



The Junior League's Approach to Community Impact

SUMMARY

This brief describes The Junior League's Community Impact Model, explains its major components, and makes clear how the approach yields significant community change and meaningful member engagement.

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True to our Mission, the Junior Leagues have been tackling the toughest and most critical issues of the day for over a century. Not surprisingly, making a difference in the community is one of the main reasons women join The Junior League, a premier organization that has gained a reputation as a thoughtful and influential change agent dedicated to the public good.

In today's world, communities are in a constant state of change—changing demographics, volatile economies, technological innovations, evolving values and expectations, and more. And the most pressing social issues facing communities today are increasingly more complex, so that no single entity has the ability or resources to solve them on its own. In this tough environment, how do we, The Junior League, strive to bring about positive and lasting changes in our communities?

The Junior League's approach to community impact is defined by three distinct elements:

- **Listening to the community's needs and responding with well-designed strategies for change**

The key to impactful community action is the ability to stay abreast of the changing environment and needs in the community, and to respond to them efficiently and effectively. The Junior League's approach to community impact requires Leagues to carefully assess their capacity and aspirations, as well as the talents and diversity of their members.

Based on a full understanding of their community's needs as well as their own capacity, Leagues then identify the niche where they can be most impactful within their community's ecosystem. Because no single entity has the ability or resources to solve today's pressing issues on its own, Leagues are more likely to realize sustainable results if they are part of community-wide coalitions. This allows for leveraging each other's expertise and resources and working toward long-term solutions together. The Junior League's community impact approach requires that Leagues understand the complexity and dynamics of their community's ecosystem, and devote time and energy to building and nurturing community networks and alliances, thereby creating greater social good.

- **Focusing on developing our members' community and civic leadership potential**

This element goes to the heart of our Mission, *"developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers."* We build and sustain healthy communities through trained volunteers. The Junior League's approach to community impact serves to achieve the dual purpose of improving communities and developing the community and civic leadership skills of our members simultaneously.



The Junior League's approach to community impact requires that Leagues keep their members' voices and passion front and center, engage them, and utilize their capabilities every step of the way. League members who feel they are making a lasting difference in their communities also feel a deeper connection with the League, and are therefore more willing to participate fully in the League's internal and external activities. Having positive and long-lasting effects on members is one of The Junior League's ultimate goals.

■ **Creating meaningful and long-lasting community change**

The Junior League's approach to community impact starts with a thoughtful and methodical approach to understanding the root causes of the issues at hand. Because social issues these days are so severe, there are great demands for immediate relief for the problems that exist. Therefore, episodic volunteer efforts and short-term project-based community service are much in demand and appreciated. However, they are limited to addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes.

The Junior League's approach to community impact recommends that Leagues explore a wide spectrum of strategies and relationships for long-term solutions beyond relieving the immediate needs that communities might have. This long-view approach guides Leagues to fulfill our Mission of "improving communities" in a meaningful and systemic way.

The Junior League's approach to community impact is designed to be a win-win for the communities, League members, and the Leagues, alike. Communities benefit from thoughtful strategies employed by the Leagues; League members benefit from meaningful and enjoyable engagement; the Leagues benefit from having satisfied members and community partners; and, The Junior League benefits from being well-positioned to carry on our legacy for another century.