



FIVE QUESTIONS

The right stuff

What makes a great global grant application?
Abby McNear explains

The Rotary Foundation introduced global grants in the 2013-14 Rotary year to fund large-scale, sustainable activities that are aligned with one or more of Rotary's areas of focus. Abby McNear, a member of the Rotary Club of Evanston, Illinois, and grants manager for the Foundation, has seen the program grow tremendously. The number of grants awarded increased by over 50 percent during this time; in 2019-20, 1,350 global grants were awarded, totaling over \$100 million. McNear, who has worked at Rotary for 25 years, shares her tips for a successful global grant application.

1 What does the ideal global grant application look like?

It's one where the host community does a nice job with the community assessment. By talking to the people they want to help, Rotarians can find out more about residents' hopes for their communities. This way, Rotarians can leverage the skills, creativity, and knowledge of the local residents to make the most impact with their project. Ideally, Rotarians will design the project with the people they want to help. Successful projects capitalize on the strengths a community already has.

2 What is a common mistake you see in grant applications?

Not focusing on the right goal. Rotarians should ensure their project falls within the Foundation's goals for one of the areas of focus; these are outlined in our policy statements. These are big goals, but often applicants have much smaller goals in mind — for example, to provide furnishings for a community center. District grants are ideal for those kinds of projects. Ensuring that your project aligns with one of the Foundation's bigger goals, and that you've completely thought through how to achieve it, is the key to securing global grant funding.

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3 What kinds of ineligible expenses should people be aware of?

Rotarians often want to help an excellent organization within their community. They run into a challenge when their projects are just a list of things the organization needs. Projects involving schools, for example, frequently include equipment. However, the focus of a global grant project should be professional development for the teachers. If your school project is primarily focused on providing equipment, it won't be eligible for global grant funding. Involving community members in a project is one of the best ways to ensure that it is sustainable over the long term.

4 What is the top question you get from Rotarians?

“How can we can find a partner for our project?” We tell them to look on Rotary Showcase (rotary.org/showcase), where they can research global grant projects in need of partners. They can narrow their search by location, district, and club. There are also project fairs where Rotarians can explore different initiatives to get involved in; this year, fairs are being held virtually. Rotarians can also contact Rotary Action Groups to learn about projects and clubs they could partner with.

5 Where can Rotarians go for help during the application process?

Start in your own district. Each district usually has an international service chair who can connect you to people with expertise in your area of interest. Applicants can also contact the Foundation directly. We have a list of grant officers for all districts who can vet project ideas and put you in touch with members of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, who are professionals in the areas of focus. Regional grants officers can do a preliminary review of project ideas you are considering, help with project design, and advise you on eligibility. They are a talented group who have international experience and speak more than one language. And Rotary's areas of focus managers can do a deep dive to help you design your project to get the most success.

— NIKKI MEDANOVIC

The Foundation's *Guide to Global Grants* includes everything you need to know to get started. Download it at on.rotary.org/GGguide.