Guide to SATELLITE CLUBS

Satellite clubs offer members and prospective members a way to create a new club experience together, as a smaller group supported by an established local club. This **club type** needs fewer members to get started and helps people get exactly what they want out of Rotary.

All satellite clubs begin as an offshoot of one or more Rotary or Rotaract clubs. They have a sponsor club that serves as the governing body of the satellite club. Some satellite clubs eventually become independent Rotary or Rotaract clubs, while others enjoy the support of their sponsor club and prefer to remain a satellite club.

WHY START A SATELLITE CLUB?

Just like launching any Rotary or Rotaract club, forming a satellite club brings community members together to have fun and grow personally and professionally while serving their communities. Satellite clubs are often formed by current members who want a club experience that differs from what their local Rotary or Rotaract clubs offer. Here are some common reasons why satellite clubs are started:

- **IT'S EASY.** A Rotary satellite club can form with just eight members, and a Rotaract satellite club can form with at least four. Satellite clubs also don't need approval from the governor.
- **IT OFFERS FLEXIBILITY.** Members of the satellite club can meet at a different time or location than the existing local clubs.
- **IT'S A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.** The environment that a satellite club provides often varies from that of the nearby Rotary or Rotaract clubs. It can appeal to those who prefer another meeting format or want a different club culture than what they find at other clubs.
- **IT'S MORE AFFORDABLE.** Although RI dues are the same for satellite club members, clubs and districts set their own dues — which vary widely. Often, satellite club dues are lower because the clubs choose not to meet for a meal that can contribute to higher dues.

In some areas, satellite clubs that have no intention of becoming independent are referred to as companion clubs.

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- **IT CAN FOCUS ON SPECIFIC INTERESTS.** Satellite clubs offer the chance to concentrate service efforts on a particular cause or broaden the project possibilities, depending on the group's interests.
- **IT EXPANDS ROTARY'S REACH.** A satellite club can bring Rotary to areas that might not have a club. It can also increase the impact and visibility of Rotary in the community.

By creating a club experience that differs from those that already exist, satellite clubs offer a wider variety of Rotary experiences that can appeal to prospective members.

SATELLITE CLUBS ARE NOT:

- A substandard form of a Rotary or Rotaract club. In fact, satellite club members are Rotarians or Rotaractors.
- A separate club. Satellite clubs don't have their own club charters, and members are counted and billed by RI as members of the sponsor club or their previous club.
- A Rotaract club. Rotaract club members, however, can form or join a satellite club.

HOW DO SATELLITE CLUBS FUNCTION?

Just like other club types, satellite clubs hold regular meetings, organize service projects, and have their own club leaders. What's different is that satellite clubs (referred to in some places as companion clubs) may be formed with fewer members than an independent Rotary or Rotaract club. They also are governed by the sponsor club. When a satellite Rotary club grows to 15 members or a satellite Rotaract club grows to 12 members, it can choose to remain a satellite or can apply for a charter to become a standalone club. Some clubs prefer to continue as satellites regardless of their size because they enjoy the benefits of being connected to their sponsor club.

WHAT IS A SATELLITE CLUB'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS SPONSOR CLUB?

Sponsor clubs provide advice and support to their satellite clubs. The sponsor clubs are considered the official governing body and have the final say if there's a dispute between the two clubs. Successful satellite clubs have frequent communications with their sponsor clubs. They should talk with their sponsor club about whether or when they intend to become a separate club and how this would affect both clubs. If a satellite club has enough members and chooses to become independent, the members who charter the new club will no longer be counted as members of the sponsor club or of their previous clubs. When this happens, the official relationship between the sponsor club and the satellite club is dissolved.

Rotary clubs can sponsor only Rotary satellite clubs, while Rotaract clubs can sponsor only Rotaract satellite clubs.

Other good practices for the sponsor club include:

- Having a member of the sponsor club attend satellite club meetings for the first year
- Creating a committee in the sponsor club that focuses on supporting the satellite club and its members
- Focusing more on opportunities for service and for making connections with other members and with members of the community, rather than on Rotary traditions
- Considering any extra costs (such as for meals) as optional for satellite members if your sponsor club meets in person
- Inviting the chair of the satellite club to attend board meetings of the sponsor club or making them an ex officio member of the sponsor club's board
- Encouraging new satellite club members to attend other Rotary events to expand their networks and learn more about Rotary's impact worldwide
- Working together to carry out service projects in your community

Members of satellite clubs have access to My Rotary just like any Rotary or Rotaract club member. But only the sponsor club can report changes in satellite club membership. For more details about this relationship, review the **Satellite Club FAQ**.

HOW DO YOU START A SATELLITE CLUB?

Launching a satellite club begins with a group of people who have an interest in doing so, but the process can depend on the club and its circumstances. Unlike starting a standalone club, this process doesn't require approval from the governor. The list below is intended as a guide that you can adapt to specific situations, and the steps may not always occur in this order.

1. **PREPARE.** Review the **frequently asked questions** about satellite clubs before you proceed.

2. **FIND SUPPORT.** Determine which club will sponsor your satellite club. Then, find a member in the sponsor club (a person known in some places as the satellite club champion) who can guide the formation of the satellite club, answer questions from prospective members, and promote the opportunity to other clubs in the area. Having support from someone who is knowledgeable about Rotary and committed to supporting the satellite club will help the new club succeed.

When your prospective members and your sponsor club are ready, you can elect your officers: chair (instead of a president), vice chair if it's helpful, secretary, and treasurer.

3 **FIND MEMBERS.** Remember, you'll need at least eight members to start a Rotary satellite club or four members for a Rotaract satellite. These can be current Rotary or Rotaract members who want to create a different club experience, and they can come from more than one Rotary and Rotaract club. In cases where a satellite club's members come from multiple existing clubs, those members would be counted and billed with their previous clubs.

Satellite club members can also be new to Rotary. Good prospects can come from groups in the community who are underrepresented in nearby clubs, retired people, young professionals, community interest organizations, Rotary program **alumni**, former members, and friends and family. Use the **prospective member exercise** to help you find people to invite.

4 **HOLD A MEETING.** After you've identified some prospective members, invite them to a meeting to explain and get feedback on the club experience you hope to offer and how members will benefit from being involved. Use this **prospective member event guide** to plan your meeting. Consider these topics for the discussion:

- Rotary's mission and commitment to service
- How Rotary can fit into and enhance their lives
- What attendees want from their club experience
- The causes or types of projects attendees are interested in addressing
- Where, when, and how often the club will meet
- Membership expectations, including dues and any other financial or time commitments
- The next steps, such as completing the Satellite Club Member Information Form for **Rotary** or **Rotaract** satellite clubs

Share these materials to inspire participants:

- **Power in Our Connections** — Show this video, found in the **Brand Center**, that shows the impact that people of action can have.
- **Prospective Member Flyer** — Distribute this flyer to people at the meeting and at events in your community so they can learn more about Rotary.
- **Designing Your Rotary Experience** — Distribute this guide so attendees can learn about the various ways they can get involved in Rotary.

Create a **My Rotary account** to access more information and materials:

- **Learning Center courses**
- **Sponsor Clubs tip sheet**
- **Informational Meetings tip sheet**
- **Club Meetings tip sheet**
- **Online club meeting tips**
- **The Rotary Brand Center**

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5 **GET ORGANIZED.** When you're ready, meet with the sponsor club board to decide:

- How the satellite club experience will differ from that of the sponsor club
- How the new club will make a difference in the community
- Whether the initial goal is for the satellite club to eventually become its own club or to remain a satellite
- How club and district dues will be structured and whether the district will subsidize the initial membership fees or offer any short- or long-term financial support
- Where and how the satellite club will seek members
- What **membership types** the satellite club will offer
- Membership expectations for dues and participation
- How both boards will work together and how any disputes will be resolved
- The name of the club (refer to the **Satellite Club FAQ** for the naming instructions)
- What will be in your bylaws. The satellite club determines its own bylaws in collaboration with its sponsor club, which approves them. Sponsor clubs often have bylaws specific to their satellite clubs. Make sure your bylaws address who participates in elections.

A thriving club, whether it's a sponsor or satellite club, is relevant in its community and assesses its strengths and challenges every year. The **Club Health Check** can help.

WHAT'S NEXT?

1 **SUBMIT THE FORMS.** When your prospective members and your sponsor club are ready, complete the Satellite Club Application for **Rotary** or **Rotaract** clubs and Satellite Club Member Information Form for **Rotary** or **Rotaract** satellites and send them to your Club and District Support team.

2 **CELEBRATE AND PUBLICIZE YOUR NEW SATELLITE CLUB.** Tell other clubs in your area and your district governor about the satellite club. Promote what it's doing in your community.

The sponsor and satellite clubs should promote both clubs to prospective members and guests. Having brochures ready can help you educate prospects about their options. Find a customizable brochure template in the Brand Center.

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WHERE CAN WE LEARN MORE?

Use these materials to support satellite clubs:

- **Start a club page** on My Rotary
- **Satellite Club FAQ**
- Satellite Club Application for **Rotary** and **Rotaract** satellite clubs
- Satellite Club Member Information Form for **Rotary** and **Rotaract** satellite clubs

Find your **Club and District Support representative** to help with any additional questions. Learn about **flexible options for clubs** that can help them stay relevant in their communities.

Resources for new members and leaders:

- **How to Create a My Rotary Account**
- **Rotary Basics handbook**
- **Rotary Basics course**
- **New Member Orientation materials**
- **The Rotary Brand Center**

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