

GUIDE FOR BOARD ORIENTATION

Every League Board of Directors should schedule an annual board orientation meeting. A thorough orientation gives new board members greater confidence in carrying out their responsibilities and minimizes problems for the board later on. It is helpful to provide this orientation with experienced local League personnel or request a trainer from the state League to lead the discussion.

Plan to hold the board orientation as soon as possible after the new board is formed. See that board members have the files and tools of their predecessors and that they look to them before the meeting. Each should also have *In League: Guidelines for League Boards* and LWVM booklet on *Local League Boards*.

Remember that this is a volunteer organization and it is important to accomplish the work of the League without causing people to feel overwhelmed, guilty or undue stress. This can result in people not only leaving the board but the League as well. Keeping this in mind and good planning can avoid many problems.

POINTS TO BE COVERED

I. League of Women Voters Mission Statement

1. Set League goals and priorities consistent with the mission statement

II. Policies and Procedures of the League

1. Bylaws
 - First three articles should be same as state League and LWVUS. Review to keep them current, changes made at Annual Meeting by membership vote.
2. Nonpartisan Policy
 - Discuss why it is necessary; review current policy; and discussion of policy for handling potential conflicts
3. Policy for Candidates Forums
 - Who qualifies; format and rules
4. Policy for Joining Coalitions
 - the state League policy may be adapted to use locally
5. Board norms
 - day and time of meetings, attendance policy and absence notification, weather cancellations and process for informing board members, setting time for socializing and meeting breaks, reimbursement policy, portfolio reporting expectations, deadlines, attendance at other League meetings, relationship with your state League and LWVUS
6. Specific policies that pertain to your local League

III. Total Board Responsibility

1. To advance League goals
 - Voters Service/Citizen Information
 - Program – study, discussion, consensus, action

2. To plan and guide League policy
 - Set goals and priorities
 - Schedule activities (calendar planning)
 - Make all policy decisions
 - Approve plans of committees
 - Review and evaluate
3. To promote membership growth and involvement
 - Provide variety of opportunities for participation (spot jobs, study groups, action campaigns, administrative committees)
 - Provide oversight and assistance in recruitment and orientation
 - Be certain the year's activities will provide a satisfying membership experience
4. To manage finance matters and keep the League fiscally sound
 - Help plan and assist with finance drive or fundraising event (both member and community), be alert to potential donors or fundraising opportunities
 - Watchdog monthly expenditures and income
 - Know what the budget allocation is for portfolio
 - Meet state and national PMP obligations
5. To determine consensus
 - Role of committee
 - to study topic adopted by Annual Meeting, share information with membership before consensus meeting, present consensus questions to board, give a balanced presentation at the consensus meeting with discussion leader and recorder for consensus discussion, and prepare consensus report to board
 - Role of board
 - to assist in the formation of the study committee and selection of the chairperson ensuring that they are unbiased, to approve consensus questions, to attend consensus meeting, to approve consensus report and new program position and to take action on position

IV. The Role of the Officers

- President(s)
- Vice President(s)
- Secretary
- Treasurer

V. The Role of the Directors

1. Individual Portfolio Responsibility
 - To help plan and administer the League as a whole
 - To represent the League in your community

- To represent the membership and keep them informed of League plans by submitting articles and announcements to the bulletin
- To set goals and priorities and methods of accomplishing them. Make them realistic and achievable. Optimize personnel available
- To determine action to be taken, based on member consensus
- Understand chain of command, who does your portfolio report to
- Discuss your position with your predecessor to be clear on your responsibilities and past activities of the portfolio
- Form a committee or get an assistant. This will help you accomplish your plans and avoid work overload. In addition it will train and develop future League leaders and fill your position when you leave.
- Pre-plan with committee
- Present proposed plans to board for approval
- Give periodic progress reports to board
- Carry out board and membership decisions
- Recruit new members (be prepared to ask people to join at every opportunity) and assist in developing leadership
- Attend as many other League meetings as possible and get to know your League's membership
- Be up-to-date on your portfolio, e.g. information and activities locally and from the state League and LWVUS, written report on your portfolio's activities at end of year (may be published in Annual Meeting booklet), current publications, notebook or files, etc. This will make the transition, at the end of your term, easier for you and your successor.

VI. Board Meetings

1. Written agenda, with estimated timing, set out ahead of meeting. Board members should notify the President(s) of matters that should be put on the agenda for discussion and/or vote
2. Parliamentary or business-like procedure
3. Importance in attendance or proper notification if you will be absent
4. Begin and end on time
5. Full discussion and consideration of all proposals; the board makes the decision, the committees plan and implement
6. Policymaking and exchange of information. No committee work.
7. Clear assignment of responsibility
8. Full minutes taken for reference
9. Evaluation of League activities
10. Treasurer's report for fiscal monitoring
11. Board members should be prepared by reviewing the agenda and minutes before each meeting to enhance complete discussion, listening and decision making

VII. Interrelationships

1. Among neighboring Leagues

– Program cooperation, shared administrative jobs: possible examples being joint bulletins, fundraising, Voters Service and publication orders

2. Between local, state and national boards

- sending in minutes, bulletins to state
- bylaw and program proposals
- sharing information and techniques
- suggested candidates for nomination
- attending state Council and Convention and national Convention
- asking for assistance with training, speakers, or problems and concerns