

**FORMING COMMITTEES TOOLKIT**

**Overview**

The local sister cities organization’s board of directors does not work alone; all work should be divided among task forces and committees. The level of the activity in a sister cities program determines the frequency of committee meetings. Depending on the program’s agenda and goals, committees may meet bimonthly, monthly, or quarterly. Special seasonal activities, such as summer youth exchanges, may prompt additional meetings. Typically, the board of directors meets monthly, and all volunteers come together at least once a year to review the past year's activities, to elect officers and to decide upon program activities for the coming year.

**Standing Committees – Oversee the internal management of the overall program**

Commonly, a sister cities program has two standing committees: the executive committee and the membership committee. The rules and responsibilities of these committees are outlined below.

**Executive Committee**

* Manages the organization when the board is not in session
* Acts by a quorum and majority vote, unless otherwise specified
* Has members that are appointed by the board and serve at its discretion
* Has powers and duties that are spelled out in the charter (when the board of directors is in session, the power of the executive committee is suspended)
* Is subject to the same rules that control the board of directors

**Membership Committee**

* Encourages new people to join the program
* Assists new members in finding a place in the organization
* Sets goals for the growth of the organization's membership
* Conducts the annual membership drive

**Administrative Committees – Assigned to a particular program area**

There are many ways to organize the administrative duties of your program. Listed below are some ideas on how to coordinate committees to take care of these responsibilities:

**Public Relations Committee**

* Creates positive attitudes and opinions of your program
* Serves as the information link to your community and media (this includes writing news releases, developing personal contacts with reporters and responding to requests for information)
* Arranges speaking engagements for sister city volunteers with other civic organizations
* Prepares newsletters, information brochures, flyers, and other printed material
* Prepares slide shows and video presentations
* Plans and carries out special events

**Fundraising Committee**

* Solicits donations from local organizations, foundations, and corporations
* Plans and organizes events to raise money

Importantly, while the fundraising committee may be primarily responsible for fundraising activities, everyone within your program should be prepared to assist.

**Cultural Programs and Exchanges Committee**

* Plans cultural events, such as educational exhibits, photographic displays, musical and theater performances and language classes
* Develops cultural exchanges with its sister city counterparts
* Highlights and promotes the important role that the sister cities program and volunteers perform in the community in terms of cross-cultural exchange

**Municipal and Congressional Relations Committee**

* Serves as the direct liaison with City Hall and municipal government departments
* Establishes and develops relationships with the state and federal congressional representatives

**Professional/Technical Committee**

* Arranges professional and technical internships and exchanges between the sister cities
* Serves as the clearinghouse for counterpart professionals in both cities
* Develops professional and technical training projects
* Advises the programs on issues involving professional and technical development issues in the sister city programs with affiliates in developing countries may use this committee to lead assistance efforts

**Trade and Commerce Committee**

* Develops trade and business exchanges, seminars, exhibitions, and trade fairs with businesses in the sister city
* Acts as the liaison with the local chamber of commerce
* Promotes industries and exports of the sister cities to local industries
* Develops relationships with sponsor's economic interest in SCI

**Hosting Committee**

* Handles protocol for international visitors
* Arranges tours, cultural outings and homestays for visitors from the sister cities
* Organizes receptions for sister city visitors
* Arranges for visitors to meet their professional counterparts

**Education and Youth Exchange Committee**

* Serves as the liaison with schools (primary, secondary, post-secondary), colleges and universities in the community
* Promotes “sister school” linkages and the introduction of the sister cities program into the city’s educational curriculum
* Organizes youth and academic programs and exchanges between the sister cities

**Youth Chapter**

* Encourages active representation and participation of youth in the sister cities program (there should be at least one adult advisor for this division)
* Youth participants set their own guidelines and organize activities with support and assistance from the adult committees
* Nominates one representative per affiliation to serve on the SCI National Youth Program Assembly

**Virtual Committee**

A growing popular committee is made up of individuals with an interest and talent related to technology. The Virtual Committee assists with online and virtual events. Technical expertise is necessary for carrying out successful virtual events. These events allow more individuals to get involved with sister cities. Zoom is a popular platform for these events.

**Other Committees**

Other committees may include a history and archives committee, an audit committee, and an advisory committee. In addition, SCI encourages the local sister cities program to maintain close contact with the national office by appointing a committee or person to serve as the liaison between the program and the state representative and SCI. The liaison is responsible for keeping SCI informed about local program activities and submitting local newsletters, articles, photos, videos, and other materials for SCI to share with the network and to include in its publications. The Liaison works closely with the State Representative.

**Special Committees**

Special committees are formed sometimes on a onetime basis, or as events come up that may need special attention for a finite period. Two examples are:

**City Selection Committee**

* Establishes criteria for the selection of future sister cities (SCI has a list of criteria that the committee may use as a guideline in drafting its local criteria for future city selection. Common criteria include population size, geography (e.g. mountain resorts or a ports), historical connection, previous collaboration by other organizations, similar names and similar industries/exports).
* Decides whether a proposal for a new sister city meets the program’s established criteria
* Recommends proposals for new sister cities to the board of directors (this recommendation is then presented to the mayor for approval)

**Nominating Committee**

* Is appointed preceding an election for the board of directors
* Interviews potential candidates and defines the job description and obligation of board members
* Presents a slate of board of directors’ candidates to the general membership and conducts the election of new directors