

Selection Criteria for Proposed New Sister Cities

SSCA Board members are frequently asked: *how does SSCA select a Sister City?* The answer is not simple. Building a sustainable Sister City relationship depends on orchestrating a number of factors, and each of our Sister City relationships is a unique composition. Nonetheless, certain general criteria apply to our consideration of all Sister City proposals.

SSCA's Mission

SSCA supports the mission of its parent organization, Sister Cities International (SCI), which was established in 1956 under President Eisenhower as a nonprofit citizen diplomacy network with the mission of promoting world peace through mutual respect, understanding, & cooperation.

The mission of Sarasota Sister Cities Association, Inc. (SSCA) is to foster international relationships between Sarasota and cities that have similar interests by creating exchanges in areas of culture, education, tourism, business, and government. SSCA's objective is to develop respect, understanding, and cooperation through citizen diplomacy.

In addition, according to an agreement between SSCA and the City of Sarasota (Rev. 14 Sept 2003), the City Commission has final approval as to the number and the designation of Sister Cities. This agreement ensures that support for official Sister City relationships has been negotiated between SSCA and the government of the City of Sarasota.

SSCA's Criteria

SSCA's criteria for evaluating Sister City candidates is based on a combination of recommendations from SCI and SSCA's experience with successful inter-city relationships, which dates back to its founding in 1963. These criteria include:

I. Structural considerations for Sarasota and the proposed Sister City: 'built-in' permanent factors that ensure a solid, reliable basis for long-term, sustainable partnerships.

- **Communications:** Reliable 24/7 phone, fax, e-mail, and Internet connections.
- **Community:** strong sponsorship by interested organizations or sustaining groups (see III. below)
- **Cultural organizations and facilities** (involving music, dance, theater, visual arts, film).
- **Economic / business environment:** opportunities for growth, including import/export trade potential that will attract support from our business community.
- **Education:** strong K-12 programs and access to institutions of higher learning.
- **Tourism:** well-developed tourism industry that will encourage travel between our cities.
- **Transportation:** ease of access (international airport), convenient local transportation, and easy access to other parts of the host country.

II. Permanent sponsoring organizations or groups in Sarasota and the proposed Sister City:
these include

- **Established community groups** (further specified under III below)
- **Municipal Government** (some administrative and in-kind support staffing, some funding, titular hosting of events, official approval)
- **SSCA** (communications, networking, facilitation, experience, coordination)

III. Shared sectors of community involvement in Sarasota and the proposed Sister City that will contribute time, money, and in-kind support. The following list is meant to suggest a menu of possibilities (not requirements).

Each key sector in Sarasota should have a 'committed champion' and a core committee of SSCA members in order to ensure that ongoing exchange is not dependent on the momentum and dedication of a single individual.

- **Business organizations:** Chambers of Commerce and other business and/or professional organizations; individual businesses / corporations involved in manufacturing, technology / electronics, biomedicine, tourism, import/export, joint ventures, investment, agricultural enterprises, architecture, interior design, construction, real estate, etc.
- **Community organizations** with significant membership and an ongoing interest in and commitment to fostering relations between Sarasota and other countries.
- **Culture:** Arts organizations and councils; ethnic cultural and performance groups; historical /archaeological societies, archives, and genealogical resources; museums and galleries; theaters; individual artists and performers; public art projects; performance venues; cinema groups and venues, etc.
- **Education:** Schools and school systems K-12 (sources of grade segmented and subject oriented projects and exchanges); community colleges (exchanges involving art, photography, technical/applied science, faculty, students); colleges and universities (exchanges involving joint projects, internships, students, faculty); museum education, adult and continuing education, etc.
- **Environmental and Urban Planning:** initiatives/programs for recycling, composting, desalinization, coastal clean-ups, biological filtering, ecosystem design, alternative energy, zoning, infrastructure; parks and recreation, public safety, neighborhood organizations, etc.
- **Scientific / Technical / Professional arenas:** internships, joint projects, research opportunities, consulting, symposia in areas such as botany, horticulture, agriculture, interior design, landscaping, marine biology, medicine, dentistry, alternative health care, etc.
- **Service organizations:** Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.
- **Other:** youth organizations, sports (individual/team exchanges); senior venues (e.g. Elderhostel, SILLS); health and fitness centers; special interest groups, etc.

SSCA's Process

Persons interested in proposing a Sister City for Sarasota should work with a designated SSCA Board member to develop a well-researched proposal to present to the SSCA Board.

The proposal should include

- 1) an evaluation of the candidate city using SSCA's Criteria Form, including supporting information and contact persons in the candidate city,
- 2) evidence of sponsorship in the Sarasota community from established interest organizations or sustaining group(s),
- 3) Any additional information that would be helpful to the Board's consideration of the proposed relationship, and its recommendation to the City.

NOTE: many kinds of international exchanges can be initiated and carried out independently of Sister Cities. The purpose of creating an official Sister City relationship is to enable diverse projects within the context of a sustainable long-term relationship.

Sarasota Sister Cities Association, Inc.

Procedure for Acquiring New Sister Cities

1. When SSCA is approached with the idea of taking on a sister city, the inquirer is to be given a copy of *The Selection Criteria for Proposed New Sister Cities*.
2. SSCA will check with Sister Cities International to determine whether a sister city relationship already exists with the city in question.
3. If after reviewing this document, the group representing the city in question believes their city meets these criteria, the VP for Cities and Candidate Cities, or his/her designate drawn from among SSCA's Board, will work with the sponsoring organization to put together a formal, written recommendation nominating their city.
4. SSCA's Board will study the recommendation, and if the nominee is found substantially to meet the established criteria, the Board will vote to accept or reject the nomination. If the nomination is rejected, the Board may, at its discretion, send it back to the sponsoring organization with recommendations as to how the nomination could be modified to more adequately reflect the established criteria.
5. If the Board votes to accept the nomination, the Mayor and the Sarasota City Commission will be presented with the formal recommendation and a record of the Board's support.
6. If the City Commission agrees that the city in question should be formally invited to become a SSCA sister city, a formal *Letter of Invitation* shall be sent to the top elected official of the city/county/district/province in question.
7. Upon receipt of a written letter of acceptance from the executive of the city in question, an invitation to visit Sarasota for a formal signing of a sister city agreement will be extended in writing to the top elected official.
8. An official *Sarasota Sister City Agreement* or *Memorandum of Understanding* will be drawn up in duplicate. These documents will be signed in a formal, public ceremony in Sarasota. Each partner to the signing will receive a signed set of the official documents for their records, and official copies will be sent to SCI.
9. At a time agreeable to both parties, SSCA shall send an official delegation to the new sister city to initiate and carry forward projects of mutual interest and benefit.