

Suggestions for Establishing an International Committee at Your Rotary Club

Randeep Singh Arora, Randip.arora72@gmail.com Rotary Club of Fairfield-Suisun
Ron Reece, rerece@snowcrest.net Rotary Club of Redding West (RWR)

Why establish an international committee and support international projects at your Rotary club?

Rotary International is an international service organization that brings together business and professional leaders to provide humanitarian services and to advance goodwill and peace around the world. What better way to participate in the worldwide vision of Rotary than for your club to have an international project?

Who should be your international committee chairperson?

Your chairperson should have a passion for international service. Generally, the chairperson has experience travelling abroad and has worked on international projects with other organizations in your community.

How many people should be on your committee?

Your core group should compose 5-6 people. They should be willing to commit to serving 3 years on the international committee to lend continuity to past, present, and future projects. In addition, your club's past president, president, and president-elect can be on the committee and/or should be included in email correspondence.

Should your international committee have a budget?

Yes. For example, RWR's budget has been \$10,000 per year. This should be established at the beginning of your presidential calendar year and approved each year by your Rotary club's Board. This would allow funding for 4-5 projects ranging from \$2000 to \$2500 each.

RWR does not carry over unused funds but starts with a fresh budget each year. Budgets may vary according to your fund-raising efforts and your club's yearly budget. Your club's international budget should not be considered an add-on expense but integral to your club's activities. Your budget may be enhanced by applying for a district Rotary grant, a Global Grant, or teaming up with another Rotary club on an international project.

Should you work with an established Rotary club that can oversee the project in the project country?

Yes, working with a Rotary club in the project country is a good idea. They will be able to help oversee the project and assure the finances are distributed appropriately. It also builds international Rotarian camaraderie.

However, there may be an international project connected to other organizations and individuals. Having your own international committee allows flexibility in project selectivity.

How do you start an international project for your club?

It is desirable to have international projects where at least one of your club members is directly involved on the project. An international program presented at your club may have an international project you could embrace. Encourage your international committee members to embrace an international project.

What paperwork is involved?

Keep it simple. RWR uses three forms: (1) Grant Request Form, describing the project and financing needed, (2) Grantee and Grantor Agreement Form, and (3) Project Final Report Form.

Should the project be sustainable? Should you set a time limit for contributions to an international project?

Your international project may be a onetime event, such as providing supplies for a classroom, or it may involve a longer commitment.

It is wise to set the time frame for your project to be initiated and completed within the presidential year. For Rotary clubs, that is from July 1st to June 30th the following year so that the president-elect has input to continuing the project in the future.

Commit to projects your Rotary club can focus on and complete. Project updates and project programs can be a part of your Rotary meetings bringing your entire club onboard.

Should you write checks to individuals involved in the project, or should one pay only 3rd party vendors or the local Rotary club?

Other than exceptions (decided by your club board), checks are generally written to the Rotary clubs/districts. Once a project is approved by your international committee, it should be reviewed by your Rotary club board.

Having the past president, president, and president-elect on the committee or included in email communications assures the project has ongoing approval before submitting to your Rotary club board.

Any check written should go through your club's check approval system, usually requiring two signatures.

Should we pay for any of our club members to visit the site?

Generally, travel and trip expenses are donated by the Rotarians. However, there may be exceptions recommended by your international committee and your Rotary club board. For example, some may have the time and motivation to work on an international project but cannot finance themselves. Some may have technical know-how on the project. Some may only give financial contributions.

Districts can use District Designated Funds (DDF) to support travel to and participation in Rotary project fairs to help districts identify project partners. District 5160 has included Project Fair Attendance Grants in its portfolio of funding available to clubs. Please contact the District Grants Committee Chair for details.

What should be your policy in giving money to an organization such as Shelter Box, Doctors without Borders, or other organizations to address a specific issue in another country?

In general, it's advisable for your club to focus on projects where a member is directly involved. However, during natural calamities, your club may want to support these other organizations.

How should we keep track of what is happening with our international project? Zoom calls, visits, other methods?

Zoom calls, Rotary programs, remote CCTV installation, member visits, social media, publications, newspapers clippings, quotes from beneficiaries, receipts/invoices can all help your club understand and follow the project. The grant forms should help you organize and following each project.