



# Sister Cities Fact Sheet

## **What is a Sister City?**

A sister city relationship is a long-term, cooperative relationship between two cities in different countries through which cultural, educational, business, and technical exchanges take place. It is formalized when two mayors (or highest elected/appointed officials) sign a memorandum of understanding establishing a sister city relationship.

The mission of sister cities is to promote peace through mutual respect, cooperation, and understanding—one individual, one community at a time. The foundation of sister cities is citizen diplomacy, that idea that individual citizens have the right if not the responsibility to represent their own communities around the world and in international affairs.

## **Who Participates in Sister City Organizations?**

Anyone! Most sister city organizations are nonprofits staffed by volunteers from throughout the community, including students, teachers, businesspeople, artists, municipal employees, elected officials, health professionals, retirees, and everyone in between.

## **Why Have a Sister City?**

A sister city program is an incredible opportunity to travel, build partnerships, promote peace and understanding, and have fun. The benefits to individuals and the community at large include:

- Make new friends around the world, learn about other cultures as well as your own
- Offers young people their first opportunity to travel abroad as a guest and not just a tourist
- Allows municipal employees and other professionals to learn from their international counterparts, and to promote their own best practices around the world
- Art and cultural exchanges
- International business opportunities for local firms
- Flexibility of sister cities allows for almost any type of exchange, and lets people pursue activities that they are passionate about
- Creates a civic organization that anyone in the community can participate in, regardless of profession or background
- Be a part of a decades-long peacebuilding movement started by one of our greatest Presidents

## **Support at the National Level**

Founded by President Eisenhower in 1956, Sister Cities International is the national nonprofit, volunteer organization serving the sister city programs of over 500 U.S. cities with more than 2,000 partnerships in 145 countries worldwide. SCI is the hub for intuitional knowledge & best practices, and provides staff support, networking, and other assistance to assist private citizens, municipal officials, and business leaders involved in local sister city programs.



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The following are just a sample of the hundreds of activities sister city programs do every year.

## **Arts and Culture**

### **Phoenix Sister Cities Spread Disabilities Awareness around the Globe**

The first of its kind in the sister city network, the Phoenix Sister Cities' Disabilities Awareness Committee works to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities in communities around the world. One way that they engage the disability community is through the International Competition for Artists with Disabilities. The Art Competition gives people with disabilities a chance to showcase their talents and express themselves, and the artwork submitted each year also shows the similarities and differences between the cultures of each city involved, as each artist interprets the annual theme. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## **Youth and Education**

### **Young Digital Diplomats from Cork Inspire Tech Innovation in San Francisco**

In 2014, five middle school students and junior computer coding experts from Cork, Ireland visited San Francisco, California to exchange coding insights and other Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) activities. Combining youth, education, and technology, the exchange opened up new doors for all involved. The Irish students had a chance to teach their peers at a school in San Francisco how to code and to also learn from senior engineers in the coding field. This digital sister city exchange was celebrated throughout San Francisco and Cork by community members, parents, teachers, and students alike. [Click here](#) to read more.

## **Business and Trade**

For the past several years, the Sausalito Sister City Program has been focused on mentoring and networking with entrepreneurial business women in Vina del Mar, Chile, working principally with an organization of women called Asociacion Gremial de Empresarias y Profesionales (AGEP-V). A delegation recently visited Vina del Mar to receive special recognition during an International Day of the Woman event and to meet with women entrepreneurs who visited Sausalito the following month to exchange business ideas and learning. [Click here](#) to read more.

### **Atlanta-Toulouse International Startup Exchange**

In 2016, the Atlanta Mayor's Office of International Affairs and Invest Atlanta launched the first Atlanta International Startup Exchange with Atlanta sister city Toulouse, France and has expanded in 2017 to include sister city Newcastle in the UK. The two week residency program provides selected companies a platform for global expansion and direct access to two of the top aerospace and tech industries clusters. [Click here](#) to read more.

## **Humanitarian/Municipal Exchange**

### **Leipzig Helps Sister City Houston with Charity Concert**

After Hurricane Harvey blew through southeastern Texas and beyond, a sister city in Germany stepped up to help its American counterparts with a charity concert. [Click here](#) to read more.