

CITIZENS LEAGUE HANDBOOK

FOR

STUDY COMMITTEE CHAIRS,

COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND

STAFF

Enclosed are several materials which we hope you will find helpful as you take on the very important task of chairing a League study committee. As you know, League study committees have a long and rich history of producing good ideas that become innovative policy solutions. We hope these materials will help you understand the process better and ultimately lead to another quality policy recommendation.

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I. The Citizens League Tradition

Important information for new Study Committee members

You have joined a Citizens League Study Committee – an experience we hope will be challenging and enjoyable for you, and which we hope will contribute to the welfare of Minnesota as a whole. You and the other members of the study committee will be continuing a tradition begun in 1952, when the Citizens League was founded by a group of public-spirited citizens intent on improving the quality of Minneapolis city government. The vision articulated by these founding members is as important today as they were then:

“Our city, county and state need a strong group devoted solely to good government, effectively organized to compete with many pressure groups already long entrenched and now aggressively functioning in behalf of self interests. Our organization will make effective and magnify the influence of its individual members – for good government.”

-- Statement by the Citizens League’s Founders, 1942

In its over 65-year history, the Citizens League has become known as one of the nation’s premier citizen-based good government and public policy organizations. The League is distinguished by its pioneering approach to involving citizens in studying important public issues and developing policy solutions. The Citizens League’s **identity** is to renew democracy in the 21st Century by building the civic imagination and capacity to govern for the common good in Minnesota. The Citizens League’s **purpose** is to implement an innovative approach to policy-making that develops the ability of all Minnesotans and all Minnesota institutions to shape public policy, thereby organizing a diverse base of members and partners across backgrounds, sectors, parties, and ideologies to define and solve complex policy problems, and to implement and sustain policy solutions.

In carrying out the activities of the Citizens League – and especially those of the Study Committee – we aim to meet these **strategic goals**:

- 1) *Build the internal capacity to achieve and sustain our **Identity, Values and Purpose**; and*
- 2) *Impact public policy outcomes and existing approaches to public policy in Minnesota.*

A. The philosophy behind the Citizens League Study Committees

The hopeful alternative

During the past 60+ years, Citizens League study committee members have been at the forefront of shaping public policy initiatives that have distinguished the state: The Hennepin County Park Reserve District, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Miracle, tax-base sharing, Metropolitan State University, charter schools – these are just a few of the ideas that were born in League study committees.

Many people today have lost faith in government. The public is skeptical and sometimes downright hostile about a government that appears indifferent and ineffective when dealing with issues of concern to them. Participating in a League study committee is a hopeful alternative to the creeping cynicism that threatens our public life. By being part of this study committee, you’re standing up for some powerful principles: Citizens are capable of understanding and solving serious problems. Ideas matter. People can rise above self-interest and serve the common good. People, working together, *can* make a difference.

Values/Principles

The League's approach is based on these values/principles:

1. **We believe in human capacity:** That citizens have the power and are capable of developing an in-depth understanding of sophisticated policy problems. Our experience confirms the belief that all citizens who invest the time and energy find they can identify, analyze, evaluate and formulate complicated policies. It takes time and effort to become adequately informed. The Study Committee process provides the support to reach the level of knowledge and insight needed.
2. **We believe in democracy and good governance:** Information and reasoned analysis should be brought to bear on public problems. The debate on the tough questions of public life is often shaped by people's emotions, personal self-interests, power relationships, and the compromise and give-and-take of the democratic process. None of this messiness of democratic life can be wished away, nor should it be. We believe, however, that citizens are empowered by applying that uniquely human capacity – reason – to the challenges we face in our common life.
3. **We believe in civic leadership and active citizenship.** The quality of ideas coming out of a Study Committee depends on the quality of participation of Study Committee members. Citizens League doesn't believe in engaging in citizen participation just for its own sake. Bad ideas that emerge from an open and participative process *might* be better than bad ideas that come from dictators – but they're still bad ideas, and will do little to advance solutions to the community's problems. When a Citizens League Study Committee succeeds, the result is a "good idea" that can make a positive difference.
4. **We believe in good politics and political competence.** Democracy depends on "free spaces" – places where citizens from all walks of life can come together for uninhibited discussion about public concerns. The Citizens League believes the best problem-solving occurs when people are free to be candid and to disagree with one another, even vehemently, while preserving their bonds of respect and mutual obligation.
5. **We believe in institutional accountability.** In a democracy, all institutions meet a particular human need for family, faith, community, work, learning, governance and a common need to produce the civic capacity – the obligation of citizenship and the imagination to understand how individual decisions impact the common good in order to sustain democracy as a just system of governance.

B. How Study Committees Work

Study Committees are the League's core activity. Topics for study committees are selected by the League's Policy Committee and approved by the Board of Directors. To identify potential topics, Policy Committee members and staff conduct interviews and discussions with a wide variety of individuals and communities, and scan other media to identify problems and trends and then use a set of criteria to determine how we prioritize potential committee work. The Policy Committee is also responsible for recommending Study Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs to the Board to lead the work. Staff and members will then recruit members to the committee.

Study Committee work usually has three phases:

- 1) In the first, study committee members learn about their topic with help from community experts and staff research.

- 2) Next, the study committee develops consensus about the facts of the issue, and frames the issue and draws conclusions – or value judgments – based on the facts.
- 3) The committee will then complete its charge, which may include developing a set of specific recommendations or using the framework to organize others to action. Members may also participate in an advancement group to work on report implementation.

C. Your responsibility as a study committee member

As a study committee member, you pledge to uphold the Citizens League **standards**. You agree to:

- **Define the problem by including those who are impacted by the problem.** The Citizens League intentionally organizes the diverse stakeholders surrounding any problem to get as accurate a definition of the problem as possible and to produce a stake in leveraging the complex resources needed to address the problem.
- **Demonstrate transparency and good governance.** A Citizens League study committee meeting is a place where special-interest agendas and partisanship are transparent, but also where members are challenged to think beyond their own self-interest.
- **Contribute resources** to help solve the problem. This means more than just your time and two-cents, but also thinking critically about how you can contribute your leadership, networks, and resources (perhaps your member donation) to move our study into the implementation of solutions.
- **Participate in sustaining solutions.** In addition to suggesting implementable recommendations for the Study Committee to consider, all participants will help to advance and sustain recommended solutions.

In addition, we expect you to practice these **civic and political skills**:

- **Critical thinking** to distinguish objective reality (facts) from subjective reality (interpretative)
- **Open-ended questions** to engage different perspectives
- **Strategic listening** to determine and clarify self-interest as it relates to common goals
- **Suspending judgment** to get divergent points of view
- **Fostering constructive tension** to highlight issues that need to be resolved
- **Ability to negotiate and compromise** while staying accountable to civic principles
- **Holding self and others accountable** for follow through on agreements

D. The League's meeting style

We think of the Citizens League study committee meeting style as semi-formal: task-oriented and orderly but friendly, too. Each meeting will have a prepared agenda that will be available prior to the meeting. The study committee chair will lead the meeting using a "comfortable parliamentary procedure." Members who wish to speak will be recognized in turn. When decisions are required, the chairs will accept proposals in the form of motions, and votes will be taken on the motions. Official minutes will be kept of all meetings and be made available. While the procedure is orderly, however, we don't adhere to the formal rules of address found in the Legislature, for example. We think meetings should be enjoyable occasions and maintain the practice of evaluating each meeting to ensure that we're hitting our objectives, making good use of time, and learning from practice.

A few tips for keeping meetings productive:

- Keep comments concise and on point.
- Honor the chair's prerogative to limit discussion on matters that have been resolved in earlier meetings. From time to time, the study committee will make decisions about definitions, scope, and direction that will shape the rest of the group's work. These decisions will be summarized by staff. To keep the study committee moving forward, the chairs will avoid re-debating old decisions.
- The chairs will do their best to give all members a chance to speak. If you do have thoughts that didn't get shared during the meeting, you are encouraged to fax or email written comments to the League office or call the staff or chairs. Many times good ideas do not get fully expressed in the meeting and should not be lost.

Housekeeping Details

- Meeting spaces are often provided to the Citizens League free of charge. Please be considerate of our hosts and leave the room tidy.
- Watch your meeting notices carefully. There might be occasional variations in room location or time, some additional meetings, and perhaps weeks in which no meeting is scheduled.
- If you miss a meeting, we will email out meeting minutes for review by all Study Committee members.

II. The Roles and Responsibilities of Study Committee Chairs

For the League's staff and committee chairs, there are essentially five stages to the League's study process:

Background Work: Once you have agreed to chair a Citizens League study committee you will begin working with the League staff person -- typically a research associate assigned to that particular study. The study will be that staff person's primary job responsibility (consuming approximately 75% of his/her time) for the duration of the study, although the staff person will have a few other job duties to attend to simultaneously. This person will be your primary liaison with the League, although you will also be in contact with the League's Policy Director, particularly at critical junctures in the process. Prior to the committee's first meeting,

you will advise staff in contacting key members of the community, preparing a draft work plan, and considering potential resource speakers.

Note: It is essential to the success of the committee that the staff person's primary role be to support the work of the committee – NOT to participate in the committee as a 'partisan'. The objectivity of staff – and committee leadership – is essential to the integrity of the outcome.

Resource Testimony: The committee will begin with meetings that are devoted primarily to collecting resource testimony. With input from you and other committee members, staff will arrange for local experts and opinion leaders in the field to attend committee meetings. In the case the committee wants to hear from a higher-profile member of the community (such as a state commissioner), you might be asked to issue the invitation yourself. Otherwise staff will handle the arrangements, keeping you up-to-date on who is testifying when and on what topics.

Typically two or three speakers can be heard from in each two-hour meeting. The speaker will be asked to address particular issues in a 20 minute presentation and then remain for another 20 minutes for a question and answer session. As chair of the committee, it is your responsibility to welcome the speaker at the beginning and facilitate the question and answer period following their presentation. Staff will be taking notes during the presentation, for inclusion in the minutes and future reference.

Every effort should be made to ask those who testify to be a part of the study committee process – if at the very least these people should be consulted with regularly if time is a barrier to their participation. Likewise, members of the committee should be asked to do informal "research" when key questions can be brought into a committee member's world (family, workplace, professional networks, etc.) to help inform the study committee's work.

Internal Committee Discussion: As the committee nears the end of the resource testimony phase, committee meetings will gradually shift to discussion. Rather than abruptly cutting off resource testimony and throwing the door open for discussion, we have found it works best to gradually reduce the amount of meeting time spent listening to resource speakers while increasing the amount of time for committee discussion. Eventually, though, we will have a few meetings devoted entirely to debate and discussion.

Report Writing & Revising: After a few meetings devoted to committee discussion, staff will produce a first draft of the final report, focusing on the committee's findings and conclusions. Staff will share the report with you and get your input prior to sending it out to the full committee. The committee will then use the remaining meetings to discuss and comment on successive drafts of the report. Staff will take notes and mark-up the draft during each meeting and then complete the necessary re-writes prior to the next meeting.

Report Approval, Release and Implementation: At the final committee meeting, the committee should take a formal vote to approve the report. Following committee approval, staff will do the "finishing work," which includes adding an executive summary, various tables and graphs, and the necessary appendices. When the report is completely finished, it will be released in one of two ways. If it is a board approved study, League staff will arrange a press conference where you will be asked to outline the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations. If it is a contract study, you will be asked to present the report to the contracting agency. In either case, the report will also be presented to the Citizens League Board.

Implementation efforts vary depending on the type and content of the study, but you will probably be asked to help with implementation of the committee's recommendations. This can include presentations to local organizations and conferences, meetings with editorial boards and testifying before legislative committees.

Responsibilities of the chair:

- 1) Run all meetings.** This includes calling the meeting to order, outlining the day's agenda, introducing resource speakers, facilitating questions and discussions and adjourning the meeting.
- 2) Ensure that all committee members and points of view receive equal consideration.** At the same time, when you think an issue has been thoroughly covered it is your responsibility to move the discussion forward rather than just allowing the same points to be made over and over again.
- 3) Bring closure to discussions and definition to the committee's views.** After issues have been fully discussed, you will need to see that the committee reaches closure or a clear statement of opinion on an issue. Before moving on, it is helpful to ask staff if they think they have "sufficient direction" or a clear enough understanding of the committee's opinion to make the necessary changes in the draft report.
- 4) Conduct meeting evaluations.** At the end of each meeting, meetings are evaluated by each participant using a scale of 1-5 to determine if the purpose of the meeting was achieved and to identify agreements and disagreements, expectations to be achieved before the next meeting, and to surface agenda items for the next meeting.
- 5) Advise and direct staff** on the preparation of meeting agendas and scheduling of resource speakers. Make sure the purpose of the meeting is linked to specific work plan objectives and strategies – pre-work, if any, is identified and agenda items identify measurable goals. This typically requires at least a weekly conference call between you, your co-chair and the staff person, as well as occasional planning meetings outside of the regular committee meeting. During the writing of the report, you will be expected to review drafts with staff to ensure that they are consistent with the committee's views.

Additional things to keep in mind:

1) Respecting all opinions does not mean including all opinions. When the time comes for the committee to edit various drafts of the final report, individual committee members will inevitably raise concerns and call for changing or removing sections of the report. It is your responsibility, as chair, to determine whether the committee as a whole agrees with individual comments. Sometimes, this will be apparent, with other committee members jumping at the chance to respond to a comment or directly challenging the assumptions of another committee member. On other occasions, an individual's comments will be met with little response. At that point, it is perfectly acceptable, and often necessary, for the chair to say something along the lines of, "We've heard from one committee member on this issue, what do others think?" If every comment is accepted without discussion and incorporated into the report, the final product can easily become too watered down.

2) Push committee members to actively contribute ideas to the report. Some committee members will speak up only when they see something they don't like. Although it is easier to just remove controversial ideas and move on, the end result is an empty report. When committee members object to statements or claims in the report, push them to suggest an alternative statement or point of view, and put the alternative up for the consideration of the whole committee.

3) Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate. Even if you agree with a particular position, it is important that all sides receive consideration. When no one else is presenting a particular side, you should consider doing so.

4) Don't be afraid to take votes. League committees generally operate by consensus. However, when consensus is not apparent, tough and important issues should be put to a vote. This is particularly true as the committee nears the completion of its work. When a committee member or members objects to a section of the report or suggests changing it, it is perfectly acceptable to take a vote on the proposed change. While we strive for consensus, in the end, the majority rules. In fact, taking votes can lead to consensus: individuals will often withdraw or modify their comments if it becomes apparent that the rest of the committee does not agree with them.

When members or a group of members continue to object to a particular conclusion or recommendation, you can offer them the option of preparing a minority report. This minority opinion will go to the Board of Directors, who will have the final say on whether to modify the report or include the minority opinion as an appendix to the final report.

III. Responsibilities of Staff

Service as a member of the Citizens League professional staff will be immensely satisfying to you. Very few persons have the opportunity to work with a Citizens League committee. At the outset you will know very little about your topic. About seven to twelve months later you will have completed a major report on that topic and will feel comfortable discussing it in almost any forum. You will have made many good friends with committee members and with the chair of the committee. You may have experienced a great deal of controversy. It is likely you will have developed a very imaginative proposal to deal with a knotty problem facing public life in this region and state. While this report will be the product of the work of the committee, you more than anyone else will feel personally identified with it.

In this memo we make several suggestions concerning the League process. We are continually trying to improve the process and would expect that you would come up with some good ideas of your own. Some of the points we mention might seem to you to be wrong. For the time being, we ask that you simply trust the experience of people who have gone through the process several times.

The memo is organized in sections which follow chronologically your service to a committee: (1) groundwork before the committee begins meeting; (2) mechanical aspects of committee staffing; (3) the work of the committee; (4) the debate-report-writing phase; (5) submission of a report to the Board of Directors; (6) public release of a report; and (7) implementation following release.

Our objective, of course, is a quality product. The credibility of the Citizens League depends upon the objectivity and thoroughness of our studies.

1. **Groundwork before the committee begins meeting**

Prepare yourself

You probably will receive your assignment about two or three months before the first meeting of the committee. This is a time to bring you up-to-date as quickly as possible. Here are some ideas:

- Read over the complete work file of a committee which has completed its work. That should give you a good idea of the kinds of materials which are distributed.
- Get on the mailing list of a significant newsletter or magazine in the field of study.
- Start talking with knowledgeable persons in the community about the topic. This will help you become acquainted with the persons who later will be serving as resource people. It also will give you a good first hand idea of the issues in controversy. Make sure you consult with persons representing different positions on the issues.
- Search the web to find materials that are relevant.

Depending upon the topic and the time you have available before the committee meets, you might want to prepare a background document for the committee, summarizing your own findings. Keep in mind, though, that the committee will be behind you and still want to hear testimony and see materials—be patient while they catch up to your knowledge base.

Begin assembling the "A", "B" lists

You will find that the Citizens League keeps a wide variety of persons well informed about our studies while they are in progress. We do this in two ways. Persons on the "A" list receive minutes and notices and other materials, just as if they were actual members. Persons on the "B" list receive minutes only.

As you are talking around in the community you will find those persons for whom it will be very helpful to receive our materials. Also you will identify those persons whom we need to keep informed because it is in the Citizens League's interest to do so. Usually you should try to limit the size of the "A" list to about 10-15 persons. The "B" list can grow as large as you think is desirable. To get an idea of who should be on these lists just check a past committee or two or talk with other staffers. Frequently, persons who serve as resource are also on the "A" or "B" lists. Policy Committee members should be included on the "B" list.

Consult early with the chair of the committee

As soon as the chair is selected, you will want to arrange an informal get-acquainted session. If possible, you should try to involve the Executive Director. Try to learn when it is good to contact your chair. Some persons may prefer to be contacted by phone regularly. Others may prefer a face-to-face meeting as frequently as once a week. You will work more closely with the chair than anyone else during the several months of this study.

Ultimately, the chair will be the person who, more than anyone else, will represent this report to the community. Sometimes your chair will know very little at the outset about the content. You need to reassure the chair that, over time, that will change. We have seen repeated examples where the chair, having learned about the topic from the outset, becomes better equipped than anyone else to communicate the result of the committee's work.

It is difficult to anticipate how each chair will work with a committee staffer. Only experience will demonstrate that. If there is anything that a staffer should keep in mind to promote good relationships with a chair, it is that you should not surprise the chair. That is, don't just tell the chair what has been planned for the next meeting or what a draft is going to contain. Make sure that you have talked over these things in advance. You will soon discover the bounds within which you can act responsibly. Some chairs will want to defer to you a great deal.

Prepare an overall plan of work

You and the chair need to develop a workplan as early as possible. It should include a timetable, along with a description of the process by which you will orient the committee and then carry through from the discussion and to the final draft of the report. You need not feel tied to such a plan. The important dimension is that the plan be prepared. It, of necessity, will be modified several times. Yet you will have in front of you at all times something that will be your guide. This should be conveyed clearly to the committee, too. Committee members will want to discuss such a plan. They even may want to approve it. Your chair will feel particularly comfortable with the existence of such a plan. You need not worry about it being overly detailed. But it will serve as a guide as you try and figure out where you are at any given point.

Evaluate whether a "steering committee" should be formed

This could be decided before or after the committee starts meeting. On a few occasions a small group of members has been picked to be responsible for planning meetings. This can be very helpful so long as a steering committee has the confidence of the full committee and is not seen as pre-empting the committee's own decisions.

What about subcommittees of the full committee? The League tries not to use subcommittees too often, for two major reasons. First, we think it is good to keep the entire committee working on all the issues, rather than having members specialize. Second, we are wary of the problems of staffing subcommittees. Nevertheless, they have worked on occasion. They should be set up to handle specific responsibilities of limited duration.

Understand your role in accountability and responsibility

A committee staffer occupies an unusual position. The staffer seems to have many "bosses" – the committee chair, the committee itself, the executive director of the Citizens League, possibly other staff members, and the board of directors of the League. On day-to-day matters involving your committee, you'll be mainly accountable to the chair and the members of the committee. To a lesser degree, you'll be accountable to your staff superiors for carrying out these responsibilities. On matters of substance you might find other people on the staff urging that certain strategies be followed which may conflict with the desires of the committee. The best thing to do in such situations is let your colleagues on the staff know of the nature of the conflict. Such conflict will likely occur when your colleagues, particularly the executive director, sense that the committee is pursuing a line of activity that could place the report in jeopardy when it reaches the Board of Directors. You must exercise the greatest caution in communicating such concerns to the committee. Usually, it is best if you just convey the concerns as if they were your own.

(2) Mechanical aspects of committee staffing

Pay careful attention to mechanical details of the meetings

The Citizens League provides nameplates or nametags for each member of the committee. Some staffers have found that one of the better ways to get to know individuals on the committee is to give each member his or her nameplate (tag), individually, before the meeting. This, of course, is not always possible, when people come in late. But if you make the effort, even for those people who come in late, you will find how easy it will be to get to know the people soon. Also they will be flattered.

A second dimension of the mechanical aspects of a meeting is the sign-up sheet. You will have to pay particular attention to making sure that all persons present sign up. Don't circulate the sign-up sheet too early in the meeting or late comers won't sign. You have to be keeping an eye out for it because sometimes people don't pass the sheet on to another row of tables.

Arrange the meeting room as often as possible in such a fashion that people do not look at the backs of heads of others. Perhaps the best approach is a big circle of chairs around which everyone sits. A second, almost equally desirable arrangement is the U-shape approach. Least desirable of all is auditorium seating, although larger committees are sometimes forced to accept this arrangement.

Get your minutes and notices out early

When members receive their notices well in advance of the meetings, they are much more at ease. It enables them to make their own personal plans accordingly. Start with a commitment that the first notice to the committee will go out at least two weeks before the first meeting. Then make sure that the other notices routinely go out one week before the meeting. If you are uncertain about what a notice should contain, simply consult one of the books which include all the materials from a previous committee. You will see the kind of detail that is present. A first notice to a committee needs to make the group feel at home. Go out of your way

to make it clear how persons should get to the meeting. This is particularly true if there are unfamiliar locations. Advise persons on bus routes and parking.

Take the job of minute-taking very seriously

If there is any tradition which distinguishes Citizens League committees, besides the tradition of coming up with good ideas, it might be the practice we have of taking detailed minutes. Write your minutes for the persons who were not present. That is, you might need to elaborate on a point in order to make the minutes intelligible. You might need to call a resource person, clarify a point and insert the clarification in the minutes. Selected tables and charts also can be helpful. Never consider the minutes as being a verbatim account of what transpired. Verbatim minutes are extremely difficult to read.

Try to break up your minutes from paragraph to paragraph with underlined lead-in sentences. This will help the person who must skim minutes. You will find the recorded minutes extremely valuable for yourself. Not only is it good discipline for you to spend an hour or two debriefing yourself right after a meeting by doing minutes, but later, when you begin the internal discussion portion of your work you will need to go back to review what has been said in the earlier meetings.

Your members will deeply respect you for the work you do on the minutes. We mail the minutes to many persons who are not attending or are not members. Remember we talked earlier about the "A" list and the "B" list. But our people who serve on committees are very busy themselves. Thus, you do them a favor by making it possible for them to pick up on what actually transpired at a meeting they missed.

A word is probably in order about the discipline which a professional staffer needs to follow in getting the minutes done. They should be done immediately. That means the first thing the next day, if at all possible. Sometimes it isn't possible to get to the minutes this quickly. Yet if you let the pile of minutes stack up on your desk, the job will become even more difficult. Your committee comes to depend upon you. Also, the freshness of your notes is lost if you wait too long to do the minutes. Tape recording minutes can help preserve what happened, but don't let the fact that you have a tape to rely on lull you into thinking that minute-writing can wait. In addition, it takes so long to listen to the tape that it isn't worth the extra time.

Try not to have your minutes run too long. There is a sense of overdoing it. You can be so faithful in recording every nuance that a person looking for a summary gets frustrated.

Routinely send the minutes to the resource persons who have testified. They will appreciate this service. You also will find that the credibility of the process is enhanced.

Occasionally some people will wonder whether it is necessary for you to continue taking minutes even when the committee is in its internal discussion phase. The answer is yes. The internal discussion phase will sometimes last three or four months. It is very important that you have a record of the discussion. Moreover, you need to remember that you are doing a service for the people in the community who like to keep track of what is going on. Implementation of a Citizens League report begins before the report is even written. It begins when persons in the community, by reading our minutes, start thinking about the issues on which we ultimately will be making recommendations. Yes, there is a risk that someone will spot a possible recommendation and implement the report before it is even written. This happened at least once. Yet if we recognize that our objective is results, not necessarily getting the credit, we can even be happy in such circumstances.

Seek out the assistance and support of fellow staffers

Ours is an open door office. As a general rule we stress that anything leaving this office should probably have had at least two sets of eyes look at it first. Of course, this isn't always possible. Moreover, we know from experience where such help is needed particularly. Clearly, when you are working on a draft of a work plan or list of possible resource persons, let someone else on the professional staff react to what you have before you show it to your chair. This will help immensely in your getting an effective job done. Letting others in the office see your drafts before they go to the committee is particularly important when you get to the stage of drafting your findings, conclusions and recommendations. This represents extra work, but you will find it to be extremely valuable assistance. This is no reflection on anyone's ability. In fact, the reluctance to accept ideas from others will be the real problem. We encounter more problems when a staff member declines to share material. However, no one needs to see your minutes before they are sent out. That is the one major exception to the rule for assistance from others.

Develop good working relationships with committee members

While you will spend most of your time with the chair, remain open to know and listen to all members of the committee. Listen carefully to suggestions they make. Try to honor them. Try to find ways to visit with members in informal settings. Perhaps this could be for a breakfast or a lunch outside the meeting. Maybe you could have a get-together before the meeting or perhaps leisurely afterwards. It would be a good idea, for benefit of the members themselves, to take a brief break during each meeting so that people can simply talk to each other. It is important the committee members become well acquainted with their counterparts.

Ultimately your objective is that the entire committee will "own" the report. Nothing is going to make your job tougher than if the report is seen as the staff's report. They will need to defend the report. This will take place before the Board of Directors and in the community at-large. The chair cannot do this alone.

Help identify members with leadership potential

You will get to know newer members of the Citizens League better than anyone else. Consequently, you will be in an excellent position to help identify persons for future leadership positions in the organization. These positions would include committee chairs, members of the board of directors, members of our major standing committees, among other positions. Keep an eye out, therefore, for members who seem to display a deep interest across a broad range of public affairs, who enjoy wrestling with public issues even when they are not personally affected, who exhibit good judgment in discussion with others, who offer innovative ideas, and who are bright. You'll be asked to suggest names from time to time.

Promote regular attendance; trim membership list as necessary

Usually you find that members attend very faithfully for the first two or three meetings. Then attrition begins. A brief handwritten note on the regular meeting notice to such persons can help. Or maybe a phone call.

Some persons, however, never will attend. Circumstances may have prohibited their participation. In any event, after about five or six meetings a special memo should be sent to them. Consult with other staffers on the wording of such memos. Usually we say "unless we hear differently we'll be removing your name from the membership list." We also offer to continue to send them minutes if they so request.

Additional "drop" notices may be sent later in the process, including notices to persons who attended one or two meetings and no more.

(3) The committee meetings

Spend time upfront orienting the committee

In recent years we've found it is useful to give the committee some time to get to know each other and familiarize them to the League process and tradition. Rather than launch right into continuous resource testimony, it's best to use at least half of the first couple of meetings for orientation. It might seem a bit forced at first, but you will find that in the long run it's useful for committee members to know what to expect and to trust the process.

Make progress at each meeting

Perhaps one of your major challenges will be to develop, working with the chair, exciting meetings which make progress each week. In the early stages of your committee work, you will be relying heavily on outside experts, or resource persons, who will be testifying. During this stage, you need to make sure you get people who can communicate ideas clearly. During this stage, too, you have to be sensitive to the fact that people will want to have the opportunity for internal discussion among them. Just as it is very important to have an overall plan, it is important that you have a specific plan for each meeting. The plan may go awry. There will sometimes be unforeseen events. That is OK. But if you come into a meeting unprepared you will never have any general idea of where you are going and this will cause frustration for the committee members, too.

Exercise care in lining up resource persons

During the first several weeks of a committee's work, several resource persons will be invited to share ideas and background. Working with the chair of the committee, you will play a key role in this period of the work. Too often we tend not to think carefully about the entire set of meetings devoted to resource people. It would be a good idea for you, working with the chair, to lay out a plan covering all types of persons with whom you want to consult. This then should have the concurrence of the committee. By following such a plan members will have an idea of how each meeting relates to the other.

Having agreed with the chair as to the kind of resource person to invite, you then need to explore who would be appropriate. Extensive consultations with others are very helpful here. If your objective is general background, try to steer from inviting third level bureaucrats. These people know their topic very well but usually have very little policy orientation. More often than not, they tend to bore the committee. It is far better for you to invite somebody who is involved in a direct policy role and urge that person to provide the background. The policy person may bring along someone else who knows the details, but you will not be burdened with a lengthy description of some regulation manual. On balance, it probably is advisable for you to err on the side of too much policy input from resource persons and too little background. You always can pick up the background as necessary. This is not to say that you don't need to provide committee members with the essential information for making decisions. It has to do with the context in which that information is presented.

A balance of viewpoints is absolutely essential. The Citizens League reputation for fairness is at stake. If we did not provide all viewpoints, our ultimate recommendations could be challenged, with justification. If the committee is leaning in the direction of a certain recommendation, you might even overdo the effort to hear persons on the other side.

As the professional staff responsible for the committee, you will have the responsibility of drafting the letters to the resource persons. Always include a list of detailed questions. Never leave the resource person free to discuss whatever he or she would like to discuss. You will find that the resource person appreciates that courtesy because they aren't always certain about what they should talk about. Always get your letter to a resource person in the mail a week before the meeting is scheduled. Not all resource persons will follow your requests. That is the prerogative of the resource person. It might make sense to distribute your letters to resource speakers in the committee packet at each meeting.

There is no easy answer to the question of how many resource persons are appropriate for a given meeting. Usually it would appear that a minimum of twenty minutes for speaking and twenty minutes for questioning with the members is required. If this schedule were followed, you can see that over a two-hour period three persons probably is the maximum number that can be accommodated. Nevertheless, we have scheduled more than that, and on occasion, even one person can be kept busy for two hours. Here you must use your own good judgment, considering the amount of work that needs to be done. As a general rule it would be better to have too many resource persons than too few. It is amazing what can be accomplished when the time is limited.

Always make sure you send a letter of thank you following the presentation, enclosing a copy of the minutes. Virtually every resource person comes without cost to us, including the cost of expense to get to a meeting. We need to show these people the utmost courtesy.

Use conference calls for resource persons in other parts of the nation

Many staffers have found it very helpful to involve committees in conference calls with knowledgeable persons elsewhere in the nation. Occasionally, such a speaker may talk too long because he or she is not involved in direct eye contact with the committee. Thus, you should prepare very carefully in advance with the speaker. Urge that responses to questions be kept brief.

Another way for us to use outside experts is to piggyback on someone else's budget. For example, an expert may be coming to the Twin Cities area for another reason. If we learn a person's schedule early enough, sometimes we can squeeze in a meeting with a Citizens League committee. The Citizens League budget makes no provision for paying travel expenses or honorariums to resource persons. But a bit of imagination goes a long way.

The professional staffer need not remain silent

You will find your time heavily consumed by minute-taking during the meeting. Yet you, more than anyone else, know what needs to be elicited from a resource person. Of course, you must not be domineering. When committee members have questions, their questions should take precedence. But you should not be silent. Some staffers have a small sheet of paper next to them on which they jot brief descriptions of questions that need to get asked. Then when the committee members have exhausted their questioning, or when a gap occurs in their questions, you as a staffer should be ready to ask necessary questions. Needless to say, you have to be careful to maintain neutrality. This can be accomplished by asking questions on both sides of an issue. It also can be accomplished through care in expressing the question. More often than not, however, you may end up being the one who asks the most difficult question.

When internal discussion commences, your role may change. It will become more difficult for you to speak out without appearing to be on one side or the other. However, you should not remain silent when the issue is

one of clarifying positions or making sure that something gets debated thoroughly. Sometimes a committee is anxious to dispose of an issue and move on to other items, but you may sense that the committee ought to talk about the issue even though there is unanimity of feeling. The pros and cons will have to be listed in the final report.

On rare occasions you may have to step in and make known your own feelings. This should be avoided if at all possible because it could cause some difficulty. Yet it is sometimes true that very vocal members with certain positions intimidate the other persons present. In such a circumstance, the only person left to take on someone like that may be the professional staffer. Usually, however, you have advance warning about such an individual and have had some internal discussion with fellow members of the staff before a confrontation occurs.

(4) Preparation of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Summarize what the committee has learned to date

When the committee begins to move into its internal deliberations, you can aid the process a great deal by preparing a background document summarizing what the committee has learned. Members may be overwhelmed by the volume of minutes, memos, articles and other materials distributed during the first several weeks. A background document can help bring a sense of order; moreover, it can give greater assurance that members will be debating from a common base of information. Preparing such a document at this time also will help you later, when you are putting together the complete report.

Move gradually into internal discussion meetings

You probably should move gradually, not abruptly, into the internal discussion phase of committee work. That is, don't move from meetings which are 100 percent devoted to resource persons immediately into meetings which are 100 percent devoted to internal discussion. Mix up the sessions. Often a stimulating resource person who meets with the committee for the first half of the meeting will do a good job of prompting significant committee discussion in the second half. Later on, as the committee nears the end of its work, you'll have nothing but meetings devoted to internal discussion.

Prepare outlines, in advance to assist in internal discussion

Always develop a guide for discussion, working with your chair, in advance of the meeting. It is possible that the committee will ignore your guide, but more often than not, members will find it very helpful. It should be brief; it should be designed so that at the end of the meeting members feel a sense of accomplishment, however small. The guide should be designed to stimulate discussion of different points of view. To help you prepare yours, you might look at previous committee discussion guides. There is no right way to handle this phase of the committee's work. Your objective should be clear, however; you want the committee to identify the central problem or problems which need to be settled. Sometimes this means redefining the issue. We want to know what the issues in controversy are and why there are controversies, but the committee may conclude that the real issue hasn't even been discussed.

Adopt a systematic approach for completion of the report

Your report when completed must contain essential background on the subject; a discussion of the controversies, accompanied by the facts which are relevant to those controversies; the committee's value judgments about the controversies; the various options available for making changes, consistent with the committee's value judgments, and the committee's preferred option for action. Other words used to express these sections are: findings, conclusions and recommendations.

You need not feel tied to any one approach. Do that which is most comfortable for you. Many staffers prepare first a draft of findings, which may be revised two or three times by the committee. Then they prepare conclusions, which also are subject to revision, followed by recommendations. Another approach involves splitting the findings, so to speak, into a series of separate issue papers. Each issue paper contains the relevant factual material which applies to the specific issue under consideration. Members then talk through these papers on successive meetings, developing their conclusions and recommendations about each issue.

However you work on this area, you must be extremely careful to lay out all sides of an issue. Ideally, the draft of finding should present the pros and cons of different issues along with the relevant facts but should not reveal how the committee feels about those issues. The committee's feelings should be reflected in the conclusions. Moreover, the conclusions ought not to be expressed as recommendations. The recommendations come in another section.

Perhaps an example would serve to help your understanding here. Let's say that you are studying an ordinance about tall buildings. You will have heard from critics of the present ordinance who claim that there are certain problems that are present. You would have heard from defenders of the present ordinance who feel that things are going well. You also would have heard facts about the present ordinance and their implications. These ideas all would appear in the findings section. We would not reveal, however, in that section how we feel personally. Then we would come to the conclusion section. There we would say that based on an analysis of all positions, it is our judgment that either the ordinance should be modified or it should stay as is, with our reasons for feeling that way. Then the recommendations section would contain the specific proposals that we have for making change. The recommendation section also would comment on the possible recommendations which we considered and rejected. It is very important that we give attention to the options which were not adopted as well as the option which we selected.

One of the best disciplines that you could follow as you begin your first draft of findings would be to go back over all of the materials in your minutes and in the background materials that have been distributed. Sometimes we forget to do that.

You will find that you will go through several drafts of your report. This is part of the strength of this organization.

We always are looking for ways to improve the way our reports are written. Consequently, take these recommendations here as general guidelines, not firm regulations. Some people may disagree on the best approach to take. Some people have suggested, for example, that what our reports need are summaries running perhaps four to eight pages at the outset which outline the policy argument in some detail. Others find the discipline of findings, conclusions, and recommendations difficult to follow.

"Cradle" New Ideas

A new idea may emerge from a resource person or from internal discussion among members. Perhaps it even appears in something that is submitted in writing to the committee. Whatever the situation, you as a professional staffer have a particular responsibility to see that a new idea has a chance. Some of the most notable proposals from the Citizens League never would have survived had they not been cradled. You need not espouse the idea. You might not even want it to survive; yet new ideas often stimulate other kinds of thinking. Or they may be really worthwhile in and of themselves. You will find, too, that the so-called "experts" often are anxious to kill new ideas when they emerge, particularly if they threaten the conventional way of doing things.

For example, if a committee were discussing school aids, a new, inexperienced member might have an entirely new way of looking at the subject. If that person's idea is left to fight alone against all of the defenders of the status quo, it doesn't stand a chance. You need to give new ideas their fullest expression in the minutes. You have to see that they get debated thoroughly by everybody.

Of course, one doesn't always know nor is able to identify a good idea. In fact the idea may not be good. What probably is important is that we encourage new, unconventional thinking. Such thinking will stimulate others in the same direction.

One final note on this topic: We always are looking for good new thinkers in the Citizens League. If someone advances an idea which is immediately shot down by others, this may affect that member's interest in wanting to stay with the process.

When in doubt, look over previous reports

Most of our learning has been by example. If you aren't sure how a report should be organized, look over several of our previous reports. You'll undoubtedly find some examples worth following and some examples to be avoided.

Maintain a "local" flavor to your reports

While it is true that most metropolitan problems occur in all metropolitan areas, your report should have a distinctly local (Twin Cities area or Minnesota) flavor. Its factual basis should be local: It should deal with real events, here. We aren't writing textbook descriptions that can apply anywhere.

Keep in touch with interested persons in the community when preparing your report, but exercise extreme caution in circulating drafts outside the committee

When you are drafting your report, you may find yourself with very little time to talk to outsiders. Yet this is the time when such consultation can be most helpful. Informal, oral contact is best without the presence of a written draft. You usually can convey the sense of the report to someone on the outside very effectively in informal visits. You then can consider the responses in your redrafts. It is usually not a good policy to give outsiders a draft, before it is approved by the Board of Directors. In the first place the draft does not yet represent League policy. Second, an outsider may be extremely critical of a section, or a proposal. If you make the change, you've satisfied the outsider, but you may have weakened the report. If you fail to make the

change, you've simply irritated the outsider. If the report is factually sound, the outsider will have to react in a different manner if the specific proposal is not known until it is made public by the League.

Of course, it may be practically impossible to keep drafts out of the hands of some outsiders, for example, those who attend meetings of the committee. But they, at least, capture more of the full flavor of the committee process.

(5) Submission of report to Board of Directors

When approved by the study committee, the report is submitted to the Citizens League Board of Directors for action. No report of the League is issued until it has been approved by the Board. The Board has full control over the disposal of the report. It may approve a report; it may amend a report and then approve it; it may reject a report; it may take no action. In almost all cases—there have been exceptions—the report is ultimately approved, usually with some amendments. A few reports have had to be rewritten before they received Board approval.

It's preferable to include at least one Board member as a member of the committee. If not, someone from the Board should be appointed as official liaison to the committee, to consult now and then with the staff and the chair, raising the kinds of questions that might get raised at the Board level. This is done so that major conflicts between the committee and the Board are identified early and dealt with as often as possible before the report gets to the Board.

When amendments are made by the Board of Directors, you, as principal staffer for the report, will be responsible for making changes.

(6) Public release of the report

Citizens League reports are made public as soon as possible after Board approval. Sometimes the mass media have learned that our Board is considering the report. But usually we are free to set our own release date.

You will be heavily involved with the Citizens League Communications Committee in the release of your own reports. This includes:

- Preparation of a news release
- Preparation of a brief statement which the chair may have available to read at a news conference
- Contact with reporters and editorial writers before the news conference
- Circulation of a limited number of copies of the report to selected individuals who should see a copy before it is made public. Usually these are the persons who, by virtue of their public offices, are most directly affected by the report's recommendations.

(7) Implementation following public release

The Board of Directors, working with the staff, will approve a plan for League advocacy. The chair, other committee members and you probably will have several opportunities to present the report to interested individuals and groups. Wherever possible we try to involve our volunteer members in such presentations,

with the staff playing a supportive role. Occasionally, you as staffer will make presentations on your own. You'll be responsible, too, for developing the complete list of persons who should receive our report.

Some reports will speak to an immediate controversy and, therefore, will become a part of the community debate with relative ease. In other cases we may have to stimulate interest in our report. In such cases it may be several months before such movement seems to be occurring to carry out our recommendations.