

RYLA Handbook

Rotary 

ROTARY YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS HANDBOOK

This handbook is primarily for club and district leaders who organize Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA). It provides step-by-step guidance to help you develop a safe, meaningful, and fun RYLA program for all participants. Any policy references are based on the **Rotary Code of Policies**. Decisions made by the Rotary International Board of Directors take precedence over information in this publication.

Email questions or comments about Rotary Youth Leaderships Awards to **ryla@rotary.org**.

STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

Rotary International strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotaractors, their spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

For more information about Rotary's commitment to youth protection or to report a youth protection-related concern, visit **my.rotary.org/youthprotection** or email **youthprotection@rotary.org**.

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WHAT IS RYLA?

Why organize a RYLA event or program?

Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) is an intensive leadership program for young people ages 14-30. Organized by clubs, districts, or multidistricts, RYLA allows participants to learn new skills through civic engagement and personal and professional development opportunities.

As a RYLA organizer, you can customize the content and format of your event to target certain age groups or to address specific needs and interests within the community. Your RYLA program might include workshops, interactive activities, or more formal presentations. It could be designed for secondary school students, university students, or even young adults starting their careers. You also determine its length. This flexibility allows you to develop innovative programming that meets participants' unique needs.

Through RYLA events, clubs, districts, and multidistricts equip young leaders with the knowledge and skills they need to make real change locally and globally. In turn, clubs and districts benefit from the fresh perspectives of RYLA participants and alumni.

A RYLA program should aim to:

- Develop young people's leadership skills and recognize those who are making a positive difference in their communities
- Instill a lifelong commitment to service in young people and connect them with ongoing opportunities to serve through Rotary
- Fulfill Rotary's commitment to youth service by empowering young people through leadership development

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Rotary International strives to create an organization that is open, inclusive, fair, and beneficial to all our communities. All members and participants are responsible for upholding these principles. As a RYLA organizer, you can do your part by engaging underrepresented groups and building partnerships with diverse communities. Throughout this handbook, the  icon will highlight ideas, tips, and best practices for ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion at every stage of your RYLA event. Learn more about **Rotary's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion** (DEI) and visit the **DEI learning topic** in the Learning Center.

Why organize a RYLA event or program?

There are many good reasons to get involved in RYLA. Here are just a few:

- ☐ *Prepare youth for a strong future:* As a Rotary or Rotaract club member, you know that our world needs as many young leaders as possible to address local and global challenges. Rotary's fifth Avenue of Service, Youth Service, emphasizes the importance of empowering young people through leadership development. Organizing a RYLA program gives club members an opportunity to do just that, by serving as mentors to promising young people in their community. Through the support and guidance of members like you, young people can develop the skills they need to find their voices and take action.
- ☐ *Build connections:* RYLA provides the perfect opportunity for young leaders in the family of Rotary to connect and collaborate. Be sure to involve Rotary Youth Exchange students, Interactors, and Rotaractors so they can learn more about Rotary and meet other young people who are committed to making the world a better place.
- ☐ *Expand your reach:* RYLA is often a young person's first encounter with Rotary. In fact, Rotary International estimates that over 50,000 young people are introduced to our organization through RYLA every year. This presents a tremendous opportunity not only to reach young leaders but also to foster lifelong connections to Rotary. Make sure RYLA participants understand the opportunities available to them through Rotary. Encourage them to join an Interact, Rotaract, or Rotary club depending on their age and goals. Explain how they can start their own club if they can't find one that meets their needs or interests. You can also introduce participants to Rotary's other programs, such as [Rotary Youth Exchange](#) and [New Generations Service Exchange](#).

2

BUILD YOUR RYLA TEAM

Working with the district governor

Forming a RYLA committee

Engaging alumni

Building your network

The first step to organizing a successful RYLA program is building a dynamic team to plan your event. It should be made up of members, youth program participants, and alumni who are dedicated to youth leadership. In this chapter, you'll learn how to develop this team by connecting with district leaders, alumni, and the wider Rotary community.

Working with the district governor

The district governor oversees all Rotary programs in the district, including RYLA, and appoints the district RYLA committee chair. The governor can help promote RYLA activities and provide other valuable support, so be sure to keep yours informed of any plans.

Forming a RYLA committee

RYLA committees are responsible for creating, promoting, and overseeing RYLA activities. Although each committee can determine its own format and structure, it will typically comprise a chair and members who share an enthusiasm for youth leadership development. The committee can include as many members as it needs to accomplish its goals. Committee members can either take on specific roles (e.g., communications director, curriculum director, or program director) or share responsibilities.

Committees are strongly encouraged to include RYLA alumni and current youth program participants. Involving them will ensure that young people's ideas are represented and that the RYLA program appeals to them and meets their needs.

Committees can be formed at the club, district, or multidistrict level to support unique RYLA activities developed at every level or to coordinate efforts to plan a single program.

CLUB LEVEL

- Organizing a RYLA program at the club level is a great way to start small, activating club members' facilitation skills and encouraging other program participants — such as Interactors, Rotary Youth Exchange students, and alumni — to strengthen their connections to Rotary.
- Club-level committees can also support a district or multidistrict RYLA program. Promoting RYLA activities, finding qualified applicants, and raising money to offset costs for participants are all critical steps to helping district and multidistrict RYLA programs succeed.

DISTRICT LEVEL

- The district RYLA chair, appointed by the governor, forms a district RYLA committee to organize district activities, oversee and advise clubs that are managing their own RYLA programs, and work with other districts to coordinate multidistrict events.
- Even if your district has never participated in RYLA or hasn't for a while, forming a district RYLA committee can help you get organized, train volunteers, share ideas with other district RYLA chairs, and receive important updates and resources from Rotary International.
- To learn more about the roles and responsibilities of district leaders, visit Rotary's Learning Center.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your RYLA program is designed for minors and your district does not have a youth protection officer, it will be especially important that you work closely with your district governor. The governor can help ensure that your RYLA program follows all of Rotary's youth protection policies. Learn more about developing additional youth protection policies in chapter 7.

Are you reported to RI?

If you're a district RYLA chair, make sure your district governor has reported your role in My Rotary under [District Administration](#). The incoming governor must report a district RYLA chair each year, even if the same person will continue in the position. This reporting will ensure that you and future chairs receive important updates from Rotary International, along with the district RYLA chair directory, which will help you connect with your counterparts worldwide.

MULTIDISTRICT LEVEL

- To engage young people from different backgrounds, across large geographic regions, or internationally, district governors may authorize multidistrict RYLA activities. The RYLA chairs of each participating district work together, often through a multidistrict RYLA committee, to coordinate efforts.

- Some multidistrict RYLA events are entirely collaborative, with participating districts working together to develop content, manage logistics, and find applicants. Others are organized mainly by the host district, with partner districts helping with promotion, recruitment, or fundraising.
- For every multidistrict RYLA event, a single district must agree to serve as host. The host district assumes responsibility for the event.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Your RYLA committee should include members who reflect the diversity of your community. Provide committee members with training and resources and be sure to include diversity, equity, and inclusion in their vision statement and goals.

Engaging alumni

Your district's Rotary alumni can be very helpful in planning, promoting, and implementing your RYLA program. Alumni often bring important perspectives and new ideas to the discussion. RYLA alumni in particular can offer valuable information, such as the most significant aspects of their RYLA experiences and what might be improved.

Your RYLA is also a great opportunity to reengage alumni in Rotary. Depending on their skills and backgrounds, alumni may be interested in joining your committee, providing on-site assistance, facilitating workshops, or even serving as speakers.

Building your network

If this is your first time organizing a RYLA program, consult with other clubs and districts to learn from their experiences and share ideas.

You can connect with the wider Rotary community through the [RYLA learning topic](#) in Rotary's Learning Center. As you form your team, ask questions of more established committees and hear what strategies they've used when planning their RYLA events.

As you build a strong RYLA network, consider contacting local leaders, schools, youth groups, and other organizations. They may be able to provide logistical guidance and help your committee recruit speakers, facilitators, and participants.

GOOD TO KNOW

Talk to your district alumni chair, who can connect you with alumni in your district and offer ideas for including them in your RYLA program.

3

CUSTOMIZE YOUR EVENT

Participants

Length and timing

Focus

As a RYLA organizer, you can tailor your event to your community. To do that, you will need to consider participants' age range, as well as your program's length and structure. By customizing your event from the start, you will lay the foundation for success.

Participants

Although RYLA is open to young people ages 14-30, you are strongly encouraged to focus your event by inviting participants of a similar age and maturity level. By targeting a particular age group, you can design a program that meets participants' needs. For example, a RYLA event for 16- to 18-year-olds might work on leadership skills that participants might need during the college or university application process. A RYLA event for 22- to 30-year-olds might focus on the skills necessary for career advancement. Remember, RYLA is also an opportunity to engage young people who have leadership potential or special needs, as long as you have qualified volunteers and access to appropriate facilities.



EXPERT ADVICE

Get creative! Your committee doesn't have to limit itself to one event per year. One district in New York plans multiple RYLA events throughout the year for the same group of participants. This allows organizers to cover a wide array of leadership skills while also giving participants time to have fun and form new friendships.

When considering selection criteria for participants, determine which characteristics or backgrounds will result in a group of participants that will be the best fit for your event and align most closely with your intended outcomes. Consider:

- Level of interest in participation or in specific topics
- Maturity
- Academic performance
- Participation in extracurricular activities or community organizations
- Demonstrated leadership abilities or leadership potential
- Educational or career goals
- Availability and time commitment

You'll also need to think through the selection process for your RYLA event. Consider whether participants should submit a written application, complete an interview, or provide references from their school or employer.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

With your RYLA committee, take some time to be thoughtful about how you can engage participants from traditionally underrepresented communities and provide a welcoming environment throughout your program. Continually assess your practices, processes, and culture in recruiting and selecting RYLA participants.

Length and timing

Before you begin planning other details, determine the duration of your RYLA event. Most are 3-10 days, but you can choose the length that is best for your program.

To help you decide, think about how much time volunteers, facilitators, and committee members can dedicate to a RYLA event. Also, be sure to consider participants' schedules. You may need to hold your RYLA event during a school break or, if you're working with participants in their 20s, accommodate work and family schedules.

Weather conditions may also affect your timing. If your event will include outdoor activities, be sure to inform participants in advance so they'll be prepared and pack appropriately.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't assume you already know the interests or needs of participants. After you select a target age range, take the time to find out about that group's interests. Ask potential participants what they would like to learn through RYLA. Read more about planning engaging content in chapter 5.

Focus

Decide on the focus and format of your event as soon as possible. Both will affect logistical decisions you'll have to make early in the planning process. Participants' ages and interests will help you establish your focus. Most RYLA events cover the following:



GOOD TO KNOW

Technology has made it easier than ever to connect virtually. Think beyond an in-person RYLA event and consider using an online platform to reach participants. Read more about the benefits of a virtual RYLA event.

Your focus will help shape the format of your RYLA event. Consider including keynote speakers, workshops, and team bonding activities in your program, and think carefully about which approach would be best for each topic. Speakers and presentations can inform and inspire participants, while workshops and team-based exercises can help them put new skills into practice. When you have chosen a good combination of approaches, you can select a venue that meets your needs. If you plan to divide participants into small groups, for example, you'll want to make sure the venue has enough space and perhaps multiple rooms.

In chapter 5, you'll learn even more about designing your RYLA program.

4

MAKE A DETAILED PLAN

Budget and financing

Logistics

Making a timeline

You're now ready to begin planning your RYLA event. In this chapter, you'll learn about the important logistical decisions you'll need to make and how to develop a detailed budget and timeline. The work you already did to assemble your team and customize your program will also help you plan your RYLA event effectively.

Budget and financing

The first step in planning a RYLA event is developing a comprehensive budget. Make the budget as detailed as possible. Along with the cost of each item, include a description of the expense, the reason it's needed, and any important dates for collecting or making payments.

Consider including the following items in your budget:



Venue. In addition to the rental fee, be sure your budget will cover any associated costs like heating, room set-up, and security.



Food and drinks. You'll probably be expected to provide meals, snacks, and beverages for participants, facilitators, and speakers.



Transportation. You might decide to provide transportation during your RYLA event or to and from the venue.



Design and printing. Think through the promotional materials you'll need to design and print. Also plan for any items you'll need during the event, such as workbooks for participants and facilitators.



Equipment and technology. Consider what equipment you'll need for your event, including speaker systems, projectors, computers or tablets, or other equipment that needs to be purchased or rented.

Arts and crafts supplies. You may need materials like paper, pens, pencils, markers, paints, or tape for workshops and other activities.



Guest speakers and entertainment. Although some speakers or entertainers (musicians, comedians, or dancers) may offer to donate their services, many charge a fee. Even if they offer to work at no cost, in many cultures, it's a thoughtful gesture to provide a gift or modest compensation to cover their transportation, meals, and time.



Insurance. Connect with district leaders to learn more about club or district coverage and see how much it would cost to purchase additional coverage if existing policies do not adequately cover individuals or your event.

RAISING FUNDS

After you complete your budget, decide how you'll cover your costs. Some clubs ask members to contribute to a RYLA program fund to support youth service. Others hold fundraisers specifically to support their RYLA program.

Such fundraising offsets the cost of RYLA so that the club and its members do not have to pay for most of the cost and participants can attend for free or at a significantly reduced rate. Consider these strategies:

- *Hold fundraising events.* Organize events such as walkathons, talent shows, or movie nights and ask participants to make a donation.
- *Apply for grants.* Research local nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, and businesses that offer funds for community organizations.
- *Ask for donations.* Have members ask their friends, family members, people in your school community, and local businesses if they'll donate money to sponsor a RYLA participant's attendance.
- *Get in-kind contributions.* Ask friends, family members, businesses, or local organizations to contribute equipment, books, supplies, or food.

GOOD TO KNOW

In most cases, clubs raise money to cover the cost of the participants they sponsor, but funds from the district can also be used to support a RYLA program. After you finalize your budget, present it to the district governor or district treasurer during the annual budget approval process and ask if any district funds are available to support your RYLA activities.

Logistics

After you complete your budget, the biggest logistical decision you have to make is selecting a venue for your RYLA event. It's important to select a venue that will meet your needs. For example, if you plan to give slide presentations, separate groups into multiple rooms, or use interactive activities, make sure the venue will allow you to do so easily.

Community partners and leaders may be able to help you find a suitable venue for a reduced rate or even at no cost. Many RYLA programs hold their events at camps, youth centers, schools, or universities. Ask people in your network if they can recommend or provide access to a safe, well-equipped facility that meets the needs of your event.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Think about your participants when you select a venue. Make sure it's accessible, especially if it's likely that any participants will have physical disabilities or other needs. If you'll provide housing, also make sure it has a safe and comfortable option for participants who identify as LGBTQ+ and for people of any gender identity.

Other major logistical matters include transportation, meals, and access to medical care. Below are a few things to consider in each of these areas.

Transportation

- ☐ *Using private vehicles.* Decide whether to allow participants to bring vehicles to the event or drive their vehicles during the event. If participants are minors, you'll need to get permission from their parents or guardians.
- ☐ *Chartering transportation.* If you choose to charter buses or any other type of transportation during your RYLA event, make sure that all transportation providers have adequate liability coverage and can name all involved clubs, districts, and the event as additional insureds.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

If you provide transportation, make sure that it is accessible to all participants, including those with physical disabilities.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your committee will most likely need to make other important logistical decisions. If you have any questions or would like additional information about these decisions, write to ryla@rotary.org.

Meals

- ☐ *Dietary restrictions.* Participants may have dietary restrictions because of medical conditions, allergies, their religion, or their personal beliefs. Ask participants about such restrictions before the event and provide food options as needed.

Medical care

- ☐ *Emergencies.* Make sure to have a plan in case of a serious medical emergency.
- ☐ *On-site medical care.* Many RYLA program organizers choose to have a nurse available throughout their events.

Making a timeline

It's helpful to make a detailed timeline that you can use as an action plan to prepare for your RYLA event. Your timeline should include the date or time when each task needs to be completed and who is responsible for completing it. Below are examples of tasks that you might need to complete before, during, and after the event.

Before the event

- ☐ Develop a budget.
- ☐ Select a venue.
- ☐ Arrange transportation.
- ☐ Produce promotional materials and any materials to be used at the event.
- ☐ Recruit and select participants.
- ☐ Set up registration for participants.
- ☐ Develop the curriculum.
- ☐ Finalize programming.
- ☐ Confirm speakers.
- ☐ Train facilitators and chaperones.
- ☐ Arrange for meal preparation or delivery.

GOOD TO KNOW

Consider assigning roles to members of your committee according to their skills and interests. For example, it may make sense to have a communications director who does most of the promotional tasks or a curriculum director who develops the content for the sessions.

During the event

- ☐ Orient facilitators.
- ☐ Set up rooms (including delivering any worksheets or other needed materials or supplies).
- ☐ Provide support for equipment and technology.
- ☐ Receive meal deliveries.
- ☐ Coordinate the arrival of each speaker.

After the event

- ☐ Collect evaluations from participants and facilitators (see chapter 11).
- ☐ Thank speakers and volunteers.
- ☐ Tell your district and Rotary International about the outcome of your RYLA event.
- ☐ Stay in contact with your new RYLA alumni and invite them to other district activities.

5

PLAN ENGAGING CONTENT

Topics

Additional topics and considerations

Learning outcomes

Format

RYLA is designed to help young people develop leadership skills through civic engagement, personal development, and professional development. Within this broad definition, you choose what to cover and how to present it. Throughout every step of this process, prioritize the needs and interests of your participants.

Designing engaging content includes considering which topics and formats are best, finding ways to collect feedback and ideas, and setting learning goals.

Topics

In chapter 3 we listed some of the topics that are covered at RYLA events around the world. Here are some ideas for including those topics at your event. Remember, participants should shape the topics you cover.

Leadership theories and finding your leadership style:

- Introduce participants to various leadership theories.
- Use a worksheet, survey, or group activity to reveal participants' leadership styles.
- Discuss the strengths of different leadership styles and the importance of developing teams that allow various styles to thrive.
- Plan small-group activities or interactive workshops that encourage participants with different leadership styles to work together in ways that utilize their strengths.



Communication skills, including public speaking skills:

- Have participants take turns leading group activities.
- Have a different participant welcome others to each day of activities, introduce each speaker, or explain each activity during the event.
- Organize a speech competition in which participants speak about a topic of their choice and receive constructive comments from other participants.

- Introduce participants to the Toastmasters resources available in Rotary's [Learning Center](#).

**Collaboration and team building:**

- Teach participants how to be effective and empathetic listeners.
- Emphasize the importance of acknowledging and respecting different perspectives and ideas.
- Give participants challenges that they can complete successfully only if they work together.

**Problem-solving, peacebuilding, and resources for promoting peace:**

- Teach participants about Rotary's commitment to [peacebuilding and conflict prevention](#).
- Showcase completed projects that focused on promoting peace or preventing or resolving conflict.
- Identify concrete ways to engage in Rotary's work in peace and conflict prevention through the [Positive Peace Academy](#).
- Introduce participants to [Rotary Peace Fellowships](#).

**Ethical leadership:**

- Introduce the components of ethical leadership, including respect, service, community, justice, and honesty.
- Ask participants to consider what ethical leadership means to them and have them create their own code of ethics.
- Present hypothetical situations that provide participants with the chance to consider how they can make ethical decisions in real-life scenarios.

**Social justice and advocacy:**

- Invite local social justice and advocacy organizations to present.
- Help participants identify social justice issues that they care about.
- Teach advocacy skills, including tips for using traditional and social media effectively.



Identifying and addressing community needs:

- Introduce Rotary's [service-learning resources](#).
- Teach participants how to conduct a community assessment.
- Assign teams to develop a service-learning project and then present their ideas to the entire group.
- Invite clubs in your district to show participants examples of meaningful service projects and their impact on the community.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- Review Rotary's [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement](#).
- Encourage participants to consider what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to them and how they affect their everyday lives.
- Help participants write their own diversity, equity, and inclusion statement for their school, a club, the community, or the RYLA event.

Additional topics and considerations

There are many other topics that you may wish to include in your RYLA programming. Consider following these steps when you choose topics.

CONDUCT A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

It's important that your program focuses on topics that your program participants are interested in and that will benefit them. Before you begin developing content for your event, talk to potential participants and invite them to offer their ideas. You might arrange interviews, organize focus groups, or even take a survey to collect suggestions.

Make sure your RYLA event also addresses real community needs by conducting a community assessment. Begin by reviewing local media sources to learn more about the critical issues in your area. Also consult local government leaders, nonprofit organizations, educators, and other members in the district to learn about the pressing issues they're trying to address through their work.

Review what you learn and see if any themes emerge. Use them as the foundation of your curriculum and the program as a whole.

CONSIDER EVALUATION FINDINGS AND OTHER FEEDBACK

Evaluating the impact and success of a RYLA event is helpful in deciding which topics to cover at future events. (Learn more about designing a successful evaluation in chapter 11.) Review the findings from your evaluations of previous RYLAs. Look for themes, gaps in programming, and topics that are no longer relevant. Revising your curriculum regularly in response to the comments you receive will help you expand your programming, address relevant and timely topics, and make participants and facilitators feel included in planning.

ENGAGE ALUMNI

Engaging alumni is another way to find new topics to include in your programming. Ask recent RYLA alumni for additional detailed feedback. It may be helpful to include alumni who participated in the program at different times (within the past year, 3-5 years ago, and 5 or more years ago) to find out what skills they still use or what they wish they had learned. Invite some to join your RYLA committee. If they don't have the time to serve as committee members, give them the opportunity to review the content of upcoming events and ask for their suggestions on topics, speakers, and facilitators.

REVIEW THE RYLA LEARNING TOPIC

In the [RYLA learning topic](#) in Rotary's Learning Center, you can connect with others around the world who are involved in organizing and planning RYLA activities. District RYLA chairs and committee members have uploaded their own content and other resources. Add your own topics, share your ideas, or ask others what topics they felt were the most useful and most successful at their RYLA events.

Learning outcomes

No matter which topics you choose, Rotary International has created suggested learning goals for participants and developed indicators to help you track progress toward these goals.




GOOD TO KNOW

Do you think your RYLA program could inspire others? Upload content and other resources from your RYLA event for others, especially those who may be just starting a RYLA program in the [RYLA learning topic](#).

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Although we encourage you to work toward these learning goals, they may not be appropriate for every RYLA event or participant. If they don't apply to your event, work with your committee to adapt them to fit your needs, or create your own learning goals and indicators. Doing so will help you develop appropriate content and track participants' growth.

SUGGESTED LEARNING GOALS AND INDICATORS

LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF LEADERSHIP	IMPROVE THEIR ABILITY TO ENACT CHANGE WITHIN THEMSELVES AND A TEAM	KNOW HOW TO TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL ISSUES	UNDERSTAND ROTARY'S IMPACT IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH ROTARY
			
PARTICIPANTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use effective communication strategies when expressing their ideas and opinions or trying to influence others • Use conflict management strategies • Understand how to solve problems ethically 	PARTICIPANTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe they have the ability to take actions that positively affect their community • Understand that they can expand their leadership skills and learn new ways to grow as people • Believe they can influence others to make positive decisions 	PARTICIPANTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of Rotary's resources, including service-learning resources, that can help them plan and implement meaningful service projects • Understand the importance of addressing the causes of an issue • Know how to conduct a community assessment • Can work in a team and appreciate the skills and talents of others and put them to use 	PARTICIPANTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of Rotary's causes and the kinds of projects that can be done to advance them • Know how to get involved with Rotary, whether by joining a Rotary, Rotaract, or Interact club or through other Rotary programs

Format

After you determine which topics to cover, you're ready to plan the format of your event. RYLA events typically feature a combination of keynote speakers, workshops, and team-building activities. Design an interactive program that is both informative and engaging. As you build your program, balance physical activities, presentations, and group work to hold participants' attention. Putting participants in a number of situations allows various types of leaders to use their unique abilities.

ICEBREAKERS AND SOCIALIZING

Schedule time for participants to get to know one another so they can expand their networks and develop new friendships. Using icebreakers at the beginning of the event or each day can help participants feel more comfortable with one another and therefore able to work together more successfully. Networking can include outdoor activities like hiking or swimming, game nights or talent shows, or themed dinners. Think of ways you can also help participants stay connected after the RYLA event through social media or some other platform.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

When you plan social events and icebreakers, ask your participants to decide together on activities that everyone can enjoy. Still, keep in mind the possibility that some participants might not be comfortable with, or able to complete, all of the activities. If that's a concern, consider making social events optional, providing accommodations, or offering alternative activities at the same time.

SPEAKERS

Invite community leaders, partner organizations, Rotarians, or Rotaractors to speak at your event. Many RYLA programs choose to have speakers start their event (or each day of the event) to introduce major themes and inspire participants. Popular topics for speakers include:

- Personal stories that show how the speaker overcame challenges or obstacles
- Leadership development advice that shows participants how to utilize their unique leadership skills
- Overviews of successful service projects and what the speaker or others did to make sure the projects made an impact
- An introduction to Rotary's **causes** and impact around the world

Before you invite speakers to your event, make sure that they are engaging and will give a dynamic and memorable presentation. Attend other events where they speak, invite them to a club meeting, review their recordings online, or ask for personal or professional references.



EXPERT ADVICE

In Ontario, Canada, a RYLA event holds an open mic night as part of its program. Participants can tell a story about themselves, their interests, or another topic that is important to them. It's a unique way for participants to get to know one another.

GOOD TO KNOW

Include time for reflection throughout the event. Allow participants to discuss what they learned from each session or activity while it's still fresh in their memory. Reflection reinforces what participants have learned from each activity and also allows you and facilitators to gather feedback.

WORKSHOPS

It can be beneficial to design activities that have participants work together in small groups. If possible, allow participants to lead these workshops, to give them another opportunity to practice their leadership skills. Facilitators can be there to introduce the activity, answer any questions, and provide support as needed.

6

RECRUIT FACILITATORS

Defining facilitator roles

Recruitment and selection

Training

Holding a successful RYLA event or program depends on finding and training a variety of capable and engaging facilitators. In this chapter, you'll learn about various facilitator roles, selecting facilitators, and the importance of training facilitators.

Defining facilitator roles

Your event might have many different kinds of facilitators, including counselors, program leaders, and speakers. Each will be assigned responsibilities based on their skills and interests.

COUNSELORS

Facilitators will need to be available to serve as counselors throughout your RYLA program or event. Counselors' responsibilities range from supervising RYLA participants to helping during workshops and other activities. Here are some of the key roles of counselors:

- **Sergeants-at-arms.** These counselors make sure that participants are where they're supposed to be at all times and have the materials they need for activities.
- **Overnight supervision.** If participants will stay overnight, especially if they're under 18, counselors need to supervise them closely to prevent inappropriate behavior and to respond to any emergencies or other situations that may call for an adult.
- **Meal assistance.** In addition to making sure participants arrive for their scheduled meals, counselors can also help with meal set-up, distribute food, and clean up.
- **Room set-up.** Before each activity, counselors can prepare rooms and any technology that's needed.
- **Speaker assistance.** Assign counselors to welcome speakers and to check with them before and during the event to make sure they have any equipment or supplies they need. When speakers have a seamless experience they'll be more likely to participate again or recommend a friend or colleague.

- **Junior counselors.** If junior counselors aren't ready to lead workshops or take on other roles, they can support these activities or assist other counselors. Distributing materials, ensuring that sessions follow their schedules, and taking notes are all tasks that younger counselors (especially former participants) can do to prepare for a role as a lead counselor in the future.

PROGRAM LEADERS AND SPEAKERS

You'll also need facilitators who can lead sessions. Depending on the content and activities, they might need to do nothing more than introduce a session and answer any questions. Or program leaders may guide participants throughout the entire session.

They can also establish expectations for participants' behavior or guide them to set their own standards for conduct and interactions at the event.

Chapter 5 details the role of speakers in planning engaging content. No matter how engaging they are, and even if they'll have only a small role in the event, be sure to select, vet, and train them carefully. They help foster a safe and inclusive event, too.

Recruitment and selection

When you've considered the facilitators you'll need for your event, you can begin recruiting and selecting them.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

During recruitment and selection, try your best to find facilitators who are as diverse as your program participants and the communities.

ALUMNI FACILITATORS

We've already discussed several ways former RYLA participants can make tremendous contributions to RYLA events. One of the most valuable ways to involve alumni is as facilitators. Because they're familiar with the program, can anticipate participants' needs and questions, and often want an opportunity for continued leadership growth, RYLA alumni are a natural fit.

SCREENING

A critical part of your selection process must be vetting and screening all facilitators — not just those who will have direct contact with participants, but also program leaders and speakers. This is a particularly important step if minors are involved. (Details on upholding Rotary's youth protection policies are covered in chapter 7.)

GOOD TO KNOW

Rotaractors are often excellent counselors. Being closer in age may help them connect with and support participants.

Vetting of facilitators should include:

- A written application
- An in-person interview
- Checking of references
- Completing a criminal background check

Thorough vetting and screening can identify applicants who have a history of inappropriate conduct and uncover information or activities about a potential facilitator that could damage Rotary's reputation. It also sends a message to facilitators, participants, parents, and the public that your program sets high standards to keep participants safe. Often, rigorous screening is enough to deter potentially dangerous people from even applying. To learn more about how to screen volunteers who work with young people, review the [Rotary Youth Protection Guide](#), which includes:

- A sample youth program volunteer application
- Sample youth program volunteer interview questions
- Sample questions for youth program volunteers' references

Training

After you select facilitators, you'll need to train them. Below, we discuss the training that facilitators should complete before they work with RYLA participants.

DISTRICT AND RI YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES

The safety and well-being of youth program participants is Rotary International's top priority. If minors participate in your program, all facilitators must follow our youth protection policies. You'll learn more about youth protection in chapter 7.

Work with your district governor and district youth protection officer to make sure you know about and follow any additional youth protection or risk management policies your district has or any other training it requires.

GOOD TO KNOW

Never skip steps in your vetting and screening process, even if you know the applicant well. Holding everyone to the same standard is essential to ensuring a safe environment.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING

A crisis or emergency can occur at any time. Each district should have a crisis management plan, especially if it is involved in youth programs or activities. Review your district's crisis management plan and train facilitators in what to do in a crisis. Cover who's responsible for doing what, communication procedures, and how to reach emergency services.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TRAINING

Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Develop concrete policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in your RYLA program. Your committee can also contribute by training facilitators in this area. Ask them to review Rotary's **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement**. Work with them to make sure they uphold these important policies. You'll learn more about diversity, equity, and inclusion in chapter 7.



PROTECT AND INCLUDE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

Developing youth
protection policies

Diversity, equity, and
inclusion

Developing youth protection policies

Developing comprehensive youth protection policies will help your committee plan events that are safe for everyone. First, make sure your committee understands and can implement Rotary International's youth protection policies. Review the [Rotary Youth Protection Guide](#) and take the online course Protecting Youth Program Participants in the [Learning Center](#). Any additional policies your committee develops must be in line with Rotary International's youth protection policies.

STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

Rotary International strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotaractors, their spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Take time to review local, regional, and national laws that address youth protection. If necessary, incorporate any additional legal standards into your committee's youth protection policies. You can also talk with other local organizations that work with youth and learn what they do to protect participants.

District leaders are also a valuable source of information. Get input from your district youth protection officer and district governor as your committee develops youth protection policies. They can tell you if the district already has youth protection policies in addition to Rotary's, and they can advise you on any that are specific to RYLA.

As your committee works to develop its own youth protection policies, remember that policies for a RYLA event should include:

- Details about an event's program, location, any travel itineraries, sleeping accommodations, and contact information for program organizers must be shared with parents or legal guardians before departure.
- Criteria and procedures for screening and selecting facilitators (see chapter 6)
- Procedures for training facilitators who work with youth (see chapter 6)
- Systems for managing program documentation and maintaining confidential records
- Processes for collecting and storing written permission from participants' parents or legal guardians
- Guidelines for reporting and investigating incidents of abuse or harassment
- Policies for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and appropriate disciplinary actions
- A communications plan to inform parents and guardians, participants, and facilitators about youth protection policies

Rotary International takes all allegations of abuse and harassment seriously. Rotary keeps records on people who are accused or convicted of abuse or harassment in order to restrict their access to youth programs or membership. This information is shared with the Rotary districts that may need it.

For more information about Rotary's commitment to youth protection or to report a youth protection-related concern, visit my.rotary.org/youthprotection or email youthprotection@rotary.org.

GOOD TO KNOW

It's important to communicate policies for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, both between adults and youth and between youth participants, during training for facilitators and orientation for participants. The **Rotary Youth Protection Guide** provides guidance for establishing clear expectations for conduct and responding to misconduct appropriately.



EXPERT ADVICE

Clothing can sometimes indicate a participant's economic background. To ensure lower-income participants don't feel excluded or uncomfortable, a RYLA event in Athens, Ohio, USA, gives all participants RYLA-branded T-shirts that they're expected to wear throughout the program. It helps counter the role clothes can play and creates a common identity for the group.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Rotary **seeks to cultivate** a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture in which people from underrepresented groups have greater opportunities to participate as members and leaders. The ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) should always be present in your committee's work.

PLANNING A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAM

Before you start planning, think about how you can be open to new ideas and include diverse voices in decision making. Consider drafting a DEI statement for your committee that includes the steps you'll take to make your program inclusive.

When you plan a RYLA event, ask these questions.

Venue selection	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the venue accessible to all participants, including anyone who uses a wheelchair or has a physical disability? Will everyone be able to move easily from one place to the next?
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> How can we make sure all participants have housing that they're comfortable with, especially participants who identify as LGBTQ+ or nonbinary?
On-site nurse	<input type="checkbox"/> Has the nurse been trained in providing sensitive treatment to LGBTQ+ participants? <input type="checkbox"/> If any of the participants have physical disabilities, does the nurse have the training to provide medical treatment? <input type="checkbox"/> Can our nurse give mental health support if needed? Or direct participants to resources or other care providers?
Recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/> How can we encourage participants from underrepresented groups to apply? <input type="checkbox"/> How can we find and recruit facilitators with diverse backgrounds? <input type="checkbox"/> What can we do to reduce the cost to participants?
Training	<input type="checkbox"/> What information should the diversity, equity, and inclusion training for facilitators include? <input type="checkbox"/> How can we effectively communicate our diversity, equity, and inclusion policies to everyone involved in our event?

PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT YOUR EVENT

There are also actions your committee can take at the event to make all participants feel welcome and included.

Introductions are one way facilitators can practice being inclusive. Here's one example that can be adapted for your culture:

HI! MY NAME IS ____, AND I USE [SHE, HER, ETC.] PRONOUNS. WHAT ABOUT YOU? LET'S INTRODUCE OURSELVES. TELL US YOUR NAME, YOUR PRONOUNS, AND YOUR FAVORITE [FOOD, SPORTS TEAM, OR BOOK].

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS



- Model inclusive introductions like the one shown above.
- Ask participants what DEI means to them, and have them develop their own diversity, equity, and inclusion statement.
- Guide participants in establishing expectations for behavior that will make others feel welcome and included during the event.

REFLECTION



- Ask participants to reflect on their DEI statement a few times during the event. Ask them if they're following their statement and if they could do anything to support diversity, equity, and inclusion better.

SUPERVISION

- Ask facilitators, counselors, and participants to work together to create an inclusive atmosphere and to help hold each other accountable.
- Make sure participants know how to report issues or concerns.
- Address any behavior issues (when appropriate) and remind everyone of the behavior guidelines.

COLLECTION AND REVIEW OF FEEDBACK



- At the end of the event, collect feedback from participants. Based on their answers, identify any gaps in your diversity, equity, and inclusion statement. Consider whether to add or change any policies for your next event.
- Prepare a report about any problems or suggested actions and include a summary of the feedback for future committees or to use in planning future events.

Other clubs or Rotary programs in your district might already have developed policies or practices to promote youth protection or diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition to consulting your district youth protection officer, consider talking with your district's Interact chair and Youth Exchange chair to learn about their policies.

Learn more, exchange ideas, and share your committee's best practices in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion learning topic in Rotary's [Learning Center](#).

8

MANAGE RISK

Insurance and liability

Crisis management plans

Insurance and liability

Your committee's top priority should be to protect program participants. But you also need to take steps to protect event organizers, facilitators, and counselors and minimize their exposure to risk.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Liability insurance can provide protection from claims and lawsuits that allege negligence by your committee, facilitators, or other volunteers. Consult with local insurance professionals to determine how much coverage is needed. At minimum, it should cover claims that arise from bodily injury or property damage.

In the U.S. and in the U.S. territories and possessions, Rotary clubs and districts are covered under the U.S. Rotary Club and District Liability Insurance Program, which provides general liability and directors' and officers' liability insurance. The liability arising out of activities associated with RYLA is covered under those policies, subject to the terms and conditions.

Acquiring liability insurance can become more complicated when multiple districts or clubs sponsor an event, because each entity might carry a different level of coverage. In these cases, it is especially important to seek professional advice to determine how to protect all participants.

LEGAL DOCUMENTATION

Your committee should also require parents or legal guardians to give written permission for minors to participate in a RYLA event. This provides your committee with some additional legal protection and ensures that parents or guardians are aware of their child's participation.

INSURANCE POLICIES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Participants' parents or guardians should also verify that their health and life insurance policies cover them adequately while they attend an event. Many policies provide only limited coverage outside of one's home area. If your event takes place outside of participants' coverage zone, suggest that they get additional travel, medical, and accident insurance that covers emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability, from participants' departure from home until they return.

Crisis management plans

Developing a crisis management plan creates protocols for protecting participants in an emergency. This is an important task for your committee because young people are often especially vulnerable in a crisis. Fortunately, you can take steps to reduce risk and prepare yourselves to take immediate action if necessary.

Although your committee can't possibly plan for every type of emergency, you'll want to develop procedures for all of the following:

- ☐ Accidents
- ☐ Physical health emergencies
- ☐ Mental health emergencies
- ☐ Natural disasters
- ☐ Political instability
- ☐ Crime or violence.
- ☐ Missing person or death

Steps to take to develop a crisis management plan:

- ☐ Designate a crisis management team.
- ☐ Determine the risks.
- ☐ Consult with experts.
- ☐ Develop a plan and protocols.
- ☐ Develop a communications plan.
- ☐ Share the plans.

GOOD TO KNOW

If obtaining insurance coverage is cost prohibitive for some families or would otherwise exclude participants, consider how you might make your event more financially accessible by limiting travel or other activities, or plan alternative events that would not require participants to acquire additional coverage.

Download [Developing a Crisis Management Plan](#) to learn more about making a comprehensive plan. It includes best practices and a sample district crisis management plan, contact list and crisis notification protocols, and a debriefing questionnaire.

9

PROMOTE YOUR RYLA EVENT OR PROGRAM

Branding

Recruitment

Publicize your impact

Your committee has planned a fun and safe RYLA event or program. Now you're ready to promote it in your district and community. In this chapter, we cover how to brand and promote your event, recruit participants, and publicize your impact.

Branding

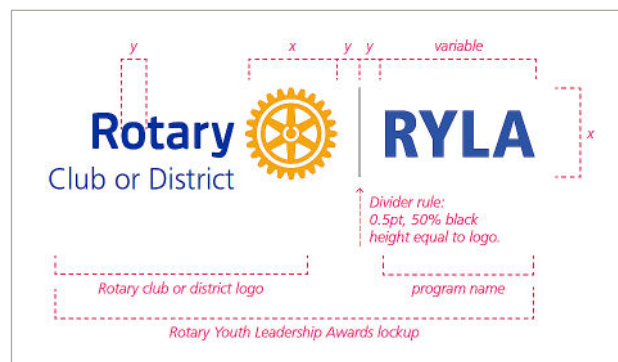
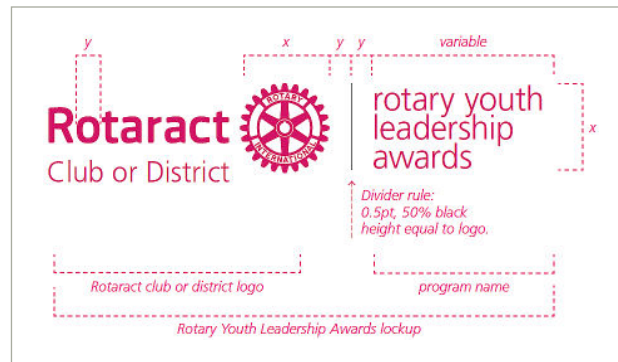
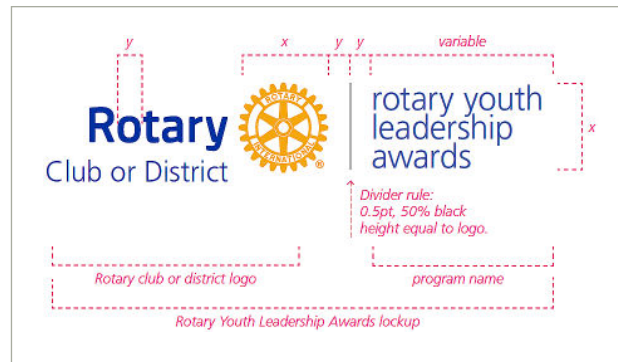
Of course you'll want to promote the program or event in a compelling and welcoming way. It's also important to follow Rotary's voice and visual identity in all of your RYLA communications. The resources in the [Brand Center](#) will help you create everything you need to promote your RYLA program:

- **Guidelines.** Our messaging and visual guidelines will help you develop communications that are clear, concise, and effective.
- **Logo templates.** Create a club, district, or multidistrict RYLA signature that clearly communicates what the program is and its connection to Rotary.
- **Promotional materials.** Customize promotional cards and posters, banners, and news releases.
- **Images and videos.** Find high-quality photos and professional videos that help you share information about RYLA on your website or social media accounts and about Rotary at your event.

LOGO USAGE FOR YOUR RYLA PROGRAM

A central part of branding your event is making sure you have an official lockup, or signature, for your RYLA program and use it correctly. It should combine your club or district logo on the left with the program name to the right of the vertical line. See the examples below for reference.

These lockups show the strong connection between Rotary and RYLA.



GOOD TO KNOW

An official Rotary logo with the RYLA signature is necessary for conveying your program's connection to Rotary clearly and effectively. But you can also create your own visually compelling graphics and designs. Just make sure to follow the guidelines in the **Brand Center** on how to use and not use the Rotary logos.

Recruitment

Effective promotion will help you recruit a strong and diverse pool of participants for your RYLA event. Here are a few effective recruitment strategies:

- **Talk to clubs in your district.** Share information about your RYLA event with nearby clubs and tell them how to submit nominations or invite participants to attend.
- **Connect with district leaders.** Work with your district Interact chair and Youth Exchange chair and ask them to invite Interactors and Youth Exchange students to your RYLA event.

Share alumni stories. Have alumni visit local clubs and talk to their peers about their RYLA experience and encourage them to attend.

- **Contact schools and youth organizations.** Share information about the event with school groups, school counselors and faculty, and community programs.
- **Use social media.** Include information about the event in district newsletters and social media channels.
- **Use local media.** Send a news or media release before the event. Be sure to include a registration link or information on how to apply.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Remember, your committee should actively seek to recruit a diverse group of participants. Ask local organizations that work with economically disadvantaged young people to share your event's registration information.

Publicize your impact

After all of its hard work, your committee should make sure to share the impact of the event as a strategy for promoting future events. Make sure to use (with permission) your photos and videos of the event and testimonials from participants to show potential facilitators, partners, supporters, participants, and parents the impact of RYLA. Consider who would be most interested in learning about your program and what, specifically, you want to communicate about it. Use the same strategies you used for recruiting participants to promote the success of the event, including presenting on it at clubs or events, and sharing images and recaps on social media and with your local media. You can also post in the [RYLA learning topic](#). The RYLA learning topic in the Learning Center is an excellent place to share your impact, and what you learned, with the broader Rotary community.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your district RYLA chair is reported to Rotary International, they'll get updates about promotional resources and ways to exchange ideas with the RYLA community.

10

HOST YOUR RYLA EVENT

Now all of your careful planning becomes action. No matter what your RYLA event looks like, there are steps you can take to ensure it is a success. Review your “day of” checklist, and make sure to:

- ☐ Look over your detailed schedule for the day and make any last-minute adjustments.
- ☐ Check any equipment, tools, or technology that will be used throughout the event. This includes any slide presentations or videos you might show.
- ☐ Connect with the vendor and confirm there is nothing outstanding.
- ☐ Confirm that all food and beverage vendors know when and where to arrive.
- ☐ Coordinate with any speakers. Make sure they feel comfortable with their presentations and know where they need to be and when.
- ☐ If arranging transportation, make sure each person knows where they need to be and when.
- ☐ Review the schedule and the crisis management plan with facilitators, counselors, and your committee.

During the event, document all activities. This will be helpful later, when you evaluate the event's impact (discussed in chapter 11) and when you plan and promote your next event. To successfully document your event, you will need to:

- **Interview participants.** Ask participants for their opinions about each activity, or take notes during their group reflection time. Record their answers as well as your impressions.
- **Record it.** Take photos or video recordings of key activities or events. You may also wish to take notes during activities to help you remember what went well and what could be improved.
- **Share updates.** Provide updates, videos, and photos throughout your RYLA event on social media.
- **Track your budget.** Keep a record of all your expenses throughout the event to make sure you stay within your budget.

Participants can help document your event. Assign them roles such as photographer or videographer, note taker, or interviewer.

11

EVALUATE THE EVENT OR PROGRAM

Conduct an evaluation

Evaluating through reflection

Using your findings to improve the program

You'll want to take time to evaluate your impact, reflect, and use your findings to improve your RYLA program.

Conduct an evaluation

To fully comprehend how successful your RYLA event was in achieving its outcomes, you need to collect feedback from participants and find out how they responded to your program.

Depending on the type of data you are interested in collecting, there are two types of surveys that you may wish to utilize — surveys that evaluate the overall participant satisfaction with the experience and surveys to assess changes in participants' knowledge, ability, or behavior. Learn how to effectively implement both types of surveys below.

MEASURING SATISFACTION IN THE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

You can collect data that allows you to understand if participants enjoyed your event and came away having had a positive experience. To do so, consider doing this electronically, using an online survey tool. It makes the most sense to distribute these surveys during your closing workshop, after participants return home, or at the end of each day or major activity, when participants' memories are fresh. Be sure to collect participants' feedback on all aspects of the programming. Below, we have provided sample questions that can be adapted for your RYLA event for a satisfaction survey.

Sample Survey

DATE <input type="text"/>		
ITEM	SAMPLE QUESTIONS	ANSWER
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you learn about this RYLA event? How easy was it to get information about the time, date, cost, and logistics of the event before you applied or registered? How easy was it to register? 	<p><i>(short answer)</i></p> <p><i>(not easy, somewhat easy, very easy)</i></p> <p><i>(not easy, somewhat easy, very easy)</i></p>
Icebreakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective were the icebreaker activities? Did the icebreakers help you feel more comfortable with the other participants? Which icebreaker was your favorite? 	<p><i>(not effective, somewhat effective, very effective)</i></p> <p><i>(no, somewhat, yes)</i></p> <p><i>(select from list)</i></p>
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, how effective were the speakers? Which presentation was your favorite and why? Which presentation was your least favorite and why? Think about the people you met or worked with during the event. What did they do or say that is the most memorable to you? 	<p><i>(not effective, somewhat effective, very effective)</i></p> <p><i>(select from list; short answer)</i></p> <p><i>(select from list; short answer)</i></p> <p><i>(short answer)</i></p>
Workshops and interactive activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, how would you rate the workshops? What was the most effective workshop or activity and why? What was the least effective workshop or activity and why? 	<p><i>(not effective, somewhat effective, very effective)</i></p> <p><i>(select from list; short answer)</i></p> <p><i>(select from list; short answer)</i></p>
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the RYLA event meet your expectations? Why or why not? 	<p><i>(short answer)</i></p>
Venue and accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you rate the accommodations? Were you comfortable with your lodging arrangement? 	<p><i>(not adequate, somewhat adequate, very adequate)</i></p> <p><i>(short answer)</i></p>

Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you rate the food? • At meals, could you find options that met your dietary needs? • Do you have any suggestions about food options, mealtimes, or dining rooms? 	<i>(not adequate, somewhat adequate, very adequate)</i> <i>(yes/no)</i> <i>(short answer)</i>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you rate the transportation? • Did the transportation accommodate your needs? 	<i>(not adequate, somewhat adequate, very adequate)</i> <i>(yes/no)</i>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else that you think will help us improve our RYLA program for future participants? 	<i>(short answer)</i>

MEASURING LEARNING IN THE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

You can also collect data that allows you to measure if participants acquired new knowledge, learned a new skill, or changed their behavior as a result of attending your RYLA event. To determine the best methods for collecting this type of data, think through how to best receive answers to the following participant questions:

- What new skills did you learn?
- Was there a change in your confidence as a result of a skill that you learned during a workshop or activity?
- Do you think differently about yourself and your ability to lead now?
- Do you think differently about your community and your ability to positively impact it now?
- What is one thing you will do differently now because of something you learned at this RYLA event?
- What are you most likely to do as a result of attending this RYLA event?

It may be beneficial to collect evaluations from facilitators, counselors, vendors, and others involved in the event. Ask for their thoughts on the event and working with you or your planning committee.

Below, we highlight some of the most effective ways to collect the data needed to measure learning and growth in your participants.

Observations

Ask counselors or facilitators to observe participants and track how often they demonstrate or practice a certain skill or learning objective. They should include the following in their observations:

- The percentage of participants they observed demonstrating a new skill or behavior
- The number of times participants practiced a new skill or behavior. For some skills or behaviors, they may be able to grade them as not achieved, partially achieved, or fully achieved. They should include specific examples.
- What, if anything, could be done differently to help participants continue to develop this skill

Pre/post surveys

Consider using questions or surveys before and after a workshop or activity to gauge changes in participants' knowledge, ability, or behavior. This can be as simple as asking participants to complete a short survey as a worksheet or answer questions in a journal at the beginning and end of a session.

Pre/post surveys can also be used to collect feedback from the parents or guardians. Ask for their feedback on the following:

- Signing up for the event
- Acquiring travel insurance
- Making travel arrangements
- Impression of facilitators
- Additional questions or concerns

GOOD TO KNOW

Pre/post surveys are especially important if others connected to the program want to see evidence that participants gained skills or learned from the experience — whether it's for funding purposes or to evaluate part of a school's curriculum.

Interviews and focus group conversations

You can also interview participants or hold focus group conversations to learn more about the experiences. This is especially useful if you would like to supplement your findings with qualitative evidence or personal stories.

Evaluating through reflection

Reflection is another central tool of evaluation, and there are numerous ways to foster reflection during a RYLA event. Reflection activities ask participants to think about their experiences, how they feel, or how they act. Consider using some of the following forms of reflection or allowing participants to choose the method that best suits their learning style.

LEARNING STYLE AND REFLECTION EXAMPLES		
LINGUISTIC	MATHEMATICAL	VISUAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share thoughts, feelings, or observations at the end of each activity or day • Post on social media • Share stories in a newsletter, blog, or summary of the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design opinion polls or surveys that use quantitative ranking • Collect and analyze data • Create graphs or charts • Rank activities or workshops in order of most effective to least effective • Create a list of favorite icebreakers, activities, or presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a short play or skit individually or as a group • Take photos or create a collage • Make drawings or paintings individually or as a group
MUSICAL	INTERPERSONAL	INTRAPERSONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform an original song or lip-synch a song that summarizes your feelings about the RYLA event • Perform a dance individually or as a group • Have each participant or group of participants choose a song that reflects their experience and use them to create a playlist for your closing ceremony or social event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the experience in pairs or small groups • Interview volunteers from partner organizations • Teach others what you learned through a presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write in a journal or use worksheets • Write a personal essay • Create a scrapbook

Using your findings to improve the program

When you've gathered information about your RYLA program, use the findings to strengthen and improve it. Have your committee meet to analyze survey results, qualitative data, and comments recorded during reflection. Ask yourselves:

- Do any trends or themes emerge?
- Were certain workshops or activities notably more popular than others?
- Did any presentation receive particularly high or low ratings?
- Can you identify any gaps in the content, logistical planning, or accommodations?

Based on your findings, develop an action plan to use when you begin planning your next RYLA event. Use the insights especially in updating the curriculum, which should be done each year. Collecting and using feedback to make changes to your RYLA event will help you build the best possible program.

12

SUPPORT FROM ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Online tools

- **Brand Center** — Customize your RYLA logo for use on promotional materials, shirts, and more.
- **Rotary Showcase** — Search for the keyword “RYLA” to read success stories and share your ideas with others.
- **Rotary’s Learning Center:**
 - **Service-learning resources** — Find interactive courses and downloadable workbooks that youth participants and adult advisers can use to design youth-led service projects.
 - **Protecting Youth Program Participants** — This course helps clubs and district leaders understand, recognize, address, and prevent abuse and harassment.
 - **RYLA learning topic** — Share resources and curriculum, learn from the experiences of other RYLA leaders, and ask questions.

Publications and other information sources

- **Young Leaders in Action** — Subscribe to this monthly e-newsletter about Rotary’s programs for young leaders, including RYLA.
- **RYLA certificate** — Add participants’ names to complete their certificates, and print them to distribute at the end of your RYLA program.
- **Rotary’s causes** — Introduce participants to Rotary’s causes and the work members are doing to advance them.
- **Youth Programs page** — Tell participants about Rotary’s other youth programs.
- **Rotary Code of Policies** — Find policies and procedures established by the RI Board of Directors that relate to RYLA and other programs for young leaders.

Go to the [RYLA information page](#) for additional resources. If you have any questions, write to ryla@rotary.org.



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