



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women

*Improving the lives of women and girls through
programs leading to social and economic
empowerment.*

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Designing and Implementing a Successful Soroptimist Club Project

In addition to participation in federation programs, Soroptimist clubs advance the mission of the organization by conducting local-level projects that address the unique needs of women and girls in their community. This step-by-step guide has been created to support clubs in the design and implementation of local-level club projects.

Step I: Choose a Women or Girl-Focused Issue

Organize a meeting to discuss the issues facing women and girls in your community. Provide sufficient time for members to talk about which issues they're interested in pursuing and why. Through consensus, choose an issue to address, such as domestic violence, human trafficking, health, education, poverty, mentoring, etc. It's important to use consensus as it will give members a sense of ownership in the success of the project.

To help educate members about issues facing today's women and girls, Soroptimist has created a series of [white papers](#), which are summations of the most current research available. Once your club has chosen an issue, suggest members read the white paper(s) that corresponds to the topic. For more information about white papers, please refer to the club resource, [How Clubs Can Use Soroptimist White Papers](#).

Once an issue has been chosen, ask for volunteers to serve on a project committee. The role of the committee will be to provide project oversight making sure all components of the project are successfully implemented. The committee will also be responsible for addressing any problems that arise. Depending upon the size and scope of the project, the committee should be comprised of three to five members.

Step II: Conduct a Community Needs Assessment

Conducting a community needs assessment will take time and research but is a necessary component to creating a successful project. The goal of a community needs assessment is to:

- Determine what services are currently available.
- Determine what services are most needed.
- Compile a list of potential partners for the club project.

It will be helpful to compile a set of specific questions, such as:

- What organizations or agencies are already working on the issue?
- What services are they providing?
- Do they have a particular focus? For example, if the issue is breast cancer, do they address the needs of poor or minority women?
- Are there any existing community programs that could be expanded upon?

Step III: Choose a Specific Project

Upon completion of the community needs assessment, the project committee should present the results to members so they can collectively decide upon a specific project. Prior to the meeting, committee members may wish to peruse the corresponding [model program kit](#) to help generate project ideas. The model program kits

have been designed to provide guidance in planning and implementing projects by offering ideas with proven methods and resources for achieving success. For more information about how best to utilize model program kits, please refer to the club resource, [Soroptimist Model Program Kits](#).

The committee should begin the meeting by making recommendations for projects. Then provide ample time for all members to discuss the recommendations and present their own ideas. Use consensus to determine what specific project members wish to conduct, this will help ensure members continue to feel a sense of ownership.

Step IV: Consider Partnering

After a specific project has been identified, you will need to decide whether or not to partner with another organization. Utilize the results of the community assessment to help guide your decision. Consider organizations or institutions that have the potential to support your efforts, such as other women's organizations, social service agencies, governmental agencies, elected officials, police personnel, college administrators, etc.

For more information about forming successful partnerships, please refer to the club resource [Effective Partnerships for Soroptimist Clubs](#).

Step V: Plan the Project

For a project to be successful, the project's goals, objectives and outcome targets must be clearly stated, as well as methods for measuring and evaluating the project's outcomes and impact. The best time to create an evaluation plan is during the initial planning stage. For more information about how to successfully write project goals and objectives, identify outcome targets and design an outcomes-based evaluation, please refer to the club resource [Outcomes-Based Project Evaluation for Soroptimist Clubs](#).

When planning the project, the committee should facilitate a group discussion which answers questions such as:

- What are the goals and objectives of the project?
- How will we accomplish the goals and objectives?
- What are our outcome targets?
- What methods will we use for carrying out the project? How will we do it?
- Who will be responsible for what? Be specific when delegating responsibilities to particular members.
- How will the project improve the lives of women and/or girls?
- If working with a partner, what are club responsibilities and what are the responsibilities of the partner organization?
- Are there any problems we can foresee? If so, how would we deal with them?
- What methods will we use to evaluate and measure the success of the project?
- What will we do with the evaluation results?

Step VI: Create a Budget and Secure Funds

When creating a budget, itemize with as much detail as possible. For example, rather than simply writing down "\$500 for supplies," actually list the name of each supply item and its cost, and use real costs, not estimates. Once an initial budget has been created and approved by the president and treasurer, compare it to club resources. Chances are the budget is greater than the available resources. The club must then decide how to raise funds to make up the difference. As fundraising requires considerable time and energy, request three to five volunteers to form a fundraising committee.

There are four main ways to raise funds for a club project:

- Hold a community fundraiser
- Solicit sponsorship from local businesses

- Apply for grants, including a Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls
- Request donations from club members

Community fundraisers are an excellent way to raise funds and to also raise the community profile of Soroptimist. For examples of successful fundraising events, please refer to the club resource, [Event Ideas: Successful Soroptimist Fundraisers](#).

Sponsoring a Soroptimist project provides businesses a chance to show they are committed to giving back to the community. Solicit sponsorships by making a request for cash and/or donations or discounts on materials and/or services. Provide a brief description of the project and offer reasons why the business should sponsor the project. What will they get in return? How will the club acknowledge and publicize their sponsorship. Let them know what percentage of the budget the club is contributing and if there are other sponsors. Businesses may be more inclined to help if others have already agreed to do so.

Each year, Soroptimist awards \$175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls. Grants range from \$500 to \$10,000. [Applications](#) are due each year in March.

Requesting donations from members should be a last resort option as members are already giving generously with their time and energy. However, if the club is committed to the project and other funding sources aren't enough, members may be inclined to make a personal donation.

Step VII: Advertise the Project

The primary goal of a Soroptimist project is to improve the lives of women and/or girls. In addition, projects should also be designed to attract media attention in efforts to help raise the public profile of Soroptimist and aid in membership recruitment.

Form a public relations committee to take responsibility for all media outreach. When creating an advertising plan, please refer to the [public awareness materials](#). These club resources include: a media consent form and templates for news releases, media advisories and public service announcements.

To help ensure media coverage, court specific members of the media. Identify news, radio and/or television reporters whom you believe to be sympathetic to issues relating to women and/or girls and cultivate a professional relationship with them. Begin by sending them a [media kit](#).

Cultivate a relationship with these reporters throughout the year. Follow their work and write them letters of appreciation when they cover a story related to women and/or girls. When it's time to promote a club project, address all media outreach directly to them.

In addition, when developing an advertising plan, include member recruitment strategies. Inviting potential members to participate in a hands-on community project is a dynamic way to demonstrate the mission-based work of Soroptimist. To assist in recruitment efforts, please refer the [recruitment materials](#). These club resources include a recruitment manual, sample invitation and guidelines for engaging prospective members.

Step VIII: Implement the Project

Once your club has successfully chosen a project, developed a plan, created a budget, raised funds and advertised, it's time to actually implement the project. Carefully following the steps described above will help ensure the successful implementation of your project. Remember to take action photos to submit when reporting to local media and Soroptimist headquarters. We want to promote Soroptimists doing what we do best: helping improve the lives of women and girls. SIA always needs photos of club projects for use in *Best for*

Women newsletter, on the website or in the latest brochure. For tips on taking photos that tell a story and leave a lasting impression, please refer to the club resource [Taking Good Photos](#).

Step IX: Evaluate the Project

A project evaluation is an assessment of how well the project accomplished what it set out to accomplish. More precisely, an outcomes-based evaluation measures the extent to which project participants experienced benefits or changes to their lives as a result of the project. As discussed in Step V, designing a plan for outcomes-based evaluation should be part of the initial project planning. Once the project has ended, you will then be prepared to conduct an evaluation.

Conducting an outcomes-based evaluation will enable you to speak more specifically about the impact on the lives of women and girls in your community. Outcomes-based evaluations don't need to be complex or lengthy. Usually a pre- and post-survey of project beneficiaries will be the easiest way to measure success. For more information about evaluating your project, please refer to the club resource [Outcomes-Based Project Evaluation for Soroptimist Clubs](#).

Once you've compiled the evaluation results, you'll need to decide how best to utilize them. One of the best ways to use the results is to help identify what worked particularly well and, on the other hand, what needs improving.

Step X: Share the Project's Success

Once the project has been completed, share the success with local media and SIA headquarters. Contact your media person, ideally the same person you contacted when advertising the project. Provide them with information about the project's outcomes, including photos, to illustrate how the lives of women and/or girls in your community have been improved. Request they do a story on the impact of the project. If appropriate, arrange for an interview with a project participant who can speak to how the project has impacted her life.

In addition, submit information about the project to SIA headquarters. You can do this by submitting a Soroptimist Celebrating Success Award entry, a *Best for Women* magazine submission form or a Program Focus Report.

If your project was exceptionally successful, please submit an entry for the [Soroptimists Celebrating Success Award](#) program. Entries are due each year in January.

Inclusion in *Best for Women* is an excellent way to share the success of your club's project with fellow Soroptimists throughout the federation. A newsletter [submission form](#) can be submitted at any time.

Enter a description of your project directly into the [Program Focus Report](#) database, which is accessed from the website of Soroptimist International. The username is: sia and the password is: philadelphia. Please note both the username and password are all lower case.

Step XI: Thank You

The final step in designing and implementing a successful club project is to thank all those who helped to make the project a success. Sending out thank you cards to partner organizations, sponsors and/or media professionals will be much appreciated and go a long way in generating goodwill in your community. Remember to also thank any non-Soroptimist volunteers and make sure to invite them to any upcoming club events.

If you have any questions about designing and implementing a Soroptimist club project, please contact the program department at: program@soroptimist.org.