

League of Women Voters of Washington

External Survey

Executive Summary

Overview

In September 2022, the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) contracted with Washington State University's Division of Governmental Studies and Services to conduct an independent evaluation designed to assist the LWVWA in three ways: to better understand how organizations across the state perceive the League, to help build the LWVWA's capacity to accomplish its goals and objectives, and to increase its overall effectiveness in conducting its work. This report presents the preliminary findings as of April 2023.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods research design to address four primary topics: (1) LWVWA awareness, (2) LWVWA credibility/valued partner, (3) LWVWA impact, and (4) LWVWA effectiveness. The research involved semistructured interviews and an online survey of organizations across the state that included state legislators, county government officials, state executive offices, nonprofit groups, law enforcement, and others.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods used a nonprobability (nonrandom) sampling, which limits generalizations. Additionally, for both methods, self-select bias—where sample bias occurs from research participants self-selecting to participate in research—is highly likely. With both the interviews and the online survey, those most familiar with the LWVWA and those with more positive views were more likely to participate in the research, which biases the results. Thus, results from both methods should be treated with caution, reflecting the participant sample and not necessarily the population of LWVWA stakeholders.

What follows are key findings from the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Semistructured Interview Findings

- Most interview participants were familiar with the LWVWA, and about half of the participants could identify an area or issue the LWVWA regularly addresses. Few participants could identify the LWVWA mission.

- Several participants, especially coalition partners, use LWVWA resources and research in their own work.
- Most participants who collaborated with the LWVWA stated that their collaborations were successful. Many types of success were identified, including passed legislation, increased participation in events, and wider outreach.
- Most interview participants felt the LWVWA was highly credible and knowledgeable. The organization is considered a nonpartisan, trustworthy source of information for many participants. However, there is a clear partisan divide in this opinion. Republican and/or conservative participants did not view the LWVWA as credible, nonpartisan, or trustworthy.
- Most participants stated that the LWVWA needs to diversify its membership and its events. Participants offered several suggestions to help the LWVWA meet its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. Some recommendations included more use of social media platforms, advertising the LWVWA and its events at churches and community centers, offering language translation at events to broaden reach, and providing childcare at events.

Online Survey Findings

- Approximately two-thirds of stakeholder respondents were moderately, very, or extremely familiar with the LWVWA, while approximately one-third were slightly or not at all familiar with the League.
- Over half (57.1%) of the survey respondents have partnered or collaborated with the LWVWA, and over 80% reported their collaboration was either an excellent or good experience.
- Strengths of partnering with the LWVWA included that the LWVWA is knowledgeable, well-informed, organized, responsive, professional, committed, dedicated, nonpartisan, and unbiased.
- Weaknesses of partnering with the LWVWA included that the LWVWA needs more diversity within the organization and that the LWVWA needs to engage with more diverse groups.
- Among state executives/professionals and local governments/public officials, the LWVWA is viewed as a credible organization. The majority of these respondents viewed the League as nonpartisan (65.5%), as basing its positions on facts (58.6%), as knowledgeable on the issues they address (69.0%), and as an important partner for their organization (58.6%).
- Stakeholders generally view the LWVWA as most effective in the areas of educating the public on state and/or local issues and motivating the public to vote. The League is viewed as least effective in areas such as connecting with younger voters in the community and connecting with underserved populations.