Future Causes & Impact Measurement Framework for Rotary

From Inputs to Human-Centered Impact in the Smart Rotary GenAI Era

Contents

Executive Summary

Rotary clubs and similar service organizations have long demonstrated their value through generosity, volunteerism, and community engagement. Across communities, these organizations mobilize financial resources, volunteer labor, and leadership to address critical needs in health, education, water and sanitation, and economic development.

Traditionally, this value has been measured using readily available and easily understood metrics—most notably total dollars donated and volunteer hours contributed (Inputs in *Figure 1*). In many cases, these figures are normalized into per-member measures, allowing clubs to compare performance across different sizes and over time. These metrics are useful. They reflect engagement, commitment, and capacity, and they provide a consistent foundation for reporting.

However, they do not answer the question that increasingly matters most:

> ***What difference did these contributions actually make?***

Figure 1: Rotary Impact Measurement Framework

This question reflects a broader shift across the nonprofit and development sectors. Donors, members, partners, and communities are no longer satisfied with knowing what was given or how much activity occurred. They are asking what changed as a result—what outcomes were achieved, what impact was created, and how effectively resources were used.

This white paper introduces a practical and scalable framework designed to help Rotary and similar service organizations answer that question.

The framework as shown in *Figure 1* is built on a structured progression:

- Inputs (dollars and hours)

- Activities (projects and programs)
- Outcomes (people served and services delivered)
- Attribution (a club's share of those outcomes)
- Impact (human-centered results expressed through common metrics)

At the center of this progression is the concept of **human-centered impact measurement**, expressed through Rotary Impact Equivalent (RIE) or Club Impact Equivalent (CIE). These measures translate diverse outcomes into a shared scale based on healthy human life-years gained or preserved. This approach builds on established global health methodologies while adapting them for practical use in volunteer-led organizations (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014; Hall, 2026).

A key innovation in this framework is the introduction of **AI-assisted attribution**. Advances in generative artificial intelligence now make it possible to estimate a club's share of impact within larger programs using transparent, assumption-based models. While these estimates are expressed as ranges rather than precise values, they provide a meaningful connection between contributions and real-world outcomes.

Importantly, this framework does not replace traditional metrics. Instead, it builds upon them. Inputs and activities remain essential for understanding engagement and operations. However, they are extended by outcome, attribution, and impact layers that provide deeper insight and stronger decision support.

To operationalize the framework, the paper introduces the concept of an **impact dashboard**, which integrates all layers into a coherent structure. This dashboard enables clubs and districts to compare projects, evaluate partnerships, and allocate resources more effectively.

The paper also reframes sustainability in the context of service organizations. While environmental metrics such as carbon emissions are important, they represent only one dimension of impact. Rotary's primary contributions are human-centered, and many environmental benefits arise indirectly through improvements in health, education, and community resilience. This perspective aligns with regenerative approaches to sustainability that emphasize system-level improvement and long-term adaptation (Hall, 2025; Project Drawdown, 2023).

Implementation is designed to be incremental. Clubs can begin with existing metrics, gradually incorporate outcome tracking and attribution, and ultimately adopt human-centered impact measures and dashboard-based planning. This phased approach minimizes disruption while enabling continuous improvement.

The implications of this framework extend beyond Rotary. As service organizations adopt more effective measurement practices, expectations for transparency and impact are likely to increase across the philanthropic ecosystem.

Ultimately, this paper advances a simple but powerful idea:

Service organizations create value not through what they give, but through what they help change.

By moving from generosity to effectiveness—and from effectiveness to measurable impact—Rotary and similar organizations can strengthen their relevance, improve outcomes, and expand their contribution to a more sustainable and resilient world.

Section 1 — Where Clubs Are Today: Input-Based Measurement

Across Rotary and similar service organizations, measurement typically begins with what is most visible and easiest to quantify: financial contributions and volunteer effort. Clubs routinely track total dollars donated each year and the number of hours contributed by members. These figures are widely used in annual reports, grant applications, and internal evaluations.

To improve comparability, many clubs normalize these metrics by membership size. Measures such as **dollars donated per member** and **hours volunteered per member** allow for meaningful comparison across clubs of different sizes and geographies. They also provide a simple way to track trends over time, helping clubs understand whether engagement is increasing, stable, or declining.

These input-based metrics offer several important advantages.

First, they are **objective and easy to collect**. Financial contributions and volunteer hours are typically already tracked for operational purposes, making them readily available for reporting.

Second, they are **widely understood**. Members, donors, and stakeholders can easily interpret these metrics, which makes them effective for communication and benchmarking.

Third, they reflect **engagement and commitment**. High levels of giving and volunteerism indicate a strong and active membership base, which is an important component of organizational health.

For these reasons, input-based metrics should not be dismissed. They provide a valuable foundation and will continue to play an important role in how clubs understand and communicate their activities.

However, they also have clear limitations.

The most significant limitation is that inputs measure **effort**, not **effectiveness**.

A club that donates $50,000 annually is not necessarily creating more impact than a club that donates $20,000. The difference depends on how those resources are used, the effectiveness of the programs supported, and the outcomes that result.

Similarly, volunteer hours do not inherently translate into meaningful outcomes. Time spent on activities may be valuable for engagement and visibility, but it does not guarantee that those activities produce lasting or significant change.

This creates a critical gap in understanding.

Consider two clubs:

- Club A donates $40,000 across multiple small projects with limited long-term impact
- Club B donates $25,000 to a highly effective intervention that produces substantial and sustained benefits

Based on input metrics alone, Club A appears to be more impactful. However, when outcomes are considered, Club B may be creating significantly greater value.

This example illustrates a broader point:

Inputs do not equal impact.

As expectations for accountability continue to increase, service organizations are being asked to demonstrate not only what they contributed, but what was achieved as a result of those contributions (GiveWell, 2023; World Bank, 2018).

This shift does not invalidate input metrics. Rather, it places them in context.

Inputs are the starting point. They describe capacity, engagement, and effort. But to understand effectiveness, organizations must look beyond inputs to the results those inputs produce.

This leads naturally to the next level of measurement: activities and, more importantly, the outcomes that follow from them.

Section 2 — From Inputs to Activities—and the Limits of Activity-Based Thinking

As clubs recognize the limitations of input-based measurement, many naturally expand their reporting to include activities. These may include the number of projects completed, events hosted, grants awarded, or programs supported. This shift represents a logical next step—moving from what was contributed to how those contributions were used.

At first glance, activity-based measurement appears to provide a more complete picture. It offers visibility into operations, demonstrates engagement, and helps communicate the breadth of a club's work. Members and stakeholders can see tangible evidence of effort—projects completed, people involved, and initiatives launched.

However, this shift introduces a subtle but significant challenge.

Activity-based measurement can create the illusion of effectiveness without actually measuring it.

Clubs may begin to equate activity with impact, assuming that more projects, more events, or more participation automatically lead to greater results. In practice, this assumption often breaks down.

A club that completes ten small projects may generate less meaningful impact than one that focuses on two well-designed, high-impact initiatives. Similarly, a calendar filled with

events may reflect strong engagement but not necessarily meaningful or sustained outcomes.

This phenomenon can be described as the **activity trap**—the tendency to measure what is visible and countable rather than what is meaningful and transformative.

To better understand this limitation, consider how activity-based metrics are typically used:

- Number of service projects completed
- Number of fundraising events held
- Number of volunteers engaged
- Number of beneficiaries reached (often estimated)

These metrics provide useful operational insight. They help clubs understand how active they are and how resources are being deployed. They also support communication and member engagement.

However, they have important limitations:

- They do not distinguish between high-impact and low-impact activities
- They often emphasize quantity over quality
- They rarely capture long-term or sustained effects
- They can unintentionally incentivize visible action over effective action

These limitations are not unique to Rotary. Across the nonprofit and development sectors, there has been a growing recognition that activity-based reporting is insufficient. Stakeholders increasingly expect organizations to demonstrate outcomes—what changed as a result of their efforts—rather than simply documenting what was done (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014).

The consequences of remaining in the activity trap are significant.

Clubs may:

- Allocate resources to projects that are easy to organize but low in impact
- Continue legacy initiatives without evaluating effectiveness
- Overlook higher-impact opportunities that require deeper partnerships or longer-term commitment
- Struggle to communicate value in a way that resonates with modern donors and members

Perhaps most importantly, clubs may miss opportunities to increase their impact—not because they lack resources or commitment, but because they lack visibility into what works best.

This leads to a critical realization:

> ***Activities are the pathway to outcomes—but they are not the outcome themselves.***

To understand effectiveness, clubs must move beyond counting what they do and begin measuring what results from those actions.

This shift—from activities to outcomes—is where impact measurement becomes both more meaningful and more challenging. Outcomes are often produced by complex systems involving multiple organizations, partners, and external factors.

As a result, understanding outcomes requires looking beyond the club itself and examining the effectiveness of the organizations and programs it supports.

This brings us to the next layer of the framework:

> ***measuring the impact of charities and partner organizations.***

Section 3 — Measuring the Impact of Charities: The Missing Layer

As clubs move beyond inputs and activities, they encounter a more complex and often overlooked reality: much of their impact is delivered through others.

Rotary clubs frequently act as funders, partners, and facilitators within a broader ecosystem of nonprofit organizations, NGOs, and community groups. While clubs may design and implement some projects directly, a significant portion of their resources is channeled into programs delivered by external organizations.

This creates an important dependency.

The effectiveness of a club's impact is closely tied to the effectiveness of the organizations it supports. Yet, in many cases, clubs do not systematically evaluate these organizations beyond basic due diligence or familiarity.

This gap becomes particularly important when considering how differently similar contributions can perform.

A $10,000 donation can produce dramatically different outcomes depending on:

- The design of the intervention
- The efficiency of the organization
- The local context and implementation conditions
- The sustainability of the solution

Research in philanthropy has shown that differences in cost-effectiveness across programs can be substantial, even within the same sector (GiveWell, 2023). Some interventions produce orders of magnitude greater impact than others with similar levels of funding.

Despite this, many clubs continue to evaluate opportunities based on factors such as:

- Personal relationships or familiarity
- Historical involvement
- Visibility of the project
- Perceived community value

While these factors are important for engagement and trust, they do not necessarily correlate with measurable impact.

To move toward more effective decision-making, clubs can begin incorporating a more structured evaluation approach. This does not require complex modeling or advanced analytics. Instead, it involves asking better questions about the organizations and programs being supported.

A practical evaluation framework might include the following dimensions:

- **Cost-effectiveness**: How much impact is generated per dollar invested?
- **Sustainability**: Will the benefits persist over time without continuous external support?
- **Scalability**: Can the solution be expanded to reach more people or communities?
- **Transparency**: Does the organization provide clear and credible reporting on outcomes?
- **Alignment**: Does the program align with Rotary's mission and the club's strategic priorities?

These criteria provide a foundation for more informed decision-making without imposing excessive complexity.

In recent years, advances in generative AI have made it easier to support this type of evaluation. AI-assisted tools can synthesize publicly available data, compare organizations across multiple dimensions, and highlight strengths, risks, and gaps. While these tools do not replace human judgment, they significantly reduce the effort required to conduct meaningful analysis.

This represents an important shift.

Clubs no longer need to rely solely on intuition or limited information. They can begin to incorporate structured, data-informed insights into their decision-making processes.

However, even with improved understanding of organizational effectiveness, a critical question remains unresolved.

Once a club selects an effective partner and supports a program that produces measurable outcomes, how should it understand its own contribution to that impact?

This is the problem of attribution—and it represents the next major step in the evolution of impact measurement.

3.1 — Estimating a Club's Contribution to Impact (GenAI-Assisted Attribution)

As clubs begin to focus on outcomes and partner effectiveness, the question of attribution becomes unavoidable.

Most charitable programs report results at the aggregate level. A health initiative may report the number of vaccinations delivered, a water project may report the number of people served, and an education program may report the number of students reached. These

figures provide valuable insight into overall program performance, but they do not indicate how much of that impact can be attributed to any single contributor.

For individual clubs, this creates a disconnect.

They know what they contributed, and they may understand what the program achieved, but they lack a clear way to connect the two.

Historically, this problem has been difficult to solve. Attribution requires linking inputs to outcomes across complex, multi-partner systems, often with incomplete data and varying levels of transparency.

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence have changed this equation.

AI-assisted approaches can now combine available data—such as financial contributions, volunteer participation, program scale, and known benchmarks—to produce **reasonable, assumption-based estimates of attribution**. These estimates are not intended to be precise, but they are structured, transparent, and directionally meaningful.

To illustrate this, consider a large-scale vaccination program.

The program reports delivering approximately 5 million inoculations and, based on epidemiological models, preventing an estimated 300 deaths. A Rotary club contributes funding and volunteer support representing approximately 10 percent of the program's delivery capacity.

Using a proportional attribution model, supported by AI-assisted estimation, the club's contribution can be expressed as:

- Approximately 500,000 inoculations supported
- An estimated 20 to 40 lives saved (expressed as a range)

Even with a range-based estimate, this provides something that clubs have rarely had: a **credible, human-centered connection between their contributions and real-world outcomes**.

Attribution, however, is not uniform across all types of projects.

Different project structures require different approaches:

- **Direct-service projects** (e.g., local builds, hands-on initiatives)
  Attribution may be relatively clear and closely tied to the club's direct involvement
- **Multi-partner programs** (e.g., grants, large-scale initiatives)
  Attribution is shared and estimated based on proportional contribution
- **Systemic or long-term interventions** (e.g., education, economic development)
  Attribution may be more diffuse and expressed through broader ranges and longer time horizons

This variability reflects the real complexity of social impact. It should not be viewed as a limitation, but as a reason to adopt flexible and transparent estimation methods.

AI-assisted attribution is particularly valuable because it enables clubs to perform this analysis with relatively low effort. What previously required specialized expertise can now

be approximated in minutes, with assumptions clearly documented and results expressed as ranges.

The introduction of attribution has several important implications.

First, it strengthens accountability. Clubs can move beyond reporting what they gave to understanding what they helped achieve.

Second, it improves decision-making. By comparing the estimated impact of different contributions, clubs can allocate resources more effectively.

Third, it enhances communication. Impact can be expressed in human terms—people served, outcomes achieved, lives affected—rather than abstract financial figures.

Finally, it creates positive pressure within the philanthropic ecosystem.

If a significant portion of supported organizations cannot provide basic outcome data—or cannot support reasonable attribution—this becomes visible. Over time, donors will increasingly expect greater transparency and stronger reporting.

This does not require perfection. However, it does suggest a rising standard:

Organizations should be able to explain what they do, what outcomes they produce, and how contributions support those outcomes.

Service organizations such as Rotary are uniquely positioned to accelerate this shift—not by imposing rigid requirements, but by asking better questions and using better tools.

Attribution also serves as the bridge to the next level of measurement.

Once a club can estimate its share of outcomes, those outcomes can be translated into a common, human-centered metric. This enables comparison across different types of projects and forms the foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of impact.

That step—from outcomes to impact—is the focus of the next section.

Section 4 — From Outcomes to Impact: A Common Language for Human Benefit

As clubs begin to understand outcomes—and, increasingly, their share of those outcomes through attribution—the next challenge becomes clear:

How can different types of impact be compared in a meaningful way?

A vaccination program, a clean water system, a literacy initiative, and a local economic development project all produce value. However, they do so in different ways, over different time horizons, and with different forms of benefit. Without a common framework, these efforts are difficult to compare, prioritize, or evaluate collectively.

This challenge is not unique to Rotary. It has been addressed for decades in global health and development through the use of **life-year–based metrics**, such as Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) and Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs). These frameworks provide a way

to compare interventions by measuring how they affect both the length and quality of human life (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014).

While these approaches are analytically rigorous, they are not always practical for use in volunteer-led organizations. What is needed is a **simplified, accessible adaptation**—one that maintains conceptual integrity while remaining usable in real-world decision-making.

4.1 Introducing Human-Centered Impact Units (RIE / CIE)

To address this need, this paper introduces a human-centered unit of measurement:

- **Rotary Impact Equivalent (RIE)** – Rotary-specific application
- **Club Impact Equivalent (CIE)** – Generalized for broader use

At its core, the concept is intentionally simple:

One RIE (or CIE) represents one healthy human life-year gained or preserved (Hall, 2026).

This definition provides a common reference point that allows diverse outcomes to be expressed on a shared human scale. It does not attempt to capture every nuance of human experience, nor does it imply precision beyond what available data can support. Instead, it creates a **practical language for comparing impact**.

The strength of this approach lies in its balance:

- Simple enough to use
- Rigorous enough to guide decisions
- Flexible enough to apply across different domains

4.2 What Human-Centered Impact Measures Capture

Human-centered impact metrics are designed to reflect outcomes that matter most: improvements in human well-being, health, and long-term opportunity.

Depending on the project, this may include:

- Lives saved or extended (e.g., vaccination, disease prevention)
- Severe illness prevented or reduced
- Years of disability avoided
- Quality of life improvements (e.g., access to clean water, housing, sanitation)
- Long-term capacity gains (e.g., education, workforce development, economic stability)

These outcomes are often interconnected. A single intervention may produce multiple benefits that reinforce one another.

For example, a clean water system may:

- Reduce disease incidence
- Improve daily quality of life
- Increase time available for education and work
- Strengthen long-term community resilience

Rather than attempting to isolate each effect with artificial precision, human-centered metrics allow these benefits to be **aggregated into a unified estimate of impact** (Hall, 2026).

This aggregation is not perfect, but it is practical—and far more informative than treating each outcome in isolation.

4.3 Why a Common Impact Unit Matters

Introducing a shared unit of measurement provides several important advantages.

First, it enables **comparability across projects**. Clubs can begin to evaluate very different types of initiatives—health, education, water, economic development—on a consistent basis.

Second, it supports **better resource allocation**. When combined with attribution, clubs can assess not only what was achieved, but how effectively their contributions translated into meaningful outcomes.

Third, it improves **communication and engagement**. Expressing impact in human terms—rather than dollars or activities—creates a clearer and more compelling narrative for members, donors, and partners.

Fourth, it aligns measurement with Rotary's identity as a **human-centered service organization**. Rotary's mission is not financial or operational—it is fundamentally about improving lives.

By measuring impact in human terms, the organization measures what it actually values.

4.4 Separating Impact from Efficiency

A critical design principle of this framework is the separation of **impact** from **efficiency**.

- **Impact (RIE/CIE):** How much human good was created
- **Efficiency (Cost per RIE/CIE):** How effectively resources were used

This distinction is essential.

Without it, there is a risk of oversimplification or unintended value judgments—where outcomes are implicitly ranked based on cost rather than significance. This concern has been discussed in philanthropic evaluation as a form of "moral reductionism," where complex human outcomes are reduced to purely economic comparisons (GiveWell, 2023).

By separating these dimensions, clubs can have more balanced discussions:

- Impact answers: What difference did we make?
- Efficiency answers: How well did we use our resources?

Both questions are important, but they serve different purposes.

4.5 From Attribution to Impact Translation

Human-centered metrics become most useful when combined with attribution.

As described in Section 3.5, clubs can estimate their share of outcomes within a larger program. Once those outcomes are identified, they can be translated into impact units.

For example:

- A club contributes to a program that prevents a measurable number of disease cases
- Those cases correspond to known health outcomes (e.g., reduced mortality or morbidity)
- The resulting benefit can be expressed as a range of healthy life-years gained

This process does not require exact precision. Instead, it relies on:

- Transparent assumptions
- Use of ranges rather than point estimates
- Continuous refinement as better data becomes available

Advances in generative AI make this translation increasingly feasible. AI can help map outcomes to known benchmarks, apply reasonable assumptions, and produce structured estimates with minimal effort (OECD, 2022).

This transforms impact measurement from a specialized analytical task into a **practical capability available to most clubs**.

4.6 Recognizing Compounding and System-Level Effects

One of the most important advantages of human-centered impact metrics is their ability to reflect **compounding effects over time**.

Many Rotary-supported interventions generate benefits that extend far beyond their initial implementation.

For example:

- Health interventions improve productivity, education outcomes, and long-term resilience
- Education initiatives increase lifetime earnings, health outcomes, and adaptive capacity
- Economic development programs reduce vulnerability and improve community stability

These effects often form **virtuous cycles**, where initial improvements lead to sustained and expanding benefits.

This concept aligns closely with regenerative approaches to sustainability, where systems are designed to improve over time rather than simply maintain equilibrium (Hall, 2025).

While it is not possible to quantify these effects with perfect accuracy, human-centered metrics provide a way to **acknowledge and approximate their scale**, which is often far greater than short-term outcomes alone would suggest.

4.7 The Impact Measurement Stack (Putting It All Together)

At this stage, the full measurement progression becomes clear as illustrated in *Figure 1*.

Clubs move through a layered framework:

1. **Inputs**
   Dollars donated per member
   Volunteer hours per member
2. **Activities**
   Projects completed
   Programs delivered
3. **Outcomes**
   People served
   Services delivered
4. **Attribution**
   Estimated share of outcomes
5. **Impact (RIE/CIE)**
   Human-centered benefit

Each layer builds on the previous one. None are replaced; instead, they are extended and refined.

This layered approach allows clubs to adopt more advanced measurement practices gradually, without abandoning the familiar metrics that remain useful for reporting and engagement.

4.8 A Bridge to Broader Sustainability Thinking

Human-centered impact metrics also provide a bridge to broader sustainability discussions.

While environmental metrics—such as carbon emissions—are important, they capture only one dimension of impact. Rotary's most significant contributions often occur through improvements in health, education, and community resilience, which in turn produce environmental benefits indirectly.

This perspective aligns with solution-oriented sustainability frameworks, such as Project Drawdown, which emphasize addressing root human needs as a pathway to long-term environmental improvement (Project Drawdown, 2023).

In this context, human-centered metrics do not replace environmental measures. Instead, they **complement and contextualize them**, ensuring that sustainability is understood as an outcome of effective service rather than a separate or competing objective.

4.9 Complementary Impact Metrics: Economic and Environmental Dimensions

While human-centered impact metrics provide the core framework, it is important to recognize additional dimensions of value.

Many interventions produce measurable **economic and environmental benefits**, including:

- Healthcare cost savings from disease prevention
- Increased productivity from improved health and time savings
- Household savings from reduced expenditures
- Reduced pollution and environmental contamination
- Improved resource efficiency
- Reduced carbon emissions

These benefits are important and should be captured where possible.

However, a key methodological challenge arises: **double counting**.

Many economic and environmental benefits are derived from the same underlying human outcomes. For example:

- Improved health reduces medical costs (economic benefit)
- The same health improvement contributes to human well-being (captured in RIE/CIE)
- Environmental improvements may also reinforce health outcomes

If these effects are simply added together, total impact may be overstated.

To address this, a clear structure should be maintained:

- **Primary metric:** Human-centered impact (RIE/CIE)
- **Complementary metrics:** Economic and environmental indicators reported alongside
- **Contextual interpretation:** Understanding relationships between metrics

This approach preserves clarity while allowing a richer understanding of impact.

It also aligns with broader **triple bottom line thinking**, while avoiding the pitfalls of combining fundamentally different measures into a single, potentially misleading score.

4.10 Impact Measurement Stack

As the framework progresses from inputs to human-centered impact, it becomes useful to summarize the full structure in a single, integrated view. The purpose of Table 1 is to present the **Impact Measurement Stack** in a way that is both practical and comparable across clubs, projects, and time periods. Each layer builds on the previous one, moving from simple and familiar metrics toward more meaningful and decision-relevant measures. Importantly, the layers are not replacements for one another; they are extensions that provide increasing clarity about how resources translate into real-world outcomes and long-term impact.

Table 1: Impact Measurement Stack

Level	Measurement Layer	Key Metrics	Purpose	Example
1	Inputs	Dollars donated; Dollars per member; Volunteer hours; Hours per member	Measures resource commitment and engagement	$50,000 donated; 1,200 volunteer hours
2	Activities	Projects completed; Events held; Programs supported	Shows how resources are deployed	8 service projects; 3 fundraising events
3	Outcomes	People served; Services delivered	Captures direct results of activities	2,000 people served; 1,500 vaccinations
4	Attribution	% contribution; Range of outcomes supported	Links club contribution to program results	10% of program → 150,000 vaccinations
5	Impact (RIE/CIE)	Human life-years gained; Impact per member	Translates outcomes into human-centered value	25–40 life-years gained
6	Efficiency (Optional)	Cost per RIE/CIE	Evaluates how effectively resources are used	$1,200 per life-year
7	Complementary Metrics	Economic value; Environmental impact (CO_2e, pollution reduction)	Provides broader context without double counting	$200K economic benefit; reduced contamination

Section 5 — Impact Dashboard: From Measurement to Decision-Making

As clubs move through the progression from inputs to outcomes, attribution, and ultimately human-centered impact, a practical challenge emerges:

> ***How do we organize all of this information in a way that actually supports better decisions?***

Tracking individual metrics—dollars donated, hours volunteered, people served, or even estimated impact—provides useful information. However, when these metrics are viewed

in isolation, they do not easily answer the questions that matter most to leaders and members:

- Which projects are generating the greatest impact?
- Which partnerships are most effective?
- Where should we invest more time, money, and energy next year?
- How is our impact changing over time?

To answer these questions, clubs need more than a collection of metrics. They need a **structured, integrated view of performance**.

This is the role of the **impact dashboard**.

5.1 From Metrics to Insight

Traditional reporting often presents metrics in separate categories:

- Financial reports show dollars raised and donated
- Service reports show hours and activities
- Project reports describe individual initiatives

While each of these is useful, they do not naturally connect. Leaders must mentally piece together information from multiple sources, which makes comparison and prioritization difficult.

An impact dashboard addresses this problem by organizing metrics into a **coherent framework aligned with the impact measurement stack** introduced in earlier sections.

Rather than asking members to interpret disconnected data, the dashboard presents a **layered view of performance**, where each level builds on the previous one.

This transforms data into insight.

5.2 Core Structure of the Impact Dashboard

A practical impact dashboard for Rotary or similar service organizations should reflect the full measurement progression. The structure should be simple enough to use, but comprehensive enough to guide decisions.

At a minimum, the dashboard should include the following layers:

Inputs (Resource Commitment)

- Total dollars donated
- Dollars donated per member
- Total volunteer hours
- Volunteer hours per member

These metrics provide a baseline for understanding engagement and resource capacity. They remain important for benchmarking and continuity.

Activities (Operational Output)

- Number of projects completed

- Number of events conducted
- Types of programs supported

These indicators show how resources are being deployed and help identify patterns of activity.

Outcomes (Direct Results)

- People served
- Services delivered (e.g., vaccinations, wells installed, students supported)
- Immediate outputs of projects

This is the first level at which real-world change becomes visible.

Attribution (Share of Contribution)

- Estimated percentage of program contribution
- Range-based estimates of outcomes supported

This layer connects club inputs to program outcomes, providing a clearer understanding of the club's role.

Impact (Human-Centered Metrics)

- RIE / CIE (range estimates)
- Impact per member
- Impact trends over time

This is the most meaningful layer, translating outcomes into a common human-centered scale.

Complementary Metrics (Contextual Value)

- Economic value (cost savings, productivity gains)
- Environmental indicators (pollution reduction, emissions avoided)

These provide additional context but are not aggregated into the primary impact measure.

5.3 A Multi-Dimensional View of Impact

One of the most important features of the dashboard approach is that it avoids reducing impact to a single number.

There is often a strong temptation to create a single "impact score" that summarizes everything. While this may appear convenient, it introduces significant risks:

- Oversimplification of complex outcomes
- Loss of transparency
- Increased risk of double counting
- Misleading comparisons across fundamentally different projects

Instead, the dashboard presents a **multi-dimensional profile**, where different types of information are displayed together but not forced into a single metric.

In this structure:

- Human-centered impact (RIE/CIE) provides the primary lens
- Economic and environmental metrics provide supporting perspectives
- Inputs and activities provide operational context

This allows decision-makers to see both the **scale of impact** and the **pathways through which it is achieved**.

5.4 From Reporting Tool to Planning Tool

An effective dashboard is not just a reporting mechanism—it is a **planning and decision-support tool**.

When used actively, the dashboard enables clubs to:

- Compare different projects based on estimated impact
- Identify high-performing partnerships
- Reallocate resources toward more effective initiatives
- Track improvements over time
- Set goals based on impact rather than activity

This represents a fundamental shift.

Instead of asking, "What should we do next year?" based on tradition or preference, clubs can begin to ask:

> ***"Where can we create the greatest impact with the resources we have?"***

This shift aligns closely with strategic planning frameworks, including Club Horizon Planning and other forward-looking models, where decisions are guided by long-term objectives rather than short-term activity.

5.5 Application Across Organizational Levels

One of the strengths of the dashboard approach is that it can be applied at multiple levels within Rotary and similar networks.

At the **club level**, the dashboard supports:

- Annual planning and review
- Project selection and prioritization
- Member engagement and communication

At the **district level**, it enables:

- Aggregation of data across clubs
- Identification of high-impact models and best practices
- More effective allocation of district grants and resources

At the **organizational level**, it supports:

- System-wide understanding of impact
- Alignment between strategy and measurable outcomes
- Stronger communication with external stakeholders and partners

This scalability is particularly important in decentralized organizations, where individual units operate independently but contribute to a broader mission.

5.6 The Role of AI in Dashboard Development

Historically, building and maintaining a comprehensive impact dashboard required significant analytical resources. Data needed to be collected, cleaned, analyzed, and interpreted—often manually.

Advances in generative AI have significantly lowered these barriers.

AI-assisted tools can now:

- Aggregate data from multiple sources
- Estimate attribution and impact ranges
- Identify patterns and anomalies
- Generate narrative summaries for reports
- Support scenario analysis and planning

This makes it feasible for even small, volunteer-led organizations to adopt more sophisticated measurement practices without requiring specialized expertise (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022).

AI does not replace judgment. Instead, it **augments decision-making**, providing faster insights and reducing the effort required to work with complex data.

5.7 Design Principles for Practical Adoption

For an impact dashboard to be effective in a volunteer-driven environment, it must be designed with practicality in mind.

Several key principles should guide its development:

- **Simplicity**: The dashboard should be easy to understand and use
- **Transparency**: Assumptions and estimates should be clearly documented
- **Flexibility**: The framework should adapt to different types of projects
- **Consistency**: Metrics should be comparable across time and organizations
- **Low Effort**: Data collection and updates should not create excessive burden

These principles ensure that measurement supports the mission rather than becoming a distraction from it.

5.8 From Insight to Action

The ultimate value of the dashboard lies in its ability to inform action.

When clubs can clearly see:

- Which projects generate the greatest human impact
- Which partnerships are most effective
- How their contributions translate into real-world outcomes

they are better equipped to:

- Focus efforts where they matter most
- Improve outcomes over time
- Strengthen both local and global impact

In this way, the dashboard becomes more than a tool—it becomes a **foundation for continuous improvement and strategic clarity**.

5.9 Linking to Case Studies and Practice

The concepts described in this section are illustrated in the case studies presented at the end of this paper.

In the first case, a club uses attribution and impact estimation to better understand its role in a large-scale health initiative. In the second, a club applies a multi-dimensional framework to evaluate water projects, integrating human, economic, and environmental metrics.

Together, these examples demonstrate how the impact dashboard approach can move from concept to practice.

Section 6 — Sustainability Reframed: Carbon in Context (Rewritten)

As organizations across sectors place increasing emphasis on sustainability, measurement frameworks have become heavily oriented toward environmental indicators—particularly carbon emissions. Carbon accounting has emerged as a dominant tool for assessing impact, driven by global climate concerns, regulatory frameworks, and growing expectations from stakeholders.

While these developments are important and necessary, they introduce a potential misalignment for service organizations such as Rotary.

Rotary's primary mission is not environmental management. It is human-centered service—improving health, expanding access to water and sanitation, supporting education, strengthening communities, and fostering economic development. These efforts often produce environmental benefits, but those benefits are typically **secondary effects**, not the primary objective.

Understanding this distinction is essential for developing an appropriate framework for measuring impact.

6.1 The Limits of Carbon-Centric Measurement

Carbon metrics are powerful because they are standardized, quantifiable, and globally comparable. They provide a clear way to track emissions and evaluate environmental performance across organizations and sectors.

However, when applied as the dominant or sole measure of impact, they have important limitations.

First, carbon metrics capture only one dimension of value. They do not directly measure improvements in human health, education, or quality of life. For organizations whose primary purpose is to serve people, this creates an incomplete picture.

Second, carbon-focused frameworks can inadvertently shift attention toward activities that are easily measured rather than those that are most impactful. Projects that produce measurable emissions reductions may be prioritized over those that deliver greater human benefit but have less direct carbon impact.

Third, carbon accounting can obscure indirect and system-level effects. Many interventions—such as improving water access or expanding education—produce environmental benefits over time by changing behavior, increasing resilience, and reducing resource pressures. These effects are real, but they are not always captured in direct emissions metrics.

For these reasons, carbon measurement should be viewed as **necessary but not sufficient** for understanding the full impact of service organizations.

6.2 Carbon as Accountability, Not Identity

A more appropriate role for carbon within Rotary's impact framework is as a form of **accountability**, rather than identity.

Carbon metrics help ensure that:

- Projects do not create unintended environmental harm
- Operations are conducted efficiently and responsibly
- Environmental impacts are understood and managed

This is an important function.

However, carbon should not define success.

Rotary's identity is rooted in human-centered impact. Its success should be measured by improvements in health, well-being, opportunity, and resilience. Environmental outcomes are often a byproduct of these improvements, but they are not the sole or primary objective.

This distinction can be summarized simply:

Carbon is accountability—not identity.

This framing allows Rotary to incorporate environmental responsibility without losing focus on its core mission.

6.3 Human Development as a Pathway to Sustainability

One of the most important insights of this framework is that **human development is itself a pathway to sustainability**.

Many Rotary-supported interventions produce environmental benefits indirectly by improving human systems.

For example:

- Clean water systems reduce disease, decrease environmental contamination, and improve resource efficiency
- Health interventions reduce long-term strain on healthcare systems and improve community resilience
- Education initiatives increase awareness, adaptive capacity, and more sustainable economic behavior
- Economic development programs reduce pressure on natural resources by improving livelihoods

These effects are not isolated. They interact and reinforce one another, creating **system-level improvements**.

This aligns with broader sustainability thinking that emphasizes addressing root causes rather than symptoms. When communities are healthier, more educated, and more economically stable, they are better positioned to manage resources sustainably and adapt to environmental challenges (Project Drawdown, 2023).

6.4 Regenerative Sustainability and System-Level Thinking

This perspective is closely aligned with **regenerative approaches to sustainability**, which emphasize continuous improvement, system-level adaptation, and long-term resilience.

Rather than focusing solely on reducing negative impacts (e.g., lowering emissions), regenerative approaches seek to create systems that:

- Improve over time
- Strengthen natural and social systems simultaneously
- Generate compounding benefits

This concept is central to the framework outlined in *Perpetual Innovation™: Perpetual Sustainability by Leveraging Regenerative Dynamic AI (rdAI)* (Hall, 2025), where sustainability is understood as a dynamic, evolving process rather than a static target.

Within this context, Rotary's work can be seen as inherently regenerative:

- It improves human systems
- It strengthens communities
- It creates conditions for sustained, long-term progress

Environmental benefits emerge as part of this broader system.

6.5 Integrating Environmental Metrics Appropriately

While human-centered impact should remain the primary measure, environmental metrics still play an important role.

The key is to integrate them appropriately.

As discussed in Section 4.9, environmental indicators such as carbon emissions, pollution reduction, and resource efficiency should be treated as **complementary metrics**. They

provide additional insight into the broader effects of projects but are not combined with human-centered impact into a single score.

A balanced measurement structure includes:

- **Primary metric**: Human-centered impact (RIE/CIE)
- **Supporting metrics**: Environmental and economic indicators
- **Contextual interpretation**: Understanding how these dimensions interact

This approach ensures that environmental considerations are included without overshadowing the organization's primary purpose.

6.6 Avoiding Misaligned Incentives

Overemphasis on carbon metrics can create unintended consequences.

Organizations may:

- Prioritize projects with measurable emissions reductions over those with greater human impact
- Allocate resources toward activities that are easier to quantify rather than more effective
- Undervalue interventions that produce indirect or long-term environmental benefits

By maintaining a human-centered framework, these risks can be mitigated.

Clubs can focus on interventions that deliver the greatest overall benefit, while still accounting for environmental considerations in a balanced way.

6.7 Sustainability as an Emergent Outcome of Impact

The framework presented in this paper leads to a broader conclusion:

Sustainability is not a separate objective—it is an emergent outcome of effective service.

When Rotary and similar organizations:

- Improve health
- Expand education
- Strengthen economies
- Build resilient communities

They are simultaneously contributing to more sustainable systems.

This perspective shifts the focus from measuring isolated environmental indicators to understanding how different forms of impact interact and reinforce one another.

It also aligns with the layered measurement approach developed throughout this paper, where:

- Inputs lead to activities
- Activities lead to outcomes
- Outcomes, through attribution, lead to impact
- Impact contributes to long-term sustainability

6.8 Linking to Practice and Case Studies

The implications of this reframed approach are illustrated in the case studies presented at the end of this paper.

In particular, the water project case demonstrates how a single intervention can produce human, economic, and environmental benefits simultaneously, while still maintaining clarity in measurement by avoiding double counting.

These examples reinforce the central idea of this section:

> Sustainability should be understood as a **multi-dimensional outcome of effective, human-centered impact**, not as a standalone metric.

Section 7 — Implementation Roadmap: From Measurement to Practice

The transition from input-based reporting to a comprehensive impact framework does not require immediate transformation. In fact, attempting to implement all elements at once would likely overwhelm most clubs and reduce adoption.

Instead, the framework presented in this paper is designed to be implemented **incrementally**, allowing clubs and districts to build capability over time while continuing to operate effectively.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is progress—moving steadily from measuring effort to understanding impact.

7.1 Starting Where Clubs Are

The most effective implementation strategy begins with a simple principle:

Start where clubs are—not where the framework ends.

Most clubs already track financial contributions, volunteer hours, and basic project activity. These existing practices provide a strong foundation.

Rather than introducing entirely new systems, implementation should begin by:

- Standardizing existing metrics
- Improving consistency of reporting
- Introducing small enhancements that build toward deeper measurement

This approach minimizes resistance and builds early momentum.

7.2 A Phased Approach to Adoption

A structured, phased roadmap allows clubs to gradually expand their measurement capabilities while maintaining simplicity.

Phase 1: Strengthening Input Metrics (Year 0–1)

The first phase focuses on establishing a reliable baseline.

Clubs should:

- Track total dollars donated and normalize as dollars per member

- Track total volunteer hours and normalize as hours per member
- Maintain consistent reporting across projects and years

At this stage, the emphasis is on **consistency and comparability**, not complexity.

Phase 2: Introducing Outcome Awareness (Year 1–2)

Once baseline metrics are stable, clubs can begin incorporating outcome-oriented thinking.

This includes:

- Tracking people served and services delivered
- Requesting basic outcome data from partner organizations
- Beginning to distinguish between high-visibility activities and meaningful outcomes

This phase represents a shift from measuring effort to recognizing results.

Importantly, it does not require precise measurement—only improved awareness.

Phase 3: Estimating Attribution (Year 2–3)

With outcomes in view, the next step is to connect those outcomes to the club's contributions.

Clubs can begin to:

- Estimate their percentage contribution to programs
- Use AI-assisted tools to generate range-based attribution estimates
- Document assumptions and levels of confidence

This phase is a major step forward. It enables clubs to move from general impact statements to **specific, though approximate, impact estimates**.

Phase 4: Introducing Human-Centered Impact Metrics (Year 3–4)

Once attribution is established, clubs can begin translating outcomes into human-centered impact.

This includes:

- Applying RIE/CIE estimates to selected projects
- Tracking impact per member
- Comparing projects based on estimated human benefit

At this stage, measurement becomes both **meaningful and actionable**.

Clubs can begin to see not only what they are doing, but how much impact they are generating.

Phase 5: Deploying the Impact Dashboard (Year 4–5)

The final phase integrates all elements into a unified system.

Clubs and districts can:

- Implement a structured impact dashboard
- Aggregate data across projects and time periods

- Use insights to guide planning and resource allocation

At the district level, this phase enables:

- Cross-club comparison
- Identification of best practices
- More strategic use of grants and shared resources

7.3 Aligning with Rotary Planning Cycles

This phased approach aligns naturally with Rotary's annual planning cycle and longer-term Horizon Planning frameworks.

Clubs can integrate impact measurement into existing processes:

- **Planning phase (Year 0)**
  Use prior-year data to inform priorities and resource allocation
- **Implementation phase (Year 1)**
  Track inputs, activities, and emerging outcomes
- **Review phase**
  Evaluate outcomes, attribution, and impact to inform the next cycle

Over time, this creates a **continuous feedback loop**, where measurement informs planning and planning improves impact.

This alignment ensures that measurement is not a separate activity, but an integrated part of strategic decision-making.

7.4 The Role of Leadership and Culture

Successful implementation depends not only on tools and processes, but also on leadership and culture.

Leaders at all levels play a critical role:

- **Club leaders** introduce the framework and encourage adoption
- **Board members** use impact data to guide decisions
- **District leaders** support standardization and provide training

Equally important is the development of a culture that values:

- Transparency
- Learning and improvement
- Evidence-informed decision-making

This does not require perfection or rigid compliance. Instead, it requires a willingness to ask better questions and continuously improve.

7.5 Keeping It Practical: Avoiding Over-Complexity

One of the greatest risks in implementing any measurement framework is over-complication.

Clubs should avoid:

- Attempting to measure everything at once
- Requiring excessive data collection
- Introducing tools that are difficult to maintain

Instead, they should focus on:

- A small number of meaningful metrics
- Gradual expansion over time
- Use of AI tools to reduce effort

The framework is designed to be **lightweight but extensible**—simple enough to adopt, but powerful enough to grow.

7.6 The Role of AI and rdAI in Implementation

Generative AI plays a central role in making this framework practical.

AI can:

- Summarize survey and project data
- Estimate attribution and impact ranges
- Identify patterns and opportunities
- Generate reports and narratives

Within a broader regenerative dynamic AI (rdAI) approach (Hall, 2025), these capabilities support a continuous cycle:

- Data collection
- Insight generation
- Decision-making
- Implementation
- Feedback and refinement

This transforms planning and measurement into a **living system**, rather than a static annual process.

7.7 From Measurement to Strategic Advantage

As clubs adopt this framework, measurement evolves from a reporting function into a **strategic capability**.

Organizations that can:

- Understand their impact
- Compare alternatives
- Allocate resources effectively

are better positioned to:

- Increase their effectiveness
- Attract partners and funding
- Strengthen member engagement
- Enhance long-term relevance

In this way, impact measurement becomes more than an accountability tool—it becomes a source of **strategic advantage**.

7.8 Linking to Practice and Case Studies

The phased approach outlined in this section is reflected in the case studies presented at the end of this paper.

The health initiative case demonstrates how a club can move from inputs to attribution and impact. The water project case illustrates how multiple dimensions of impact can be integrated without losing clarity.

Together, these examples show that the framework is not theoretical—it is practical, scalable, and adaptable to different types of clubs and projects.

Conclusion: From Generosity to Measurable Impact

Rotary and similar service organizations have built their legacy on generosity, volunteerism, and a deep commitment to improving lives. For decades, clubs have mobilized resources, engaged communities, and supported meaningful projects across a wide range of focus areas. That foundation remains strong.

What is changing is not the mission—but the expectation.

Increasingly, members, donors, partners, and communities are asking not only what was given or what activities were completed, but what difference those efforts made. This shift reflects a broader evolution in the nonprofit and development sectors, where effectiveness, transparency, and measurable outcomes are becoming central to how organizations are evaluated.

This paper has outlined a practical framework for responding to that shift.

Beginning with familiar metrics—dollars donated and hours volunteered—it extends measurement through activities and outcomes, introduces attribution as a way to connect contributions to results, and culminates in human-centered impact metrics that provide a common language for understanding value.

This progression does not replace what clubs already do well. Instead, it builds upon it.

Inputs remain important. Activities remain meaningful. Outcomes provide essential insight. Attribution creates connection. And impact—expressed in human terms—provides clarity.

Together, these elements form a coherent system for understanding how resources translate into real-world change.

The introduction of human-centered impact metrics such as RIE and CIE represents a significant step forward. By expressing results in terms of healthy human life-years gained or preserved, clubs can compare very different types of initiatives on a consistent basis. More importantly, they can align measurement with their core purpose: improving lives.

Equally important is the role of attribution. With the support of emerging AI tools, clubs can now estimate their share of impact within larger programs. This bridges a long-standing gap between contribution and outcome, allowing clubs to move from general statements of support to specific, meaningful expressions of impact.

The impact dashboard brings these elements together into a practical tool for decision-making. It enables clubs and districts to compare projects, evaluate partnerships, and allocate resources more effectively. In doing so, it transforms measurement from a reporting exercise into a strategic capability.

The reframing of sustainability further strengthens this approach. Rather than treating environmental metrics—such as carbon emissions—as the primary measure of impact, this framework positions sustainability as an outcome of effective, human-centered service. Improvements in health, education, and economic stability create the conditions for more sustainable communities, aligning with regenerative approaches to long-term development (Hall, 2025; Project Drawdown, 2023).

Implementation does not require immediate transformation. A phased approach allows clubs to begin with what they already track, gradually incorporate outcome awareness and attribution, and ultimately adopt human-centered impact metrics and dashboard-based planning. This ensures that the framework remains practical, scalable, and adaptable to different contexts.

The implications of this shift are significant.

Clubs that adopt this approach will be better positioned to:

- Understand the true impact of their efforts
- Communicate value in meaningful, human terms
- Strengthen member engagement and alignment
- Make more informed and effective decisions
- Demonstrate leadership within the broader philanthropic ecosystem

At a broader level, this framework contributes to an evolution in how service organizations operate. As more organizations adopt improved measurement practices, expectations for transparency and effectiveness will rise. Those that can clearly demonstrate impact will stand out—not only for what they do, but for what they achieve.

Rotary is uniquely positioned to lead this evolution.

With its global network, strong brand, and long history of service, Rotary can help define what effective, human-centered impact measurement looks like in practice. By adopting better questions, better tools, and better frameworks, Rotary clubs can move beyond measuring effort to understanding—and increasing—their impact.

The core idea is simple, but powerful:

Impact is not defined by what is given. It is defined by what is changed.

By embracing this perspective, Rotary and similar organizations can build on their legacy of service while strengthening their effectiveness, relevance, and contribution to a more sustainable and resilient world.

The case studies that follow illustrate how these concepts can be applied in practice, demonstrating that this framework is not only conceptual, but actionable.

Case Studies

Case Study 1 (Realistic): Scaling Health Impact Through Partnership and Attribution Problem

A mid-sized Rotary club in a suburban region had a strong history of fundraising and volunteer engagement. The club contributed approximately $75,000 annually across several charitable initiatives and logged over 2,000 volunteer hours each year.

Despite this level of activity, leadership recognized a growing challenge: they could not clearly articulate the impact of their efforts. Annual reports highlighted dollars raised and hours served, but members increasingly asked what difference these contributions were making in real-world terms.

A significant portion of the club's funding supported a large-scale international health initiative focused on childhood vaccinations. While the partner organization reported total program outcomes, the club had no clear way to estimate its contribution to those results.

Strategic Questions

The club leadership and board focused on several key questions:

- How can we move beyond reporting inputs to understanding outcomes?
- What portion of this program's impact can reasonably be attributed to our club?
- Are we allocating our resources to the most effective initiatives?
- How can we communicate our impact in a way that is meaningful to members and donors?

Response / Process

The club adopted a structured approach aligned with the framework outlined in this paper.

First, they standardized their input metrics, calculating dollars donated per member and volunteer hours per member. This provided a baseline for comparison and internal benchmarking.

Second, they gathered outcome data from their partner organization. The vaccination program reported delivering approximately 5 million inoculations annually, with epidemiological models estimating the prevention of several hundred child deaths.

Third, the club applied a simplified attribution model. Based on its financial contribution and volunteer involvement, the club estimated that it supported approximately 8–12 percent of the program's delivery capacity.

Using AI-assisted estimation tools, the club translated this into a range of outcomes:

- Approximately 400,000 to 600,000 vaccinations supported
- An estimated 20 to 40 lives saved (range-based estimate)

Finally, the club translated these outcomes into a human-centered impact estimate using a simplified RIE model, expressing results in terms of healthy life-years gained.

Results / Lessons Learned

The introduction of attribution and human-centered impact measurement produced several important outcomes.

First, it transformed how the club understood its role. Instead of viewing itself as a donor among many, the club could clearly see its contribution to a large-scale life-saving effort.

Second, it improved communication. Members responded strongly to impact statements framed in human terms, such as the number of children vaccinated and lives potentially saved. This strengthened engagement and reinforced the value of participation.

Third, it influenced decision-making. The club began comparing its major initiatives based on estimated impact, leading to a gradual shift toward fewer, higher-impact partnerships.

Finally, it highlighted the importance of partner transparency. The club recognized that its ability to measure impact depended on the quality of data provided by partner organizations. This led to more deliberate selection of partners and clearer expectations around reporting.

This case illustrates how even approximate attribution, combined with human-centered metrics, can significantly enhance both understanding and effectiveness.

Case Study 2 (Hybrid / Local-Global): Water, Economic Impact, and Sustainability Problem

A smaller Rotary club in a semi-rural area focused much of its service work on local projects, supplemented by participation in district and global grants. One of its primary initiatives involved funding and supporting clean water systems in underserved communities, both locally and internationally.

The club contributed approximately $30,000 annually to water-related projects and provided volunteer support for planning and implementation. While the projects were widely viewed as successful, the club faced a familiar challenge: it could not clearly quantify or compare the impact of its efforts.

In particular, the club struggled to answer several questions:

- How does a water project compare to other types of interventions?
- What is the long-term value of improved water access?
- How should environmental benefits be considered alongside human outcomes?

Strategic Questions

The club's leadership identified several key strategic questions:

- How can we measure the full value of clean water projects, beyond installation?
- What portion of impact can be attributed to our club's contributions?
- How do economic and environmental benefits relate to human-centered impact?
- How can we prioritize between local and international projects?

Response / Process

The club adopted a multi-layered measurement approach.

First, it documented inputs, including dollars contributed and volunteer hours, and normalized these metrics on a per-member basis.

Second, it collected outcome data from project partners. A typical project provided access to clean water for approximately 1,500 to 2,000 individuals.

Third, the club applied attribution estimates. Based on funding contributions and participation, the club estimated that it was responsible for approximately 15–25 percent of each project's total impact.

Fourth, the club evaluated outcomes across three dimensions:

1. Human-centered impact
   Improved water access reduced waterborne illness, improved daily quality of life, and increased available time for education and economic activity.
2. Economic impact
   Reduced medical costs and time savings translated into increased productivity and household economic benefits.
3. Environmental impact
   Improved water systems reduced contamination and supported more sustainable resource use.

Using AI-assisted tools, the club translated these outcomes into:

- Estimated number of people benefiting from improved water access
- Approximate range of health-related benefits (e.g., reduced illness incidence)
- Estimated economic value of time savings and reduced healthcare costs
- Qualitative assessment of environmental improvements

Finally, the club translated human outcomes into a range of CIE/RIE estimates, recognizing that benefits would accrue over multiple years.

Results / Lessons Learned

This multi-dimensional approach provided several important insights.

First, it revealed the compounding nature of water projects. Benefits extended beyond immediate health improvements to include economic and social gains over time.

Second, it clarified the relationship between different types of impact. Economic and environmental benefits were significant, but they were best understood as supporting and reinforcing human-centered outcomes rather than replacing them.

Third, it improved project comparison. The club was able to compare water projects with other initiatives on a more consistent basis, supporting more informed prioritization.

Fourth, it strengthened local engagement. When members understood that a single project could improve the lives of thousands of people over multiple years, their sense of purpose and commitment increased.

Finally, it reinforced the value of a layered measurement approach. By combining inputs, outcomes, attribution, and impact metrics, the club developed a more complete and actionable understanding of its work.

This case demonstrates how service organizations can integrate human, economic, and environmental metrics without losing clarity or introducing double counting, while also highlighting the long-term, system-level benefits of well-designed interventions.

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