

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BOARD RETREATS: BUILDING “TEAM LEAGUE”

Following election at annual meeting, the new board gathers for its first meeting. Often this meeting takes place in a “retreat” format. Typically, a retreat is a relaxed, informal gathering where the League’s leadership team can get to know one another, build working relationships, learn about their board roles and responsibilities, and plan for the coming year. The facilitator should be someone who understands your community and its issues, as well as League organization and processes. You will need a recorder, flip chart and markers.

What happens at a retreat?

The local League leadership team can:

- Do a self-assessment:
 - How are we doing?
 - Are we doing the right things?
 - Are we doing enough? Too much?
 - Do we have a good enough team to do the things we are trying to do?
 - Do we have enough members for our teams?
 - Do we have the right kind of members for our teams? Are there unique types of members we should try to recruit?
 - Should we recruit new talents, such as board members, leaders with like-minded organizations?
- Develop a vision and action plan for the year ahead (see below*)
- Review local policies and procedures to remind continuing board members and to orient new board members.
- Explore ways boards can work together more efficiently, methods of distributing the workload evenly, and delegating appropriate tasks to off-board members.
- Develop a monthly calendar for the coming year.

Topics for discussion:

- *League Policies and Procedures*
 - yearly review
 - update as needed
- You might use the *Annual Checkup for Local or State Leagues* to start off your board retreat or orientation. Discuss answers to evaluate the local League activities.
- *Membership*
 - recruitment and retention techniques
 - training and involving new members
 - activities to be planned, scheduled, and placed in the calendar.
- *Voters Service and Citizen Education*
 - Voter registration drives
 - Candidate forums
 - Voter guides
- *Program* (Study and action priorities as determined by members at annual meeting)
 - What program is most important for this League to cover?
 - Is there interest?
 - Will it attract new members?
 - Are there people to work on it?
- *Fundraising*—Plan and schedule a fundraising strategy that enables the League to achieve its goals for the year.
 - How much money is needed this year?
 - How should it be done?
 - Who is going to do it?
 - When will it be done?

League Phrases

Prepare cards with phrases on them such as *Doing it the League Way*, *Flexible Meeting Schedule*, *Creating Inclusion*, *Seeking Change*, *Diversity*, *Board Tenure*, *Growing Membership*, and *Growing Financially*. Pair off the board members, have them look at the card and tell what the phrase means to each of them. Then show the card to the group for further discussion. The board can decide if any of the subjects will be integral to their planning.

League Terms

If the board or group of members are new to League, an exercise similar to that above might use basic League terms chosen from the "Glossary." This is a good way to learn "League Lingo" and the processes unique to the League.

Ice Breaking Activity

On any team, one of the most difficult, yet important, steps is to become acquainted with other members. You may have served together on your League board of directors for years, but most Leagues have a few newbies. Even if you don't, on your retreat or board orientation take a few minutes to get to know a bit more about each other. To make the job of introducing yourself a little easier, consider the following statements and share responses.

Who am I? _____

Money, time, and responsibility aside, I would rather be doing _____ more than anything else.

If I were going to a costume party I would dress as a _____ because _____.

What I value most is: _____

What motivates me is: _____

What I like most about the League is _____

What I like least about the League is: _____

*VISIONING & GOAL SETTING ACTIVITY

Topics for discussion:

1. WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE LEAGUE OF _____ ?

- If we could be all that we want to be, what would we look like?
- How do we want the outside world (people we want to influence; receivers of our message) to perceive us?
- What do we want our image to be? Interested party? Advocate? Lobbyist? Fearsome? Friendly?
- Why?

2. WHERE ARE WE IN RELATION TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE?

- Is there a gap?
- How far apart are we? (How big is the gap?)

3. HOW DO WE GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE? WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

- Tasks
- Who does them
- Other resources (e.g., funding)
- Where
- When
- How
- What speed

Example: 2011-12 LWVSC Vision & Action Plan