

Program Planning with a Focus on Equity

Promoting equity within a formal group, and in the wider society, acknowledges the underlying and often unexamined biases within organizations that favor some groups of people, and some approaches, over others. A commitment to diversity or to the inclusion of a wider membership, or to projects that recognize the effects of inequality, are very important. But they do not in themselves address the fundamental question of who has power in a group, and whose experience is centered when making decisions about projects and programs.

Efforts to create an inclusive culture that honors diverse perspectives and approaches often encounter the resistance of “We don’t do things that way here.” It can be very frustrating and exhausting for those participants who find “the way things are” to demand constant translation or even denial of their experience and perspective. It is difficult to negotiate the power relationships involved when settled process and procedure doesn’t appear to have discriminatory intent, but “shut downs” diversity in practice.

This should lead us to ask: What current approaches, processes, or expectations, that may seem **essential** to being the League of Women Voters, mainly reflect the **historical practice** of a predominantly white group dedicated to “empowering voters and defending democracy?” In our work to become an activist home for people from all backgrounds, **we should leave no process untouched in our attention to equity**. Our LWVTPC planning for 2021 offers a focused opportunity to prioritize equity in asking questions about how these plans move us forward in our commitment to DEI.

Earlier in December this year, the LWVTPC Board approved the inclusion of specific questions about equity to be part of our ground rules for our meetings and planning. In identifying these questions, we drew on DEI materials provided by the National League, and on Board discussion over the past several months.

As we meet to determine our program of study and action for 2021, we ask all of us to consider the questions below when making proposals for new or continuing projects.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Who should participate in this project/program?
2. Who would benefit?
3. What are the barriers to participation?
4. How does this address underserved voters?
5. How does this address equity?

National LWV link for DEI lens materials

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/dei-resources/dei-lens>

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