MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT STUDY
Findings from focus groups with young professionals

April 2012
Report prepared for the
League of Women Voters of St. Paul
St. Paul, Minnesota

Prepared and Moderated
by Laura Schwartz
Co-President,
LWV of St. Paul
Master of Public Policy Candidate,
Humphrey School of Public Affairs
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 3
Thanks .................................................................................................................................. 3
Background ............................................................................................................................ 3
Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 4
Study Limitations .................................................................................................................. 4
Demographic Summary .......................................................................................................... 5

Findings

Q1: What was the last group or club that you joined, and what prompted you to join it? ...... 6
Q2: What did you really hope to get out of the groups that you joined? .............................. 8
Q3: What features do you like in the groups that you join? .................................................. 9
Q4: Of your favorite groups, what are some of the best events that they have had, and what made these events good? ................................................................................. 10
Q5: What comes to mind when you think about the League of Women Voters? .......... 11
Q6: Within the organization’s mission, general objectives, and principles, what phrases or concepts speak to you? ....................................................................................... 12
Q7: Here are some of the features that the League either currently offers or is considering. Which of these features do you find most appealing? ......................................................... 13
Q8: Would the opportunity to volunteer make you more likely to join an organization or group? ........................................................................................................................................ 14
Q9: Here are some current volunteer opportunities with the League. Which of these seem appealing to you? ...................................................................................................................... 14
Q10: If you could design the perfect group for young professionals, what would that group look like? ......................................................................................................................... 15

Conclusions ............................................................................................................................. 16
Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 16
Appendix: in-person questioning route, handouts, transcripts .............................................. 17
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative study was conducted on behalf of the League of Women Voters of St. Paul (LWV) in order to improve its recruitment efforts toward young professionals. It was implemented through three focus groups and was designed to determine what features entice young professionals to join organizations or groups, and what might attract them to the LWV.

Findings suggest that they are highly motivated by the ability to make social connections and to grow professionally. Logistics also play an important role in whether or not young professionals are willing to commit to an organization or to a volunteer position. This demographic, largely populated in this study by graduate students, highly values its time. Poor and time-wasteful program design quickly leads to drop out. Organizations must simultaneously satisfy young professionals’ social, cerebral and altruistic needs, while offering programming that is conducive to their busy schedules.

THANKS

Special thanks is due to the League of Women Voters of St. Paul for providing financial incentives for focus group participants. More thanks go to Laura Logsdon and Mary Gleich for taking notes and for helping to facilitate the interviews, as well as to Dr. Mary Anne Casey and Dr. Richard Krueger for their consultation in the study design.

BACKGROUND

The League of Women Voters was formed in 1920 out of the U.S. suffragist movement. As a nonpartisan political organization, it encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. It operates at national, state and local levels through more than 800 chapters, in all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong.

The organization’s overall membership is both declining and aging, with an estimated average member age of 70. Membership growth is a priority for both the national chapter as well as the Minnesota chapter. In 2012, the St. Paul League voted ‘Young Member Recruitment’ as part of its strategic plan.

This study was conducted in order to learn what features entice young professionals to join organizations or groups, and what might attract them to the League of Women Voters of St. Paul.
METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted over three focus groups. The first was an Internet-based group guided over five days between February 20 and 24, 2012. This group used a condensed questioning route and participants typed answers to one question per day in a secured chat room. The second focus group was conducted on March 29 at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the third was conducted on March 15 in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Participants were recruited through the Humphrey School of Public Affairs’ and the League of Women Voters of St. Paul’s listservs, as well as through a focus group methodology course at the University of Minnesota, and through Facebook and the Minnesota Rising blog. Female college graduates between the ages of 22 and 40 were eligible to participate, however one male was included in the Internet group. Participants of the in-person groups received small incentives for their participation. Findings were analyzed according to the frequency, specificity, emotionality and extensiveness of responses.

The majority of participants were graduate students at the University of Minnesota, most of whom study public policy, urban planning, organizational leadership and policy development, social work, or public health. They also work part-time or full-time in government, academia or nonprofit organizations. Participant employers include: the Greater Twin Cities United Way, the Audubon Society of Minnesota, Goodwill Easter Seals, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the Minnesota Zoo, among others.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

While this study yielded some valuable findings, it has limitations. Ninety percent of the participants were graduate students, so both their motivations for joining groups and their available free time may be very different from young professional non-students. Future studies should include more interviews without students, and could target other types of young professionals, such as: couples, men, people with children, and individuals working in for-profit industries. This study also lacked diversity in race and ethnicity. Furthermore, it was conducted in a large metropolitan area, which means that results may not transfer well to LWV chapters in rural or suburban areas. The Twin Cities, for instance has an abundance of nonprofit organizations and young professional groups, which compete against one another for the limited time, money and interest of its residents. Additionally this area has one of the highest volunteerism rates in the nation.
## Participant Demographic Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Groups</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>28 to 40</td>
<td>26 to 31</td>
<td>23 to 29</td>
<td>23 to 40</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. citizen</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non U.S. citizen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non graduate student</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul resident</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis resident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar with LWV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not familiar with LWV</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWV Member</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-member</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous LWV</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation</td>
<td>No previous participation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY FINDINGS

Key finding from the study are organized by interview question. Participant quotes that capture important ideas from the three conversations are in red.

★ Q1a: WHAT WAS THE LAST GROUP OR CLUB THAT YOU JOINED?

Professional Groups
The majority of groups that participants joined are cerebral and either career or school related. They included the following: Minnesota Social Work Alliance, Forum for Women in the Environmental Field, Humphrey Food Policy Collaborative, Humphrey School Diversity Committee Curriculum Working Group, Humphrey Ambassadors, Comparative and International Education Society, Teacher Education Redesign Initiative, Minnesota Study Abroad Re-entry Conference Committee, Minnesota Literature, Common Grounds.

Topical Organizations
Other groups are mission driven, such as the Sylvia Rivera Society, the Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services the Alzheimer’s Association Young Champions. And several are politically oriented, such as the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party and the Young Progressive Majority.

Social Clubs
Other participants joined groups that provide social activities. These types included: book clubs, choirs, church groups, a yoga studio, Life’s a Hoot Triathlon Club, the YMCA, a women’s study group, and a food coop.

Young Professional Groups
Many also joined groups that are specifically targeted toward young professionals, such as the Young Nonprofit Professional Network, Net Impact, Alzheimer’s Association Young Champions, and Jewish Family and Children’s Services NextGen.

Alumni Groups
Lastly, a few participants joined alumni groups. These included the Peace Corps Volunteers of Minnesota, Teach for America, and Fulbright Alumni.
**Q1b: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO JOIN THESE GROUPS?**

They Offered Professional Development and Networking
The most common motivation is professional development and networking. These groups give participants access to other professionals in their fields, as well as opportunities to enhance their skills and gain experience. One participant explained, “I joined to learn more about how to do research and to support the work I was doing.” Others said joining a group gave them opportunities to get real world experience outside of their degree programs.

They Had Clear Expectations, Respected My Time
Across all three focus groups and throughout each, participants stressed how much they value their limited time. Many said that they actually joined groups specifically because they were respectful of and conducive to their schedules. Volunteer opportunities within these groups offer clear-cut commitments. People can make a difference with minimal, or at least well defined, time commitments and responsibilities. These groups also offer events that allowed members to come and go, and do not castigate members for not showing up for a particular occasion.

“I joined because it had to do with diversity issues, which I’m interested in. But it has very clear-cut responsibilities. I have 3 interviews to do; it’s going to be 3 hours; and it’s going to be part of a bigger project that I can either continue on, or I can say, I did my part. So I actually joined specifically because I could make a difference in something with minimum commitments.”

I Could Make a Valuable Contribution
Others joined because they saw certain needs not being met, such as a lack of representation within an organization by youth or by people of color. Another participant started a student group around food policy because it was not offered at her school.

“A lot of these boards have people who are like 50 and up, and they’re retired. So the organization is shifting towards that population...that 50 and up club, so it’s nice to look at how we can try to shift focus.”

The Mission/Content is Interesting
Yet others joined groups because they were interested in an organization’s mission. Special interest areas include diversity, cooking, local foods, singing, and Bible study. One joined the Alzheimer’s Association Young Champions because she has a grandmother with the disease.

Someone Invited Me to Join, I Was New to the Community
Quite a few also joined because they were specifically asked to by a friend or because they recently moved and wanted to make new friends. They temporarily found themselves with more free time and hoped to become connected to their new communities through groups.
Q2: WHAT DID YOU REALLY HOPE TO GET OUT OF THE GROUPS THAT YOU JOINED?

Professional Development and Networking
In this question participants reiterated their desire to make professional connections. They hoped to stay current on issues relevant in their fields and to be part of their professional communities. Some groups give them access to member-only conferences and publications that they feel are critical. Participants also hoped joining a group would help fill gaps in their resumes, and allow them to gain skills and experience. Several said that groups can demonstrate professional consistency. During an economic period with frequent layoffs, groups can provide networking and a professional safety net. They also provide stimulation for individuals in unfulfilling careers.

“I feel like I do a lot of free stuff. My mom calls me the board whore.”

Social Connections
The second most prominent motivation is to make social connections and to feel a part of something. One person said that she feels stimulated by being around like-minded people while focusing on a social issue.

“I wouldn’t stay involved in a group, at least long term if I didn’t at least like the people that I was working with and want to build long-term relationships with them. I might do it in the short run if I really believed in the mission, but certainly not in the long run.”

A Feeling of Altruism
Participants also hope to gain a sense of altruism from their groups. They care about organizations’ missions and want to help causes. One participant grew up in a home that encouraged volunteerism, so she joined a group in order to give back to her community.

“I want to help…and also meet people and make connections, but ultimately [gain] a sense of altruism.”
Q3: WHAT FEATURES DO YOU LIKE IN THE GROUPS THAT YOU JOIN?

This question opened up Pandora’s Box. Participants approached the question by venting about general values and characteristics of groups that they do not like, rather than specific features that they do.

Respectful of Time
It is acutely important to participants that organizations value and appreciate their limited time. Several bemoaned of useless and time-wasting meetings or events that produce little in the way of results. Many also feel that their time is often abused, or that they are frequently asked to overcommit themselves.

“I mean, a lot of times we sign up because we want to be a part of something and don’t really anticipate getting asked to overcommit. And that happens a lot...if they’re volunteer-run they really depend on everyone giving a little. So sometimes people get stuck giving a little more.”

“Then as soon as that work started getting dumped on me, I was like I’m done volunteering for you. I felt like that was abuse of my time, like there was this expectation that I was a student so I had time to do this work.”

Flexibility and Convenience
Similarly, because many participants are extremely busy, flexibility and convenience are important. They want the ability to choose their level of involvement. Attractive groups give participants the ability to drop-in and out, or leave early or come late without having to feel guilty. One person said shorter events, such as an hour and a half in length, are perfect. Convenient transportation options are also key; and participants do not want to travel to the suburbs. The time of day that events are held matters too. Several said that interesting events are often held during business hours, which makes them impractical to attend. Participants also strongly believe that happy hour events should be held during actual happy hour special time slots.
Q4: OF YOUR FAVORITE GROUPS, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BEST EVENTS THAT THEY HAVE HAD, AND WHAT MADE THESE EVENTS GOOD?

Stimulating Conversation
Participants enjoy events that facilitate deep, meaningful conversations. One participant was really touched by an event held by the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network, which had facilitated conversation particularly well.

“They were able to pull folks together who didn’t know each other at all and have very personal conversations about themselves...It was a very comfortable atmosphere...Turn to the person next to you and just be like, ‘I’m really struggling with this thing and I’m not sure how to get around it. Here’s what the speaker said that might be really useful for me, and share that.’ And that’s something not a lot of events do.”

Both Social and Actionable
Others said events are successful when they provide attendees with specific, actionable goals. While many said that great events offer networking opportunities, others believe that too little happens at networking-only events. They want both. Another participant said that too many organizations are ‘preaching to the choir.’ She said that creating both a social and an enriching atmosphere could draw in new people.

“I would rather get to know people and network by demonstrating my skills at a purposeful structured event. And if down the line there’s a happy hour with a group I know, then that’s great. But I would rather do that...I don’t think people ever build a relationship with a really great elevator speech.”

“A lot of what I don’t like about current events is that it’s either happy hour and it seems flat and you don’t really get anything out of it, or it’s just a meeting and then everyone rushes out afterwards and you don’t get to meet anybody, so its nice to have that balance of socializing and networking, but content...and it gives you something to talk about at the happy hour!”
Q5: WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS?

Some participants are vaguely familiar with the organization, but even those who had previously participated in events or volunteered had a pretty superficial understanding of the organization. Several also questioned whether or not men are allowed.

Old Fashioned Old Ladies
The most commonly used phrases were: ‘old ladies’ and ‘old fashioned.’ One said, “Old ladies in 1920s dresses and banners.” A current volunteer said, “I feel super young because everybody is 80 and up.” Others hesitantly mentioned the suffragist movement and the daughters of the American Revolution. A few other recalled grandmothers taking them to parades.

Historic and Established
Those who are a bit more familiar with the organization think it is an important part of history. They described it as ‘well established’ and ‘in the news.’ One person said the organization endorses candidates, and said that when it does, it matters.

“One thing that I do enjoy is that a lot of the 80-year-old women are these historic figures of Minnesota. They hold so many keys to how Minnesota started. Like, ‘do you remember when we used to wear those gloves?’ Whoa! I mean they’re this piece of history. And it’s nice to be a part of that.”

It’s Mission and Work
Participants who are familiar with the organization used phrases like: ‘civic engagement,’ ‘voter engagement,’ ‘political advocacy and awareness,’ ‘elections,’ and ‘voting.’ A few are also familiar with the League’s young professional development program, The Leaders of Today and Tomorrow (LOTT) and one person had even completed the program. A couple others knew of it through happy hours and networking events.
Q6: WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION’S MISSION, GENERAL OBJECTIVES, AND PRINCIPLES, WHAT PHRASES OR CONCEPTS SPEAK TO YOU? [PARTICIPANTS REFERRED TO A HANDBOUT.]

‘Informed and active participation’
In both in-person groups, this phrase clearly ranked highest. First, participants believe that citizens today are asked to vote on incredibly complex issues, which they need help understanding. One person said, “Even being in policy school, people ask me stuff and I’m like, ‘dude, all I know is that I don’t know enough.’” Participants also believe that the news media is rampant with misinformation and political slant. Attaching action to good information is also important to them.

‘No person or group shall suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination’
This phrase also scored highly in both groups. This quote summarizes participants’ statements: “I feel like there are a lot of active groups right now that are trying to make laws that prevent people from voting…specifically people who don’t have as much political power. And I think that that’s really wrong.”

‘Nonpartisan’
Although the concept of nonpartisanship was brought up, it was clearly less of a priority. Some participants even dismissed it as ineffective and unrealistic. When referring to the handout with the League’s principles, one participant implied that she could not differentiate the organization from the political left and so could not understand why the League does not ally itself with the power that comes from party identification.

“I feel that informed and active participation is more important than remaining nonpartisan because no matter what your beliefs are in terms of government, you should at least be informed about what’s going on and actively participating and voting.”
Q7: HERE ARE SOME OF THE FEATURES THAT THE LEAGUE EITHER CURRENTLY OFFERS OR IS CONSIDERING. WHICH OF THESE FEATURES DO YOU FIND MOST APPEALING? [PARTICIPANTS REFERRED TO A HANDOUT.]

Events for Young Professionals
Participants said young professional events seem like a good way to help organizations while simultaneously having fun and socializing. Suggestions for activities included game night, roller derby, and bowling. Others recommended offering a service project in which attendees could accomplish something together and then have an opportunity to socialize about it.

Speakers
Participants expressed interest in various forms of speaking events. One described an event that hosted several ‘speakers’ who remained static at separate tables while small groups rotated around them. She said this set-up gave the speakers and ‘audience’ a more intimate opportunity to exchange information. Another called the Citizen’s League ‘Policy in a Pint’ the perfect model for speaking events. The events feature well-known regional political and academic figures who give bar talks, followed by question and answer time.

Mentoring
Mentoring was thoroughly discussed within the groups. However, the majority of participants believe that a valuable relationship includes a mentor who is currently in the workforce. They want mentors who will open up their professional networks, help set up interviews, expose them to opportunities, allow job shadowing, and act as a champion for them. With the League’s high ratio of retired members, mentoring may not work well for professional purposes. A few participants did however express an interest in mentoring for personal development purposes.

Structure
Structure in events was another consistent theme. Participants strongly believe that events should be designed to encourage informal networking and to facilitate deeper discussion or action through a structured component. They even described the layout of the room as crucial for alleviating much dreaded network anxiety. They suggested high top tables, buffet options, drinks across the room, and space to move around.

“You have no structure. You say ‘show up to this rally! It’s going to be great! There are going to be hundreds of people!’ You don’t say ‘meet at this tree and meet other people in the group.’ And I’m going to be a face in the crowd and how does that matter? Structure is important to get people involved.”

“Sometimes you just need an organization that has structure that you can just show up for the event and that’s all that’s expected, and sometimes I wish that was the case now.”

“I don’t like networking, am not good at it, and feel uncomfortable in this sort of setting, even if it is with a group of people who have common interests.”
**Q8: WOULD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER MAKE YOU MORE LIKELY TO JOIN AN ORGANIZATION OR GROUP? TELL ME WHY OR WHY NOT.**

If it’s Meaningful and Well Designed
Participants were divided on this question. Those in the Internet group, who were somewhat older and more likely to have children, were less interested in volunteering or taking on leadership roles, at least right away. They were also more interested in volunteering as a way to build relationships, while the other groups were more interested in building skills and gaining experience. At the same time, many of the graduate students expressed a lot of concern about their busy schedules and would only accept something with a low time commitment. However, all of the groups made it clear that in order to accept a volunteer position, they must feel that both their time and unique skills are valued by the organization, and that their efforts will make a tangible difference. They want positions that have very clearly defined responsibilities and time frames.

“Maybe something that really utilizes my skills in a better way. I feel like there’s a lack of...higher-level volunteer opportunities. I would be happy to work on a project or do some of the same things that I do at my job, rather than filing or just licking envelopes.”

“If there was an opportunity to be part of board, that’s one thing I’m looking to do...actually being able to have say over what’s going on in an organization.”

**Q9: HERE ARE SOME CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE LEAGUE. WHICH OF THESE SEEM APPEALING TO YOU? [PARTICIPANTS REFERRED TO A HANDOUT.]**

Research and Leadership Opportunities
From a list of opportunities, participants expressed interest in serving on various committees as well as helping to register new voters. Several also expressed interest in conducting research because it has the potential to utilize their skills while providing a flexible schedule. Others are interested in helping to plan events and in learning about high-level organizational functioning through board service.

“I am a goal-oriented person, so I like to see the fruits of my labor...being able to work on a report or something, there is an end goal that I can pass on and say, ‘hey, I did this.’”

“I know that [a research project] has a beginning and an end, instead of this ongoing horrible crisis that I can’t really solve in that time period.”

“On the surface, [being on board is] a great resume builder, you learn a lot of skills, it’s good for networking and the time commitment is fair... and as far as responsibility, it would be the most meaningful.”
★ Q10: IF YOU COULD DESIGN THE PERFECT GROUP FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, WHAT WOULD THAT GROUP LOOK LIKE? WHAT FEATURES WOULD IT OFFER? WHAT EVENTS WOULD IT HAVE? WHO WOULD BE A PART OF IT? HOW OFTEN WOULD THEY MEET?

Think, Drink, Act, Be Flexible, Have Fun, Meet Cool People
The clear themes from final proposals include: think, act, drink, be flexible, have fun, meet cool people. One person said a great group would pose a policy question and the allow members to come up with solutions—while drinking. While a few participants said they prefer events outside of bars and without alcohol, pairing social activities with drinking was a very common suggestion. Another person said there is too much separation among groups, and suggested integrating with similar organizations. And yet another person suggested many levels of mentoring, within generations, and within and outside of the organization.

“It’s enriching, giving, flexible, and fun...It includes networking but also educational opportunities to learn from speakers and learn from each other and is also social...serving the organization’s greater purpose, those goals that align with your goals... you can miss it and you don’t have to feel bad for being flakey... you meet cool people you do cool things and you smile at each other.”
CONCLUSIONS

Young professionals in this study joined organizations that fit or contributed to their values. These values include: 1) relationships and connections, both personal and professional; 2) making a difference, or being part of something bigger than themselves; 3) gaining skills; 4) and using their limited time wisely.

⇒ Young professionals are highly motivated to join groups by the opportunity to make social and professional connections with new people.

⇒ They are also motivated by a desire to learn, gain skills, build their resumes, and expand their professional networks.

⇒ Because young professionals and graduate students are extremely busy, they will only commit to organizations and volunteer positions that use their time efficiently and toward valuable and tangible outcomes. This means that commitments must have clearly defined expectations and time frames.

⇒ Successful events include both structured activities, in order to build commonality among attendees, and unstructured time for people to mingle.

⇒ An ideal young professionals group satisfies a desire to learn, to serve a greater goal, to socialize, and to have fun. Perhaps just as importantly, it must offer both flexible schedules and commitment levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

⇒ While nonpartisanship is one of the stalwart principles of the League of Women Voters, it does not seem to resonate with young professionals. Efforts should be made to market the importance of the concept to this demographic.

⇒ Marketing should be targeted toward young professionals who have recently moved into the area. These individuals are looking for ways to meet new people and to become integrated into the community. They are also less time constrained than graduate students.

⇒ Many local LWV chapters are struggling to fill board seats; while at the same time, young professionals are craving higher-level volunteer positions to apply their unique skills. Leadership opportunities can cement an individual’s commitment toward an organization. Local leagues should capitalize on this untapped resource, both for governance purposes and for long-term membership growth.
IN PERSON FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONING ROUTE

OPENING AND MOTIVATIONS
1. Think back to the last time you joined a new group, organization or club (not a job). Tell us what the group is and what prompted you to join?
2. Of the groups you’ve joined or attended events for, have any of them been specifically directed toward young professionals? If so, please tell us a bit about them.
3. Of any of the groups that you’ve joined, young professional or other, what specifically did you hope to get out of them?
4. What features of the groups that you’re involved in do you really like?
5. Think about your favorite group some of the best events they have had. What made the events great?

FEATURES AND REPUTATION OF THE LWV
6. Have you ever heard of the League of Women Voters before? If so, what comes to mind when you think of it?
7. Here is the mission statement for the League of Women Voters and some of its principles. Which part speaks most to you? [Display on individual handouts.]
8. Here are some of the features that the League either currently offers, or is considering. Which of these features do you find most appealing? [Display on a flip chart and on a handout. Identify and discuss the top two by a show of hands.]

VOLUNTEERING
9. Would the opportunity to volunteer make you more likely to join an organization or group? Please tell me why or why not.
10. If you were to volunteer for any kind of group, what would you like to do for them?
11. Here are some current ways to volunteer with the League. Which of these would be of most interest to you? [Rate options on a handout. Each person will then choose a top choice and will discuss. Collect handouts.]

CLOSING
12. If you could design the perfect group for young professionals, what would that group look like? What features would it offer? What kinds of events would it offer? Who would be part of it? When would it be? How often would it be?
QUESTION 7 HANDOUT

Please circle the concepts that speak most to you.

Mission
The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

General Objectives
• Establishing positions on public policy through member participation and agreement
• Taking concerted actions that secure public policies consistent with league positions
• Enhancing citizen participation in federal, state and local government decisions
• Increasing citizen participation in the federal process

Principles
1. The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

2. The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen’s right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

3. The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

4. The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

5. The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people, that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems which affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies which facilitate the solution of international problems.

6. The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.
QUESTION 8 HANDOUT

Please rate: 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not appealing and 5 meaning very appealing

- Monthly speakers who talk about local issues, like schools or housing
- Monthly happy hour
- Monthly Young Professionals event, that could be happy hour, bowling
- Mentoring by an older member
- Monthly Book club
- Forums in which candidates running for office debate issues (during election seasons)

QUESTION 11 HANDOUT

Please rate: 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not appealing and 5 meaning very appealing

- Conduct research on a policy issue to help the League define a position
- Help register new citizens to vote
- Coordinate volunteer resources
- Organize or help with candidate forums
- Serve on the board of directors
- Serve on a young professionals advisory board
- Serve on a committee, such as: membership, technology, program, communication, strategic planning
- Coordinate social media
- Plan events for young professionals