities set by the entire League, including capacity-building support at the state and local level, should also be clear in order to accomplish those priorities.

Recommendations: Building a healthy League network requires all levels to focus on the mission and vision, aligned with programmatic priorities, and operate with impact and efficacy. A consistent goal across the organization is being seen as “one seamless League.” A key opportunity to support this vision is to make it simpler and easier to join the League as a dues-paying member.

Next Steps:

- The national organization will lead a process to explore a “Join at All Levels” online experience. This process will explore the systems and businesses processes needed to build engagement, membership, and increase retention. “Join at All Levels” could require major structural changes with far-reaching impact on how the League presents itself to the world, how newcomers experience their relationship to the League, and the relationship between various levels of the League. Implementing this “Join at All Levels” membership is deceptively complex. In addition to culture change and the need to develop a significant technology infrastructure, this will have immediate and long-term financial implications.
- State and local Leagues should assist the national office in beta testing the “Join at All Levels” membership platform and ensuring the supporting business processes meet the needs of diverse Leagues.

- State and local Leagues must commit to a brand usage and affiliation agreement to help ensure consistency and integrity throughout the organization.

4. **INCREASING CAPACITY AT ALL LEVELS**

Assessment: The administrative demands on all levels of the League limits the ability for more mission impact work.

Recommendations: To accomplish our mission impact work and tell our story more effectively requires an increase in capacity — including staff resources — to support technology, communications and fund development.

Next Steps:

- The national organization will grant more programmatic funding to state and local Leagues to work on the core elements of the Campaign for Making Democracy Work.
- The national organization will explore the feasibility of one organization-wide, comprehensive database of all stakeholders and interactions, shared across national, state and local Leagues and the ways this might interact with the “Join at All Levels” effort.
- The national organization will work to increase state capacity by providing trainings and resources, increasing communications assistance to provide more frequent tools and information, and providing technical support to leverage funding opportunities in their communities.
- State and local Leagues should participate in a baseline assessment so that national understands the collective capacity of the organization.

CONCLUSION

This transformation roadmap is a living document and serves as a guide. Implementing the goals in this document will be a challenge to balance our desired outcomes with available resources. All levels of League have a stake in the future of the collective organization and this transformation requires sustained commitment from all. Buy-in, collaboration and resources will be required from all levels as we evolve into a stronger, more impactful League with a focus on building a more modern League positioned toward the future and growth of the organization – not the past.

Finally, we know that many state and local leaders remain committed to transforming our organization to improve the League’s health and external relevance. Our mission statement clearly articulates why we must continue the transformation journey. Our ability to empower voters and defend democracy is dependent on a strong, healthy and vibrant League network and must be the rallying call for all of us who serve as League leaders.

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

We are eager for your feedback on the Transformation Roadmap. What are you excited about, and where are your concerns? Please take a few minutes to provide some feedback and help us move this transformation forward together.

<https://www.surveymzmo.com/s3/4331288/Transformation-Roadmap-Executive-Summary-Feedback>

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