



League of Women Voters of Michigan

600 W. Saint Joseph St., Suite 3G, Lansing, MI 48933-2288
517-484-5383 www.LWVMI.org

EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Overview of LWVMI Membership Development Policy and Practices

The following LWVMI State Board approved membership development guidelines and policies have been developed using best practices to meet the interest of community members expressing interest to develop a League in their Michigan community and to support existing Leagues. The structure has been carefully reviewed to insure the success of an independent LWV through coaching by an established local League or by the state board VP of membership. The structure is designed to nurture a developing unit to the confidence level required to service their community. In addition, guidelines have been developed to support established Leagues for successful management.

For specific requirements for each stage of development, please see:

- LWVMI Geographical Unit Policy
- LWVMI State (Member at Large) Guidelines
- LWVMI Requirements for Obtaining Local League Status
- LWVMI Maintenance of Local League Status

The steps listed are intended to be progressive, but in some cases, the step from Geographical unit to independent local League may skip over the State MAL guideline.

Best practices applied are from the LWVMI experiences, the MLD (Membership, Leadership Development) national program and the experiences and desires of the community members intending to develop and/or continue an LWV in their community.

A well-organized file of accomplishments (both electronic and hard-copy) as outlined in the following policies should be presented to the mentor League then to the LWVMI State Board for support (approval) to sanction the unit's next level of recognition. Adherence to the LWVMI Board Diversity Policy and the Membership Dues policy is required.

It is not intended for Michigan LWV members to participate in other forms of League development beyond or instead of what is outlined in this overview and the membership policy package.



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LWVMI BOARD POLICIES

Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI), in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism. LWVMI recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making, and subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds.

Inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs, and therefore, LWVMI will in both principles and practices promote the inclusion in participation in any activity of LWVMI all persons whatever their gender, race, socio-economic status, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.



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LWVMI BOARD POLICIES

LWVMI Geographical Unit Guidelines

An LWVMI Geographical Unit is an entity of a local League designated as the mentor League and is answerable to it. LWVMI will serve as a consultant with the local/mentor LWV and the Geographical Unit.

A Geographical Unit is usually established by the following steps:

1. The idea for forming a Geographical Unit with the intent of ultimately becoming a local League arises through community or member inquiry.
2. LWVMI will work with the community and local Leagues to identify a League willing to mentor a Geographical Unit. Once a request has been made and a local/mentor League has agreed to host, an informational meeting is organized by the local/mentor LWV, a LWVMI field representative and the interested people. An informational meeting introduces the League including the non-partisan nature of the League and the limitations on action activities, assesses the level of interest, and explains the relationship of the Geographical Unit to the local/mentor LWV per these guidelines.
3. If all parties want to develop a Geographical Unit, the local/mentor League's board of directors will approve formation of a Geographical Unit and appoint an advisor. The official name of a Geographical Unit should be chosen at the time a Geographical Unit is authorized by a local/mentor League and should be "League of Women Voters of ____ (local/mentor League name), _____ (area) unit.
4. A designee from the Geographical Unit will be asked to serve on the local/mentor League board as voting or non-voting member. If the local/mentor League is part of the MLD program, the Geographical Unit should be represented on the calls.
5. All governance of LWVMI Geographical Unit is under the local/mentor League. For example: memberships, program, advocacy and budget are established by the mentor League with the leader(s) of the Geographical Unit. Any action in the name of the LWV by the Geographical Unit may be taken only with the board approval of the local/mentor League.

6. Members-At-Large, at their membership renewal time and new members, will pay dues to the local/mentor League. The local/mentor League will be responsible for membership responsibilities for the Geographical Unit, including LWVUS database, renewals and payments to state and national LWVs.
7. The Geographical Unit must work with the local/mentor League to establish what activities will be conducted by the Geographical Unit, such as program meetings; candidate forums, and participation in VOTE411.
8. Communication devices, such as Facebook, newsletters, website, etc., may be developed specific to the Geographical Unit's community with approval from the local/mentor League.
9. It is recommended that at least every two years, a Geographical Unit and the local/mentor League, determine if the Geographical Unit should continue:
 - as it is
 - become a Member-At-Large unit of the state
 - or become a new League of Women VotersThe state membership chair will work with the local/mentor League and Geographical Unit to facilitate any transition and provide the details for the transition.
10. Though it may choose to do so, the mentor League is not obligated to fund the voter service or visibility activities of the Geographical Unit beyond the amount of the dues collected from the Geographical Unit members. The Geographical Unit will be encouraged to raise funds to support the unit's activities and to support the mentor League's fundraising activities on the unit's behalf. The mentor League board is required to approve any independent fundraising activity of the Geographical Unit.

Adherence to the LWVMI Board Diversity Policy and the Membership Dues policy is required.



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State (Member-at-Large) Unit Guidelines

A member-at-large unit is an established entity of the state board and is answerable to it. The official name of a member at large unit may be chosen at the time a unit is authorized but is usually “League of Women Voters of Michigan, _____ chapter” with the blank filled in by the county, city or other jurisdictional identifying description.

A member-at-large unit may be started by initiative of the state board, request of a member-at-large, or request of a local league.

A member-at-large unit is usually established by the following steps:

1. The idea for forming a new League entity arises through citizen, or member, inquiry, by board initiative or by the development of a State Geographical Unit.
2. The initial informational process may be through a local citizen or member receiving and sharing information about the League, or by the state board identifying the community as a target area and working to distribute information about LWVMI. At the time of initial inquiry or initial identification of a community by the board, an MAL field representative will be appointed by the state board. The MAL field representative will be the resource, motivator, and monitor for the initial effort to establish a member-at-large unit.
3. Once a nucleus of interested people residing in the area is identified, an informational meeting is organized by the field representative and the interested people. An informational meeting: introduces the League including the non-partisan nature of the League and the limitations on action activities, assesses the level of interest, plans an organizational meeting, and recruits members for the new group, as well as planning how to recruit members after the informational meeting.
4. An organizational meeting is held when at least 8 members in the jurisdictional area have been obtained.

An organizational meeting selects a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary and a treasurer. The organizational meeting should adopt a non-partisan policy for the unit, or it may be adopted at a subsequent member meeting before the unit is officially recognized.

5. The fiscal year of the unit must be the same as that of LWVMI (July 1 to June 30).

LWVMI retains the responsibility for collecting dues and paying LWVUS PMP for members of a unit. Once a unit is recognized, the state board will furnish the unit a startup fund consisting of \$50. Thereafter, the unit will receive \$5 per member upon receipt by the state board of a budget for the ensuing fiscal year (July 1 to June 30).

6. Recognition of a MAL unit by the state board may occur at any time but will happen only if:

- A. The unit has at least 10 members.
- B. The unit has adopted a non-partisan policy
- C. The unit has identified an appropriate banking institution or alternative to hold funds of the unit and procedures for accounting for monies received and expended (not until the State Unit is recognized by the LWVMI State Board.)
- D. Bylaws developed
- E. Recognition is recommended by the designated field representative

7. The state board, at the time of recognition, will appoint a state advisor for a MAL unit. That person will be someone familiar with League procedures and policies and may or may not be a resident of the jurisdiction of the MAL unit but will be available to the unit and the unit's leadership on a personal as well as a phone basis.

8. MAL units may distribute state and nationally published League voter service materials. Permission from the state board is necessary for MAL units to publish local voter service material or to conduct candidate meetings. MAL units are encouraged to participate in state and national program items and program planning but must report their conclusions to LWVMI on both state and national program initiatives.

9. Action in the name of LWV may be taken only with permission of the state board. Members of MAL units are encouraged to take action as individuals on League positions.

10. An MAL unit may disband upon request of a majority of the members of the unit, or the determination of the LWVMI board. All funds held by the disbanded MAL unit will be paid to LWVMI.

11. The steps listed in the overview are intended to be progressive, but in some cases, the step from Geographical unit to independent local League may skip over the State MAL guideline.

Adherence to the LWVMI Board Diversity Policy and the Membership Dues policy is required.



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Requirements for Obtaining Local League Status

1. Board of Directors
2. Bylaws
3. Budget
4. Non-partisan policy
5. Evidence of:
 - membership development activities
 - understanding of the local community
 - voter service activities
 - fundraising activities
 - media coverage/social media presence
 - adherence to LWVMI Diversity and Membership Dues policies

Application Process:

1. Complete local League application form and gather the required attachments.
2. Review the completed application package with the Geographical Unit's mentor League and/or MAL Unit's State field representative.
3. Submit the application package to the LWVMI Vice President for Membership for review and possible recommendation to the LWVMI Board.
4. If the LWVMI VP for Membership recommends that the application be reviewed by the LWVMI Board, prepare your board and leadership for presentation to the LWVMI Board for endorsement.

Steps following Approval:

1. LWVMI President will send the application packet and a letter of authorization to LWVUS.
2. LWVUS will certify the local League and send a letter confirming recognition.
3. The newly certified local League can open a bank account, if it has not already established one.
4. The local League is an affiliate of LWVMI and thus shares its tax identification number (EIN) and IRS nonprofit status (501c4).
5. The local League annually must E-file the 990N postcard for the IRS and make payments for Per Member Payment (PMP) to LWVUS and LWVMI.
6. The local League must meet and continue to meet the minimum requirements for LWVMI local Leagues.



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Application for Local League Status

1. Name of MAL or Geographical Unit:
2. Name and address of MAL or Geographical Unit Chair:
3. Proposed name of new local League:
4. Name, address, phone and email of president for proposed new local League:
5. Date recognized as a State MAL (unless currently a Geographical Unit):
6. If the community has had a local League in the past, state the League's name:
7. Number of current paid members:
8. Congressional districts(s) in your service area:
9. Attach copies of:
 - a. Membership list indicating membership type (regular, student, household)
 - b. List and map of jurisdictions your League will encompass.
 - c. List of zip codes in your service area, so nationally recruited members can be assigned
 - d. Board list
 - e. Bylaws
 - f. Budget
 - g. Non-partisan policy
 - h. Membership--past activities and future plans, including efforts to increase membership, improve retention, develop leadership and build diversity. Attach copies of newsletters or social media links and web site address.
 - i. Program work—past activities and future plans, including community outreach that demonstrates an understanding of the demographics and size of the community to be served
 - j. Voter service—past activities and future plans, demonstrating knowledge of local government, including school districts and voting precincts
 - k. Fundraising—past activities and future plans
 - l. Community impact--newspaper clippings and/or social media evidence

Positive recommendation by LWVMI Vice President of Membership:

Date:

LWVMI Vice President of Membership:

Name printed

Signature

Approval by LWVMI Board:

Date:

LWVMI President:

Name printed

Signature

Date submitted to LWVUS with original documents attached: _____



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LWVMI BOARD POLICIES

LWVMI Guidelines for Local League

The following are LWVMI requirements for a local League:

1. The League must have bylaws, the first three articles of which must be consistent with those of LWVUS.
2. The League must have established and maintain a non-partisan policy.
3. The League must hold an annual business meeting of the membership.
4. The League must hold regular board meetings (as established in their bylaws.)
5. The League must meet their financial obligations to state and national League levels.
6. The League must have a plan for membership retention and growth that encourages a membership as diverse as their community.
7. Any advocacy pursued must be consistent with LWVMI guidelines and League principles, positions and policies.
8. Adherence to the LWVMI Board Diversity Policy and the Membership Dues policy is required.

Each local League President (or streamlined committee leader/convener) is responsible to make sure their League satisfies the basics outlined above.

In the event the League is unable to meet the requirements, the local League President should consult with the LWVMI Vice President of Membership. There are guidelines of Best Practices to support a League's effort for optimal measures to regain a healthy organization. When an LWVMI local League is facing challenges to continue their service/function, the following steps shall be completed before dissolution is considered.

Steps for regaining characteristics of a healthy League will be developed by the VP of Membership, an assigned Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) coach and with the LWVMI President using Best Practices outlined by LWVUS.

The steps may include:

- Meet in person to review the League's current condition and intentions for the future
- Review Best Practice Guidelines with the League's current board/Leadership committee
- Develop/Establish options to regain a healthy League using Best Practice Guidelines
- Work with a MLD coach assigned by the LWVMI MLD Coordinator/VP Membership to hold networking meetings at regular intervals
- Establish plan for review of accomplishments of guideline criteria at regularly scheduled dates

In the event the League is unable, cannot or does not wish to continue, a recommendation by the Vice President of Membership of dissolution or merging membership with another local League will be presented to the LWVMI Board.

All efforts to salvage the health and functionality of a challenged League must be exhausted before dissolution becomes a recommended remedy.



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Local League Participation Form

Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) Program

*Growing the League,
Making Democracy Work*

Please complete the following form to participate in the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program. Once completed, please return this form to the VP Membership/MLD State Coordinator via email office@lwvmi.org or via mail at 600 W. Saint Joseph St., Suite 3G, Lansing, MI 48933 as your League completes the information.

Participation in the MLD program builds on the training session at the state conventions workshops and LWVMI Regional workshops on tried-and-true best practices proven to increase membership, engage members, develop leaders, and become more visible in the community. Your League will also be assigned a state coach who will work directly with your League's MLD team to support and guide you in your efforts to connect with your community and strengthen your League voice and impact!

LOCAL LEAGUE INFORMATION

Please choose three individuals to be the primary contacts for the MLD program. We recommend the Local League President and two other individuals be selected to coordinate the MLD program. Coordinators of the program will also be expected to participate in a short (approximately 30-45 minute) phone call with their state coach each month. During these phone calls, local Leagues will receive on-going training and support.

League Name _____ League ID _____

President(s): Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Email _____

1st Coordinator: Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Email _____

2nd Coordinator: Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Email _____

Below are questions for your local League board to discuss as a team. The answers provided will assist your state coach in supporting your efforts. Please provide answers on a separate sheet of paper, preferably typed.

1. **YOUR COMMUNITY.** Please describe your community, including the following information.
 - a. Which communities does your local League interact with the most and what are key characteristics of each? (Examples of key characteristics include: urban, suburban or rural; approximate population, etc.)
 - b. Are there other communities in your local League service area – not described above – that could be a place for growth and what are their key characteristics?
 - c. What are the community organizations or groups that your local League has worked with in the past that could be potential allies or partners going forward? Please describe them briefly.
 - d. What are the community organizations or groups that your local League has *not* worked with in the past that are potential allies? Please describe them briefly.
 - e. Who are major employers – corporations, hospitals, governments, universities, colleges, other educational institutions – in your community and what is the League’s relationship with them?

2. **YOUR LEAGUE.** Please describe your League’s membership characteristics, including the following.
 - a. How do most members come into your League?

- b. If your local League has been engaged in membership recruitment efforts within the past three years, what was their focus and what were the results?
- c. How are leaders identified and trained in your League?

3. YOUR LOCAL LEAGUE PARTICIPATION IN MLD

- a. Why would your local League like to participate in the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program?
- b. What are your local League's priorities or focus for the coming year?

If you have any questions about the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program or the application process, please contact the LWVMI Vice President of Membership and/or the LWVMI MLD State Coordinator.

All applications should be returned to LWV of Michigan via:

- FAX - to the attention of 517.484.3086 (or)
- Mail - to address listed below

APPLICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED ON-GOING



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LWVMI BOARD POLICIES

Membership Dues

1. Local Leagues must contribute to the financial support of the League as a whole as provided by the LWVUS and LWVMI bylaws.
 - Each local League decides the level of its dues and the method of collection. In setting dues, Leagues should consider all the costs related to maintaining an effective organization.
 - Local Leagues hold in trust that part of a member's dues which is designated to cover state and national Per Member Payment (PMP). They should not budget this money for any other purpose.
2. Local Leagues are responsible for:
 - reporting all members to LWVMI and LWVUS on the annual membership count.
 - payment of PMP to LWVMI and to LWVUS.
 - In the case of a household membership, full PMP is paid to LWVMI for the first member and half that amount for the second member. In the case of a student membership, one-half PMP is paid to LWVMI.
 - renewal of all members on a timely basis.
3. An individual paying membership dues to LWVMI, who resides within an area of a local League, shall be designated a member of that League.
4. An individual paying membership dues to LWVMI who does not reside within the area of a local League shall be designated as a member-at-large (MAL). The LWVMI is responsible for providing all appropriate services to the MAL and for paying PMP for that member to LWVUS.
5. A member of a recognized member-at-large unit shall pay membership dues to LWVMI. LWVMI is responsible for paying PMP for that member to LWVUS.
6. Per Member Guidelines for Local Leagues
 - a. Local Leagues in arrears for PMP to LWVMI at the end of a fiscal year shall be contacted regarding payment of this obligation.
 - b. PMP received during the current fiscal year shall be applied first against the previous year's obligation.
 - c. If the local League is in arrears with its PMP at the end of a second consecutive fiscal year and does not have a plan acceptable to the LWVMI board to meet its outstanding

PMP obligation, an ad hoc committee will be appointed to review the local League's financial status and to report recommendations for action to the state board and the local League.

d. Local Leagues that have not fulfilled their PMP obligation through the third quarter of the current fiscal year will not be allowed to have delegates at state council or convention