

CULTURAL EXCHANGE COMMITTEE MANUAL

Youthlinc
creating lifetime humanitarians



Everything you need to know to run a successful committee

YOUTHLINC CULTURAL EXCHANGE COMMITTEE MANUAL

A complete guide for Mentors, Alum Leaders, and youth volunteers facilitating cultural exchange abroad. When these projects are thoughtfully planned, cultural exchange becomes the **heart** of the Youthlinc experience.

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PART 1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose of the Cultural Exchange Committee

As a member of the Cultural Exchange Committee, your role is to help our team build meaningful relationships with the community we will be working in. You create opportunities for connection, understanding, and shared experience.

Your committee ensures that:

- Our team learns about the host country's culture in a respectful and accurate way
- Our activities honor the traditions and values of the community
- Cultural exchange feels natural, uplifting, and inclusive
- Volunteers understand how to communicate respectfully across cultures
- All cultural projects (ceremonies, games, conversations, fun fair, etc.) are organized and ready before departure

Your work helps shape how our team is welcomed into the community and how we leave a positive, lasting impression when we return home.

1.2 Philosophy of Cultural Exchange

A guide for how to approach cultural work respectfully and successfully

Cultural exchange is not about performing or giving a lesson on "American culture." It is about listening, learning, and building trust.

- **People Already Have Culture**

Every community has deep and meaningful cultural traditions. Our job is not to define or explain their culture; our job is to learn from it.

As a committee member, you help prepare the team to enter the community with curiosity, not assumptions.

- **Participation Is Better Than Performance**

Cultural exchange should feel shared, not one sided.

This means:

- Keep activities interactive
- Keep ceremonies simple and meaningful
- Avoid long speeches or anything that feels like a staged show

We are there to share experiences with the community, not to entertain them.

- **Less Talking, More Doing**

Hands on and visual activities cross language barriers much better than long explanations.

Aim for cultural exchange activities that are:

- Visual
- Movement based
- Easy to follow
- Appropriate for all ages

If someone can understand it without words, it is probably perfect.

- **Honor Local Knowledge**

Community members are the cultural experts. Encourage volunteers to ask open and respectful questions like:

- What celebrations are important here?
- What do families like to do together?
- What traditions matter most to your community?

These questions show interest and help build connection.

- **Avoid Cultural Assumptions**

Volunteers must be mindful of how they talk about cultural differences.

Avoid:

- Stereotypes or generalizations
- Romanticizing poverty or difficult living circumstances
- Comparing cultures (“In America we do this better...”)
- Jokes about traditions, accents, or lifestyles

Cultural exchange requires humility, kindness, and awareness.

1.3 Cultural Respect and Dignity

Every cultural project your committee prepares should reflect respect for the community. That includes:

- Asking permission before taking photos
- Dressing appropriately
- Learning correct greetings and customs
- Avoiding handouts, trinkets, or gifts that create inequity
- Being mindful of cultural taboos
- Avoiding sensitive topics like, money, trauma, or religion (Outside of committee lessons)

Your committee helps ensure the team understands what is appropriate and what is not before departure.

1.4 Working With an Interpreter

Many cultural activities will involve interpreters. Your committee helps train the team on interpreter best practices.

Volunteers should:

- Speak in short, simple sentences
- Pause after each idea
- Look at community members, not the interpreter
- Use gestures and visuals to support understanding
- Share any ceremony scripts or questions with interpreters beforehand

Interpreters are partners in ensuring cultural respect and clarity. Treat them with kindness and gratitude.

1.5 Understanding Cultural Context

Before we travel, your committee researches important cultural information such as:

- Greetings and respectful behavior
- Dress expectations
- Gender roles
- Family structure
- Important customs or celebrations
- What may be considered disrespectful
- How to interact with elders and leaders
- What topics should be avoided

This research helps the whole team understand how to show respect and build positive relationships.

1.6 Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Who leads what, and how your committee works together

The Cultural Exchange Committee is designed for Humanitarians to take the lead on planning and preparing all cultural projects. Mentors and Alum Leaders play supportive and guiding roles, but the ownership and creativity come from the students.

Humanitarians

Humanitarians are responsible for driving the committee's projects from start to finish. This includes:

- Researching cultural etiquette, traditions, and community expectations

- Taking the lead on planning ceremonies, daily kids games, fun fair stations, and conversation activities
- Coming prepared to committee meetings ready to contribute and share ideas
- Participating in practice sessions so activities run smoothly in country
- Helping gather supplies your committee will need
- Coming prepared to each committee meeting and following through on tasks.
- Working together as a team to support the community and your volunteers in country

Alum Leader

Your Alum Leader has been on a Youthlinc trip before, which means they bring experience, insight, and practical tips that can help your committee succeed. They work closely with the Mentor but also directly with humanitarians.

The Alum Leader will:

- Help keep the committee organized and on schedule
- Follow up with members on tasks and deadlines
- Share personal experience from past trips to guide your planning
- Help train the committee on cultural expectations and activities
- Assist in preparing ceremonies, games, and conversation plans
- Support the team in rehearsals and preparation meetings
- Be a resource for questions, concerns, or ideas

Mentor

Your Mentor helps guide the committee and makes sure everything we plan fits Youthlinc values. Their role is to support the committee, not take over.

The Mentor supports the committee by:

- Ensuring cultural activities honor Youthlinc values and respect the host community
- Providing guidance, feedback, and approval on final plans
- Supporting problem solving and logistics
- Helping humanitarians understand cultural sensitivities
- Coordinating with the Team Leader and In Country Coordinator when needed
- Being available for questions, challenges, or brainstorming

PART 2: TRAINING TO LEAD CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

This section teaches committee members and volunteers how to lead cultural exchange activities in a way that is respectful, engaging, and culturally humble. These skills apply to ceremonies, games, conversations, home visits, fun fair, and any community interactions. Your goal is to help create experiences that feel natural, welcoming, and collaborative for everyone involved.

2.1 How to lead as a Youth Volunteer

You do NOT need to be a cultural expert. You are:

- A learner
- A helper
- A respectful representative of Utah and the United States
- Someone who models curiosity and kindness

Good cultural leading is less about knowing facts and more about:

- Being prepared
- Being open minded
- Working well through interpretation
- Creating shared experiences
- Encouraging participation

Most importantly, you help create an environment where everyone feels comfortable and respected.

2.2 What Good Cultural Leading Looks Like

Good facilitation is simple. You do not need fancy performances or complicated explanations to connect with others. Instead, focus on:

Clear and simple communication

- Use short sentences, gestures, demonstrations, and examples.

Warm and positive energy

- Smile often. Use encouraging body language. Show genuine interest.

Engagement over explanation

- Start activities quickly. Let people join in rather than listen for long periods.

Checking in with participants

- Watch people's reactions. If they seem confused or disengaged, adjust.

Respectful curiosity

- Ask questions that invite learning on both sides.

Flexibility

- If something is not working, change it. If the community wants something different, adapt.

Good leading feels comfortable, collaborative, and easy for everyone.

2.3 Common Cultural Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Cultural misunderstandings can happen easily. Being aware of common mistakes helps prevent them.

Pitfall 1: Talking too much

Long explanations often lose people, especially through translators.

Avoid by: Demonstrating the activity instead of explaining everything verbally.

Pitfall 2: Centering American culture

Cultural exchange is not about showcasing our culture as better or more interesting.

Avoid by: Keeping American elements simple and making space to learn from their traditions.

Pitfall 3: Accidentally stereotyping

Even positive stereotypes can be harmful.

Avoid by: Speaking about individuals and experiences, not entire cultures.

Pitfall 4: Romanticizing poverty

Avoid comments about how “simple” or “peaceful” life seems. These comments can be insensitive.

Avoid by: Listening and learning without judging or idealizing.

Pitfall 5: Using humor that doesn’t translate

Jokes about accents, family roles, traditions, or living situations can be hurtful.

Avoid by: Using kindness and curiosity rather than humor about differences.

2.4 Adapting Activities for Different Ages and Groups

You may interact with:

- Primary students
- Secondary students
- Adults
- Elders
- Mixed age groups
- Mixed literacy levels

Each group may need something different.

Young Children

- Keep activities short
- Use large movements
- Use visuals or demonstrations
- Avoid anything that requires reading

Teens

- Use games, music, discussion, and shared interests
- Ask open questions they can answer confidently

Adults and Elders

- Use respectful tone and body language
- Allow space for them to share stories
- Avoid activities that feel childish

Mixed Groups

- Demonstrate everything
- Keep instructions simple
- Choose activities that work for all ages

The best activities feel inclusive and easy to follow regardless of age or background.

2.5 Motivating Participation and Handling Shyness

Some people may feel shy, especially when interacting with foreigners. Volunteers should make participation feel safe and enjoyable.

Ways to Encourage Participation

- Start with simple actions (clapping, pointing, standing up)
- Use group activities rather than individual tasks
- Demonstrate first so people know what to expect
- Celebrate effort, not perfection

If Participants Are Shy

- Allow people to participate silently through gestures
- Use small group conversations
- Let volunteers model the activity first
- Never call someone out for not participating

Participation should feel welcoming, never pressured.

2.6 Ensuring Cultural Humility

Cultural humility means recognizing that the community is the expert on their own traditions and way of life.

Volunteers should:

- Approach everything with curiosity
- Avoid comparisons
- Validate cultural differences
- Follow local guidance and instructions
- Listen more than they speak

Cultural humility strengthens trust and shows respect.

2.7 Using Visuals, Stories, and Demonstrations

Because activities often cross language barriers, visuals and demonstrations are essential.

You can use:

- Gestures
- Drawings
- Simple objects
- Movement
- Songs
- Repeat-after-me activities

Stories are also powerful. Short, relatable stories help build connection and cross cultural understanding.

2.8 Monitoring Understanding Without Pressure

Instead of asking “Do you understand?”, use check ins that feel natural, such as:

- Thumbs up or sideways
- Watching body language
- Asking people to copy a motion
- Having volunteers demonstrate again
- Asking for a simple repeat after me moment

Avoid putting individuals on the spot or asking them to read or speak publicly if they seem nervous.

Summary of Part 2: What You Should Remember

- Keep it simple
- Smile and stay encouraging
- Focus on shared activities
- Use visuals and demonstrations\
- Let the community lead
- Adapt when needed
- Never compare cultures
- Be curious, not judgmental
- Participation matters more than performance

PART 3: CULTURAL COMMITTEE PROJECTS

The Cultural Exchange Committee plans and prepares several major projects that help our team learn about the community and build meaningful relationships abroad. Each project requires organization, cultural humility, and teamwork.

This section explains each project, what it is, why it matters, and what your committee needs to prepare before departure.

3.1 Cultural Do and Do Not Research

Purpose

To help the entire team understand culturally appropriate behavior before traveling.

What This Project Includes

Your committee researches important cultural information about your host community, such as:

- Greetings and respectful ways to address others
- Dress expectations
- Behavior that is considered respectful or disrespectful
- Taboos (topics or actions to avoid)
- Cultural norms for visiting homes
- Expectations around elders, leaders, and religious spaces
- Communication styles (direct or indirect)

Your Responsibilities

- Assign committee members to research different topics
- Prepare a clear, simple summary for the team
- Present this information at a team meeting
- Provide concrete examples and guidance (not just general statements)
- Become the “go to” resource for the team during the year

Why It Matters

This project helps prevent cultural misunderstandings and ensures the team shows respect from the first day in country.

3.2 Opening Ceremonies

Purpose

To introduce our team to the community in a warm, respectful, and celebratory way.

What the Opening Ceremony Should Be

- 10 to 20 minutes long
- Simple performances that require little rehearsal

- Mostly small group or individual pieces (since group practice time is limited before travel)
- Energetic, welcoming, and appropriate for all ages

Examples:

- A short song or simple dance
- A musical performance
- A cultural symbol from Utah
- A quick group activity that includes everyone

Your Responsibilities

- Create a program line up
- Gather volunteers to participate in each part
- Keep performances short, simple, and culturally appropriate
- Prepare a printed script for the interpreter
- Make sure volunteers know what to wear, bring, and practice

Why It Matters

Communities often put great effort into welcoming Youthline teams. A thoughtful opening ceremony shows gratitude and respect.

3.3 Closing Ceremonies

Purpose

To thank the community, celebrate partnerships, and honor the relationships built during the trip.

What the Closing Ceremony Should Be

- Meaningful and reflective
- More rehearsed than opening, since the team can practice in country
- Inclusive of all team members
- Focused on gratitude and connection

Examples:

- A group song or dance
- A few short thank you messages
- A cultural activity shared with the community
- A team presentation of appreciation

Your Responsibilities

- Plan a full program and gather participants
- Practice in country
- Work with interpreters to prepare translations
- Ensure the program represents humility and respect

3.4 Fun Fair

Purpose

To provide a large, organized celebration day for children in the community. It should feel joyful, structured, and fair for every participant. This event is typically 1-2 hours at the end of the trip. Exact timeline details should be discussed with your Team Leader

Fun Fair MUST Include

- Enough stations for everyone to participate
- Clear rotation system
- No prizes or giveaways
- Activities that can be repeated many times

Your Responsibilities

- Plan 8 to 12 stations depending on team size
- Assign team members to run each station
- Create clear instructions for every station
- Develop a rotation system so all children participate equally
- Train the whole team in advance

Common Station Ideas

- Parachute
- Tug-a-war
- Face painting
- Nail painting
- Obstacle course
- Bean toss or ring toss
- Bubble station
- Dance or movement station
- Polaroid Station

Most Important Rule

No items are handed out. No balloons. No stickers. No toys.
These create inequity and unsafe situations.

3.5 Cultural Conversations and Home Visits

A core part of meaningful cultural exchange

Purpose

Home visits allow volunteers to learn directly from families in the community in a respectful, safe, and structured way. These visits are one of the most powerful ways to understand daily life, traditions, challenges, and hopes from the people who live them. This is not a tour. It is a moment of genuine human connection.

Home visits help volunteers:

- Listen deeply
- Build empathy
- Recognize shared humanity
- Learn about culture through real stories, not assumptions
- Honor the people we partner with
- Grow as lifelong humanitarians

Many volunteers describe home visits as the moment their entire Youthlinc experience “clicks.”

What This Project Involves

Each day, small groups of volunteers visit homes throughout the community. Visits are coordinated ahead of time by the In Country Coordinator (ICC) and community leaders. Groups are guided by interpreters who help support communication. A typical home visit lasts 30 to 60 minutes and may include:

- Sitting with the family and talking together
- Seeing their home and daily routines
- Observing or learning about traditions
- Asking respectful questions
- Sharing about life in Utah

At the end of the visit, the group leaves a gift of gratitude that has been approved by the Team Leader and community partners.

Optional Hands On Activities

Some families may welcome volunteers to join them in a simple, everyday activity. These must be pre arranged with the ICC and community leaders to ensure they are appropriate and culturally respectful.

Possible activities may include:

- Helping plant in a family garden
- Assisting with light farm work
- Preparing a traditional snack or meal
- Gathering materials for cooking
- Learning a craft or skill
- Participating in a family chore

**all supplies should be provided by the Youthlinc participants for these activities*

These moments often become the most meaningful part of the visit, because volunteers get to learn through doing, not just listening.

Your Responsibilities

The Cultural Committee prepares everything the team needs to make home visits meaningful and respectful.

Your tasks include:

1. Create thoughtful, appropriate questions

Questions should be:

- Open ended
- Kind and curious
- Focused on daily life, culture, hopes, roles, and traditions
- Avoid topics that may feel personal or emotional unless approved ahead of time.

If a question would feel uncomfortable for you, it will feel uncomfortable for a family.

2. Prepare clear instructions for volunteers

Help the team know:

- How to greet families respectfully
- What to expect during cultural conversations
- How to show gratitude and humility
- How to use body language and active listening
- How permissions for photos or recordings work

3. Determine the gratitude gift for each family

Work with your committee, Team Leader, ICC and other committees to determine what gift will be given to the family. It should be meaningful, useful, and respectful.

Examples include:

- A Polaroid photo of the family with volunteers
- A hygiene kit
- Seeds or basic garden supplies
- A water filter
- A simple household staple

Gifts should never feel like charity. They should feel like a sincere thank you.

Why It Matters

Home visits are often the heart of the Youthlinc experience. They create moments where volunteers and community members see each other not as “foreigners” or “students,” but as people with families, dreams, worries, joy, and shared humanity.

Through home visits, volunteers learn:

- To listen with compassion
- To honor someone else’s story
- To understand cultural differences and similarities
- To build relationships based on respect, not assumption

And families get the chance to:

- Share their stories
- Pass down cultural traditions
- Teach volunteers about their lives

- Build pride in their community

When done well, a home visit is not just a conversation. It is an exchange of trust, gratitude, and connection that lasts long after the trip ends.

3.6 Mural

Purpose

Your team will create a painting or 'mural' in the community or at the school. To create a lasting, collaborative piece of art that reflects partnership, shared identity, and community pride. A mural is not something the Youthlinc team “leaves behind,” but something that is created together with the community.

What This Project Includes

- A shared design.
The mural should be designed in collaboration with community partners and approved by the Team Leader and In Country Coordinator before painting begins. The design should reflect themes that are meaningful to the community, such as local values, history, environment, or shared hopes for the future.
- Community participation.
When appropriate, students, teachers, or community members should be invited to help paint the mural. This turns the mural into a shared experience rather than a volunteer-led project.

Your Responsibilities

- Work with your Team Leader and In Country Coordinator to confirm whether a mural is part of your site plan, and if so, where it will be placed
- Help identify a mural theme that is community driven and culturally appropriate
- Ensure the design is approved before arrival in country
- Plan materials needed, including paint, brushes, drop cloths, and cleanup supplies
- Assign volunteers to specific roles (outlining, filling, mixing colors, cleanup)
- Teach volunteers how to invite community members to participate respectfully
- Make sure the mural space is cleaned and respected before and after painting

The mural should never feel rushed or forced. Quality, collaboration, and respect matter more than speed.

Why It Matters

A mural becomes a visible reminder of partnership and shared effort. When done well, it reflects community voice, creativity, and pride, not just the presence of visiting volunteers.

Murals matter because they:

- Create a lasting symbol of collaboration
- Allow learning and connection through shared creative work
- Give students and community members ownership of the final product
- Honor the space by adding something meaningful and intentional

- Leave behind something that continues to tell a story after the team leaves

A successful mural is not about how impressive it looks. It is about who helped create it and what it represents.

3.7 Community Activities (Optional)

Purpose

To create connection with students, teens, and adults in fun and meaningful ways outside of English Camp.

Possible Activities

- Sports: soccer, volleyball, relay races
- Arts and crafts
- Music, rhythm, or movement activities
- Storytelling or cultural games
- Team building activities
- Spa Day for the women's groups

Your Responsibilities

- Plan activities for each/an age group
- Make sure activities are respectful and appropriate
- Gather supplies well in advance
- Communicate with the Team Leader so activities can be added to the master schedule
- Train volunteers on how to run each activity

Why It Matters

Community activities build relationships and help volunteers connect across language barriers in natural, joyful ways.

3.8 Cultural Discussion Groups (Optional)

Purpose

To connect Youthlinc volunteers with local teens through guided conversation.

What This Looks Like

Groups of U.S. teens and local secondary students sit together and discuss safe, fun topics such as:

- School life
- Hobbies and interests
- Traditions
- Future dreams
- Community life

It should feel comfortable, balanced, and positive.

Your Responsibilities

- Prepare balanced conversation questions
- Make sure questions are appropriate and avoid sensitive topics
- Teach volunteers how to keep conversations respectful and inclusive
- Prepare printed question sheets

Why It Matters

Discussion groups build relationships between peers and allow both sides to learn about life in another part of the world.

Summary of Part 3

Your committee manages some of the most meaningful and interactive parts of the Youthlinc experience. Each project should be:

- Respectful
- Well organized
- Culturally sensitive
- Fun and engaging
- Easy for volunteers to understand and lead
- Prepared well before departure

When these projects are thoughtfully planned, cultural exchange becomes the heart of the Youthlinc experience.

PART 4: COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND PREPARATION

Committee work does not happen all at once. It builds gradually throughout the year as your team learns more about the cultural projects you are responsible for and gathers resources, ideas, and skills. This section outlines how your committee should prepare, meet, and practice your cultural responsibilities before departure.

The goal of your preparation is simple: Make sure every cultural activity, ceremony, game, and conversation is organized, practiced, and ready before you travel.

This helps you feel confident, reduces stress in-country, and ensures the community receives a thoughtful, respectful experience.

4.1 Purpose of Committee Meetings

Committee meetings allow you to:

- Plan cultural projects step by step
- Assign responsibilities and deadlines
- Practice activities before teaching them to the team
- Review what has worked in the past
- Gather and test materials
- Discuss any concerns with your Mentor and Alum Leader
- Make adjustments based on feedback
- Ensure nothing is left until the last minute

These meetings should be supportive, organized, and collaborative. Everyone plays a role in making cultural exchange meaningful.

4.2 How to Run an Effective Committee Meeting

Committee meetings are where most of your cultural projects actually get built. Even though your Mentor or Alum Leader may step in to guide or clarify, **humanitarians** should take the lead.

A strong committee meeting usually includes:

- **Clear goals:** Everyone knows the purpose of the meeting and what needs to get done.
- **Quick progress check:** Members share brief updates so the group knows where things stand.
- **Focused work time:** This is when you plan activities, finalize details, practice elements of ceremonies, prepare questions, or organize materials.
- **Group problem solving:** If something does not make sense or feels overwhelming, the group talks it through and adjusts the plan together.
- **Action steps before leaving:** Each member leaves knowing exactly what they are responsible for before the next meeting.

Good meetings feel organized, collaborative, and productive. When everyone contributes and follows through, your committee's projects in country will run smoothly and confidently.

*** If work is not finished during the monthly team meeting:** Your committee should schedule **one additional meeting each month**, outside of the regular team meeting, to complete tasks and review progress. This helps ensure everything stays on track and is fully prepared before departure.

4.3 What You Should Do in a Committee Meeting

Each meeting focuses on specific preparation tasks. By the time you travel, your committee should have:

- A complete cultural do and do not list
Clear, respectful guidelines to help the whole team interact appropriately.
- A finalized plan for opening and closing ceremonies
This includes:
 - Performances
 - Transitions
 - Speaking parts
 - Music selections
 - Any needed materials

Ceremonies should be simple, meaningful, and easy to repeat.

- A detailed fun fair plan
Including:
 - Stations
 - Rotation schedule
 - Supply list
 - Volunteer assignments
 - Clear instructions for each activity
- Cultural conversation and home visits
Your committee should prepare:
 - Respectful, open ended questions focused on connection
 - Topics that avoid personal, sensitive, or intrusive issues
 - Clear instructions for volunteers on how to engage respectfully
 - A simple, pre approved plan for a small gratitude gift for each family

Gratitude gifts should be thoughtful, culturally appropriate, and coordinated with other committees, the Team Leader and In Country Coordinator.

- Mural

Your committee should prepare:

- A clear mural theme that reflects community values or shared ideas
- Confirmation that a mural is approved and appropriate for your site
- A simple, pre approved design that can be completed in the time available
- A materials list (paint, brushes, drop cloths, cleanup supplies)
- A basic timeline for painting and drying
- Volunteer roles (outlining, painting, mixing colors, cleanup)
- A plan for inviting community members or students to participate respectfully

Murals should be collaborative, community driven, and thoughtfully planned in advance.

4.4 Practicing Activities as a Committee

Instead of calling this “rehearsals,” this manual uses language that reflects what you are truly doing: preparing, testing, and building confidence.

Activity Practice

As a committee, you should practice:

- Kids games
- Fun fair stations
- Opening and Closing Ceremonies
- Ways to explain activities through an interpreter
- Question prompts for conversation groups

This helps identify confusion before you teach the rest of the team.

Team Education Practice

Your committee will present cultural information during team meetings. Practice ensures your explanations are clear and respectful.

You may practice:

- How to explain cultural etiquette
- How to model respectful behavior
- How to teach games using simple language
- How to walk through ceremony plans

Committee Check In Moments

- These are short reflections where you ask:
What is finished?
What needs more work?
Do we need supplies?
- Is everyone clear on their tasks?

Meetings run smoother when the committee checks in often and communicates honestly.

4.5 Scenario Based Preparation

Just like cultural exchange can be unpredictable in country, your committee meetings help you prepare for real situations you may encounter. Here are common scenarios and how to plan for them during preparation:

Scenario 1: The community is shy or quiet during an activity

During preparation, practice:

- Using gestures
- Asking yes or no questions
- Breaking activities into simple steps
- Demonstrating before speaking

Scenario 2: A ceremony piece feels too complicated

Practice simplifying:

- Shorter songs
- Repeating movements
- Removing transitions that require rehearsal
- Choosing group pieces that require no memorization

The best ceremonies are simple, confident, and joyful.

Scenario 3: A Cultural Activity Does Not Translate Well

Sometimes an activity that makes perfect sense in the United States may feel confusing, uncomfortable, or culturally out of place when you test it.

During your committee meetings, discuss:

- Does this activity make sense without a lot of talking
- Does it fit the cultural norms of our partner community
- Would all age groups feel comfortable participating
- Can we explain it clearly through simple gestures or demonstrations

If the activity does not translate well:

- Simplify the steps
- Remove anything that might feel awkward or overly competitive
- Adjust the activity so it works for mixed ages
- Choose a more universal version if needed

If an activity requires too much explanation or feels culturally off, it is better to choose something more simple, welcoming, and universal.

Scenario 4: Cultural conversations feel one sided

Sometimes when you practice cultural conversation questions, it can feel like volunteers are interviewing the community rather than having a real conversation.

Use meetings to:

- Add questions that invite both sides to share
- Remove questions that sound too formal or awkward
- Practice giving short examples so the exchange feels balanced
- Make sure questions encourage connection, not just information

Good cultural conversations should feel like two people learning from each other, not a questionnaire.

Scenario 5: Materials are missing or unclear

Use meetings to:

- Assign who gathers what
- Decide how materials will travel
- Make clear lists
- Label items
- Test activities using real materials

Better to discover issues now than in country.

4.6 Final Preparation Before Departure

By your final meeting, your committee should have:

- All activity supplies written and laminated
- Ceremony plan typed, printed, and rehearsed
- Fun fair fully organized
- Question lists finalized and printed
- Cultural research ready to share
- Supply lists completed
- Responsibilities assigned for in country execution

At this stage, your job is to double check everything and make sure everyone knows their role.

PART 5: Additional Committee Resources

This section provides practical tools and ready to use templates your committee will rely on as you prepare for the international experience. These resources make your planning more organized, keep your team on the same page, and help ensure all cultural activities are fully ready before departure.

Use these throughout the year, and especially during your Committee Meetings and Preparation sessions.

5.1 Cultural Research Template

Use these prompts when researching your country's etiquette, social norms, and traditions.

Cultural Research Topics

- Greetings and respectful behaviors
- Dress expectations for men and women
- Gender norms and expectations
- Behavior around elders and leaders
- Important customs, celebrations, or holidays
- Food norms (what is polite, what is rude)
- Taboos or sensitive topics
- Appropriate physical touch
- Social cues for politeness
- Expectations for guests
- Community roles (teachers, parents, chiefs, etc.)

Deliverable: give "Cultural Presentation" during Team Meetings.

5.2 Ceremony Planning Template

Use this to plan your team's Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

Opening Ceremony (10–20 minutes)

- Welcome activity
- 1 to 2 simple group song or dance
- 1 to 3 small group or individual performances
- Brief introduction of Youthlinc and Utah culture
- No complicated choreography, no last minute learning

Closing Ceremony

- Thank you speeches
- A group performance everyone knows
- Recognizing hosts or leaders

- Cultural exchange moment (song, dance, story, or symbolic gesture)

Details to finalize before departure:

- Who is performing what
- Who is speaking and in what order
- Printed script for interpreter
- Music and speakers
- Back up plans if something changes

5.3 Fun Fair Station Template

Use this template to organize a well structured and smooth Fun Fair.

Station Planning Template:

1. Station name
2. Activity description
3. Who is running the station
4. Rotation instructions
5. List of supplies needed
6. What to say to kids before beginning
7. Clear rules
8. How long each group stays
9. End of rotation signal
10. Notes for interpreter

Important:

- No prizes
- No giveaways
- Keep supplies simple and reusable if possible

5.4 Cultural Conversations and Home Visits Template

5.5 Mural Template

5.6 Monthly Planning Checklists

These checklists guide your committee through the year so you stay organized and on track.

January Checklist – Understand Your Committee

Focus: Understand your role and build your foundation

- ☐ Meet your committee and exchange contact information
- ☐ Review this manual together

- ☐ Look through last year's committee report for ideas
- ☐ Begin researching cultural etiquette, greetings, and traditions
- ☐ Assign research topics to committee members
- ☐ Decide how your committee will communicate
- ☐ Brainstorm early ideas for ceremonies, kids games, and community activities

February Checklist – Understand Your Site and Brainstorm Projects

Focus: Turn ideas into rough plans

- ☐ Present your cultural do and do not list to the committee or team
- ☐ Begin outlining opening and closing ceremony ideas
- ☐ Identify who will lead each major committee project
- ☐ Brainstorm mural options test simple versions
- ☐ Begin mapping out potential Fun Fair stations
- ☐ Start drafting respectful home visit gifts and discussion questions
- ☐ Prepare and submit questions for the community or In Country Coordinator to your TL

March Checklist – Start Building and Drafting Project Materials

Focus: Drafts and Clear assignments

- ☐ Team members sign up for opening and closing ceremony roles
- ☐ Create a first draft supply list for all ceremonies, games, and Fun Fair stations
- ☐ Assign who will gather which supplies
- ☐ Finalize a simple ceremony outline (not the full script yet)
- ☐ Prepare and submit questions for the community or In Country Coordinator to your TL
- ☐ Hold an additional committee meeting outside the team meeting if needed

April Checklist – Practice, Test, and Improve Your Projects

Focus: Practice • Evaluate • Refine

- ☐ Begin small group and team ceremony practice (songs, skits, transitions)
- ☐ Finalize your Fun Fair station list
- ☐ Create a rotation plan so groups move smoothly
- ☐ Prepare printed drafts of your game cards, question sheets, and ceremony outline
- ☐ If possible, practice explaining activities using interpreter style pacing
- ☐ Recheck cultural do and do not list for accuracy and clarity
- ☐ Prepare and submit questions for the community or In Country Coordinator to your TL
- ☐ Hold an additional committee meeting outside the team meeting if needed

May Checklist – Finalize Everything Before Departure

Focus: Preparation • Final decisions • All materials ready

- ☐ Finalize the closing ceremony program and sequence
- ☐ Gather any remaining supplies for games, ceremonies, and Fun Fair

- ☐ Make sure all cards, scripts, and lists are ready for printing
- ☐ Prepare and submit questions for the community or In Country Coordinator to your TL
- ☐ Hold an additional committee meeting outside the team meeting if needed

June/July Checklist – Packing and Final Checks

Focus: Pack • Organize • Final review

- ☐ Print and laminate ceremony scripts and speaking parts
- ☐ Label Fun Fair station materials and place them in organized bags
- ☐ Complete a final review with your Team Leader and ATL
- ☐ Assign which volunteers will carry which materials to the country
- ☐ Ensure your committee has at least one final check in before departure

If your committee does not finish all assignments during monthly team meetings, you must schedule an additional committee meeting outside the team meeting. This should happen at least once per month to stay on track and ensure all tasks are completed on time.

5.7 In Country Daily Checklist

Each day in country, the committee should review:

- Interpreter is briefed
- Materials are gathered
- Everyone knows their role
- Ceremonies are practiced as needed
- Safety and cultural respect reminders given
- End of day reflection completed

3. Kids Game Cards for English Camp

Your committee will prepare **4 games per day** of English Camp in simple card format that any volunteer can run.

Each Game Card Should Include:

- Game name
- Age group
- Time needed
- Clear steps
- Demonstration example
- Materials (or note “no materials required”)

- Safety considerations
- Visual diagram if helpful

Tip: Laminate these so they survive travel and in country use.
