



Kiwanis Guide to Sister Cities International

As community partners, Sister Cities International and Kiwanis International benefit individuals and communities around the globe through international service. Below is a guide for the Kiwanis family to learn more about Sister Cities International and the ways in which Kiwanians can get involved with local sister city organizations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **WHAT IS A SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP?** A sister city relationship is a long-term, cooperative relationship between two cities in different countries through which citizens promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation—one individual, one community at a time. A relationship is formalized when two mayors (or highest elected/appointed officials) sign a memorandum of understanding establishing a sister city relationship. Activities are usually organized and implemented by volunteers, local institutions, and municipal employees. A city may have any number of sister cities.
- **WHAT DO SISTER CITIES DO?** Sister city organizations plan and implement cooperative activities and exchanges in cultural, educational, municipal/technical, business, and humanitarian fields. Thousands of inbound and outbound exchanges take place every year, as well as virtual exchanges and other remote, cooperative activities.
- **WHAT DOES SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL DO?** Sister Cities International is a nonprofit member association for U.S. sister city organizations. Its staff provides assistance and expertise to 545 U.S. member communities with over 2,100 partnerships in 145 countries to help strengthen their sister city organizations. It shares best practices, helps to create new sister city partnerships, assists with protocols and procedures related to sister cities, advocates for sister city organizations and international exchange, organizes conferences and meetings, publishes a printed and online directory of sister cities, networks among its membership, and provides other resources and affinity benefits.
- **WHO RUNS SISTER CITY ORGANIZATIONS AND HOW ARE THEY STRUCTURED?** All of Sister Cities International's members are independent organizations and have a number of management structures. Sister city organizations may be run by a group of volunteers, representatives from local institutions, the mayor's office or municipal government, or by some combination of these. Most often sister city organizations are incorporated as 501(c)(3) nonprofits, although the municipal government may have representation or a formal relationship with the group. Many are governed by a board of directors or commission, although the majority of members are volunteers from all sectors of the community. They are most often organized by committee, with one committee for each partnership responsible for creating and implementing projects. Some sister city organizations are run by local institutions, such as a museum, cultural center, or chamber of commerce. Most municipal contacts for sister city organizations are in the office of the mayor, office of tourism/convention and visitors bureau, office of international affairs, office of protocol, or office of economic development.

What is Citizen Diplomacy?

Citizen diplomacy is the concept that every global citizen has the right, even the responsibility, to engage across cultures and create shared understanding through meaningful people-to-people interactions.

Sister Cities International serves as a hub for institutional knowledge and best practices in the field of citizen diplomacy.

TEAM UP WITH SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL IN 2016

- **YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT** Join us in Washington, DC for our 60th anniversary which includes Sister Cities International's Youth Leadership Summit and 2016 Annual Conference! Encourage Key Club members to engage with over 100 sister cities youth from around the globe to learn about the important role citizen diplomacy plays in helping to create world peace July 14-16. Learn more at <http://sistercities.org/YLS>.
- **YOUNG ARTISTS AND AUTHORS SHOWCASE CONTEST** Take part in Sister Cities International's 2016 Young Artists and Authors Showcase. Youth use their creativity to express what the theme "Peace through People" means to them using original artwork, literature, film, and photography and win prizes too! Learn more at <http://sistercities.org/YAAS>.
- **J-1 VISA HIGH SCHOOL HOMESTAY EXCHANGE PROGRAM** Help build cultural exchange in your community by hosting a student from your city's sister city! As a U.S. Department of State-designated sponsoring organization, Sister Cities International can process the J-1 secondary school student visa starting in the 2016-17 school year. Learn more at <http://sistercities.org/HSHS>.

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S MISSION

To promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time.



HOW CAN SCI AND KIWANIS WORK TOGETHER?

- **YOUTH & EDUCATION** Providing experience in international affairs and citizen diplomacy to youth is a critical part of any sister city organization. Sister city exchanges are often the first opportunity that youth have to travel abroad, and the experience of being a guest rather than a tourist is a unique opportunity that helps develop cross-cultural competence and maturity. Activities include short- and long-term student exchanges, virtual exchanges, and service learning trips. Educational exchanges, whether at the high school or college level, provide young people with the opportunity to develop professional skills under the umbrella of citizen diplomacy. These exchanges are often described by participants as "a life-changing experience," and many current leaders in international affairs or diplomacy can trace their interest to their first sister city exchange. Key Clubs can take advantage of existing connections to municipalities and schools abroad to develop their own programs or exchanges as well.
- **ARTS & CULTURE** Arts and cultural programs are some of the oldest and most robust in the sister cities network and continue to connect people from different backgrounds on a fundamental level. By experiencing and exploring the culture of an international community, citizens may gain insight into the history, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of their partners. Today, cultural exchange provides the foundation for many sister city relationships. These exchanges take many different forms, with musical performances, art exhibits, peace parks and gardens, and international cultural festivals proving popular throughout the sister city network. Cooperative art projects for Key Clubs along with cultural events are a great way to engage both local and international communities.
- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** Peer-learning between municipal employees and other professionals through sister city activities has helped cities implement innovative policies and management techniques in sanitation, water, health, transportation, tourism, economic development, and education, among other areas. Sister city organizations often raise funds or collect supplies for natural disasters or other emergencies in their sister cities. Other humanitarian and community development projects include renovation of clinics, creation of wells, and trainings for medical personnel. Numerous programs support schools abroad through donation of materials, construction, and partnerships with U.S. schools. Community development exchanges are the perfect way to merge Kiwanis' mission of service with Sister Cities International's mission of international cooperation.

GET INVOLVED

- **CONTACT LOCAL SISTER CITY PROGRAMS** Interested in getting involved with a sister city program in your community? Reach out to sister city program contacts directly through the city search on the SCI website at sistercities.org.
- **CONTACT SCI HEADQUARTERS** Contact Sister Cities International staff with any questions regarding sister city partnerships or to get in touch with a local sister city organization. Email info@sistercities.org or call 202.347.8630.



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