



**31 May 2008**

## **Report on Grassroots Survey 2007**

### ***Introduction***

Sister Cities New Zealand's (SCNZ) 2004 Grassroots Survey was the first comprehensive attempt to research the international activities of SCNZ members. A detailed survey aimed at all organisational members was done for SCNZ by Asia New Zealand Foundation. The objectives were to look at all sister city, friendship city or any other type of formal or informal international arrangements between communities, to examine activities undertaken in the past three years and identify the forward challenges. The intention was that the survey would be repeated after three years, so that in addition to collecting much-needed information about New Zealand's sister city portfolio, trends in activities could be observed. Accordingly, with the continued and generous support of Asia New Zealand Foundation, the survey was repeated in late 2007, with some significant changes to the questionnaire.

It should be noted that the term 'sister city' is used in reporting, as it was in the survey questionnaire, as shorthand to refer to the entire range of local authority-endorsed international community links. The 2004 survey found that the majority of arrangements are actually sister cities (57 relationships) with friendship cities being the second most common (21 relationships). There were also four port-to-port relationships, and other varieties such as sister district, friendly town, co-operating city, exchange city, and even a 'declaration of goodwill'. That range of nomenclature has not changed in the ensuing period.

The report details the findings of the survey, with brief discussion throughout. A more detailed discussion follows at the end of the report, which closely follows the format of Dr Rebecca Foley's 2005 report on the 2004 Grassroots Survey, which is unreservedly acknowledged

### ***Methodology***

#### ***The research instrument***

The survey was designed to collect data via a questionnaire directed to all NZ local governments. This varied significantly from the approach in 2004, when only financial organizational members of SCNZ were targeted. Our aim in 2007 was to seek information on all sister city-type links in NZ and in fact the position of all local governments on the question of sister cities, without restricting responses to those communities that support SCNZ with membership. The survey was sent to local governments only, and where it was known that community groups operate local sister city relationships, relevant councils were asked to take responsibility for all links in their territories.

The questionnaire was sent to all 85 local governments in NZ, each form individualised with the known relationships of the council areas concerned, with space for additions if required. The questionnaire sent to councils with no known sister city links was an abbreviated version of the main document (which ran to as many as 65 pages (Christchurch) when completed).

The survey was partly intended as a census of sister city activity. However this was not achieved as the response rate was not 100%.

The questionnaire had seven sections (a copy is attached Appendix One):

- A: obtained contact information for the main council and/or community organisation personnel dealing with sister city relationships, and sought reasons why communities did not have sister cities;
- B: recorded details on each sister city relationship engaged with by the council or community organisation. This section was intended to provide information on the shape of each relationship and the amount of activity over the last three years;
- C: examined strategic planning and communications for sister city activities;
- D: provided information on local council and community input to Sister City related work;
- E: examined inbound and outbound visitors and economic activity;
- F: gauged youth involvement in sister cities; and
- G: looked at the services provided by SCNZ and sought feedback on future challenges.

The questionnaire comprised mainly closed answer questions with a list of pre-determined responses to tick, along with an 'other' category where respondents were asked to provide further information. Also included were several rating scales. The questions were not pilot tested as had been done in 2004, as this was substantially a repeat of the earlier survey process.

### ***Process***

Under a covering letter from the SCNZ Executive Officer the survey was posted to all local governments on 18 October 2007, requesting completion, with a prize incentive, by 30 November 2007. This fast turnaround was intended to encourage immediate completion of the forms before the Christmas holiday season..

Reminder emails and telephone calls followed in December, January and February, and by Easter a response rate of 53% was achieved with 45 respondents. A further breakdown showed that 25 councils with known sister cities responded, while 15 respondents without known sister cities responded. Those who participated were offered the chance to go into a draw for three prizes of Christmas hampers as an incentive to respond by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007. 21 respondents were in that draw, (done under Police supervision), with prizes going to Waipa, Central Hawkes Bay and Hurunui.

The tables and figures in this report are only in part based on the total number of responses. Much of the survey asked those respondents to answer all questions for each of their sister city relationships, and these totalled 87 (a number of which were noted as 'inactive/allowing to lapse'). Note also that some questions allowed multiple responses. For each table or figure the number of responses is indicated by an N value.

### ***Limitations***

Inevitably a low response rate to the survey is a limitation. To gain an accurate overview of exactly where New Zealand's sister city links currently stand, a 100% response was sought, however only 48% was achieved, very disappointing given that all those surveyed were a targeted group of significant organisations. The findings therefore cannot claim to represent the full range of sister city activity or views. Another limitation is that as many questions asked for estimates of level of activity, responses will differ according to the accuracy of records kept and diligence for the task at hand.

When inputting the data many inconsistencies were discovered. As in 2004, the approach to such inconsistencies was to take each case on an individual basis, as often comments were provided allowing a judgement to be made. Those who answered questions about activity over the past three years, and then indicated that events had not taken place in the past three years, were excluded from the data concerned.

In the 2004 survey severe limitations were experienced with the economic activity information sought and provided. The approach this time was to reduce emphasis on subjective financial data input, with the aim being to extrapolate financial benefits from the number of people movements recorded, based on tourism industry standards.

### ***Response***

A total of 40 responses were received, an overall response rate of 48%. They encompassed 90 sister cities, of which 58 (65%) were classed as active and 31 (35%) inactive. The council areas with which those sister cities were linked totalled 25 (46% of those with known links), leaving 15 responses from councils without sister cities (48% of those without known links). The overall response was disappointing given that all those surveyed were a targeted group of organizations, about half of which are members of SCNZ and most of the balance of which received a very brief and simple survey form.

### ***Reasons for not having a Sister City (Survey Section A for Relevant Councils)***

When non-members of SCNZ were asked whether they had a sister city, two answered yes, nine answered no, and two indicated a relationship was under consideration. They were also asked for the primary reason their council is not a member of SCNZ. Four responded: one saw no apparent benefit, one stated there was no budget, one that sister cities were more relevant to territorial local authorities than regional councils<sup>1</sup>, and one that the concept (of sister cities) is not being pursued.

When asked why their community has no international civic links, responses were across the board: limited council support, the absence of a driver in the community, benefits perceived to be limited, commitment would stretch resources, and in one case, a lack of shared interest in internationalisation.

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<sup>1</sup> For completion and consistency, given one regional council has a sister city, the 85 councils surveyed included the 12 regional councils. Six responded.

When asked what would encourage the establishment of a sister city (respondents being invited to select more than one option), increased awareness of benefits had five responses, experience of another sister city link had two, a personal presentation on the benefits had three, and increased central government support for sister cities had six.

Other comments were:

*Has not been an issue for this council*

*Our council is involved in sister cities through the city councils - however the regional council is not the appropriate level of government to be involved.*

*I don't believe that the council could be encouraged to become involved*

*If it did not cost us anything - small population therefore limited rates income*

*It would be a struggle to get this off the ground given our limited resources (and size)*

*Not sure that we would under any circumstances. We don't believe this is our core business*

Note that conclusions drawn from this section are particularly affected by the low response rate.

### **Sister City Relationships (Survey Section B)**

The 40 responses were received covered 90 sister cities, of which 59 (65%) were classed as active and 31 (35%) inactive. The inactive links can be broken down by country as follows:

Australia	7	USA	7	Other	4
Japan	6	China	3		
England	3	Korea	1		

Of the 90 sister cities listed, three were previously unrecorded by SCNZ and added to the survey forms by respondents. Links listed as active 65%, compares with 78% three years ago.

Relationships were defined as:

Sister City	62
Port-to-port	4
Friendship City	14
Exploratory only	1
Memorandum of Understanding	3

East Asia continues to dominate New Zealand's sister city portfolio in both absolute numbers and level of activity, followed by Australia, and the USA third. Regarding future relationships, most respondents are not considering this (74% of responses from N=27, compared with 71% from N = 24 in 2004). For those who answered yes, possibilities include links in Korea, India, USA and the Pacific.

**Table 1: Frequency of Contact with Sister City Counterpart**

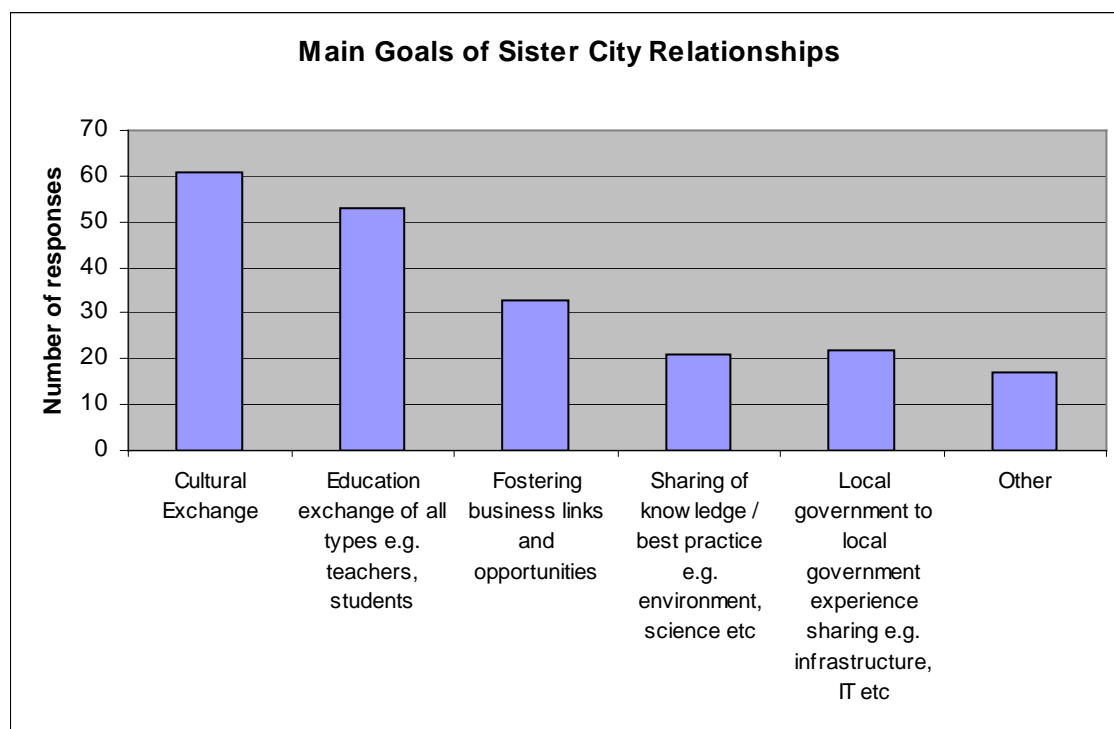
(N=79)

Frequency	Number of responses	Percent	Percent 2004
Weekly	8	10%	13%
Fortnightly	15	19%	13%
Monthly	14	18%	8%
Every two months	4	5%	5%
Quarterly	13	16%	7%
Annually	6	8%	11%
On a project by project basis	19	24%	43%

When compared with 2004 responses, there is a trend to more regular and frequent contact with sister cities, with less contact prompted specifically by projects.

**Figure 1: Main Goals of Sister City Relationships**

(N=207, respondents were able to tick more than one option)



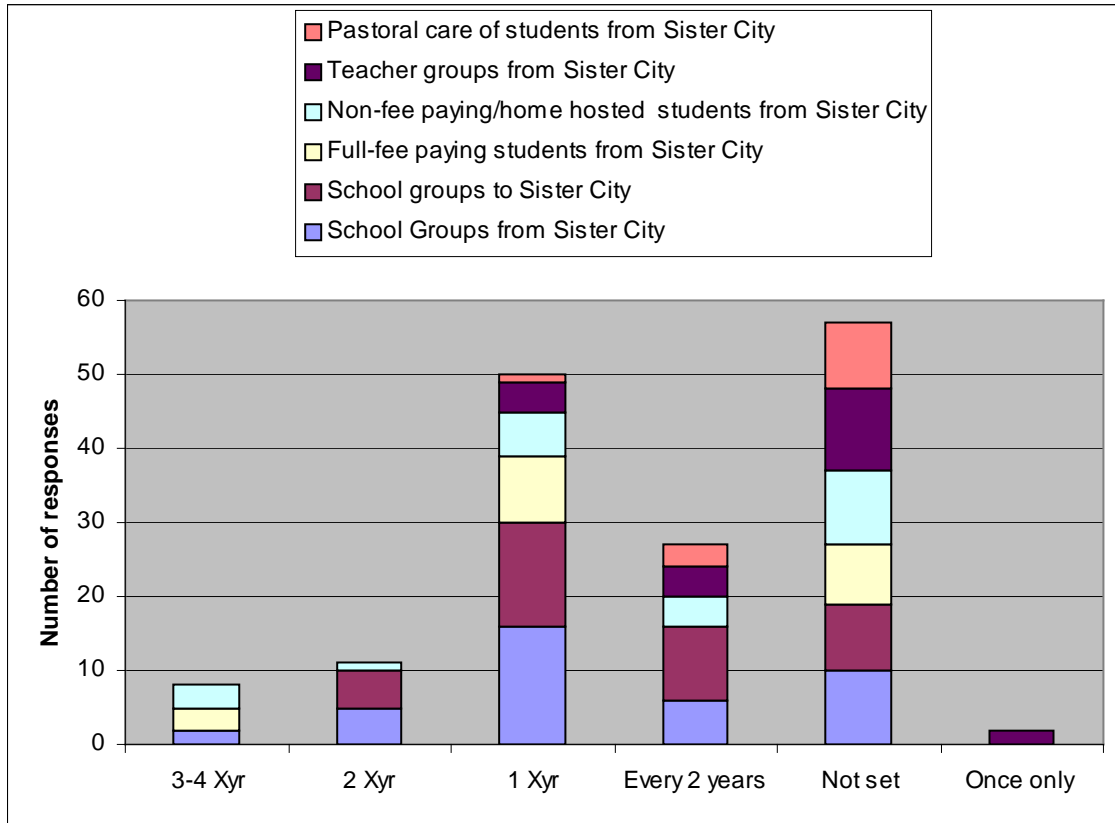
The main goals recorded clearly confirm the dominance of cultural and education exchanges in sister city activities. These findings are very similar to those of the 2004 survey and the 2003 NZIER survey.

Education exchange remains the most significant sister city activity. Figure 2 groups all education related activities, with a total of 155 activities among the 25 respondents with sister cities having occurred over the past three years (6.2 each). During a one-year period, 50 activities were recorded by those respondents (2 each).

When compared with 2004, when 27 respondents recorded 159 activities (5.9 each), of which 83 were in a one-year period (3.1 each), an overall increase in activity is apparent, but there is a marked reduction in regular annual exchanges.

## Figure 2: Education

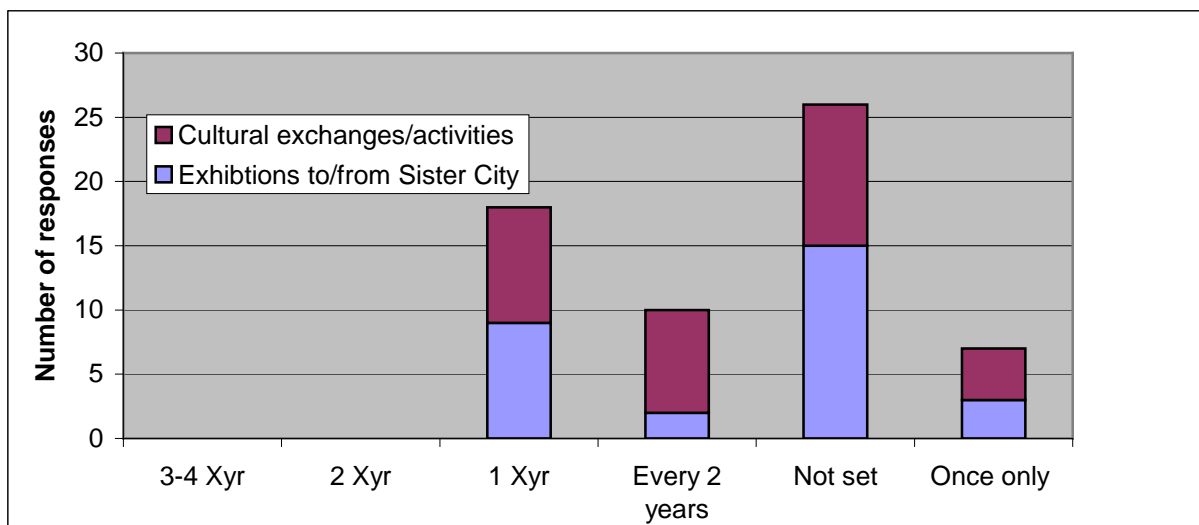
(N=155, respondents were able to tick more than one option)



Culture-related exchanges are the next most common type of sister city activity. This includes both non-personnel art exhibitions, and cultural group exchanges and activities. Among respondents with sister cities there were 61 activities over the last three years (2.44 each), compared to 69 (2.55 each) in the previous three years. As before, most occur on an ad hoc basis.

## Figure 3: Cultural Exchange

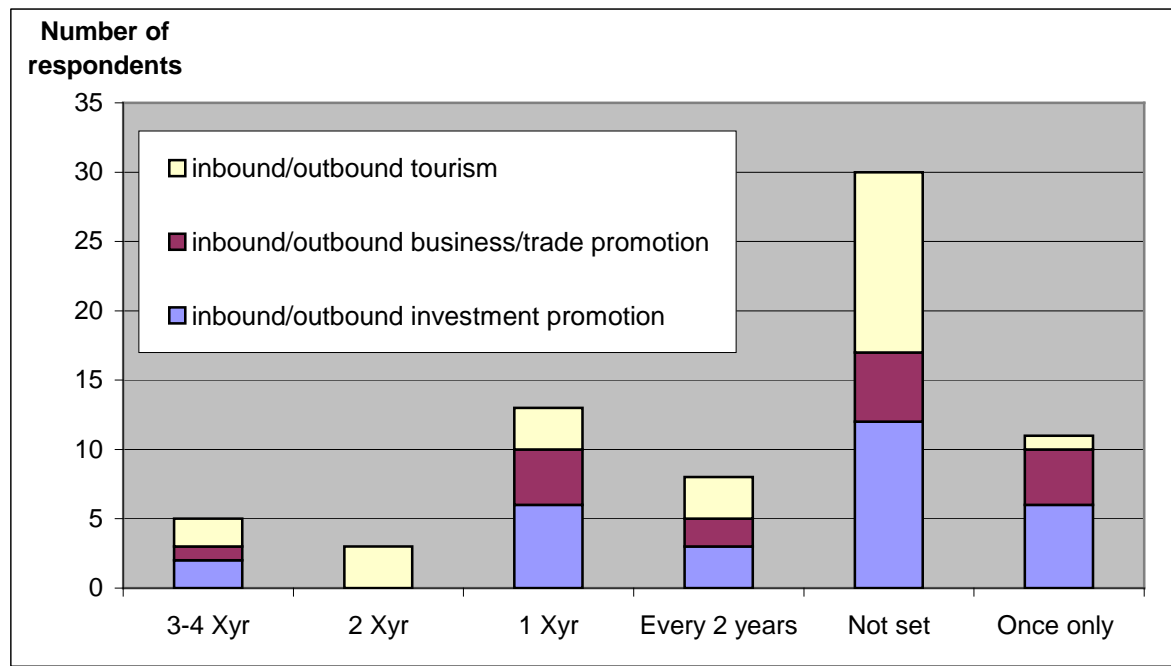
(N= 61)



There were 70 cases of business-related sister city activity in the three years to 2007 (2.8 per respondent with sister cities). This compares with 69 (2.6) in the previous three years. This indicates a small increase in economic development as an important component of New Zealand's sister city activities. Given the weighting placed in New Zealand on economic benefits as a rationale for sister cities, a higher increase could have been expected.

**Figure 4: Business Related Activities**

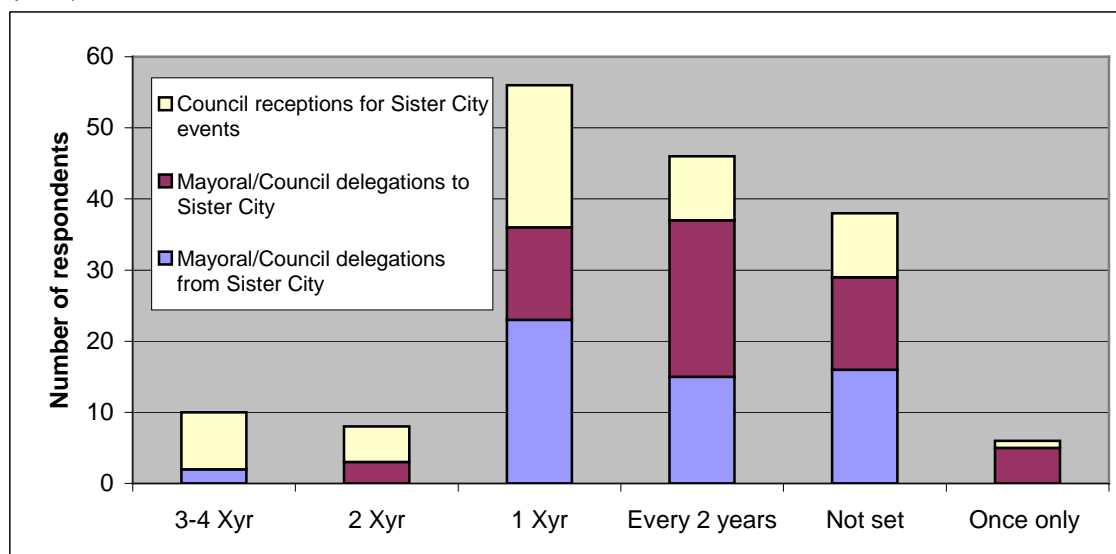
(N=70)



Underpinning the three most significant areas of activity – education, culture and business, as well as others discussed further below, is the direct engagement of councils themselves in their sister cities. The number of outgoing and incoming mayoral and council delegations to Sister Cities is even (56 each way), very similar to the previous three year period when there were 62 NZ delegations to sister cities and 59 the other way. There is a marked difference in frequency however. 23 sister city delegations visit NZ annually, while 15 visit every second year. Numbers from NZ are roughly reversed.

**Figure 5: Mayoral and Council Activity**

(N=164, respondents were able to tick more than one option)



Separate from education related activities, 14 youth group exchanges took place between the councils with sister cities and their partners (0.6 each). Six were listed as sports exchanges and the others not specified. This is a significant decrease on 2004, when 59 were recorded among the 27 respondents (2.2 each). On the other hand, Professional/technical exchanges combined with knowledge exchange/best practice showed a marked increase, with 52 exchanges (2.1 each), compared to 42 (1.6 each) in the earlier period. Local government to local government experience sharing saw 32 activities or projects over the last three years (1.3 each), compared to 26 (1 each) in the previous three years.

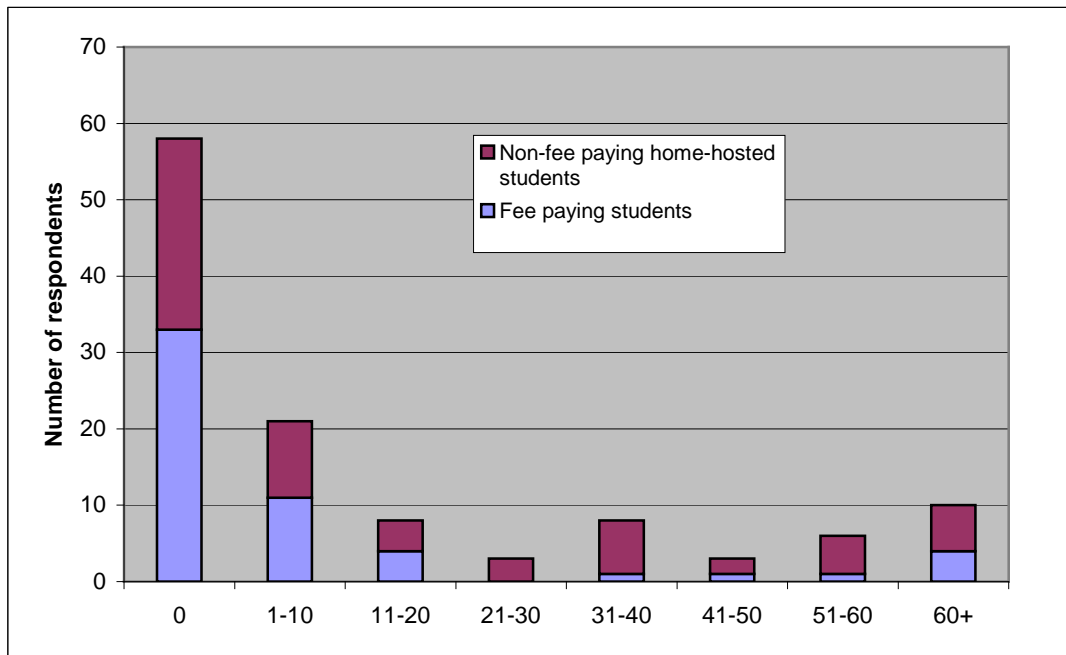
**Table 2: Other Sister City Activities Over the Last Three Years**

(N=118)

	3-4 x year	2 x year	1 x year	Every 2 years	not set	Once only
Youth groups <u>from</u> Sister City	0	1	6	1	9	1
Youth groups <u>to</u> Sister City	0	1	1	1	9	0
Sports groups <u>from</u> Sister City	0	0	1	0	9	2
Sports groups <u>to</u> Sister City	0	0	2	1	11	3
Professional/technical exchanges	3	3	10	6	25	5
Local Govt to local govt experience sharing	3	0	8	1	16	4

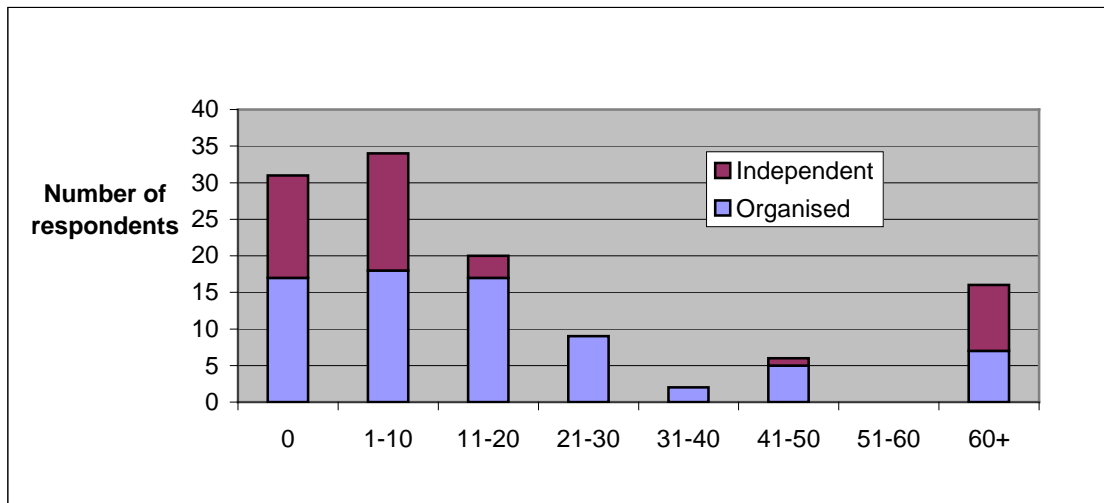
The survey asked respondents to estimate over the last three years how many students had come to their region/city from their sister city. The vast majority of respondents expected the number of visiting students to remain the same, very similar to three years ago.

**Figure 6: Visiting Fee and Non-fee Paying Students Over the Last Three Years**



A new question in 2007 was regarding visiting adults on sister city exchanges.

**Figure 7: Visiting Adults Over the Last Three Years**

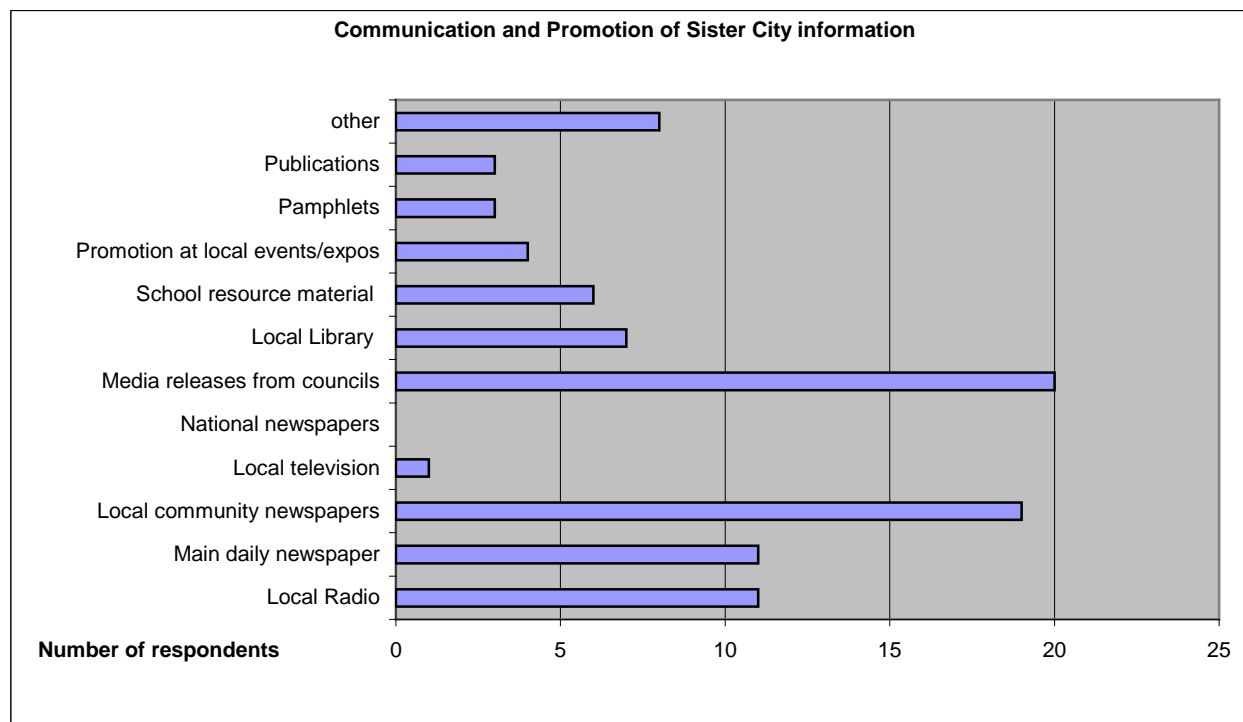


***Planning and Communication (Survey Section C)***

This section was substantially redesigned after 2004, and it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with like questions in the last survey. Its focus was to gain information on the level of strategic planning that goes into sister cities, and how that is communicated, and thus translated to action, in the respective communities. Only nine respondents indicated their councils have a Sister Cities Strategic Plan, (36% of those with sister cities). Seven are maintained and regularly evaluated, four by a joint council community committee, one by council

only and two by community only. This indicates a lack of policy focus on sister cities compared with other local government-supported activities. Copies of strategic plans, communication plans or youth guidelines were requested but just one received. Included in this section was information on sister city web pages, and whether SCNZ is able to link to them. Fourteen respondents (56% of those with sister cities) have a dedicated sister city web page or pages, or are developing them. Of those, 13 are willing for SCNZ to link to their sites, while 11 are willing to host a link to [www.sistercities.org.nz](http://www.sistercities.org.nz).

**Figure 8: Communication and Promotion of Sister Cities to the Wider Community**



***Local Council and Community Input (Survey Section D)***

Given that local government plays a significant role in all sister city activity in New Zealand, it is important to analyse the resource applied directly from this source. Equally, community input is critical and this also has again been surveyed.

When asked for an estimate of council staff time spent on sister city activities, and taking the mid-point for each of the ranges below, respondents with sister cities (N=25) indicated a total of 398 hours per week (average 16hrs/week or 0.4 FTE). This compares with 2004's 30 councils totalling 400 hours per week (average 13hrs/week). It should be noted that only two councils have staff spending 31-40 hours per week on sister city work, with the great majority engaged just 1-10 hours per week.

**Table 3: Weekly Council Staff Time Spent on Sister City Work**

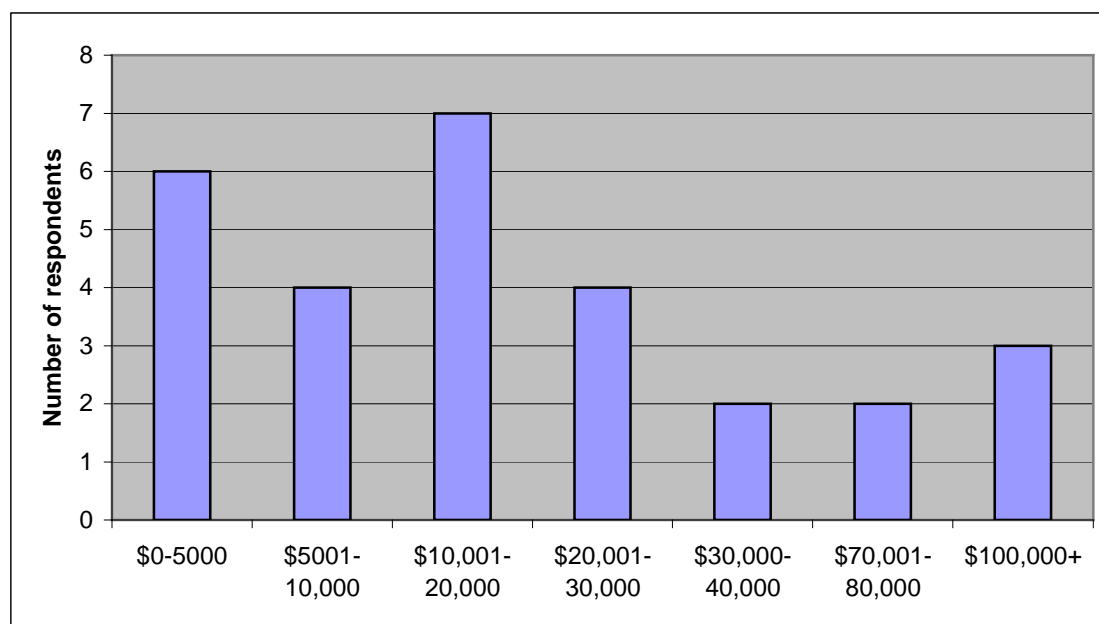
(N=25)

Number of responses	Total number of Council staff	Average number of hours per week
20	26.5	1-10 hours
3	6	11-20 hours
0	0	21-30 hours
2	5	31-40 hours

As for Council spending on sister city activities, an estimate of the average yearly spend (including staff salaries and all grants made to community organisations for sister city purposes), taking the mid-point of the ranges provided below is approximately \$27,500. This compares with \$28,770 in 2004. Please note that expenditure ranges that received no response are excluded from the graph.

**Figure 9: Estimated Average Yearly Council Spend on Sister City Activities**

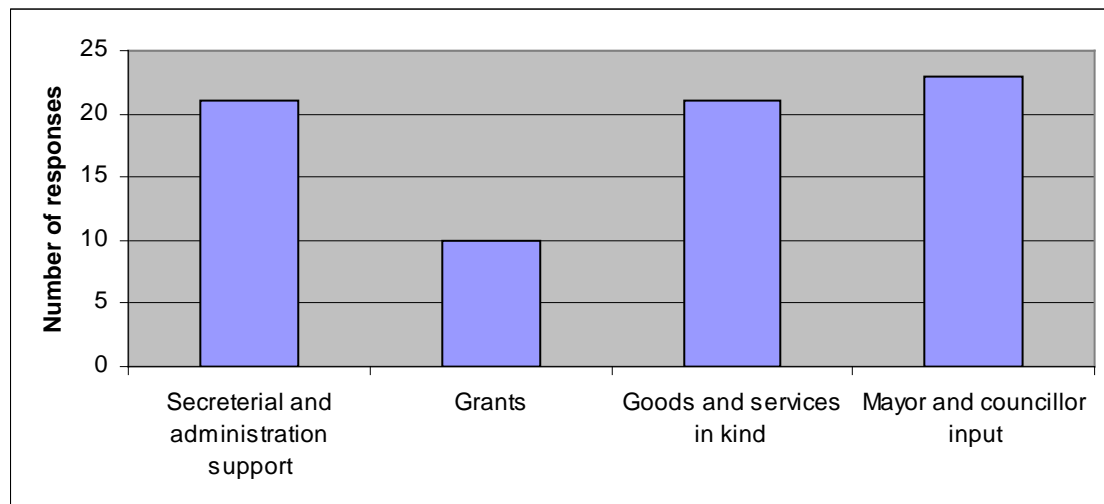
(N=28)



A new question in 2007 asked about council input that could not be directly attributed to dedicated sister city staff time. This was aimed in part at the tasks of staff who do not have responsibility for sister city work written into their job descriptions. The responses are recorded below, but it needs to be noted that there may be some duplication with questions relating to staff time spent on specific sister city work.

**Figure 10: Additional Council Support for Sister City Activities**

(N=75, respondents were able to tick more than one option)



In regards community input, the methodology differed this year in that only councils were surveyed. They were asked to consult with community groups where applicable, to avoid the duplication and confusion that arose in 2004. Of those that responded, all councils with sister cities involve volunteers in sister city work. Taking the midpoint of ranges below (and the 20+ range as 20 to be conservative), the average number of volunteers per council is 11.5. This indicates that volunteer input remains a critical resource for sister city work. As in 2004, the majority of volunteer input is in home-stay activities, followed by committee work, event support, individual projects and pastoral care of international students.

**Table 4: Volunteers involved in Sister City Activities Per Year**

(N=32)

Number of Responses	Number of Volunteers involved in Sister City activities each year
6	0
5	1 - 5
7	6 - 10
5	11 - 15
4	16 - 20
5	20 +

A new question aimed to identify the number of young people who are volunteers in sister city work. Again taking using the same midpoint method as above, the average number of your person volunteers per council is 6.1.

**Table 5: Volunteers who are Young People**

(N=18)

Number of Responses	Number of young volunteers involved
9	1 - 5
1	6 - 10
0	11 - 15
7	16 - 20
1	20 +

**Table 6: Activities Volunteers are involved in**

(N=62)

Number of Responses	Activities
16	homestays
17	committee involvement
16	event support
3	pastoral care – international students
10	Individual projects

Ten of the 25 respondents (or their community organisations) formally recognise or reward volunteer contributions to sister city work. Forms of rewards include certificates, annual recognition events, letters of appreciation from Sister City committees or mayors, invitations to events and meals, and acknowledgement at receptions.

When asking specifically about the involvement of home-host families over a one-year period, taking the lowest-point of the ranges provided in Table 7, approximately 190 families are involved in sister city home-hosting. Among those with a response higher than zero, this is an average of 10.5 families per councils, compared with 12 in 2004. As in the previous survey, most home-stay families are not financially rewarded by council/community groups.

**Table 7: Total Number of Home-Host Families involved in Sister City Hosting per year**

(N=24)

Number of Responses	Number of Homehost Families
6	0
3	1 - 5
2	6 - 10
8	11 - 15
3	16 - 20
2	20 +

### ***People Movements and Economic Activity (Survey Section E)***

Section E of the survey focused on inbound and outbound visitors associated with sister cities. Responses were related to the current year of activity (January 2007-December 2007). In 2004 the comparative survey section (F) also asked for financial values to be put on people movements. However as noted in the introduction this had serious limitations resulting in information that was not suitably consistent to produce accurate assumptions or findings (refer R Foley's 2004 report under this section).

A survey of airlines used for both inbound and outbound visits predictably shows Air New Zealand to be dominant, but a variety of other airlines to be utilised nevertheless.

To assess economic benefits from the inbound sister city groups is outside the scope of this survey, which purposely avoided asking for subjective input from respondents. However based on the formula used by Covec in assessing the benefits of Auckland's international partnerships (Tourism category),<sup>2</sup> and in taking the midpoint values of the data in Table 8, the value of these visits to New Zealand's GDP is calculated as \$1,600,000 (\$64,000 per respondent with sister cities). Note: an assumption has been taken that the average stay in New Zealand is ten days for students and one week for adults.

**Table 8: Inbound Sister City Visitor Groups January - December 2007**

Note: Some respondents did not provide a % breakdown of visitors in home-stay and hotels, and this measure has been excluded from the results.

Number and types of groups	Average number per group			
	1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40
44 Student groups (n=18)	7	30	7	0
7 Teacher groups (n=5)	5	3	0	0
27 Official delegations (n=18)	26	3	0	1
4 Culture and art (n = 4)	4			
2 Youth (non-school groups) (n =)	2	2	1	1
2 Business Promotion (n=2)	2	0	0	0
1 Sports group (n=1)	1	0	0	0
6 professional/tech. groups (n=3)	6	0	0	0
5 Tourist groups (n=5)	3	2	0	0

**Table 9: Main Airlines Used for Inbound Sister City Visitor Groups**

Main Airline	No of groups	Average number per group		
		1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30
Air New Zealand	19 (n=12)	12	2	1
Qantas	4 (n=4)	3	0	0
Singapore Air	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
Cathay Pacific	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
China Airlines	3 (n=2)	3	0	0
Japan Airlines	5 (n=5)	2	2	0
Don't know	n = 7	2	0	0

<sup>2</sup> Covec, Assessing the Benefits of Auckland City Council's International Partnerships, prepared for Auckland City Council, July 2007.

**Table 10: Outbound Sister City Visitor Groups January - December 2007**

Number and types of groups	Average number per group			
	1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40
44 Student groups (n=15)	12	87	9	1
4 Teacher groups (n=4)	4	100	0	0
9 Official delegations (n=7)	8	40	1	0
2 Culture and art (n=2)	1	0	1	0
2 Youth (non-school groups)				
3 Business Promotion (n=2)	1	0	2	0
2 Sports group (n=2)	2	0	0	0
4 Professional/tech groups (n=2)	2	0	0	0
3 Tourist groups (n=3)	2	0	0	0

**Table 11: Main Airlines Used for Outbound Sister City Visitor Groups**

Main Airline	No of groups	Average Number per Group		
		1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30
Air New Zealand	22 (n=12)	10	11	1
Qantas	3 (n=3)	3	0	0
Singapore Air	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
Cathay Pacific	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
Korean Air	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
Emirates	1 (n=1)	1	0	0
n=2	n = 7	2	0	0

The standard of answers in this category indicated that generally councils do not keep this level of information. It is worth noting here a repeat of some results from 2004. In that year councils and community organisations were specifically asked if they currently kept records relating to the amount of inbound/outbound activity or economic activity accruing from sister city activities. The response was overwhelmingly negative at 86.9% (N=23). Asked whether it would be helpful if SCNZ provided a series of standardised templates for recording visitor and economic activity 82.6% said yes (N=23). (That exercise was accordingly carried out in 2007. Only four members have since indicated they now use the templates). When asked whether it would be helpful to provide occasional workshops on best practice and success models, including an emphasis on economic opportunities 81.8% said yes (N=22). SCNZ also conducted two workshops in 2007, and has compiled the Aichi Manual of Best Practice with mixed support from members.

Asked whether the same level of inbound visitor activity was expected for the next 1-2 years, 20 responded yes and five expect increased activity. In 2004 three of 27 expected an increase.

Asked whether the same level of outbound visitor activity was expected for the next 1-2 years, 16 responded yes, eight expect increased activity, and one expects a decrease. The increase is largely accounted for with comment that 2007 was a relatively quiet year.

### **Youth Involvement (Survey Section F)**

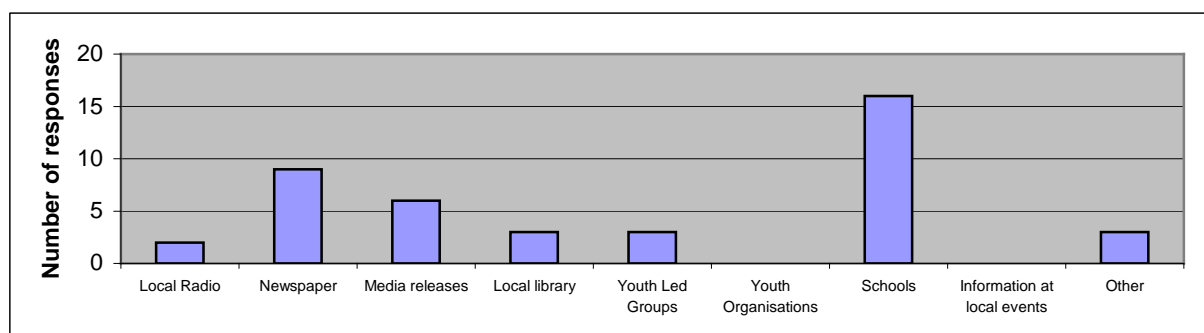
In 2007 a new section was added, seeking information on Youth involvement in sister city activities. Engagement of young people is essential, not only through direct exchanges but also in sister city leadership and policy development. SCNZ and its members have been criticised for not doing more in this area, and attempts have been made to address that shortcoming.

The survey asked for information on known sister school relationships. 41 sister city-generated sister school links (21 in Auckland), and 14 known non-sister city-generated links were recorded. This average of 1.4 per community (those with a sister city), while skewed by Auckland's levels, nevertheless indicates that school linkages remain a strong part of our community international portfolio. It should be noted that when asked about sister schools that were not generated by sister city links, there was some comment to the effect that the information is not available. Schools often make their own arrangements without reference to local government, so the figures are probably conservative.

Five respondents (20% of those with sister cities) indicated they were working on more sister school links, three had produced school resources as part of their sister city programmes, but only one indicated that it has sister city initiatives for non-school group young people.

When asked how youth opportunities are communicated, most respondents indicated schools as the major means. This would tend to reinforce the known role that schools play in sister city activities. Local media is also frequently used.

**Figure 11: Communication of Youth Opportunities Locally**  
(N=42)



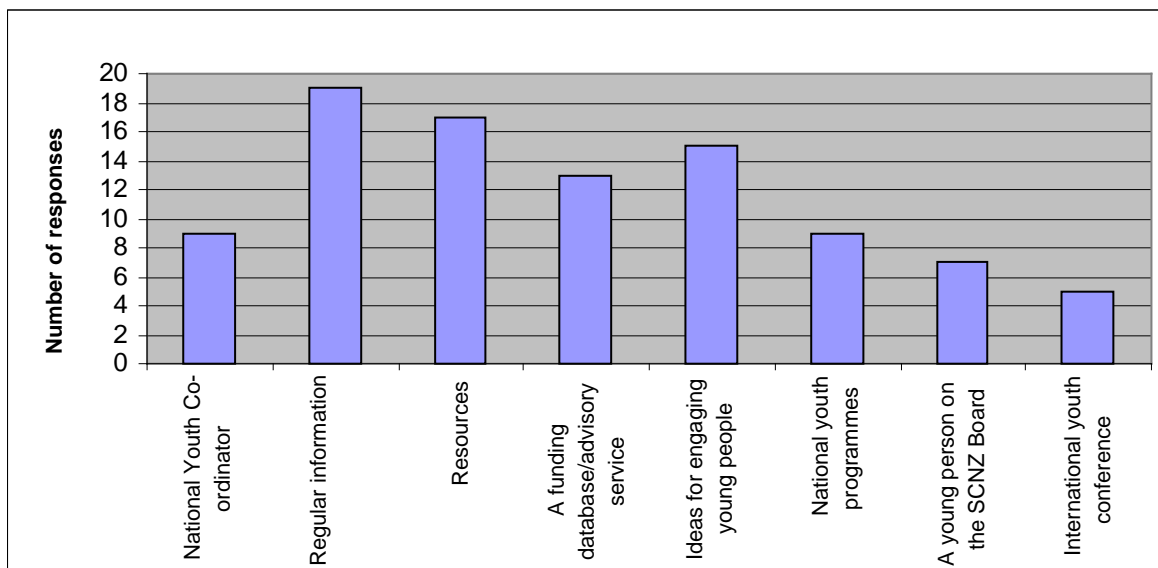
When asked whether the council has a Youth Council or committee, 14 answered yes but of them only six indicated it had any involvement in sister city activities. A similar question regarding a dedicated Youth Support officer also resulted in 14 affirmative replies, with again six being involved in sister city activities. Note this and all other questions in the Youth Involvement section was only issued to those councils with known sister cities, of whom 25 responded.

Ongoing follow-up and contact with school exchange participants is a key to retaining some level of involvement by young people, once they have experienced a sister city activity. Six respondents with sister cities indicated (24%) they have a system in place for that to occur.

A question about what support respondents would like to see to ensure more involvement of young people in sister city activities drew a large and varied response (N=94). Regular information is seen as the single most important factor in engaging young people, followed closely by resources to directly assist with engagement of young people.

**Figure 12: Involving More Young people in Sister Cities**

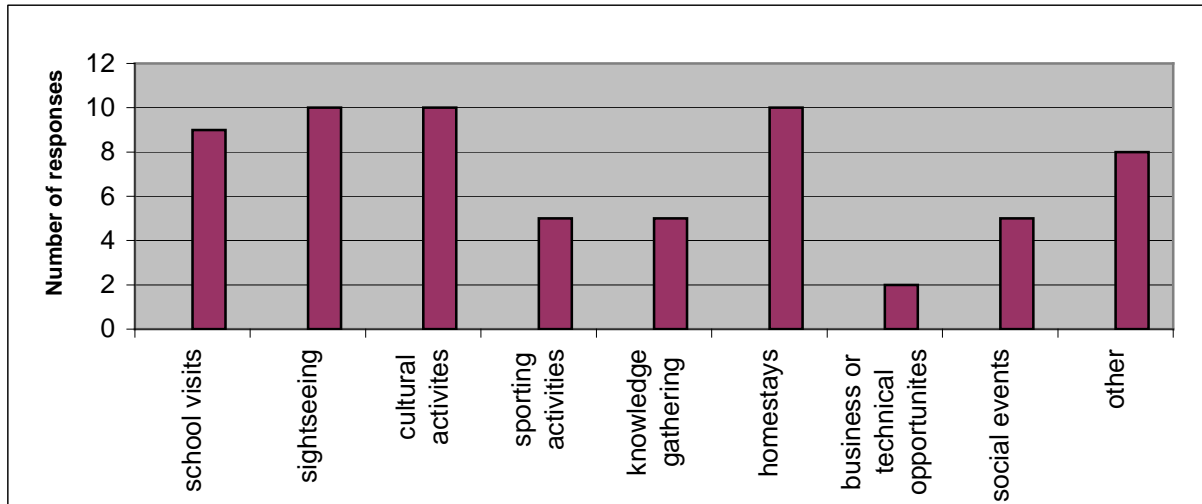
(N=94, respondents were able to tick more than one option)



When asked for each sister city relationship whether any young people are hosted outside of organised school visits, 49 answered no and 21 answered yes. The latter group is detailed in the following chart. A limitation on this is that there may be some responses that include school visits (eg. under ‘home stays’).

**Figure 13: Hosting Young People excluding School Group Visits**

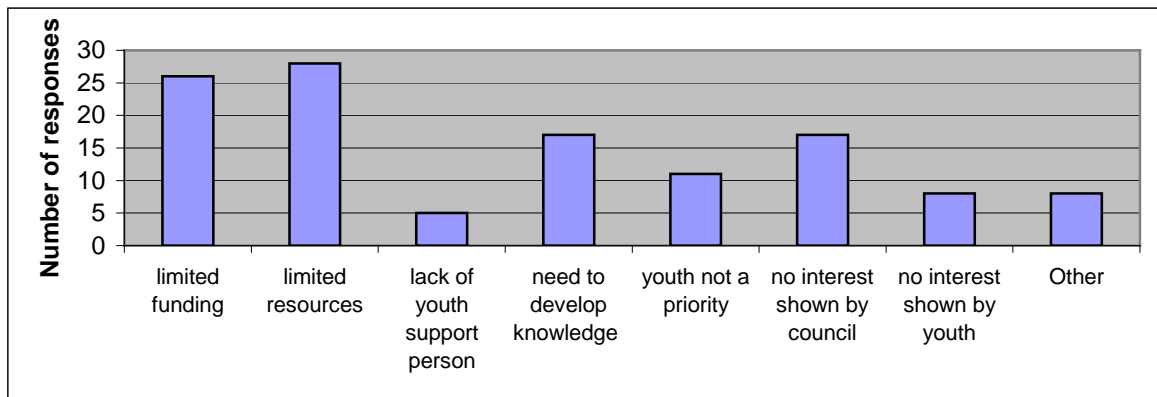
(N=64)



A question asking about those sister city relationships that do not involve young people returned a surprisingly high response, with 59 of the 92 relationships surveyed having no youth activity or programmes. Even allowing for the 31 relationships defined as inactive, this number is concerning. 28 of 59 (49%) relationships defined as active have no involvement among young people.

**Figure 14: Reasons for no Young Person Involvement in Sister Cities**

(N=120)



**Looking Forward (Survey Section G)**

The final section of the survey asked about future relationship possibilities. Seven of the 27 respondents indicated they were considering another sister city relationship, specifically in USA (1), Samoa (1), Korea (3) and India (1).

The section also surveyed the usefulness of current services offered by SCNZ. The importance of information flows is highlighted by the high rating the Newsbrief and website received. All services generally rated well, but the number of respondents unaware of some services indicates that better communication with members is required.

**Table 12: The Usefulness of SCNZ Services to Members**

(n=179)

Service offered	Not aware of service	Not at all	Slightly (a little)	Moderate	Very	Extremely
Newsbriefs	1	0	6	4	10	0
Website	1	1	7	2	11	0
Annual conference	0	1	2	10	6	1
Practitioners workshops	6	1	0	3	8	1
Resource library	5	2	4	5	3	1
Database Directory	5	1	5	5	3	0
Best practice awards (Air NZ)	3	1	4	5	7	0
Business plan	5	1	5	6	1	0
Advisory/enquiry response	3	0	2	8	6	1

When asked what further services SCNZ could provide, there was moderate support for an information kit, with other services rating at varying but lower levels.

**Table 13: Further Services SCNZ Could Provide**

Service	Not at all	slightly (a little)	Moderate	Very	Extremely
Annual Journal	5	5	5	3	0
Information kit	0	2	12	5	0
News clipping resource	6	4	2	6	0
Travel information service	3	6	5	3	0
President's visits	7	2	6	0	1
National level pamphlet	3	10	2	3	0
National youth programme	0	7	5	5	1

Finally, the survey sought information on the challenges facing communities in developing their sister city links, asking them to be ranked in order of importance. As in 2004, the responses show that the challenges are across the board. But whereas in the earlier survey, when they were in developing effective community partnerships, better promoting and profiling Sister City programmes and developing new and innovative approaches to Sister City activity, this year the frustration at not being able to build on mature links for economic benefit have begun to show through. Links to multiculturalism and improving strategic focus also developed as challenges over the period of the two surveys. As before, pioneering new relationships was given low importance.

**Figure 15: Challenges to Sister City Programmes to 2010** (N=169)

	Not at all	Slightly (a little)	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Youth participation	0	1	8	7	3
Effective community partnerships	0	4	3	10	2
Link to multiculturalism & internationalisation	0	3	12	3	1
Better promoting and profiling	1	3	4	8	3
Focus on economic benefits	0	1	8	4	6
Improved strategic focus	0	3	3	10	3
Pioneer new contacts	9	5	2	2	0
Local government knowledge sharing	1	5	5	7	1
Innovative approaches to activity	0	1	2	11	4

When asked what other challenges are faced engaging in sister city activities, comments were as follows:

*We are a small council - big challenge is finding the resources (time and money) to commit to developing our sister city relationship. Our sister city is large, well resourced, keen to travel and does not seem like the ideal match*

*Convincing the public that there is value in the sister city relationship - economic as well as relationship building and that the investment is worth it*

*How one moves forward from a formal relationship towards establishing closer economic ties*

*Alignments could be viewed as supporting the way China deals with activists and non-conformers*

*Being able to say no to a request to visit that comes from China without offending. Setting limits that correspond with our resourcing.*

*Resourcing - sister cities function is incorporated into a full time governance administration role. Difficulties in fitting it all in but we manage this by working closely with industry sector leaders to help co-ordinate and facilitate relationships*

*Getting people in general interested in the whole "sister city" programme. Even some of our councillors think it's a huge waste of money and nothing more than an excuse to take junket trips. This is why a focus on multiculturalism is becoming key*

*Lack of interest/participation from the community*

*How to build on the relationship from a business/commercial aspect. To get our local products into our Japanese sister city. To bring more sister city people to our area to experience our lifestyle/scenery and have a good time*

*Expectation of Sister City Societies vs the Council regarding funding of how committee is serviced.*

*Continued questioning of the value of Sister Cities*

*For Society - time volunteers have to work on committee.*

*Funding will always be a limiting factor. Without Council/ratepayer support it is unlikely that this relationship would have developed.*

*Heaps of passion but not enough money or resources. Managing 6 relationships is difficult. Engaging with youth - if engaged they leave district to future education or work opportunities.*

*Getting some of our partner cities interested in the same things we are. E.g. Japanese cities focus remains cultural and educational - not much scope for economic benefits*

## ***Discussion and Recommendations for the Future***

It remains useful to reflect on the underlying rationale for sister city relationships. Following World War II, Sister City relationships were envisaged as a reconciliatory gesture. Early relationships focused on reducing barriers and increasing information and understanding between people.<sup>3</sup> Most of New Zealand's sister cities at this time were with the United Kingdom, Europe, the USA and Australia. 50 years later the majority of our relationships are with Asian communities and while the objectives of cultural, social and knowledge sharing still stand they have been joined, in New Zealand and most other countries, by commercial and business goals.<sup>4</sup> As the 2003 NZIER survey pointed out, cultural and commercial objectives are not mutually exclusive.

In 2005 the survey report noted that *“there may be those who feel uncomfortable about commerce being a sister city objective, but the personal connections developed through sister cities open up the possibility of commerce.”*<sup>5</sup> This discomfort is reducing over time. The 2005 observation that *“it can be argued that where emphasis is placed on developing the conditions able to deliver long-term sustainable growth to improve the quality of life of all New Zealanders, the economic value that sister cities can provide to the country should be taken advantage of”*<sup>6</sup> applies even more strongly in 2008.

On the other hand, we need to keep in mind that our partner communities and cultures often have objectives that are not completely aligned with ours. This of course is the very essence of dealing with another country. The survey includes comments on Japanese sister cities not sufficiently appreciating the place economic aims have in our sister city policy framework. While we seek to engage more with our USA links, we need to be mindful of the upsurge in ‘citizen diplomacy’ being advocated and practiced in that country as a means of building meaningful international relationships.

In 2005, the survey report referred to the government's then current Growth and Innovation Framework (GIF), based on a vision of New Zealand as:

- a land where diversity is valued and reflected in our national identity;
- a great place to live, learn, work and do business;
- a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas;
- a place where people invest in the future; and
- an environment people cherish and are committed to protect for future generations.

It was noted then that the aim of Sister Cities were consistent with GIF in several respects. Three years on, the government has moved to a focus on “Economic Transformation”, comprising five themes:

- growing globally competitive firms;
- world class infrastructure;
- innovative and productive workplaces;
- Auckland as an internationally competitive city, and
- environmental sustainability.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> NZIER survey p3

<sup>4</sup> Sister Cities New Zealand (2002) *Business Plan 2003-2005*.

<sup>5</sup> R Foley, Grassroots Survey Report, 2005

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Economic Development website accessed 29 May 2008.

Sister cities' part in this new focus would appear significantly more narrow in relevance, emphasizing as it does economic development as the dominant objective. This "what's in it for us" approach is consistent with current thinking amongst most local governments engaged with sister cities, and New Zealand needs to take care not to move too far away from the core values of education, cultural understanding and world peace. Our sister city focus is now very different from the typical USA example, where humanitarian objectives remain significant.

New Zealand's growing economic relationship with Asia is a significant factor in where our sister city emphasis lies. Potential opportunities to strengthen and expand these ties in all manner of ways has long been recognised, but there is little evidence in the survey of action being taken. Where it has, the approach has been an ad hoc and go-it-alone basis, rather than as a concerted "NZ Inc." approach as has long been suggested. Given the territorial and necessarily parochial nature of local government, it may now be time for central government to take a leadership role in developing and facilitating means of capitalising on our sister city networks through cooperation and joint initiatives.

A worthy observation in 2005 was the establishment of triangular links or even a web of relationships so that doors can be opened to the partners of our sister cities. A study of our links, even just a small sample of our most active ones, shows a huge range of new and potentially rewarding openings through this means. A strong pre-existing relationship with sister city partners would be needed to gain their support for referrals to their third party partners, and they should not merely be used as a convenience. But the opportunities are significant, not just in accessing possible trading partners, but also as a low-impact entry into developing nation links, something New Zealand quite conspicuously does not currently entertain.

As mentioned in the introduction, the survey made no attempt to quantify the value of sister city linkages in financial terms. There is much speculation and many claims around this issue, but supporting evidence is anecdotal at best. For credibility and to avoid confusion and misrepresentation about our sister city relations, either more effort needs to be made to overcome this shortcoming with the engagement of appropriate expertise, or the focus on 'economic benefits' should be tempered and sister city links be realigned in the public arena to reflect just what they really are.

Tourism from sister cities is another area ripe for future expansion. Much has already been written on this subject, however private enterprise buy-in to market New Zealand through our sister city networks is not being maximised. SCNZ and its members need to be more proactive in encouraging such initiatives among our business communities. For new opportunities in general, a positive step towards doing that is for SCNZ to develop policy guidelines for civic led delegations – built around ensuring opportunities are created, inviting key people to join the delegation, asserting trip objectives to the host city (while being mindful of its own objectives), and support on return to NZ.

Hand in hand with the economic benefits come the costs of operating sister city programmes. Section D indicates that staff time is slightly up on 2004, while council budgets are slightly down. Both could however fall within the margin for error. The unavoidable key finding is that council resource applications are not

increasing overall, and neither is voluntary input, which is aging at the same time. Councils are required today to clearly state their costs by activity, even to the point of indicating a 'return on investment', and 'contribution to the bottom line'. It was noted in 2004 that while funding for sister city relationships may not have the same returns as other promotional investments for a city or district, they may nevertheless have to demonstrate some type of return to make them viable for future funding. There is no clear evidence that this is the case as yet, but the gradual increase in economic activity as a basic reason for engaging with an international community renders the point still valid. SCNZ perhaps need to heighten debate on the qualitative benefits of sister city links, to balance the arguments based around economic expediency.

As observed in 2004 volunteer input is made often with no thought to the cost, and so it cannot be quantified.

A recommendation in 2004 was for the keeping of sister city-generated economic data for both sponsorship opportunities and better understanding of the worth of Sister City relationships. *"It is of vital importance that SCNZ develops an easy to use system to formalise the collection of this type of information. As noted above the majority of respondents do want the SCNZ national office to provide a series of standardised templates for recording visitor and economic activity and occasional workshops on best practice and success models, including an emphasis on economic opportunities."*<sup>8</sup> That work was done and made freely available. However SCNZ's initiative has had very little support from members, and so has not produced anything meaningful. The information SCNZ uses to promote the benefits of sister cities, to enable it to advise wisely and initiate its own programmes of national benefit is only as good as what its members provide by way of data. A message for SCNZ is perhaps that it needs to be more proactive in educating members about their opportunities by applying themselves somewhat more diligently, and for that matter accepting more responsibility as part of the NZ Inc. team.

Of course a strong partnership is a result of mutual understanding, and pushing economic objectives can destabilise the strongest of links if they are not a priority of the partner. For China the main (albeit long-term) objective of a sister city relationship remains economic cooperation. Some argue that China's outward push primarily has motives of 'influence',<sup>9</sup> however that is not reflected in sister city agreements. For Japan, business relations are widely acknowledged as being outside the realm of sister city relationships. So a style that works with China may not work with Japan. An understanding of cultural as well as economic values is essential for success, and suitable expertise needs to be applied to the task. Local government needs to engage more professionals in this area, which will inevitably require more resources to achieve quality results.

An overemphasis on economic return also tends to downgrade non-financial benefits that may be forthcoming for a community through a more 'humanitarian' approach to links with the developing world. As seen elsewhere in the world, such an approach can engender a high degree of community pride and togetherness. The challenge is to convince the population that such unquantifiable benefits are

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<sup>8</sup> R Foley, Grassroots Survey Report 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Dr John Lee, Islands Business,

[www.islandsbusiness.com/islands\\_business/index\\_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=17755/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl](http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands_business/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=17755/overrideSkinName=issueArticle-full.tpl), accessed 2 June 2008

actually real. New Zealand's sister city community needs to consider whether there is still a place for the type of links that evolved out of the original "peace and understanding" ethic.

A strategic commitment is essential to ensure the continuation of the sister city programme as key individuals, often the very catalysts for the relationship and its activities, move on. Just as in 2004, strategic planning is an area in which councils serious about their sister city links need to do more work. Just 36% of the responding councils or community organisations had a strategic plan with regards to their sister city relationships, down from 50% in 2004. 28% evaluate the success of these plans, compared to 44% in 2004. Judging by these results, there is a real danger that sister city policies are being allowed to drift as they gain familiarity and maturity.

The large number of inactive and lapsed relationships identified in the survey is indicative of a focus on relationships that deliver positive benefits, with a natural stepping back from those less beneficial relationships. SCNZ would be wise to encourage its members to take care of the relationships that are held dear and maximise the benefits derived from them, while diplomatically extricating themselves from links that now exist in name only. The latter are a distraction, and time and resources can be better spent making the most of what is 'alive and kicking', while investigating new and innovative opportunities, of which there are many as more and more nations embrace the sister city concept as a means of international engagement.

SCNZ considered it important to add a dedicated section on Youth to the 2007 survey, following feedback from members that more should be done to encourage the younger generation to be active in sister city affairs. There is no doubt as to the aging population of sister city activists, while at the same time young people are those in number who benefit the most from sister city exchanges. The challenge is to capture and retain the interest resulting from participation in school and other youth exchanges as the people concerned move through life.

The survey shows that school activities dominate youth participation in sister cities. Only one respondent indicated that it has sister city initiatives for non-school group young people. There was no indication of involvement by scouts and similar groups, sports clubs, young leader groups or the like. This is cause for real concern, as is the indication from councils that while most have youth councils/committees and youth support officers, very few of them are involved in sister city activities. This needs to be taken into account as SCNZ develops its Youth Involvement guidelines.

Question asking for reasons why more sister city activity does not occur generally and not surprisingly indicate limited resources as the main cause. There is however also an apparent lack of appreciation about what possibilities exist. SCNZ has produced its Aichi Manual as a guide to best practice and to showcase success stories, however the organisation would benefit from a review of its information role. The website [www.sistercities.org.nz](http://www.sistercities.org.nz) is maintained as the primary publicity tool, however there is still a place for a quality newsletter that 'hits the desk'. The ASCA newspaper is of a consistently high standard and could be the basis for better public information and edification.

Tables 12 and 13 provide valuable feedback on SCNZ's role and potential for assisting more. The key issue is of course resources, as it is elsewhere in the survey. If those resources are lacking, then SCNZ needs to consider repositioning itself so that its services retain their quality – doing less, but doing it well. If resources are forthcoming, there are indications of a huge contribution SCNZ can make in better information dissemination, education, matchmaking, project delivery and cultural/multi-track<sup>10</sup> diplomacy.

SCNZ would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in this survey. Collection of this type of information greatly assists the work of SCNZ in providing the appropriate level of service to members, as well as helping to give the country as a whole an accurate picture of our sister city profile, its strengths and areas for improvement. Good information is the basis of good management, and like any other activity our sister city relationships must be managed carefully and diligently if opportunities are to be leveraged, and all benefits are to be maximised.

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<sup>10</sup> J W. McDonald, [www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/mcdo3682.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/mcdo3682.htm), accessed 2 June 2008