2016 COUNCIL GRANTS CLUBS GREATER FLEXIBILITY

Representatives from Rotary districts around the world met in Chicago in April to revise Rotary policies. They approved changes that give clubs greater flexibility in when, where, and how they meet and the types of membership they offer.

Why are these changes needed?

In some parts of the world, Rotary continues to grow at a rapid rate. In others, membership has been declining and the average age of members is increasing.

Over the past 15 years, Rotary has carried out pilot programs that have explored innovations in membership, classification, and the club experience. Consistently, in research and in the experiences of members, we have found that when clubs have more freedom to determine how they hold their meetings, who they invite to membership, and what defines engagement, the club is more vibrant and more able to grow.

All Rotary clubs will now be able to adopt the new options the Council approved by amending their bylaws. Clubs that wish to continue to follow their traditional requirements for meetings, attendance, structure, and categories of membership may do so.

Flexibility in meeting frequency, format, and attendance

Council on Legislation representatives voted overwhelmingly to eliminate limitations on how Rotary clubs conduct their meetings. They also recognize that club health is not determined by attendance alone. The RI Board and Council representatives agree that individual clubs should be able to:

- Determine the best day and time for their meetings
- Change or cancel a meeting, if the need arises
- Count service projects or social events as meetings
- Choose whether to gather in person, meet online, alternate between online and in-person meetings, or even use both formats at the same time (for example, a member could participate in an in-person meeting online through video chat)
- Amend their bylaws to either relax or tighten attendance requirements and policies of terminating members for poor attendance

Rotary clubs now have the option of reducing their meeting frequency as long as they meet in some way at least twice per month. They are still expected to forward attendance reports to the district governor within 15 days of the last meeting of each month.

The recent Council on Legislation decisions *do not* modify the current rules of the Standard Rotary Club Constitution. Clubs that want to adopt these changes will need to amend their bylaws. Clubs that wish to continue to adhere to the traditional requirements regarding meetings, attendance, structure, or categories of membership may do so.

E-clubs and Rotary clubs

Having decided to give all Rotary clubs greater flexibility as to how they meet, the 2016 Council concluded that it was no longer necessary to label them as either e-clubs or traditional clubs. For that reason, references to e-clubs have been removed from Rotary's Bylaws and the Standard Rotary Club Constitution, but e-clubs may continue to name and brand themselves as e-clubs to emphasize that they meet exclusively or primarily online.

Flexibility in Membership Types

The RI Bylaws and Standard Rotary Club Constitution provide for two types of membership: active and honorary. By amending their bylaws, clubs may offer additional membership types that are desired in the community, such as associate, corporate, family membership or others.

- Rotary International will continue to record, and grant all of the benefits of membership to, active members only who pay RI dues
- Clubs that offer additional membership categories should report these members to Rotary International as active and are responsible for paying said members' RI dues
- Clubs and districts set their own policies about these members' other financial obligations (club and district dues, meal costs, etc.), attendance requirements, and service expectations and reflect these policies in their bylaws
- Clubs determine how they accept former or transferring members, including whether they allow current Rotaractors to join

Dual Membership for Rotaractors

The Council amended the Rotary International Bylaws to permit Rotaractors who meet the qualifications of membership to join a Rotary club while remaining Rotaract members.

We hope that giving qualified young leaders a way to maintain their involvement in Rotaract, along with giving Rotary clubs greater flexibility in the format and frequency of meetings, will facilitate Rotaractors' transition to Rotary clubs. As members of the family of Rotary, Rotaractors are committed to the world community and share Rotary's goals of furthering service, world understanding, and peace.

With all of this change, is Rotary putting its reputation and brand at risk?

While the enactments adopted by the 2016 Council increase clubs' flexibility in meetings and membership categories, they don't permit clubs to deviate from Rotary's essential elements:

- We are still business, professional, and community leaders. Our qualifications for membership have not changed.
- The Object of Rotary, our basic tenets, have not changed.
- Our essence statement — join leaders, exchange ideas, and take action — have not changed.
- Our values of fellowship, integrity, diversity, service, and leadership have not changed.
- The Four-Way Test, one of our most important distinguishing features, has not changed.

The changes the Council did make are not a threat to the quality of Rotary's membership. Instead, they empower clubs to adapt to a changing environment to remain relevant in our second century of service.

When do these changes take effect?

Changes take effect 1 July 2016. Now is the time to begin discussing what changes, if any, your club might pursue to make them more relevant to current members and the business, professional, and community leaders you seek to attract.