

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS**



DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Purpose

Service to our veterans, their families and their communities is as solid a plan today, in a period of epoch-making change, as it was in 1919 when the founding fathers of The American Legion met in Paris.

They were true visionaries. Much of The American Legion's success rests on its understanding that the fight for veteran's rights - past, present or future - is never-ending. While our purposes may remain unchanged, our capabilities must not. The environment is changing; we must stay in front of that change to be the nation's advocate for veterans.

For success we must continue to provide first rate service to our veterans in the 21st century, the basis for this blueprint is the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which was finalized at the St. Louis caucus in 1919 and reaffirmed at Minneapolis in 1994. This declaration reaffirmed the principles on which our great organization was developed.

And the method for applying this blueprint for success to American Legion activities has not changed either. Personal contact at every level of leadership within The American Legion is the catalyst that has made us successful in the past and will make us successful in the future.

Since our founding fathers gave us a sound, clear focus, we need to build on this direction as we seek every opportunity to excel in growth and membership in the next century.

The purpose of this plan is to provide the appropriate guidelines for a continuity of effort throughout the Department of Texas, at every level, to ensure that meaningful objectives are both established and met, regardless of the inevitable changes in the leadership hierarchy.

This plan will articulate the Department's philosophy, mission, and vision, and be used for planning purposes. It is not to take the place of the Constitution & By-Laws at any level, but is intended to fully complement any existing, or future, documents that are directive in nature.

Mission Statement

The American Legion Strives to serve the needs of all veterans and their families; To promote a better understanding of the principles of democracy; To inculcate among all people a higher appreciation of the benefits of American citizenship and to fulfill our commitment to community, state and nation.

Vision Statement

The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans service organization founded on the values, contributions, and sacrifices, of those who answered the nation's call to arms, therefore we must:

- Respond to quality of life needs of all veterans and their families;
- Prepare each generation to meet its citizenship obligations;
- Maintain a strong national defense;
- Perpetuate the principles of government embodied in the United States Constitution;

- Be a values-based organization committed to serving God, country, community and every veteran today, tomorrow and throughout the 21st Century.

Core Values

21st Century Key Challenges: The key challenges facing The American Legion in the 21st Century, as outlined by the National Executive Committee in October, 1997, have a common denominator to success -- personal involvement of Legion Officers.

Vision: Every American Legion member must focus on service to the veteran, to their families and to the communities as their number one priority. Legion officers at every level will lead the way in reinforcing this vision.

Goals: We must have goals to fulfill our vision of service. A mission statement should be in place that includes these goals and spells out a direction of where we, The American Legion at every level should be in one, three, five and seven years.

Image: We must be aware at all times of our image and how others perceive us and our work in our community. We must remain the champions of service to our veterans and their communities. Everyone in Legion leadership positions must set the example for all members to follow.

Partnership: The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Riders need to be partners in providing service to our veterans, their families and their communities. Legion officers again must set the example for inter-organization dialogue and cooperation. Our work of service to our veterans is a family affair.

Public Relations: We can amplify our commitment of service to the veteran through an aggressive and consistent public relations program. It allows us to maintain visibility in the community. Technology in the media has made it possible for everyone to become accessible to print and broadcast media. Likewise, Community Service Committees, Chamber of Commerces, and Business Associations have doubled in number over the past 10 years. These are excellent opportunities to network and become involved in the community as a good neighbor. Public relations opportunities to tell the Legion story should be pursued.

Programs: Our service to veterans and their communities are manifested in our programs. There are many to choose from our veterans, Children and Youth and Americanism programs. Single theme or service posts can be drawing cards for starting new posts. Legion officers at every level will be coaches, motivators and consultants in helping posts develop and maintain programs.

Training: Every officer and staff member needs training. Through training, we gain knowledge to help us better serve our veterans. Whether it is Legion College, the Extension Institute or National Information Conferences, education of our officers and staffs at every level should be an on-going process. The most ideal and effective training programs lies in **mentoring**.

Mentoring: Is a "hands-on" approach to training that has proven to be the best investment in nurturing future Legion leaders. Mentoring can be tailored to accommodate any learning needs of your members. It can be in small group or done one-on-one. Through the individualized coaching by a seasoned Legion officer, new officers and members can receive the training and reap the benefits of experience which may be lost in a classroom setting. Mentoring allows one to learn at their own pace and in their

own locality. It allows ample room for positive motivation and stimulates new ideas for improving Legion business.

Membership: Service to our veterans begins with our membership base. Without members we would have no voice on Capitol Hill nor could we achieve the entitlements and support to our veterans, their families, their communities, our state and nation. **Membership is everyone's responsibility -- especially Legion officers.** Post revitalization and new post development should be on every Legion Officer's mind. Resolution 28, Disenfranchising, reaffirmed that the Department Commander or Department Executive Committee is the final decision maker on establishing posts within the department, not another post or district.

Communication: This is a must! Legion officers must set the example in establishing clear and concise lines of communication with members and nonmember alike. Through communication and personal contact, The American Legion can cross all race, gender and age barriers on its way to providing quality service to our veterans and their communities. District Commanders should visit every post within their jurisdiction. This provides you with an awareness of their needs and growth potential. Communicate, educate and support one another through all mediums available to you whether its newsletters, bulletins, newspapers, E-Mail and/or direct contact.

Conclusion: As you can see, the essence of the 21st Century Plan is personal involvement through demonstrated leadership. Our blueprint for success was laid out for us by our founding fathers----

Goals

Vision – The Department, Divisions, Districts and every Post take the initiative to be proactive, growth oriented with informed, trained and knowledgeable members who understand and communicate the programs and principles of The American Legion to all eligible veterans, military personnel, family members, community and Post members.

I. Image

- Every level of the Department will adopt and follow the mission and vision statement.
- Every level of the Department will exemplify the ideals of the American Legion as set forth in the preamble.
- Every level of the Department will be a value-based organization, by annual or periodic self-evaluation using the checklist contained in the Post Officers Guide.
- Division and District Commanders will take an active role in assisting Posts to maintain a current certification of Post Officers.
- Division and District Commanders will see that every Post in Texas completes and submits an annual Consolidated Post Report (CPR).
- Legionnaires are considered to be in uniform when wearing the official American Legion cap, therefore all Legionnaires are encouraged to wear his/her Legion cap during all Legion activities and should conduct themselves accordingly.

II. Partnership

- Every Post should establish, where practical, a viable functioning American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion Squadron and American Legion Riders Chapter.
- Every Post should establish, where practical, a partnership with other civic organizations, i.e. Lions, Elks, Rotary Club, Shriners, Optimist Club and other local groups..
- Every Post should establish, where practical, a partnership with community leaders, i.e. school district officials, city and county officials and church leaders.
- Every Post should establish, where practical, a partnership with other veterans organizations.

III. Public Relations

- Every Post should utilize available media to educate and inform the community of local Post and National patriotic events and other local Post activities.
- Every Post should strive to have at least one article each month published in local newspapers to keep veterans and local residents informed of Legion activities, events, or important issues.
- Every Post should establish an annual Public Relations plan outlining the Public Relations activities of the Post as overseen by a Public Relations committee.

IV. Programs

- Each District will endeavor to increase, by a minimum of 5, the number of participants in the National High School Oratorical Contest.
- Each District will endeavor to increase, by a minimum of 5, the number of participants in American Legion Boy's State Program.
- Each District will endeavor to produce one nominee to be considered as the department nominee for the National Law and Order Awards.
- Each District will endeavor to produce one nomination of an employer that has significantly enhanced opportunities of hiring veterans.
- Districts will endeavor to coordinate the adoption of a local National Guard or Reserve Unit; and that the Family Support Network is fully operational to support these units.
- Districts and Posts should support families and the family readiness groups for those located near active duty forces/installations.
- Every Post should endeavor to promote and accomplish one or more American Legion programs annually.
- Each Post should endeavor to fully support all established ROTC/JROTC programs in their local area.

- Each Post should endeavor to fully publicize the Eagle Scout of the Year program.
- Each Post should endeavor to fully establish a liaison team with all local veteran's healthcare and/or extended care facilities.
- Each Post should endeavor to establish and fully train a team to provide Military Funeral Honors.
- Each Post should endeavor to establish an Emergency Disaster Management Team in their local community.

V. Training

- Develop a Department Leadership Program.
- Department Training Committee establish a leadership program for future leaders.
- Encourage future leaders to attend Department leadership training in support of the needs of the Department.
- All Department Officers must attend all mandatory training sessions.
- All Division and District Commanders shall be prepared and available to assist Posts in training, as needed.
- All Division and District Commanders along with Auxiliary and SAL officers will endeavor to establish mini program and benefit workshops in their area of responsibility.
- Each District Commander will endeavor to obtain the application of at least one post-Vietnam era Legionnaire to The National American Legion College. A selection committee will review all applications. Annual selections will be based on availability of authorized seats and funding availability.
- Every Post should have a representation of officers or members at the annual Mid-Winter Conference and Department Convention.
- Every Post should be represented, by the officers of the Post, at all District Meetings.
- All Post, District, Division and Department Officers, (elected and appointed) will endeavor to successfully complete The American Legion Extension course prior to their installation.

VI. Mentoring

- Districts, Divisions and Department will establish a mentoring program for Posts.
- Every Post member who signs up a new member should introduce them to the Post. The new member will be provided a mentor until they are familiar with rules and activities of the Post.
- Every Post should establish a mentoring program for inactive Legionnaires, including those Legionnaires confined to nursing home, hospitals, or homebound.

- Posts and Individuals should be encouraged to use MyLegion.org.

VII. Membership

- The Department shall meet or exceed established annual membership goal set by National.
- Statewide membership goal is to enroll 10% of the 1.7 Million eligible veterans in Texas.
- Establish Post membership goals that increase membership, are clear and obtainable.
- Membership strength shall result from minimum target goals: 90% from renewals and 10% new member recruiting.
- The Department will fully challenge elected and appointed officers.
- Each District Commander will strive to revitalize at least one dormant post within his/her respective district annually.
- Each District Commander will strive to establish one new post within his/her respective district annually, utilizing eligible veterans within the community and the Headquarters Post members.
- Every Post should establish, train, and maintain a team of not less than 3 individuals to serve as new member recruiters.
- Every Post should establish, train, and maintain a team of not less than 3 individuals to serve as an existing membership renewal team.
- Every Post in the immediate vicinity of a military installation, National Guard, or Reserve unit, should establish, train, and maintain a team of not less than 3 individuals to serve as the Reconnect team.

VIII. Legislative

- Every Post will refrain from endorsing a political party or candidate while serving in the official capacity of The American Legion; strict standards of non-partisanship will be maintained.
- Every Post should endeavor to establish a relationship with all elected officials at the local, state, and national level.
- Every Post should routinely invite elected officials to meetings to keep abreast of issues and to deliver the veteran viewpoint to lawmakers.
- Every Post should endeavor to establish a Legislative Committee to keep membership updated on issues that may affect benefits, services, or programs.
- Each Post Commander shall endeavor to make routine calls or office visits to elected officials.
- Each Post should endeavor to provide for training on the preparation of resolutions and the legislative process.

- Each Post should endeavor to establish a "rapid reaction" team to notify the membership of important issues requiring their individual communication to elected officials.

IX. Communication

- Each District and Post should appoint a Hubmaster to assist with the dissemination of information and report information provided at the last meeting and for the agenda of the next meeting.

- Every Post should endeavor to keep all Post members informed by the proper dissemination of information received by the Post.

- Every Post should endeavor to develop a means of reaching Post members that do not attend regularly scheduled meetings or functions to keep them informed of items of interest impacting the military community.

- Every Post should thoroughly discuss and disseminate the procedures established to readdress individuals concerns, issues, or recommendations.

- Each Post should strive to establish electronic communication venues (Email) and establish a website. Each Post website should be linked to the Department website.

X – Accountability

- Having goals and objectives mean nothing without accountability.

- Having goals and objectives that cannot be measured will not happen.

Objectives

- Establish long-term goals for membership, Legion programs, training/education, financial stability, and any other area of interest, so that the Department's vision and priorities are fully supported.

- Develop an improved set of metrics for all levels of command throughout the Department of Texas, with emphasis on those areas that have the greatest impact on the success of the Department, in as many areas as practical; and conduct the necessary training to ensure that the concept is fully embraced.

- Identify areas for which automation and systems support will contribute to the effectiveness of the Department as a whole, with emphasis on the organizational opportunities at the Post level and the standardization of Department HQ operations.

- Identify and disseminate the essential priorities for the conduct of Legion business in the Department of Texas, and articulate them, through the intermediate organizations, to ensure that everyone understands "what really matters".

- Provide the necessary guidelines for a continuity of effort that is increasingly more successful, from one administration to the next, at every level within the Department of Texas.

- Provide the means of creating and measuring intermediate goals to ensure that everyone is focused on the long-term goals, along with the necessary means to assist commanders at every level to set and achieve goals.

- Ensure that fiscal responsibility is exercised at all levels of command, and that assistance is made available in the areas of budgeting, accountability, auditing, expense control, reporting, fundraising, or any other area, as requested.

Strategies

I. Training

- a. Mentoring
 - 1. Identify potential mentors
 - 2. Identify needs
 - 3. Match mentors to needs
- b. Staff development
- c. Train the Trainer
- d. Post Officers Training

II. Membership

- a. Recruitment
- b. New Post Development
- c. Post Revitalization
- d. Retention
- e. 5 Year Membership Plan

III. Communications

- a. Public Relations
 - 1. Internal
 - 2. External
- b. Website

IV. Management

- a. Accountability
- b. Technology
- c. Constitution and Bylaws

- d. Reorganization
- e. Program efficiency
- f. Leadership

V. Financial

- a. Fundraising
 - 1. Department
 - 2. Posts
- b. Investments
- c. Bonding
- d. Post Evaluating

Action Plan

I. Training

- a. Mentoring
 - 1. Identify potential mentors – Identify potential mentors and their area(s) of expertise.
 - 2. Prepare a database of mentors for the Training Committee to review by March 31, 2012.
 - 3. Training Committee reviews and prepares list of potentials members and publishes list
 - 4. Develop method for Posts to request assistance or for the District Commander to request and/or direct.
 - 5. Projected implementation date is June 30, 2012.
- b. Staff development
 - 1. Identify new technology, programs and updates for all Staff Members (Department Staff, Training Instructors, and Department, Division and District Officers).
 - 2. Identify training needs of staff members.
- c. Train the Trainer
 - 1. Training Committee develop a pool of 20 – 30 instructors on to cover all subject matters by Department Convention.
 - 2. Training Committee identify and selection candidate for the National Legion College each year at Department Convention.

d. Post Officers Training

1. Training Committee continue the fundamental of Post Operations training.
2. Training Committee develop Post Officers training for all Officers positions.
3. Training Committee establish short term and long term training needs.

II. Membership

a. Recruitment

1. Membership, Organization and Post Activities Commission (MOPAC) with the assistance of the Public Relations Commission investigate the use and cost of bill board advertising and the use of other new media systems to reach potential members and veterans across the state.
2. MOPAC develop organized membership drives across the state.

b. New Post Development

1. MOPAC identify potential areas for new Posts across the state.
2. Districts are required to start at least one (1) New Post within their District each year.

c. Post Revitalization

1. MOPAC provide Post guidance on how to do effective Post revitalization.

d. Retention

1. MOPAC develop a guide on how to retain Post members.

e. 5 Year Membership Plan

1. 5 year Membership Plan Ad-hoc committee review and complete Department 5 year membership plan by Department Convention.

III. Communications

a. Public Relations

1. Public Relations Commission establish an internal / external plan by the 2013 Department Convention.
2. Establish and provide a Post Guide to practical guidelines to interface with local media.

b. Website

1. Develop a list server for Posts/Members to use.
2. Board of Trustees evaluate our communications systems.
3. Evaluate our internet provider.
4. Develop the training page on the Department Website.
5. Establish website vigilance.

IV. Management

a. Accountability

1. Measure performance at all levels of the organization.
2. Establish a Post of the Year Award, based upon programs and community participation, not just membership.

b. Technology

1. Encourage Posts and Members to participate on MyLegion.org.
2. Encourage Posts to set up and use Wi-Fi in Posts.

c. Constitution and Bylaws

1. Review of Post Constitution and Bylaws to reflect the changes in the Department Constitution and Bylaws by the 2013 Midwinter Conference.

d. Reorganization

1. Review current District Boundaries by the 2012 Department Convention.

e. Program efficiency

1. District Commanders evaluate their Posts to ensure the Posts are working Legion Programs.
2. Develop weekly to communication to Posts by the Department Commander using DVD or video stream.

f. Leadership

1. Develop programs to develop competent Post, District, Division and Department Officers.

V. Financial

- a. Fundraising
 - 1. Develop a Post Fundraising Guide.
- b. Investments
- c. Bonding
- d. Post Evaluating