

**SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL  
CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHEET**

**Strengthening your Organization's Membership (large communities)**

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**Purpose**

This assessment instrument is designed to be used by your community to undertake a relatively quick assessment of the strength of your organization's membership base. 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 strengthening the capacity of your sister city program to be more effective in building and maintaining its membership base.

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 the strength of your organization's membership base. 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**

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

## KEY FACTORS TO STRENGTHENING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERSHIP BASE

Key Factors	Select your top 3 priorities
1) Developing a comprehensive membership recruitment and retention strategy	
2) Developing a strategy for reaching out/communicating with our members, both existing and new	
3) Building an expanding and diverse individual membership base	
4) Developing a corporate membership strategy	
5) Clearly identifying the benefits of being a member of our sister city organization	
6) Creating a membership structure that is affordable and marketable yet will also produce revenue	
7) Attracting younger people to become members of our sister city organization	
8) Creating an organizational infrastructure that will allow us to track and communicate with both existing and potential members	
9) Launching a membership campaign	
10) Promoting inclusiveness by reaching out to diverse sectors of the community to welcome their ideas and invite 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) Developing a comprehensive membership recruitment and retention strategy

- Establish a task force that will be charged with producing the strategy
- Set specific goals that can be achieved for each membership category
- Clearly articulate the costs and benefits of being a member
- Identify the best techniques for reaching out and communicating with potential members
- Establish a computer-based system for managing our membership information
- Others—please list

#### 2) Developing a strategy for reaching out/communicating with our members, both existing and new

- Establish a newsletter
- Establish an e-newsletter
- Create a website, or ask our local government to establish a sister city page on its website

- Hold an annual membership event that is enjoyable and brings everyone together to celebrate the successes of the sister city program(s)
- Work with our local government to produce a sister city video to be aired on the public access channel
- Others—please list

### **3) Building an expanding and diverse individual membership base**

- Create the appropriate individual membership categories (individual, family, senior, life-time, etc.)
- Create an appropriate dues structure that is both affordable and will generate income
- Identify the target groups that should be interested in becoming a member
- Develop a membership brochure
- Create membership recruitment goals for every board member to meet within a specific timeframe
- Others—please list

### **4) Developing a corporate membership strategy**

- Create appropriate corporate membership categories by levels of contribution
- Identify corporations that should have an interest in our sister city partnership(s)
- Clearly define the benefits of being a corporate member
- Develop a corporate membership presentation
- Assign each Board member a specific number of corporations to contact in person
- Others—please list

### **5) Clearly identifying the benefits of being a member of our sister city organization**

- With our Board or a task force, creatively brainstorm all the reasons for being a member
- Identify upcoming programs and activities where members can be involved
- Consider linking local membership with SCI membership (SCI is in the process of developing this linkage opportunity)
- Consider linking with other international organizations (World Affairs, International Visitors, UN Association) and offering a combined membership
- Others—please list

### **6) Creating a membership structure that is affordable and marketable yet will also produce revenue**

- Review membership structures for other not-profit organizations in our community
- Contact SCI for information about sister city organizations that have an excellent membership structure
- Clearly articulate how membership dues will be used
- Consider offering incentives – two for one membership, first-time membership discount, etc.
- Others—please list

### **7) Attracting younger people to become members of our sister city organization**

- Clearly identify the opportunities for young people to benefit from our sister city program
- Create a youth program committee that will be responsible for generating new youth initiatives
- Create opportunities for youth to be part of the governance structure of our organization
- Develop a program where youth will recruit youth

- Assign a young person (perhaps the youth position on our Board) the responsibility for using technology to advance the mission of our sister city organization
- Others—please list

**8) Creating an organizational infrastructure that will allow us to track and communicate with both existing and potential members**

- Create a membership committee
- Purchase or have donated membership tracking computer software
- Examine other membership organizations in our community and understand how they have created the organizational infrastructure for membership retention and expansion
- Recruit a volunteer membership coordinator for the youth, seniors, or other volunteer networks – work with our local government and schools; they will often have an excellent network of volunteers
- Others—please list

**9) Launching a membership campaign**

- Identify other membership organizations that have undertaken successful membership campaigns and understand what makes for success
- Create a task force with specific target goals for the campaign; recruit members to the task force who possess excellent marketing skills
- Launch our campaign with an appropriate theme and an opportunity to attend a significant sister city event
- Identify a key person(s) who can serve as honorary chair to the campaign and whose name will be recognized in our community
- Others—please list

**10) Promoting inclusiveness by reaching out to diverse sectors of the community to welcome their ideas and invite their active participation**

- Clearly identify all the groups in our community that might have an interest in our existing or new sister city relationships
- Reach out to diverse sectors – offer to attend their meetings to introduce sister cities
- Offer a free/discounted membership for the first year
- Carefully examine our sister city programming to make sure that our activities are of interest to the groups we are trying to reach
- 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 \_\_\_\_\_**