

**From:** Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair K.R. Ravindran <grants@rotary.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 22, 2020 9:01 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Updates to Rotary's Global Grant Program



Dear chairs of district Rotary Foundation committees and the subcommittees for grants, scholarships, and vocational training teams:

It would be an understatement to say the world is facing a global crisis of a magnitude never seen before by this generation.

Many of our communities lack funding and are struggling to provide the very services and qualities that would otherwise have made life comfortable. Many of our own members have been seriously affected, both in terms of their health and in terms of their finances.

In these circumstances, The Rotary Foundation Board of Trustees must make decisions that enable our organization to persevere and thrive.

We cannot do that without your complete help, support, and understanding.

Thus, I have some important updates to share with you about the global grant program.

The global grant program of our Foundation has been an enormous success. In 2013-14, when global grants were introduced, the Foundation awarded 868 global grants worth \$47.3 million. By 2018-19, the number of global grants awarded had risen to 1,403, worth \$86.6 million. You will note that while demand for our grants had shot up by 80 percent, corresponding Annual Fund contributions never kept pace, showing only a 7 percent increase during this same time period. Therein lies our fundamental problem.

Last year, for instance, we fully expended our World Fund budget for global grants by mid-May 2020. At that point, we realized we had become victims of our own success.

This year, we have almost \$12 million less in our World Fund for global grants. And that has nothing to do with COVID-19; it's because our Annual Fund contribution two years ago decreased significantly, especially after the sterling performance the prior year, which incidentally happened to be our centennial year.

After much thought and discussion, this month, your Trustees initiated a new policy that eliminated the match on cash contributions to global grants. We knew it would hurt, but we had little choice. The alternate options, which we carefully examined to make up for a \$12 million projected shortfall, were even more dismal. Hopefully, we will be able to restore this as soon as contributions grow and funds become available.

As we look to the year ahead, your Trustees naturally want to ensure that the World Fund we have can fund as many global grants as possible. Being prudent managers though, we also had to consider how we will react if demand exceeds supply again.

To that end, your Trustees have taken the following decisions:

***Elimination of a World Fund minimum***

Effective immediately, there is no minimum World Fund match for global grants.

Global grants are now defined as having a minimum budget of \$30,000 and a maximum World Fund award of \$400,000. This means that applicants can use a combination of District Designated Funds (DDF), cash, and/or directed gifts and endowment earnings to fund a global grant. The Foundation will provide a 100 percent World Fund match for all DDF contributions.

We hope this new policy will make it easier for applicants to put together financing for a global grant since they are not constrained by the necessity of securing at least \$15,000 in DDF to receive \$15,000 in World Fund.

For example, under the new policy, grant financing might look like this:

\$10,000 DDF + \$10,000 World Fund + \$10,000 cash contributions = \$30,000 global grant

*Or*

\$5,000 DDF + \$5,000 World Fund + \$20,000 cash contributions = \$30,000 global grant

***Alternative financing when it's needed***

Should we again find ourselves in the situation where demand exceeds World Fund supply, we encourage grant sponsors to finance their global grants without a World Fund match.

This means that sponsors can use DDF, cash, directed gifts, or endowment earnings to make up the minimum \$30,000 budget that they need for their grant activity. While everyone would understandably prefer to receive a World Fund match, this proposal allows those with DDF to be able to look for alternative sources of funding and still access DDF for global grant activity, even if no World Fund is available.

Of course all of the usual global grant eligibility criteria would still apply to these grants. Global grants are the Foundation's premiere and flagship grant activity, so the quality standards for these activities will never be compromised.

In conclusion, let me again draw your attention to the challenging times we had been presented with – not that you needed to be reminded.

It would be appropriate then to commend to you the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand at times of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy.”

I pray that you will be well and you will be safe, my friends. We have an interesting year ahead of us. But we will endure.

Sincerely,

K.R. Ravindran

Chair, The Rotary Foundation 2020-21

cc: Rotary Board of Directors, The Rotary Foundation Trustees, Rotary Foundation Programs Committee, regional Rotary Foundation coordinators, district governors, district governors-elect

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