

# Increasing Global Grants Inter-District Partnerships

## A personal perspective

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Do you have passion to initiate a particular project through Rotary? Did you know there is a way to pursue this by applying for a Rotary Global Grant? It is not as hard as you think. These grants provide one of the best ways to “do good in the world.” They give individual Rotarians the ability to develop, initiate, and execute needs-based projects that have high sustainable and measurable outcomes and make an impact on individuals and communities.



My name is Narayan Murarka, from the Barrington Breakfast Rotary Club in District 6440. I had the privilege to sponsor, on behalf of my club, six major global grants in Guatemala in partnership with Club Rotario Guatemala Sur, District 4250. The total budget for these grants is \$1.2 million over the last eight years. I had also an opportunity to serve as Global Grants Chair for District 6440 Rotary Foundation Committee for five years. As a result, I have gained some experience from the ground level about the Rotary Foundation and how global grants work.

I have written this article, primarily for Rotarians within the United States, to give my perspective about the issues that affect a typical Rotarian who may venture to sponsor a global grant.

My hope is that this article will generate dialogue resulting in improvements in the global grants process within the districts in a zone. I welcome comments, critiques and constructive suggestions.

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There are four major top-level requirements for any global grant to succeed. They include:

- Lead Rotarian – Power of One
- Role of The Rotary Foundation (TRF)
- Available resources to navigate the grant application process
- Financing

### 1. Power of One:

For the successful execution of a project, it is critical for Rotarians to lead with passion, persistence and perseverance. These individuals should be recognized and commended for their initiative and commitment to fulfill The Rotary Foundation’s goals.

Though there are many Rotarians who venture to undertake and implement these projects, there are too many who stay on the sidelines. They should not be discouraged by negative stereotypes, such as the notion that navigating a global grant application is extremely difficult. As Rotarians, this should not be the reason to not try or give up, particularly if there is a passion to help others. There are many examples of Rotarians who have succeeded in pursuing and implementing substantial global grants. These examples provide reasons to encourage those who are on the sidelines to be engaged in grants by providing proper support and help.

### 2. Role of The Rotary Foundation:

The Rotary Foundation has a dual role. It collects funds and in turn finances projects by matching funds from local Rotary clubs or districts. There is a significant need (and rightfully so) for promoting contributions to TRF. These local contributions are tallied, and awards are made to the top performing districts and clubs.

What about the importance of promoting results of how these funds benefit communities? Consider a quote from Paul Harris and another more contemporary quote from PRID Mike McCullough:

“Whatever Rotary may mean to us; to the world it will be known by the **results** it achieves.”  
- Paul Harris

"It's not about the money, it's about what the money can do!" - PRID Mike McCullough

These messages clearly point to the need for publicizing project results, outcomes and impacts with an active public image and awareness campaign. This will no doubt enhance our brand.

### **3. Available resources to navigate the grant application process**

Training is one of the primary responsibilities of the district. The Grants Management Seminar (GMS) is related to the Rotary Foundation and global grants. It generally runs about four hours once each year and covers all aspects of foundation programs. By necessity, this is a very high-level overview and as such it has a very limited impact.

The problem is compounded because individual Rotarians within the district lack knowledge of the detailed processes and aspects associated with global grants. It would be immensely helpful if a cadre of individuals were available in each district to guide the lead Rotarian in real time through the entirety of the grants process. These individuals need to be those with “hands-on” experience as opposed to those who have official titles.

The districts need to make “global grants” a priority much the same way “membership” is stressed as a top priority. They also need to develop a robust ongoing training program beyond GMS for navigating grants through the process and to successful outcomes.

### **4. Financing:**

Finding financing partners is a major challenge for the lead Rotarian wishing to initiate and sponsor a global grant. This is a frustrating and very time-consuming process. Within the Rotary’s existing system, there are ways these concerns can be minimized with proper management of resources and policies. I offer some ideas for consideration.

**4.1 Power of Partnerships:** Global grants require partnerships to raise funds. It is critical to bring together multiple clubs and districts to partner and raise funds. There are several potential relationships that can be fostered and developed. Under this mechanism, several clubs should be able to pool their available cash together and then apply for District Designated Fund (DDF) and TRF matches. This can be done in the following ways:

***Club-to-club intra-district partnership:*** A club sponsoring a global grant within a particular district should be able to attract other clubs within the same district to contribute cash from their club. While this scenario is ongoing, it is practiced in a somewhat limited way. This is because most of the other clubs in the district do not have knowledge of a particular in-district grant that is being pursued. The lead Rotarian does not generally have the outreach to other clubs for support. Yet, most clubs budget funds for participation in international projects. These funds can thus be gathered and leveraged to

support a grant project. There is a need to develop a systematic way for clubs to have this type of information.

***Club-to-club inter-district partnership:*** This is truly a major challenge. We are missing a great deal of potential participation that would be available if clubs within a zone would collaborate on TRF grants. Each zone consists of about 15-20 districts. This amounts of over 1,000 clubs. Imagine, if only 10% - 20% of these clubs were to join together with cash contributions, there would be a tremendous boost in financing a global grant. This does not generally happen due to lack of information about projects from outside-district clubs. This issue calls for an effective information exchange vehicle for clubs within the same zone.

**4.2 Power of Matching:** TRF has devised a unique system that provides matching dollars at the district level via District Designated Funds (DDF) and at the TRF level via World Fund. These matches have a multiplier effect, providing a substantial boost to the cash committed by clubs and/or districts for the project.

Further details are available in an article entitled “Financing Rotary Foundation Global Grants – A Tutorial” at this link:

<https://www.rotary6440.org/Stories/financing-rotary-foundation-global-grants—a-tutorial>

***DDF support for intra-district clubs:*** This is a very straightforward way to provide the power of matching to a grant generated within the district itself. Assuming that the lead Rotarian is able to generate support and partnerships from other intra-district clubs, the district should be able to match the combined club cash with DDF in a 1:1 ratio or even higher if there are enough funds available. Hopefully, such a matching mechanism can be universally formalized by each district within the zone and widely announced as a standard policy. By making the policy transparent, the lead Rotarian will have one fewer issue to worry about.

***DDF support for inter-district clubs:*** As stated above, an inter-district club-to-club partnership is a very healthy way to finance global grants. For example, it is highly desirable if a club in District A supports another club in District B; thus, District A should be able to provide matching DDF for its own club’s cash contribution. The reverse should also be true in that if a club in District B supports a club in District A with club cash; District B should provide matching DDF. This means that districts provide DDF matches to all clubs within their own district if they contribute funds to intra- or inter-district clubs. This seems to be a very fair and equitable way to support clubs undertaking global grants. The impact of this policy will be significant.

***Inter-district DDF partnership:*** Districts are sitting on a significant amount of uncommitted and unspent DDF. Would it not be better to use that money to help others? After all, our overall goal should be to help Rotarians who sponsor and implement global grants for the good of humanity. Rotarians undergo a lot of stress in raising funds. Anything that can be done to alleviate this problem will bring greater Rotarian participation.

Apparently, there is reluctance and reservations among districts to fully embrace this form of partnership based on many considerations. I am aware of at least one of them - expectation of reciprocity when one district provides its DDF to another. This raises borderline ethical issues. My research indicates that this practice is against the TRF policies quoted below from Article #52.050, Rotary Foundation Code of Policies, January 2019:

*“It is inappropriate and unacceptable for districts to trade or swap DDF as sponsor contributions for global grants with the purpose of simply securing funding for local projects.”*

This is an area that should be widely debated to arrive at some reasonable and acceptable policies.

Imagine an **ideal** situation (I can dream) where districts allocate their DDF to finance grants based on the project’s quality and impact. The effect will result in a substantial increase in impactful global grants that change lives.

*In my opinion, there is no reason why a fair and transparent policy can’t be developed to address inter-district DDF partnerships. Implementing such a policy within a zone will be a good start.*

## **5. Summary:**

The next progressive step is to promote and formally establish a multi-district and multi-club partnerships mechanism perhaps under the zone umbrella. There is a large number of clubs in each district that do not participate in global grants. Partnering offers them the first entry point and an opportunity to get engaged. Clubs with limited cash resources can be engaged in international projects, which builds membership, public image, and service opportunities. Partnerships also help clubs to further fellowship and friendships with other Rotarians in other clubs.

Project development and implementation could be additional components of partnerships beyond just financing. Country coordination is another area where sharing information about prospective host clubs and their local knowledge could be beneficial for the success of a project.

Relationships, trust and mutual respect are key components of partnerships. It’s logical to think clubs and districts within a zone are more likely to have trust as a result of many interactions that occur between them.

Perhaps, a zone-wide system may be established to at least increase partnerships between clubs within its 15-20 districts. An appropriate structure/mechanism needs to be created that makes it easier for clubs to know about upcoming opportunities for partnerships.

One reason for writing this article is to seek out other comments, ideas and suggestions.

I hope that constructive dialogue will emerge. Inter-district global grant partnerships will be the beneficiary. Just imagine the wonderful projects that could emerge and the good this will bring to the world!

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