

21st Century Implementation Survey

Executive Summary

Overview

At the October 16-17, 2019, meeting of the National Executive Committee, the report of the 21st Century Ad Hoc Committee was adopted and directed to be implemented. It has been over three years since departments were encouraged to do so. During the 2022 Fall Meeting, the Advisory Committee to the National Commander asked that a survey be conducted of all departments in reference to their implementation of these recommendations.

The Concern

The 21st Century Ad Hoc Committee did not want this report to be set aside and referred to occasionally after its adoption. Then in March of 2020, COVID took place, and all the momentum came to a stop. Now with at least three years of leadership changes, the concern is this report has fallen off the radar or, in some cases, the new leadership is not aware of this report.

There are departments who have implemented many of the recommendations within the report and they answered that within the survey. There are some departments who did not know the report even existed. This survey allows us to compile information on what the departments know about the 21st Century report and its recommendations and what we need to do to ensure it stays at the forefront of the organization.

Survey

- The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey.
- The survey was broken down into sections based on the 21st Century Report.
 - Total of 46 questions under the following topics:
 - General Information
 - Legacy & Vision
 - Membership and Member Engagement
 - Training
- It was emailed to the National Executive Committeeman of each department with copy to the department commander, department adjutant, and contact, if applicable to complete.
- All 55 departments responded.
 - 104 total responses
 - 66 individuals completed the survey.
 - 37 individuals started the survey but did not complete it.
 - One individual skipped the survey.
- Due to the importance of the 21st Century Ad Hoc Committee recommendations and these survey results, when the survey was completed, we will issue a \$100 credit in Emblem Sales for use by the department. Only one credit will be given per department.
- It was also noted that our current marketing efforts do not replace the 21st Century Committee recommendations, which are timeless. The 21st Century recommendations must continue to make The American Legion viable.

What We Learned

General Information

- 70 percent of those taking the survey had previously reviewed the 21st Century Report.
 - 31 percent of those who have reviewed it, have their own 21st Century Committee or equivalent.
 - 17 percent of these committees give regular feedback.
 - 29 percent do not have a committee but are planning to develop one.
- 22 percent did not know the report existed.
- 46 percent of departments have a formal strategic plan.
 - 34 percent of these departments stated their plan is easily accessible for its members.
 - 27 percent review their strategic plan on a regular basis.

Legacy & Vision

This section focuses on Mission and Vision statements with concise messaging. The Committee also believed the knowledge of our experienced leaders needed to be passed down to new members but embrace their talents as well through mentoring programs.

- 53 percent stated their department has a Mission statement.
 - Out of the 47 percent who stated they do not have a Mission statement, 72 percent stated they plan to develop a Mission statement.
- The number lessens when it comes to Vision statements. 35 percent of respondents stated their department has a Vision statement.
 - 66 percent of those who do not have a Vision statement, plan to develop one.
 - Several stated they use the national Mission and Vision statements.
- 78 percent of departments have some type of mentoring program.
 - Nine percent have a formal program.
 - 68 percent encourage mentoring as an informal process.

Membership and Member Engagement

This section focuses on how to engage our current membership and how to reach potential new members. This can be done in a variety of ways such as the *Membership Impact Report*, community engagement, and Buddy Checks. Plus, they recommended engaging communities through other opportunities.

- 40 percent of respondents have a committee that focuses on keeping members engaged.
- One way to keep members engaged at the local level is to share the *Membership Impact Report*. The following are ways the departments share this information with their members:
 - 19 percent use their department newsletter.
 - 40 percent use their department website.
 - 59 percent share it with their districts to be passed down to their posts.
- Buddy Checks are essential to engaging our membership.
 - 26 percent of respondents have a formalized program.
 - 72 percent rely on their districts and posts to manage their own program.
 - In 2022, we had over 4,077 posts conduct 8,269 Buddy Check events.
- 90 percent of respondents engage their communities by attending other like-minded organizations' conventions, participate in parades, homeless standdowns, and suicide prevention seminars are some examples.
- 63 percent of respondents actively engage the active-duty military, National Guard and/or reserves within their department.

Training

It is essential to have a direct focus on training at all levels to continually improve the effectiveness of the organization as well as ensuring that all members are good stewards of our Legacy and Vision. The ultimate goal is to engage, educate, and empower American Legion Family members.

- 67 percent of respondents stated they have a committee focused on training.
- 43 percent of respondents stated they have a department level Legion College.
- 73 percent of respondents stated they hold in-person training at least one to five times a year.
- 77 percent of respondents stated they promote participation in national headquarters training.

What is the Solution?

The organization needs to keep the recommendations at the forefront of leaders at all levels and ensure it is relevant for years to come. The following items can help to make this happen:

- We need to proactively communicate the 21st Century recommendations and the accomplishments that are achieved.
- During the National Membership Workshop, training sessions will be tied back to the 21st Century report.
- Committee/Commissions report to the NEC each October providing the status of working towards the recommendations.
- During the Commanders & Adjutants Conference in October, Internal Affairs staff will brief the report and what the departments should be doing.
- This will be added as topic to be covered during the National American Legion College.

These are some steps that we can take to ensure it remains in the forefront at all levels of the organization.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Committee's report was to propose recommendations aimed at bettering The American Legion. These recommendations can assist leadership in developing and implementing new or refined strategies in a multi-generational veterans service organization.

This survey was a good first step in helping to bring the 21st Century recommendations back to the forefront and if the numbers are accurate, we can surmise that The American Legion is turning a corner to the positive. We understand where departments are exceeding and see other areas where they need assistance.

Next step would be to build on this momentum and continuously communicate this report and implement recommendations to all members. By doing so, the organization can work towards a common goal and strive towards the proud and prestigious legacy – just like the one our forefathers gave to us. It's important to keep in mind that implementing changes takes time and effort, but with the right approach and commitment, it can be done successfully.