



# ROTARY PROJECT FAIRS

A GUIDE FOR ORGANIZERS

# INTRODUCTION

Project fairs are regional events hosted by Rotary districts to encourage international friendship and collaboration. Fairs give Rotary clubs an opportunity to showcase their service projects to potential global partners, and they give international visitors a chance to find a project that meets their club's goals.



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## GOALS

Identify your goals for the fair. Project fairs are meant to connect international visitors with local clubs to build the foundation for international service. Consider these questions:

- ▶ Why are you hosting this event?
- ▶ How will you recruit exhibitors and international visitors? How many participants do you hope to attract?
- ▶ What are the main things you want a club that's exhibiting at the fair to gain from this experience? What do you want an international visitor to gain?
- ▶ How will you encourage participants to interact with each other?
- ▶ How will you measure your success?

Consider asking local clubs if they're interested in participating in a project fair and what types of support they'd like from international clubs. Set goals for the event that meet those needs.

## FORM A COMMITTEE

Fairs are organized and planned at the local level, usually by a host committee. As a first step, form that committee of interested members.

Some district leaders to include in your committee:

- Your [district governor](#) can encourage clubs to collaborate on your event.
- Your [district Rotary Foundation chair](#) educates clubs about The Rotary Foundation and inspires them to support fundraising and grant activities. They are key in pre-reviewing projects that will be seeking a global grant from The Rotary Foundation.
- Your [district international service chair](#) works with clubs and districts to identify resources to develop international projects of higher quality and greater scale. They can help recruit international attendees.
- Your [district community service chair](#) works with clubs to address community needs and share service-related resources with club leaders. They can help recruit exhibitors to participate in the fair and can arrange for international participants to visit or volunteer on a service project while they're attending the event.

Also consider including your [regional Rotary Foundation chair](#) and [Rotary coordinator](#). They are responsible for helping Rotarians meet their service and fundraising goals by supporting The Rotary Foundation and participating in service activities. [Regional public image coordinators](#) can help promote the fair.

# COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Think about these questions as you formalize your project fair's committee structure:

- ▶ Is this a one-time event? If your event is recurring, will you be moving from city to city or country to country?

▶ If you're organizing an event across multiple districts and countries, involve leaders and club representatives from each country.

- ▶ If your event is a recurring one, set up a committee structure that allows people to teach others from year to year. Consider designating someone to maintain important information about the event, including costs, attendance details, and logistics.
- ▶ Develop local guidelines and establish an oversight committee to select future locations for the fair and provide year-to-year support, especially if the area includes multiple districts or countries or uses more than one language. An oversight committee can share the lessons learned with future organizers, which can then improve those events.
- ▶ The organizing committee should also create and maintain a website for your event. If the event will recur, appoint a committee member who's responsible for updating the website each year.

12-16 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

## FINALIZE THE DATES AND SECURE A VENUE



When you select dates for your event, avoid conflicts with other Rotary events such as district conferences, zone institutes, Foundation training, grant management seminars, or the Rotary International Convention.

If you want to host your event in conjunction with a Rotary event, dedicate specific dates for the fair. For example, to have a fair in tandem with a zone institute, designate two or three days for the fair before or after the institute. Be sure the fair and the adjoining event are open to all international visitors.

When you choose a venue for the event, make sure there's ample space for each local club to put up exhibits about their projects in booths or on tables.



## DEVELOP A PROGRAM

An engaging event includes lively discussion sessions as well as time for international visitors to meet with each exhibitor, learn about projects that are seeking support, and initiate relationships.

### Encourage fellowship

- Host afternoon and evening activities for socializing, such as luncheons, dinners, cultural shows, and home hospitality events to help relationships develop between local and international Rotary members.
- Arrange tours of the city for international participants, and have local Rotary members accompany them if possible.
- Open the fair with a reception or a discussion session that includes presentations describing the purpose of the fair and what international visitors and exhibitors can expect. Help participants understand that the fair is a starting point for international relationships that will need cultivation to grow into successful project partnerships.
- Work with district Rotary Foundation chairs, district international service chairs, and Rotary International and Rotary Foundation staff members to develop the program content.
- Consider organizing a meeting during the fair for local and international Rotarians to talk about their experience and ask questions about the fair or any of the presentations.
- Provide resources about Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation at a breakout session or booth.
- Allow plenty of time and space for project booths to be displayed and for international partners to meet with local Rotarians. We recommend a minimum of two full days.
- Share the program with international participants several months before the event so they can plan the best use of their time.

### Incorporate service

Arrange project site visits and service projects that international and local Rotary members can undertake together. This helps visitors better understand the needs of the community and builds fellowship with local members.

# PROJECT EXHIBITS

It's important for local clubs to prepare strong project proposals and engaging displays for international visitors. Not every visitor will be looking for a global grant project to support, so make sure your fair features projects of various sizes and budgets. That can range from small-budget projects that are seeking support through cash contributions or district grant funds to larger projects that will be seeking a global grant and a primary international partner.

Determine well in advance the number of clubs that will be involved and how many projects will be exhibited. Limit the number of project exhibits so that international participants aren't overwhelmed and can visit each exhibitor.

International visitors should have access to a list of all the projects before they arrive. Encourage exhibitors to add their projects to [Rotary Ideas](#) under the Project Fair category. You can send participants a digital file beforehand and give them a printed copy once they arrive.

- ▶ Include district Rotary Foundation chairs and district international service chairs in this process. These leaders have expertise to ensure that the projects presented at the fair contain the information international visitors are looking for.
- ▶ District Rotary Foundation chairs should review all prospective global grant project proposals and provide feedback to the host club. Give clubs enough time to make changes to their proposals before the project fair.

Local clubs can also work with their regional grants officers on projects that will need global grant funding. [Find your Rotary grant officer.](#)

# PROMOTION

**Did you know?** District grants can be used to support travel to and participation in Rotary project fairs as a way to help districts find project partners. As with any district grant, the district decides whether to allow District Designated Funds (DDF) to be used for this purpose.

In your promotional materials, encourage district leaders to use DDF to send representatives to your fairs. After those visitors return home, they can tell their clubs what they've learned about the projects featured at your fair and inspire their clubs to support one as an international partner.

## FINALIZE WEBSITE

After you've set up a website with the event details, an agenda, and cost and registration information, Rotary International can start promoting the fair in our newsletters, magazines, blogs, social media accounts, and website.

## WORK WITH ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Share your event website and details with Rotary at least 10-12 months before the event so staff members can promote your fair. Rotary staff members can also work with you to develop a promotional plan that can help attract international visitors. Find more information about [project fairs](#).

## USE TARGETED OUTREACH

While Rotary is promoting your event to our broader network, have a member of your fair committee be responsible for promoting the event to international visitors. Consider contacting district leaders such as the international service committee chairs or district governors around the world to ask them to share the event in their districts. Send targeted invitations to clubs and districts that you have a relationship with, including former global grant partners, Rotary Youth Exchange partners, Rotary Friendship Exchange partners, sister clubs and districts, and multidistrict activity representatives such as intercountry committee leaders.

Start promoting your event as early as possible so that international visitors can plan their travel.

## BRANDING

Before you create your project fair website and marketing materials, review [Rotary's Voice and Visual Identity Guidelines](#) and visit the [Brand Center](#) for logo templates.

Also brand your event with the district or districts hosting the project fair.

## AFTER THE EVENT

- ▶ After the project fair, revisit your goals and determine if you achieved them. Document what worked and what didn't so you can improve future fairs.
- ▶ Ask your local clubs and international visitors about their experiences at the fair and use this feedback to develop future events. Send out your survey at the end of your event or immediately afterward.
- ▶ Because international relationships do take time to build, you might send another survey six months after the fair to assess the success of the exhibitors and visitors at building partnerships. Follow up with project exhibitors for the first year or two afterward.
- ▶ If your clubs didn't find an international partner at the fair, encourage them to post their projects on [Rotary Ideas](#) to find support.
- ▶ Share the success stories and partnerships that result from your project fairs with Rotary, so we can inspire more participation in project fairs. Send them to [rotary.service@rotary.org](mailto:rotary.service@rotary.org).



## QUESTIONS?



Write to [rotary.service@rotary.org](mailto:rotary.service@rotary.org) if you have any questions.