



U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON)

CULCON 30

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SUBNATIONAL DIPLOMACY/LOCAL & REGIONAL EXCHANGE WORKING GROUP

INTERIM REPORT

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1. Introduction

The U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) is a binational advisory panel that serves to elevate and strengthen the vital cultural and educational foundations of the U.S.-Japan relationship, and to strengthen connections between U.S. and Japan leadership in those fields. It works to ensure that the best new ideas for cultural, educational, and intellectual activity and exchange are implemented as operational programs.

CULCON organizes working groups, whose members, consisting of CULCON members and private sector and government officials with related expertise, focus on specific impediments to exchange and/or best practices; and offer recommendations to stakeholders to address common challenges.

CULCON established the Subnational Diplomacy/Local & Regional Exchange Working Group (SND WG) in October 2022. The SND WG brought together participants from both the U.S. and Japan, for “exploring the role of subnational diplomacy/regional exchange on the U.S.-Japan partnership, as well as investigating ways to enhance this important form of interaction (Final Report of the CULCON Ad Hoc Committee, October 2022).” The Working Group discussions endeavored to “identify problems and search for feasible projects, with the goal of recommending policies to the Japanese Prime Minister and the U.S. President, as well as nurture the next generation of leaders in the U.S.-Japan alliance.”

CULCON agreed the SND WG should meet twice before submitting an interim report to CULCON 30 in October 2023.

The SND WG met twice, once in-person and once in hybrid format on the following dates:

- Meeting #1: March 18, 2023 (at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Conference in Boston, MA)
- Meeting #2: August 3, 20:00 ET/August 4, 9:00 JT (SAKURA Hall, The Japan Foundation, and Zoom)

2. Summary of WG Discussions

Co-Chairs SATO Yuri and Bill Tsutsui led discussions among experts and participants from various fields, including diplomacy, academia, local government, and nonprofit organizations. The participants engaged in in-depth discussion about various aspects of subnational diplomacy, local and regional exchange. The Working Group grappled with the broad and varied scope of activities in subnational diplomacy, and they identified major purposes and players of subnational diplomacy activities between Japan and the U.S. They agreed the work going forward should be examined further through the lens of CULCON’s mission and priorities.

The Working Group focused on two overarching objectives: exploring the role of subnational diplomacy on the U.S.-Japan partnership; and investigating ways to enhance subnational diplomacy. One recurring theme that emerged during the discussions emphasized supporting discerning prioritization of objectives and broadening the involvement of various key stakeholders in subnational diplomacy. This, in turn, underscores the potential positive impact of these efforts on economic growth, problem-solving, empowerment of future generations, cultural exchange, and the promotion of mutual understanding.

The following is a summary of the main topics of discussion from both meetings that address these themes.

A. Main Purposes of Subnational Diplomacy/Local and Regional Exchange:

The Working Group discussed four major purposes of U.S.-Japan subnational diplomacy efforts. They are (1) economic promotion, (2) problem-solving, (3) empowerment of future generations and (4) mutual understanding, including cultural exchange. Although these have been identified as vital motives for cities and other organizers engaging in subnational diplomacy, it may be beneficial for the Working Group to collect good practices and case studies to understand and analyze the concrete benefits or outcomes of existing efforts in subnational diplomacy.

B. Major Players of Subnational Diplomacy/Local and Regional Exchange and Priority Areas:

The Working Group discussed extensively the key participants in subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchanges. Mr. KITANO Mitsuru shared his work by identifying several categories of players, including Local Authorities (L.A.s), exchange program organizers, diplomatic establishments, regional representatives, Japan-America/America-Japan Societies, universities, and grassroots exchange organizations. Another category of key subnational players is the private sector, as represented by corporations and business associations. These players are involved in various activities, such as sister-city relations, cultural exchange, economic promotion, and problem-solving efforts. These players collaborate with each other when necessary.

Mr. KITANO shared a chart to show how each player relates to different goals, emphasizing the need to explore their connections and collect case studies to enhance the U.S.-Japan partnership through subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchanges. The Chart and a more complete analysis of it is provided in Appendix C.

C. Data Collection for Demonstrating Benefits:

Dr. Mary Alice Haddad has been conducting research on the impact of subnational diplomacy worldwide. Because of the interest expressed by the SND WG, she has begun to gather evidence to showcase cases of U.S.-Japan subnational diplomacy. Her team has constructed a dataset that gives information about the 300+ sister and friendship cities between the U.S. and Japan, 30+ formal Memorandums of Understanding involving subnational entities in one or both countries, 100 nonprofit organizations that focus on fostering U.S.-Japan relations, etc.

Dr. Haddad's preliminary evidence from a project focused on U.S. metro areas shows a clear, positive relationship between subnational diplomatic activity and a metro area's exports. It may be possible to use those data to discover how subnational U.S.-Japan relationships affect U.S.-Japan trade. Additionally, with new data from the Japan Foundation, she plans to examine how subnational diplomatic activity may be related to levels of Japanese language learning in U.S. states.

D. Good Practices and Case Studies:

One key highlight of the Working Group's discussion was the importance of identifying good practices and case studies that showcase successful approaches to U.S.-Japan subnational diplomacy. The Working Group will use the data and analysis presented by Mr. KITANO as a starting point for its future discussions on collecting good practices and case

studies. The Working Group also highlighted the work of Mr. KOYAMADA Shin's newly established Japan-U.S. Sister City Association (JUSSCA)¹ as a promising vehicle for promoting and elevating sister city activity between the two countries, including ways to share good practices, especially among smaller partnerships. The SND WG also drew attention to the work of the Koyamada International Foundation Japan (KIF Japan) with Junior Chamber International Japan (JCI Japan) in Tokyo, which hosted a virtual Japan-U.S. Subnational Youth Leadership Forum during the pandemic to strengthen bilateral economic ties among youth from six different sister cities partnerships.

3. Areas of Further Exploration and Preliminary Recommendations for Actions

The Working Group's discussions underscored the potential of subnational diplomacy to foster economic promotion, problem solving, empowerment of the future generations and mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan. The Working Group identified the following as areas of further exploration in relation to the WG's goals of exploring the role of subnational diplomacy on the U.S.-Japan partnership and investigating ways to enhance subnational diplomacy. These provide practical steps for enhancing collaboration, leveraging technology, and fostering leadership to achieve these goals. The Working Group will take direction on its future areas of exploration and actions from the CULCON Panels during its discussion at CULCON 30.

A. Measurement and Data Collection:

- Collect and showcase data to demonstrate the economic and cultural benefits of subnational diplomacy.
- Emphasize the need for empirical evidence in highlighting successful outcomes for U.S. and Japanese public and private sector stakeholders.

B. Collecting Good Practices and Conducting Case Studies

- Collect and analyze good practices of successful subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchanges. For example, the Working Group could analyze data and information on good practices of the local autonomies which were conducted for the purpose of economic promotion, problem solving and/or empowerment of the future generation, including their activities of sister-city relations, and/or gaining mutual understanding. relations.
- Develop a series of case studies highlighting specific successful subnational diplomacy initiatives. For instance, showcase how a sister city relationship between a Japanese and an American city resulted in increased tourism, trade and investment, and the number of people studying language or interest in language study. These case studies can demonstrate the clear evidence of how subnational diplomacy has impacted on economic growth or cultural exchange/mutual understanding on a local/regional level. For example, tracing the record of career development of former JET participants may reveal how people-to-people exchange programs have impacted the bilateral relationship in diverse fields on national and local/regional levels.

¹ <https://jussca.org/en/>

- Investigate sister and friendship city relationships that no longer appear to be active and analyze the reasons for the inactivity or failure. This analysis might be valuable in reviving moribund relationships or informing and/or supporting nascent or existing relationships.

C. Networking with other Organizations Involved in Subnational Diplomacy and Local/Regional Exchange:

- In collecting good practices and conducting case studies, the Working Group could initiate talks with other organizations engaging in activities related to subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchange, such as Keidanren, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CLAIR, Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs.
- Initiate discussions with organizations such as JETRO, which possesses economic data specific to local and regional areas. Also include Japanese associations representing various industries engaged in community initiatives, representatives from civil society groups advocating for subnational diplomacy, as well as colleges and universities actively addressing international issues. Seek their insights and assessments regarding subnational activities and their socio-economic impact.
- Establish fora and conferences for leaders from sister and friendship cities to connect and share insights.

D. Bilateral Collaboration, Education and Cultural Exchange:

- Collaborate with organizations like The U.S.-Japan Council to create collaborative programs that bring together young professionals, diplomats, business leaders, local government leaders, civic leaders, and artists, among others, from both countries to address common challenges.
- Develop joint degree programs and educational partnerships to support subnational diplomacy.
- Promote exchanges between universities and institutions to solve mutual problems.
- Explore how to support high schools/colleges/universities as anchor institutions to promote local/regional subnational relationships between the two countries.
- Support artist exchange, including collaborations, which play a significant role in subnational activities. Foster local leadership through mentorship programs connecting young professionals with experienced diplomats, local government leaders, civic leaders, and artists, among others.
- Address challenges related to transitions in leadership across generations.

E. Global and Indo-Pacific Collaboration:

- Extend focus to collaborations with cities in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance subnational diplomacy efforts.
- Explore opportunities for international collaboration beyond the U.S.-Japan partnership.
- Explore triangulation among the U.S., Japan, and emerging countries, for example, among U.S., Japanese, and Southeast Asian cities. There are international and regional subnational networks such as ASEAN Smart City Network, United Cities and Local

Governments (UCLG), and Inter Cultural City (ICC). These connections have mainly two purposes of problem solving (fixing potholes, security, disasters, health, etc.) and mutual understanding are worth exploring. Key common issues are funding and expertise.

F. Other Issues for Further Consideration

The Working Group identified other pertinent issues for promoting subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchange, such as funding for enhancing activities relevant to subnational diplomacy, use of communication technology to make subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchange more efficient, creating a sustainable infrastructure of subnational diplomacy, the challenge of maintaining relationships amid evolving political and social climates. The Working Group also recognized the importance of language study as a driver of cultural understanding.

4. Next Steps

The meetings of the CULCON Working Group on Subnational Diplomacy/Local & Regional Exchange underscored the significance of leveraging assets such as sister city relationships, exchange programs, diplomatic initiatives, and grassroots exchanges to enhance bilateral relations.

The Working Group members recommended that CULCON extend its term of service for the next two years, or until CULCON 31. The Working Group will plan to meet at least twice more, calling upon additional expertise, where necessary, to expand the discussion of each theme. By the time of CULCON 31, the Working Group will provide a Final Report, which will include recommendations to both federal/central governments, state and local governments, grassroots organizations, and other stakeholders on expanding and supporting efforts in subnational diplomacy.

5. Appendices

A. Membership of CULCON Subnational Diplomacy/Local & Regional Exchange (alphabetical)

Japan CULCON Members:

- ❖ SATO Yuri, Executive Vice President, The Japan Foundation; Working Group Co-Chair

U.S. CULCON Members:

- ❖ Bill Tsutsui, Chancellor and Professor of History, Ottawa University; WG Co-Chair
- ❖ Cynthia Matson, President, San Jose State University

Japan WG Members/Resource Persons:

- ❖ KITANO Mitsuru, Executive Adviser, Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)
- ❖ KOYAMADA Shin, Founder and Chair, Japan-United States Sister City Association (JUSSCA)
- ❖ SUZUKI Kotaro, Consul General of Japan in Boston

U.S. WG Members/Resource Persons:

- ❖ Mary Alice Haddad, John E. Andrus Professor of Government; Professor of Environmental Studies and East Asian Studies, Wesleyan University
- ❖ Peter Kelley, Former President, National Association of Japan America Societies (NAJAS)

B. Membership of CULCON

U.S. CULCON

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[Dr. Sheila A. Smith](#)

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Former Ambassador to the United States, Former Chair of CULCON Japan Panel

C. Key Players and Priorities in Subnational Diplomacy

The Working Group deliberated extensively on the key players of subnational diplomacy/local and regional exchange. Mr. KITANO Mitsuru shared his work examining key players of subnational/regional activities has been largely anecdotal. The first category of players is Local Authorities (L.A.s). Their international activities include sister-city relations which have impact on empowering the future generations. But their activities do not limit to the sister-city relations and are extended to economic promotion such as tourism or investment promotion as well as problem solving efforts with other regions and cities in such fields as environmental issues, urban designing and disaster prevention. The second category of players is publicly supported exchange program organizers such as organizers of JET, J-LEAP, and JOI. They foster cross-cultural understanding and language education as well as empower future generations. The third category of players is diplomatic establishments such as Consulate General's offices and Honorary Consuls. Their activities aim at promoting economic activities and fostering mutual understanding. The Working Group also highlighted the regional engagements such as the newly appointed Department of State Special Representative of Subnational Diplomacy, Ambassador Hachigian. The fourth category of players is Japan-America/ America-Japan Societies, which conduct wide range of activities for the purpose of economic promotion, empowering the future generations and gaining mutual understanding. The fifth category of players is universities and academic institutions including language and study abroad organizations such as the Fulbright Program, AFS and YFU among others. They contribute to problem solving, empowerment of future generations and promoting mutual understanding. The sixth category of players are various grass-root exchange organizations such as JUMP (Japan-US Military Program), Japanese gardens and cherry blossom festival organizers. The seventh category of key subnational players is the private sector, as represented by corporations and business associations. The following chart created by Mr. KITANO illustrates how each player is related to the purposes of activities. The working group identified the priority areas highlighted by Circles (○) / double circles (◎). It may be important to explore how each player is related to priorities. By collecting good practices and case studies of marked areas in this chart, the Working Group could identify how to energize priority targets or goals set by each player to innovate the U.S.-Japan partnership through subnational diplomacy and local/regional exchanges.

	Economic promotion	Problem solving	Empowerment of the future generations	Gaining mutual understanding
Local Authorities (L.A.s)	○	○	◎	
Publicly supported exchange program organizers			◎	◎
Diplomatic establishments	○			◎
Japan-America/ America-Japan Societies	○		○	◎
Universities and Academic Institutions		◎	◎	◎
Grass-root Exchange Organizations				◎
Private Sector	○			◎