

Organizational Handbook for SONA Local Chapters

Student Organization of North America (SONA)

The Student Organization of North America is a body of undergraduate students, graduate students, and new professionals who hail from each province and state of all three North American Nations: Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

We aim to foster:

- 1) Cooperation among students of the three nations by establishing a student organization with local campus chapters through out North America.
- 2) With other organizations, including the business community, higher education institutions, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties.
- 3) Mutual understanding of local, regional, and continental concerns and challenges in environmental, social and economic sphere.
- 4) To accomplish our aims we plan to use various communication techniques (dialogue and debate in annual meetings, websites, email, communication, and other media) to inform local activities through campus chapters.
- 5) And encourage members of SONA to become leaders in the larger communities to which they belong so as to disseminate ideas and concerns related to SONA.

SONA Values

1. To provide opportunities for people from across the continent to interact and promote mutual respect and understanding.
2. The recognition that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and the commitment to promote international conditions which promote and protect this equality.
3. The belief that all human beings should act towards one another in a spirit of peace, sharing and cooperation.
4. All human beings have the inalienable right to life, liberty and the security of person.

5. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or economic status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Local Chapters of the Student Organization of North America

Mission Statement

Local Chapters are the most basic and important units to foster SONA principles. Local Chapters aim to develop a broad vision of the North American Community at the most local level of interaction. Chapters may vary in geographic size from local communities within cities to regions of provinces or states depending upon population and interest. Local Chapters will act locally to:

1. Increase awareness of and respect for the nations and peoples of North America during these times of change.
2. Promote opportunities for students to experience the North American Community.

Statement of Strategies

1. Local Chapters have freedom to design their own activities based on local needs.
2. Local Chapters should not violate the Trilateral Mission, values, strategies or Membership guidelines
3. Local Chapter{s states of Organizational Principles, for example, constitution or by-laws will use substantially similar mission, value, strategy and membership guidelines from SONA.
4. Local Chapters are encouraged to develop strategies and on-campus activities and forms of organization to match local needs.

Networking

The Local Chapter will work and organize locally to facilitate the sharing of ideas and information with other Local Chapters and organizations.

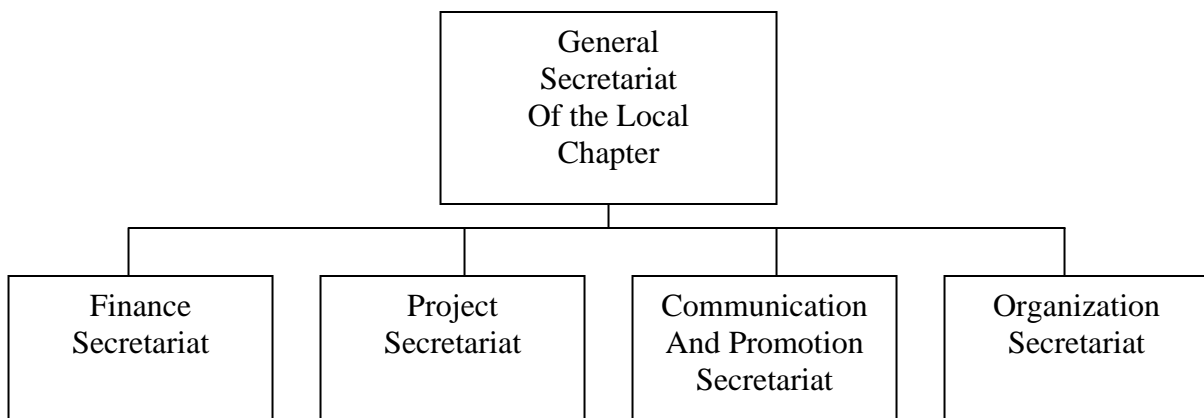
Event Sponsorship

We organize events aimed at providing individuals with information about and experiences within the great North American community.

General Guidelines for Starting Up Your Local SONA Chapter.

Planting the Seed:

1. Visit your campus Student Programs office to find out the minimum number of members required to start a new organization. Most will require between seven to ten members. You will probably be required to have at least two officers (a president and a treasurer). Here we suggest a structure:



The functions for each secretariat are described below:

General Secretariat of the Local Chapter

The *General Secretariat* is in charge of interfacing other local chapters and International committees. Its responsibility is to lead within the local communities and promote the local chapter's activity before the local community. It is also charged with the responsibility of overlooking and directing the Local chapter.

Finance Secretariat

The *Finance Secretariat* is in charge of controlling the resources that are needed to accomplish all SONA's activities. It is also responsible in accounting for the income and expenditures.

Project Secretariat

The *Project Secretariat* is responsible for researching and organizing viable plans for projects that the Local Chapter can undertake.

Communication Secretariat

The Communication secretariat is responsible for making sure that the reports and communications of the other secretariats are made available to the pertinent secretariats within SONA.

Organizational Secretariat

It is in charge of organizing events, meetings, workshops, forums, fundraising and any other promotional activities.

2. Get your friends to sign on as members, even if it is only temporary. You cannot begin the recognition process until you have the prerequisite number of members
3. Fill out the necessary documents to become organized by your college or university. University recognition is important, because only recognized organization can ask local student councils and other organizations for grants. Recognition also entitles you to special campus privileges (i.e.: room, reservations free of charge, discounts with University approved vendors etc.) You will also need to decide the nature of the organization (i.e.: is it social or service based?)
4. Apply for start up funds from your local student council. Some campuses have special funds just for new clubs to help defray the costs of membership drives.

Cultivating the Crop

Increasing Membership- the key is visibility

1. Start with a social function (BBq, mixer). College students love nothing more than free food. Use these functions to spread information about your chapter. However, avoid lecture formats. You might want to seek the sponsorship of an established organization or club to host a joint social event.
2. Host an information table in a heavily trafficked part of campus (i.e. right in front of the food hall). Use balloons and music to draw a crowd. Be sure to check with the proper authorities for the rules and guidelines for such displays.
3. Advertise! Pass out lots of flyers around campus advertising your events (not your purpose). Wait until people come to your events to give them an in-depth description of your organization and its aims. Extend invitations to other clubs, fraternities and sororities. Also, post advertisements in the different colleges/faculties (i.e.: social and behavioural sciences, liberal arts, science, businesses)

The Key for longevity

1. Always strive towards building membership. Be vigilant in guarding your image. When it comes to student organization, image is everything.
2. Fundraise! Start small (i.e.: car washes) and don't be afraid to ask local businesses for donations. Remember that insolvent chapters cannot afford membership drives.
3. In the midst of all the social functions and fundraisers do not lose sight of the principals and purposes upon which you were founded.

Appendix

Guidelines for Developing Local Chapters

Creating Awareness

1. This can be done easily by putting up attractive signs-posters with basic information on SONA to spark interest
2. The posters should have contact information (website, e-mail address, local contact).
3. Make contact with the International Centres on campus and convince them that affiliation with SONA will increase their visibility
4. International Centre's also publicize upcoming conferences, activities, events, scholarships, etc., that have an international focus.

Networking

This is a continuation of contacting the international centres and creating awareness.

1. Help figure out structures
2. Find ideas for activities
3. Learn about issues, opportunities, contacts, etc
4. "Work with already formed student organizations, clubs, International Centres, International Houses, Councils on Diversity, Multi-ethnic Associations on local levels to bring together students (and support groups) that are interested in the North American community"

Information Exchange

1. "Work and organize to share information about opportunities and information for students about and within North America"
2. Need people to find/research opportunities
3. Need people to communicate these opportunities
4. International centres and clubs on campus are a great way to get these opportunities communicated. They have large list servers than a new local chapter would.

Event Sponsorship

1. Organize events aimed at providing individuals with links to the North American Student Educational community. We try to focus on issues relating to North America with a goal of increasing the awareness of those issues and of the type of information available on opportunities and events in North America
2. What type of events? Speakers, conferences, festivals...
3. Local Chapters can brainstorm to figure out what kind of events would work best in their community.
4. It is best to work with other campus clubs and organizations
5. Get involved with "International Weeks or International Development Weeks" on campus.

Local Chapters

1. Become involved with educational conferences (e.g.: Local Chapters could request as volunteers at the CBIE conference which is held yearly). Other organizations to be involved with: CONAHEC, CIEE, WSANET (Ontario).
2. Hosting visiting exchange or education abroad students, giving tours, becoming peer partners.
3. Hosting excursions
4. Offer the chance to meet people who live in a city where you will study/travel before you get there.
5. Arrange (or join) a program of language partners to exchange languages and cultures in the city.
6. Host a local list server to distribute opportunities to students in your local area. Opportunities can include: exchange or education abroad scholarships or programs, International Internships or Employment, Funding like Fellowships or scholarships.
7. Networking- Through your connection to SONA, find partners to make up Grant Proposals. Do off-campus presentations on SONA to Tri-lateral companies to gain support and interest in the community. Tell them what we can offer them.
8. Share your experience through:
 - a. Programs such as the Country Representative Program at Queen's (www.quic.queensu.ca) - Link SONA to it.

- b. Volunteer for pre-departure orientation for exchange students going to study in other parts of North America.
- c. Coordinate a booth at University Study Abroad fairs/Information Booths.
- d. Do airport reception for incoming students to your university (bring SONA Local Chapter members to the International Centres, and ESL programs on campus)
- e. Organize classroom/school visits to share your experience with students and promote the benefits of SONA as a Tri-Lateral Organization
- f. Host North American study nights- information on how to study in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.