

# Strengthening & Building Alliances

...Tips and tactics your chapter can employ to reach out to diverse communities and spread the word about the industry and your chapter.

You can begin by assessing your chapter's current outreach programs should they exist. If not, consider creating a local chapter task force to spearhead some of the proposed efforts. Again, the idea is to COMPREHEND the local landscape, and evaluate relevant opportunities and organizations in which to CONNECT with in an effort to CULTIVATE lasting and mutually beneficial relationships.

Don't be overwhelmed! You don't necessarily need to allocate additional funds or personnel for these efforts. In fact, outreach efforts can be considered an extension of what your chapter does on a regular basis. It may be most effective, at this point, to tailor one or more of your chapter's awareness efforts to better suit a diverse audience, and then keep strengthening the program as time and resources allow.

The following sections will guide you step-by-step through the process:

- Start Smart
- Partnership Guidelines
- Alliances to Build; Actions to Take
- Tips for Making Contact
- Getting the Word Out

## **START SMART**

To begin the process you can do web searches to find relevant organizations in your area. Please note the organizations below were pulled as samples only. A sample finding from a Google.ca search for professional Asian organizations in Canada delivered some great results:

NAAAP: The National Association of Asian American Professionals is the largest and fastest growing Asian American professional organization in the US and Canada ...  
[www.naaap.org/](http://www.naaap.org/) - 23k - Dec 13, 2004

Asian American Organizations ... of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations - Asian Pacific ... Asian Pacific Health Care Venture - Chinese American Professional Society - Filipino ... [www.awib.org/content\\_frames/directory/asian/](http://www.awib.org/content_frames/directory/asian/) - 24k

Asian American Net: Asian Organizations ... Legal Outreach) combines the commitment of a non-profit, community-based organization with the professional services of a ... Asian Women in Business (AWIB). ... [www.asianamerican.net/org\\_main.html](http://www.asianamerican.net/org_main.html) - 27k

## **PARTNERSHIP GUIDELINES**

Before your chapter makes contact, following are some partnership guidelines to consider when approaching potential organizations. When entering into a relationship with an organization or association that differs from the traditional business partner relationship, one must assess and evaluate the request and perform proper due diligence.

The below evaluation criteria should be used to evaluate any relationship request by another organization to determine the merit of any proposed collaboration. The same holds if your organization proposes to initiate a relationship with another organization.

### Evaluation Criteria

Current or new relationships should be evaluated against the following criteria:

- A formal proposal from the requesting organization must be submitted. The proposal should set forth all activities under the proposed relationship and the proposed timeline for the relationship.
- The proposal should detail the responsibilities of your organization in fulfilling its obligations. This should include such items as financial responsibility, member and staff time requirements, public relations responsibilities, inclusion in communication vehicles and relationship with specific programs (including any marketing efforts). The proposal should provide the same level of detail regarding what the requesting organization proposes to contribute.
- Additionally, if applicable, the proposal should cover:
  - o The extent to which the proposed partnership activities will reinforce your organization's brand.
  - o The extent to which the requesting organization is expecting to exchange memberships, trade show booths, event registrations, email lists, membership lists and opportunities for advertising and the benefits of such exchanges to your organization.
  - o The extent to which the proposed relationship provides a benefit to your members that you currently do not provide.
  - o The extent to which the proposed relationship provides access to key stakeholders that may or may not be eligible for membership but which your organization wishes to influence.
  - o The methodology to evaluate the success of the relationship.

### Partnership Development

Any organization that wishes to create a partnership must be informed of your organization's program of strategic partnerships, including the proposal submission process. If the interested organization wants to submit a proposal after the initial conversation, an application including the evaluation criteria should be sent to that organization.

Upon receiving the completed application, your organization should hold a formal review meeting to evaluate the application against the proposed review criteria. Recommendations

should then be made to the Executive Committee to approve or disapprove the proposed Partnership.

### Due Diligence

During the due diligence process with possible partner organizations, there will be many points to include. Some basic suggestions include:

- Confirmation of the organization's status (e.g., corporation, 501(c), etc.)
- Date incorporated or company start-up date
- Registration date
- City of registration
- Other pertinent information about the organization

## **ALLIANCES TO BUILD; ACTIONS TO TAKE**

### Community Activities

- Contact local groups and ask to be kept aware of sponsorship opportunities for upcoming events to increase visibility and name recognition.
- Inform city officials of your chapter's campaign and ask for advice on reaching key markets.
- Become actively engaged with the community and publicize your chapter's mission by sending letters to the editor and press releases to local media.
- Participate in local forums and town hall meetings.
- Become involved with local faith-based groups, military organizations or other groups with diverse memberships.
- Look for volunteer and sponsorship opportunities offered by local philanthropic organizations in the communities your chapter would like to reach (e.g. building houses, repurposing public spaces, healthcare advocacy, youth literacy initiatives, etc.).

### Industry

- Get involved with local professional organizations and advocacy groups such as the African-American/Black, Asian and Hispanic/Latino Chambers of Commerce.
- Contact your local Convention & Visitors Bureau and request information on upcoming diverse gatherings or events.
- Contact local affiliates of national industry organizations. See relevant organizations in the Reference section for examples.
- Partner with other meetings industry or hospitality-related organizations that concentrate on diverse topics or membership to communicate your chapter's efforts and share ideas, membership lists and best practices.
- Take part in job fairs in and around diverse communities. If there are no job fairs of this kind in your chapter's area, consider helping to organize one.

### Student Services

- Collaborate with local colleges on ways to make your chapter presence felt on campus.
- Make contact with heads of marketing and hospitality departments; ensure that they are aware of your mission, and keep them up to date on seminars or meetings held. Ask that they pass the information on to interested students.

- Offer local scholarships to students with diverse backgrounds.
- Establish a mentoring program to pair members with interested students and promote careers in the industry.
- Offer internships within the chapter to engage and inform interested students with diverse backgrounds.
- Offer fellowships to students of diverse backgrounds to attend annual meetings.
- Provide on-campus career centers with information on the meetings industry and your organization.
- Invite students to seminars and educational events by sending a “Calendar Alert” to the Career Center, as well as relevant academic departments (marketing, hospitality, etc.) for distribution.

### Membership Communications

- Develop bilingual, culturally relevant consumer materials for distribution at local events.
- Collect names and other contact information for your chapter’s database and email a follow-up within the week.

### **TIPS FOR MAKING CONTACT**

- *Have a plan.* The better prepared your chapter is, the more likely you are to engage your audience and to project sincerity. Know who the leaders of the organization/business are, what the business or organization does, and who it serves. Importantly, know the common ground that you share, and why it makes sense for your chapter to collaborate.
- *Nothing beats a handshake.* While your chapter’s initial contact likely will be a phone call or email, it is vital to follow up with a face-to-face meeting, which is an especially valued means of communication within certain communities. The personal interactions will go a long way to building trust and emphasizing your chapter’s dedication to diversity development.
- *Be patient.* It may take time for some organizations or individuals to agree to work with your chapter. This could be caused by any number of factors: timing; you may not have reached the real decision maker; they may need more information, etc. If possible, identify and address the issue that is creating the delay and reconfirm your chapter’s dedication to the process.
- *Recognize that you will not engage everyone.* Put forth a good effort, including revising your chapter’s approach, as necessary. If it doesn’t seem to be working, try again at another time.
- *Know what you want.* Your chapter should have specific objectives in mind (e.g., do you want to conduct a joint seminar? Would you like a list of speaker or topic suggestions? Would you like to share mailing lists?), which always should include your chapter’s long-term goal of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship.
- *Use your affiliations.* Don’t be shy! If members of your chapter know people at the affiliate or in the community who might help make an introduction or put in a good word for your chapter, ask them to do so.
- *Sustain momentum.* Don’t expect that a small effort will reap a large reward. Instead,

look to establish ongoing relationships through a sustained and consistent campaign. And remember, if your chapter isn't successful on the first try, then try and try again—persistence will pay off in the long run.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT

### Introduction Letter Template

ADDRESS

DATE

Dear **[INSERT NAME]**:

I am writing on behalf of the **[INSERT CHAPTER NAME]** of the **[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]**. **[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]** has **[INSERT OR DELETE recently]** instituted a diversity education program to help raise awareness about the meetings industry profession and career opportunities within the field.

As **[INSERT CHAPTER LEADER NAME]** of **[INSERT ORGANIZATION]**, your insight into and understanding of the **[African-American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American]** community would be of great benefit to our members, many of whom are looking to expand their professional and cultural contacts and broaden the reach of their services. To help kick off this effort, our chapter is hosting a **[BLANK EVENT]** on **[DATE]** which I invite you to attend. **[INSERT INFO ON SPECIFIC PROGRAM EFFORT OR EVENT]**. It will be a chance for us to meet, put a name to a face, and see how we can start working together to build business and create economic growth in the future.

I will telephone you early next week with more details. In the meantime, please feel free to call me at **XXX-XXX-XXXX** with any questions. I look forward to our introduction.

Sincerely,

NAME

TITLE