

TIPS FOR ACHIEVING DIVERSITY

The League of Women Voters believes in the values of diversity, inclusiveness and the power of collective decision making for the common good. This belief is reflected in the LWVUS Diversity Policy:

LWVUS Diversity Policy

The League, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. The League subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

The League affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of America in its board, staff and programs.

Every League is expected to adopt its own written policy on diversity and to devise a plan of action to become an organization that fully reflects its community.

Commitment. The most important step League leaders can take in meeting this challenge is to make a personal commitment to diversity. Learning to be more culturally sensitive and practicing inclusiveness must become a day-to-day priority for each of us as individuals before meaningful diversity can become a reality for our organization.

Training. Valuing diversity is something we have to learn and practice. Training programs can help all of us come to terms with our biases and assumptions about others and learn how to create an inclusive environment for all members. Leaders committed to diversity will provide opportunities for their members to:

- Become knowledgeable about culturally diverse groups;
- Become comfortable with discussions about diversity;
- Identify barriers within the League that operate against achieving diversity, and
- Develop remedies to remove these barriers.

They will also recognize that developing the skills to manage diversity takes time and that training will be needed at many points in the process.

Setting goals. Many groups of people are not currently represented in any significant numbers within the League. Increases in racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity, the number of lower income members, the number of members in the work force, members who are younger and members with disabilities are all needed. The task is a large one and will need to be managed in stages.

Translating diversity goals into action. Diversity strategies should be woven into all aspects of League planning and League work.

Program. Design programs that serve all segments of the community. Meet with representatives of diverse groups to identify areas of common interest and discuss opportunities for collaboration. Seek out an organization that serves a group targeted in your diversity plan and join together in developing a program to address an issue of mutual concern. Working together builds trust and mutual respect.

Meetings. Hold meetings in locations that are inviting to all people in the community. Experience indicates that public or semi-public facilities are more successful sites than are private homes. Make sure all sites are barrier free. Schedule meetings at times that are convenient to a diverse audience.

Publicity. Traditional means of inviting participation in League activities are not effective in reaching all audiences. Make use of alternative community newspapers, student publications and church bulletins. Personal invitations and follow-up are invariably more effective than printed announcements.

Environment. Embrace diversity. Welcome new points of view. Provide opportunities for all members to contribute their talents and develop new skills. Be prepared to accept the changes that will come by bringing in members with different backgrounds and life experiences. Encourage members to be "diversely" active in their everyday lives.

Evaluation. Review progress and update goals and strategies regularly.

Compiled from *Starting Point—A Guide to Organizing New Leagues*