


CITY OF HOUSTON

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A.P. No. 2-18	
	Effective Date UPON APPROVAL	
1. PURPOSE It is the policy of the City of Houston to promote relationships with international cities that enhance the cultural, economic, educational and humanitarian activities of our community. The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to ensure consistency in the development and administration of these relationships.		
2. OBJECTIVE To establish procedures for creating International Municipal Agreements; disposition of request for the sale and donation of used or surplus equipment; and requests for disaster relief assistance.		
3. SCOPE This Administrative Procedure applies to all City officials, departments/divisions and employees.		
4. PROCEDURES I. International Municipal Agreements A. Sister City Relationships 1. The purpose of Sister City Relationships is to promote people-to-people diplomacy and encourage citizens to develop mutual trust and understanding through commercial, cultural, educational and humanitarian exchanges. 2. Sister City policies are established by Sister Cities International (SCI) on the national level. 3. Relationships are created by City Council resolution at the request of community leaders and after meeting SCI and local requirements.		
Approved 	Date Approved 9-1-00	Page 1 of 6

4. Relationships continue until dissolved by City Council resolution.
5. Relationships are administered by the Houston International Protocol Alliance (HIPA).

B. Partners Agreement Programs

1. The purpose of Partners Agreements is to demonstrate a desire to build links and establish additional ties between Houston and an international city. Sometimes, the agreements support the efforts of Houston organizations that are developing programs with the partner city, such as a school, chamber of commerce, or arts exchange. For example - Partners in Trade (PIT) agreements focus on economic and trade relations.
2. Partners Agreements are sponsored and signed by elected officials.
3. HIPA will work with elected officials who desire to sponsor a new agreement or support an existing one.
4. Partners Agreements have a one-year term.
5. While the agreements may outline specific areas for potential links (trade, education, technology), they do not formally commit any City department to a specific action unless the action is fully described in the agreement and the agreement is signed by the Mayor and passed by City Council, as applicable.
6. HIPA will update and maintain Partners Agreement guidelines.

C. City Department Agreements and Exchanges in Specific Areas

1. A City department may enter into an agreement or an exchange at the discretion of the Department Director.
2. The Department Director is responsible for approving or denying any requests pertaining to the department based on these factors:
 - a. availability of funding, staff, and resources to meet the terms of the agreement;

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A. P. No. 2-18	Page 2 of 6
	Effective Date 9-1-00	

- b. Houston's ties to the country;
 - c. the country's relationship with the U.S. including political, economic and security issues that could affect the agreement; and
 - d. possible long-term benefits of the agreement, including business development, training and technical exchanges.
3. Upon receipt of a request the Department will:
 - a. forward a copy of the request to the Mayor's office and to HIPA,
 - b. brief the Mayor and HIPA regularly on the progress and outcome of the Department's evaluation of the request.
 4. HIPA will include information relating to these requests in background reports for the Mayor and other officials participating in activities with dignitaries from that country.
 5. Departments are responsible for obtaining any necessary approvals that are normally required from the Legal Department or City Council (for funding or disposition of used equipment, etc.).
 6. Departments are responsible for administering any request granted or agreements entered into.
 7. Department heads and those involved in these exchanges are to be mindful of their role as advocates for Houston. While the purpose of these relationships is generally not trade development, participants may become aware of possible trade, business, or other opportunities of interest to other parties in Houston. Participants are to promptly forward this information to the International Economic Development Officer in the Mayor's office who will refer it to the organizations (such as a Chamber of Commerce) or companies that might benefit.

II. Requests for Sale or Donation of Used or Surplus Equipment

A. Requests

1. Requests from cities outside the U. S. are to be handled on a case-by-case basis, considering the availability of the item requested and the legal constraints on the disbursement of the item.

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A. P. No. 2-18	Page 3 of 6
	Effective Date 9-1-00	

2. Upon receipt of a request, a City of Houston official or consulate will contact HIPA.
3. HIPA will facilitate the necessary contacts or provide information to handle the requests. This ensures that all requests receive equal treatment and allows for a central contact point to collect information on the requests the City of Houston receives and how they are handled.
 - a. Requests related to the Public Works and Engineering Department and/or the Solid Waste Management Department are to be directed to the department head of the applicable department.
 - b. Requests related to all other City departments are to be directed to the Director of the Finance and Administration Department.

B. Sale of Item

1. State law prohibits the donation of surplus city equipment, but the equipment can be purchased through scheduled auctions, or at fair market value with City Council approval.
 - a. Auction -
 - 1) HIPA will provide interested parties with a list of surplus equipment and auction dates, or refer them to the appropriate contact in the Finance and Administration Department.
 - 2) Interested parties unable to attend the auctions in person may appoint a representative.
 - b. Direct Purchase at Fair Market Value -
 - 1) Direct purchases of equipment at a fair market value must be approved by City Council.
 - 2) Upon receipt of a request, HIPA will determine availability of the item requested by contacting the Director of Finance and Administration, Public Works and Engineering and/or Solid Waste Management.

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A. P. No. 2-18	Page 4 of 6
	Effective Date 9-1-00	

- 3) If the item is available, HIPA will contact the Director of the Finance and Administration Department who will coordinate with the appropriate department and request an appraisal to determine fair market value of the item.
- 4) Upon receipt of the appraisal, HIPA will send a memorandum to the Mayor, with copies to the chairman of the City Council International Trade Committee, the country's consulate (if applicable), and any other interested parties. The memorandum will:
 - a) describe the request received;
 - b) make a recommendation regarding advisability of the potential sale; and
 - c) request an item be placed on the City Council agenda authorizing the sale if a sale is recommended.
- 5) If City Council approves the sale, the party requesting the equipment will be put in direct contact with the appropriate City department representative.
- 6) The City representative will notify HIPA and City Council of the details to the final agreement.
- 7) HIPA will inform the consulates and sister city organizations of these procedures.

III. Disaster Relief Assistance Requests

A. Coordination of Efforts

1. Disaster relief assistance on an international basis is generally coordinated through the Federal government and international relief agencies such as the Red Cross. Occasionally, efforts are coordinated at the state level as well.
2. The government of the afflicted country usually requests assistance from the U.S. government through the State Department or other means, and works closely with the major international relief agencies to obtain necessary help.

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A. P. No. 2-18	Page 5 of 6
	Effective Date 9-1-00	

3. Following a disaster, the consulates and/or embassies of the afflicted country as well as relief agencies such as the Red Cross, generally inform the public of the help and the type of assistance required.

B. City's Response

1. The City will respond to all requests for assistance in a consistent manner.
2. City officials or departments contacted by individuals or groups in the Houston community requesting disaster relief assistance will direct all requests to HIPA.
3. Upon receipt of a request for disaster relief assistance, HIPA will provide referrals to the country's consulate or embassy, and to the appropriate relief organizations, so that needs and resources can be properly coordinated.
4. Efforts on an individual or small group level that are not coordinated with the larger organizations often result in wasted resources or delays in distributing the needed aid.
5. The City is eager to help countries (especially those with which Houston has close ties) to access necessary resources and inform the public of how it can be involved in the relief efforts. However, the City of Houston does not normally provide financial or other material assistance for international disaster relief.
6. The City's response to a disaster includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. a letter from the Mayor acknowledging the disaster and offering sympathy, with a copy to the ambassador or consul general;
 - b. if requested, the Mayor will meet with the country's head of post or other representative to discuss the needed aid and how Houston might help;
 - c. HIPA will coordinate introductions, meetings or referrals to individuals or agencies that can assist in meeting specific needs, such as the Texas Medical Center or non-profit relief agencies;
 - d. HIPA will work with the Chairman of the City Council International Trade Committee to arrange for the head of post or other country representative to have an opportunity to brief the City Council committee;
 - e. HIPA will coordinate with the staff liaison to the Mayor's Advisory Board for International Affairs and Development for the region for a similar briefing to that group; and
 - f. HIPA and the Mayor's communications office will assist the country's consulate or embassy with a press release or the Mayor's participation in an event to draw attention to the disaster relief needs.

SUBJECT International Agreements, Equipment Sales and Donations, and Disaster Relief	A. P. No. 2-18	Page 6 of 6
	Effective Date 9-1-00	