THE AMERICAN LEGION

District/County

COMMANDER'S GUIDE

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COMMANDER'S GUIDE

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The American Legion *District/County Commander's Guide* provides the reader with very general information about planning and conducting various programs. This guide is only intended to help assist volunteers and staff. With respect to information contained in this guide, neither The American Legion nor any of its officers, directors or employees make any warranty, express or implied, nor assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product or process implemented at the post or department level. This guide only constitutes general advice and recommendations for operations based on best practices. Information within the guide stating "shall or must" is based on federal law or federal/IRS regulations and mandates. All other items of information in this guide are general suggestions except for the National Constitution and By-Laws. This guide does not constitute any type of legal advice. If readers have any concerns about anything in this guide, they are strongly advised to contact their respective department and an attorney licensed in their state.

Please see 36 U.S.C. Section 21704: The Corporation (The American Legion) may provide guidance and leadership to organizations (departments) and local chapters (posts) ... *but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations (departments) and local chapters (posts)*. (emphasis added)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I – ORGANIZING, TEAM BUILDING & GOAL SETTING 3

What is a district commander? 3

The team 3

The first team meeting 4

District meetings 5

How to run a district meeting 8

District training 10

Program reminders 11

Goal setting 13

SECTION II – COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS & RECRUITING 14

Communications 14

Public Relations 15

District PR team 16

Social media 17

Military recruiting commands 19

Recruiting active-duty military 19

Recruiting among the Guard and reserves 19

SECTION III – POST EVALUATIONS AND ANALYSIS, MOTIVATION & RECOGNITION 22

Visiting and evaluating posts 22

Analysis of post operations 22

Post Responsibility Audit (PRA) 24-25

The value of an organized post 27

Steps to a better post 27

Post revitalization 29

New posts 29

Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) 32

Motivation and recognition 32

APPENDIX – District Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth 35

How to contact American Legion National Headquarters 42

FOREWORD

According to Article VIII of The American Legion Constitution, departments have the authority to create intermediate bodies between the post and department to assist as a liaison between the two, and for the purpose of promoting American Legion programs.

The most common division is a department's partition into districts. However, many departments do provide for county organizations, inter-county councils and other subdivisions below the district level. In one department, county organizations substitute for districts.

The department executive committee or constitution defines the powers of these bodies, which in no way are to infringe on the prerogatives vested in the post, department or national organization. Depending upon the powers delegated, the district may have some supervisory powers over posts within it, but its primary purpose is to promote, stimulate and coordinate programs so the posts' work is made more effective.

The *District/County Commander's Guide* is published annually to assist newly elected district and county commanders and is sent to the departments for distribution. The guide is also available online at the **MyLegion.org** site.

SECTION I – ORGANIZING, TEAM BUILDING & GOAL SETTING

- **The district commander's job**
- **Selecting a team**
- **Selection and use of committees**
- **How to run a district meeting**
- **District training**
- **Program reminders**

What is a district commander?

The title "district commander" is interchangeable with county or area commander. Every year, more than 750 Legionnaires across the nation are elected to this position, and very few have prior experience. Being a district commander is a unique opportunity to serve The American Legion and, in turn, serve America. The term as district commander can be a most rewarding and satisfying experience.

Each American Legion post is a separate and distinct unit, functioning independently of other posts. A district commander is the link between individual members, posts and the department. The department, in turn, is the link between districts, with National Headquarters connecting the 55 departments. Under a district commander's leadership, the posts in the district will be able to link their programs and operations to the state and national organization. Much of The American Legion's success depends on posts being connected to the larger whole.

The district commander is usually an elected representative of the posts in the district, but with that comes a duty to provide guidance and supervision. Posts are responsible for carrying out The American Legion's objectives and programs, and fully complying with the obligations assumed under the post, department and national constitutions. When a post is inactive, begins to falter or fails, the district commander must be prepared to give direction and take control. Such supervision requires organization.

The team

The first two months in office can and often do determine success or failure. This is the time to select key people to assist in being successful. Set a timetable of events and encourage posts to get organized. Choose people who work well together and can best perform the tasks necessary for a successful year.

Here are some tips:

- Advance the most important projects, following a definite timetable.
- Determine the district's long-range and immediate objectives.
- Organize fully and communicate clearly ideas and enthusiasm.
- Make sure the lines of communication are open so that information flows quickly and easily to the public, post, district, department and National Headquarters.

If the district has had a successful past few years, by all means carry on. Consult with past district commanders about what worked and what didn't, but identify areas that need attention (i.e., membership, programs, committees) and make the necessary adjustments to turn them around. Leadership and a great skill set are often the district commander's keys to success.

Organize the district

- Know the boundaries and post officers of the district or division.
- Select and use committee members.
- Set a schedule of events at the start of the year, not in the middle.
- Have frequent communication with posts.
- Establish deadlines.
- Remember that teamwork is essential, from the post level up to the national commander.

Encourage participation

- Challenge new and long-time members by asking them to serve on committees.
- Appoint proven achievers to more challenging positions.
- Build future leaders through direct mentoring.

Communicate

- Newsletters, email blasts and social media are excellent ways to get the word out.
- Encourage every post to attend district meetings.
- Personal contact is still the most effective way to communicate.
- Remember that many times the commander will be the one who makes things happen.

District adjutant

The district adjutant has the same position in the district as the secretary of any other organized body, and maybe a bit more. Just as at a post, an adjutant may provide continuity in the district. While the commander's duties are largely inspirational and executive, an adjutant's duties are administrative, including keeping the minutes of meetings, assisting the work of other officers and committees, and publishing official orders, announcements and instructions.

District finance officer

- The finance officer/treasurer must be a person of proven integrity in handling financial affairs. The posts/districts depend on finance, just as any other organization, and will do well to accept expert advice in formulating and administering its financial policy.
- The finance officer/treasurer usually serves as the chair of the finance committee and oversees all receiving and disbursing of all funds.
- Accounting forms are designed to meet the requirements of American Legion posts/districts in maintaining a correct and permanent membership and finance record. Because of their simplicity, they require no specialized knowledge of bookkeeping or accounting.
- Districts should check with the department headquarters on the EIN procedure.
- All account information and funds must be reported to the department headquarters to be included in the department's annual filing of Form 990 to the IRS.

The first team meeting

A well-prepared agenda will establish a pattern for all future meetings and go far towards getting the district functioning quickly and effectively. Give responsibility to district vice commanders and see that other district officers clearly understand the duties of their office. Prior to the first meeting as district commander, know the past programs and objectives of the district and posts, and their success or failure. Consult past district commanders. Learn all you can about the district. Assign district officers to regularly attend post meetings on a rotating basis within the district.

The agenda

- Membership potential, goals, target dates, distribution of posts and the need for more posts
- General discussion of programs' status throughout the district
- Personal objectives as district commander
- Assignments for officers, chairmen and committees
- Initial planning for district meetings
- Visitation schedule of the district's commander, vice commanders and other officers

Selection and use of committees

The key to a smoothly functioning district is the selection and proper use of committee chairs and committees. Whenever possible, a chairman should be someone with personal interests in the program at hand, and with enough stature to make effective contacts throughout the community with others of like interests. While it's important to distribute appointments over the entire district, consider where a particular chairman lives and where a job needs be done. Personally contact each potential committee chairman to determine that person's willingness to serve.

Arrange a meeting with the key chairs and their committees to establish a program for the coming year. The district commander is responsible for seeing that each has the necessary information and materials to do the job. This includes building a timetable of events that fits into the overall district program and can offer a projection for the year at the first district meeting. Also, as the year draws to a close, give careful attention to the selection of a nominating committee. This committee will be responsible for finding qualified people to carry on the work started.

Sources of assistance

The department adjutant will have information and resources available from the department and National Headquarters. Other valuable sources of assistance are within the district. Don't be too proud to consult with past district officers. In fact, consider establishing an advisory committee of past district commanders. When properly sought and utilized, the experience of this group will help avoid pitfalls.

Value of reporting

Preparing reports is rarely pleasant, except when results are favorable. A district commander's performance is in no small part measured by an ability to report favorable and unfavorable situations in the district to department officers, and to report department and national actions to district and post officers. This is a two-way street, emphasizing the importance of the district commander as a link in a chain. The district commander is the key to communication. Check membership results monthly for each of the district's posts. Results will frequently indicate the need for a visit.

Timetable

Not all programs are handled on a district-wide basis, but such a calendar is necessary. List activities and report dates so post and district chairmen know them well in advance.

District meetings

The district meeting is the largest American Legion meeting the average member ever attends. Not all Legionnaires attend state conventions, and fewer attend national conventions. Therefore, the district meeting is a special opportunity to impress the average Legionnaire and to highlight The American Legion's accomplishments and aims. If the first two months are spent properly preparing, organizing a district meeting is easy. Committee chairs should be ready to make concise reports on their programs, and posts should be alerted so that their officers can outline their plans as they fit individual communities and relate to the district program.

District commanders should meet with the host post's officers to work out the meeting's details, including a banquet and entertainment (if desired). Send notices to all posts well in advance, informing them of the start time, location, whether or not there will be a meal or social hour, and any other information that would make for a better-informed district membership. Use the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* to conduct a district meeting in the same way that a post commander follows it to conduct a good post meeting. Be sure to notify all district chairs, and those who are expected to report should receive a follow-up call to confirm they will be present and prepared. Conduct elections carefully, giving all candidates an equal chance to speak.

American Legion or American Legion Auxiliary dignitaries usually attend district meetings. Know how to properly introduce them, and know the proper time for receiving any message they might have. Out of courtesy to them and to those attending the meeting, do not permit competing activities that will only serve as a distraction. Restrict bar activities to social hours. The intent of the business part of a district meeting is to improve post performance and make the Legion more effective in local communities.

Checklist for conferences and conventions

- **Time and place –** The district meeting or convention should not conflict with events that might interfere with attendance. Select a site that the greatest number of people can reach by traveling the shortest distance. Too often a meeting is set at a post in a far corner of a district in the hope that it will increase attendance in that area. This usually backfires and results in poor attendance.

- **Attendance –** Setting a date for a meeting doesn't guarantee a crowd. The success of a meeting is based on the greatest number of posts represented rather than the greatest number of people present. The first step is sending an official notice to each post commander and adjutant in the form of a sincere invitation. Follow up by personally inviting every post commander to attend; enlist the vice commanders to help. To a large degree, the commander's leadership will determine attendance. Many will come out of loyalty, others because of their interest in a certain program, and still others because of an obligation. Every post should be represented by its commander and adjutant, at a minimum.

- **Arrangements** – Once a meeting place is determined, personally contact the post commander in that area to make the necessary arrangements for conducting the meeting: color guard, podium, microphones, seating, registration procedures, refreshments, social functions and more.

- **Agenda –** Preparation and execution of an agenda are equally important to the meeting's success.

Agenda

Call to order – Promptly call the meeting to order at the time set. Officers, guests and color bearers should be in proper position.

Advancement of the colors – Firmly give the command to salute.

Prayer – At a district meeting where the chaplain may not be known to all, say, for example, "Joe Smith, our district chaplain, will offer prayer." *The Chaplain's Prayer Book* and the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* include suggested prayers.

Preamble – If the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is not on display in the room, give those present an opportunity to get their membership cards so they may join in reciting it. It is also recommended to print a copy for members to use.

Reading of minutes – Some districts have the reading of the minutes, others do not. If they are not read, say, for example, "Joan Doe, district adjutant, will read the minutes of the last district meeting."

Introduction of officers and guests – When the presiding officer fails to say a name correctly, fails to introduce someone in an important position or assigns improper titles, those attending may walk away disenchanted. Do not rely upon memory. Write down on a slip of paper those to be introduced,

together with names and titles in the order in which they should be introduced. In district meetings, it is always recommended that the commander acknowledge past district commanders. Do not overlook past department commanders or National Executive Committee members. When making introductions, do not ask those introduced for remarks at that time. Later, it may be appropriate to hear from certain distinguished guests.

Department officers – If department officers are present, they should be given special recognition and the opportunity to extend greetings. A district commander should not say, for example, "We have Department Vice Commander Joe Smith with us, and I am wondering if he has anything to say." Instead, say, "We are delighted to have our department vice commander, Joe Smith, with us today, and we will be happy to hear from him at this time."

Department commander – If present, the department commander should be respectfully introduced and given the floor for such period as may be desired.

Roll call – This may be done prior to the reading of minutes or introduction of guests, but it is usually best to do just before the meeting's business commences. Those answering for a post should rise and state their name and position.

Reports – Prior to the meeting, inform those who will be called on for a report and go over what the report should cover. Reports to early district meetings should cover plans for carrying out district programs and give hints or suggestions as to posts' role. Suggest to those making reports that they write them out. Call upon those making reports by name, post number and title of office, requesting they come to the front and address the meeting. If you know an official or committee chair has no report, do not call upon that person. If posts are requested to report to the meeting, alert the post commander in advance, outlining what the report should cover. As district commanders, prepare a personal report. Give special recognition to posts or officers doing an outstanding job, as an encouragement to them and to motivate others.

Announcements – No meeting should conclude without announcement of coming events, such as department conferences, special programs or observances, and membership deadlines.

Special recognition – Acknowledge posts that have received special awards or recognition for outstanding performance.

Closing – Close the meeting with an expression of appreciation to those who have attended, for their interest and support, and to the host post for its hospitality.

Helpful hints

- In conducting a meeting or convention, a presiding officer will command more respect, and have better control over the gathering, by standing whenever the group is addressed or presiding over business.
- The presiding officer is the "boss" of the meeting. When anyone wishes to address the chair, have that person stand, give a name and post number, and be properly recognized before granted permission to address the conference.

How to run a district meeting

All officers should be in uniform, each wearing an official American Legion cap and the official badge of office. The commander shall announce the meeting is about to open. Officers shall take their stations. The commander shall seat those present with one rap of the gavel, and the sergeant-at-arms shall close the doors of the meeting hall. The commander shall then give three raps of the gavel, and all who are present shall stand at attention.

District commander: "The color bearers will advance the colors."

As the color bearers start to advance, the commander gives the command to salute.

District commander: "Hand salute."

Give the command "Two" immediately after the colors have been posted.

District commander: "The chaplain will offer prayer."

District commander: "All members and guests in attendance shall remain standing with their caps removed and placed over their hearts from the opening prayer, through the POW/MIA ceremony, and concluding with the Pledge of Allegiance."

The chaplain offers prayer.

Resolution 288, adopted at the Legion's 67th National Convention, calls for designating an empty chair at all official American Legion meetings as a continual physical symbol of POW/MIAs and the cause for which we stand, namely their return or full accounting.

District commander: "A POW/MIA empty chair is placed at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the many American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. This is a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us rededicate ourselves to this vital endeavor."

District commander: "Place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair."

The first and second vice commanders, or other designated individuals, approach the empty chair carrying a folded POW/MIA flag. Upon reaching the chair, they reverently unfold the flag and drape it over the chair with the crest facing the membership. After the meeting is concluded, the POW/MIA flag should be refolded and stored for future use.

The district commander (or appropriate official) leads the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Legionnaires will remove their caps.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Regular meeting opening resumes after the Pledge of Allegiance.

District commander: "Cover."

The district commander and members recite the preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion slowly and in unison, as follows:

"For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

"To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

"To maintain law and order;

"To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

"To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;

"To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

"To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

"To make right the master of might;

"To promote peace and good will on earth;

"To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

"To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

The commander seats members with one rap of the gavel.

District commander: "I now declare the _____ District/County/Division of the Department of _____ regularly convened."

The suggested order of business shall be:

a. Roll call of officers to determine if quorum is present
b. Reading of minutes of previous district meeting (vote on adoption)
c. Introduction of guests
d. Committee reports
e. Sick call, relief and employment
f. Service officer's report
g. Unfinished business
h. New business and correspondence
i. Memorial to departed members (if appropriate)
j. Business for the good of The American Legion

District commander: "Is there any further business to come before the meeting? If not, the chaplain will lead us in prayer."

The commander gives three raps of the gavel, and the membership rises and uncovers. The chaplain prays.

District commander: "Cover. Sergeant-at-arms, recover the POW/MIA flag."

The sergeant-at-arms steps forward, picks up the POW-MIA flag off the chair, folds the flag, steps back and places the POW-MIA flag on the table in front of the commander.

"Till we meet again let us remember our obligation to our country can be fulfilled only by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community, state and nation be ever a main objective of The American Legion and its members. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our country, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall swerve us from the path of justice, freedom and democracy. The color bearers will retire the flag of our country."

As the color bearers retrieve the colors, the commander shall give the command to salute.

District commander: "Hand salute."

As the color bearers reach the rear of the meeting hall, the commander says, "Two."

District commander: "I now declare this meeting of _____ District/County/Division No. _____, The American Legion, Department of _____ adjourned."

The commander gives one rap of the gavel.

District training

Teaching our members how to effectively execute the programs and functions of The American Legion should be a top priority at all levels of the organization. We must mentor new members, whether they are veterans of Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, any other conflict, or fresh from combat operations in Afghanistan. They must know how the nation's largest wartime veterans organization operates and be able to carry on its work.

Thousands of Legionnaires are ready, willing and able to carry on our mission; they just need to be taught how. The responsibility belongs to all of us, not just the top leadership.

Objective

In a perfect world, members would know the programs of each pillar of The American Legion – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth – inside and out. They'd know how to run the programs, recruit participants, conduct PR activities to support them and rally community support. They'd know the organization's legislative positions, year by year, and be fully engaged in lobbying elected officials at every level to support legislation we've championed.

In other words, the average Legionnaire would be a walking encyclopedia of American Legion history and knowledge – able to answer any and all questions that a potential member might ask, able to step directly into any chairmanship or officer position and hit the ground running, able to speak to any community group with authority about The American Legion.

Admittedly, not every member is there – yet. Many are delighted to be their post's American Legion Baseball coordinator or Americanism chairman and are happy to continue to serve in that job. Yet others relish an opportunity to sharpen their leadership abilities, expand their knowledge and tap into their potential.

Set the bar high. Strive to help members in the district learn the joy of being active Legionnaires. Appoint a district training chairman and use the many educational and training resources available to assist in conducting ongoing training at the post, district or county.

Why train?

A significant amount of the time spent in the military involved training. From basic training, where we learned how to march and wear the uniform properly and work as a team, to advanced training, where we honed our specialty skills, learning was integral to professional development.

In a nutshell, training made us better at what we did. Likewise, training makes Legionnaires better at what we do. Training guarantees that The American Legion remains able to serve our communities. Only by mentoring new members will we develop in them the expertise to become the next generation of Legion leaders.

Establishing and implementing a well-organized training program in the district will reap dividends that go far beyond the immediate satisfaction of answering questions about how The American Legion operates. A well-planned curriculum will likely:

- Enhance the quality of programs and post operations
- Offer incentives for new members to learn and sharpen their skills
- Provide new skill sets for long-time members
- Increase social activities at the post centered around training events
- Establish an effective mentoring process
- Standardize execution of post programs
- Motivate members to increase their Legion knowledge

An active post training program can increase membership, lift retention, and provide new opportunities for participation in post activities.

Develop a district training plan

Training can be as intense and formal or as relaxed and informal as needed. First, assign a training chairman to assess the needs of the district or division. There are basic courses ideal for every American Legion member and others that are program or subject specific. The chairman can create an annual schedule, set milestones, and carry out the training appropriate to the post, district, division and community. The chairman should be familiar with resources and products available from National Headquarters. Whether it's a one-hour video about recruiting new members shown at a monthly meeting or a weekend Legion College covering a variety of topics, engage members with an exciting and enjoyable learning experience.

Within The American Legion's four pillars are many subjects that can be taught, including:

- American Legion Basic Training
- Membership recruiting
- The job of post service officer
- Post leadership
- Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW)
- Americanism and Children & Youth programs
- Public relations
- Lobbying
- Planning and executing events
- Conducting town hall meetings and public events
- Post disaster preparedness and response
- American Legion resolutions
- Obtaining sponsors for post community events
- Fundraising

Program reminders

Each year, districts and departments conduct seminars on general post operations and specific American Legion programs. Help reduce the risk of future leadership problems in the district's posts by encouraging posts to send representatives to these training sessions. Attendance at district and department functions also helps build the esprit de corps that makes for a good Legion post.

JANUARY – Initiation ceremonies are good membership stabilizers. Keep working on membership, especially by contacting those who became delinquent Jan. 1. A community service survey can reveal areas where additional effort is needed. This month is also a good time to present flags and copies of the flag code to local schools. Confirm dates for post, district or county, and state Oratorical contests. March is Community Service Month, so now is the time to plan initiatives and projects.

FEBRUARY – Americanism Month Plan school awards with local educators. Sponsor religious emphasis activities. Start planning the upcoming American Legion Baseball season. Local veterans employment representatives make great speakers at post and district meetings. Consider hosting observances of Abraham Lincoln's and George Washington's birthdays. Plan a big American Legion birthday program for March.

MARCH – Buddy Check & Community Service Month Give priority to Boys State selection this month, or earlier. Close out the membership campaign, and mail dues and cards to the department. Recognize the anniversary of The American Legion's founding March 15-17. This is an occasion for post and district officers to focus on projecting the proper image of The American Legion in the community, in the programs sponsored and services provided, and also in the appearance of post homes and surrounding grounds. These are often perceived as a reflection of the attitude, initiative and civic awareness of the post membership. Posts should

be pillars of their community, conscious that they represent the national organization to local citizens. Renewed attention to appearance doesn't require a capital improvement project, merely one of attention to detail and routine fix-ups, from signs to inside and outside improvements. This should be included on an annual Post Responsibility Audit. Between January and March, post leaders should consider forming a committee to host a post open house.

APRIL – Children & Youth Month Coordinate Children & Youth activities and recognition with the post's Auxiliary unit. Obtain Children & Youth Guide from department headquarters. Plan election of new officers, summer Scouting activities and Boys State. How about an old timers' night? Community service will elevate posts' standing in their community. Urge posts to put American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Week on their calendars.

MAY – This month marks the anniversary of the St. Louis Caucus, where the organization of The American Legion was completed in 1919. Armed Forces Day, Mother's Day and Memorial Day form the basis for good post programs and outreach to U.S. military personnel in communities nationwide. Consider honoring them with a Blue Star Salute. Do the district's posts have uniformed groups? Do they decorate veterans' graves? Present school awards at the end of the semester. Kick off American Legion Baseball and summer athletic programs. Contact school officials to get Legion activities approved and on the calendar for next year: Oratorical Contest, Boys State, school awards, American Education Week.

JUNE – Start planning a membership drive for next year, calling on past officers for assistance and guidance. Decide how to go about contacting new veterans. June 14 is Flag Day, so consider surveying people and businesses in the community, asking who flies flags on patriotic holidays. The history of Old Glory would make an excellent program for a post meeting. Summer youth programs need members' support and attendance. Community service is a great activity this month and every month.

JULY – Host an old-fashioned community Fourth of July celebration. Certify new officers with department headquarters. Installation of officers makes an impressive ceremony at post meetings. Continue efforts on behalf of summer youth programs.

AUGUST – By now, the district's posts should have received next year's membership cards from department headquarters. In many communities, school starts at the beginning or middle of the month. Begin planning a community Veterans Day observance.

SEPTEMBER – National Disaster Preparedness Month Sept. 2 is V-J Day, so consider asking churches to ring their bells. Encourage the community to recognize Patriot Day, Sept. 11. Celebrate the anniversary of Congress' charter of The American Legion on Sept. 16, perhaps with an event including civic leaders. Sept. 17 is Constitution Day, an ideal time for a citizenship program. Provide schools with copies of "Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette." The third Friday of the month is National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Obtain ad materials for Veterans Day.

OCTOBER – Launch an all-out district membership campaign. Remember that dues for next year are payable by Oct. 20. Organize and participate in Halloween safety programs.

NOVEMBER – Buddy Check Month Continue full speed ahead on the membership campaign by conducting membership roundups. Get them in before Dec. 31. Lead your community in observing Veterans Day and American Education Week. Remind members they need next year's card number when paying American Legion life insurance premiums. Continue full speed ahead with membership roundups, with an emphasis on retention. The deadline for payment is Dec. 31.

DECEMBER – Don't let Dec. 7 go by without an acknowledgment of Pearl Harbor, "a day that will live in infamy." As the holiday season begins, encourage and support activities that bring Christmas cheer to needy families. How about a Christmas party? Work toward an all-time high in district membership. Keep plugging for renewals and new members. Visit veterans who are ill or in the hospital.

Goal setting

Successful leaders know what they want and devise ways to get it. The secret is their ability to set and achieve specific goals. If unable to identify and communicate goals and make a plan to achieve them, the commander will have difficulty fulfilling other leadership responsibilities.

Characteristics of goals

Goals should not be grand or complex. They need only be statements of results you hope to achieve. For example, a district commander's goal may be to visit all posts within his or her district over a two-year period.

A goal should be:

- **Specific –** It clearly states what must happen.
- **Measurable –** Results can be easily validated.
- **Action-oriented –** It begins with the word "to," followed by a verb.
- **Realistic –** It is challenging, yet practical and achievable – not too high or low.
- **Time-limited –** It has a measurable period for achievement.

Pursuing goals

- Involve team members when setting goals. People are more likely to be committed to achieving goals when they play a part in setting them. They feel a sense of ownership and take responsibility for results when they have a personal stake in the process.
- Write out each goal for the best results. This makes them easier to remember and to track progress.
- Consider what must be done to achieve goals. What problems or obstacles might be encountered? Identifying and resolving potential conflicts now will assist in focusing on them.
- Regularly review progress. Is the team on the path to accomplishing goals? If not, determine the reason for the delay and take action.

Planning process

- A plan outlines necessary activities, resources to be allocated and task distribution.
- A plan gives guidance and direction to everyone involved in achieving the goal.
- Planning reinforces goals, putting them in the forefront. Since goals are the starting point for plans, leaders always remember their goals.
- Planning makes leaders future-oriented, looking beyond the present to project what could happen.
- Planning helps leaders to make decisions having considered their possible effects.
- Planning ensures that goals will be achieved efficiently and effectively, making the best use of resources.

Without planning, resources are often overused or wasted, straining deadlines and raising stress levels. Leaders who make wise use of manpower and materials have happier workers and higher productivity.

SECTION II – COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS & RECRUITING

- **MyLegion.org, knowing the posts**
- **Social media**
- **District PR team, officer**
- **Recruiting commands**
- **Recruiting active duty, National Guard and reserve**

Communications

The jobs of post and district commander depend on good communication with members. As district commander, though, one will be communicating with many more Legionnaires.

Department – The district commander should be receiving information about every week from department officers. Reply and relay it to the posts. Communications to the department should be as swift; keep department leaders aware of program updates and potential problems.

Post – As the department sends information on The American Legion and its programs, quickly pass it on to posts. Try putting out a weekly email update and posting information on the district's website and/or Facebook page. Also, relay in brief all pertinent information at district meetings and the post visits between them.

Social media – Consider creating a Facebook page for the district to update post officers and members on events and other information. This is also a good way to send invitations for district events.

MyLegion.org – Through MyLegion, post officers have access to online membership information, rosters, reports and membership processing. The site is also designed to assist membership efforts at the district level, helping identify members who have failed to renew so that posts can achieve their 100 percent goals, along with headquarters post members. This information can benefit post development and district revitalization efforts.

Key features include:

- Searching members by post, ID numbers or name (view only)
- Addresses, dues remittance addresses, dues amounts, adjutants, commanders, post homes and more
- Track and retrieve CPRs submitted by area posts
- List of posts and members
- Lists of expired members and headquarters post members, searchable by ZIP codes
- Post and district manuals

For more information, contact the MyLegion Support Team at **(833) 253-9995**.

Distribution of resources and information – Establish a resource board to display at all district meetings, featuring current American Legion program brochures and booklets. Encourage post officers to take copies to distribute at their post and in their area. At the beginning of the year, go through all national and department guides and craft a plan of action that tracks posts' program deadlines and all district meetings and events, by date.

Confirm receipt – When sending information to posts or up the chain to the department, ensure the message has been received by requesting a reply. Don't send an email or leave a phone message and think that's sufficient. Ask if the message was clear to avoid misunderstandings.

Know the officers – Know the strengths and weaknesses of each of the district officers so it is known who should be given certain jobs and who may need trained. Mentor them in every way; as district commander, try to train others and prepare to be replaced. A person will not be in the position forever, so teach others to do the work in the event of an absence.

Post POCs – Know each post's point of contact, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each post commander, adjutant, and any past or current department officers in the district.

Public relations

Several "publics" require our attention as PR volunteers, including:

- Our members
- The media
- Local and national elected officials and decisionmakers
- Local community members
- U.S. citizens in general

Narrow the list to specific target audiences, such as participants in American Legion programs and recipients of support and charitable contributions. How we relate to the public depends on which public it is and the message we wish to send.

Public relations is primarily about image, and every Legionnaire plays a role in communicating it. The positive and negative things seen and heard at every level of the organization shape how people perceive The American Legion and what we stand for. And for most people, perception is reality.

The familiarity and reputation of its name are two of the greatest assets of any product or organization. In modern advertising parlance, it's called branding. For instance, what is the first thing that comes to mind when hearing the word Lexus? Luxury and quality? How about McDonald's or Hyundai? Now apply the same exercise to The American Legion. Each person's perception is different than that of others, because one's image of a product or organization is based on experiences and knowledge.

An organization's image is based on its character, integrity and total performance. It has many facets, including:

- The organization's history in dealing with people
- Internal attitude toward members
- External attitude toward community responsibility and involvement
- News releases, interviews and other dealings with the media
- Internal and external publications
- Institutional advertising

What is the image of The American Legion today? It depends on which public is asked. To the media in general, we are the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization and a reliable source of information concerning veterans issues. In some communities, the Legion has no image because the local posts don't conduct community programs. In other communities, Legionnaires are champions of social issues and pillars of the community. Still others may view an American Legion post as a watering hole for older veterans, with little to offer their younger counterparts and their families. Again, each public's perception is its reality.

District PR team

Appoint a district public relations chairman and committee to oversee internal PR (within the district's posts) and external PR (outside the district's posts). The committee should also promote The American Legion throughout the district by encouraging each post to establish its own public relations committee.

The district PR team would be responsible for the following:

- Internal attitude toward members (email and phone calls)
- External attitude toward community responsibility and involvement
- News releases and other dealings with the media
- Internal and external publications
- Advertising

Something is happening every day within The American Legion and the district. The district PR team should have a weekly to-do list to get the word about The American Legion, the district and its posts. *Remember, image will make or break the district*.

American Legion National Public Relations Guide

This guide explains how to organize PR teams and includes sample letters and radio voice scripts for specific holidays, programs and other events. In addition, the Media & Communications Division produces DVDs with public service announcements for radio and TV. Ask department headquarters or order them for free at **(317) 630-1253**.

Responsibilities of a district PR officer

Public relations professionals have any number of titles in corporate and government circles: public affairs, communications, publicity, marketing, media relations, new media. All these roles figure into the job of a district's public relations officer or chairman.

In some ways, public relations is the most important function at any level of The American Legion. It is a district PR officers' job to inform, enlighten, persuade and convince the Legion's many publics of our beliefs, events and goals.

The district PR officer's first responsibility should be to determine The American Legion's image in the area. Ask media representatives how they perceive The American Legion. Talk to community leaders and post neighbors. Talk to local members – not just those who are always there to help, but those who seldom show up for meetings or events. Find out why they don't participate to help change their perceptions about The American Legion and get them involved.

Next, the PR officer's task is to alter or maintain the image of the district and The American Legion, and to communicate the Legion's various messages to each of its many publics. Based on knowledge of The American Legion's image, one can better focus the message(s) to achieve a goal, whether that's rallying support for a veterans issue or persuadings members to support a district function.

Good public relations begins with the district commander establishing policies and practices that are ethical, honest and in keeping with the public interest. Then the PR officer can take those policies and practices to the public for acclaim, understanding and, if need be, clarifying any misconceptions.

The district PR officer is expected to provide four basic services:

- **Advice and counsel –** The district PR officer should advise district officers of the effect policy decisions will have on the media, community and members.
- **Communications service –** The district PR officer oversees efforts to inform members and the public about events and policies via newsletters, brochures, speeches, news media, good citizenship and other means.
- **Public relations research –** The district PR officer identifies, evaluates and communicates information about the community and world events to district leaders and members to help their posts manage their affairs better.
- **Public relations promotion –** The district PR officer develops and executes a variety of programs and activities designed to gain acceptance for The American Legion among members and within the community.

Social media

As district commander, consider appointing a district social media chairman to start a district Facebook page, at minimum. This person should use every available social media channel to connect members of the district and department members, along with anyone else who would want information about events in the district and its posts. Posts should be encouraged to establish their own Facebook pages, too. This is a fun and easy way to publicize events, invite others and share photos.

Think of regular media as a one-way street: people read a newspaper, watch a report on TV or click on an article online. They have a limited ability to interact or share their own thoughts. Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street, offering people the opportunity to communicate and participate too. Social media is a way to interact with others by sharing opinions and visual content.

Characteristics of social media include:

- Contributions from everyone, blurring the line between media and audience
- Open voting, comments and the sharing of information
- Two-way exchange of ideas and opinions
- Connection with people who share common interests, such as love of photography, a political issue or a favorite TV show
- Links to other sites, resources and people

Social networks

Social networks such as **Facebook** allow people to build personal web pages and connect with family and friends. They offer opportunities to share opinions, links, photos, videos, news and more.

Facebook – The website that turned "friend" into a verb – as in, "I wasn't going to, but she asked, so I friended her." Facebook friends are the people who see a user's information – birthday, age, relationship status ("it's complicated"), likes, dislikes – as well as updates posted on the user's Facebook page. It's reciprocal, of course; a user can see their pages, too, and Facebook friends' updates show up in the user's news feed.

Twitter – A site where messages can be no more than 140 characters. For comparison, the preceding sentence has 57. Find out what others are "tweeting" by "following" them, just as they can follow others – but only with permission. Once an account is created, tweets from others are listed chronologically on the user's Twitter home page, which includes a field to post one's own 140-character-long thoughts. Tweets can range from random ("I could really go for a candy bar right now") to reporting breaking news ("Opposition claims more than half the 14,000 killed since #Syria uprising began were slaughtered in past 4 months.").

Blogs – One of the oldest and most common forms of social media. These are online diaries in which the entries appear with the most recent on top. Bloggers rely on text but also embed photos, videos, links to other sites and other content to support their viewpoints.

Microblogging – Social networking combined with bite-sized blogging. Small amounts of content or updates are distributed online and through a mobile phone network. Twitter is the most common microblogging site.

Content communities – Sites that allow users to share multimedia materials. The most popular – Pinterest, YouTube and Flickr – tend to form around photos and videos.

Wikis – Websites that allow you to add content to or edit the information posted – a sort of communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia.

Podcasts – Audio and video files that are available by subscription, through services such as Apple iTunes.

Forums – Areas for online discussion, often centered on specific topics and interests. They predate social media and are an element of online communities.

LinkedIn – A business social-networking site where people can post résumés, search for jobs and establish contact with professionals in their industries.

Recruiting and retention

Project Stay Active

Americans are on the move, and Legionnaires are no exception. National Headquarters' Project Stay Active helps local posts maintain contact with members who move into their area.

In many cases, a Legionnaire may wish to transfer membership to a post in the community. Some of these Legionnaires, however, are involved in temporary moves, have a life membership "back home," or have sentimental feelings toward their hometown post. Regardless, contacting these American Legion members welcomes them to the community and post activities.

Access to Project Stay Active member information is available online through the post **mylegion.org** portal.

Military recruiting commands

These sorts of partnerships are an overlooked membership possibility. Military recruiters are stationed in more than 1,500 communities nationwide. Usually far from home, they need a support network for themselves and their families. Recruiters are also the first point of contact for new soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guardsmen. All are potential members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion – not only the recruiter and the recruiter's family, but recruits and their families, too.

The majority of Americans volunteering for military service are sons and daughters of a veteran. Their parents understand well the importance of a support network and the values of The American Legion. A partnership with a military recruiting command gives Legionnaires an opportunity to make a lasting positive impression on a young servicemember. That new recruit will hopefully recommend the Legion to

others in basic training, especially when care packages and well wishes arrive from a post. This is not a one-time contact, but a project that can last as long as there are recruiters and new recruits.

Suggested programs

- Invite recruiters to special dinners at the post home, such as an American Legion birthday dinner or installation of officers.
- Invite recruiters to be guest speakers at post and district meetings.
- Attend recruiter training events to brief them on the benefits of American Legion membership.
- Create welcome packets for new recruiters and their families. Include discounts from local merchants, names of local hospitals and doctors, a list of day cares and more.
- Offer recruiters a community tour, introducing them to the mayor, city council, police chief, teachers, principals and other local leaders.
- Send care packages to local military personnel while they are in basic training.
- Place American Legion brochures and posters in recruiting offices.
- See that newspaper editors are aware of recruiting efforts and names of new recruits.
- Write stories about successes in post and district newsletters and forward them to department and national headquarters.
- Celebrate branch of service birthdays, inviting recruiters to be guests of honor at post and district functions.

Recruiting active-duty military

Military installations are ripe with potential members. It's not easy to gain accesss to them, but by following simple guidelines, one can overcome some of the hurdles:

- Prepare a letter over the signature of the department commander, addressed to the installation's commander, stating who, what, when, where, and why. Be precise. Consider asking permission for the department service officer to address servicemembers that have decided to separate concerning their VA benefits. Another option might be to request permission to set up an information booth in the vicinity of the commissary or base exchange. Whatever action you pursue, do not simply state your purpose as member recruiting. Offer The American Legion as a benefit and resource to military personnel.

- Establish district recruiting teams that are knowledgeable about American Legion programs and project a favorable image of the organization. Personal appearance is important, since they are selling The American Legion in a military environment; first impressions are often lasting impressions. Find out which members of the department are active military or work on the installation. These Legionnaires can provide insight or act as a liaison. Seek their assistance in this endeavor. They may be able to expedite the process or at least open a door or two.

- Plan a presentation. Ensure there are enough resources and manpower necessary to make it a success. Assign the team specific duties to perform, matching needs with skills. Plan to have an information table with brochures and other literature. Have a sign-up roster for those who may desire additional information, collecting names, phone numbers and email addresses for a follow-up.

- Conduct the event. Wear American Legion attire with cap. Act professional at all times and be prepared to address questions during and after the presentation. Give the audience a point of contact for American Legion posts in their area. Depending on the audience, consider extending an invitation for them to visit a local post (an open house of sorts).

- Evaluate the event immediately after it ends to discuss what went well what needs improvement. Looking for the lessons helps us strengthen our skills and strive to be more effective next time.

Recruiting among the National Guard and reserves

Another market full of potential members is the National Guard and reserve forces. Both are full of eligible veterans who may be interested in becoming members of The American Legion, but have not done so because they have not been asked, they're unaware of what we do and have done on behalf of all veterans, or they simply don't think they're eligible. Many of these veterans have chosen to affiliate with reserve components due to the downsizing of the active military, and as a result, the membership potential is great.

The following steps are a place to start:

- Write a letter to the state adjutant general asking permission to approach subordinate units. Include the department commander's signature to get the appropriate attention and response.
- Identify local units/armories to approach. In the years following 9/11, many National Guard and reserve units were activated and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and many are still tapped for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.
- Establish recruiting teams that are knowledgeable about American Legion programs and project a favorable image of the organization. They must understand that they will be selling our organization in a military environment and that first impressions set the stage for future opportunities. Legionnaires who belong to these units are usually beneficial to membership efforts. Solicit their assistance when forming recruiting teams. The focus should be service first and membership second.
- Make initial contact in one of two ways. First, send a letter to the commander of a specific unit asking for a date and time when the team could provide an overview of The American Legion. Simply try to get a foot in the door. The letter should mention a few of The American Legion's programs and how they could benefit the citizen soldiers or the unit's reservists. Examples include service officers willing to discuss VA benefits, the National Emergency Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance, the Family Support Network, Heroes to Hometowns, Operation Comfort Warriors and other programs. Next, visit the unit in person. Each unit has at least one person who works in the unit on a full-time basis. Prepare in advance a letter addressed to the unit commander, outlining the information above. Take the opportunity to sell yourself and the Legion during this visit. Full-time personnel have direct communication with the commander and can help you make an appointment.
- The presentation to the commander should be no more than 30 minutes. Ensure the team knows the material and is prepared to answer questions. Persuade the commander that a presentation would be of great benefit to unit members.
- Be prompt for the appointment and cut straight to the purpose of the visit. Highlight the benefits of presenting information about The American Legion to the unit. Ask for a date and time. Remember, try to get a foot in the door. Do not say that The American Legion wishes to recruit new members.
- Have brochures and other literature to leave with the commander (available from department headquarters). Commanders are often looking for speakers to present information to their unit, but keep in mind that unit leaders make a training schedule several months in advance; there may not be an immediate opportunity. Be patient. The purpose is to get a date and time.
- Plan the event. Have the resources and manpower necessary to make it a success. Assign the team specific duties to perform, matching needs with skills. Plan to have an information table there, with brochures and other literature. Have a sign-up roster for those who may desire additional information, collecting names, phone numbers and email addresses for a follow-up.

- Conduct the event. Wear American Legion attire with cap. This will identify the team as being from The American Legion, and we want to be remembered. Be professional at all times. Again, be prepared for questions addressed by members of the unit. Give the audience a point of contact and tell them where they can find local American Legion posts. Finally, extend an invitation for them to visit a local post at a pre-determined date and time.
- Evaluate the event immediately after it ends to discuss what went well and what needs improvement. Looking for the lessons helps us strengthen our skills and strive to be more effective next time.

Eligibility of National Guard, reserve

Veterans of the National Guard and reserves must meet the same eligibility requirements as full-time federal active veterans. To be eligible, they must have served at least one day on federal active duty during any of the delimiting periods set forth in Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution of The American Legion, and have an honorable discharge or currently be serving in the Guard, reserve or on federal active duty.

The key to determining if a Guardsman or reservist has been on or currently serving on federal active duty is the "authority line" on his or her activation orders. In both cases, Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301 are orders from the Secretary of Defense and are federal orders.

The authority a governor uses to activate the National Guard as an individual or unit is Title 32 orders, i.e. weekend drills and annual training. These are not federal orders. The reserves have similar reserve orders, which are Title 10, Subsection 270. This authority code gives the reserve component the authority to activate the reserves for weekend drills and annual training.

Use Military Law Chapter 39 when determining eligibility for National Guardsmen and reservists.

	ELIGIBLE	**NON-ELIGIBLE**
National Guard	Title 10 Subsection 672 or 12301*	Title 32
Reservists	Title 10 Subsection 672 or 12301*	Title 10 Subsection 270

** This subsection was created to replace 672 following Operation Desert Storm.*

Note: A DD 214 will be issued for the time on federal active duty, or a DA-1059 for completion of a school will be issued with a character type of discharge. All reserve components send their members to basic training using Title 10, Subsection 672/12301 orders.

SECTION III – POST EVALUATIONS AND ANALYSIS, MOTIVATION & RECOGNITION

- **Visiting and evaluating posts**
- **Analysis of post operations**
- **Post Responsibility Audit (PRA)**
- **Steps to a better post**
- **Revitalizations and new posts**
- **District and post recognition awards**

Visiting and evaluating posts

A good way to evaluate changes in American Legion programs is to review their history. For example, in the field of child care, The American Legion has been an innovator. Many nationwide programs first saw the light of day as an American Legion resolution. But today's Children & Youth program bears little resemblance to the program of the 1920s and 1930s. Then, we emphasized orphanages; today, we focus on the "whole child" and keeping the family's home and life as intact as possible.

The program has changed over the decades, but don't be surprised if at the first post visit, the entire program centers on a discussion about whether to enlarge the club parking lot. And don't be too shocked if at the second, it's said, "Well, we didn't have any program for tonight, so we'll just turn it over to the district commander." Perhaps at the third, someone will report, "We've had the same program with the school since World War II. Now the school officials want to change it. Well, they won't get away with it. I've got an appointment with the school board."

This may be business as usual, but it's not good enough. The job of the district commander is to search out and help post officers find programs that have meaning for a new generation of veterans. Opportunities are all around. Veterans young and old are eager to talk to someone who realizes there are problems in readjusting, in retaining a pension, in finding work, or in getting training to make a decent living. Every community needs a program for recognizing its veterans. Through the press, Internet, TV and radio, posts can take on the job of building support. Leading authorities say the best way to combat drug abuse is through public education. Urge posts to find out what local schools are providing; they organize a public meeting with a respected speaker and take the lead in developing a community drug education council.

What happens after local posts' delegates return from Boys State? Perhaps they could help organize a Junior Law Cadet program like one sponsored by the Department of Nebraska, where high school juniors visit the state patrol training center for a week of instruction involving all branches of law enforcement.

Analysis of post operations

President Abraham Lincoln is said to have remarked, "A man's legs need to be long enough to reach the ground." In the same way, a post's membership needs to be large enough to carry on the work of the post – and it will be, for a post's activities cannot exceed what its membership can support. But before discussing a post's membership and how big the post ought to be, consider these questions:

- What does the post do that would make a veteran want to belong?
- Is the post looking to the future?
- What further activities could the post reasonably expect to carry out?
- How many members can the post expect to handle?
- How many members does the post actually want, and how many could it be expected to handle?

- Are post members satisfied with their current membership?
- What kind of post is it or do members want it to be?
- What is the reason for the post's existence?

The answers for every post will be different, revealing which posts are capable of membership growth and which must improve and modernize their programs before healthy membership growth can be supported.

In any given post, there is a reliable group of members who do most of the work. Nearly all posts build their programs around this manpower pool. Even so, this percentage of active members does not need to hover at the same mark. Pick up department and national planning manuals for ideas on how to increase the number and contributions of active Legionnaires and use this material as a base for a presentation to make the post more effective.

Limits of authority, methods of obtaining information

Many posts resent what they perceive to be interference in their operations. At the same time, the department counts on district commanders to have detailed knowledge and understanding of each post in their districts. This conflict is usually resolved by working with posts to obtain information and improve operations. A sample Post Analysis Sheet (PRA) is available in the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies*. Experience in the field has shown the actual sheet can be left in the briefcase as the information is gathered. As district commander, one should be prepared with several key questions on programs or activities; they may be individual pet interests. In a meeting with post officers, these key questions can be the start of a good discussion, allowing one to obtain the information needed and at the same time offer suggestions for improvements. There is no value in handing an analysis sheet to one or more post officers and asking them to complete it without consultation with the district commander or whoever requested the form be completed.

How to use the information

As important as it is for district commanders to know the internal operation of each post, it is equally important that this information be put to proper use. It has no value if the district commander simply obtains this information for information's sake. First, put it to work assisting the post in improving its programs and procedures. Secondly, pass the information on to the department. Thirdly, consider it a way to make district officers better informed.

If posts adopt an approach geared to satisfying the needs of potential Legionnaires and communities, projecting The American Legion as a vehicle for service, this makes for easier acceptance. The possibilities are endless if the primary motive behind continuing or forming a post is to provide service. For example, many enjoy a post with a good clubroom. They like the social atmosphere of a good bar, but that doesn't appeal to all veterans, some of whom are community leaders who are needed in the Legion. Sure, the first membership "sale" may be made, but the post probably isn't gaining a continuing or active member.

There must be people within our organization whose primary responsibility is analyzing the post structure, particularly those located in metropolitan and urban areas. Their purpose is not to make individual contacts but help posts figure out how to fulfill the present and future needs of veterans and their communities.

Further, we must build a task force of people capable of making contacts at the highest level of a community and developing with those leaders a marketable American Legion presence for the area. Ask what the post and its membership can do to better serve local veterans and the community. The PRA attempts to answer such questions by helping determine the quality of a post operation and its relationship to membership growth.

Post Responsibility Audit (PRA)

A Post Responsibility Audit (PRA) expects that a post participates, through its members, in meaningful activities within the community where its members reside. The PRA is a helpful way to measure the results of these activities.

Over the decades, The American Legion and its posts have developed programs largely in response to pressure. These pressures take many forms: a drop in membership, acceptance by the wider community, changing economic factors, or the return of a new generation of veterans from war. These challenges and others must be faced head-on. Unfortunately, some posts respond by reacting rather than acting.

As individuals, and in our personal lives, we know the value of planning ahead. When a person has been active in a post for a long time, "blinders" or "tunnel vision" can occur. Sayings such as "Be active" or "promote community service" sound nice, but in reality, members may choose to react instead of act ahead of any emergency.

No precise standards have been developed to provide both a qualitative and quantitative post analysis, but one must start somewhere, and the accompanying PRA form can be used as a barometer to help measure a post's effectiveness.

The intent of the PRA is not necessarily to indicate how to quickly rate posts, although this could be a valuable tool. The primary purpose is to indicate if the post is fulfilling a useful function, attracting veterans and benefiting the community based on activities.

Be honest in the post evaluations, which may be surprising. More importantly, these simple evaluations may help indicate where improvements are most needed.

It could be easy to cover all such activities under the fifth item, "Post is a community center," or the eighth item, "Is a friendly place to be." If the PRA is used, there may need to be increased emphasis on planned social or recreational programs. In the meantime, do not lose sight of the fundamental question, "Is this post doing the things that justify its continued existence in the community or for veterans?"

A score of 24 usually reflects a post that's doing a respectable job of hanging on to old members. But it's doubtful many are coming out to meetings, and it's more doubtful it would be attracting the necessary new blood to make the post grow.

Most posts, with a bit of effort, can become outstanding posts simply by improving in each area listed on the PRA. One area in which a better performance is most visibly observed is in post meeting attendance. Others are members' enthusiasm and a brightening of the membership outlook.

Evaluate how the post is doing by using the following PRA form to audit post activities. Conduct a beginning audit with periodic follow-ups for comparison – perhaps quarterly – to see whether or not the post has made any improvements in specifically identified areas.

POST RESPONSIBILITY AUDIT

Rating schedule

0 - No participation
1 - Poor
2 - Below average
3 - Average
4 - Above average
5 - Excellent

		0	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Follows principles of Preamble	___	___	___	___	___	___
2.	Has good youth programs	___	___	___	___	___	___
3.	Members are interested and active	___	___	___	___	___	___
4.	Is a real asset to the community	___	___	___	___	___	___
5.	Post is a community center	___	___	___	___	___	___
6.	Veterans needing help are helped	___	___	___	___	___	___
7.	Has businesslike operation	___	___	___	___	___	___
8.	Is a friendly place to be	___	___	___	___	___	___
9.	Is well thought of by the community	___	___	___	___	___	___
10.	Is well thought of by veterans	___	___	___	___	___	___

TOTAL POST SCORE _____

DATE OF AUDIT _____

Overall rating (assessment) from post total

0 - 4	Dead
5 - 14	Poor
15 - 24	Below average
25 - 34	Average
35 - 44	Above average
45 - 50	Excellent

POST ANALYSIS

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF _____

Post _____ # _____ Location _____

Date of visit _____ By _____ Title _____

Name of commander _____ Adjutant _____

COMMITTEES	Committee appointed		Committee functioning	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Americanism	__	__	__	__
Membership	__	__	__	__
Children & Youth	__	__	__	__
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation	__	__	__	__
Veterans employment	__	__	__	__
Boys State	__	__	__	__
Legion Baseball	__	__	__	__
Oratorical	__	__	__	__
Other committees	__	__	__	__

MEMBERSHIP

Goal _____ To date _____ Last year _____ Gulf War/War on Terrorism veterans joined? _____

Describe the general conduct of the meeting. _____

_____

Total attendance _____ How often does post meet? _____ Dates _____

How often does the post executive committee meet? _____

In your opinion, what can be done to assist this post? _____

_____

_____

_____

Signed (post officer) _____ Title _____

Signed (department representative) _____ Title _____

The value of organized posts

District commanders will have under their jurisdiction posts ranging from highly successful to dormant. To a large degree, success as a district commander depends upon how effectively one can get the greatest number of American Legion posts to operate while in office. When a post has a completely successful operation, it needs minimal supervision. As district commander, become familiar with these posts' procedures so that their ideas and programs can be recommended to less successful posts.

Many times, new post officers are eager to do a job but lack the background. There are several options as to how best to help them. Call a post officers' seminar early on, asking district chairmen and officers to present the program for the coming year. District conventions offer the same opportunity, keeping in mind time limitations.

Maintain a list of phone numbers of all district/county and post officers for emergencies. District officers should also make post visits. At times, the district commander will need to go directly to a post and sit down with the officers available and offer plans or procedures known to work. The following outline can be recommended in district seminars or when meeting with individual posts.

Steps to a better post

1. Obtain post records and get new material from department headquarters to become familiar with the policies and traditions of the post, district, department and National Headquarters.

2. Call an early meeting of the newly elected officers. Invite the outgoing commander and adjutant and other influential Legionnaires to meet with the group.

A suggested agenda should include:

a. Budget
   1. Old, current and possibly new sources of income
   2. Estimated expenditures
   3. Possible methods of financing selected programs with other than post funds
b. Assignments and outline of duties of elected officers
c. Discussion of individual programs and committees to determine the following:
   1. Qualifications and suggestions for committee chairs and members
   2. Established programs
   3. Possible new programs (use available handbooks and department material as guides)
   4. Program schedule
d. Discussion programs unique to the post
e. Initiate study of the post and community for new programs, conduct post analysis

3. Activate committees.

a. Select chairperson and members
b. Make personal contact with each chair to determine willingness to serve
c. Arrange meeting of committees to formulate program
d. Instruct chairpersons on programs, available materials, post reports and more
e. Build timetable for each committee to fit into the overall post calendar

4. Coordinate with the post's Auxiliary unit. Many programs depend on Auxiliary support to be successful.

5. Conduct a post meeting.

a. The first post meeting tends to set a pattern for the entire year.
b. Work closely with the adjutant, officers and committee heads.
c. Run a formal meeting, following the ritual in the Manual of Ceremonies.
d. Post business should be attended to as briefly as possible.
e. Know department and national material in advance and report items of interest to the membership.
f. Committee reports should be brief and to the point.
g. Consider qualified speakers at some or all meetings for briefings on some phase of Legion programs.
h. Don't neglect the social side.
i. Announce the main business of the next meeting.
j. Have the welcome committee established.

6. Conduct a Public Relations Committee meeting.

a. Discuss ways and means.
b. Formulate instruction to post officers and committee chairs on standard procedure for keeping the Public Relations chair and editor of the newspaper or bulletin informed.

7. Plan for a more informed membership.

a. Talks at post meetings
b. Give everyone a job.
c. Encourage enrollment and completion of the American Legion Extension Institute (ALEI) online.
d. Pass on information.
e. Publish a monthly post newspaper or bulletin.
f. Acquaint active members with veteran benefits.

8. Appoint a coordinating committee for patriotic observances.

a. Work with standing committees, including younger members.
b. Work with the entire community to recognize local active military personnel and all veterans.
c. Include uniformed groups if available.

9. Give proper credit.

a. Awards and citations
b. Thank-you notes
c. Recognition at meetings

10. The voice of the Legionnaire and the post is only heard by active participation in meetings, whether district, department or national.

a. Plan election of delegates as part of the post timetable.
b. Attend district, department and national conventions and conferences.
c. Present sound resolutions of concern to The American Legion.
d. Report back to the post.

11. Follow standard procedures and schedule all year round. At a minimum, plan post meetings three months ahead, and social activities six months ahead.

12. It is never too early to evaluate possible post officers for next year.

Post revitalization

A community with no post and a community with a dormant post have an almost identical void – one characterized by the complete lack of activities in the various fields of concern to The American Legion. Actually, the community or neighborhood with a dormant post is often a greater problem to those responsible for American Legion programs. Many times there is an adjutant, commander or both on record, and district or department officers continue to attempt a post revitalization through them. Obviously, these are post officers who have only a token interest or do not have leadership ability. If this were not true, the post would be functioning. District officers are usually wasting their time if these are the only contacts that can be made. The solution lies in reaching out to other Legionnaires to find a new nucleus for a post. In doing so, the situation is the same as if a new post were to be organized. Remember: one or two key people can change a post completely.

For information on conducting a district revitalization, see the District Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth on **page 35**.

New posts

When the department-prescribed minimum number of eligible veterans has decided to form a new post, and they have the go-ahead from the county or district and department officers, set a time and place for an organizational meeting. Spread the word via local newspapers, email, websites, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Establishing a new post or reviving a dormant one is not difficult if a group follows certain steps. Determine first that The American Legion is not serving a particular community or neighborhood where there are sufficient veterans to support an active and growing post. Someone of stature from the district or the department must visit the area and find out where the community's and veterans' needs. This may take the form of a survey, asking where The American Legion might serve in connection with local schools and school programs, drug abuse and teen suicide prevention, Scouting, care for disabled or aging veterans, or the community's need for volunteer groups such as the American Legion Auxiliary. Such a survey should certainly consider the community's recreational and social facilities.

Often, even while such a survey is in progress, one can go a long way toward achieving the second step, which is the recruitment of eligible veterans who have the ability and willingness to be the core group around which an American Legion post can be built. The local school superintendent or principal might suggest some names of those who would be interested. Federal employees are often eligible members. The local Scouting executive may also know some veterans who would see a new American Legion post as a way to expand the Scouting program. Adults active in Little League or other youth baseball programs are usually interested in ensuring that there is an American Legion Baseball team and can be instrumental in assisting in the search for the necessary number of veterans to start a post. Other organizations, such as Lions or Kiwanis, may need the cooperation of an American Legion service officer to round out a program. Banks and other businesses are often interested in being represented in such a venture, particularly if the bank or business is headed by a Legionnaire from another post but has many employees living in the desired area. The post can access **mylegion.org**, and National Headquarters can assist in identifying names and addresses of Legionnaires belonging to posts in other communities or other states who live within the boundaries where a new post is proposed.

Sometimes district officers will still lack a key person or group to form a new post. Make a list of places to look, starting with banks, insurance and real-estate offices, school principals, and local government.

Pay a visit to these places, explaining what is being attempting and why an American Legion post will be an asset to the neighborhood or community. At each stop, request the names of any veterans who might be interested in getting on the ground floor of a new American Legion post. Oftentimes, this method will produce one, two or three key people who can take the lead, locally, in forming the post. In a chain reaction of sorts, their friends and acquaintances will likely be a source of additional members.

In making the first contacts with a prospective new member or business, it is not necessary to offer a detailed explanation of The American Legion. That can come later. Actually, a copy of *The American Legion Magazine* is a simple item of substance that makes the selling job easier. If the right people are recruited, only a small number are required to ensure the success of a new post. These people will do most of the recruiting among their friends, business associates and acquaintances. In fact, the job of finding the "nucleus" of a new post is simplified by drawing upon friends of Legionnaires in adjacent posts or district officers.

Several decisions must be made when starting a new post. Select a temporary name, set initial dues and, most importantly, identify three or four reasons why a new post is needed.

Two important reasons to organize a post are 1) to assist veterans and local families, and 2) to make the community or neighborhood a better place to live. However, these reasons should be spelled out in terms of programs that have meaning to area residents.

After recruiting the minimum number of eligible veterans necessary to start a post, conduct a brief organizational meeting to elect a temporary chairman and secretary. There then exists an organization that can set the date for a second meeting, where the procedures outlined in Article IX, Section 4, of the Constitution of The American Legion should be followed to organize a post. This group should make sure proper publicity is given to the second meeting, and that those Legionnaires who have volunteered to assist the new post during its formation and the first few crucial months – including a service officer – are in attendance.

The work of dedicated Legionnaires who unselfishly devote time and effort to assuring the success of a new post should not go unrecognized. For this purpose, the National Membership & Post Activities (M&PA) Committee issues "Pioneer Award" citations, which a new post can award at the time it receives a permanent charter to the individuals or posts most instrumental in its success. The department and districts should also give awards to those most active in establishing new posts.

Although most posts are community-oriented, drawing their membership from a cross-section of the local population and carrying on such standard American Legion activities as they are capable of, there is room within the broader American Legion for a variety of specialized posts. There are highly successful luncheon-type posts, made up primarily of business and professional members. Others limit their membership to employees of a business or industry. There are doctors' posts, nurses' posts, and posts made up entirely of church members or federal employees. Some posts cater to veterans of a military outfit or those who were stationed in a particular country. Any area of interest or activity with which a group of veterans identifies itself can provide the reason for an American Legion post as well as the means of organizing it.

Regardless of the post's type, there must be a legitimate, recognizable need to be served by establishing an American Legion post. Then, a core group of eligible members should be brought together, and they should be interested in taking the initiative to form a post. Finally, there must be help, encouragement and expertise from knowledgeable Legionnaires in a position to advise and inform the group.

Step-by-step procedures

When establishing a new American Legion post, a positive attitude is essential. Don't say, "If we form a post." It's "when we form a post." Remember, the post will be providing a genuine service to the community and its veterans. The following steps can serve as a guide:

1. Determine the city, town, neighborhood or other identifiable area where veterans are without a readily available post.
2. Decide that a new post will be established to serve the selected area.
3. Communicate with the Legion's department headquarters and, if necessary, the district commander. (Others may already be working to establish a post in the area.)

4. Find out from the department the minimum number of members required for a post charter.
5. At the same time, ask the department for an application for temporary charter, a copy of the *Post Adjutant's Manual* and membership applications.
6. Select two or three projects that the new post can carry out to meet local needs or aspirations.
7. Contact key people in the community and get their approval for a new post, along with suggestions for possible leaders and members. Ask the mayor, police officers, fire department officials, the school superintendent, teachers, bank managers, real-estate agents, insurance agents, barbers and business owners.
8. Pick a key individual who can serve as the presiding person during organization. Look for leadership, talent, enthusiasm and stature in the community.
9. Pick a name for a post. (A post may not be named for any living person.)
10. Ask the department headquarters to assign a number to the post.
11. Establish post dues before the first organizational meeting, keeping them in line with neighboring posts.
12. Designate a secretary/treasurer to serve during the organizational period.
13. Open a bank account for the post. (Two signatures should be required on all checks.)
14. Start signing members. (Be familiar with eligibility requirements.)
15. Set a time and place for an organizational meeting.
16. Get the required number of signatures on the application for a temporary charter.
17. Notify all members in writing of the time and place of the organizational meeting.
18. Publicize the post's formation and organizational meeting through local press, social media, notices on shopping center bulletin boards and other outlets.
19. Be sure to have signatures of all members on the charter application and that the form is fully completed with necessary copies.
20. Do not overwhelm members and prospective officers with literature or too much information. Take it one step at a time.
21. Select one or two needed community projects. Emphasize how The American Legion can help meet the needs of veterans and the community.

Initiation and installation

This is a first-class social event that should be carefully planned with department and district officers.

1. Publicize the organizational meeting.
2. Temporary officers should preside (if it is a revitalization).
3. Key Legionnaires responsible for the post should be present.
4. Initiate new members.
5. Install officers.

Consolidated Post Reports (CPR)

Each post receives a three-part, snap-out Consolidated Post Report (CPR) form as the reporting year ends. This may be the most important document that the district's posts complete this year; the first two copies go to department headquarters, and the third copy is to be retained by the post. The CPR form may also be completed on myLegion.org and is available for download at **legion.org/publications**, under "Membership Service."

All reports should be sent to department headquarters on or before the June 15 deadline, or sooner if the department has set an earlier date. The deadline for department submission of the CPR to National Headquarters is July 1.

The CPR form covers a post's participation in The American Legion's basic programs: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Public Relations, Ceremonial Honors for Veterans, Veterans Employment & Education, Americanism, Children and Youth (C&Y), and Internal Affairs & Membership. Other requested items are the number of funeral honors provided for deceased members, and whether the post sponsors a uniformed group or distributes a regular publication to members. Don't be discouraged if a post doesn't have something to report in every blank on the CPR. Very few posts have every American Legion program. However, a CPR with al blanks will not be accepted and will not count as submitted. Many outstanding posts devote their energies and resources to just two or three programs or activities, more than justifying their existence.

Information from CPR forms is included in a final report presented to Congress each year by the national commander as justification for The American Legion's nonprofit status and to elaborate on what the organization does in local communities, giving Washington a snapshot of the valuable community service provided by American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and SAL members.

If a post had projects, activities or events which cannot be adequately covered on the report form, attach a written description with pictures and articles, if applicable, to the national and department copies of the form. The narrative report will be reviewed by personnel at National Headquarters responsible for specific programs and shared with *The American Legion Magazine* staff. Each post has a story to tell, and when we speak collectively our strength is magnified.

In addition to being the basis for good local news releases, the CPR also helps in the preparation of membership promotional material. And there's always the possibility a post's reports will result in national recognition for one or more of its outstanding programs.

Motivation and recognition

National Headquarters has a number of district and post recognition awards. For a complete list and full explanation of each award, download the *National Membership Awards Points Manual* at **legion.org/publications**.

Race to the Top competition

Competition is divided into five categories based on the membership of the district without regard to geographic locations. District commanders will compete in each of the following categories based on final membership year totals, and a top district commander for the national award will be selected from each of the five categories. Post ribbons are awarded to each top district commander for all posts in those districts.

Second and third place awards are also presented in each category. The district commanders will be awarded checks in the amount of $500 for second place or $375 for third place, but no additional ribbons are awarded for the posts in these districts.

The Race to the Top certification form must be submitted by the April target date.

Race to the Top categories

Category I	Districts with 15 to 1,499 members
Category II	Districts with 1,500 to 2,999 members
Category III	Districts with 3,000 to 4,999 members
Category IV	Districts with 5,000 to 7,499 members
Category V	Districts with 7,500 or more members

First place – A trip to the national convention is awarded to the top district commander and guest in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the greatest percentage over the final previous year membership. **This cannot be less than 100 percent to qualify.** Each winner and guest are entitled to a trip to the national convention as a distinguished guest of the national commander, including round-trip airfare, tickets to the National Commander's Banquet, and hotel accommodations for six days and five nights. These district commanders will also receive American Legion caps signifying they are Race to the Top winners, awarded on stage at the national convention with ribbons for each of the district's posts.

Second place – The district commander in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the second highest percentage over the final previous year's membership will receive a $500 check. **This cannot be less than 100 percent to qualify.**

Third place – The district commander in each category whose district membership on March 31 represents the third highest percentage over the final previous year's membership will receive a $375 check. **This cannot be less than 100 percent to qualify.**

New Post Achievement Award

District commanders who create new American Legion posts in their respective districts and have the new posts' temporary charter applications on file at National Headquarters by the May target date will receive a distinctive framed certificate.

100% District Commander Pin

This special pin is worn only by Legionnaires who as district commanders accomplished at least 100 percent of their assigned district membership goals. These commanders may be nominated at any time during the calendar year.

District Commander Achievement Award and District Honor Ribbon

All district commanders whose May target date membership exceeds the previous year's membership by at least the number of posts in that district will receive a framed certificate award. In addition, the district will receive an honor ribbon for its district colors.

Individual awards and recognition

National Recruiter of the Year – The individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all the departments will be declared National Membership Recruiter of the Year. The award includes a trip to the national convention, six days and five nights for the Legionnaire and a guest, round-trip air transportation, hotel accommodations and reserved seating at the National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests.

Monetary awards will be presented to the next highest 26 individuals:

- One $1,000 check
- 10 $150 award checks (third place)
- 15 $100 award checks (fourth place)

Note: Department adjutants must nominate top recruiters on or before the last day of May.

The Gold Brigade Award – A Legionnaire who recruits 50 or more new members (transfers do not count) into The American Legion by the May target date will qualify for enrollment in the elite Gold Brigade of The American Legion. These special Legionnaires will be awarded unique gifts that designate affiliation with the Gold Brigade. Also, special recognition will be given to those Legionnaires through announcements in the *Dispatch*, online, and in other media.

The gifts awarded to a Gold Brigadier will depend on the number of times that person has qualified for this award. Gold Brigade recipients will receive a choice of jacket, sweater with the Gold Brigade logo on the left breast or polo shirt; a cap pin, a Gold Brigade patch for the blue blazer; and a Gold Brigade certificate. A second-, third- or fourth-time winner will receive a Gold Brigade patch and certificate, a "hash mark" for the jacket sleeve, and the choice of either another designer jacket or a sweater with the Gold Brigade logo on the left breast or a polo shirt.

The Silver Brigade Award – A Legionnaire who recruits 25 to 49 new members (transfers do not count) into The American Legion by the May target date will qualify for this award. A silver pin and certificate will be awarded.

Note: Silver Brigade and Gold Brigade awards cannot both be awarded to a recruiter during the same membership year.

Miscellaneous trophies and awards

Pioneer Award – The National Membership & Post Activities Committee created the Pioneer Award on May 5, 1965, to recognize those who are directly involved with new post formation. However, the recognition and awarding of this citation are the new post's responsibility.

Completed certification forms should be returned to department headquarters for approval prior to being forwarded to National Headquarters. All Pioneer awards will be returned to department headquarters for proper presentation.

Five (or more) Consecutive Year All-Time High Post Award – To certify to National Headquarters those posts eligible to receive the Five (or more) Consecutive Year All-Time High Post Award. The citation may be ordered at any time for a qualifying post, but we suggest it be ordered about one month prior to the time planned for presentation (department convention, district convention, visit by department commander, etc.). Departments should check and ensure at the close of department books that all qualifying posts are certified. After a post has won the award for five consecutive years of all-time membership highs, it may continue to win the award each year thereafter as long as each year's membership sets a new all-time high.

Post Revitalization Recognition Letter – Individuals who assist in revitalizing a post will receive a recognition letter from the national commander for their hard work. The revitalized post will receive a letter from the national commander welcoming them back into The American Legion.

New Post Development Pin – The New Post Development Pin is available to any individual who assists with the initial start-up of a new post. Volunteers can be nominated at any time throughout the year.

APPENDIX

The following worksheet can be used by district/county commanders and mirrors the department strategic plans submitted for review by the Membership & Post Activities Committee and leading candidate for national commander.

District Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth

Priority No. 1 – Creating Brand Awareness

Is The American Legion a household name in the district? YES ___ NO ___

Explain.

Is the district actively promoting programs to the general public? YES ___ NO ___

How and what program(s) is the district actively promoting?

What is the plan to continue building awareness for these programs?

Priority No. 2 – Communication

Does the district have a media/public relations team? YES ___ NO ___

What are its responsibilities and how is it being utilized?

How is the district communicating with its members, and how often?

Newsletter: _____

Email: _____

Personal contact: _____

Other: _____

_____

_____

Does the district have a website? YES ___ NO ___

How is it utilized to assist in providing information to members and the general public?

Is the district communicating with the general public? YES ___ NO ___

How is the district communicating with the public, and will it generate other opportunities for the public to be involved with The American Legion?

Does the district have a relationship with local media outlets? YES ___ NO ___

Explain the relationship.

What is the plan to build a stronger relationship with media outlets so they can help tell The American Legion's story?

Is the district maintaining an email database? YES ___ NO ___

How is it being utilized? Does it include non-members?

Priority No. 3 – Training/Education/Leadership Development

Does the district have a training/education team? YES ___ NO ___

Explain its responsibilities.

How is it being utilized?

Does the training team have the capability to travel to posts and offer training for those who do not attend conventions and conferences? YES ___ NO ___

How would this be implemented?

Does the district have a mentoring process in place to develop new leaders?

YES ___ NO ___

Explain.

Does the department/district have an American Legion College? YES ___ NO ___

When and where is it offered, and what is the purpose?

Are there requirements for post/district/county officers to take and successfully complete the American Legion Basic Training online? YES ___ NO ___

Explain.

What other training is offered for members?

Priority No. 4 – Revitalization, Development and Post Creation

Do district and post officers have copies of the department's Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth? YES ___ NO ___

How does the district identify a potential area to revitalize?

Does the district have an annual goal for revitalizing posts? YES ___ NO ___

How many revitalizations?

Do district officers use the Post Responsibility Audit (PRA) form? YES ___ NO ___

How does the district identify a potential area to start a new post?

Does the district have an annual goal for starting new posts? YES ___ NO ___

How many new posts?

Priority No. 5 – Membership Recruiting and Retention

Does the district commander or adjutant have access to myLegion? YES ___ NO ___

Explain how they are using this access.

Does the district have a membership team? YES ___ NO ___

Explain its responsibilities and how the team is utilized.

Does the team focus on both recruiting and retention? YES ___ NO ___

Does the team assist with renewal and transfers for headquarters members?

YES ___ NO ___

Does the membership team offer training for posts? YES ___ NO ___

Explain.

Does the district have an awards program in place to recognize members for their recruiting and/or retention efforts? YES ___ NO ___

Explain.

Are awards annually evaluated for effectiveness? YES ___ NO ___

How is the department/county/local service officer involved in membership?

Does the district have a relationship with all military components and installations located within the district? YES ___ NO ___

Explain all relationships.

How will the district build upon and increase involvement with active and reserve components?

Does the district have a relationship with universities, trade schools, etc., located within the district?
YES ____ NO ____

Explain all relationships.

How will the district expand these relationship(s)?

What is the district's relationship with other members of the American Legion family (American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion)?

How will the district expand these relationship(s)?

Explain in detail other relationships, events and/or other procedures the district has implemented that are not outlined in one of the above five priorities.

How to contact American Legion National Headquarters

Americanism / Children & Youth (317) 630-1203, acy@legion.org
American Legion Baseball, Boys State, Boys Nation, flag education, scholarships, Junior Shooting Sports, Oratorical Contest, Scouting, Child Welfare Foundation

Convention & Meetings (317) 630-1313, convention@legion.org
National Convention, other meetings, color guard

Customer Service (800) 433-3318, cs@legion.org
Membership dues questions, membership record verification, membership application, change of address, notification of member death, change of magazine subscription, insurance programs

Emblem Sales (888) 453-4466, emblem@legion.org
Order inquiries, item availability, problems with merchandise

Finance (317) 630-1222, finance@legion.org
Department accounts, financial questions

Human Resources (317) 630-1346, hr@legion.org
Employment opportunities

Internal Affairs & Membership (317) 630-1330, ia@legion.org
Membership programs/policies, Paid Up For Life, post information/concerns, American Legion Riders, National Emergency Fund, Sons of The American Legion

Legislative (202) 263-5752, leg@legion.org
Federal government issues and legislation

Library & Museum (317) 630-1366, library@legion.org
American Legion history, memorabilia, resolutions

Media & Communications (317) 630-1298, magazine@legion.org
References to articles, magazine requests, Vet Voice, advertising information

Membership Support Services (317) 860-3013, marketing@legion.org
Member discounts programs

National Security & Foreign Relations (202) 263-5765, nsfr@legion.org
Military, national security, foreign relations, retirement benefits, ceremonies

Public Relations, (317) 630-1253, pr@legion.org
Press releases, media advisories, speeches, editorials

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (202) 263-5759, var@legion.org
Help with claims and benefits, health issues, veterans cemeteries

Veterans Employment & Education (202) 263-5771, econ@legion.org
Veterans employment, homeless veterans, veterans preference

FOR ADDITIONAL COPIES: Copies of the 2020 edition of The American Legion's District-County Commander's Guide (Publication Stock No. 30-003, revised March 2020) may be purchased from Emblem Sales online at emblem.legion.org by calling (888) 453-4466. The catalog price is $3.95.

The District-County Commander's Guide can also be downloaded free at **legion.org/publications**.

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Please see 36 U.S.C. Section 21704: The Corporation (The American Legion) may provide guidance and leadership to organizations (departments) and local chapters (posts) ... *but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations (departments) and local chapters (posts)*. (emphasis added)

THE AMERICAN LEGION
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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