

STARTING A ROTARY CLUB

Rotary

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NINE STEPS TO STARTING A ROTARY CLUB

1 Identify an opportunity.	• Look for unmet needs by researching characteristics of existing area clubs (for example, meeting time and location, club model, meeting format and frequency, club member and profession diversity, and service activities). • Contact the district governor for approval to start the process of forming a new club.
2 Get expert assistance.	• Connect with experienced Rotarians who can offer support and help. • Consult with your district governor about a sponsor club and new club adviser. • Contact your Club and District Support (CDS) representative for guidance, including on naming the club.
3 Make a communication plan.	• Decide how to promote your new club and tailor your message to your target audience. • Identify communication channels for getting your message to the widest possible audience. • Consult your new club adviser or the district governor to identify potential members, including by using online membership leads. • Contact potential members.
4 Hold a series of informational meetings.	• Prepare your agenda. • Invite potential members. • Advertise your informational meetings. • At the meetings, discuss and gain consensus on the club's meeting format, value to potential members, and how the club will differ from existing clubs in the area. • Collect contact information from attendees who show interest in joining the club.
5 Recruit charter members.	• Ask regular attendees to become charter members. • Continue to invite potential members to your meetings. • Aim for at least 15 regular attendees from your informational meetings to become charter members.

⑥ Finalize the details at an organizational meeting.	• Choose club officers. • Choose a club name in consultation with the adviser and governor and have CDS approve it. • Finalize your club meeting format and location. • Ask your new club adviser for guidance on establishing good club routines and practices, as well as drafting club bylaws.
⑦ Submit the new club application.	• Ask your district governor to sign the new club application form and send it to CDS.
⑧ Celebrate the charter and publicize the club.	• Celebrate in your community with current and potential members in the way that best suits the new club.
⑨ Continue developing the new club.	• Recruit and invite prospective members. • Promote Rotary learning by members and officers. • Continue seeking advice and support on governance, projects, and club administration from your sponsor club, new club adviser, membership chair, and other members of the Rotary community.

WHY START A ROTARY CLUB?

Most new clubs are started by Rotarians. But even if you have never been a member of a Rotary club, you can still suggest to the district governor that you start one in your community. By founding a Rotary club, you can:

- Get more involved in your community
- Make an impact in the lives of others
- Connect with others in your area and around the world who share your interest in creating lasting change
- Develop your skills by volunteering in leadership roles and grow personally through making a difference
- Build something for yourself and your community by shaping the club from the start — forming its culture, establishing its unique character, and setting its service goals

If you're a member of a Rotary club, you already know how a club can benefit you, the community, and Rotary. By starting a club, you can also:

- Create a different Rotary club experience in your area, increasing the diversity of clubs
- Develop professional and leadership skills and experience personal growth
- Explore various **club models** to meet different interests
- Pursue new project possibilities
- Meet other professionals in your community and hear their fresh ideas

This guide describes the process of establishing a new club, from the initial idea to the charter celebration and beyond. You can use it to start a Rotary club whether you're a nonmember interested in bringing Rotary to your community, a Rotarian who wants to start a new club, or a district leader who wishes to increase membership by building new clubs.

Rotary will need to grow and evolve to meet community needs. When you charter a club, you increase Rotary's capacity to improve lives in communities around the world. Thank you for helping to make this happen.



HOW TO GET STARTED

Starting a club brings neighbors, experts, and problem-solvers together to exchange ideas and take action to meet community needs. District governors often appoint a new club adviser and collaborate with Rotary's **Club and District Support (CDS) representatives** during the process. If you don't know who is the governor of your district, contact CDS.

NEW CLUBS PERFORM BEST WITH:

A new club adviser

The district governor may appoint a new club adviser or work with the district's membership development committee. Although having a new club adviser is not required, it can be very helpful.

> *Why does this matter?* Commitment and experience. New club advisers champion the effort to start a club from start to finish, and their continued involvement after the club gets its charter is critical to the club's success in its first years.

A sponsor club

Having a sponsor club is strongly recommended but isn't required.

> *Why does this matter?* Sponsor clubs can provide valuable advice and mentoring to the new club's leaders during its first few years, increasing opportunities to thrive.

More than 15 charter members

The minimum number of charter members is 15, but start your club with even more members if possible, because doing so significantly increases a club's sustainability. It's not uncommon for new clubs to lose 25 percent of their members in their first three years.

> *Why does this matter?* Our data shows that the more members a club starts with, the more likely it is to succeed. Increasing the number of charter members by just five significantly increases a club's long-term success.
>
> *What if you don't have enough members to charter a club?* Consider working with an existing Rotary club to start a satellite club. Satellite clubs can be started with as few as eight members and then you can work on increasing your membership.



STARTING A ROTARY CLUB

Rotary clubs are formed to meet various needs. Follow these steps to charter a successful and sustainable new club, adapting them as necessary to meet the needs of your community or culture. Before you get started, consider taking the New Club Formation course in the **Learning Center**.

STEP 1 IDENTIFY AN OPPORTUNITY

Think about creating a new club experience that offers options to prospective members, with the goal of being more inclusive and appealing. You can start by looking at the types of clubs in the district, the club experiences that aren't being offered, and which target audiences aren't represented in the district's membership. Or, just design your ideal club — for example, one that meets less frequently, is more affordable, does service often, has fun, offers growth — and find others who are interested.

Rotary values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our clubs provide opportunities to people of all backgrounds, regardless of their age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Engaging with Rotary is a path to personal and professional growth through local and international service.

Finally, consider if there's an opportunity to serve a group of people by starting a club that meets primarily online. Clubs that meet online can welcome members from one town, a larger region, or even the entire world.

In general, look for:

- Communities with recognized needs
- Groups of people and professions that currently aren't being recruited
- Rotary alumni (former Rotaract and RYLA participants, vocational training team members, Rotary Scholars, etc.)
- Young adults, women, members of ethnic minorities, and other underrepresented groups

STEP 2 GET EXPERT HELP

After you determine the feasibility of starting a club, contact the governor to get support and agree on a plan. Also, consider asking the governor to appoint a new club adviser to provide guidance throughout the process.

Find supporters

Starting a club involves many supporters who will help the process run smoothly:

- The **district governor** can recommend a new club adviser and ultimately approves the new club application.
- The **district membership committee** identifies opportunities to start new clubs, plans and implements a district's new club strategy, guides and motivates clubs during their first two years, and trains new club officers.
- The **new club adviser**, if you have one, guides the creation of the new club and helps with tasks like creating the communication plan and initiating informational meetings. They are often a member of the sponsor club.
- The **sponsor Rotary club**, if you have one, works closely with the new club's officers and mentors the club during its first year.
- **CDS** advises you on the best practices and guides each step of the process, from initial planning to chartering your club — and will continue to support you after that. CDS will also recommend your club to Rotary's Board of Directors, which will ultimately approve it.

If starting a Rotary club isn't feasible, consider an alternative such as forming a **satellite club**, a **Rotaract** or **Interact** club, or a **Rotary Community Corps**. All of these groups are part of the Rotary family. Depending on the ages and other characteristics of the people who are interested, another type of club may be a better option. See Rotary **Club Models** for details.

STEP 3 MAKE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

How will you tell potential members about the club?

First, create a clear, simple message that communicates what you're offering and how prospective members would benefit.

Find templates for announcements and other communications in Rotary's **Brand Center**.

Create a Rotary-branded announcement that includes the following information:

- What's happening? A Rotary club is forming in our community.
- Who can join? Adults who are willing to serve in their communities or abroad and who have a good reputation in their profession or community. Members include professionals, problem-solvers, entrepreneurs, stay-at-home parents, graduate students, retirees — anyone who wants to give back to their community.
- What will they do? Put their unique expertise and perspectives into action to better their community.
- Why should I join? To make a difference in your community and meet other like-minded and service-oriented people in your area.
- And if I'm interested? Come to our informational meeting. [Add your club details.]

Next, find ways to get the message out. Here are some ideas:

- Post an announcement on social media
- Have your announcement printed in local newspapers, trade association publications, and professional directories
- Ask local radio stations to make an announcement
- Email local business leaders and promote the club as a way to benefit the community through service and provide leadership development opportunities for employees
- Talk to community leaders and ask them to spread the word among your target audiences (for example, retirees, younger professionals, community groups, trade associations, and other professional groups)
- Leave flyers in waiting rooms and office lobbies and post them around your community

While you get your message out, plan your informational meeting, where you'll elaborate on the vision you have for the club, meeting details, and the benefits of joining.

STEP 4 HOLD A SERIES OF INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

Informational meetings are where potential members meet for the first time to find out more about Rotary. It's not uncommon that many people who have said they're interested in joining don't attend the meeting. Don't be discouraged. You may have several informational meetings as you work to start a club.

Here are some tips to prepare for your meeting:

- Have a sign-up sheet to collect names and contact information.
- Assign people to set up the meeting, lead it, and distribute materials.
- Ask club members to invite prospective members in person or using social media, phone calls, emails, and ads.
- Download and print materials to distribute at the meeting, such as:
  - A club brochure — create one using the template in Rotary's **Brand Center**
  - **Designing Your Rotary Experience**— inspires members to get involved
- Consider using **Rotary's People of Action** materials found in the Brand Center to showcase members serving their communities.
- Make an agenda.

For more details about how to conduct an informational meeting, see the additional information sections at the end of this guide.

STEP 5 RECRUIT CHARTER MEMBERS

You need 15 members to start a club. You may have enough after your first informational meeting, but if you need more members, you'll need to continue to recruit them.

Do you know people who want to help their communities? Have you spoken to someone recently who is ready to "give back" and make a positive change to someone's life? Or, have you met young professionals or young families who are interested in developing local projects? Ask them to join Rotary.

The only requirements for being a Rotarian are wanting to make a difference in the world and taking time to meet and work together on service projects.

Diversity of membership is critical. It will help make the club sustainable for the long term, because including members who have diverse perspectives and backgrounds keeps the club relevant to the community.

If you need help finding prospective members:

- Hold additional informational meetings.
- Ask established clubs for suggestions.
- Contact club and district leaders to get lists of membership leads — people who have expressed interest in joining.
- Try the exercise in **Finding New Club Members**.
- Repeat your outreach efforts from step 3.
- Contact your district's Rotary alumni.
- Talk to Rotaract club members.
- Visit local businesses and offices to talk to owners or managers about their interest in joining. Ask if you may tell their employees about the club.
- Find out who has helped with community projects or played a role in organizing social or cultural events.
- Consider professionals from different fields and industries to increase the club's capacity to serve the community.

Strive to ensure that the new club's members offer diverse skills, talents, and experiences and include people of different ethnicities, ages, and cultures, as well as a good gender balance.

There is only one Rotarian who was never asked to join Rotary — our founder, Paul Harris. The number one reason people don't join Rotary clubs is that they aren't asked to.

STEP 6 FINALIZE THE DETAILS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Hold an organizational meeting when you have 12 to 15 people interested in joining the new club. The preparation for this meeting is the same as for the informational meeting, including finding someone to run the meeting and making an agenda, handouts, and a sign-up sheet. The purpose is to elect club officers, choose a club name, reach agreement on meeting times and locations, and plan for the club's first project.

For more information on how to select the best possible meeting location for the new club or how to conduct an organizational meeting, see the additional information sections at the end of this guide.

Continue recruiting charter members and holding meetings until you have 15 committed members.

Begin thinking about what amendments you might include in your club bylaws.

STEP 7 SUBMIT THE NEW CLUB APPLICATION

Complete the **New Rotary Club Application** (also found at the end of this guide) and submit it to the district governor. The governor will sign the application to verify that it is correct and complete and will forward it to the district's **CDS representatives**.

Be sure to keep a copy of the application in the club's files for historical purposes.

After you submit the application, a Club and District Support representative will review it and contact you with any questions. Processing time varies but is usually one business week or less.

If you have questions, contact your **CDS representative**.

STEP 8 CELEBRATE THE CHARTER AND PUBLICIZE THE CLUB

When your club receives its charter, bring everyone together to celebrate and commemorate the event. This is an opportunity to solidify the group's identity, strengthen the members' sense of belonging, and generate club publicity.

Use the event to introduce your club to the community, recognize its leaders, and set the stage for its active participation in the community.

For more ideas on how to plan a successful new club charter celebration, consult **Club Charter Celebrations** in the additional information sections at the end of this guide.

STEP 9 CONTINUE DEVELOPING THE NEW CLUB

It will take some time for a new club to develop its own culture, character, and traditions, and for new members to learn how to run a club successfully. New members can learn more about Rotary by familiarizing themselves with **Rotary Basics** and the **Learning Center**.

The new club adviser and members of the sponsor club can also share their Rotary knowledge, help train club leaders, offer new member orientation (see **Introducing New Members to Rotary**), volunteer for the club's service projects, recommend speakers for meetings, and attend the new club's events. You can find more information in **Sponsor Clubs**.

NEW CLUB RESOURCES

Your new club will find information and advice on many topics in **My Rotary**. You can also consult the additional information sections at the end of this guide on sponsor clubs, informational and organizational meetings, club meetings, and charter celebrations.

How to Create a My Rotary Account
A quick, step-by-step guide that helps you **register for a My Rotary account** so you can get more Rotary resources online.

rotary.org/membership
Find resources for increasing your club membership and enhancing the member experience.

The Learning Center
Find online courses on club role training, professional development topics, forming new clubs, new club mentors, and satellite clubs.

Club President Essentials 1
Learn about your role and begin planning for your year as president.

Club Secretary Essentials
Learn about your role and begin planning for your year as secretary.

Engaging Younger Professionals
A toolkit that helps you understand what emerging leaders are looking for and how to get them involved in your club.

Rotary Club Central
The area of My Rotary where clubs set goals and track their progress toward them.

Introducing New Members to Rotary: An Orientation Guide
A guide that club leaders can use to help new members learn more about Rotary, the benefits of membership, and how they can get involved.

Rotary Basics
A course designed for new members that can also be a great refresher for other members or even nonmembers who simply want to know what Rotary is all about.

The Rotary Foundation Reference Guide
Learn about The Rotary Foundation's programs, funds, grants, and awards.

The Brand Center
Find Rotary logos, brand guidelines, membership certificates, club brochure templates, and more.

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SPONSOR CLUBS

GOOD TO KNOW

Helping a new club can be a rewarding experience for a sponsor club. Sponsor club members work closely with the new club adviser and encourage potential members to become charter members of the new club so they can enjoy the benefits of Rotary, such as social events, service opportunities, and access to a great network.

Continuous support from sponsor members during and after a club's first year is crucial. Rotary's research finds that new clubs that receive strong support from their sponsor into their second year have a better chance of becoming a great club — strong, self-sufficient, and productive.

The club that the new club adviser belongs to may serve as the sponsor club or another club can fill that role. More than one club may co-sponsor a new club. Data also shows that a sponsor club located near the new club is more likely to help the new club get a charter and thrive in its early years. Ideally, a sponsor club is at least three years old.

A SPONSOR CLUB NEEDS TO:

- Support the formation of the new club under the guidance of the district governor and the new club adviser
- Be in good financial standing with Rotary and have well-rounded experience in Rotary service

A SPONSOR CLUB SHOULD ALSO:

- Ensure that the new club builds a strong foundation of membership, service, and fellowship
- Invite the officers and chairs of the new club's committees to attend its meetings
- Offer its advice on how to succeed
- Organize joint fundraiser activities
- Support the new club as it develops its own ways of undertaking service and social events, even if they're different from the sponsor club's approach
- Familiarize the new club's officers with Rotary's policies and procedures
- Help with administrative tasks (club invoice, elections, etc.)
- Attend the new club's charter celebration
- Serve as an effective mentor for at least two years
- Undertake joint projects, fundraising, or social events with the new club

GOOD TO KNOW

INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

At informational meetings, you'll show prospective Rotarians what Rotary is all about, the benefits of membership, and what Rotary clubs can do for their communities. Consider holding several over a period of time.

MARKETING YOUR INFORMATIONAL MEETING

- Consider these tips:
- Assemble a marketing team and ask it to meet regularly to review progress, discuss ideas, and implement plans.
- Create and regularly update a list of top community and business leaders' names. Use this list to target people you want in the club.
- See if your district has any online prospective member leads that can be assigned to the new club once it's chartered.
- Generate excitement about joining Rotary by displaying posters in prominent business windows and reception areas. Find flyer templates in the **Brand Center**. Use social media for promotion, too.
- Have volunteers distribute as many cards, posters, and flyers as possible to shops and other businesses, local government offices, schools, etc. Post invitations online, too, and invite your best prospects by email.

PREPARING TO HOST AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING

- Make lists of invitees, any special guests, and speakers.
- Prepare the agenda, including the purpose of the meeting, which is to educate people about Rotary and explain the benefits of membership.
- Prepare handouts with the meeting agenda for all attendees.
- Confirm that the venue has been arranged and prepared for the meeting.
- Confirm speakers, if any.
- Think about how you can describe Rotary in a compelling way that would make attendees feel welcome and want to get involved. Ask speakers to tell their own stories about Rotary's impact on their lives or the lives of those in the community, or show a compelling Rotary video.
- Print out information for prospective members from Rotary's website to distribute at the meeting.
- Create a club brochure using the customizable template in the Brand Center. Upload your own photos and add your club's projects and events. Print enough to distribute.
- Check that presentations are ready and equipment is working before the meeting.
- Put banners and other promotional material in place well before the meeting starts.
- Assign someone to take notes during the meeting.

TIPS FOR INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

- Make it professional. You are marketing Rotary.
- Provide light refreshments (possibly sponsored by your venue).
- Network and make a list of at least 10 names of people who showed an interest in meeting again.
- Give all attendees your club brochure or other Rotary materials.
- Think about how the meeting location may affect people's perception of the club and whether the location is accessible for everyone (both physically and by being a welcoming space).

SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL MEETING AGENDA

The new club adviser works with a team of interested prospective or current Rotarians to organize and run the meeting. These informational meetings often take place over two to three months.

Sample agenda

- Ask attendees to introduce themselves and state their business, profession, or community interest. Recognize former Rotarians and those who plan to become members of the new club.
- Deliver two or three short, light-hearted presentations on the benefits of being a Rotary member, what Rotary can do for the attendees, and what Rotary does for others. Have some Rotarians tell their own stories about being members. Emphasize the international opportunities.
- Hold a discussion about the new club's objectives, including the types of community or international service the potential members want to be involved in.
- Give a brief overview of:
  - Service opportunities available to Rotarians
  - The Rotary Foundation and the causes that it supports through grants
  - Rotary's core values and mission
  - Engagement with your club expectations (attendance, service, fellowship)
  - The need for a diverse membership and their responsibility to bring in new members
  - Members' financial obligations to the club, district, and Rotary International
- Allow time for participants to get to know each other and you. Even just asking participants to meet one new person sitting next to them is a good start.
- Announce the date and time of the next meeting. Ask everyone to bring a friend.

If the next meeting will be an organizational meeting, announce that. (It takes at least 15 members to start a Rotary club, but you can hold an organizational meeting to begin deciding what the new club will be like as soon as you have a core group of 12 to 15 committed prospective members.)

GOOD TO KNOW

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS

It takes at least 15 members to start a Rotary club, but as soon as you've held one or more informational meetings and have a core group of 12 to 15 committed prospective members, you can hold an organizational meeting. At it, the club's future members can elect officers and begin planning their first project and social event.

CONDUCTING THE MEETING

At this meeting, sponsor club members or other supporters explain the responsibilities of club membership. Members of the new club should think about what they'd like to get from their Rotary experience and start to make some decisions about their new club. They might:

- Decide where and how club meetings will be held (including, possibly, whether refreshments or a meal will be served and other details)
- Decide when and how often they'll meet (for information about meeting formats and frequency, see Club Meetings and Club Flexibility)
- Discuss ideas for the club's first project or plan for the next several months
- Choose club officers (president, secretary, president-elect, treasurer, membership chair, and Rotary Foundation chair)
- Assign other roles (e.g., sergeant-at-arms or greeter for the first meeting)

WELCOME

Start every meeting with introductions so everyone feels welcome and part of the group. One of the key indicators of a successful new club is that it facilitates connections and friendships among members from its very first meetings.

You may want to invite the assistant governor or district governor to speak about the district and how it will support your club.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

The most effective service projects are those that meet real needs in the community served. Before planning any projects, review how Rotary clubs conduct community assessments and make a plan to do so. Choose club members to lead the effort on the assessment.

For now, ask attendees to list needs they're aware of. Try to get a sense of what the new club's members will be able to contribute, including their skills, availability, and other resources.

As you're organizing a Rotary club and planning service projects and fundraising events, don't forget about obtaining appropriate insurance (e.g., liability, accident, coverage for directors and officers). Your district may have an insurance program or you may need to obtain insurance from a local agent. Depending on your geographic location, liability insurance is often required by third parties that your club may be working with.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Make a list of possible social events and ask everyone to add their ideas. Vote to choose one of the top three ideas for a social gathering. Set a tentative date and choose members to take the lead on the planning.

ELECTIONS

A critical part of becoming a fully functioning Rotary club is choosing your club leaders. Club officers include president, secretary, and treasurer, and you'll elect those now. They will all serve on the club board, which might also include a membership committee chair, Rotary Foundation committee chair, and other positions your club deems necessary. Although you need 15 people to form a new Rotary club, you don't need that many to elect the new club's officers. Consider planning ahead and electing officers for the following year, too.

Ask for volunteers to serve in these club leadership roles. Find job descriptions on the **Club Roles** page. If more than one person is interested in a role, take a voice or ballot vote.

You may also want to start preparing your club bylaws by consulting the Recommended Rotary Club Bylaws. Edit them as needed. Consult your Club and District Support representative for help with editing bylaws.

MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

Be candid about what will be expected of members. They should uphold Rotary values and demonstrate good character. Discuss attendance and participation expectations and the various dues or fees that all members pay to Rotary International, as well as to the district and the club. RI dues are paid every six months. Clubs and districts set dues, too. Members pay all dues to the club, which in turn pays the district and RI. The club may also decide to charge new members an admission fee. Set both the club admission fee and club dues at an organizational meeting. It's a good idea to collect these fees as soon as possible. Club dues are often collected with new club charter fees.

NEXT MEETING

Set a date, time, and place for the next meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING

Sponsor club members should schedule training for the newly elected club officers. Go to Rotary's Learning Center for online training for all club officer positions. All new members can learn more about Rotary by exploring Rotary.org, reviewing Introducing New Members to Rotary, and taking online courses in Rotary's Learning Center. They'll need to create a My Rotary account to get to the Learning Center. Once they sign in, they can search for Rotary's Action Plan, Rotary's Areas of Focus, Planning Your Projects, and Rotary Foundation Basics. Through My Rotary, they can also subscribe to newsletters to learn more about how to participate in Rotary.

Continue to encourage everyone to promote the new club and to bring others to the next meeting.

Follow up with those who showed interest but didn't attend the informational or organizational meeting. Let them know that they are valuable potential members of the new club.

CLUB MEETINGS

GOOD TO KNOW

When starting a club, you'll need to choose a meeting location, frequency, and format. In making these decisions, consider the needs of club members, available resources, and the image you want to project to the community.

MEETING LOCATION

The first Rotary club held its meetings in the offices of its four founding members, a practice that was effective and practical in 1905. Today, Rotary clubs meet in a wide variety of venues, including restaurants, hotels, libraries, convention centers, banks, museums, town halls, bars, boats, ranches, outdoor theaters, as well as meeting rooms in local businesses, senior housing facilities, churches, temples, and mosques. Many meet online some or all of the time. Wherever you decide to hold your meetings, be sure to put this information on your club application so it can be included in our Club Finder listings. If meeting locations will vary, post the schedule on the club website and include the website address on your club application.

MEETING FREQUENCY

Rotary clubs must meet regularly, at least twice a month. They can also meet more frequently.

MEETING FORMAT

Rotary clubs also meet in a variety of ways: in person, online, or a mix of each — even a mix of each at the same meeting, if some members attend in person and others participate using online communication tools, like videoconferencing. Clubs that meet solely online are especially suited to busy members who travel frequently or are unable to attend in-person meetings. Some clubs meet on their website at a set time. Some use webinar technology. Others post a meeting activity, and members go online to participate at a time that's convenient for them.

If a club meets primarily online, at least one member needs to be proficient in the design and maintenance of the club's website, which should include:

- A secure online payment system to collect member dues, fees, and contributions
- A URL that refers to the name of the club, for example, www.rotaryclubchicago.org
- Content and design that follow the recommendations in the Voice and Visual Identity Guidelines

In-person meetings can also be held in a variety of ways; they can be formal or informal, informative or interactive, businesslike or social.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How many members does the club have? How big do you want it to be?
- What meeting formats will you use (in-person vs. online; featuring speakers, activities, social events, or service projects)?
- How often do members want to meet?
- Where do the members live and work?
- What possible venues are near members' workplaces and homes?
- Will you have a meal or refreshments with the meeting?
- What would the facility and any food cost?
- What image will the venue convey to the community? What do you want the meeting location to say about your club?
- Can any of the members provide meeting space free of charge?
- Is parking available, and is the venue served by public transportation?

- Will you need access to audio or video equipment at meetings?
- Is meeting online feasible? Who has the expertise to manage the club website, and do you have the capability to accommodate those attending remotely?
- How will the club accommodate members who cannot attend? Will they be allowed to attend the meeting electronically?
- Will club meetings be open to members' partners and children?
- How will the club keep members informed of the meeting schedule?
- What will be the attendance expectations?

WHERE DO WE START?

1. Decide whether you'll meet in person, online, or some of each.
2. If you'll meet in person, decide whether meetings will have a traditional format, including a meal and a speaker, or an alternative format, such as a service or social event.
3. Choose the top two or three locations and invite club members to visit them and vote to choose one, taking the factors above into consideration.
4. If you'll meet online, decide what software or service you'll use and the details of how meetings will be held.
5. Decide how frequently you'll meet.
6. Post the schedule on the club website.

GOOD TO KNOW

CLUB CHARTER CELEBRATIONS

The charter event is a time to celebrate a new club joining Rotary. It should be a memorable event in the history of the club and an opportunity to introduce the club to its local community and surrounding Rotary clubs.

ORGANIZING THE CELEBRATION

The charter members decide what type of celebration to hold, and how it can convey the image they wish to project to the community. Ask a smaller group of members to organize the celebration, drafting a program outline and budget for all members to approve. The organizers should focus on the following details.

DESIGNING THE RIGHT EVENT

The celebration should reflect the new club's image and can be a formal dinner or a casual party. It usually includes an inspirational address and allows the governor to present the charter to the club.

SELECTING A DATE AND LOCATION

Select the date for your charter event only after the new club application has been approved. The club's official charter date is the date the club is admitted by Rotary's Board of Directors, not the date of the charter celebration.

When setting the date, allow enough time to plan the program and hospitality and publicize it throughout the district. Avoid conflicts with other Rotary events in the district so members of other clubs can participate.

Once the date is set, select the location of the celebration.

BUDGET

Admission fees should be reasonable but cover your expenses. Factor in the estimated attendance, meals or refreshments, the cost of printing programs, dinner tickets, place cards, invitations, and publicity materials, as well as other expenses, such as souvenirs and speakers' fees.

INVITING OTHER CLUBS

When sending invitations, allow enough time for other clubs in the district to announce the event during at least two meetings. The invitation should include the date, time, price, and location of the event, as well as the names of speakers, a way to register or RSVP, and the reservation deadline. Some clubs ask for Rotarians to pay for charter event reservations in advance.

PUBLICITY

Send news releases to local media and promote the event on social media.

GUESTS OF HONOR

You might extend invitations to local dignitaries. Decide whether any guests should receive complimentary tickets. If you invite any special guests, make sure they're each assigned a host.

SET-UP

Have a registration area if the event is large. To facilitate introductions, prepare name badges in advance. If the event is formal, make seating arrangements in advance. It's always useful to assign seats to speakers and other presenters, and to have a designated space with a lectern, microphone, and other equipment available for speakers.

GIFTS FOR THE NEW CLUB

Traditionally, the sponsor and other clubs present the new club with gifts, such as a podium, a Rotary flag, Rotary lapel pins, a bell, or a gavel. Clubs that are less formal, though, may not feel a need for these items. Guests who wish to bring gifts should ask the new club what it needs or would like. Sponsor clubs may also offer to cover the club charter fees. The governor or the new club adviser should arrange for the presentation of gifts and tell the master of ceremonies before the event which clubs will present gifts.

THE PROGRAM: CREATING A MEMORABLE EVENT

The entire program should be designed to foster fellowship and inspire the new club's members. Carefully decide which Rotarian will give the main address. In many cases, the new club adviser or the president of the sponsor club calls the meeting to order and continues as master of ceremonies, keeping the program on schedule and providing smooth transitions between segments.

PRESENTATION OF CLUB CHARTER

If a paper copy of the club's charter certificate is presented, it should be framed. The electronic version could be included in a slideshow or printed in the program book. The governor often presents the charter during their address and may recognize the charter members by calling their names.

SOUVENIR BROCHURE

The event program may be designed to serve as a memento of the charter celebration. It doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive. It usually includes:

- The name of the new club
- The time and place of the charter celebration
- The event schedule, including names of speakers
- Entertainment details

GOVERNOR'S REMARKS

The district governor may attend and speak about:

- Rotary's meaning to its individual members and the community
- What the club has agreed to by joining Rotary
- The benefits of Rotary fellowship in the district and around the world
- The worldwide impact of The Rotary Foundation
- The importance of steady membership growth and development