

## Establishing Maryland Sister State Partnership

Thank you for your interest in developing a Sister State -Subnational relationship with the State of Maryland. Before proceeding, we urge you to think through the following questions in regard to why your country/region might want to develop a Sister State partnership with Maryland: *What are some mutual benefits to Maryland and the proposed Sister State? What are the synergies between the regions? How will this Sister State relationship serve the State of Maryland and its partner region in the long term?*

### BACKGROUND

The Maryland Sister States Program (MSSP), under the auspices of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State, partners with the Sister States of Maryland, Inc., a private, not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of Maryland. The Maryland Sister States Program relies on the Sister States of Maryland, Inc.'s extensive network of representative volunteer committees for development of Maryland's Sister State relationships. The program depends on private funding, grants, and in-kind donations to support its activities.

The strategic process for establishing a new Sister State relationship ensures the long term sustainability of the MSSP for the benefit of the State and its citizens. A representative volunteer committee must be in place in Maryland to sustain the tie, and strong leadership of the community is imperative to the success of the relationship. There must exist in Maryland and the foreign state/province a substantial, broad-based interest in establishing a bilateral relationship.

### CRITERIA

- Local Support
  1. A volunteer committee must be formed and be prepared to undertake the financial and staffing requirements necessary to properly administer such a relationship.
  2. The committee should include private and public sector parties, with representatives on the committee from a variety of fields including business, culture, academia, medicine, technology, fundraising, and a volunteer Chairperson.
  3. A reciprocal committee in the proposed foreign region should be formed and both committees should begin regular meetings and report activities to each other.
  4. Local leaders committed to championing and nurturing the relationship is also imperative, as the Sister State agreement will be signed by the regions' governors
- Government Support
  1. This includes support from the Embassy and Government of the proposed Sister State (in the USA and the sister region).
- Reciprocity
  1. Business climate which offers economic development potential for both Maryland and the sister region
  2. Academic institutions which could support bilateral affiliations and exchanges
  3. Established artistic and cultural environment with the potential for mutually beneficial exchanges

## APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Meet with International Division of the Office of the Secretary of State to discuss interest and review the rigorous application process.
2. Complete and submit application within 60 days of the initial meeting with the International Division. The application has the following components:
  - Proposed Sister State region profile
  - Region and regional government contacts
  - Names and contact info for proposed Sister State Committee (at least 5 volunteers). Sister State committees are completely run by volunteers. Evidence of a strong volunteer base must be shown.
  - Goals with immediate/short/ and long term objectives that align with the strategic plan of the Sister States of Maryland, Inc.
  - Describe how the committee plans to raise operating funds so that it will be self-sufficient

## APPROVAL PROCESS

1. If approved by the Secretary of State, the committee will need to give a presentation to the Sister States of Maryland, Inc. Board of Directors at its next Executive Board meeting. The presentation must include a briefing of the region, 2-3 proposed projects, goals, and business/fundraising plan. Also, be prepared to answer questions from the Board of Directors.
2. If approved by the Sister States of Maryland, Inc. Board of Directors, the committee will be given a one-year probationary period to execute proposed projects and achieve measurable success of its goals. During this one-year probationary period, the committee must attend at least two of the Sister States of Maryland, Inc. Executive board meetings to present updates.
3. Upon completion of one-year probationary period, return to the Sister States of Maryland, Inc. Board of Directors and the Office of the Secretary of State for final review and approval to forward proposal of Sister State partnership.
4. Review and approval by the members of the Governor's Subcabinet on International Affairs
5. Recommendation to the Governor for approval
6. Approval by the Governor
7. Diplomatic mission for in-person signing of the Sister State agreement/memorandum of understanding

## INTERNAL PROCESS

1. Meet with International Division of the Office of the Secretary of State
2. International Division gives recommendation to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary
3. Secretary and Deputy Secretary approve or deny request
4. Receive approval from the President of the Sister States of Maryland, Inc., for the proposed committee to present at the next Board Meeting
5. If approved by the Sister States of Maryland, Inc, advise Governor's Subcabinet of International Affairs of proposed Sister State relationship

6. Upon completion of one-year probationary period, Sister States of Maryland, Inc Board of Directors and Office of the Secretary of State approve or deny request to forward proposal of Sister State partnership.
7. Review and approval by the members of the Governor's Subcabinet on International Affairs
8. Recommendation to the Governor for approval
9. Approval by the Governor
10. Diplomatic mission for in-person signing of the Sister State agreement/memorandum of understanding