



# BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING MEMBERS

This *Best Practices for Engaging Members* textbook is partly extracted from RI online Learning Center course. Please visit the Rotary Learning Center for further information needed on the Rotary website: [Rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org)

Translating Committee  
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# Best Practices for Engaging Members

## Course Description

Is your club losing more members than it's gaining? Is participation low at meetings and events? Are the same few people doing all the work? Because your club's members are at different stages in life and in their membership, their needs differ, too. This course will help you develop strategies for engaging people at all stages of membership. You'll learn how to energize the club experience, keep members interested, and prevent your club from becoming stale.

Completing this self-guided module is required to get credit for the course. It should take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Updated August 2021

## Content

Making New Members Feel Welcome .....	1
Getting all members involved .....	3
Making the Meetings Worthwhile .....	4
Inspiring Action to Make an Impact .....	9
Building Personal Connections .....	12
Implementing More Creative Options .....	15



# Making New Members Feel Welcome

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Most members who leave Rotary do so within a year or two of joining. Making a strong connection with new members will help inspire them to become active, longtime members.



## New member orientation

Take the time to hold new member orientation sessions separate from your regular meetings in order to help new members learn more about Rotary and your club. In a smaller group like this, they can ask lots of questions.

An effective orientation can be the difference between someone who stays in Rotary for a year and someone who stays for life. This orientation can include:

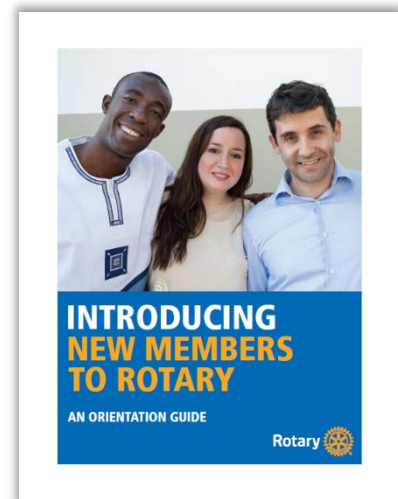
- ❶ An explanation of Rotary's history (use information from Rotary Basics)
- ❷ A discussion of the club's service activities and social events
- ❸ A talk about the culture of your club
- ❹ Ideas about how the new member can get involved (use Connect for Good)
- ❺ A discussion of leadership development opportunities (use Learning Center content)
- ❻ A direct connection with a mentor
- ❼ An explanation of Rotary recognition programs (use information about awards and certificates)

## Introducing New Members to Rotary: An Orientation Guide

Learn more about developing a new member orientation program and engaging new members from the start.

**Orientation guide:**

<https://my-cms.rotary.org/en/document/new-member-orientation-how-guide-clubs>



Involving new members and giving them a say in their club's future will strengthen both the club and the members' commitment to Rotary.

# Getting All Members Involved

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Rotary offers many opportunities for members to get involved in what interests them, and not just at the club level.

District events and programs provide ways that members can get to know people outside of their club, have fun, and develop new skills. Members can also participate in Rotary programs that connect members all over the world. By taking leadership development courses and accepting new roles, members can build skills that transfer to any setting.

Discussing these opportunities with new members during their orientation and reminding them about these options periodically is something all club leaders can do. You can also stay informed about new programs and courses from Rotary and remember that different opportunities will appeal to different members.



Use the handbook below to learn more about Rotary's programs and the ways that members can get involved.

## Ways to get involved:

Share this guide with members so they can learn about the many ways to get involved through Rotary in areas that interest them.

### Orientation guide:

<https://my-cms.rotary.org/en/document/connect-good>





# Making the Meetings Worthwhile

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Your members are volunteering their time to be part of the club and make a difference. They have lots of choices for fun ways to volunteer, and meetings that follow the same format every time can become dull. To make sure your members believe that the club meeting is a good use of their time, try activities that appeal to people's differing interests and that keep the meetings lively and interesting.



Some ideas to help make your meetings more worthwhile.

## Implement activities

One way to get members involved during club meetings is to make the gatherings interactive, so that all members get to talk and even move around. For example, have everyone find someone they don't know well or haven't talked to in a while and find out three new things about them. This can often make members feel more comfortable with each other. If your club meets virtually, you can use breakout rooms to converse in smaller groups.



## Watch motivational speeches

Browse Rotary's video library to find recorded speeches from the International Assembly and the Rotary International Convention. Or encourage members to share inspiring videos and other content during the meetings. Your club could watch a speech video together and then use some time afterward to discuss it and share ideas that it generated. This will also work well for online meetings.



## Present community updates

Because your club works to address issues in your community, consider allotting time during some meetings for members to talk about what's happening in the community that they are excited or worried about, or to let people know about upcoming events. Members may enjoy learning more about each other and the community, and the discussion could inspire ideas for new projects.

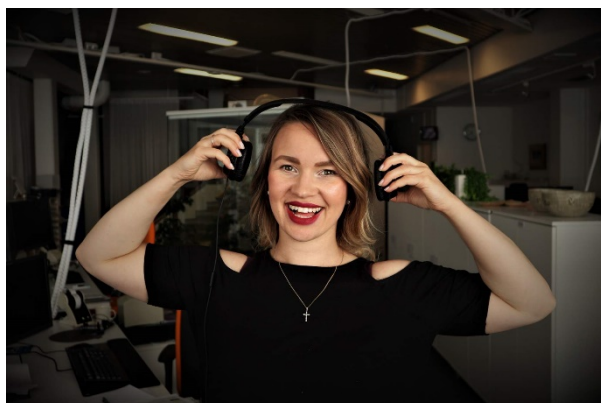


## Hear from local speakers

Have a series of speakers address your club about various topics and invite community members to join in. For example, you could have a Rotaractor talk about their club, a community leader discuss their organization, a Rotary program alum talk about their experience, or other presenters.

## Learn together

Gaining new knowledge — through a TED Talk, a podcast, a book club, or some other way — can be a meaningful method of self-improvement and can deepen the connections people feel with each other. Your club can share educational resources on topics like leadership and diversity, equity, and inclusion, and then dedicate some time for members to discuss their thoughts.



## Examine your club's bylaws

Dedicate a meeting to reviewing and updating your club's bylaws, perhaps after using the Club Health Check. What policies are working? Can any barriers to people's participation be removed? Talking about it together gives members a chance to be open about what works. Your club can change its practices, such as the meeting format or frequency, at any time — as long as the changes are reflected in your bylaws. Having this kind of discussion can help members feel like their opinions matter and can lead to more dynamic meetings in the long term.

Designating a person who is responsible for planning lively club meetings can help keep meetings enjoyable for everyone. This will energize your members and attract new ones. When a guest visits your club, they'll see interested and dedicated people who are also having fun — and they'll likely want to return. The more variety your club meetings offer, the more attractive the experience is to many groups of people.

Learn about flexible meeting options.

## Meeting Format

Consider online meetings as an option when members can't meet in person. Many of the suggestions above will work for online meetings as well as in-person ones. If you can meet in person, consider also allowing people who can't attend to join by audio or videoconference. This flexibility will accommodate people's busy schedules and unforeseen circumstances. Some clubs also use one meeting time per month to meet socially or carry out a service activity.



## Meeting Frequency

Changing your meeting frequency can make it easier for members to attend. Clubs should meet at least twice per month. If you designate one meeting for a social or service activity, those count as meetings.

## Satellite Clubs

If some members can't regularly meet when the rest of the club can, or they have different preferences about the meeting format or service activities, they can form a satellite club with just eight members. Rotaract clubs can also now have satellite clubs. Learn more in the Guide to Satellite Clubs.



These resources can help you plan interactive and fun virtual meetings:

## Tips for engaging online meetings

Find suggestions for hosting and attending online meetings.

**Engaging online:**

<https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/learn-topic/engaging-online-meetings-person-venue-virtual>

**Library of club programming videos**

Use these videos (10-25 minutes long) from recent Rotary events to supplement your club meetings.

**Find videos:**

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6968893>

**Flexible clubs**

Find ideas and suggestions if you're thinking of changing your meeting schedule or attendance expectations.

**Flexibility ideas:**

<https://my.rotary.org/en/club-flexibility>

Be sure that your club practices don't exclude anyone. When you make plans, think about how you can prevent anyone from feeling left out or offended. For example, communicating about upcoming meetings or events should happen in several ways, since some people might want to get a phone call and others would prefer a text.

Learn more ways to make your meetings more inclusive.



The location of your club meeting should be accessible to everyone. And your club's service activities should be varied so that everyone can participate in different ways.



Consider whether your club is welcoming to families and would appeal to people with young children. Think about factors such as your meeting times and the events you sponsor.



Offer opportunities for younger professionals as well as experienced ones. If your club sponsors a Rotaract or Interact club, hold collaborative meetings, invite the members to present at your meetings, and work together on shared events.



### **Adjust attendance expectations**

Taking attendance makes people feel as if they're in school and elicits a feeling of obligation. Rotary International doesn't require attendance to be taken at meetings. Your members are choosing to be part of the club and attend in their spare time. Ideally, members will look forward to attending meetings because they enjoy them, and not attend only because of an obligation.

### **Recognizing members for service**

Presenting members with awards for their service and other efforts is a great way to show public appreciation for them and all they do through and for Rotary. Celebrate the expertise and talents of the members you are recognizing by asking them to talk about their experiences and professions. This helps members get to know each other better and highlights people's unique strengths.



# Inspiring Action to Make an Impact

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The No. 1 reason people join Rotary is to make a difference in their community or around the world. Your members will feel proud and involved when your club carries out meaningful service projects.

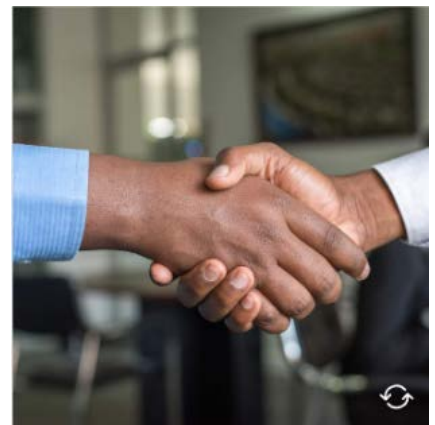
Tips that can help make that happen.



**Assess the need.** Focusing on projects that meet real needs means you can make the biggest impact on a community.



**Assess members' skills.** Knowing what people are good at can help you plan activities that use their skills in a meaningful way and help others learn.



**Build partnerships.** Collaborating with other clubs and working with local companies or nonprofits expands your resources and increases your impact.



**Set goals.** Set service goals that have a specific time frame. Plan a project that can meet the need you identified, using the skills and resources you have available, in the time period that you have set.



**Measure outcomes.** The impact of your service project can be measured with a survey after the project is complete or with other tools. This will help you evaluate whether your project met the needs that were identified.

Explore the resources below to learn more about increasing your impact.

## Project resources

Find ideas and links that can help you throughout the lifecycle of a project, from planning and supporting your effort to promoting and evaluating its impact.

<https://my.rotary.org/en/take-action/develop-projects/project-lifecycle-resources>

## Rotary's causes

Learn about Rotary's main causes to help address critical global issues, which emerge in ways that are unique to each community.

<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-causes>

## Rotary Community Corps

Learn how to build relationships with community members who are also interested in service.

<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/rotary-community-corps>

## Youth programs

Encourage members to learn more about these programs and help develop the next generation of leaders.

<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/youth-programs>

## Rotary grants

Understand which Rotary district and global grants are available for projects that address our areas of focus and follow sustainability guidelines.

<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/grants>



## **Tracking projects in Rotary Club Central**

Set your project goals in Rotary Club Central and revisit them to update your progress. Collecting and providing quantifiable data to show the impact of your project is key. Having that information means you can repeat projects on a larger scale in the future.



# Building Personal Connections

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Making connections is one of the top reasons people join Rotary, and the No. 1 reason that they stay. Members can develop friendships and connect in so many ways, and it's important that clubs facilitate this by incorporating activities and opportunities for members to get to know one another and have fun together.

Learn about ways you can encourage these connections.

## Extend the meetings

Sometimes meeting agendas are so full that there isn't time to socialize. Members may want more time to talk so they can get to know one another. Consider adding 15-30 minutes to your club meeting just for socializing.

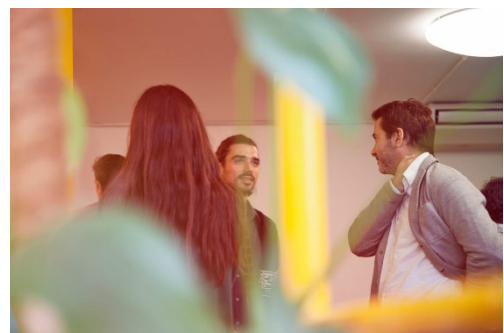


## Build networking in

Dedicating some time to networking during your club meetings is an option you can use if some members want more time to socialize, but can't stay longer.

## Plan social events

Seek a volunteer to plan regular social gatherings separate from club meetings. Consider asking someone who has been less engaged, because it may be an opportunity for them to plan activities they're interested in, learn new skills, and get more involved.



One reason members might not feel engaged is because they feel excluded or believe that others might not share their perspectives.

Rotary is an international organization and diversity is one of our core values, so it's important that we reflect this by committing to inclusion and diversity in our membership.

Learn more about how diversifying your club can help people feel connected.

### **Avoiding high turnover**

A lack of diversity can create an environment where some members may feel they don't fit in.

People who like the club overall might leave if they don't feel at ease.

### **Improving the member experience**

People in diverse clubs gain more awareness and understanding of those who are different from them and broaden their perspective and networks.

### **Increasing your club's impact**

Diversity has been shown to spur innovation and creativity, which leads to clubs making a greater impact.

## **Member Satisfaction Survey**

Use this survey to discover what your members like, what's not working, and what changes they'd like to make in your club. Then be sure to implement their ideas to show that their opinions matter.

<https://my-cms.rotary.org/en/document/enhancing-club-experience-member-satisfaction-survey>

## **Connecting beyond the club**

Rotary and Rotaract members can make connections through Rotary beyond their clubs to broaden their networks even more. Learn more as follows:

### **Rotary Friendship Exchange**

Encourage members to go on an international exchange or host international visitors.

These reciprocal opportunities are planned by districts and focus on cultural immersion, service opportunities, or professional exchanges in collaboration with a district in another country.



## Rotary Fellowships

Encourage members to be part of the international community of Rotary by joining a professional, hobby, or culture-focused fellowship. These international groups have events and activities that connect members with others who share their vocation, interests, or backgrounds.



## Rotary Action Groups

Encourage members to use their professional expertise on an international scale by joining an action group that aligns with their vocation. Action groups organize regular events within their areas of specialization, and these events are great ways for members to get more involved in a cause they want to support globally.

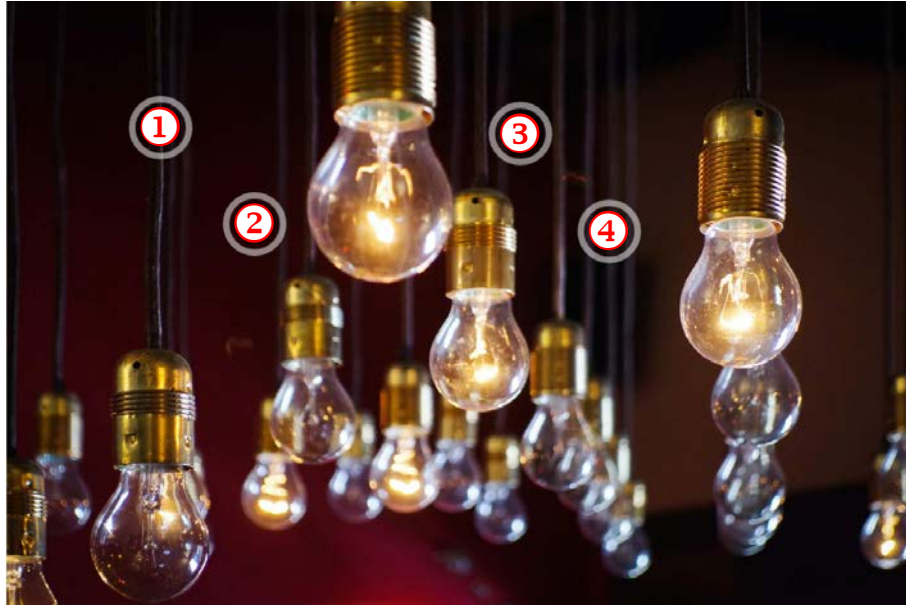


# Implementing More Creative Options

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Sometimes, no matter how much you try to get someone involved, your efforts might not be successful. Don't give up! You can try some more creative ideas.

Learn about other options.



## ❶ Explore new models

If you're having difficulty engaging members in general, consider having a discussion with the whole club about different club models to gauge people's interest and focus on that. This could reinvigorate your members.

## ❷ Offer alternative membership types

If your club doesn't attract people from diverse groups, consider offering alternative membership types - such as corporate, family, or junior memberships - with different policies on dues, attendance, and service expectations. This can help diversify your club and lead to increased engagement.

## ❸ Change the club rules

If members aren't engaged because they find attendance requirements and other rules too demanding, try easing the rules or eliminating them. Participation should be voluntary, not required. If your club is fun and engaging, people will attend and participate.

## ❹ Offer new clubs

If a member isn't happy with their club experience, they might be more satisfied in a club with a different culture or focus. Consider starting a satellite club for these members or referring them to clubs that would better match their interests.

To learn more about flexible options, different ways that clubs operate, and how to set up a new club, use the resources below.



## **Club flexibility**

Learn more about how clubs can offer more flexibility.

<http://www.rotary.org/flexibility>

## **Club types, formats, and models**

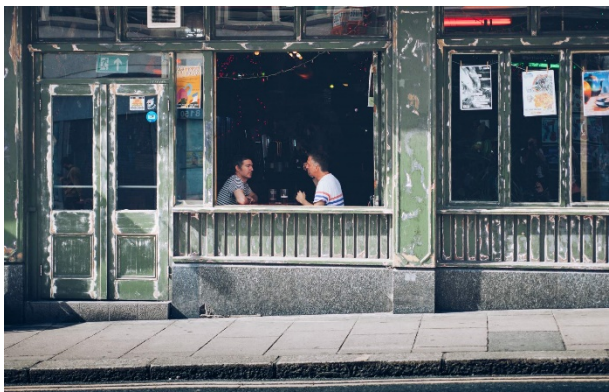
Discover your options if you want to redefine your club.

<https://my-cms.rotary.org/en/document/club-types>

## **Start a club**

Learn more about starting a club and how you can make that happen.

<https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/learn-topic/start-club>



Regardless of what methods you use to engage your members, it's important to show them that you care and to stay connected with them.

If someone hasn't attended a meeting in a while, contact them and find out why. Staying in contact acknowledges people in a way that makes them feel that their unique characteristics are valued and that their participation matters.

Staying engaged with them helps keep them engaged in Rotary.