

**SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL
CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHEET
How to Build and Sustain a Successful Youth Program**

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Purpose

This assessment instrument is designed to be used by your community to undertake a relatively quick assessment of how well you are building and sustaining a successful youth program. It is designed to be used within your community, as well as for specific sister city partnerships. The outcomes from this assessment should enable your community to better focus its resources, both human and financial, with the objective of significantly improving your local sister city organization's youth program.

This instrument is not a strategic planning instrument. You may wish to use this instrument in the context of a strategic planning process. However, the instrument is specifically designed to allow you to use this at a regular meeting or at a special meeting of your sister city leadership, and you should be able to complete the assessment within a two-hour time frame.

The assessment should result in a better understanding of how well you are building and sustaining a successful youth program. Ideally, this instrument should also be used by your sister city partner community, and the results of both assessments should be shared between the communities.

Important Ground Rules and Principles

This instrument should be administered by a volunteer facilitator who is not involved in a leadership position within your sister city organization; however, they should be familiar enough with your organization to be able to administer the process. This is extremely important. Such an individual may be found within your local government or within organizations such as the United Way, colleges or other non-profit organizations.

In addition:

- Do your best to have as many of your sister city volunteers and key local government officials participate in this process as possible.
- All viewpoints are welcomed and valued. There are no right and wrong answers.
- Keep focused on developing an action plan that can result in concrete steps to improve the capacity of your sister city organization.
- Do not attempt to solve all the issues that emerge from this assessment. It is strongly recommended that a limited number of action items be perused at one time.
- You can use this assessment instrument more than once – conducting an assessment on an annual basis is ideal.

Process

- 1) The instrument should be given to everyone at least one week prior to the meeting, and everyone should bring a completed copy of the assessment instrument to the meeting.

2) At the meeting:

- Flip charts and “dot” identification should be used to quickly compile the results. (There should be a flip chart page for each table in the assessment tool. Have each person place a dot sticker on each chart that matches their selection on the completed copy they brought to the meeting.)
- Once the information on the assessment form has been compiled on the flip charts the results should be discussed in detail. This should take place in sub-groups of no more than 8.
- Each sub-group should answer the following two questions:
 - What are the three most important areas our organization should focus its energy and resources on in order to significantly improve the capacity of our sister city organization?
 - Within each of the three priority areas, what are two specific action items that can be taken over the next six months?
- Each sub-group should report its findings and recommendations to the whole group, allowing for a good dialogue to occur, but making sure that the two specific questions are addressed with clarity.
- The whole group, either through consensus, “dot” voting or some other process should:
 - Select no more than three areas for immediate improvement.
 - Select two action items under each priority area.
 - Designate a lead individual and a volunteer task force to work on each of the action items and to complete their work in a timeframe of no longer than 6 months. Periodic updates should be given at subsequent meetings.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Place an X next to the description that best fits your sister city organization this particular point in time.	
Description	X
1) Outstanding: We should be used by SCI as a model organization.	
2) Robust, Expanding and Improving: If we continue on our present course we should become a model sister city organization.	
3) Increasing Levels of Commitment and Performance: We are moving in a positive direction with good energy. Need to stay focused and on course.	
4) New Program: We are a new program and need to get off on a positive track.	
5) Cruising but unsure where the future will take us: We have a small youth program, but we do not have a strategy/plan for improving/increasing youth participation.	
6) Stagnant and living off past performance: We once had a significant focus upon youth, but it is not growing. We focus more attention on our past accomplishments rather than future goals.	
7) Never got off the ground: We have never taken advantage of our great enthusiasm and little has been accomplished to expand and diversify our youth program.	
8) Declining: We are doing less, involving fewer people and our organizational capacity is headed in the wrong direction.	
9) Need to immediately “jump start”: This is our last chance to get things going in the youth arena.	
10) Defunct: Our organization has never had a youth program. We need to start over and make this a core objective of our sister city organization.	
11) Other: Please specify.	

KEY FACTORS TO INCORPORATING PUBLICITY AND RECOGNITION INTO YOUR SISTER CITY PROGRAM

Key Factors	Select your top 3 priorities
1) Committing to youth, both programmatically and organizationally—this needs to be articulated as a priority for our sister city organization	
2) Developing a strategy for reaching out/communicating with the youth in our community to better understand their interests in participating in international exchanges and sister city programs	
3) Offering a youth program that can capture the attention of youth in our community and demonstrate a sister city commitment to youth	
4) Bringing youth into our organizational structure in terms of membership and leadership/governance	
5) Working in partnership with other organizations in our community that have a commitment to youth and might have an interest in sister city programs—for example, boy or girl scouts, 4-H, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc.	
6) Tapping into the incredible energy and talent of the youth in our community to strengthen and expand our sister city programs	
7) Taking advantage of the youth opportunities that are offered through SCI	
8) Creating the organizational infrastructure, which will allow us to effectively communicate with the youth in our community	
9) Launching a “sister city youth campaign” around a given project or activity	
10) Promoting inclusiveness by reaching out to diverse sectors of youth in our community and to welcome/encourage their active participation	
11) Please identify any other Key Factors	
12) Please identify any other Key Factors	
13) Please identify any other Key Factors	

KEY FACTORS AND ACTION ITEMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Once you have selected the top three key factors, decide on two action items for each that can be implemented in the next six months. Below you will find some examples of possible action items; please add any others that are appropriate for your community. **For the purposes of this assessment during this workshop, please circle the action items that you feel are the most important for your community.**

1) Committing to youth, both programmatically and organizationally—this needs to be articulated as a priority for our sister city organization

- Hold a Board retreat focused on youth—don’t forget to invite young people to participate
- Clearly identify and brainstorm the two different roles that youth can play. The first is participating in youth programs, and the second is participating in the governance of our sister city organization

- Set specific goals that can be achieved—this may start with an assessment of youth interest, program opportunities, and partnerships
- Identify the best techniques for reaching out and communicating with the youth in our community—remember, they love computers and the Internet
- Agree that a youth agenda item will be incorporated into every Board meeting
- Others—please list

2) Developing a strategy for reaching out/communicating with the youth in our community to better understand their interests in participating in international exchanges and sister city programs

- Involve youth in this assessment process—they will point us in the right direction
- Get examples of successful youth programs from other sister city programs—SCI will help us in this review
- Consider partnering with specific schools, colleges, or universities to reach as many young people as possible
- Create a website, and conduct a youth survey through our website
- Hold an event specifically focused on youth to inform them about our sister city programs
- Work with our local government to identify local programs/organizations that could benefit from participation in sister city programs
- Others—please list

3) Offering a youth program that can capture the attention of youth in our community and demonstrate a sister city commitment to youth

- With the help of SCI, review successful youth programs throughout the sister city global network
- Review existing youth programs in our area, such as Rotary Educational Scholarships and explore if there is an interest in bringing a sister city focus to these already existing programs
- Reach out to other youth organizations and see if there is an opportunity to incorporate sister city programs into their existing programs—for example, community service projects that could be coupled with a delegation from your sister city
- Carefully review the SCI Web site for youth opportunities
- Others—please list

4) Bringing youth into our organizational structure in terms of membership and leadership/governance

- Create an appropriate youth membership category
- Consider establishing one or more youth designated Board seats
- Formally establish a youth committee, with a specific set of program objectives—this committee should report at every Board meeting
- Consider a youth alumni club of past participants in sister city programs or exchanges
- Consider membership partnerships with other organizations—for example, every member of a school’s “international club” could automatically become a member of our sister city organization
- Others—please list

5) Working in partnership with other organizations in our community that have a commitment to youth and might have an interest in sister city programs—for example, boy or girl scouts, 4-H, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc.

- Have a student(s) research community organizations that have a youth focus and might be interested in bringing an international dimension to their activities
- Identify other international organizations in our community and explore their interest in a youth partnership with sister city programs
- Identify funding sources (corporations, foundations, etc.) that might have an interest in supporting youth programs through sister city programs—explore the kinds of projects/activities they are likely to support
- Identify other partnership opportunities involving youth through SCI, such as the organizations that are involved with Friendship through Education (FTE). (This information is on the SCI web site at www.sister-cities.org.)
- Others—please list

6) Tapping into the incredible energy and talent of the youth in our community to strengthen and expand our sister city programs

- Bring in a student intern(s)—they can often receive academic credit for their work
- Invite youth to develop our sister city website
- Invite youth to develop an e-newsletter
- Create a youth position(s) on our Board, and ask the youth to be our organization’s link to SCI over the Internet
- Invite youth to develop new sister city programs, to fundraise, and host sister city exchange students
- Others—please list

7) Taking advantage of the youth opportunities that are offered through SCI

- Constantly check the SCI Web site for opportunities (Current opportunities include: the YES Program, focused upon Islamic High School exchanges; the AYUSA/SCI Youth Exchange Program, for six-month an year-long exchanges; the Young Artists Program; the FTE partnership and grant.)
- Explore the SCI online database for other sister city youth programs
- Attend state, regional, and national sister city meetings/conferences and attend the sessions that focus upon youth programs and involvement in sister city programs
- Contact the SCI Youth Coordinator, Elisa Stafford, at youth@sister-cities.org
- Others—please list

8) Creating the organizational infrastructure, which will allow us to effectively communicate with the youth in our community

- Create a youth committee or task force
- Develop a membership category for youth
- Communicate with youth through an e-newsletter/bulletin
- Examine other organizations in our community and understand how they created their organizational infrastructure for youth participation
- Recruit a volunteer membership coordinator for youth, and work with our local government and schools—they often have an excellent network of volunteers
- Others—please list

9) Launching a “sister city youth campaign” around a given project or activity

- Consider undertaking a high visibility event, such as a concert/road race/walkathon, to raise funds and awareness for youth exchanges through our sister city programs
- Consider a youth project that would raise funds and send youth volunteers to support a high visibility community project in our sister city(ies)
- Identify a key person(s) who can serve as honorary chair to a youth campaign, and whose name will be recognized in the community
- Others—please list

10) Promoting inclusiveness by reaching out to diverse sectors of youth in our community and to welcome/encourage their active participation

- Clearly identify all the diverse youth groups that might have an interest in sister city programs
- Reach out to diverse sectors of the youth community—offer to attend their meetings to introduce our sister city programs
- Offer a free/discounted membership for youth
- Carefully examine our existing sister city programming and identify areas in which youth can become involved
- Others—please list

Other key factor

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Other key factor

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Thank you for participating in this workshop. We trust that you enjoyed the presentations and the introduction of this assessment instrument.

We are asking you to share your information with SCI so that we can further develop this assessment instrument and make it available to all SCI members. **Please complete the information below and give this handout to the volunteer at the door.**

THANK YOU AGAIN!

Name:

Sister City Organization:

Position within your Sister City Organization:

E-Mail Address:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Country (if outside the U.S.):

Phone:

I would like this handout returned to me at the address above: Yes _____ No _____

I would like a copy of this assessment tool e-mailed to the address above: Yes _____ No _____

I would like _____ copies of this assessment tool mailed to the address above: Yes _____ No _____