

Educational Reading #1

How Rotary Is Organized: From Club to Rotary International

Although many people know their local Rotary club well, fewer understand how Rotary is organized around the world. The structure is designed to support clubs while allowing them to maintain considerable independence.

Everything begins with the **Rotary Club**. The club is the heart of Rotary. It is where members meet, develop friendships, identify community needs, and carry out service projects. Every Rotarian belongs to a club.

Clubs are grouped into **Districts**, each led by a District Governor who serves a one-year term. The District Governor visits every club, provides leadership and training, encourages membership growth, promotes Foundation giving, and helps clubs succeed. Districts also organize leadership training, youth programs, conferences, and grant opportunities.

Several districts are grouped into **Zones**. Zone leaders provide leadership development, facilitate communication between districts, and help identify future Rotary leaders. While zones do not directly govern clubs, they play an important role in strategic planning and leadership training.

At the highest level is **Rotary International (RI)**, headquartered in Evanston, Illinois. Rotary International is governed by a Board of Directors led by the Rotary International President, who also serves a one-year term. The RI Board establishes policies, supports clubs worldwide, and promotes Rotary's global initiatives.

Separate from Rotary International—but closely connected—is **The Rotary Foundation**. The Foundation has its own Board of Trustees and manages charitable donations, grants, scholarships, and humanitarian programs such as PolioPlus and Rotary Peace Centers.

This organizational structure allows Rotary to combine local flexibility with global coordination. Clubs decide which projects best meet their communities' needs while benefiting from the resources and partnerships available through districts, zones, Rotary International, and the Foundation.

One of Rotary's greatest strengths is that ideas often move upward as well as downward. Successful projects developed by a single club may later inspire clubs around the world.

Every level of Rotary exists for one purpose—to help clubs succeed in serving their communities and advancing Rotary's mission of creating lasting change.