

Process to be followed for a City-to-City Linkage

Sister Cities and Cooperation Agreements on specific topics

Cities can be linked through sister cities and/or cooperation agreements on a specific topic. It is important to consider that any linkage is an excellent opportunity to carry out cooperative actions between cities, such as the exchange of knowledge and good practices. These actions should always be carried out strategically, taking care that the priorities of the municipality are expressed and, at all times, seek to obtain some benefit for society.

La Dirección General de Coordinación Política de la SER (DGCP) [**General Directorate of Policy Coordination**]

The DGCP is the link between the Secretary of External Relations and state and municipal governments. This Office provides support so that the international relations of local governments are carried out in a strategic manner, with a vision of the territory that seeks to address the priorities of the municipality and provide the best results. The DGCP works to promote sister city agreements cooperatively.

Through the DGCP, the municipalities have access to the services provided by the various areas of the SRE, as well as its Embassies and Consulates.

1. IDENTIFICATION

- Designate liaison area

Although the international theme is cross-cutting to all areas of the municipality, where all areas can participate and all can benefit, it is important that a single area or liaison person be identified. Depending on the priorities of the municipality and its budgetary capacities, the municipality should designate an area or an official in charge of international issues.

This person or area will be responsible for liaising with the Secretary of External Relations, with cities and international partners, and within the municipality, linking its agencies with their counterparts.

Each area of the municipality will be responsible for attending to its own affairs in accordance with the attributions of each one of them.

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- Involving citizens

It is recommended that the municipalities accept and invite the participation of society. Businessmen, academics, social clubs, etc., have much to contribute to internationalization initiatives. These groups help to ensure that international activity has continuity and transcends changes in administration. They are also important allies in communicating effectively to the rest of society what is being done in this area.

- Create a municipal profile and establish local priorities.

An important step in the internationalization process is to have a profile of the municipality. This document serves, first and foremost, to help the city get to know itself, its strengths and potential, and to establish its priorities and strategies.

The municipal profile will also serve as a letter of introduction to the other municipality, as it will accompany the Letter of Intent when the municipality makes the approach of linking to the city it has chosen.

2. LINKING

- Identify foreign counterparts and possible areas of opportunity.

Once the municipality has studied its municipal profile, as well as its Municipal Development Plan, and has established the priorities and goals it wishes to achieve, it is time to choose the city that will be its partner.

For example, if the municipality needs to solve a specific problem, then it is worth trying to link up with a city that has the same problem. Chances are that city has developed some ingenious solution that it is willing to share. The municipality should also be willing to share its practices and knowledge with its foreign partner.

The sister city arrangements that are proposed with these criteria are much more likely to be maintained in the long term and give good results. Another good option are those cities where migratory groups originating from the municipality are located, which will help to give content to the relationship.

- Interchange Letter of Intent and Municipal Profile

Once the city with which the municipality wants to be linked has been identified, the Municipal President addresses a Letter of Intent to the Mayor of the chosen city. This document, as its name indicates, is to express the intention of linking. It sets out the reasons for this intention and the interests and objectives that the municipality wishes to pursue. The Letter of Intent will be accompanied by the Municipal Profile, which will allow the chosen city to get to know the municipality and identify its interest in joining.

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3. FORMALIZATION

Establishing sister cities is a movement that gained a lot of strength at the end of World War II. It was a mechanism of cooperation between European cities seeking to heal the wounds of war. This form of cooperation spread throughout the world and has been declared by the United Nations Assembly as a form of cooperation between cities. Traditionally, cities have partnered through acts, declarations and proclamations.

In January 1992, in Mexico, the Law on the Celebration of Treaties was published, which introduces the figure of the interinstitutional agreement, giving states and municipalities the power to sign this type of document.

An inter-institutional agreement has many advantages over traditional forms of sister cities establishments, because it establishes the general rules that will govern the relationship between the Parties.

The Secretary of External Relations office has generated a model agreement that includes the elements of form and substance in terms of public international law, which is congruent with the practice that Mexico has observed in the subscription of these types of agreements. This means that its articles consist of provisions for situations that may arise throughout the relationship between the cities.

The Law on the Conclusion of Treaties defines in section II of Article 2° the interinstitutional agreement as the agreement governed by public international law entered into by agencies and decentralized bodies of the Federal, State and Municipal Public Administration with foreign counterparts, where the material scope of the agreement is circumscribed to the powers of such agencies and decentralized bodies.

- Process the opinion before the Secretary of External Relations office and send the signed agreement for registration.

Article 7 of the Law on the Conclusion of Treaties establishes the obligation to notify the Secretary of External Relations office when an interinstitutional agreement is to be signed. The Office issues a procedural opinion and then receives a copy of the signed instrument for its registration.

The review carried out by the Secretary of External Relations office is aimed at ensuring that the texts comply with public international law, in addition to looking after the interests of the Mexican municipalities, taking care that, for example, they do not submit to foreign jurisdictions in the event of any controversy. The scope and commitments are the decision of the municipalities.

4. INSTRUMENTATION

- Deploy established areas of collaboration

Once the agreement is signed, the Parties can initiate the cooperation actions to which they have committed.

The model sister city agreement includes the implementation of Annual Operational Programs (AOPs). These can help the parties to use this mechanism to evaluate actions and measure results.

International activity, which may include travel abroad, is always under the scrutiny of society. It is therefore important to build a favorable narrative for international activity from the outset. This document has mentioned some ideas that can help in this regard:

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- a) That the international activity is carried out in an orderly and coordinated manner, based on priorities and an overall development strategy for the municipality.
- b) Invite the participation of society, businessmen, academics, trade unions, etc.
- c) Continuously work on maintaining communication channels with international partners, as well as working together and obtaining results.
- d) Measurement of results and effective communication of international action to society.

Process of a linkage:

