

A Publicity Committee can help your sister city organization promote its activities, educate the community about your sister city relationships, recruit volunteers, and raise funds. But how do you organize a publicity committee? Here are a few tips.

## Responsibilities of a Publicity Committee may include:

- writing, editing, and distributing news releases to the news media;
- maintaining an up-to-date list of news media for the sister city organization;
- creating displays, posters, fliers, brochures, and other branding materials;
- maintaining and updating a comprehensive mailing list
- creating and managing a website with up-to-date information on the organization and its activities;
- designing, writing, and editing a print and/or e-newsletter;
- managing special recruitment efforts and campaigns (e.g., a campaign to find host families, a campaign to recruit more volunteers);
- maintaining a photo archive or scrapbooks;
- organizing staff displays and exhibits at community events to educate the public about the sister city organization;
- asking local media outlets to run public service announcements (PSAs) (see toolkit on PSAs); and/or
- coordinating visiting community organizations to talk about the sister city organization.

## Committee Members

Remember that your Committee members are usually volunteers donating their time to help the sister city organization. They may need advanced notice to help staff with a sister city exhibit or a community festival or to have the newsletter ready for printing and mailing or emailing by a deadline. Because many publicity committees need specialized skills, it can be challenging to find talented individuals who are willing to donate their time. You may be able to recruit volunteers from public relations students at a university or a local professional association for graphic, advertising, or public relations professionals.

Young people are often one of the most untapped human resources available to volunteer organizations. Ask a high school yearbook editor to help with the layout of the newsletter or a teen to help with the website.

## Assigning Committee Duties

Your committee should elect a chairperson who is responsible for the overall functioning of the committee. As potential activities arise, the chair may need to phone committee members individually to ask for assistance. Quite often, individuals on Publicity Committees get into “niche zones,” with only one or two people always working on the newsletter, the displays, or media relations. Allow people to work in the areas in which they are talented and skilled. Encourage them and thank them repeatedly for their support and assistance. Even if people get into “niche” modes in which they only work on one or two types of projects, encourage them to help with other activities so they can stretch and grow.

## Coordinating Efforts

Media outreach work should be coordinated with other parts of the sister city organization. For example, if a large auction is being planned as a Fundraising Committee wants the Publicity Committee to issue a news release about it, they should discuss issuing the release ahead of time. You do not want to have multiple

press releases being issued at the same time from different parts of the same organization - this creates potential for confusion and the news media may not understand who to contact about the event.

Deadlines should be clearly published so individuals working in different parts of your organization know when to send information in for a newsletter or e-newsletter.

Contact information for submissions should be clear. It is often very convenient to ask sister city committees to send updates to an e-mail address electronically, so they do not have to be re-typed. In many organizations, it can be difficult to get spontaneous submissions for newsletter articles. Often a Publicity Committee will have several members assist its newsletter editor or graphic artist with rounding up newsletter articles.

## Committee Materials

It is often helpful to keep a notebook for the Publicity Committee that holds minutes, member contact information, a copy of every press release issued, and copies of all printed publications and materials. This can be organized a variety of ways, and provides continuity as committee leadership changes. Folders or notebooks can also be distributed to all the committee members if desired.

## Committee Meetings

Schedule committee meetings when most people can attend. Start a meeting with a brief icebreaker so people can get to know more about each other. An agenda should be drawn up by the chair and followed. Minutes or notes should be taken. In this day and age, it is very easy for notes summarizing a meeting to be sent via e-mail to all of the committee members after the meeting, and this keeps absent members connected to what is going on.

Your committee may want to meet monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, or biannually. How often your committee meets is contingent upon how active your organization is and how frequently your committee members communicate in between meetings.