



A GUIDE FOR YOUTH EXCHANGE

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Introduction

Deciding to conduct a youth or education exchange as part of your sister cities program is one of the most rewarding activities in which a sister cities committee can elect to participate. The young people who take part will have an experience that will continue to influence their personal lives as they develop into adults who will create a more understanding world. Host families will gain a deeper appreciation of another culture and may desire to become more involved in international affairs. These results will enhance the quality of life in your community and will enrich your sister cities program by strengthening the ties with your international counterparts.

The materials in this *Guide* are designed to offer a basic checklist of components in establishing your youth exchange program. Your committee should tailor any of this information to its own program needs. You may develop other categories. As you progress, we at SCI would greatly welcome receiving your materials and forms. We would also appreciate your comments and suggestions about these materials—are they useful? How can we improve them? What’s missing?

Developing an organizational plan, delineating specific tasks and delegating responsibility are essential to any youth exchange endeavor—particularly if there are more than one or two young people participating in the exchange. Being well-organized and having ample time to plan are akin to having good road maps—they help you get where you want to be and may be used repeatedly.

In delegating members of your committee to be responsible for a specific component of your youth exchange, it is important to choose carefully and to schedule overall planning meetings regularly as you progress. This allows for sharing ideas, orchestrating the whole program, preventing little things from “falling through the cracks” and for reviewing where you have been and projecting where you want to go.

The key to your success will be both organization and people. Recruiting strong committee chairs, who in turn form their own committees, is essential. This is a wonderful project in which to involve young people in your sister city activities—at all levels of the planning and implementation of the youth exchange. Youth exchanges will afford your committee the opportunity to strengthen and broaden its membership through participation. It will give your community an opportunity to learn about and appreciate your sister cities program.

SCI National Youth Program

The SCI National Youth Program (SCI/NYP) assists U.S. cities to motivate youth to become involved as active participants in local sister city programs. The national movement to involve youth in sister city programs began formally in 1975 at the SCI Annual Conference held in Rochester, New York. The young people in attendance participated in the round of conference activities. Their enthusiasm for the program signaled the establishment of a formal structure, which gave them for the first time, an officially recognized national body within the sister cities program in the United States. It was the youth themselves who approached the SCI Board of Directors with an outline for the National Youth Program. Since that time, the National Youth Program has grown into a full-scale program with a broad range of program offerings.

The SCI National Youth Program capitalizes on the excitement and challenge of international exchanges to ignite young people's interest in learning about other peoples and cultures and to encourage their active participation in their local sister cities program and other internationally-related programs, projects and activities.

Opportunities for Youth Exchange

Most sister city committees tend to value youth exchanges above other types of person-to-person exchanges. The great potential benefits that can be derived from youth exchanges are ultimately reflected in the ongoing attitudes and activities which continue long after the completion of the actual exchange. Since participants are young, they have their lives ahead of them to utilize their cross-cultural experience and to involve themselves in programs devoted to better international understanding and friendship. In other words, they become a rich resource to the sister cities committee and the community-at-large.

Generally speaking, youth are often inclined to experience the foreign culture more fully since they are better able to assimilate themselves into their peers' world and are highly motivated to do so. Further, their desire for new experiences, curiosity of the unknown and adaptability can overcome many of the difficulties encountered, while contributing to their accumulation of knowledge, friendships and, most importantly, to their understanding of the foreign culture as well as their own culture seen in a new perspective.

A youth exchange project with your sister city should be reciprocal—both cities send students on exchanges. It does not have to be a one-for-one exchange equal in numbers, but it should have a reciprocal exchange built into the system. A youth exchange with your sister city can occur every year, both inbound and outbound, or it can alternate years, with one city sending students the first year and receiving students the next year. Depending on your community's ability to send and host students, you and your sister city should decide in the beginning what will be the level of frequency of the exchanges.

Youth exchanges can take a variety of forms and can differ in length of stay. The basic divisions of youth exchange are:

Long-Term Academic Homestay

Generally one academic year or semester programs for 15 to 19-year-old secondary school students or recent graduates. Program includes homestay for the duration of the experience, attendance at a secondary school, community activities, orientation and language study.

School-to-School Exchanges

Generally 3 to 4 week programs for 15 to 18-year-old secondary school students. This is primarily a school linkage model in which a group of students from the same school or classroom, accompanied by a teacher, participate in an exchange with a partner school abroad. Program includes study of the partner country before departure, homestays, study and community activities during the exchange.

Thematic Exchanges

Generally four to eight-week group programs for students aged 15 to 25. Program features include study of a country, set of relevant issues or common focus (e.g., the arts, journalism,

environment) prior to and during the exchange with a similar counterpart organization in the host country, under the guidance of a group leader or chaperone, homestays for most or all of the visit and orientations.

Community Service-Learning

Programs for students and young professionals aged 15 to 25 for minimum four-week duration but preferably six to 12 weeks. Program features include experiential learning activities, including camp counseling, historical preservation or restoration, public works, conservation and volunteer community service. Work may be done as a group involving interaction with a similar age group of host country youth or as individual projects. Campstays are often appropriate, but homestays where possible are preferred. Pre-departure orientations and post-return debriefings should be included in the program.

Non-Academic Homestays

Programs for students, young workers, farm youth, athletic teams, performing arts groups, and so on, aged 15 to 25, of a minimum 4-week duration, but preferably six to 12 weeks. Program includes homestay for the full period of the visit, community activities, group activities (e.g., scouting, recreation service), individual projects (e.g., volunteer work). Pre-departure and post-return orientations are included.

Internships

Programs of six weeks to 18 months for students, young professionals and young workers, aged 15 to 25. Includes home-stays for the duration of the program, where possible; work in a private enterprise or public agency, usually in the area of one's career choice or vocation; may be coupled with study; community activities and orientations.

In addition to the exchange of youth, there are various kinds of exchanges that could lead to or prepare the way for youth exchanges to begin. These include:

Teacher Exchanges

Enables a teacher(s) to travel to the sister city and spend an academic year or semester teaching in the school system of the sister city. Program includes homestay for the duration of the program, where possible, teaching on part- or full-time basis, community activities, orientations and language study, as appropriate. Upon returning from a teacher exchange, the teacher will be instrumental in developing supplemental curriculum and/or materials for the school system, developing a school affiliation program, or starting a student exchange. This kind of project should not be confused with that of a teacher visiting the sister city to observe/participate for a short period of time.

Advisor Exchanges

Enables those adults who work with youth in an advisory capacity to travel to the sister city and to meet with appropriate counterparts to "lay the groundwork" for future youth exchanges. This might include your youth group advisor, the chairman of the youth exchange committee, a scout leader, a sports team coach, and so on. Generally short-term, three to six weeks and includes homestays, orientations, community activities and language study.

Publicity and Public Relations

Publicity and public relations are key elements in planning and carrying out successful exchanges. Good publicity and good public relations will let your community know about your youth exchange and your overall sister cities activities. In planning this facet of the program, you can work with an experienced local public relations or media person who is familiar with the media in your community or metropolitan area.

Your sister cities committee and the exchange will benefit by eliciting the support and endorsement of local government, private sector institutions and businesses and your community leaders. When dates, times and locations have been set for major events, your mayor may be willing to make a local announcement. The mayor can be asked to issue a proclamation in recognition and support of your youth exchange.

All avenues should be explored to reach the maximum number of citizens before, during and after the exchange. Consider the following:

- Radio and Television - PSAs (Public Service Announcements), local talk shows, cable television, coverage of arrival, departure and program activities, interviews with former exchangees or visiting youth exchangees.
- Local Press - Daily and weekly newspapers, press releases about your program and events, special feature articles on exchangees and their country or city. To locate these outlets, consult the yellow pages or perhaps your community publishes a directory of local media.
- Bulletins and newsletters of the community's civic organizations, places of worship, schools and service clubs.
- Speeches and presentations to civic, religious, education, ethnic groups and schools, particularly foreign language clubs.
- Press conferences for local media, ethnic newspapers, television programs.

Although media coverage is very important for your plan, ***word of mouth*** continues to be one of the most effective means of getting information to potential youth exchangees and host families. A speaker's bureau composed of members of your committee, people who have visited your sister city, former exchangees and host families can be the most effective means of promoting your exchanges.

As your plans progress, inform the media of specific activities and any VIP's participating in the project. Your committee can develop a slide presentation for future use in your public relations efforts. You may wish to designate a program photographer to cover the exchange from "A to Z."

Fund Raising

When it comes to raising funds, have you wished to be FUN raising instead? Well, now is the time to combine having fun and raising funds to support your youth exchange activities. Fund

raising can give you, your committee and your community an opportunity to rally around your youth exchange program.

Youth exchange opportunities should be open to all qualified applicants and not be based on the ability of an applicant to self-finance the exchange. Your committee may wish to consider creating a scholarship fund which could provide those qualified applicants with financial restrictions, the opportunity to participate in the youth exchange.

You will need to raise funds for several aspects of your youth exchange - helping to underwrite all or a portion of the transportation, the costs of publicity, printing costs, telephone and telegram and other communication costs, postage, and the general program activities for the inbound students and their host families.

Some of the support will come in the form of donated or in-kind contributions—a printer may donate your printing needs, a restaurant may donate the costs of a picnic, the school system may donate buses for transportation, and so on. You should document these donated contributions and be sure to thank the donors.

HINTS FOR FUND RAISING

When you ask for monetary contributions, be prepared with information about the exchange—have printed information to leave with the potential contributor—know your program well, be able to talk about its goal and objectives, be able to articulate the importance of what you are doing, the benefits it has for the contributor.

When soliciting money, the donor will want to know if your group is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. The donor's contribution becomes a tax deduction for him/her if your group is such an organization.

If you are planning a fund raising event, get a lot of people involved. Publicize it widely, giving the time, place, cost. Invite the local media to cover it. Invite local celebrities to endorse it.

Be sure to thank all donors on your printed materials or programs. Your local newspaper may donate a “thank you” ad for all the donors. Write them personal letters of thanks. Invite all donors to exchange events and programs.

Be creative. Have fun doing it. And be daring! Some ways to raise funds are:

- **Sales.** Of everything—t-shirts, arts, crafts, garage sales, rummage sales, baked goods and foods of your sister city, books, records, theater tickets, etc.
- **Athletic Events.** Tournaments, matches, shoot-outs (basketball), runs, walks, marathons.
- **Services.** Car washes, dog washes, babysitting, office work, mowing lawns, shoveling snow, raking leaves, stuffing envelopes
- **Food.** Progressive dinners, ethnic dinners.
- **Raffles, Auctions, Casino Nights.**

There are literally thousands of ways to raise funds and provide your customers with either a service or a pleasant event.

While in some communities the youth exchangees pay for all of their youth exchange expenses, there are some communities which assist the exchangees in a variety of ways. One community may have a cost-sharing plan—the student pays one-third, the sister cities committee pays one-third and the school system pays one-third. Another community may help its exchangees obtain part-time jobs to earn the money needed. Some find support from local foundations, corporations, businesses, civic and service groups and religious groups.

Recruitment

Recruitment of exchangees and host families is critical to creating a valuable exchange experience for all concerned. As you proceed, you can publicize that you are seeking POTENTIAL participants (exchangees and host families) and that all applicants will be interviewed. This allows you to screen exchangees and hosts. The publicity and recruitment phases should last one month to ensure that an adequate pool of applicants is available from which to make the best selections. A longer recruitment process also allows you to reach all sectors of your community which helps ensure that your pool of applicants transcends all socio-economic and ethnic strata.

Information sessions can be held to inform the public about your exchange, the philosophy and ideals of the sister cities concept and about your program's projects and activities. These sessions can be held in a place which is easily accessible to the public and during convenient hours. Your city hall, a school or other public place would be ideal. You may have to hold several such sessions in a variety of locations and at different times of the day to offer a variety of opportunities to talk about the project and to recruit participants. Contacting local cable television stations, radio stations, service and civic organizations, scouting groups, school clubs/classes can be most helpful in the recruitment phase.

Publicize these information sessions. Be creative. In preparing information for public relations purposes, the following should be included:

- Name of your organization
- Purpose of your organization
- Goal of this particular exchange project
- Volunteer needs you have, e.g., exchangees, host families, committee members, language instructors, orientation leaders, group leader
- Why the public might want to become involved in this project
 - a. to promote international understanding and peace
 - b. to develop long-lasting friendships with people from your sister city
 - c. to broaden personal/family perspectives about the world
 - d. to have fun and get to know other people in your own community
- Name and phone number of whom to contact if interested
- Time and place of the information sessions

Have copies of student and host family applications available at all information sessions. Let people know where and how to obtain a copy of the application forms in the event they can't get to an information session.

IMPORTANT HINT: Allow enough lead time to accomplish all the other phases of your project that follow recruitment. You should begin recruitment 9 to twelve months BEFORE the actual exchange will occur.

Selection

The selection of exchangees and host families involves screening and interviewing applicants. This can be the most important aspect of your exchange project. It should be carefully organized and conducted in a professional manner. The exchangees selected to go on the exchange will represent your committee/program, your community and your country to their counterparts abroad. Host families will represent the same for the inbound exchangees. It is important that they be people who are willing to share their lifestyles, their values and themselves.

Prior to the selection phase, you have held your information sessions and hopefully have a pool of applicants to screen and interview. Some committees have two screening committees—one to select the exchangees and one to select the host families. You may decide that one committee can do both. It is important that all the people involved in the screening and interviewing process have the opportunity to meet and decide on the criteria to be used in the selection process and the method(s) to be used. Criteria and methods vary from community to community. Below are some general ideas you may want to consider.

CRITERIA

All exchangee applications should be read carefully by all members of the screening/interviewing committee. The committee should then schedule interviews for the applicants. Some criteria that is used by sister cities committees includes:

- Adaptability
- Maturity
- Appearance
- Moral character
- Leadership ability or potential
- Academic record/language ability
- Interest in program/international matters
- Citizenship/community or school involvement

You may wish to ask the applicants to write a short essay as part of the application. The essay may be on why they wish to participate or another pertinent topic. Each applicant should have a variety of references and the screening/interviewing committee should check these.

Host family applications should also be read carefully by all members of the screening/interviewing committee. Again, interviews should be scheduled, preferably in the home of the applicant. This provides the opportunity to talk with the entire family about the role and responsibility of the host family and to determine whether or not the family as a whole would be an appropriate host for an inbound youth exchangee.

METHODS

The way you screen or interview will vary depending on the number of people on the screening/ interviewing committee and how much time is available to complete this portion of the project. Some committees do “group interviews” as the initial screening. From this group interview they select those exchangees they feel they want to interview individually. Other committees do individual interviews for all applicants.

In interviewing host family applicants, some committees conduct the interview “on the spot” in the home of the applicant at a time when all family members can attend. During the home visit, the committee members) will cover the following:

- Duties and responsibilities of the host family
- Expectations of the family about the exchange; what do they hope will happen; what are their concerns about what could happen; what is the family’s financial responsibility; what chores may they expect the exchangee to do; to whom can they turn in an emergency
- Stages of adjustment that both students and host families may experience—the stages of “culture shock”
- Attitudes about religion, cultural differences, politics, morals, sexuality and dealing with teens
- Knowledge of local and international affairs

Although some of these topics are sensitive, the committee will want to consider them because the way in which the potential host family approaches these issues will have a significant impact on the incoming exchangee and the entire project.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For Youth Exchangees

1. What do you know about your sister city and the sister cities program?
2. Why do you want to go to your sister city?
3. What do you think is the purpose of sending youth to the sister city?
4. Do you feel that you as an individual can contribute to international understanding? How?
5. What major issues involving your country do you feel would need most explanation to your hosts abroad? How would you explain?
6. How would you describe your community and/or country to a person unfamiliar with them?
7. What are your hobbies? What recreational and cultural activities do you enjoy?

8. Have you done any public speaking? When? To whom? For what purpose?
9. What do you consider to be your greatest strength? Weakness?
10. What are your plans and ambitions?
11. What do you believe are the major issues confronting the world today?
12. What is your most important personal accomplishment?
13. Can you adapt to the way of life with another family in another country? Can you cite an example of a major adaptation you've had to make?
14. What questions do you have?

For Host Families

1. What leisure activities do you enjoy most as a family?
2. Describe a typical evening in your home.
3. Describe a typical weekend in your home.
4. Does your family observe specific rules regarding smoking, drinking, curfew?
5. Would you expect the exchangee to participate in household chores? Which ones?
6. How are family disagreements handled in your home?
7. What are typical topics of discussion in your home?
8. Does your family attend religious services? How often? Is it important that the exchangee also attend these services?
9. Do you have pets?
10. How familiar are you with the town, country, culture of your sister city?
11. Does your family travel often? To where?
12. What type of rooming arrangement can you offer an exchangee?
13. Are you able to accommodate specific dietary needs of an exchangee?
14. Have you hosted an exchangee in the past? Have you had other international visitors in your home for any length of time?
15. Does anyone in your family have knowledge of another language?
16. Has anyone in your family lived abroad? Where? How long? Study, work, travel?
17. What questions do you have?

OUTREACH

It is important to have a good cross-section of the community involved both as exchangees and host families. The more different people involved, the broader the base of participation in your program will be. This helps to prevent "volunteer burnout" over the duration of your exchanges. Diversity is a key factor in the selection and placement of students and host families.

Keep a reserve or backup list of host families and alternate exchangees. This helps to prevent emergency “drop out” situations from disrupting your project. Alternate host families and exchangees should be oriented along with those selected. Should they not be used this year, let them know that they will be at the top of your list for the next youth exchange project. It is good public relations to invite alternate exchangees and host families to all the major functions held for the incoming exchangees.

Orientation

Once the selection of both exchangees and host families is complete, the orientation phase of your project should begin. Full participation in the orientation should be required for those selected and any alternates. Your committee may design one orientation series for everyone or you may choose to have separate orientations for exchangees and host families or you may have a combination of both. Orientation can be divided into three different categories:

- a. General information about the sister cities program and your program with your sister city or cities
- b. General information about international travel, e.g., passports, visas, medical requirements, customs, etc.
- c. General and specific information about the customs and culture of the sister city and country, including language lessons

All are equally important for your project to proceed as smoothly as possible. For our purposes, we will focus on (b) and (c).

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Whenever one travels, there are a thousand last minute details that need attention. When planning an exchange program, these details could take on monumental significance if not planned for in advance. What is suggested here are basic safety net precautions so your project goes smoothly. You may have already dealt with them. If you have some we’ve forgotten, let us know.

Passports

Obtain applications for passports from your local post office or the national passport office in Washington, D.C. Allow at least one to two months for processing, particularly if travel will occur during peak travel periods-holidays and summer. If a passport is lost or stolen it must be reported to the U.S. Embassy abroad immediately and application must be made for another. Be sure to make copies of your passport and leave them with key people in the United States and give one to the group leader.

Visas

Determine if one is needed for the country/countries being visited. If so, obtain applications from the Embassy of that country or its Consular Office(s) locally. Generally there is a fee, and the applicant will need 2 or more passport size photos to send with the application.

Resident Alien Cards

For some long-term stays in some countries a resident alien card is necessary. You apply for one after you arrive in country usually through the local police authority or post office. Check with the host country Embassy in Washington, D.C., prior to your departure.

Passport Photos

Carry extras with you as they come in handy for a variety of purposes.

Visas for Inbound Students

There are many different kinds of visas that international visitors to the United States may apply for and often there is much confusion about the kind of visa, for what purpose and for how long. SCI does have information about the different kinds of visas and it is suggested to contact SCI if you have any questions or need clarification.

***Please note: If your community is near a U.S. border (Canada or Mexico) and you anticipate that your inbound students will visit either or both, be sure they arrive in the United States with multiple entry visas.**

Waiver of Responsibility and Liability

It is a good idea to have such a waiver prepared for both outbound and inbound exchangees. It is advisable to have a lawyer in your community prepare the waiver to ensure that it complies with local community and state statutes. In the case of minor youth, a parent or guardian must sign the waiver. All waivers should be notarized and kept on file with your local program records.

Medical Examinations and Immunizations

It is advisable that inbound and outbound exchangees have medical examinations and immunizations prior to their departure. Include physical, dental and optical checkups.

Insurance

Inbound and outbound exchangees should have adequate and appropriate insurance coverage.

Recommended coverage includes:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| • Basic Medical and Accident | \$50,000 per injury or illness |
| • Dismemberment | Varies |
| • Preparation and Transportation of Remains to Home | \$7,500 Minimum |

Participants should be insured from the time they leave their home country until they return to their home country. Coverage may be provided by the participants or by the sponsoring sister cities committee. SCI has a brochure for such insurance which any sister cities committee may use.

Money

Carry traveler's checks. Leave a copy of the numbers with your parent/guardian in the event the checks are lost. A second copy of the numbers should be kept on your person, but not with the checks. Exchange a small amount of money prior to your departure or upon arrival in country. Best exchange rates are available at banks. Keep all exchange receipts.

Spending money and personal expense money is the responsibility of the exchangee. Funds might be used for meals outside the host home, souvenirs, outings, movies, concerts and similar events.

International Airline Travel

Know the baggage restrictions (amount, size, weight). Leave space in your baggage for overseas purchases. Pack only what you can carry yourself. There is little time or opportunity for porters in most overseas airports.

Have alternate arrangements should changes in flights occur near the time of your departure or during your international travel. If connecting through a U.S. city arrange to have a local sister cities volunteer meet your group in the event of an emergency or if assistance is needed. SCI can provide you with names of local volunteers.

U.S. Customs

Register foreign made items with U.S. Customs prior to your departure to avoid problems upon reentering the United States. When you apply for your passport, request a copy of U.S. Customs regulations and review it. Be sure to keep sales slips for all articles purchased abroad.

Miscellaneous

- Carry photographs, brochures, maps and information about your family and community to share with your host family (good “ice breakers”).
- Apply for International Student I.D. Card from CIEE, 205 East 42nd St., New York 10017. The cost is minimal and the I.D. card can secure reduced entry fees to museums, exhibits, etc. and carries with it insurance.
- Because of insurance regulations, the danger of driving on unfamiliar roads, differences in driving conditions and regulations, it is unwise for exchange students to drive automobiles in the host country.
- Exchangees should understand the seriousness of drug violations in many countries. In some nations, any drug use can mean an automatic jail sentence or worse with U.S. Embassies unable to intervene.
- Exchangees may wish to carry token gifts for their host family. Appropriate gifts include art work, crafts, books, etc. If an exchangee plays a musical instrument that is easily carried, s/he may wish to take it along.
- Each exchangee should carry with him the following:
Medical history including blood type, information on any chronic health problem or allergy, extra medication and a copy of a prescription for any medication (use generic name), extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses, emergency health form signed by parents/guardians authorizing emergency care.

General and Specific Information about Country and Culture

Orientation regarding information about the country and culture is often referred to as cross-cultural orientation. Cross-cultural orientations can be fun as well as informative and they provide valuable insight into the customs, culture and code of conduct of the sister city.

A word of caution however is needed. It is possible to “overload” the exchangees and host families with this kind of information. You need to give them enough to help them but not so much that you remove the “mystery” of discovery. Some sister cities committees separate their cross-cultural orientations into the following categories or phases:

General Information About the Country

This would include information about the history, geography, climate, political structure, the educational system, the social structure, religion of the country, media, health and other such topics.

Information About the Customs

This would include information about daily life, roles of men and women, role of children in the family, social customs, food, humor and other such topics.

Information About U.S. Relations With This Country

This would include a brief overview of the historical/political relationship between this country and the United States. The attitude this country has toward the United States. Why that attitude exists is important for exchangees to understand.

Information About Language and Communications

This would include language lessons especially if the exchangees have not formally studied the language of the sister city. They should be prepared with sufficient language study to enable them to cope when they first arrive. Information about the nonverbal communication of the culture is very important as almost 65 percent of meaning is communicated nonverbally.

Information About Culture Shock

Culture shock will occur during an exchange, particularly along-term exchange. Exchangees and host families should be prepared to recognize it, understand it and cope with it. Culture shock is a trauma people experience in a new and different culture because they have to learn and cope with a new array of cultural cues and expectations while discovering that their old ones probably do not fit or work. Generally, the cues are words, gestures, facial expressions, customs or norms acquired by everyone in the course of growing up and are a part of our culture.

For the average youth exchangee or host family, experiencing a new culture is like being “a fish out of water.” All of the familiar words, gestures, facial expressions and customs are gone. Frustration and tension increases until one adjusts to the new situation.

CULTURE SHOCK is normal. Recognizing the stages and progression of those stages is what is important for exchangees and host families.

- Excitement, euphoria of new experience, person is interested, assured and impressionistic.
- Person begins to see significant differences in host and home cultures. Has a sense of increasing confusion, loss, disorientation. Experiences isolation, apathy, loneliness and inadequacy. May feel homesick. Frustration and tension increase.
- Differences in host culture may be rejected. Some anger, nervousness, anxiety may appear. Could become opinionated, rebellious and reject host culture.
- Paralysis may set in along with an accompanying desire to leave.
- Differences and similarities are accepted. Becomes more sensitive and more relaxed. Begins to communicate nonverbally and demonstrates self control, confidence, independence. Feels like an “old-hand” in the new culture.
- Differences and similarities in host culture are valued. Person becomes more expressive and creative.

METHODS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS

There are many ways cross-cultural orientations can be structured and you are encouraged to use as many different ways of getting the information across to the exchangees and host families as possible. Some methods that sister cities committees have used include:

- Lectures, presentations by previous exchangees or other visitors to the sister city
- Movies, slides, videotapes or other audiovisual materials
- Simulations, role plays or other forms of drama to highlight a particular point

Whatever method you use try to keep it creative, uplifting, enthusiastic and fun. The orientation phase can consist of a series of meetings—six two-hour sessions for example, with one or two meetings per week.

Program

Planning the program (schedule of events and activities) is the next major step toward completing the arrangements for your youth exchange project.

Two programs need to be planned: one for the outbound exchangees and one for the inbound exchangees. Both should be planned cooperatively with the counterpart in your sister city.

Allow ample time to plan for the events and activities and divide the tasks and responsibilities among as many people as feasible. You will want to plan events and activities for (a) exchangees only, (b) exchangees and host families and (c) the entire community. Activities and events may include social, cultural and educational ones. If part of the exchange includes attending school, see the next section for special considerations that need to be addressed when planning this portion of the program.

Traditionally, there are many activities and events that sister cities committees include as part of the program. They are (a) arrival or welcoming event, (b) visit with Mayor and City Council, (c) seeing historical and cultural points of interest in your area, (d) recreational events, (e) farewell ceremonies. Keep in mind when planning events and activities that the purpose of the exchange is to acquire an appreciation and understanding of the way of life of your community. Allow sufficient time for exchangees to do things with or just be with their host family. Do not over-program exchangees or host families. The exchange is not a holiday or vacation—it is an educational and cultural experience.

Once the schedule is firm, have it typed and duplicated and distributed to all members of the sister cities committee, the exchangees, the host families and others who may be sponsoring certain events or activities. Send copies of it with an announcement to local newspapers, radio and television stations and other community groups such as civic and service groups. Let everyone know what you are doing, when you are doing it and where. Also let them know who it is for—is it for exchangees only? Or for others as well?

When planning the program, you'll need to consider things like transportation, food, chaperones, entrance fees/tickets, etc. We suggest you use an **EXCHANGE EVENT PLANNING FORM** for each activity or event that you are planning. Don't forget a contingency plan-what do you do if you have a picnic scheduled and it rains?

One activity that should be a part of every youth exchange is a general information or briefing for inbound youth shortly after their arrival. This is a time to review the program with them, inform them of the expectations that your committee and host families have, what to do in the event of an emergency, and other pertinent information. It is also an opportunity to review your overall program with them. It is possible they have arrived with no orientation from their own city.

Academic Program

An academic exchange can be for a school year, a semester or a shorter period of time such as a 3 week school-to-school or classroom-to-classroom exchange. It may occur from grades 4/5/6 through university level, though most sister cities committees have conducted academic exchanges at the high school and college levels. Before embarking on an academic exchange, a sister cities committee should thoroughly and carefully review the idea with the local school authorities. Contact should be made with either the local board of education or the superintendent of schools to discuss the possibilities and opportunities for academic exchange. Once initial approval has been given, the board or superintendent will probably identify a person in the school system to be your “key contact” for all academic exchanges through the sister cities program.

The key contact person in the school system should be an integral part of the committee that plans and designs the academic exchange program. There are many details and specifics regarding international students attending local school systems and your contact within the school system can help make the planning of an academic exchange much easier.

Your sister city counterpart should have as much information as possible about the academic exchange and about your local school system. A packet of materials and information should be sent as early as possible so the counterpart can share the materials and information with the school system in your sister city. Things to include are: school calendar, courses taught/curriculum list, school requirements for international students enrolled, level of English language ability required and other pertinent information. The more information your counterpart has the better selection of exchangees they can do. The same of course is true for you—the more information you have about the school system in your sister city the better selection of your outbound students you can do.

The orientation program for an academic exchange should be the same as any other exchange. However, it will have one more component—a session(s) that focus on attending school in a different country. Inbound exchangees, who will attend school in your community, will need to have information about things that are unfamiliar to them, like:

- Length of school day; how it is divided; bells
- Lunch arrangements (brown bag, cafeteria, off-campus, restricted campus)
- Excused and unexcused absences
- Study hall and library school lockers
- Map of inside of school (it is a good idea to take the students on a tour of the school when classes are not in session ... most helpful if they already have their class schedule and can follow it at the time they tour the school)
- Grading system; whether or not they will receive the same credit as U.S. students; do they get a regular diploma if they are seniors or is there some other kind of certificate they receive
- If they are seniors will they be participating in graduation ceremonies—some school systems do not allow for this
- What about class rings, yearbooks, etc.
- Course requirements; homework
- Student government—what is it, how does it work, who is involved
- Code of dress and/or conduct for school
- Extracurricular activities and athletic events

The idea is to help the inbound student become as familiar as possible with the local school and how it works so his/her experience is a smooth one. Each inbound student should have a student "buddy" as well as a teacher "buddy." Some school systems assign the "buddies;" others request volunteers. In either case, the "buddy" is a person with whom the exchange student can freely and openly discuss any matters or issues of importance and from whom s/ he can seek advice about a particular problem or an answer to a specific question.

The inbound student should have a meeting with his/her school advisor or counselor to review the exchangee's academic record and to plan his/her class schedule accordingly.

School policies and procedures need to be carefully reviewed and explained to the student. Topics such as attitudes and values concerning cheating, skipping classes, tardiness, free periods, study halls, restricted campuses and the grading system should be considered.

Are there extracurricular activities and athletic events the exchange student may participate in? Can the exchange student visit other classes or schools to give presentations on his/her country, culture and customs?

A communication network is very important in an academic exchange. The host family should know who to contact in the school system if there is a matter or issue of concern. The exchangee should know the same information as should the sister cities committee person in charge of the academic exchange. The school system also needs to know the sister cities committee person who is in charge of the academic exchange. All parties involved need to be aware of each other and who to contact for what purpose and how to get in touch with them.

Re-Entry

When your youth exchangees return home, especially if they have been on a long-term exchange, the contrasts may come as a shock to them. Initially they will need time to adjust, to rest and to integrate their experiences into their daily lives at home. They will need the opportunity to share their experiences and to evaluate their exchange.

Sometimes, the exchangees may feel—after the first blush of the returning excitement is over—that people are not really interested in learning about their exchange experiences. Or, they may feel that things have changed very dramatically during their absence. (They often don't realize that it is they who have changed, not things at home or in the community). In any event after an exchange, the exchangees need to have a re-entry orientation.

Your sister cities committee, working with the exchangees **BEFORE THEY LEAVE**, should plan a series of presentations to civic and service groups, religious groups, senior citizen groups and others through which the students can share their pictures, souvenirs and experiences. Perhaps a local radio or television interview can be arranged.

Host families, too, will want to share their hosting experiences. There is a different reentry situation. Host families may want to get together to share their insights, suggestions and reminisce about their exchange visitors. Host families are good recruiters for next year's host families. They can show pictures and talk about experiences they have had.

Earlier in this *Guide*, we talked about "culture shock." When a young person has been on an extended exchange, s/he will again experience "culture shock" when s/he returns home. Helping your exchangees to understand this and recognize it is as important upon returning as it was prior to their departing.

Evaluation

Did you accomplish what you set out to do? Did it all work like you thought it would? What would you do differently next time? What suggestions might you have for those who are responsible for planning future exchanges? Did your budget work?

The answers to these and similar kinds of questions are what evaluation is all about. After the exchange is completed and your young people have returned home, it is time to evaluate your exchange project. Examining what was successful and which aspects of the project were less successful will keep your youth exchange program healthy and vibrant. Such evaluation will also serve as the basis for planning the next youth exchange project.

In both cities participating in the exchange, the evaluation should be based on the feedback from all who participated—the exchangees, the host families, the school system, members of your committee and community groups that worked with you. Written evaluations become a part of your permanent records of the exchange and one to which future planners may refer.

Your committee may wish to design a standard evaluation form. The information on the evaluation should be in a form that may be used in the future and should focus on objective information combined with personal insights.

An important aspect of evaluation is the degree to which the attitudes and perceptions of the exchange participant change. A good way to measure attitudinal change is to have exchange participants record their thoughts and perceptions about their sister city prior to departure, and reexamine those thoughts and perceptions upon reentry.

If appropriate, both cities may wish to share information on the evaluation of the project. (Sister Cities International has sample evaluation forms available which can be adapted to fit most any kind of youth exchange).

Developing Youth Participation

Youth exchangees, whether they be former exchange participants or those currently involved in your youth exchange, are a valuable resource in fostering continued support and interest in your sister cities program and in your future youth exchanges. By sharing their experiences and knowledge about their exchange in another country, exchangees can be utilized as a unique learning, resource in both the schools and the community.

There are a host of activities your youth exchangees can participate in once they have returned home. They can:

- Serve as youth chairs on local committees
- Facilitate future exchange orientation sessions
- Present slide shows on your sister city/youth exchange project
- Give presentations to elementary school classes on your sister city
- Write articles for local and school newspapers on the exchange experience
- Help develop and/or participate in forming a sister cities youth program chapter
- Be your youth representatives to the SCI National Youth Program Assembly
- Help with the teaching of foreign language(s)

- Write and publish a youth exchange handbook for future exchanges
- Write and publish a guide to your community for inbound exchangeees
- Be speakers for civic and service clubs
- Assist in fund raising for future exchanges
- Assist in the future planning of youth exchange projects
- Assist in the cross-cultural orientation sessions in the future
- Host inbound students in future exchange projects

In addition to the immediate use of returning exchangeees, your local sister cities committee might want to develop an “Alumni” group of former exchangeees and host families. These might be people who want to keep in touch with your exchange program, but who do not see themselves as being actively involved over the long-term. For example, if your committee has conducted youth exchanges for 10 years and you’ve had 10 students outbound each year, there is the potential for having an alumni group of 100 members. This is a valuable reservoir of former participants who can support your program goals and projects.

Forming an alumni group isn’t difficult-it takes a bit of time and organization initially and then is a matter of maintenance. A first step is to keep track of the youth exchangeees and host families. Perhaps one person from each exchange group could be designated to keep in touch with his/her “exchange mates.” Be sure this one person is on your mailing list to receive your announcements, invitations, membership notices, newsletters, etc. In fact it is a good idea to put all former exchangeees and host families on your mailing list.

Alumni generally gather together annually or semiannually to socialize, plan specific events for current exchangeees/host families and to determine what it is that they particularly want to do on behalf of the local program. If most of your alumni are current college students, you may want to plan your annual or semi-annual event to coincide with their holidays when they will be “back in town.”

Recognition and appreciation are important factors in keeping all volunteers active-the alumni are no exception. At your annual meeting, you may want to give recognition for their contributions. Your board of directors may wish to have an alumni representative as a member of the board. A special membership card or pin or certificate may be designed for alumni. List them in your membership directory with notation of “alumni.”

Returning exchangeees, former exchangeees and exchange alumni can be your program’s greatest asset in promoting future exchanges, raising funds for the exchanges and for selecting and interviewing potential exchangeees and host families. Remember, your current youth exchangeees are your future host families.

Sample Timeframe for Conducting a Sister Cities Youth Exchange

9-12 months before exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• committee decides on type of exchange• correspondence with counterpart committee in sister city to confirm details for the exchange (inbound and outbound)
8 months before the exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• publicize youth exchange in schools and throughout the community• make applications available for students and host families• plan fundraising strategy• look into travel options
7 months before the exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• interview students and host families• select students and host families
6 months before the exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• orientation and language study commences for students (once a week for 2 hours)
3-6 months before the exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fundraising events are held to raise money for outbound scholarships and to host inbound students; sister cities committee, students and host families participate
3 months before the exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• orientation for host families• students are matched with host families; students write to host families• secure passports, visas and immunizations, if needed• finalize travel plans
1 week before exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• final orientation session for students, their parents and host families
EXCHANGE TO SISTER CITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students live with host families for a minimum of 4 weeks
3 weeks after exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• meeting/party for students to evaluate their exchange experiences with the sister cities• evaluation of host families
6 months after exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• alumni party• select alumni who will assist with orientation for next youth exchange

Sample Forms for Youth Exchange Available from SCI

GENERAL FORMS

- G1 Youth Exchange Application Form**
Preliminary recruitment form from which selection is made.
- G2 Exchange Student Information Form**
Use to gather additional information about exchangees after selection is made. Use to match/place with host families.
- G3 Academic Exchange Participant Information Form**
Use when exchange includes a regular school/academic component. Does not replace exchange student application form.
- G4 Scholarship Application Form**
Use for offering financial assistance to applicants.
- G5 Basic Policies for Exchange Students**
Use to ensure that exchangees know about and concur with your policies for the exchange.
- G6 Host Family Application and Agreement Form**
Use to recruit and select host families. Does not replace a personal interview.
- G7 Exchange Event Planning Form**
Use for each event planned during the period of the exchange project. Make it a part of your permanent records.
- G8 Evaluation of Youth Exchange Project**
Use for all who participate in either outbound or inbound exchange.

MEDICAL FORMS

- M1 Physician's Report Form**
- M2 Emergency Treatment Permission & Emergency Contact Form**

LEGAL FORMS

- L1 Waiver of Responsibility Form**

Note: These forms may also be used for outbound U.S. youth, and may be translated for use by your sister city for the inbound youth. These forms are available in the "Youth Exchange Applications Materials" publication. For copies, please contact SCI or visit the appropriate section on our Web site.