

The GSE News Kit

A guide for promoting Group Study Exchange



GSE program celebrates 40 years of cultural and vocational exchange

The 40th anniversary of Group Study Exchange, in 2005-06, offers the perfect opportunity to promote the program. Incorporate public relations into the earliest GSE planning stages. Teams involved in activities relevant to the larger community achieve the greatest PR success. Districts have the flexibility to design teams that best address local needs.

Build PR into the planning process

Since 1965, the Group Study Exchange (GSE) program has provided inspiring vocational, educational, and cultural experiences to more than 32,000 men and women.

The following types of exchanges present exciting possibilities for increasing the program's newsworthiness and visibility:

- **Single-vocation GSEs:** Teams composed of participants in one specialized vocation share information, techniques, and ideas related to their profession.
- **Cultural GSEs:** Artists, writers, and musicians share their talents and interests through an exchange that focuses on the more creative aspects of culture.
- **Neighboring country GSEs:** In a neighboring country GSE, an exchange occurs between any two districts located in countries that have a common border or exist in close proximity. In multicountry districts, a neighboring country GSE must be based on travel between localities that have a common country border or exist in close proximity.
- **GSEs in non-Rotary countries:** A GSE is sometimes a precursor to Rotary extension to a new area. Because Rotary is unknown in these areas, a GSE often draws the interest of the media and the community.
- **Humanitarian GSEs:** A connection through a GSE partnership can lead to Rotary Foundation Matching Grant projects that support district cooperation for several more years. GSE teams can identify humanitarian needs in the host district or contribute their skills to carrying out an existing project.

Attracting GSE participants

To attract as many qualified applicants as possible, consider these approaches to promoting Group Study Exchange opportunities in your community:

- **Alert the media.** Send a news release to local newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations announcing the availability of applications (see sample). Some districts have developed 30- and 60-second radio public service announcements (PSAs) inviting candidates to apply for a GSE, which have been broadcast on several local stations (see sample).
- **Create an eye-catching ad.** Contact your local newspaper or magazine to find out about discounted rates for advertising space for nonprofit groups. In creating your ad, include a brief headline and a few lines of text explaining the purpose and destination of the GSE, time frame, type of applicants sought, application deadline, and a contact name, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address for additional information. Be creative with your design by incorporating vibrant colors or writing captivating text. Contact the GSE Department at The Rotary Foundation for any existing GSE promotional materials.

- **Target local employers.** Some potential applicants may be concerned about an extended leave (up to six weeks) from their job. It is important that employers recognize the business benefits of GSE and support the program. Send information about an upcoming exchange, along with GSE brochures and applications, to human resources managers at local companies to make available to employees. In larger corporations, Rotarians may want to meet with a human resources representative to find the best way to share information with eligible employees. You may also want to display GSE materials in a public library or other public buildings.
- **Use the Rotary network.** Many GSE participants hear about the program from friends, colleagues, or Rotarians who participated in an exchange. Inform Rotary clubs in your district about the upcoming GSE, and ask Rotarians to provide information to coworkers or friends who are potential candidates. Program alumni are another resource. Inform alumni in your area of upcoming GSEs, and ask them to talk to others about their experiences and the benefits of participating.

Each district is encouraged to develop and maintain a database of Rotary Foundation alumni. For assistance in developing an alumni database, contact the Foundation's Alumni Relations staff at RI World Headquarters.

Working with the media

The media looks for stories that are interesting, visual, timely, and relevant. A visiting team's international perspective on your community can be an interesting news or human interest story. Look for PR opportunities in addition to sending out a release announcing application availability. When contacting a reporter about a visiting team, include a copy of the visitors' itinerary and brief biographical sketches of team members as well as the local contact's name, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Make sure the media receives this information at least one week before the team's arrival.

Provide photos

To improve the chances of receiving coverage, provide interesting photographs to local newspapers. If a local newspaper is unable to send out a photographer, take your own photos (or, if feasible, hire a professional photographer) and send them to the media. Include captions with photos by pasting a typed note on the back. Describe the scene and attempt to name those pictured, making sure to list them in the order they are standing.

When taking a photograph, take more than one group shot (groups of people smiling and facing the camera are generally not exciting). Be creative. Always take more than one shot, and try shooting from several different angles. Take pictures that show action or tell a story and convey the purpose of GSE, such as:

- Team members doing hands-on work with other professionals in the community
- Diversity in members and culture
- GSE team members working with local Rotarians on a service project or with children
- Include the Rotary emblem, either on a sign or article of clothing, when possible

Share GSE photos with Rotary International for use in publications and displays.

Prepare team members

GSE participants and alumni are the program's best representatives. During their exchange, team members should be prepared to talk about Rotary and their home country. Provide team members with information about Rotary and the sponsor district's service initiatives. You may want to hold mock press interviews during orientation to prepare them for possible questions.

Before they leave, team members should be able to

- Make a short presentation about their country appropriate for a Rotary club or other groups.
- Respond effectively to questions from the media and the public.
- Talk knowledgeably about Rotary programs and activities.

Crisis PR

Occasionally, team members have an unpleasant experience on the exchange that attracts media attention. Despite your best efforts, situations arise that require sensitive handling. If a reporter contacts you with questions about a potentially negative story, be straightforward. If you cannot answer a question immediately, take some time to seek advice before making a statement. After the problem is resolved, get in touch with the reporter and explain what was done to correct the situation.

Alert your district governor and the Public Relations Division at RI World Headquarters to any potentially negative publicity.

PR resources

Several RI publications can help you promote the GSE program. Contact RI's Publications Order Services Section (phone: 847-866-4600; fax: 847-866-3276) or the international office serving your area to order any of these resources:

- **Group Study Exchange Brochure** (160-EN) A leaflet providing basic information about the GSE program. Can be sent to the media or employers, displayed in high-traffic areas, or given to interested community members.
- **Group Study Exchange — An International Professional Development Program** (304-EN) A brochure geared toward businesses and organizations whose employees are being recruited for GSE team membership. Ideal for explaining the positive effect GSE can have on young professionals in the workplace.
- **This Is Rotary** (001-MU) An excellent overview of Rotary and its mission.
- **Effective Public Relations: A Guide for Rotary Clubs** (257-EN) A comprehensive how-to guide to help clubs promote service activities locally.

For the latest Rotary information, visit the RI Web site at www.rotary.org.

For more information . . .

about promoting The Rotary Foundation's Group Study Exchange program, contact RI's Public Relations Division (phone: 847-866-3000; fax: 847-866-8237; e-mail: pr@rotaryintl.org).

Sample news release: Seeking team participants

(Insert contact information here)

Rotary club seeks area professionals for goodwill exchange to (country)

(City), (State/Province), (Date) — Rotary club members of (area name — either club name or description of district/geographical area) are seeking four outstanding professionals to visit (country) in (month, year) as part of the Group Study Exchange program of The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

Through the program, teams of young professionals from two different countries exchange visits. For four to six weeks, team members experience the way of life, customs, and vocational practices of another country, while sharing information about their homeland.

The purpose of the Group Study Exchange program is to promote international understanding and goodwill through personal connection. While abroad, team members stay in Rotarians' homes and have the opportunity to meet their professional counterparts. They also give presentations to Rotary clubs and other groups about their home country.

The Rotary Foundation pays for round-trip airfare, and Rotary club members in the host country provide meals, lodging, and group travel in their district. Team members pay for personal and incidental expenses.

Young adults between the ages of 25 and 40 who are interested in applying should be employed full-time in a business or profession. Applicants must live or be employed in (name or description of district's geographical area).

For an application, please contact (local contact's name) at (preferred form of contact: address, business or home phone number, and/or e-mail address). Applications are due by (application deadline date).

Rotary is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide who provide humanitarian service and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. There are 1.2 million Rotary members in some 31,000 Rotary clubs in more than 165 countries.

Sample radio PSA: Seeking Group Study Exchange team members

TIP: When sending this suggested script to a radio station program director, include a brief letter explaining the announcement's purpose and the district's reason for distributing it. Also include background information, such as a brochure or fact sheet, about the GSE program and Rotary.

Rotary Exchange Participants Sought — 30 Seconds

ENTHUSIASTIC, INFORMED, AND OUTGOING LOCAL PROFESSIONALS ARE NEEDED FOR A ROTARY-SPONSORED GOODWILL TOUR OF (COUNTRY) IN (MONTH). ROTARY'S GROUP STUDY EXCHANGE PROGRAM ALLOWS LOCAL RESIDENTS TO FOSTER INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. PARTICIPANTS MEET THEIR PROFESSIONAL PEERS AND EXPERIENCE THE PEOPLE AND CULTURE OF (HOST COUNTRY).

ESTABLISHED PROFESSIONALS AGES 25 TO 40 WHO WOULD LIKE TO REPRESENT (AREA) ABROAD ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY. CONTACT ROTARY AT (PHONE NUMBER OR E-MAIL ADDRESS) FOR APPLICATIONS AND INFORMATION.



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