

Following Up with Prospects (From In-Person Events)

Election season is our most visible time as an organization. It also is the time that we have the greatest opportunity to gather names of “hot prospects” (i.e., individuals who appreciate the value of the League’s work). At candidates’ forums when we have a sign-in sheet, when individuals call or ask for a voters’ guide, and when we conduct other voter service activities, we have opportunities to gather contact information of individuals who can see the tangible benefits of the League’s work.

As our voter service work wraps up for this year, the question becomes: How do we stay connected with these individuals who have given us their contact information?

There are many different ways – using different mechanisms. This guidance outlines a range or menu of options for your League to consider. Identify and choose the method(s) that will work best for your League.

Ideas for identifying our “prospects”:

- *Online registration list*
- *Sign-in sheets*
- *A business card cup or basket at your next event*
- *Membership ambassadors with “give & take business cards” circulating*
- *From members & friends*

What mechanism to use?

There are four main vehicles by which you can follow up, each with its own set of pros & cons.

- **By phone:** This is the most personal and allows for the most back-and-forth sharing of information. This is a great way to engage some members who may be unable to get out to meetings or contribute in other ways. However, it is time-consuming.
- **By email:** This is the cheapest and perhaps least resource intensive method for follow-up. It offers opportunities such as issuing surveys. The downside is that we are all flooded with email. Will the message be overlooked?
- **By mail:** This is the most costly of the mechanisms, but it does allow you to make a more formal appeal to the prospect. And, especially if it is personalized in some way (e.g., a short note in the margin such as “Great to see you at the candidates’ forum!”), this can really catch someone’s attention.
- **By text:** This may be the most effective means of follow up if the message can be tailored to this medium – short and sweet. As with email, though, everyone is flooded with text messages. Always provide a way to opt-out of future texts, as some may find this mechanism invasive.

What’s our message?

Once you have decided what vehicle that you want to use, you need to determine your message. What are you going to ask of them? What do we want to tell them about the League? How can we engage them more?

There are a variety of messages that can be used, including:

- **Send a reminder:** Encourage them to vote on Election Day, and remind them about polling place hours, where they can find their polling place, and what they might need to bring with them. Point them to your League's voting information and vote411.org.
- **Invite them:** Invite them to attend the next League event. And, maybe even ask them to help with it! Would they invite a friend? Would they share the event on their personal Facebook page?
- **Brag about our impact:** Tell them more about League by sharing a recent victory or success. If there isn't something immediate in your League, maybe there is something happening in another part of the country, such as in Texas, South Carolina, and Florida, where Leagues are leading the way to preserve voting and registration rights.
- **Thank them:** Everyone appreciates being thanked. Acknowledge their time and effort in participating in the event they attended.
- **Ask them:** Send out a short, simple survey asking them about the event they attended. It could include questions such as –
 - *How did you hear about the event?*
 - *What were your impressions?*
 - *What type of event (or topic) would you like to see at an upcoming meeting?*
 - *What issues are important to you?*

Free online survey programs (such as www.surveymonkey.com) are very simple to use.

- **Call them to action:** Ask them to take some kind of action. Take a friend to vote! Become a fan of the League's Facebook page! Follow us on Twitter! Send us a donation!
- **Give them opportunities:** Ask them to volunteer at the next League event. What is a small task that you might ask them to assist with? Welcome people? Help set up the room? Collect questions from the audience?
- **Connect them with a League "buddy" or mentor:** Recruit League members who will stay in touch with them for the upcoming months. This gives them a contact and someone to ask questions, go to meetings with and generally provide a friendly welcome to the League. The mentor could be someone who works on an issue of interest to them. This can be a good way to retain new members by keeping them linked to what is happening.
- **Share a League publication:** Send along your League's newsletter or the state League's publication. Forward the LWVUS bi-weekly Update and encourage them to subscribe to it for up-to-date information. Encourage them to read the LWVUS Blog (www.lwv.org/blog) for current information about the organization and its accomplishments.

And, of course, no matter what message is sent, there should be an invitation to join!

Who will do this?

Doing this follow-up is an important task, but one that doesn't have to be done by members of the board – or even long-time League members. Once a plan is in place, this is a discrete task that could be done by a new or emerging leader. In fact, it could be a leadership development opportunity. Look to see who else in the League could help with this. Perhaps, it is even a small committee that can work together to do this follow-up work.