

## THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF OREGON

# STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SUSTAINED MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

### **I. Background and Introduction**

In the light of numerous challenges facing The American Legion, Department of Oregon for sustained membership and growth and to increase membership and post development by creating a culture of growth, it was determined in the summer of 2011 during a Strategy Session with our department leadership to create a five year plan. Outcomes of that Strategy Session identified five areas that needed to be worked. Since that strategy session our National Organization, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No: 64 giving authority to create a Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. The five key elements of this plan are Create Brand Awareness; Communication; Training/Education/Leadership Development; Post Development and Revitalization; Membership Recruiting and Retention. This Strategic Plan for The American Legion, Department of Oregon is to support sustained membership growth.

#### **Much preparation and feedback went into the development of this SMP, including:**

- Development of Strategic Membership Plan Background Documents highlighting challenges we have faced, past history and potential opportunities;
- Discussion of this background information and major membership retention and growth challenges with Membership Commission and leadership and experts in our department and in the National Organization;
- Soliciting information and ideas from the leadership, Membership Commission and members on all facets of the plan.

Development of this plan began with reviewing our National Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth, our own strategy sessions, in-put from departments with success that were shared; development of successful strategy plans from organizations with similar membership growth concerns and workable solutions. We identified six key success factors

to support our plan.

**These key success factors are:**

- a.** Retain existing membership, while working to attract new members;
- b.** Enhance member communications and contact;
- c.** Create brand awareness;
- d.** Increase training/education/leadership development;
- e.** Post creation, development and revitalization; and
- f.** Measurable Goals and Accountability, supported by visual illustrations.

## **II. The American Legion, Department of Oregon Mission Statement**

The American Legion, Department of Oregon mission is to increase membership and post development by creating a culture of growth. To better communicate with the membership, veterans, and the general public about whom we are and what we do. To make available training and education opportunities at all levels of the Department of Oregon. To develop leadership, foster, and guide those leaders identified as having potential. Establish new Posts in every District. Revitalize failing Posts. Encourage all members to help meet goals.

## **III. Key Success Factors (Goals)**

### **1. Membership Recruiting and Retention**

#### **Short term strategy**

- Firmly establish The American Legion Department of Oregon as the leading organization representing veterans in Oregon and the United States and provider of our programs.
- Develop membership teams at all levels.
- Develop a retention strategy at every level, retention must be the first priority to increase our membership. “Close the back door”, have Post telephone teams and Post teams to visit members who have not paid their current dues, invite them back into the Post, is there an issue, are they sick, do they need help. Retention, Retention is a must at Post level.
- Involve and educate all leadership and staff on membership programs, goals and issues.

- Encourage all Posts and Districts to develop a working relationship with their local military senior leaders at National Guard Armories. Offer information on Legion programs and an opportunity to join The American Legion to all eligible members of the National Guard and Reserve components.
- Determine the drivers behind member satisfaction and increase membership campaign utilizing positive outcomes in those areas of satisfied members at Post level.
- Each district holds a district revitalization event for all Posts in their district with assistance from our Department and District Membership Team along with Media, VA&R, Legislative, Americanism Department Service Office.
- Reporting: Each district commander will provide a monthly report to the leadership and all district commanders on reaching their district membership targets and program goals and of any help, training required assuring goals are met.
- Each district commander develop a membership contest within their district with awards, recognition for the Post with highest percent of membership; offer a membership challenge between Posts and report to the Department Commander at the first D.E.C. what the District is doing.
- Measurable Goals: Department weekly membership report will be utilized as the measurement tool for all Post and District membership goals and membership activity.
- Visual Indicators: Thermometer Charts, blown up membership and program goals charts will be displayed at all DEC meetings by district commanders. District Commanders will show last and current membership year at all D.E.C. meetings on their District Thermometer Charts.
- District Commanders with Thermometer Charts that are not meeting goal will report on negative cause and their recovery plan, help needed, training, additional visitation by Membership Team and department leadership.
- Department Membership Commission will maintain a visual indicator of where Department membership is in proportion of our five year plan on a monthly basis and will share with District Commanders and publish in each edition of the Legionnaire and post on Department website.
- A “Tiger Membership Team” with a makeup of Membership Team and leadership team members will provide support for Districts that District Commanders report are not making membership plan goals and need help and the team will report their findings and additional help required to the DEC at scheduled meetings.

### **Long term strategy**

- The sitting Department Commander will set a designated time for annual review of Departments Strategic Plan for updates and adjustments. Revisit and update the membership recruiting and retention plan at end of each membership year and readjust Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth to support membership growth of 28,851 traditional members by 2019 and continued sustained membership growth to ensure this plan is a living document.
- At all D.E.C. meetings, the Membership and Post Activities (M&PA) Commission will brief where we are at in the five year journey.
- Develop marketing and communications strategies and enhance effectiveness of The American Legion brand and increase membership in new markets.
- Posts continue to develop working relationships with their local military units, National Guard Armories and Reserve components.
- Continue the “Tiger Membership Team” and identify areas that need more concentration with lessons learned in reassessing the Strategic Five Year Membership Plan.
- The M&PA Commission will report to all membership where we are at in relation to the five year plan at our annual Department Convention.

## **2. Enhance Member Communications and Contact**

### **Short term strategy**

- Clearly define and communicate our history, programs, veteran’s advocacy and community activity to all communities.
- Develop strategic partnerships with community agencies supporting veterans and their families, VA facilities, JTAP, DVOP and LVER, ODVA, Access, Easter Seals, etc. to further our outreach and membership efforts.
- Redefine our publication content for the Oregon Legionnaire stressing what our Posts and districts are doing in the community, all positives, benefits of membership, and events in all our Districts.
- Keep webpage updated and user friendly and encourage Posts and members to contribute to the webpage with events and Post news and use the webpage.
- Department to develop an active media relations team.
- Communicate The American Legion’s story to our National Guard and Reserve components with emphasis on eligibility.

- Provide PSA's to district and Post and Increase PSA in local media channels.
- Increase presence in social media, radio talk shows, TV spots when involved in community events, on holidays, etc..
- Collect list of members with e-mail addresses for use on Post communications, legislative issues, membership reports, call to action.
- Include Public Relations in planning and training at the district level and dissemination of positive outcomes and reports to media.

#### **Long term strategy**

- Increase PSA in local media channels.
- Increase presence in social media.

### **3. CREATE BRAND AWARENESS**

#### **Short term strategy**

- Create news releases at Post, District, and Department level of positive events The American Legion is participating in or is the driving force.
- Encourage all Posts to participate in talk radio spots on their activity and future events in the community.
- Provide information on PA availability and how to contact your local news media and success stories in the Oregon Legionnaire.
- Use resources of Public Relations Commission for training and development of dialog and script and contacts in news media in our department.

#### **Long term strategy**

- Utilize our publication resources throughout the department to disseminate all positive accomplishments our Posts, Districts and communities.
- Include Public Relations Commission members in district meetings to train Posts and districts in additional media opportunities.

### **4. INCREASE TRAINING, EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Short term strategy**

- Working with the Department Training and Development (T&D) Commission recommendations for development of potential future leader's development and additional course for development for our Oregon American Legion College.

- Conduct Oregon American Legion College first month after department convention for all leadership and chairs and identified development candidates for future leadership emphasizing Legion History (ALEI), expectations and strategy to achieve our goals for our Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. Consider holding our college and training sessions locally and other areas of our Department to support our membership.
- Utilize the resources of our National Organization to provide LEAD training on selected courses to support our Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth.
- Department Training and Development Commission identify development candidates for participation in The National American Legion College for future leadership positions.
- Utilize our own resources of six certified instructors in ALEI Training to provide training at the district and Post level and all new Posts.
- Have additional members certified to teach ALEI training to provide support at each district level.

#### **Long term strategy**

- Through recommendation of the Department Training and Development Commission develop further classes and dialog for our Oregon American Legion College from outcomes from our first year support our Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth.
- Continue to utilize the resources of our National Organization to provide LEAD training on selected courses identified to support our Strategic Five Year Membership Plan.
- Department Training and Development Commission identify additional candidates for participation and development in Leadership Positions and for attendance at The American Legion College.
- Continue to conduct ALEI training at all new Posts and offer at each district, each year.
- Add two new certified instructors for ALEI for each district.
- The Training and Development (T&D) Commission put in their budget for equipment for instructors to teach ALEI and LEAD training.

## **5. POST CREATION, DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION**

#### **Short term strategy**

- Hold district revitalization events in every Department of Oregon district.

- Each district starts one new Post.
- Each district requesting to cancel a Post charter must start a New Post to support High Schools, and National Guard Armory's in the existing Post or District area with American Legion Programs.
- Each Post, district in which an institution for higher learning exists will visit the Colleges to provide our program information to Veterans on campus and offer assistance to start up a Student Post and explore Incarceration Facilities and National Guard Armories for feasibility to start a new Post for National Guard or Incarceration facility members only.

### **Long term strategy**

- Continue to support district revitalization in each district for additional DMS members and members not able to contact previous year, phone, door knocking, etc.
- Each district starts one new Post for each city with a High School or National Guard Armory without a Post.
- Each Post and District continues effort to have an American Legion Post in each Community, Institution of Higher Learning, National Guard Armory and Incarceration Facility.

## **6. MEASURABLE GOALS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Measurable Goals**

- All districts, Posts must increase membership at Post level by 7.13% over established membership year 2014 goal.
- All districts participate in district revitalization event for all their Posts.
- All district commanders identify all cities/areas in their district with a high school or National Guard Armory without an American Legion Post.
- All district commanders identifying a Post in their district for cancellation must start a new Post to support the community, high school and National Guard Armory in the same District if having a veteran population to support a new Post. If rural and veterans population is sparse, the District Commander must provide plan how the community, local high school and National Guard Armory will be supported.
- Each district commander is to start a new Post in their district; unless not feasible in rural, sparse populated counties.

- Each district commander will schedule ALEI training for their district membership at a district meeting.
- Each district commander is to report at each DEC on progress to reach goals to support this plan and to report on any issues or help required to reach this plan.

### **Accountability**

- The department commander is accountable through their position of leadership for success of the Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth.
- The department commander will set a designated time for the annual review of the departments Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth for updates and adjustments to support the 2019 vision and continued sustained membership growth, each year.
- The district commander is responsible through their position of leadership for implementation of our Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth measurable goals and for reporting on success and issues which would prevent our success.
- During each DEC and Department Convention, membership goals for each district will be reported on by the District Commander by the use of a district thermometer chart, indicating whether accomplishing or failing to accomplish membership goals.
- The Oregon Legionnaire will provide the last current membership report before publishing with each Post and District membership numbers, with district revitalization events held and their outcomes and ALEI training held, and new Posts receiving charters.

**Implementation of this Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth.** Once adopted this plan will be implemented by:

- Assigning a minimum of one member of the DEC to each objective to coordinate implementation.
- Establish a strategic plan agenda item for each DEC and place on the agenda.
- Report to the membership at department convention and Department Executive Committee (DEC) Meetings as an established agenda item on the status of the strategic plan, successes or changes required reaching 2019 Membership Goal and future sustained membership growth.



- Revisit and update the Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth at our annual department Oregon American Legion College to ensure this plan is a living document. Sitting Department Commanders responsibility for updates and adjustments.
- Sitting Department Commanders will bear the responsibility for updates and adjustments.

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