

ROTARY

CODE OF POLICIES

April 2023

(Containing Board Decisions Through January 2023)

Code that relates to Rotary Action Groups (Section 42.020)

Source: March 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 205; June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302

42.010.9. Youth Protection

Rotary Fellowships must protect the safety and wellbeing of all youth participating in their activities and comply with Rotary International's youth protection policies. A Rotary Fellowship may not grant membership or affiliation to a person who is known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment or who is prohibited from being a member of a Rotary club. (Upon obtaining information that a fellowship has knowingly failed to terminate the membership or affiliation of such an individual, the RI Board may terminate the Rotary Fellowship for failure to comply). (*January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113*)

Source: May 2015 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 184; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113

42.010.10. Fellowships at RI Conventions

RI will provide gratis booth and meeting space for active Rotary Fellowships in good standing, on a space available basis and when the budget permits, with the provisions that no sale of goods or exchange of funds may take place. (*November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 52*)

Source: May 2012 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 244; Amended by October 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 29; November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 52

Cross References

8.020. *Special Observances*

42.020. Rotary Action Groups

42.020.1. Purpose

A Rotary Action Group shall be an internationally organized group with subject-matter expertise and experience in a particular service area whose purpose is the advancement of the Object of Rotary by providing assistance and support to Rotary and Rotaract clubs, districts, and multidistricts in planning and implementing large-scale, community development and humanitarian service projects. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; September 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 88; May 2014 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 143; January 2016 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 123; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 115; January 2020 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 100; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.2. Relationship with Rotary International

Rotary Action Groups are a resource to clubs and districts in their specialty. Rotary Action Group activities must be in harmony with RI policy. Rotary Action Groups may not be used to promote religious beliefs, political issues, or other non-Rotary organizations, or for the sole purpose of advocacy. Recognition of a Rotary Action Group by RI in no way implies legal, financial or other obligation or responsibility on the part of RI, or any district or club. A Rotary Action Group may not act on behalf of RI, or represent or imply that it has authority to act on behalf of RI. A Rotary Action Group is not an agency of RI. Rotary Action Groups

must be self-sustaining financially, administratively, and otherwise. Rotary Action Groups may not exist or function in any country in violation of the laws of such country.

Individual Rotary Action Groups are not covered by RI insurance and are encouraged to assess their own risk and secure coverage as appropriate. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; October 2015 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58; January 2016 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 123; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.3. Governance and Membership

Rotary Action Groups must adhere to standard bylaws as approved by the Board. Rotary Action Groups shall be governed by a board of directors with at least five members. No less than 80 percent of the Rotary Action Group's board members must be active Rotarians, Rotaractors, or Peace Fellows. Up to 20 percent of the Rotary Action Group's board positions may be occupied by independent outside board member(s) who is not a Rotarian, Rotaractor, or a Peace Fellow.

Membership in the Rotary Action Group is open to any interested individual. Membership may also be offered to Rotaract clubs, Rotary clubs, and districts on an annual basis at the discretion of the Rotary Action Groups' board of directors. (*October 2022 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47*)

Source: November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; Amended by January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; January 2020 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 100; October 2022 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47

42.020.4. Obtaining Provisional Recognition as a Rotary Action Group

All prospective Rotary Action Groups must apply for provisional recognition by the Board.

To apply, the group must

- 1) Secure at least 50 prospective members representing at least five countries and three zones, who share a common interest in a specific worthwhile service activity that advances the Object of Rotary.
- 2) Submit an application, including a description of the founding members' expertise in the subject matter, the types of projects it intends to promote or conduct, and an action plan that outlines how the group plans to accomplish its service goals. At least 10 founding members must demonstrate technical or subject matter expertise in the proposed group's area of concentration.
- 3) Be organized in accordance with RI policy.
- 4) Complement the service activities of Rotarians, Rotaractors, clubs and districts and not duplicate with the purposes of an existing Rotary Action Group, RI program or Rotary Foundation program

Groups that are denied provisional recognition may not reapply for a period of two years from the date of such denial. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; *Amended by* November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.5. Requirements for Provisionally Recognized Rotary Action Groups

Within two years of the date of provisional recognition, a Rotary Action Group must demonstrate its viability by doing the following:

- 1) Provide evidence of support for at least three multi-club or district community development and humanitarian service projects
- 2) Help clubs and districts obtain partners (within or outside of Rotary) and other resources for their projects
- 3) Maintain a website with current information and resources
- 4) Meet all of the requirements and policies for Rotary Action Groups

Provisionally recognized Rotary Action Groups shall have all the rights and responsibilities of Rotary Action Groups. At the end of the two-year period, the Board may recognize or terminate the provisional Rotary Action Group. Groups that are denied recognition may not reapply for a period of two years from the date of denial. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; *Amended by* October 2018 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 115; April 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 142; September 2020 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 23; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.6 Maintaining Status as a Rotary Action Group

To maintain its status as a Rotary Action Group, a group must function in accordance with its recognized purpose and in accordance with RI policy and

- 1) Serve as a resource to clubs and districts by providing them with technical advice on project planning and implementation, developing best practices, guides, in-person and/or virtual learning opportunities.
- 2) Annually demonstrate evidence for maintaining expertise in the group.
- 3) Regularly collaborate with clubs, districts, and multidistricts on international projects in their area of specialty and annually support at least three multi-club or district humanitarian service projects. Groups shall maintain a record of their involvement and project outcomes.
- 4) Demonstrate ability to connect clubs and districts with organizations in their area of specialty.
- 5) Consistently distribute print or electronic communications to members of the Rotary Action Group.
- 6) Maintain a website with current information and resources.
- 7) Hold an annual meeting, in person or online, through which members can interact.

- 8) Submit an annual report of activities and finances, as requested by the general secretary, with a copy to its members by 1 October.
- 9) Maintain an action plan and report progress towards objectives in the annual report.

Annual reports shall be reviewed by the general secretary and the RI Programs Committee to determine whether groups are maintaining their active status. Groups that do not meet the criteria to maintain status shall be terminated by the RI Board of Directors. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2016 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 123; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; October 2018 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 115; April 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 142; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.7. Rotary Action Group Communication Policies

1. Websites

Rotary Action Groups must maintain websites that promote their activities and inform their members. Groups in formation that have not yet received recognition from the Board may organize a website to seek potential members, as long as the website clearly states that the group is not a Rotary Action Group, and does not use the Rotary Marks. Groups in formation that are denied recognition must disable these websites upon notification of the Board's decision.

2. Contact with clubs and districts

Rotary Action Groups may contact district governors district governors-elect , district international service chairs, and district Rotaract representatives. Rotary Action Groups may contact Rotary and Rotaract clubs only when a district governor grants express permission. This permission must be renewed annually with the change in district leadership.

3. Conflicts of interest

It is not permissible for a member of a Rotary Action Group to circularize on matters affecting his or her individual business interests.

4. Statement in communications and publications

Rotary Action Groups' communications (electronic and print), publications, and websites must prominently display the statement "This Rotary Action Group is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International" or similar language approved by the general secretary. This language must also be prominently included in any communications to, or agreements with, outside parties.

Following is an approved example of how such language may be incorporated into a statement describing a Rotary Action Group.

“The Rotary Action Group for Urban Concerns is a group of Rotarians whose *purpose is to mobilize Rotarians and provide global leadership to address issues such as crime, unemployment, substance abuse, and homelessness*. This Rotary Action Group operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.” (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; *Amended by* November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; September 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 88; January 2012 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 191; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 115; April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.8. Promotion of Rotary Action Groups

Rotary Action Groups shall work through the existing structure of clubs, districts, and multidistricts to support their service projects. Rotary Action Groups may list club, district, and multidistrict projects on their websites seeking financial support and provide direction on how individuals and/or organizations may contribute to those entities directly.

District governors, district International Service chairs and club presidents are encouraged to facilitate collaboration opportunities between clubs and Rotary Action Groups on projects and activities pertaining to the groups’ respective areas of specialty.

Governors-elect and club presidents-elect shall be trained in the purpose, operation, composition, and targeted expertise of Rotary Action Groups. This should include how to use Rotary Action Groups to assist clubs and districts in supporting RI strategic plan priorities. (*January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; *Amended by* January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; September 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 88; January 2016 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 123; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 87; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113

42.020.9. Independent Review of Financial Statements

Rotary Action Groups with annual gross receipts or expenditures of more than US\$25,000 or equivalent are required to provide an annual financial statement and report that has been independently reviewed by a qualified accountant or by an action group audit committee, as may be decided by the membership. This report is to be provided to the membership with a copy to the general secretary by 1 October in each year.

If an audit committee approach is selected, the committee must

- a) Be composed of at least three members who are not current officers
- b) Be composed of active Rotarians
- c) Have at least one member who is a past governor or past club president
- d) Have at least one member with accounting and audit experience
- e) Be selected by the group at its annual meeting in accordance with the procedures established by the group. (*January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; *Amended by* November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 69; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113

42.020.10. Rotary Action Group Chapters

A Rotary Action Group may form country or regional chapters to diversify involvement and increase its regional impact. The chapters must use the Rotary Action Group's RI-approved name and visual identity with a country or regional identifier.

The Rotary Action Group shall oversee its chapters and be responsible for their compliance with RI's policies. Rotary Action Group may collect dues from its chapters to offset administrative expenses incurred as a result supporting chapters. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.11. Services

Services include use of the Rotary Marks and listing in program publications and on the RI website. (*November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; September 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 88; January 2012 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 201; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 87; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80; January 2020 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 99; November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53

42.020.12. Rotary Action Groups at RI Conventions

RI will provide gratis booth and meeting space for active Rotary Action Groups in good standing, on a space available basis and when the budget permits, with the provisions that no sale of goods or exchange of funds may take place. (*November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53*)

Source: November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53

42.020.13. Suspension and Termination of Recognition

The general secretary, acting on behalf of the Board, may suspend services provided to a Rotary Action Group, with or without the consent of the group's officers or members, for failure to function in accordance with RI policy. To be reinstated, the group must address the concerns communicated by the general secretary within six months of the date of suspension. The general secretary, acting on behalf of the Board, may reinstate a suspended Rotary Action Group. In the case of non-compliance, the general secretary may recommend that the Board terminate the group.

Groups that are terminated may not reapply for a period of two years from the date of termination.

The general secretary may, acting on behalf of the Board, terminate a Rotary Action Group in cases where the group has decided to voluntarily disband.

Disbanded or terminated Rotary Action Groups shall donate any remaining funds to The Rotary Foundation. (*April 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 142*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; November 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 78; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; October 2018 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80; April 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 142

42.020.14. Rotary Action Group Dues and Fundraising

Rotary Action Groups shall disclose how dues are used in their governing documents, and on their membership application materials. Rotary Action Groups shall prepare and circulate a statement of income and expenses annually to their members.

Rotary Action Groups may have paid staff. Groups may pay staff salaries and other administrative costs through membership dues, through project administrative fees paid as part of a grant, or through donations designated for such expenses.

Rotary Action Groups may solicit funds, including on their websites, from individuals and/or organizations, provided that donations are for the purpose of supporting:

--a Rotary club, Rotaract club, district, or multidistrict project

--The Rotary Foundation

--a separate implementing organization working with Rotary or Rotaract clubs on a project (provided there is no conflict of interest between the Rotary Action Group, its officers and/or directors, and the entity receiving the funds)

Rotary Action Groups may hold donations for the groups listed above in an amount not to exceed US\$100,000. Rotary Action Groups seeking to hold funds in excess of US\$100,000 shall first obtain approval from the general secretary. (*November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; September 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 88; January 2016 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 123; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; October 2018 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80; April 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 142; November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53

42.020.15. Rotary Action Groups and Other Organizations

1. Grant-seeking policy

Rotary Action Groups approaching other organizations for funds in excess of US\$25,000 shall first provide a draft copy to the general secretary and obtain express approval prior to submitting any formal applications. This provision also applies to funds that will be disbursed to a third party organization working with the group.

2. Cooperative relationship policy

Rotary Action Groups approaching other organizations with the intention of establishing formal, written cooperative relationships or other agreements shall first provide a draft copy to the general secretary and obtain express approval in advance of any formal action. (*January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; February 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 159; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80

Cross References

36.010.3. *Contact with Other Organizations*

42.020.16. Incorporation of Rotary Action Groups

The advisability of incorporation is a matter the members of a Rotary Action Group should determine in light of their activities. Applications for incorporation must be submitted to

the general secretary for review prior to submission. The articles of incorporation, or equivalent corporate document, of a Rotary Action Group must include a statement to the effect that the group is not an activity or agency of RI and must be in accordance with RI policy. (*January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137*)

Source: June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 302; Amended by November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; January 2011 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 137

42.020.17. Rotary Action Group Advocacy Guidelines

Rotarians are advocates for ending polio and for improving lives through service in Rotary's areas of focus. Rotary Action Groups are organized with the purpose of supporting clubs and districts in planning and implementing large-scale, community development and humanitarian service projects in a particular domain in which their members have expertise. As part of their work, it is understood that RAGs promote awareness of an issue and advocate for action to address the issue. When dealing with governments for which a particular issue is politically sensitive, RAGs are expected to avoid taking partisan positions and are encouraged to submit suggested calls to action to Rotary International for review." (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: January 2018 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 102; Amended by April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

42.020.18. Youth Protection

Rotary Action Groups must protect the safety and wellbeing of all youth participating in their activities and comply with Rotary International's youth protection policies. A Rotary Action Group may not grant membership or affiliation to a person who is known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment or who is prohibited from being a member of a Rotary or Rotaract club. (Upon obtaining information that a group has knowingly failed to terminate the membership or affiliation of such an individual, the RI Board may terminate the Rotary Action Group for failure to comply). (*November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53*)

Source: May 2014 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 143; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; November 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 53

Cross References

2.120. *Youth Protection*

26.120. *Harassment-free Environment at Meetings, Events, or Activities*

Article 34. *Rotary Marks*

42.020.19. Diversity and Inclusion

Rotary Action Groups are strongly encouraged to be inclusive:

- a) to participants from all backgrounds regardless of their age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- b) when approached by other groups of Rotarians, Rotaractors and alumni working in the shared area of concentration by incorporating their expertise, creating leadership opportunities, and helping elevate their cause through subcommittees, campaigns, or signature programs. (*April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157*)

Source: April 2021 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 157

Cross References

26.130. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy Statement for Rotary International

40.050.1. Definition of Rotary Alumni

Article 34. Rotary Marks

42.030. Incorporation Guidelines For Global Networking Groups

The following recommended minimum guidelines apply to all Global Networking Groups that choose to incorporate:

1. The name of the incorporated Global Networking Group shall be the same as the name approved by the RI Board
2. The corporation shall be a not-for-profit entity, and it shall pay no dividend and no part of its money, property or other assets shall be distributed to its members, directors, or officers
3. Where any provision of the corporate documents of the incorporated Global Networking Group is not in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, or policies of RI, the terms of the constitution, bylaws, or policies of RI shall prevail at all times
4. All members of the Global Networking Group shall be members of the incorporated entity
5. The initial membership of the Global Networking Group shall be the members of the Global Networking Group as of the time of the incorporation. The addition or removal of a member from a Global Networking Group pursuant to the Global Networking Group's governing document shall immediately and automatically result in a corresponding change in the membership of the corporation
6. The board of directors and officers of the Global Networking Group corporation shall be limited to members of the Global Networking Group
7. The number and terms of the directors shall be as required by local law and as provided for by the incorporated Global Networking Group's corporate documents
8. The board of the Global Networking Group at the time of the incorporation shall be the board of the incorporated group. Incorporated Rotary Action Groups must have at least five board members. No less than 80 percent of the incorporated Rotary Action Group's board members must be active Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Peace Fellows. Up to 20 percent of the incorporated Rotary Action Group's board positions may be occupied by a board member who is not a Rotarian, Rotaractor, or a Peace Fellow. Incorporated Rotary Fellowships must have at least three board members, chaired by an active Rotarian, Rotaractor, or a Peace Fellow. The Global Networking Group may elect such other officers as required by local law and as provided for in its corporate documents

9. The chair shall report annually to the members on the status of the Global Networking Group incorporation

10. The Global Networking Group corporation is not an activity or agency of RI.

11. The Global Networking Group corporation shall immediately and automatically cease operations and begin dissolution upon directive of the RI Board or upon the approval of the members of the corporation. The chair shall provide the Board notice of a decision by the Global Networking Group to dissolve the corporation, and shall provide a final report upon the completion of the dissolution process. (*October 2022 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47*)

Source: November 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 76; *Amended by* January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 87; January 2017 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 113; January 2019 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 80; October 2022 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47

Cross References

32.090.5. General Secretary Authority to Incorporate Global Networking Groups

