



## Cultural Committee Manual



### Section One

As Roman philosopher Seneca once said, “As the soil, however rich it may be, cannot be productive without good cultivation, the mind without culture cannot produce good fruit.” The importance of meaningful cultural exchange cannot be underestimated. In today’s world, a lack of empathy can often be chalked up to an even bigger lack of understanding.

Increasingly, people are more interconnected than ever before, whether it is through technological means or through face-to-face interactions. Rather than pushing out into islands of isolation, we rely upon one another even more than in previous points in history. The simple act of understanding one another can have a profound impact on individuals, groups, and societies.

Through understanding each other's cultural practices, beliefs, and way of life, we make the world a better place. "One conversation can have the power to alter our perceptions of an entire nation of people, and that is both terrifying and empowering" (*The Importance of Cultural Exchange*, Davidson 2016). Through art, play, music, dance, home visits, and conversation, we will share our culture. More importantly, we will listen to and learn from the people we serve.

#### **Committee Goals:**

1. Build bridges between the community and Youthlinc team
2. Create understanding through active dialogue, empathy, gratitude, and generosity between cultures
3. Plan Opening and Closing Ceremonies
4. Plan Fun Fair
5. Plan and participate in Home Visits

#### **Committee Strategies and Timeline:**

##### **December**

- Focus on local service
- Sign up for committee and team job
- Start collecting clothes for the Big Brother Big Sisters clothing drive. This is how you raise money for your committee supplies!

##### **January**

- **Team Retreat!**
- At the Team Retreat:
  - Find out who is on your committee
  - Figure out a list of games to play for recess. Each person on the Cultural Committee should have **at least two** games.

- Decide who will be the chairpersons for the Fun Fair and the Opening/Closing Ceremonies.
- Discuss the schedule of events for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and what activities your team will do. In the past, dancing and songs seem to have been the most popular activities.
- Team-wide committee training meeting. Youthlinc hosts committee-specific workshops this month. Here, you'll learn about what has and hasn't worked with your committee in previous years.
- Review projects and identify questions or needed info to plan the projects
- Read last year's committee report and seek advice from previous Youthlinc teams
- Begin brainstorming ways to obtain supplies for the Fun Fair, Opening and Closing Ceremonies, games, and the mural.
- Make sure everyone has each other's contact information. Decide as a committee the way that will work best for you to all keep in touch. Whatever you agree on as a committee you need to follow through with consistently throughout the Service Year.

## February

- Travel health clinic at the University of Utah
- Review ideas and tasks from January committee meeting.
- Continue collecting clothes! One month left to hit your goal.

## March

- Review and follow up on items from February
- Big Brother Big Sisters Clothing Drive.
  - This is where the majority of your committee's funds for supplies comes from!
- Order supplies that need to be picked up and purchased in-country.
- All committee members need to be working on their cultural projects, whether it is Opening or Closing Ceremonies, Fun Fair, Home Visits, etc.
- Draft a potential list of questions that your team will ask during Home Visits

## April

- Review and follow up on items from March
- Plan/carry out supply drives and start gathering supplies.
  - Start gathering any and all supplies you need.
  - Present any committee needs to the rest of the team. Many members on your team have connections to getting supplies you might need.
- Practice any dances or songs with your group. Don't let in-country be the first time you do your Opening Ceremony dances!

## May

- Review and follow up on items from April
- Practice some more! Get your moves down perfectly!
- Finish up supplies collections
  - Get the team involved in collecting your items
  - Finalize items needed for your projects

- Go over Opening and Closing Ceremonies with the rest of the team

## Section Two

In this section, we will cover a few basic project guidelines and pointers. These guides should be used as a starting point, **not** exact guides. They should be modified based on committee members and the needs of the community.

### Opening/Closing Ceremonies

- Plan and perform up to 3 songs and dances
- Figure out how you can incorporate the other members of your team. Does someone play an instrument, do cheer/tumbling, or sing really well?
- Figure out what technology you might need for Opening/Closing Ceremonies. These needs might include: speakers, something to play music from, a microphone, etc.
- Remember that these opening and closing ceremonies should show what our culture is like.
- The most common choice of what to perform in your opening ceremonies is to sing the National Anthem. This is a great way to show our cultural. The people you will be performing for love to hear it and in turn love to perform their National Anthem for us.
- It's not easy to choreograph new dances that include the whole team for your opening/closing ceremonies, so try to pick dances that the whole team already knows. Such as lines dances like: the electric slide, cupid shuffle, boot scootin boogie. It is also extremely fun to pick easy line dances for your closing ceremonies so that the people you are serving can join in too! Here are a few examples of those: the chicken dance, the hokey pokey, and the macarena.

### Mural

- The mural should incorporate both cultures: Utah and the country you're serving
- Buy supplies in-country, but begin planning at home
- The wall is permanent, so the mural art should be well done. Plan who will be drawing/painting each part.
- Be sure to include Youthlinc and the year in your mural
- It's always fun to include kids' hand prints, and it has been a popular mural feature for past groups
- Here are some examples of previous murals:





### Fun Fair

- Plan for the Fun Fair to be about 2 hours long
- ***Do not pass out prizes!!!*** This can easily change the entire positive dynamic you're trying to build. You aren't Santa Claus, you don't need to pass out gifts.
- There should be 4-6 activity stations
  - Past stations have included: face painting, parachute games, nail painting, photo booths, bubbles, outdoor games, soccer, volleyball, jump rope, Frisbee,

relay races, "Minute to Win It" games, etc.

- Be sure to explain the structure and expectations of the Fun Fair before the kids are split into rotations
- One committee member will be in charge of each station
- You can divide the kids into groups and rotate stations
- Have a Mentor and Alum Leader be in charge of monitoring time and signaling rotations
- If you can, have a teacher with each group so that the rotation can be explained correctly to the kids and so that the teacher can help keep the kids under control too
- Be flexible, because things can and will change

### Home Visits

Before the home visits

- Before you leave the States, gain an understanding of the history of the people. Read books, watch documentaries, spend time online. The more you understand about what the people have gone through, better the interview will be.
- Discuss and plan questions ahead of time, but stress the importance of having natural conversations. Depending on your country you may have a translator for Home Visits. Any standing committee can develop questions that can be used during home visits, as we are interested in the culture, vocations, health, education, and lives of those we are partnering with.
- Understand how to create a safe place and understand how to obtain permission from interviewees
- Learn and practice how to be present through active listening and your body language.

During the home visits

- Someone should take simple notes (not every word written down) during Home Visits. These will be used to evaluate questions and methods for future teams.
- Remember what ties humankind together is what we have in common, not our differences. Seek the commonalities when developing your interview questions and during the interviews.
- Be open with your emotions. Nod and shake your head, but *always exude respect and calmness* even when responses are shocking or difficult to hear. If there is awkward silence, don't immediately jump to the next question. Silence may just be a moment of introspection, which can bring depth to the experience.
- Be like a good friend who is listening to everything that is said. Absorb each word like a sponge.
- Use your intuition to sense how and when to move from topic to topic and end the interview.

After the interview:

- Thank the interviewee for their time.
- Ask the interviewee if he/she/they have any questions they would like to ask.
- At the evening team meeting, discuss what was said, why was it significant, how did the experience impact you? Get your journal out for personal reflection.



Below is a sample list of interview questions:

## Home Visit Questions

- How many people are in your family? How old are they and what are their names? Generally folks share names of grandparents who live with them, and the children that died, but these can be separate questions.
- How is everyone's health? When you get sick, what are the problems?
- How old are people in this village when they get married? How do you meet the person you are going to marry? Do you have any traditions to celebrate when someone gets married? Do men or women have any way of showing that they are married? (like we wear a ring)
- What are the traditional roles/chores in the house for the men, women, and children?
- How old are women when they start having children? Stop having children?
- What do you eat? In the summer, in the rainy season, cold season, etc.?
- How does the weather affect your everyday life?
- How does your family make money?
- Do you ever leave the village? Why do you leave the village?
- Do people from this village go to secondary school? College?
- What are the biggest problems in the village?

- What are your biggest hopes for your children?
- What is your favorite part of the day and your least favorite?
- If the country you are serving has recently gone through a natural disaster or a difficult experience: We know your community went through a lot during X, can you share with us your experiences? As a community how did you all get through it? How did this experience affect you personally?
- Do you have anything else that you'd like to add or tell us?