



Holger Knaack

President, 2020-21

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Dear district governors-elect,

The RI Board of Directors met in late April and took several important actions in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health and safety of all participants in Rotary programs, meetings, and events. I wanted to share those decisions with you and ask for your support. We will need to continue to adapt to this new environment and it will be challenging, but I am confident we are learning important lessons along the way that will help Rotary make the long-term changes needed to help us thrive for decades to come.

Most importantly, the Board decided that no in-person Rotary meeting or event shall be mandatory. Anyone who feels uncomfortable attending because of the pandemic, will be permitted to skip in-person events. This is a major change for us, and an essential one if we are going to properly care for all Rotarians and Rotaractors and continue to put their health and safety first.

We all want to get back to seeing each other face to face, but we have to be especially careful, given the international nature of our connections and service. We do not know how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last or when there will be vaccine. We also have a special responsibility to be an international leader in public health. For these reasons, all conveners and organizers of Rotary meetings are asked to consider current health concerns when making decisions to hold in-person meetings. Organizers shall fully comply with all health and safety rules in effect in their location, going above and beyond local rules, when appropriate. To that end, all RI Board meetings and RI committee meetings for calendar year 2020 will be conducted virtually (and not in-person).

Rotary institutes, governor-elect, and governor-nominee trainings

Conveners are asked to follow local requirements and health and safety guidelines when deciding how to best conduct your region's institute, and governor-elect and governor-nominee trainings, either in person or virtually. I encourage you to consult your director for more information as it becomes available. Also, I know we enjoy the rich exchange of knowledge from having staff attend these events and provide in-person training. This year, Rotary staff members are not able to join institutes or governor training, except in exceptional circumstances.

President's representatives

This year, not all District conferences can be held in-person. In the interest of fairness, RI will not fund the expenses of any president's representative to a district conference for the 2020-21 Rotary year. If a district requests a president's representative, the president may appoint one from the same region of the world in which the district is located, at no cost to RI.

District governor visits

Governors are encouraged to use virtual meetings for club visits that occur during calendar year 2020. Consult your Club and District Support team for the best practices and guidelines in conducting an online club visit. There may be instances when face-to-face meetings are appropriate, but if there are any concerns regarding the health, safety and comfort of members, virtual meetings are encouraged.

Regional leader seminars

Regional leaders are also strongly encouraged to use virtual meetings for training seminars and other events during calendar year 2020.

These are tough, but necessary choices the Board made, and ones that provide us all the opportunity to get better acquainted with online technology and use it most effectively. Rotary's [Club and District Support team](#) is available to assist you in conducting online training, club visits, and club and district operations. Rotary's Learning Center also has a new Learning Topic: [Meeting Online](#), where members can share their best practices and ideas.

I know we will all come out of this crisis amazed at how differently we interact and how powerful these new technologies can be. These adaptations will help us rethink our clubs. The care that we have to show each other will be powerful too – it will demonstrate how much we need one another and why member engagement is our greatest challenge and opportunity.

I look forward to hearing how you confront the COVID-19 crisis. I strongly believe that Rotary Opens Opportunities, and sometimes we do it out of necessity.

Take care,

Holger Knaack
President, Rotary International 2020-21

CC: District Governors, District Governors-nominee

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