



TIPS FOR A GOOD CC VISIT

By Sally Mahé
Director of Organizational Development

Experience is teaching that CC visits prove valuable. Visits can be CC to CC, GC Trustee to CCs, or Staff to CCs.

Practical suggestions for what makes a good CC visit:

1. **Ask to be invited.** Agree beforehand on duration, accommodations, purpose and expectation of the visit. Exchange emails early on to share ideas about what the visit might include.
2. **Bring something to offer.** Supporting CCs means thinking ahead about what kind of information a CC might need. Offerings might be any recent output by the region or global office—brochures, CDs, regional newsletters or a resource list of materials, names of like-minded organizations or websites that a CC might find helpful. Of course, if in home stays, offer a gift of gratitude for hospitality and a thank you note.
3. **“Walk with” the CC members.** URI embraces an appreciative approach and this means there is a deeply shared belief that people have the capacity to touch their own creative source and find answers within themselves. Listening to different perspectives and sharing experiences with CC members should be a key part of a visit. A visit is a time to sit together and a time to listen—for the visitor to try and put on the shoes of the CC members and see and understand their aspirations, frustrations and hopes from their context.
4. **Record and reflect strengths.** Most people do not clearly see the depth of their potential or the extent of what is being impacted by the “little things” they are doing as a CC. Most people need to be reminded of their value and their dreams. Hosting a visitor can raise into view the value and the significance of CC members’ efforts. Of course, verbal affirmation and enthusiasm is good. Keeping a careful journal, and then offering the journal reflection back to the CC as a follow up is deeply appreciated. The journal installments can also become a “learning tool” to contribute to a broader learning for the URI community. When this information is shared, a CC can see that the richness of their unique experience was valuable information for others in URI. Always ask the CC to correct a journal entry before sharing it because it is easy to make mistakes.
5. **Take seriously what CCs say they need and what talents and services they are willing to contribute.** Keep notes of the requests, the questions raised, practical items requested, the talents offered.
6. **Help.** Usually CCs are facing an issue or have questions they may need help answering. On one trip to visit CCs in Europe, things came up such as: how to shift focus (getting to know one other) to another CC priority (getting more active in the community); improving internal CC communication; improving CC and regional/global URI communication; how to manage changes in leadership; how to choose an appropriate



action plan given the constraints of CC members; how to distribute responsibility in a CC so that one or two people don't do most of the work; how to introduce interfaith where people are wary of religions and inter-religious cooperation. When asked for help - a visitor can ask more questions to understand the situation more fully; offer practical suggestions; share what other CCs have done; offer to connect CC leader with another CC in similar situation; offer to think about request and get back to CC with resources, etc. The visitor should keep note of the issues CCs are facing and set a date to call back for a follow up conversation.

7. **Appreciate unique nature of URI's committed people.** Learning people's unique backgrounds and what led them to commit to this work is impressive. Visitors are introduced in a personal way to CC members - the "social capital treasures" of URI. This knowledge can be elicited more deeply and shared more effectively by people who visit CCs.
8. **Appreciate the unique nature of each CC.** One CC is rarely like another. Usually the reasons CCs form are unique and different. Some CCs are large organizations, some are small clusters, some are longstanding interfaith organizations, some produce sophisticated interfaith material, some are beginning interfaith work for the first time.



Visitors can provide general capacity building tools, training etc., but don't expect the CC to be able to pick it up and use it. CCs need easy, reliable access to information on a range of subjects and covering a range of resource materials. They need to be given an opportunity to choose what works for them or be guided to find resources that match their need. Each CC works within a unique context. Visitors should learn context and help direct the CC to materials and resources that fit their specific circumstance. Providing CCs with resources is not "one size fits all." The visitor might make a list of resources a CC has to offer as well as the specific needs a CC has, and make this information available as a

regional/global resource.

9. **Look for leaders and connect them.** Members of CCs may have special talents or expertise useful to the URI community. An opera singer might help another CC's interfaith concert an expert in interfaith urban mediation may be invited to train a CC in another city, etc. URI visitors can help connect and maximize the leadership of its members to benefit others in the URI community.



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