



Lions Clubs International

# How to consolidate districts







## Why consolidate small districts?

While the ideal size for a district has been debated, there is little doubt that a district should be large enough to have a sufficient pool of trained, qualified district leaders, a well-attended and meaningful district convention and ample resources to support club development.

While membership growth should always be a part of the plan, redistricting can infuse the district with a mix of new leaders who can look at district activities in a new way, combine resources to more effectively meet the needs of the clubs and even reduce the dues for each member as expenses are shared over a larger population of Lions. Redistricting, when done well, can strengthen the district and stimulate membership growth, enhancing the districts' ability to provide needed humanitarian service.

However, to be successful, it takes a thorough understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities of each district and a detailed plan to ensure the new structure effectively addresses the needs of the clubs. This guide will provide a process to identify opportunities, determine new territories, and establish goals with a plan for implementation. A worksheet can be found on page 15 to help pull the information together and organize the planning process. Of course, if you need additional assistance we welcome you to contact the English Language Department at [englishlanguage@lionsclubs.org](mailto:englishlanguage@lionsclubs.org).

# Step One:

## Conduct a resource analysis

The first step to develop a plan is to identify the services and resources that are provided (or should be provided) by each district to support club success.

Identify the following for each district:

### Events

- District convention
- District forums
- Zone and Region meetings
- Leadership development events
- Other district events that serve the clubs

### Leaders who support clubs and provide mentoring

- DG Team members
- Global Action Team Coordinators
- Region Chairpersons and Zone Chairpersons
- District Chairpersons
- Lions Leadership Institute graduates
- District or local foundation staff and services (if applicable)
- Other leaders who might provide advice, guidance and support

### Service projects

- District service projects
- District fundraising activities
- Any project carried out at the district or zone level

### Club communication and support services

- Public relations
- Services that district chairpersons offer to clubs
- Signage supported by the district
- District websites, social media or other projects
- District newsletters
- Other district correspondence or news postings

#### District assets

- Equipment that is owned by the district
- Space or leases that are contracted by the district
- District foundations
- Contracts that either the district is bound by or a party to
- Any other commitment or service provided by the district

#### District or multiple district representation

- Position on foundations
- Positions on multiple district or area projects
- Other positions within the government or outside organization that would be held by a representative of the district

## Establish a district wish list

Now that you have identified the projects and services that the district currently provides, determine the services and projects that the district *would like to initiate* (or needs to initiate) that have not been possible in the past. Dream a little! Perhaps the district always wanted to conduct a public relations campaign or host a unique event, but never had the means or volunteers to do it. Write down new ways that clubs can be supported or the talent in the district can be utilized. Change can be fun and empowering so encourage new ideas and new ways of thinking!

Complete **Step One** of the **Redistricting Planning Worksheet** for each item that should be continued or initiated. The worksheet can be found on page 15 of this guide.

By pulling these items together, you will know both the challenges that you will face and the resources available to provide expanded opportunities. By coordinating these you will come a long way to having a winning redistricting proposal.



## Step Two: Determine the territories

Next, look at the geographic distribution of the clubs. Is there a natural division?

Consider the following:

Club management:

*Would club meetings be accessible to district leaders?*

*Would the convention and district events be accessible to clubs?*

*Are zones easily defined?*

*Will the change separate a strong club that has sponsored or mentored a weaker club?*

Leadership:

*Where are the current and past leaders located?*

*How can potential leaders be involved?*

Membership growth:

*Does each new district have potential for growth?*

Service:

*Can the projects previously supported by the district be supported by the new structure?*

Events:

*Does the potential new district have a centrally located facility or logical location to hold district events?*

In some ways combining districts is easier since the new district will be combining resources instead of dividing them.

With the information provided, determine district lines that would best support each club.

## Step Three: Establish goals and objectives

During your analysis and the creation of your wish list you documented programs and services that are critical for club health and development, now take the next step and look at the area that is being considered and think about how these services and programs might be managed with the new structure.

Using the **Redistricting Planning Worksheet** on page 15, take each item identified in **Step One** and consider how it might be accommodated by the territories outlined in **Step Two** and the changes that the new structure may bring:

*Can it be accommodated by the new structure?*

*How will this service be strengthened by the new structure?*

*How will this service be weakened by the new structure?*

*What opportunities exist with the new structure?*

*What threats exist with the new structure?*

*Will there be a financial impact?*

Next, determine the actions that need to be taken and how and when these tasks should be completed to achieve the goal.

Change can be scary if you are not part of it. Involve the past and future leaders in a positive way to gain their support. Involve the members in the new area to engage and empower them. Make sure the issues that are important to them are part of the plan.

You may find that some adjustments are needed to accomplish the objectives. This might include reconsidering boundaries or perhaps eliminating or expanding a service or project. This exercise helps you put the pieces together to find both opportunity as well as items that might need further attention.

### Reallocating district resources

Districts may hold monetary assets such as income from dues and should be allocated in a way that is fair. Some areas have split the remaining funds by the number of members (or clubs) that will be in the new district or in a way that supports activities that will be utilized by the newly formed district. Identify a strategy that would best support your area.

# Step Four: Write the plan

While there are certain items required by board policy that must be submitted to gain approval by the board, the district is free to collect additional information to provide more detail and ease the transition.

## Items required by board policy

**Chapter IX: Section I: Redistricting of the Board Policy Manual** outlines the components that are required for redistricting. It can be found on page 11 of this document. Please read the policy carefully. It also specifies that fees and the requirement to have the minimum of 35 clubs and 1,250 members in each district are not requirements for districts that are consolidating. Each proposal requires the following:

1. List of clubs for each district
2. Map of the area
3. Explanation of how the clubs will be better served by the new district structure (this can include a summary of the detailed plan mentioned in the next section and may include items like a reduction of district dues and the new services that the district plans to provide)
4. Effective Date that the redistricting should take place. The redistricting will take place following the International Convention following the approval by the International Board of Directors unless otherwise specified. However, when consolidating districts it is often suggested to allow an additional year to provide time to reorganize.



# Items recommended, but not required for submission to Lions Clubs International

## **1. Detailed plan for serving the district's needs**

To truly have a successful plan takes much more than the documents that are required by Board Policy. Using the planning forms completed during the analysis, write a comprehensive plan that outlines the goals of the district, corresponding actions required to accomplish each goal and the people and resources to accomplish these goals. Include a specific timeline for completing each action. This will allow you to track your progress and make adjustments as necessary.

## **2. Estimated new district budget**

You might find that some of the services and projects (like the district convention) can go further and support more clubs. You might also find that the additional members will bring down the cost of dues and events like the convention. Capitalize on these efficiencies and make dues more affordable for everyone! This will help make membership more affordable for new members too! It is good to note that the District Governor's budget from LCI will be adjusted to take into account the additional travel needed to support more clubs and travel greater distances. Once the budget is established, determine the new district's dues structure.

## **3. Process for placing a resolution on the convention ballot**

Review the Multiple District Constitution and By-Laws to determine the proper steps to put the resolution before the delegates during the convention. Make sure the steps are understood and the appropriate Lion leaders are aware of the request.

## **4. Plan for electing a district governor team for the new districts**

During the analysis you identified past, current and potential leaders. At this step, the districts can collectively determine how to move forward. Here are a few strategies that might help.

Planned vacancies – A planned vacancy is when one district leaves the first vice district governor position vacant and the second district leaves the second vice district governor position vacant in anticipation that the first vice district governor will come from one of the merging districts and the second vice district governor would come from another district that is involved in the merger. If this agreement can be reached (and please note that this is an informal agreement which can be contested) then it makes the merger easier. However, this can be more complicated if more than two districts are merging.

Holding elections – Keep in mind that the only time the new district team may be elected is following the board meeting when the proposal was approved and just prior to the International convention when the redistricting takes place. If the redistricting is scheduled to take place more than a year after its approval, the elections will also need to be delayed until that time.

Election at multiple district convention – The delegates from clubs that are in the new sub-districts may gather in a separate meeting room for the purposes of holding an election for district governor as provided for in the International By-laws, Article 1X. When a meeting during the multiple district convention cannot be held, a meeting may also be called for the purpose of an election.

## Amending the District Constitution and By-laws

Review the District Constitution and By-Laws to determine if changes are needed. Keep in mind that the Standard District Constitution and By-Laws will be the governing document until the amended District Constitution and By-Laws is approved by the delegates of the new district. You will find the Standard District Constitution and By-Laws in the Board Policy Manual in Chapter VII: Constitution and By-Laws.



# Sample timeline for redistricting

## Year one

1. District leaders meet to discuss redistricting and conduct the analysis
2. Following the analysis, **write the plan** (This must be done in time to be communicated to the clubs no later than 60 days prior to the multiple district convention)

Note: **Board Policy Chapter IX: Item H. Redistricting** outlines the required documentation needed by the board for approval. The items below may help provide guidance locally.

### **Required by board policy:**

1. List of clubs for each district
2. Map of the area
3. Explanation of how the clubs will be better served by the new district structure (this can include a reduction of district dues and the new services that the district plans to provide)
4. Effective Date: Include the year that the redistricting should take place. The redistricting will take place following the International Convention following the approval by the International Board of Directors unless otherwise specified.

**Optional information:** These documents are not required to be submitted as part of the plan, but should provide clear direction to the Lion leaders locally.

1. Goals and action plans for serving the district's needs
  2. Recommended district dues amount
  3. The actions taken to have the resolution passed by the multiple district
  4. Recommend a plan for electing a DG Team
3. Follow multiple district guidance for placing a resolution before the delegates
  4. Communicate and promote the plan to clubs in the proposed areas. The full published proposal must be communicated effectively no later than 60 days before the multiple district convention. See **Chapter IX: Item H. Redistricting** for specific language.
  5. Multiple district approves proposal during convention.

## **Year two**

1. Proposal is placed before the International Board of Directors during the October Meeting for approval. If approved the redistricting takes place following the International Convention unless otherwise specified.
2. Districts hold elections during the multiple district convention or a special convention. If the proposal was approved to take place the following year, district conventions would take place as usual for the election of DG Team for the current districts.
3. For areas that are waiting an additional year to merge, consider this year as a time to consolidate programs. Encourage Lion leaders to meet to determine how items identified during the analysis can best be managed. Encourage them to revisit the goals and further outline their action plans.

## **Year three**

1. For areas that are already redistricted this is the first year of the new district and the year to implement plans, coordinate efforts and utilize the resources that exist in the district.
2. For areas that delayed redistricting, this is the year that elections for the new district take place during either the multiple district convention or a special convention.

## Step Five: Promotion and Communication

The key to success is effective communication and this includes clearly understanding possible resistance as well as understanding the benefits of the proposal. One benefit should include larger conventions and a wider leadership pool, but lower dues and improved club support are also important potential advantages. Be sure area leaders are aware of the goals and objectives of the plan so Lions see the proposal as a benefit and a positive move. This is a time to increase our presence and expand the reach of our service. Clubs need to know that they, and the communities they serve, will benefit from the new structure.

Promote the proposal throughout the districts and the multiple district, emphasizing that the most important element is the support of the clubs.



## Redistricting policy from the Board Policy Manual Chapter IX: District Officers and Organizations

### **I. REDISTRICTING**

The following policy shall apply with respect to each redistricting proposal submitted to the International Board of Directors pursuant to Article VIII, Section 3 of the International By-Laws:

All redistricting proposals must meet the requirements below, and be submitted and filed with District and Club Administration Division 60 days prior to the October board meeting for which they will be considered. No additional documentation submitted after this date will be accepted.

1. **REDISTRICTING OF DISTRICTS:** Districts (single, -sub or multiple districts) seeking to redistrict must submit the following:

- a. A list of clubs that would comprise each proposed sub-district containing each club's total membership. Each proposed sub-district must have the minimum of 35 clubs with 1,250 members in good standing 60 days prior to the board meeting for which it is considered and sustain membership strength through the time that the redistricting takes place.
- b. A map clearly defining the proposed boundary lines or changes in boundary lines for each district. The proposed districts should be established in a way that allows for efficient district management and minimal travel and administrative costs.
- c. Payment of US\$500 as a redistricting fee for each new district, sub-district or multiple district proposed.
- d. Districts and multiple districts submitting a request must include the following from each voting body evidencing that the proposed redistricting plan obtained the necessary approval.
  - (1) A full copy of the minutes, certified with the signature of the District Governor, First Vice District Governor and Cabinet Secretary for single district or sub district(s) minutes, and the signature of the Council Chairperson and Council Secretary for multiple district minutes, who were in office during the convention or special convention in which the redistricting was approved.

The minutes must reflect that a majority of the registered and certified delegates approved the resolution by written and secret ballot and must include the ballot count. The minutes must also reflect that the results were announced to the delegates during the convention. It should be noted that only a majority vote, and not a two-thirds vote, is required for consideration by the International Board of Directors.

- (2) A copy of the published proposal, which must include a full and clear description of the proposed districts and/or multiple districts by clearly defining the territories for each proposed district and/or multiple district by official geographic boundary, a list of clubs to be allocated to each proposed area and a clearly marked map.
  - (3) Verification that the full proposal as noted in item 1.d.ii., was circulated to each club in the single district, sub-district(s) and multiple district no later than 60 days prior to the convention for which the vote was taken.
  - (4) Explanation of how the multiple/sub-district(s) will be better served through redistricting, including a detailed plan that outlines goals and action plans to support membership growth, leadership development and club support initiatives.
2. **MERGER/REDUCTION OF DISTRICTS:** A multiple district that is consolidating one or more sub-districts of which one or more sub-districts have fewer than 35 clubs and 1,250 members to increase the number of members per sub-district must also submit the documentation noted in item 1. above, but is not required to submit a payment. Approval is required from the convention of the multiple district. An explanation is required outlining the programs recently implemented by the sub-district(s) to increase membership and why redistricting is still needed. In these areas, if the plan results in a sub-district that does not meet the 35 club and 1,250 member minimum, the proposal may be considered if it helps strengthen or improve the management of a sub-district and support of clubs.
  3. **MULTIPLE DISTRICT REDISTRICTING:** A multiple district proposing to redistrict, but is not changing sub-district lines, must submit the items as outlined in item 1. above, but need only submit items noted under 1.d. at the multiple district level. Minutes showing the approval of the proposal and subsequent district name changes by a two-thirds vote of the district cabinet members from two-thirds of the districts is required prior to the multiple district putting forth the resolution.
  4. The proposed name of the district and the multiple district must meet the naming criteria as established by Lions Clubs International. When a proposal divides an existing sub-district, the name of one of the new sub-districts should be the same as that of the original sub-district if circumstances so permit.
  5. All approved redistricting proposals shall take effect at the adjournment of the next international convention unless a later International Convention is specified.

6. Any objections with regard to the procedure or process followed to gain approval of the resolution and the district (single, -sub or multiple) must be resolved utilizing the appropriate dispute resolution process.
7. The election of the district governor, first vice district governor and second vice district governor must take place following the approval of the proposal by the International Board of Directors and prior to the International Convention for which the redistricting will follow. The election must take place during a properly called meeting of the delegates of the new district. It is suggested that the election take place during an existing district or multiple district convention for which the delegates would normally attend.
8. Proposals that do not meet the requirements above shall be rejected and returned to the applicant. If a new application is submitted within 12 months of the initial proposal rejection, the application fee of US\$500 is waived.

# Redistricting Planning Worksheet

COMPLETE FOR EACH ITEM TO BE CONTINUED OR INITIATED

**Item identified in step one:**

**Goals and objectives from step three:**

*Can it be accommodated by the new district structure?*

*How will this service be strengthened by the new structure?*

*How will this service be weakened by the new structure?*

*What opportunities exist with the new structure?*

*What threats exist with the new structure?*

*Will there be a financial impact? (include a cost estimate)*

| Tasks/action steps | Who | When | How will we know it is completed | Possible challenges | Possible solutions |
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Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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