

2018 01 13 FFO Inbound Hosting Working Group Final Report

Part I—Preamble

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Our work group was formed in September 2017. We were asked to examine how hosting is carried out in FFO and how our club might encourage more participation in hosting.

1. Objective: For inbound journeys, examine ways to provide a better balance between:

- (A) Providing a fulfilling broad and local cultural experience for ambassadors and hosts, and
- (B) Maintaining reasonable costs and effort for FFO hosts.

2. Steps and Timeline

October to mid-November:

- Research FFO experiences and those of other clubs.
- Identify issues and barriers that may be in the way of good host experiences or that may be discouraging participation in hosting.

End of November:

- Consolidate the issues from above, and
- Provide suggestions to mitigate issues and barriers.
- Begin the interim report.

Early December:

- Prepare an interim report which will include:
 - (1) a preamble identifying our objectives, our steps and timelines and 2017 club practices
 - (2) issues and barriers to hosting participation that members may have experienced, and
 - (3) concepts, ideas and suggestions for mitigating barriers and encouraging participation.

December 30

- Finalize the interim report to send to the FFO Board for its January 5 meeting.

3. 2017 Club Situation and Practices

Friendship Force travellers are in search of true cultural understanding and lasting friendships. We believe that through travel and hosting, we have the opportunity to make our world a better place. Friendship Force is an organization with emphasis on friendships around the world, not a travel club emphasizing tourist sites. Our journeys are experiences where there are rich, meaningful opportunities to make connections.

FFO provides excellent inbound journey experiences. Ratings by ambassadors are consistently high, and journeys to Ottawa are in demand.

Hosting ambassadors on inbound journeys is a fundamental FFO activity. Often it is difficult to obtain enough night, day and dinner hosts for an inbound journey, as well as to locate people to be part of the journey planning committee. These difficulties will be somewhat alleviated as new FFO guidelines take

effect. The guidelines provide for capping the number of ambassadors in an incoming journey at 20. In addition, FFO will not host an incoming journey while there is an FFO outgoing journey. As our hosting experiences become more rewarding and fulfilling, the corresponding ambassador experiences will also be enriched.

Our membership is diverse. We have seasoned and experienced members, new members, retired members and members in the work force. We have a much higher proportion of singles to couples than in earlier years, and incoming journeys reflect the same trend. This has implications for hosting; e.g. generally more beds are needed for the ambassadors on an inbound journey, and sometimes the responsibilities of single night hosts can be harder to manage; e.g. maintaining conversation with an ambassador while preparing dinner.

There is a wealth of experience and knowledge among club members, and there is much useful information on the FFO website and in club exchange reports. Formal and informal communication and training are needed to pass along this information.

As we identified practices to encourage FFO members to take part in incoming journeys, a number of general principles and guidelines became apparent.

- **Have timely and comprehensive communication in the planning of a journey and during the journey.**
- **Teamwork is not only fun but also the best way to be effective.**
- **Providing ways to engage newer members in hosting and other club activities is important for their forming of club friendships and their engagement in FFO. Partner newer members with more experienced members where practical.**
- **Ask questions and ask for help. Not only do members receive information in this way but also they develop friendships within the club.**
- **Ongoing education and training for hosts and the planning committee is vital.**
- **It's important to be flexible. Each journey has its own unique character and flavour and each ambassador is an individual.**
- **Guidelines and suggestions are just that, not rigid rules.**

Part II Hosting Issues and Suggestions Chart

Our working group has identified a number of issues and barriers to participation that members may be experiencing with regard to hosting, planning committee or other participation in an inbound journey. We have provided suggestions to increase host engagement, participation and enjoyment in these vital FFO activities.

We have organized the barriers and suggestions into four categories:

1. Program and Organization
2. Effort and Costs
3. Awareness of Roles (Communication and Training)
4. Physical & Language Capabilities of Ambassadors

1. Program and Organization	Suggestions to Increase Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High work load for some (especially night hosts) including hosting during the day and long days with full programs. • Sometimes hosting information is late or incomplete • Sometimes those who have offered to host don't hear from the journey coordinator and "drift away" making other plans. • Not always a balance of enough/too many activities. • Sometimes there are surprises with program activities (e.g. longer, or more rigorous than expected). • Incidental program suggestions: • Sign-ups are very early since there are only 4 GMs /year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have day hosts as needed; • Combine as a team and have them work together earlier: day hosts, night hosts, dinner hosts who live nearby for hosting during the day; • Planning committee attempt to get ambassador information in good time and communicate it. • Organize sooner rather than later. Journey coordinators need to maintain contact with people who have signed up to help with a journey. • Provide flex time; combine 2 night hosts &/or 2 day hosts to share the long day. • Research new activities thoroughly, and request modifications in light of physical limitations – (e.g. shorter or easier) • Flexibility is key. Day coordinators, feel free to ask for modifications on the spot • Provide unscheduled time for ambassadors to better get to know each other – plan them in. e.g. bus seating, walking journals, mixers (so couples are split up), appropriate quiet venues, link with community organizations and activities. • Implement training for Planning Committees. • The FFO Toolbox is a valuable resource for training http://www.friendshipforceottawa.ca/ffowebiste_014.htm • Use personal telephone calls plus sign-ups

2. Effort and Costs	Suggestions to Increase Participation
<p><u>Planning Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time commitment to lengthy meetings of large planning committee. (Many planning committees now have an experienced FFO member mentor a new member, and the two work as a team.) • Meeting costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep full meetings at high level. Have separate mini-meetings for detailed team discussions; use email for some matters; • Implement Training for Planning Committee • Include in ambassador budget; • If necessary, meet in restaurant meeting rooms or venues such as Sobeys and Loblaws
<p><u>Night Hosts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of providing food and meals (sometimes 4 dinners), perhaps especially challenging for singles • Costs of transportation, parking, entry fees, farewell and welcome events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as a team with other night hosts to combine for potluck dinners (perhaps use a condo party room); • FFO members not hosting, drop off a casserole or salad; two FFO members prepare and host a meal; non FFO friends help with entertaining and meal preparation; discuss strategies for meal preparation at the hosting meeting • Reduce event costs by varying welcome and farewell experiences such as outdoor breakfasts, barbecues, picnics and such venues as Gatineau Park cabins • Incorporate entry costs and parking fees into the incoming journey budget; consider compensating Hosts with a flat compensation per person/host to help mitigate expense.
<p><u>Day Hosts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of days required • Lengthy days • Day hosts don't always feel part of the team • Cost of parking, entry fees, event costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage day hosts to give two or three full day equivalents; encourage members still in the work force to volunteer one weekend day or an evening; where possible combine with another day host (especially when there are single ambassadors); assign a second day host if needed • Day hosts work as a team with night hosts and other day hosts to divide up a long day. • Night hosts invite Day hosts to arrive early for coffee or breakfast; include them in potlucks where possible and friendship dinners. • As above for night hosts
<p><u>Dinner Hosts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner hosts don't always feel part of the team • Dinner hosts often have unrealistic expectations to provide a gourmet dinner(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include dinner hosts up front– engage as part of the planning. • Include briefings for dinner hosts. Keep it simple, family style, nothing elaborate or costly.

3. Awareness of Roles	Suggestions to Increase Host Participation (Communication & Training)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • night, day and dinner hosts, planning committee members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade training on hosting roles for (a) new member briefings (b) general meetings, (c) exchange reports • For each inbound journey at the first hosting organization meeting, briefly explain the roles of the hosts • Clarify the club emphasis: the cultural (broad meaning) side as well as the new friends aspect—and the individual characteristics of the journey • At a general meeting have an update presentation re: the roles of hosts, participation expectations and ‘Everyone’s a Host’ theme. • At the initial planning committee meeting, clarify the roles of the committee members & provide training: coordinator(s), treasurer, hosting leader, JC/ED (for first time folks and as a refresher/update for experienced ones. • At the sign-up tables encourage the hosting roles to those who sign up. • Encourage hosts to access the FFO website.
4. Physical & Language Capabilities of Ambassadors	Suggestions to Increase Host Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes ambassadors do not disclose their level of physical ability, and special unexpected adaptations are required. • Ambassadors are expected to participate in all the program activities, but some want to skip a program activity • Ambassadors may not disclose dietary constraints (don’t want to trouble hosts) • Language differences may cause ambassador isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FFI/FFO Strength and Mobility form is completed by each ambassador and verified by the incoming journey leader. FFI indicates there is a new ‘sliding scale’ on its website, although it is not available at time of writing this. Keep in mind for future. • Adapt the forms and ask questions relevant to the program activities agreed on by the two journey coordinators. • FFI site provides a sliding scale for indicating mobility. Link: • Plan options if appropriate. • Journey coordinators agree to individual adaptations and the individual night host should be able to manage any special needs. • Encourage full participation; be flexible as needed • Communication between night host and ambassador explore further; information to dinner hosts • Have two ambassadors at friendship dinners and activities; • include translators and community members who speak the ambassador’s language; use translation software on phones and tablets

Part III “Blue Sky Brainstorming” Ideas for Consideration

1. Hosting Teams

Hosting Teams, created for each inbound journey, coordinate and provide hosting services.

- If possible, in general geographic areas (e.g. east end, west end, central, south).
- Hosting Team provides hosting for more than 1 ambassador units (whether single or couple).
- Each team has a “Hosting Team Lead” (plus “novice” partner), both of whom sit on the exchange planning committee.
- After the Program and Ambassador Matching have been roughly established (starting earlier – even before actual ‘bed’ requirements are known), teams begin to meet and plan – in living room Mini-Meetings. This provides a social opportunity for newer and less active members to form friendships within the club.
- 3 or 4 teams could provide hosting for the exchange as follows:
 - a. Each team would coordinate for 5 or 6 inbound ambassadors.
 - b. Each team (signed up in the usual way) might be comprised of: Team Lead, 3 or 4 night hosts, 3 or 4 day hosts, 3 or 4 Friendship dinner hosts, and 3 or 4 pot luck team.
 - c. Teams are encouraged to reach out to others to ask for participation: e.g. new members, less active members and interest groups (e.g. Solo Group, Dinner Group, Bridge Group). (again, this engages more club and possibly others, earlier)
 - d. Hosting ‘jobs’ can be mixed and mingled (e.g. a dinner host might also day host on a different day. Or a day host might also prepare food for a pot luck another day.) They work together as a Team.
- Benefits:
 - a. engages more members and possibly community outreach;
 - b. provides social and friendship opportunities;
 - c. encourages more participation on multiple tasks;
 - d. enables people (especially singles) with limited home hosting facilities to participate
 - e. gives hosts a ‘network’ to ask for help and mitigate their costs;
 - f. only the ‘Team Lead’ & ‘TL2’ (newer assistant) need attend Journey Planning Meetings.

2. Pot Luck Dinners

Working within the Hosting Team framework (above), by organizing pot luck dinners, make it easier to access more members for help or to volunteer. Ideas include:

- Could be ‘bring a dish and stay’ to share, or
- ‘Meals on wheels’ type contributions: drop off a casserole, dessert and/or salad.
- Include a plan for ‘Clean Up’ to assist host.
- Hosting team should feel free to ask interest groups within the club to contribute or participate.
- Friendship Dinner could also be run this way. (Question: do we need to do both?)
- Benefits: engages more members in inbound journeys; ideally provides opportunities for those who no longer travel to stay more active in exchanges; gives hosts a ‘network’ to ask for help and mitigates their costs.

3. CLUB Friendships First = Always Be Friending (ABF)!

- Suggested strategy: We are ALL ambassadors – FIRST to new club members, to Inbound Ambassadors, to outbound new friends, all the while enjoying lasting friendships at home.
- Consider “mixing” opportunities at GMs.
- New Members’ Onboarding:
 - Continue with coaching sessions, mentoring, welcome evening by Board,
 - Suggest: new workshop: ‘Participating in Inbound Journeys’ (What it means to be an FFO member, how to participate / get involved & ‘what’s in it for you’ (WIIFU).
- Facebook. Increase comfort and participation. Hold ‘how to’ workshops, perhaps part of a GM – perhaps a presentation with breakouts - partner to help each other (ideally current FB user with non). Cover basic steps: ‘friend’, ‘like’ FFO FB page, privacy settings, etc. Possible uses: e.g. :
 - Hosting Committees form ‘secret’ group to communicate and update each other.
 - Hosting Committees form ‘private’ group and invite ambassadors to join. Can be disbanded after the event, but the friendships remain. Some clubs are doing this.
 - Club can form a private group for posting activities and communicating updates, new strategies and pilots, messages can be sent using private messenger.
- Benefits.
 - More collaboration, fun, participation, communication, engagement and friendships in FFO-at-home and abroad.

4. Change Management (Training and Communication)

- ED / JC Briefings and Updates.
 - Continue this practice and use the opportunity for JCs (new and seasoned) to learn about new club strategies, resources, web updates, approaches and activities recently tried (e.g. the value in having a ‘new-ish’ member as back-up to seasoned, in planning).
- Communication. Essential. To reach more and raise more awareness of exchange participation – use multiple communications strategies for each Inbound Journey’s participants, e.g.
 - Traditional: GM sign-ups, blast email from Pres to list, Capcon
 - Facebook: see above
 - EDs can ‘pitch’ their inbound at GMs & in other communications (e.g. Facebook). Include ‘What’s In It For You’ (WIIFU) e.g. fun, club friendships, new club friendships, connections, opportunity to participate in new activities,
 - NB new concept: Hosting Team / Pod is here to help hosts & ease the load
- Reporting to GMs. Include metrics, e.g. # of club participants, # hosting teams, # pot lucks facilitated, # new members (up to 2 years) participating. Also include: new venues, fun, challenges and issues, what to do more of/less of. Requires more speaking time for Journey Directors. Share slide deck of Journey Director and feedback to Board.
- Benefits. More fun and engagement for ALL members, better awareness and acceptance of new strategies, club expectations, opportunities to participate in inbound exchanges and other activities.