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Effective Service Projects



Developing Effective Service Projects

Effective Rotary clubs develop service projects that meet the needs of their own communities and communities in other countries. Through a process of careful selection, planning, and evaluation, Rotary clubs can implement successful service projects that address the needs of communities around the world.

An effective service project is one that

- responds to a real issue, not a perceived or imagined one;
- improves community members' lives;
- incorporates the abilities of those who are served;
- recognizes all participants' contributions as important;
- is based on a realistic assessment of resources available;
- aims for specific goals and objectives with measurable results; and
- builds working networks.

Your Responsibilities

Service projects require a systematic approach in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. As club president, it is your responsibility to ensure that your club is developing service projects that meet the needs of the community they are intended to serve. In order to achieve this goal, you must be familiar with the basic steps of conducting effective service projects:

- **Needs assessment** — determining the needs of the club and community;
- **Planning** — identifying the steps, people, and resources necessary to implement the project;
- **Implementation** — effectively executing the plan developed; and
- **Evaluation** — determining the effectiveness of the project and learning lessons to apply to future projects.

In addition, before your year as president begins you should review the status of current club projects to ascertain how they will affect your program for the coming year.

- Assess whether projects currently under way are meeting the needs of the communities they are intended to serve. If projects will continue into your year as club president, how can they be improved?
- Determine whether club projects match the interests and capabilities of club members. Is there broad participation in the projects? If not, how can participation be increased?
- Learn from past successes and challenges. Focus on areas that require improvement as well as successful strategies that can be replicated in future projects.

Taking these important steps will give club leaders the information necessary to select, plan, and implement the service projects the club will undertake during your year as president.



Needs Assessment — Determining Project Requirements

What makes a community service project effective? *Relevance*. Effective community service projects must address real, current community concerns. A project need not be expensive or elaborate — just necessary. As club president, you will need to ensure that the service projects undertaken reflect community needs as well as club capabilities and interests. You will accomplish this by working with the club service leaders to do the following:

- Determine club members' interests and capabilities to help you decide which type of service activity will generate the greatest enthusiasm and response.
- Determine what resources within and outside the club might be available to support potential projects.
- Ascertain which community issues can be best addressed by the club, given member interest and the financial and human resources at hand.

In reviewing the points above, you will note that an effective needs assessment has two components — an internal assessment focused on the club and an external assessment focused on the targeted community.

Internal Assessment

It is important to consider if a particular project fits the club's unique mix of ages, interests, and abilities. Through an internal assessment, club members review the following factors:

- Skills and talents of club members;
- Past project experiences and the lessons learned from them; and
- The composition of the club in terms of the
 - number of members willing to participate,
 - diversity of skills,
 - level of member interest in potential projects,
 - level of involvement club members are willing to have in community affairs, and
 - satisfaction level for past projects.

Evaluation of these factors will reveal both strengths and weaknesses and help club leaders define the types of service projects best suited for the club. To increase the likelihood of success, identify a project that takes advantage of the widest array of member skills and interests.

Community Assessment

Another important step is to conduct an external evaluation, or community assessment. Such an assessment will help Rotarians better serve their community.

To determine key areas of concern in a community examine these aspects:

- Economic situation
- Geographical setting
- Educational strengths and weaknesses
- Demographic profile
- Political conditions

To properly conduct a community assessment, club service leaders should meet with a wide cross-section of community members including:

- Local government officials and social service providers;
- Community organizations and civic groups, police, and firefighters;
- Educators; and
- Religious leaders.

These contacts will enable the club to gain an accurate impression of the community and the issues it faces and will also build relationships with a variety of community leaders and organizations. These groups can provide the club with a resource base of “experts” to consult regarding community issues, project strategies, and future club service projects. In addition, working with community members to develop and implement service projects helps identify potential new Rotarians.

For Your Information

To learn more about working with your club and community to develop a service project, consult *Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Projects* (605A-EN).

Rotary's History of Service

Rotary's first service project, in 1907, entailed the construction of public restrooms in bustling downtown Chicago, Illinois, USA. While far from glamorous, the project was effective because it met real community needs.



Project Planning and Implementation

Project planning and implementation go hand-in-hand. Without effective planning, club members are likely to encounter obstacles during project implementation. As club president, you work with the club service committees overseeing and helping to shape project plans that address real community needs and ensuring that they

- involve and motivate club members throughout the planning and implementation process;
- develop a detailed budget and work plan based upon the requirements;
- supplement financial resources through well-organized fundraising; and
- create a detailed public relations strategy to gain support for the project, attract potential members to the club, and enhance Rotary's image in the community. (*For more information about public relations see Chapter 8, "Public Relations," pages 87-95.*)

Initial Considerations

The following questions should be considered before beginning a service project.

In what projects are club members currently involved?

Carefully consider how a new project might affect any ongoing projects to which the club is committed.

What will be the goal of the project?

Ensure the goal is specific, challenging, measurable, realistic, and *reflective of expressed community needs*.

Who will be involved?

Club members? Community groups? Interact, Rotaract, and Rotary Community Corps members? Families, friends, and colleagues? How will volunteers be recognized?

When will the project occur?

How much preparation time will be needed? Are there special timing considerations such as holidays or school schedules?

Where will the project occur?

Are there any special considerations such as transportation costs or safety and liability concerns associated with the project venue?

Why is the club undertaking the project?

The project must represent a meeting of community needs and club interests and capabilities in order for individuals to be willing to commit their time and money to it.

How will the club achieve its project goals?

Will additional volunteers be required? Will the club need to seek additional funding for the project? How will the club promote the project?

Once these important questions have been answered, the club will be prepared to develop an implementation plan for the project.

Effective planning involves the following steps:

- Set well-defined and measurable goals.
- Establish a realistic time frame to plan and implement the project.
- Identify the person(s) responsible for accomplishing each task.
- Develop a budget.
- Promote the project and the club's role in it.
- Use available resources.
- Keep Rotarians, community members, and beneficiaries of the project well-informed.
- Share information with incoming club officers if the project will continue beyond the current Rotary year.

For your Information

The "Work Plan Worksheet" on page 72 has been included to help facilitate planning for service projects.



Evaluating Service Projects

Evaluation plays an important role in the club's current service project and its future projects. As club president, ensure that club service leaders evaluate all project activities in which the club engages. A thorough evaluation enables the club to

- review successes and failures and learn from those experiences;
- determine whether a project achieved its goals and objectives; and
- apply lessons learned to increase the effectiveness of future service projects.

To Do

Ask all club members who participated in the project to write an evaluation report that is succinct, easy to understand, and useful. A copy of the evaluation report can then be sent to Rotary International for possible inclusion in RI publications.

A reporting form can be found in *Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Projects* (605A-EN). Also consider listing your project on the RI Community Projects Database on www.rotary.org. This database allows clubs around the world to access examples of successful projects.

When evaluating a service project it is especially important to consider the following questions:

- Did the project meet the community needs revealed in the needs assessment? If not, why not?
- Were there sufficient opportunities for club and community members to participate in the project?
- Was there a balance between financial support and hands-on assistance?
- Was there adequate media coverage of the project?
- Did club and project financial resources meet the financial requirements of the project?

Consider conducting the following types of evaluation:

- **Data Analysis** — Compare data from before and after the project. For example, in adult literacy classes participants can be tested at the start and end of the program and the results can be compared.
- **Survey** — Useful for results that are not easily quantifiable. Surveys should be designed to measure changes in attitude or knowledge. For example, a project that focuses on raising levels of awareness regarding AIDS in a community might employ a survey before and after its campaign to track levels of awareness.
- **Case Study** — A case study records the effects of a project on a limited number of people and can supply details that other forms of evaluation might not provide. For example, in a project that establishes a Rotary Community Corps it might be useful to interview participants about how the project has affected their lives and community.

These three forms of evaluation may be used together in order to gain as much knowledge as possible. The more the club is able to learn about the impact of its service efforts, the more effective those efforts will be in the future.



International Service

In Rotary, the idea of community extends far beyond the place in which a single Rotary club is located, to encompass all peoples of the world. This is especially true today, as high-speed communications and transportation are bringing people together from all parts of the globe.

World Community Service (WCS) is an excellent way for clubs to participate in projects internationally. WCS occurs whenever a Rotary club in one country assists a club in another country with a service project.

The basic strategies for international service projects are the same as for local service projects. However, because at least two clubs in different countries must work together, communication is even more critical to a project's success.

To participate in an international project, clubs need to find an international partner. Various ways to find a partner include:

- Exploring the World Community Service Projects Exchange on Rotary's Web site;
- Speaking with the district's World Community Service chairperson;
- Contacting your district Rotary Foundation Committee chairperson and exploring Rotary Foundation grant programs;
- Using the *Official Directory* to find members of various RI committees or task forces to contact for project assistance;
- Networking with fellow Rotarians at district and international meetings;
- Observing what other organizations are doing around the world; and
- Reaching out to fellow Rotarians on the Internet.

The Rotary Foundation Programs and WCS

As you develop your WCS project, remember that The Rotary Foundation has an array of tools to enhance and increase the impact of WCS projects. Consider the following Humanitarian Grants programs in your planning:

- Matching Grants for International Humanitarian Projects
- Grants for Rotary Volunteers
- Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants
- Discovery Grants
- New Opportunities Grants

For Your Information

For more information regarding these programs please consult Chapter 7, "The Rotary Foundation," found on pages 73-86.

Further information on WCS and using the programs of The Rotary Foundation to help finance your international service projects can also be found in the *World Community Service Handbook: A Guide to Action* (742-EN).



Club Committees Related to Effective Service Projects

Service projects are the primary concern of the following committees:

Rotary Volunteers Committee

- Identifies appropriate projects that need volunteers;
- Exchanges ideas on worthy Rotary and non-Rotary volunteer opportunities with other club committees, such as Community Service and World Community Service;
- Compiles a club volunteer directory;
- Keeps everyone informed on projects receiving, and in need of, volunteer support; and
- Recommends outstanding volunteers to the district governor or district Vocational Service chairperson to receive a Rotary Volunteer Certificate of Recognition.

Career Development Committee

- Develops projects that use members' experience to help young people find jobs;
- Initiates or supports apprenticeship programs that help unskilled or disabled workers acquire marketable skills;
- Organizes career-planning programs in schools to help students make informed choices about their futures; and
- Promotes efforts to retrain adults whose skills have been replaced by technology or who are returning to the workforce after raising families.

Vocation at Work Committee

- Develops projects designed to generate new jobs within the community;
- Supports efforts to help retirees remain productive by placing them in volunteer and part-time positions;
- Promotes programs that address the problems of illiteracy and drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace;
- Initiates projects that promote positive employment relations in the workplace;
- Supports activities that promote knowledge and application of The 4-Way Test throughout the community; and
- Increases members' awareness of the "Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions," and encourages them to practice and promote high ethical standards throughout the business community.

Vocational Awareness Committee

- Develops projects and programs that increase members' knowledge and appreciation of various occupations; and
- Emphasizes the worthiness to society of all useful occupations.

Vocational Awards Committee

- Develops ways of recognizing those who achieve vocational excellence; and
- Devises means of recognizing those who practice high ethical standards in their vocations.

Human Development Committee

- Promotes the welfare of all human beings in your community;
- Develops projects and service activities relating to child care and early immunization, crime prevention, the disabled, drug abuse prevention, the elderly, women, health education and care, AIDS education and awareness, literacy, hunger, poverty, safety programs, and youth activities; and
- Promotes RI Family Week (2nd week of February).

Community Development Committee

- Addresses issues dealing with the physical state of a community and its outlying suburban and rural areas; and
- Focuses on projects that deal with community centers, health facilities, infrastructure improvement, libraries, parks and recreational facilities, public facilities, safety, sanitation, schools, and urban and rural revitalization.

Environmental Protection Committee

- Examines threats to the environment on both global and community levels; and
- Develops projects that promote animal protection, beautification/cleanup campaigns, clean air, energy resource protection/promotion, forestation, noise abatement, recycling, soil conservation, toxic waste disposal, waste management, and water management.

Partners in Service Committee

- Recognizes the need to promote and enhance relationships between Rotarians and Rotary-sponsored organizations such as Rotaract (service club for young adults, ages 18-30), Interact (service club for secondary-school-age students, or those ages 14-18), and Rotary Community Corps (groups of non-Rotarians who wish to serve their community);
- Provides leadership training to Rotary-sponsored groups that will help them organize and implement community development projects;
- Promotes World Rotaract Week (the week of 13 March);
- Promotes New Generations Month (September); and
- Promotes World Interact Week (the week of 5 November).

RYLA Committee

- Promotes youth leadership by organizing RYLA events locally; and
- Recruits youth with leader potential for district RYLA events.

International Youth Projects Committee

- Participates in the RI Youth Exchange program, which arranges for young people from other countries to live and study in the club's community and for youth from the local community to study abroad; and
- Extends hospitality to international students who are already enrolled in local schools.

World Community Service Committee

- Provides Rotarians with information on the World Community Service program and resources available from Rotary International and its Foundation;
- Identifies opportunities to form World Community Service partnerships with clubs in other countries; and
- Promotes World Understanding Month (February) and World Understanding and Peace Day, 23 February, by supporting a WCS project.



Resources for Effective Service Projects

A wide variety of resources is available to help the club conduct a needs assessment and to plan, implement, and evaluate service projects successfully, including:

- Service-oriented club committees (as described on pages 67-69)
- A project organizing committee
- Other human resources
- Information
- Finances

Project Organizing Committee

Effective service projects depend upon the hard work and commitment of many people. The club committee structure recommends the formation of a variety of service-oriented committees. Additionally, it is recommended that a *project organizing committee* be formed to collaborate on specific projects. The organizing committee, in cooperation with other club members, is responsible for the following:

- Helping to devise a project's goals and objectives;
- Maintaining contact with relevant community members and organizations;
- Promoting the project both within the club and in the community;
- Encouraging widespread club and community involvement in the project;
- Managing resources such as funds, materials and club member time;
- Monitoring progress toward project completion; and
- Conducting an evaluation and completing an evaluation report.

A project organizing committee should include individuals whose interests and talents best correspond to the project's needs. If possible, include:

- Non-Rotarian community members
- Members of existing service-oriented committees
- Local Interact, Rotaract, and Rotary Community Corps members

Other Human Resources

People are the key to a successful service project. They serve as volunteers, help determine project goals, consult on community needs, and provide assistance in evaluating a project. Such human resources might include:

- Rotarians and their families
- District committees (particularly the World Community Service Committee and the Rotary Foundation Committee)
- Community organizations and other interested citizens
- Rotary Foundation alumni
- Partners in Service (Rotaractors, Interactors, Rotary Community Corps)
- Other Rotary clubs (by working together clubs can combine their resources)



Information

A wide variety of information regarding service projects is available from Rotary International. These include:

- www.rotary.org — Rotary International Web site
- *Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Service Projects* (605A-EN)
- *Menu of Service Opportunities* (605B-EN)
- *World Community Service Handbook: A Guide to Action* (742-EN)
- *World Community Service Projects Exchange* — available at www.rotary.org
- *Vocational Service in Your Community* (509-EN)
- *Interact Handbook* (654-EN)
- *Rotaract Handbook* (562-EN)
- *International Service in Action: A WCS Video Workshop* (753-EN)
- *Rotary Community Corps Handbook* (770-EN)

For additional service-related publications and materials consult the *RI Catalog* (019-EN).

Financial Resources

Many clubs hold fundraisers to support service projects. Other financial resources include:

- Funds raised from individual donors and local businesses
- Grants from other foundations
- Rotary Foundation grants



Work Plan Worksheet*

Be as specific as possible.

GOAL:

Objective:

TASK:

Person Responsible for Task

Target Date for Completion of Task

Resources Available for Completion of Task

Estimate Expenditures Needed to Complete Task

Expected Outcome

Notes

TASK:

Person Responsible for Task

Target Date for Completion of Task

Resources Available for Completion of Task

Estimate Expenditures Needed to Complete Task

Expected Outcome

Notes

* Make copies as necessary.