

Future Vision Plan

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It has been a few years since I was sitting where you are today, but I vividly remember my experience at the International Assembly. It was full of excitement and one that I'll never forget. It brought many new friends from every corner of the globe and gave me the opportunity to witness firsthand the true internationality of Rotary for the first time. It also presented a tremendous challenge. I remember the massive amount of information that was presented, the outstanding speakers in the plenary sessions, and the dedicated training leaders. The Rotary experience never ends.

Today, my friends, I have the pleasure of sharing with you some exciting information about our Rotary Foundation and encouraging each one of you to join The Rotary Foundation in its vision to build "A Foundation for the Future."

As a member of the Future Vision Committee for the past two years, I can tell you that the work that the committee is doing is the most fulfilling and challenging, yet frustrating and exhausting, that I have ever done in Rotary. When I return home after these meetings, I am not only fulfilled but completely worn out, as the meetings are always long and spirited. The work that has been completed thus far has been comprehensive. I hope you have some familiarity with the Future Vision Plan. Regardless of your level of knowledge, I encourage you to visit the Foundation booth here at the assembly to learn more details of the plan and to visit Rotary's Web site to find more information on those details.

Today, I get to share with you my excitement about this unprecedented opportunity for our Foundation in the coming years. I am confident that each of you possesses the resilience to adapt to the change being considered for our new Foundation and challenge you to be very open to the ideas being considered.

So, you ask, "Why the change?"

Based on frequent and focused feedback from Rotarians worldwide, the Trustees recognized the need to reassess our Foundation's current programs and operations and to envision its potential in our second century of service beginning in 2017. Rotarians worldwide have asked for a more strategic approach in leveraging the Rotary brand, our expertise, our leadership, and the commitment we bring to the table. The Trustees listened to these concerns and formulated the future vision based on this feedback.

As my district governor classmate, Past Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair Bob Scott, said, "Being everything to everyone has left the Foundation struggling to realize its mission." The Rotary Foundation's programs have not changed significantly since they were established. Scholarships began in 1947; both Group Study Exchange and the Matching Grants programs began in 1965. And — guess what? — they all operate in much the same way as when they began. Yet the world has changed significantly since these programs first started. Humanitarian and educational needs are growing, and The Rotary Foundation can help Rotarians respond more effectively.

The Foundation's significant growth has also been a challenge. We have been a victim of our own success! The Foundation has to remain relevant to address priority world needs of those most in need: the children, the poor, the hungry, and the less fortunate with limited resources and opportunities.

We must continually strive to improve our Foundation, making it stronger, more prominent, and more accessible. We must focus our work on positively impacting those who need assistance in making their lives more productive and successful, which will make the world a better place for all.

The Rotary Foundation has gained significant recognition in recent years because of its leadership in polio eradication. Our partnership with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has greatly enhanced Rotary's image in the world of international development.

The Future Vision Plan offers the opportunity to deliver the kind of outcomes that will help the Foundation and its work be more recognizable and have a global impact.

The Rotary Foundation has focused on this transformation to integrate the passion and commitment of our 1.2 million plus Rotarians, to leverage the strengths and successes of our current Foundation service projects and activities focused on "Doing Good in the World," and to address the major concerns expressed by Rotarians.

So let's talk about the emotions and stages of change we understand will occur as we move forward in the Future Vision Plan. I am sure you would agree with me that change brings discomfort. Whether or not we perceive this change to be "good" or "bad," I can guarantee you that there will be a sense of loss of what was. Maybe we even doubt the facts, doubt our doubts, and struggle to find information about the change that we believe is valid. Folks, I admit that I am not absolutely, 100 percent committed to every aspect of the plan. However, I have always said and repeat this afternoon that the plan as it stands today will not be the final plan after the pilot phase. But I can tell you all that I do believe we need to change and recognize that the Future Vision Plan is moving our Foundation in the right direction.

As we progress in this initiative, the change and all it means will hopefully become clearer and start to settle in. And where we are today is a pivotal place; we must move on with the change and discover the possibilities that change presents. I encourage each one of you to do so.

At the next stage, the pilot phase, we will see and understand the light at the end of the tunnel. We will have a new sense of control and hope. We will be optimistic about the good outcomes, because we have choices in the plan. And, in the end, we will understand the change and be more confident. We are all thinking logically, and our behavior is much more productive in moving our Foundation forward. We have insight into the rewards of the change and are successful in building the new Foundation. What a wonderful success story!

Now, you may be asking yourself, "What are the benefits? What's in this for me?" Let me share some key points that may address your questions:

The Rotary Foundation's mission clearly defines the scope of activity in the areas of peace and international understanding, health, education, and poverty alleviation. The Future Vision Plan directly supports the mission of The Rotary Foundation by promoting activities within these key areas. I believe Rotarians support this mission in the work they do today. We are laying "A Foundation for the Future" that will allow Rotarians more flexibility in effectively responding to the growing needs around the world, whether in their local communities or in a community on the other side of the globe. The plan attempts to optimize contributions to our Foundation so that clubs and districts can maximize the use of funds for greater impact and sustainability in their work.

By leveraging our resources and focusing on significant outcomes, Rotarians and the Foundation can reach more people in need and make a more enduring impact. It is important to remember that all existing humanitarian and educational activities are possible under the new grant structure — but in a different way. The Trustees and other senior leaders recognize the significance of the change that is being put forth. The change affects (1) the grassroots — Rotarians, clubs, and districts; (2) the leadership; and (3) the Secretariat services. The plan emphasizes a new way of doing business to achieve our mission of Doing Good in the World.

You will learn more about the pilot in the breakout session this afternoon. The intent of the pilot is to find out what works and what doesn't. The pilot is a critical step in validating the strategies and assumptions in the plan. We are confident in the plan, but we also recognize that it will have challenges and unknowns that will be addressed and evaluated by the districts that agree to participate in the pilot.

After this assembly, the Foundation will be asking interested districts to apply to be a pilot district and help implement the Future Vision Plan. Once again, this will be a grassroots effort. That will ensure Rotarian commitment when the Future Vision Plan is implemented throughout the entire Rotary world.

The Foundation believes that the Future Vision Plan will:

1. Simplify the Foundation programs and administration to make it easier to understand and provide better ways for Rotarians to do good in the world
2. Focus the service interests of Rotarians and the Rotary movement to align service outcomes with the mission of the Foundation
3. Increase ownership of Foundation activities at the local level
4. Provide the necessary funding to achieve the goals by leveraging resources of all stakeholders and potential partners
5. Heighten recognition, visibility, and fundraising capabilities

Our mission is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty. That's what the Future Vision Plan is all about. We think The Rotary Foundation is poised for unprecedented change, unequalled opportunity, and unparalleled growth, and the Future Vision Plan is the catalyst that will take Rotary and its Foundation to unimagined new heights. This will all be made possible because of your efforts and the efforts of Rotarians worldwide to help improve our Foundation.

We look forward to working with a diverse and representative group of districts to help us build our Foundation for the future.

Thank you and good luck in your year as governor!