



The American Legion Auxiliary
Organizational Effectiveness Assessment
July 17, 2015

American Legion Auxiliary

**IS AT A
CROSSROADS**





American Legion Auxiliary:

- **Advocates for veterans**
- **Educates citizens**
- **Mentors youth**
- **Promotes patriotism, good citizenship, peace, and security**



ALA's Centennial Plan will:

- 
- **Position the organization for the next century**
 - **Rethink how the ALA delivers its mission and invests in its future**
 - **Turn around declining membership trends by focusing on new ways to engage members**

By 2019/20,
the American Legion Auxiliary's million members will
be making a difference for veterans and their families
in every neighborhood.

The Organizational Effectiveness Assessment
measured:



ALA's ability to deliver its mission
ALA's ability to achieve Centennial Plan goals



How do key constituents view
ALA's capacity to **deliver the ALA mission**?

What is **interest in and commitment** to ALA's
mission and plans for the future?

Will ALA be able to achieve
the five goals of the **Centennial Plan**?

**KEY
INPUT
FROM**

Internal Audiences

National, Department, District, and
Unit leaders

External Audiences

Current, Former, and Potential
members

Feedback from **8,849** Respondents



135 in-person and telephone interviews



7 focus groups, comprised of 54 constituents

Electronic Assessment Tool



67,418 constituents

8,300 responses

12% response rate

Thank you

To all those who participated

and

ALA National Headquarters staff members

Stephanie Abisi, Carley O'Connor, and Julie Schafer

The American Legion Auxiliary is

***a very committed group of women who believe in the
mission of the ALA and are passionate
about service to veterans, our military, and their families.***



Our Report

5

Observations organized around the Centennial Plan's 5 goals



General observations at end



Input from discussions



Responses from the electronic assessment



Shows the tenor of comments without compromising confidentiality



Goal 1: Attain a Million Members

Respondents
Say:

Goal 1 – Attain a Million Members



Focuses on quantity versus **quality** of members

Recruitment not **retention**

Not **mission**-focused

Not aligned with member **interest**

Respondents
Say:

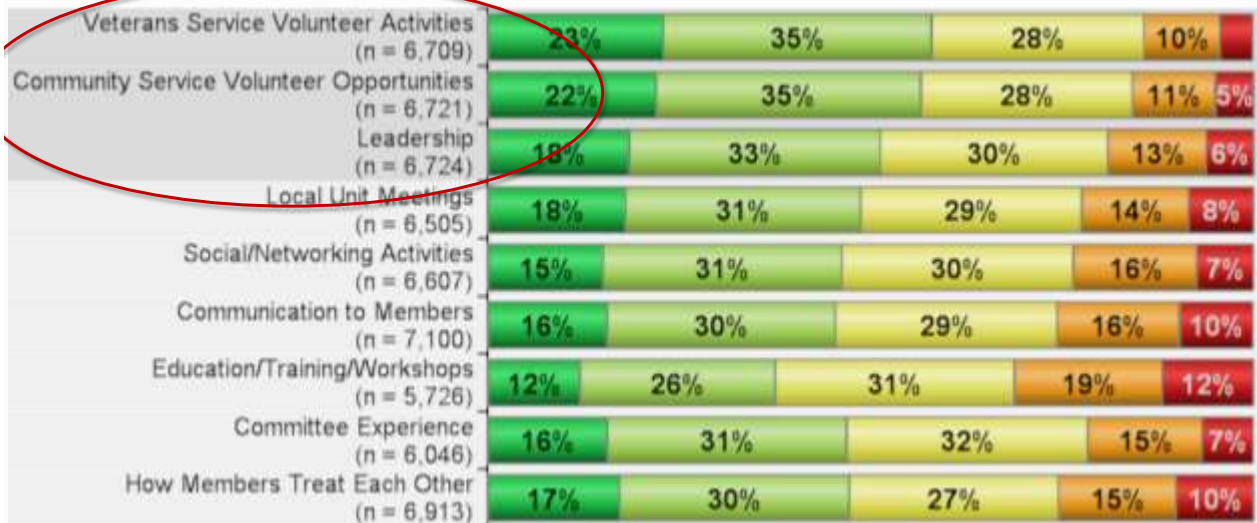
Top drivers of the ALA experience:



Veteran and community service

Participating in a **leadership** role

Top Drivers of ALA Experience



Respondents Say:



Too Much Focus on

Meeting Structure:

Program engagement and impact should be more important than meeting attendance and parliamentary procedure

**Respondents
Say:**

Need to Explore Alternative Pathways to Service:

De-emphasize the Unit **meeting requirement**
Embrace membership at **all levels** of engagement

**Respondents
Say:**

Simplify Membership Metrics:

Multiple tracking periods of
membership goals are
Confusing
Membership renewal year vs. fiscal year vs.
Leadership term
Demotivating
Exceed one year, more pressure the following
year to achieve even more

**Respondents
Say:**

Membership dues

Membership pricing structure is not a barrier to acquiring and retaining members

94%

Rate dues as either moderate, low, or very low

**Respondents
Say:**

Youth Involvement

ALA Girls State, ALA Girls Nation, Junior Activities

Not serving as feeder system to the Auxiliary

Youth need different membership engagement model



Goal 2: Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill

**Respondents
Say:**

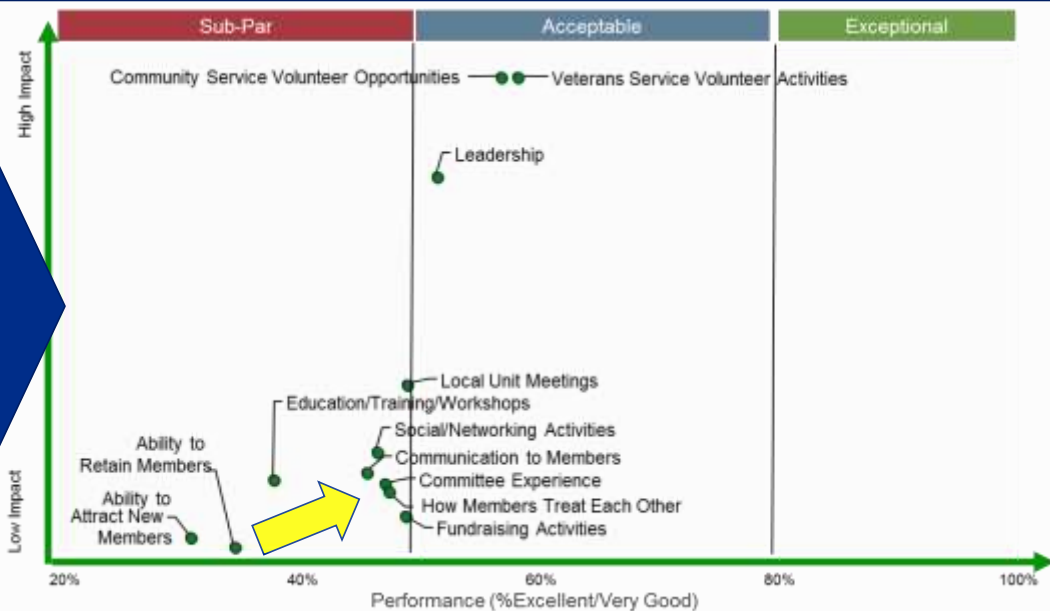
Goal 2: Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill



Crisis-Point for ALA

**Prevalent and widespread culture of unkindness
Biggest obstacle to implementing the Centennial Plan**

How members
treat each other
is rated sub-par



Respondents
Say:

Main Causes for  Lack of Goodwill:

- **Moving up** the ladder at all costs
- **Unwelcoming** atmosphere at Unit meetings
- **Maintaining power and control** by withholding information



Goal 3: Develop Leaders at All Levels

**Respondents
Say:**

Goal 3: Develop Leaders at All Levels

Leadership



Challenges

Annual terms lead to lack of continuity

Lack of open and competitive **elections**
at National and Department level

Need broader candidate **screening**

Void in Unit and Department level **leadership
training**

**Respondents
Say:**



National Governance

On the path to improvement

- moving to **2+ year terms**
- created **Executive Committee to NEC**

**Respondents
Say:**

Lack of diversity at leadership levels

Not reflective of US Veteran population

<u>Veterans</u>	<u>ALA</u>
82% Caucasian	93% Caucasian
12% African-American	3% African-American
7% Hispanic	1% Hispanic
2% Asian/Pacific-Islander	
1% Indian/Alaska-Natives	
3% Other	



Goal 4: Strengthen Departments and Units

**Respondents
Say:**

Goal 4: Strengthen Departments and Units

Unit and Department  Level Engagement

Centennial Plan will fail without engagement
Unit levels lack communication and training needed for stronger engagement

**Respondents
Say:**

Communication Challenges



Overwhelming communication from
Departments to Units

Too much information, **too many**
communiques

Reports **too tedious** and **burdensome**

Lack incentive to report if miss goals

A decision at National level takes **3**
years to implement at Unit level

**Respondents
Say:**

Delivery of Training

Conferences **poorly attended, poorly presented**

Training **curriculum** fails to incorporate:

- generational differences
 - operational failures
- national trends in service
- interpersonal challenges



Goal 5: With the American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty

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ALA lacks brand identity

Tied to success of **The American Legion**

Impacted by **demographics** of Legionnaires

Need increased awareness of ALA with **military members**

**Respondents
Say:**

**Respondents
Say:**



ALA messaging lacks focus

Streamline to 2 - 3 major program areas

Ensure programs are **relevant and mission-driven**



General Observations

**General
Observations:**

General Observations

Centennial Plan

Overwhelming – 150+ initiatives

Implementation plan **too complex**

Conflicts with other strategic plans

Not aligned with existing structure

**General
Observations:**

National Headquarters Staffing

35 staff members to serve 750,000 members

Able to serve **membership needs**

Implementing **complex Centennial Plan**

Administering **11 National programs**

and **scholarship programs**

General Observations:



Technology Not Adequate

Can't **access information** at Department and Unit levels

Need effective use of technology platform to **support membership**



Recommendations

Recommended Actions:

Recommendations

These actions will position ALA to **deliver its mission and achieve the goals** of the Centennial Plan

Based upon synthesized **feedback from 8,489 respondents and nonprofit best practices**

Recommended Actions:

1. Foster an Overall Culture of Goodwill

Stay **mission-focused** at meetings

Establish a **fair leadership selection/election** process that is understood by members

Create a **hospitality chair**

Train members to **collaborate**

**Recommended
Actions:**

2. Membership, Programs, and Meeting Structure



Emphasize mission at meetings

Create meeting guidelines to encourage engagement over procedure

**Recommended
Actions:**

Embrace ALL members

Members who want to volunteer and lead

Members who pay dues but can't volunteer

Members who reflect the diversity of veterans



Recommended Actions:

Focus on membership recruitment and retention

Simplify reporting by **aligning** renewal year
and **fiscal** year

Focus national staffing unit on
membership recruitment and retention
with **Units** and **Departments**



Recommended Actions:

Create an active online membership presence



Create tools for **online membership** signup,
renewal, and communication

Engage members on **social media**

Appropriately **support e-Units**

**Recommended
Actions:**

Simplify

Conduct review to streamline programs and minimize duties of staff

Be ruthlessly mission-focused



**Recommended
Actions:**

Leverage ALA Girls State/Nation



Feeder for future members

Create alumnae association

Offer dual membership track

Strengthen Junior Activities program recruiting

Recommended Actions:

Examine Dues Structure



Dues are seen as **moderate or low**

Could ALA have **greater impact** with more dues revenue?

What **dues level** will membership bear?

Recommended Actions:

3. Leadership Structure



Address leadership **selection and election** process

Move to **2+ year** term

Change Secretary title to **reflect role** as headquarters executive, not administrative clerk

Recommended Actions:

Grow New Leaders through Mentorship



Eliminate “my year, my pin, my theme”

Focus on Centennial Plan

Foster collaborative leadership transition

Recommended Actions:

4. Departments and Units/Training



Professional review of training and delivery effectiveness

Focus on District and County training

Consistent new leader training

Consider staffing National unit training team

Create webinar training system

Recommended Actions:

5. Public Awareness and Brand Identity

Repair **focus on mission and culture of goodwill**
before public awareness campaign

Communicate **relevancy and impact** of American
Legion and ALA

Jointly promote within military branches

Leverage **social media** and Internet



Recommended Actions:

6. Centennial Plan

Ensure **sufficient resources** for implementation
today and in future

Examine National **staffing and funding**

Continue to **simplify** implementation

Focus on **Department and Unit** levels

Streamline all reporting to align with Centennial Plan

Now is the time for ALA to:

Be bold

Embrace change

Be relevant

Fulfill your mission

Support our veterans and families
