



SOROPTIMIST

Best for Women

Soroptimist Sponsored Organizations  
Sigma, S and Venture Clubs

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# Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Forming a Sigma or S Club.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Managing a Sigma or S Club.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Role of the Sponsoring Soroptimist Club and Faculty Advisor.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Sigma and S Club Project Ideas.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Forming a Venture Club.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Managing a Venture Club.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Role of the Sponsoring Soroptimist Club.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Venture Club Project Ideas.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>Outcomes-Based Club Project Evaluation.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>XI.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>8</b>
 <b>Appendix</b>		
	<b>Sample Bylaws.....</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Sample Sponsored Club Advisor Job Description.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## **I. Introduction**

Soroptimists give generously of their time, talents and resources to achieve the Soroptimist mission of improving the lives of women and girls—in local communities and throughout the world. Serving as mentors to women and girls through the sponsorship of a Sigma, S or Venture club is one way to achieve the Soroptimist mission.

As mentors, Soroptimists provide support, advice and friendship to women and girls, while encouraging them to develop to their fullest potential. Soroptimists have the additional opportunity to instill within mentees a passion for helping other women and girls live their dreams of a better life.

All women and girls need positive female role models—especially role models who are successful professional women. As such, Soroptimists have the ability to serve as individual role models, and to also provide a model of what can be accomplished when a network of professional women work together to make the world a better place for all women and girls.

The concept for mentoring young women through the sponsorship of Venture clubs began in 1926 when Mae Carvell, a member of SI/Los Angeles, California, envisioned the sponsorship of youth groups as a way to provide vocational guidance. In 1934, the Venture club model was created to provide guidance and support to young women entering into the business and professional world.

In 1966, SIA established Sigma and S clubs, providing Soroptimists the opportunity to mentor college and high school age women and girls and to instill within them a desire for volunteerism. Both high school girls and college women face unique gender bias, discrimination and challenges as they grow up and enter the working world. Mentoring girls and women through the sponsorship of a Sigma or S club, enables Soroptimists to impart invaluable support and guidance, while providing growth and leadership opportunities.

Since the establishment of the sponsored organizations, their administration has changed over time. They exist now as a project of the sponsoring Soroptimist club. It is no longer necessary to report the sponsorship to SIA headquarters or pay a sponsorship fee. Successful club projects can be reported to SIA using the [programme focus report database](#).

The Soroptimist mission to improve the lives of women and girls should serve as the driving force of all sponsored club activities. For more information on mentoring and club project ideas, please refer to the Soroptimist model program kit: [Designing a Club Mentoring Program for Girls](#), available in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

## **II. Forming a Sigma or S Club**

Sigma Societies Sigma are formed for college women and S clubs are for high school age girls. Sponsoring a Sigma or S club gives Soroptimists the opportunity to mentor college women or high school girls. (Please note that in March 2009 the Soroptimist Board of Directors amended the [federation procedures](#) so that Soroptimist clubs no longer need to notify SIA headquarters or submit sponsorship fees or statements when forming a Sigma or S club.)

In order for a Soroptimist club to successfully sponsor a Sigma or S club, the following is necessary:

- enthusiastic support of the sponsoring Soroptimist club
- approval of school authorities
- a group of women or girls interested in forming a Sigma or S club
- a dedicated Soroptimist committee (two or three members) with time and energy to devote to the project
- an interested faculty advisor who is available to support and guide the women or girls.

Once a club decides to sponsor a Sigma or S club, create a committee of members who are interested in working with college women or high school girls and are willing to give their time to lead the formation of the sponsored club. Consider members who work in the field of education, scouting or other youth-oriented professions.

Design materials that explain how and why the club would like to form the sponsored club. For example, guidelines for how the Sigma or S club will operate; how Soroptimists will attract Sigma or S club members; what amount of funds will be allocated to support the Sigma or S club; and what types of volunteer projects will be undertaken.

Contact the school administration. Be enthusiastic and explain the opportunities such a club will bring to the school, the women or girls and the community. Explain that the club is for students of all abilities and talents and that the Soroptimist sponsorship is a way assist them in their volunteer efforts to help other women and girls in their school and community.

Request an opportunity to speak with a small group of women or girls who are interested in volunteering to support the [Soroptimist mission](#) and who might be interested in forming a club. Have a school representative present. Some schools will require that the club have a faculty advisor. Explain the meaning and reasoning behind the Soroptimist mission and sponsorship. Girls will be proud to be sponsored by Soroptimists, who are leaders in the community.

When there is a definite indication that prospective members feel strongly about forming a club, the sponsoring Soroptimist club and faculty representative can collectively seek membership through school notices, bulletin boards and social networking sites.

Enlist this group of students to organize a few introductory meetings. Schedule them at different times and in different locations, and advertise them in a variety of places—including the school newspaper and radio station. At the meetings, introduce Soroptimist and the goal of the club. It may be beneficial to talk about ideas for the Sigma or S club's first volunteer project in order to attract more members.

Arrange a charter event that is convenient for all parties (club members, school representatives, faculty advisors, sponsoring Soroptimist club members and the region governor). Funds for the event should come from the sponsoring Soroptimist club. Writeable [charter templates](#) for both Sigma and S clubs are available in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

Help guide the new group with both practical advice and moral support. Express interest in all activities and, when necessary, provide financial assistance. Suggest possible projects and contacts within the community. Ongoing support of Sigma and S club members is necessary for success.

### **III. Managing a Sigma or S Club**

To ensure the ongoing success of the Sigma or S club, charter members should design bylaws that will govern the club. See page 9 for sample bylaws. Soroptimist members should work with the charter members to design workable bylaws. Some of the items that should be included are:

- The mission of the club.
- Laws governing membership.
- A description of officers and their duties. Officers may include president, president elect, secretary and treasurer.
- Nominating and election procedures.
- A description of any needed committees such as a program committee or a budget committee.
- Dues, if any.
- Information and instructions on how to amend the bylaws.

- Statement regarding the relationship with sponsoring Soroptimist club.

Well-run business meetings are necessary to create the proper environment for Sigma or S club members to provide volunteer support to other women and girls. Take time to instruct Sigma or S club members on how to set a meeting agenda and stick to it so those in attendance stay engaged. Suggest this sample meeting agenda.

### **Sample Meeting Agenda**

Call to order (President)  
 Roll call  
 Minutes from last meeting (Secretary)  
 Treasurer's report (Treasurer)  
 Committee reports  
 Unfinished business  
 New business  
 Adjourn

### **IV. Role of the Sponsoring Soroptimist Club and Faculty Advisor**

Chartering a Sigma or S club does not terminate the responsibility of the sponsoring Soroptimist club. Continued success is contingent upon maintaining a connection and friendship between the sponsoring Soroptimist club and the Sigma or S club. Ways to establish and maintain this relationship include

- Have the club president and other members (in rotation) attend a Soroptimist meeting every month. Provide girls with Soroptimist materials, including [Live Your Dreams](#) pins and a subscription to [Best for Women](#). Visit the [Soroptimist Store](#) on the SIA website to purchase Soroptimist items.
- Include club members in Soroptimist program and fundraising events.
- Donate supplies (a gavel, computer, etc.) to the sponsored club.
- Suggest worthwhile projects for the club. Guide members in the development of projects.
- Whenever possible, rotate the Soroptimist members of the Sigma or S club committee (and other interested club members) at scheduled Sigma or S club meetings.
- Appoint a Soroptimist member to serve as liaison between the Soroptimist club and the faculty advisor.

The faculty advisor can be as involved as necessary according to school protocol and her own interest. The advisor should:

- Be present at all club meetings.
- Act as liaison between the club and school administration.
- Be responsible for the club's adherence to school policies and procedures.
- Promote ongoing recruitment of new members.

### **V. Sigma and S Club Project Ideas**

The mission of Sigma and S clubs should be to conduct volunteer projects that improve the lives of women and girls. The Soroptimist club should help the Sigma or S club identify volunteer projects their members are interested in and help them plan and execute the projects. The Soroptimist club may also want to include Sigma or S club members in Soroptimist projects. The following are some projects ideas:

- A career week for girls, co-sponsored by a local Soroptimist club. The Sigma or S club could organize speakers from many different professions to come into school to discuss different careers available for women. Soroptimist club members could serve as speakers.
- Programs on applying for jobs—hold a seminar on how to write a resume and how to have a winning interview. Include a section on negotiating a salary.
- Sponsor a lecture on women's history to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8.
- Volunteer at schools for girls with special needs.

- Conduct a [teen dating violence](#) awareness-raising project.
- Conduct an [anti-trafficking/slavery](#) project.
- Sponsor university forums for girls. Provide information about selecting a university, completing the application and writing a personal essay.
- Plan a self-esteem seminar for girls. Activities can include dance and acting classes, health issues affecting girls, and self-defense.
- Establish or participate in a mentoring program for younger girls. Once a week eat lunch with them, read, work on homework, or just get to know them.
- Participate in Earth Day by bringing in environmental speakers to school to discuss how exposure to dioxin links to many types of medical problems for women, including risk of ovarian and breast cancer.
- Establish a food and clothing drive for a domestic violence shelter.
- Donate toys and books to a local domestic violence shelter.
- Work with underprivileged and migrant girls in tutoring programs.
- Co-sponsor (with the Soroptimist club) programs about the Violet Richardson Award.
- Establish a pen-pal program and encourage club members to correspond with girls in another school or country.
- Get involved in an “Adopt-a-Grandmother Program.”
- Participate in women’s health awareness workshops, seminars, and fairs.
- Volunteer in a program that provides free interview-appropriate clothing for economically disadvantaged women.
- Develop leadership skills that build self-confidence, responsibility, teamwork, and decision-making.
- Hold a Live Your Dream event where the girls discuss their dreams for themselves and the world.

For a list of one-day project ideas, please refer to the SIA program resource, [Soroptimist One-Day Club Projects](#), available in the program section of the members’ area of the SIA website.

To help the Sigma or S club determine the impact and success of their projects, please refer to the SIA program resource [Outcomes Based Project Evaluation for Clubs](#) available in the program section of the members’ area of the SIA website.

## **VI. Forming a Venture Club**

The sponsorship of a Venture club provides Soroptimist clubs with a way to mentor young women entering the business and professional world. As a Venture club member, these young women not only have the opportunity to receive mentoring and guidance from established business and professional women, they also can conduct volunteer projects that improve the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world.

Before a Soroptimist club decides to form a Venture club, consider whether it would be more beneficial to invite the young women to join the Soroptimist club. Inviting younger women to become Soroptimists will bring new ideas, talents, energy and vitality not only to an individual club, but to the whole of SIA. In addition, the resources (time, energy, money) needed to form a Venture club may be better spent strengthening and building the Soroptimist club.

After thorough consideration, if the club still decides to form a Venture club, keep in mind that the Venture women are being mentored to become potential Soroptimist members. Sponsoring a Venture club is a commitment to provide advice, guidance and support, and to instill a passion for the Soroptimist mission.

Create a charter team of Soroptimist members to develop a plan and timeline for sponsoring the Venture club. Decide when invitation letters will be mailed, when follow-up will take place, and when/where the informational meetings will be held. Allow two to three weeks between mailing the information letters

and holding the informational meetings. Involve all members of the club in creating a list of potential members. List the names of potential members such as relatives (daughters, nieces), friends, neighbors, business acquaintances (banks, hospitals, doctors offices, law offices, etc.), and contacts made through SIA club projects/fundraisers.

Host a series of informational meetings focusing on programs and the ways Venture members can improve the lives of women and girls in the community and throughout the world. Ask those attending if they know of others who might be interested in joining the new club.

When a core group of potential Venture members has been identified, host a new club organizational meeting. A candid orientation about financial and time commitments will ensure that each prospective member understands what is expected of her before she decides to join.

Once a club is ready to charter, arrange a charter event. Funds for the event should come from the sponsoring Soroptimist club. A writeable [charter template](#) for Venture clubs is available in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

## **VII. Managing a Venture Club**

In order to ensure the ongoing success of the Venture club, members will need to develop bylaws that outline how it will function. Consider items related, but not necessarily limited to, the following: officers (duties, eligibility, terms of office, etc.), membership (eligibility, attendance requirements, termination), description/duties of committees, dues/fees/assessments, meeting frequency and location, and information on how to amend the bylaws. See page 9 for sample bylaws.

Each Venture club will operate within the framework of its adopted policies, programs and bylaws. The relationship between the Soroptimist club and its sponsored Venture club should include regular communication, joint involvement in volunteer projects, and an annual evaluation by both organizations regarding their relationship.

Each Venture club should consider establishing club dues and a payment schedule that will support the administration of the club, its programs and projects. Additional financial support from the sponsoring Soroptimist club is at the discretion of the sponsoring club.

## **VIII. Role of the Sponsoring Soroptimist Club**

- Appoint an advisor (or committee) to advise the Venture club on such matters as program development, communication, leadership development and training. See page 10 for a sample Venture club advisor job description.
- Assist Venture clubs with volunteer efforts, including fundraising projects and other activities as requested.
- Assist Venture clubs in planning and evaluating activities.
- Encourage Venture members to attend Soroptimist program meetings of special interest, region conferences and SIA conventions.
- Be informed and supportive of Venture activities.

## **IX. Venture Club Project Ideas**

All Venture club projects should support the Soroptimist mission of improving the lives of women and girls. Projects can also involve joint participation between the Venture club and its sponsoring Soroptimist club. Venture club project ideas:

- Host programs on challenges facing young girls today (teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, eating disorders, self esteem development).
- Donate supplies and/or services at a local shelter for victims of domestic violence.

- Conduct a [teen dating violence](#) awareness-raising project.
- Conduct an [anti-trafficking/slavery](#) project.
- Participate in women’s health awareness workshops, seminars, and events.
- Provide assistance/funds for childcare to single women attending school.
- Prepare survivor kits for use at a local rape crisis center or domestic violence shelter.
- Participate in the [Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence](#).
- Sponsor a clothing drive for women and their children in shelters.
- Collect/donate baby clothing/supplies for single or low-income mothers.
- Organize a mentoring program for local middle school girls.
- Participate in an “Adopt a Grandmother” program at a local nursing home.

For a list of one-day project ideas, please refer to the SIA program resource, [Soroptimist One-Day Club Projects](#), available in the program section of the members’ area of the SIA website.

To help the Venture club determine the impact and success of its projects, please refer to the resource: [Outcomes Based Project Evaluation for Clubs](#).

### **X. Outcomes-Based Club Project Evaluation**

When planning projects, one of the most crucial factors to consider is the intended outcome. It is important to understand outcomes-based project evaluation before setting goals and objectives, and before designing a project.

Outcomes-based project evaluation is the assessment of how well a project is meeting its goals. It is the regular, systematic tracking of the extent to which project participants experience benefits or changes to their lives as a result of the project. This type of evaluation:

- enables clubs to verify accomplishment of their goals.
- ensures that the correct activities are being conducted to bring about the impact needed by project beneficiaries.
- measures the benefit or change to beneficiaries as a result of the project.
- enables clubs to state the impact of its projects;
- enables clubs to make well-informed decisions about continuing, ending or revising a project.

Clubs that conduct outcomes-based evaluation are able to speak more specifically about the impact of their work in the community to improve the lives of women and girls. Outcomes-based evaluations do not need to be complex or lengthy. The scope of the evaluation should match the complexity of the project.

For frequently asked questions, detailed instructions for implementing outcomes-based evaluation, and an example evaluation, please read [Outcomes-Based Project Evaluation for Soroptimist Clubs](#) available in the program section of the members’ area of the SIA website.

### **XI. Conclusion**

Whether sponsoring a Venture, Sigma or S club, Soroptimists have the opportunity to mentor women and girls, and provide them with the encouragement and support they need to realize their fullest potential as women—while also helping to improve the lives of other women and girls in their communities and throughout the world. As Venture, Sigma or S club members, women and girls have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and qualities while gaining valuable experience as a community volunteer, all with the support of Soroptimists who are genuinely invested in their success.

Venture, Sigma and S clubs, together with their sponsored Soroptimist clubs, have the potential to double their efforts—not only to achieve the Soroptimist mission to improve the lives of women and girls, but to



support the SIA vision to be the leading international organization of business and professional women united through volunteer efforts to enable women and girls to live their dreams, take control of their lives, and live according to their own values.

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## Sample Bylaws

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These sample bylaws for a Sigma or S club can also be easily modified to fit the needs of a Venture club. The sponsoring Soroptimist club should revise and adopt these bylaws to reflect the character of the Sigma, S or Venture club and, in the case of Sigma or S, take into consideration any school requirements.

### Article I—Name

Section 1—The name of this club shall be the Sigma or S Club of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Article II—Objectives

Section 1—The objectives of this club shall be:

- a. to improve the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world;
- b. to cooperate with school authorities in creating a school environment with high standards and ideals;
- c. to prepare members to assume leadership in the business and professional world.

### Article III—Membership

Section 1—Membership in this club shall be for girls interested in community volunteerism and who show leadership in extracurricular activities in school.

Section 2—Membership should be divided as evenly as possible among ages.

### Article IV—Officers

Section 1—The officers shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Section 2—The officers shall assume office following their election and shall hold office for one year, or until their successors take office.

Section 3—Duties of the officers:

- a. The president shall preside at all meetings of the club; represent the club in student activities when necessary; appoint all committees; and be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.
- b. The vice president shall perform the duties of the president in her absence.
- c. The recording secretary shall keep the minutes of all club and board meetings; maintain a roll of membership and attendance; be a custodian of the permanent records of the club; conduct all official correspondence; prepare a calendar of events and notices of meetings for the school bulletin; and prepare a monthly report for the Soroptimist club.
- d. The treasurer shall collect all dues and keep an account of all receipts and expenditures; deposit funds in accordance with the procedure recommended by the school; submit a monthly financial report to the club; and be a member of the Budget Committee.
- e. A report shall be made by each officer at the end of the term of office on activities pertaining to the office.

## **Article V—Nomination and Election of Officers and Advisor(s)**

Section 1—A Nominating Committee of three members will be appointed by the president.

Section 2—The Nominating Committee shall nominate one or more nominees for each office.

Section 3—The report of the Nominating Committee shall be read at the April meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor with the consent of the nominee.

Section 4—Election shall take place between April 1 and May 15, and shall be by ballot. A majority shall elect.

Section 5—The faculty advisor(s) shall be appointed/approved by the school administrator. There shall be no limit to the term of office.

Section 6—In case of vacancy in the office of president, the vice president shall become president. In case of vacancy in any other office, the Nominating Committee shall report at the next meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor and the club shall elect an officer to fill the vacancy.

## **Article VI—Meetings**

Section 1—There shall be two meetings each month during the school year to be held on the \_\_\_\_ of each month. Option: One can be a business meeting and the other a program meeting.

Section 2—The time and place of the meeting shall be determined by the members with the approval of the school administrator and the faculty advisor(s).

Section 3—At least one Soroptimist advisor and/or one faculty advisor shall be present at every regular meeting.

Section 4—A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members.

## **Article VII—Committees**

Section 1—The Membership Committee shall be responsible for putting into operation the plan for getting new members (Article III, Section 3).

Section 2—The Program Committee shall plan and be responsible for each program meeting.

Section 3—The Volunteer Committee shall investigate volunteer projects and, with the approval of the Soroptimist and faculty advisors, present them to the members. The committee shall supervise and direct the completion of the projects chosen by the club.

Section 4—The Publicity Committee shall publicize all activities sponsored by the club and shall send semiannual notices of club activities to the sponsoring Soroptimist club.

Section 5—The Budget Committee, consisting of the outgoing president, the outgoing treasurer and the faculty advisor, shall submit a budget for membership approval at the business meeting in May.

Section 6—The Fundraising Committee shall suggest methods of raising money for service and operational expenses. It shall promote all projects approved by the club, with the consent of the Soroptimist and faculty advisor and school administration.

**Article VIII—Dues**

Section 1—The dues shall be \_\_\_\_\_ per year.

Section 2—If the club disbands, any remaining funds in the treasury shall revert to the Board of Education of the \_\_\_\_\_ School.

**Article IX—Parliamentary Authority**

Section 1—The latest edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised* shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedures not specifically covered by this constitution.

**Article X—Amendments**

Section 1—These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote by the sponsored club followed by a two-thirds vote by the sponsoring Soroptimist club.

Section 2—Proposals for amendments may be submitted by this club through the local sponsoring Soroptimist club.

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## **Sample Sponsored Club Advisor Job Description**

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- Facilitate interaction and communication between the sponsored club and the sponsoring Soroptimist club.
- Be available to advise the sponsored club president on all aspects of Soroptimist and foster leadership opportunities.
- Be available to give meaningful input to assure a smooth-running club.
- Train and educate sponsored club officers and members in running meetings, planning programs and organizing service projects.
- Train sponsored club officers in the duties of their offices, club bylaws, club structure, parliamentary procedure and Soroptimist activities.
- Train sponsored club members in community volunteerism, how to assess needs of the community and tailor volunteer projects accordingly.
- Attend sponsored club meetings or arrange for another Soroptimist to attend.
- Encourage joint activities and volunteer projects with Soroptimist members.
- Report regularly to the Soroptimist club about the sponsored club activities. Provide information for both clubs' newsletters.
- Encourage the Soroptimist club to provide financial support to the sponsored club as necessary.
- Assist with recruitment of sponsored club members, and encourage both sponsored club members and Soroptimist club members to recruit new members.
- Be a positive Soroptimist role model for sponsored club members.
- Foster a positive environment in which to make friends, to help people and to have fun doing it.
- Encourage sponsored club members to join the Soroptimist club when appropriate.

### **Eligibility Requirements:**

- Must be a Soroptimist member in good standing.
- Must have the ability to relate to women or girls in a manner that will facilitate their growth and development as successful, self-empowered individuals who value volunteerism and the Soroptimist mission.
- Must make the time commitment to attend sponsored club meetings and activities.
- Must be a positive role model for women or girls.

**Reporting Requirements:** As determined by the Soroptimist club.

**Term of Assignment:** In accordance with club appointments.

**Finances:** As determined by the Soroptimist club. Funding is recommended for the following: attendance by at least one sponsored club member (usually the club president) at region fall meetings, spring conferences and workshops.