

# Specialized Units Booklet

## Table of Contents

SUs: An Introduction	3
Glossary of Terms	4
Why Are We Implementing SUs?	5
Piloted Cases	6
SU Structure	7
Implementation	10
FAQs	13
Tips	16

## **Specialized Units: An Introduction**

The concept of Specialized Units was introduced to the network in IC Russia 2012. It then passed through a piloting process until IPM Serbia 2013. The purpose of this booklet is to guide you through the realizations we had from the piloting process and to help you start your own SUs in your entity. It contains good case practices and advice from AIESEC International, based on the entities that piloted SUs for this period and from entities that had similar concepts implemented previously. This booklet shouldn't limit you in your operations but its purpose is just to give you some ideas that can support with your implementation.

The concept of SUs was planned from 2010 as a component that would contribute to the achievement and success of 2015. Therefore, the goals for 2014 have a higher percentage growth than the other years as it considers that SUs will begin operating in 2013.

This booklet is for MCs who want to implement the concept of SUs in their entities. It is also useful for LC EBs who are leading SUs.

Please note that this booklet contains suggestions that should be adapted according to regional/national and market reality.

## Glossary of Terms

**Expansion** is extending your operations in a new area that does not have AIESEC operations. It could be a country/territory or a new LC or new SU.

**Specialized Unit** is an extended unit to an LC/MC that helps the LC/MC function in a new educational institute or a new city.

- A specialized unit is led by a separate team that reports to the mother LC or to the MC.
- An SU can run 1 or 2 exchange functions (OGCDP, IGCDP, IGIP or OGIP).
- An SU can become an LC in the future (can be used as a simplified framework to start LC expansions).

P.S. If an LC/MC expands only their Exchange Program in another city/educational institution without having a permanent team, then it is not a specialized unit.

**SUP** is the Specialized Unit President, or the person who will lead the SU; whether alone or with a team.

**SUVP** is the Specialized Unit Vice President

**Expansion Manager** is a term used to describe the person that will himself start a new expansion whether an LC or a country/ territory or an SU.

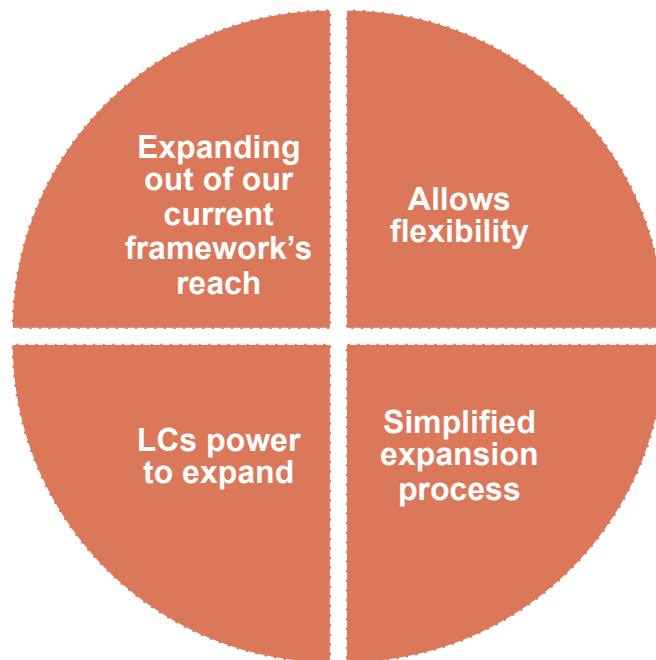
**LCVP SUD** is the Local Committee Vice President for Specialized Units Development, and is responsible for putting systems in place for the knowledge management of the SUs, for bringing LC good case practices to the SUs, and for tracking. The LCVP SUD should:

- Facilitate coordination between functional VPs and the SU;
- Think about long-term growth and development of the SU;
- Be knowledgeable about all functions in the SU;
- Personalize coaching to the SU according to market and entity reality.

**SUC** is the Specialized Unit Coach, an experienced member or a recent alumnus from the LC or a current TL that has capacity. This person coaches the SU on daily basis in all the operational knowledge. It is advised that an SU Coach be responsible for only 1 SU.

## Why Are We Implementing SUs?

The main purpose of SUs is to offer more experiences to people who do not have access to the AIESEC experience by adopting a more flexible framework. SUs should be used as a programme strategy to help grow the programme you are focusing on as an entity. You should start SUs in your entity when you feel that this framework will help you reach potential markets that you couldn't reach previously and that will support the growth of your focus programme.



### **1. Expanding out of our current framework's reach:**

SUs help us expand to areas that are currently unable to have LCs. Examples include cities with a large university but no companies or NGOs for the ICX market, or cities with enough LCs to cover the ICX market but not enough LCs for all the universities' OGX market or vice versa. This is given that those universities have good potential for OGX or those cities have market potential for ICX.

### **2. Allows flexibility:**

Since SUs do not have to adopt LC structure, their operations and structures are customizable according to the needs and realities of their external markets. Also, it allows the entity to focus more on their focus programme.

### **3. LCs power to expand:**

Instead of MCs leading all expansions in the country/territory, the LCs can take responsibility and lead expansions by starting an SU.

#### **4. Simplified framework for new expansion LCs or MCs:**

If a new LC or MC expansion is initiated by non-experienced AIESECers, a more function-specific focus would allow for an easier transition of knowledge and higher rate of efficiency and performance. The entity can start with 1 or 2 exchange functions then continue towards a full member LC/MC doing all exchange programs.

### **Piloted Cases**

These cases exemplify the implementation of SUs in different realities and/or markets.

#### **Case 1: Indonesia – ‘OGX potential only’**

Indonesia is a tier 1 entity that is currently using the SU framework to expand into more universities in Jakarta and more cities in general. Indonesia has a small number of big and highly efficient LCs. They want to use this same efficiency to expand to more places where they can impact people they were previously unable to reach as they only have OGX potential. All SUs in Indonesia are currently focusing on OGCDP and some are planning to incorporate IGCDP in future operations.

#### **Case 2: Slovenia – ‘Non-performing LCs’**

Slovenia is a tier 3 entity that had underperforming LCs because they did not have the potential to operate in all programs, yet they were diverging their focus to bring results in all programs.

Slovenia converted two LCs to SUs to become more focused. Another SU was also initiated in another small city, which addresses the specific needs of the market. Both SUs are focused on OGIP and IGCDP.

#### **Case 3: Honduras – ‘New country/territory expansion’**

Students in Honduras wanted to open an AIESEC entity and AIESEC Nicaragua extended their support. They followed the “country/territory expansion process”, but instead of starting with all programs, they started only with OGCDP to test the market and allow for easier transitioning for the students of Honduras who are not experienced AIESECers. The future step for them is to become a full member entity performing in all programs. Currently they are a country expansion using an SU framework.

**Case 4: Egypt – ‘New LCs expansion’**

Egypt wanted to expand in six new LCs outside of Cairo and had to recruit inexperienced AIESECers to initiate the expansions due to a lack of AIESECers inhabiting those cities. By adopting the SU framework and focusing on OGCDP and IGCDP, expansion managers of those LCs could be more easily transitioned while at the same time performing in specific functional areas. These expansion LCs will be performing in all programs by next year. Starting those LCs with an SU framework allowed for fast growth and performance in the initial stages of expansion.

**Successful Results:**

2 of those SUs achieved full member LC status in 9 months.

SU-Damietta: realized 17 IGCDP, Matched 29 & Raised 41 TNs.

SU-Mansoura: realized 17 OGCDP, Matched 20 & Raised 25 EPs.

AIESEC in Egypt has a very strong MC structure supporting SUs in coaching, research and communications.

**Case 5: Egypt – ‘City too big with LCs covering ICX market’**

Currently, Cairo has five LCs which are sufficient to cover the GIP and IGCDP markets, but there is still much potential for the OGCDP market. Egypt therefore decided to start OGCDP SUs in the capital in order to reach more universities.

**A GCP from Ethiopia – ‘From SU to LC: LC EIABC’**

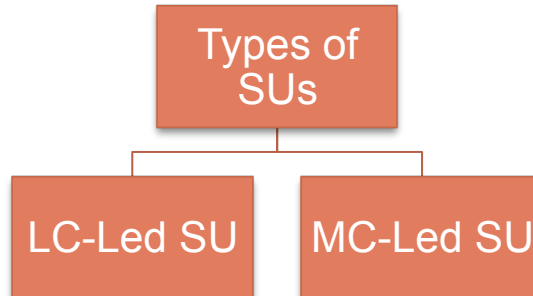
This SU started by focusing only in OGX and they matched 20 EPs in the first 6 months. Then they expanded to become a full member LC. Next step is focusing on GCDP-ICX.

**A GCP from Russia – ‘IT SU’**

AIESEC in Russia started SUs focusing on OGIP-IT (web programming sub product). One of the SUs managed to raise 9 IT EPs & 1 Match in 1 month.

## Types of SUs

An SU can function under either an LC-Led structure or an MC-Led structure.



**An LC-Led SU** is an SU that is functioning under a mother LC and reporting to that LC. This should be the case when the SU's operations are smaller than the operations of the LC. This is usually how most SUs start.

**An MC-Led SU** is an SU that is reporting immediately to the MC as an independent entity (like an LC). This should be the case when the LC-Led SU starts growing in operations and becomes bigger than its mother LC. This makes it easier for the SU to receive information directly from the MC and help them to grow their capacity and have more rights in the national plenary. It could also be the case because the LCs in the entity are not mature enough to lead an SU themselves or just because the MC wants to start operations in specific universities themselves.

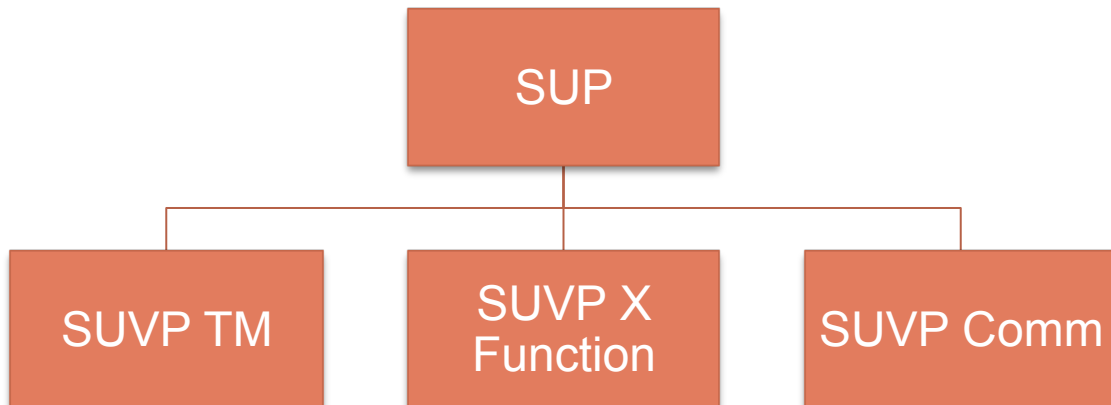
**LC expansion using SU framework:** An LC expansion that is starting with only one or two exchange functions could be an LC expansion starting with SUs as a framework or could be an SU that will later on become an LC.



## Development of SU Structures

### Scenario 1:

If experienced AIESECers (with past leadership experiences) are initiating the SU then you can start with a full structure like the one suggested below.



### Scenario 2:

If the people starting the SU are current members or returning EPs then it is suggested that you start with simple structures and develop it gradually.

1. Send one person there to test the market, start university relations, and try to recruit the first batch of EPs. This person can be assigned as the SUP.
2. If this person discovers that there is high potential in this university/market, then he/she can immediately recruit Team Leaders to support with operations. For example, every TL will be responsible to raise EPs for a specific region or sub-product.
3. When EPs reintegrate, and if operations are still minimal, returning EPs can work under the current Team Leaders. If operations are developed and yielding result and there are many returnees, operations can diversify into more functions to support the growth of the SU (e.g. SUVP TM, Comm, ER, university relations, etc.).
4. When the SU becomes bigger than the mother LC or wants to start another exchange function, then the SU can apply for the national plenary to become an MC-Led SU.



In Scenario 2, the supporting functions of the LC could support the core function of the SU in the initial stages. For example, the marketing team of the mother LC will create promotional materials for the SU OGIP function. The supporting teams in the LC can incorporate members from the SU to better understand the SU reality.

## Implementation

### **‘SUs for IT’ Project**

‘SUs for IT’ is a project led by AIESEC International with specific entities. The main focus of the project is to raise GIP IT EPs from universities that have high potential for IT students to be realized with internships abroad. This is an example of an SU initiated for a specific sub-product and a specific need in the market to grow a specific programme. Since there is a high demand for IT EPs in the network, some SU teams are building a rapport with the university IT department and only promoting IT TNs in the network and the TMP/TLP programs.

#### **Example of research before starting an SU:**

On AI when we wanted to start the “SUs for IT” project where we wanted to work with universities that has potential to send IT EPs to the network we chose the entities to work with based on those indicators:

- Unemployment with tertiary education
- Unemployment, total
- GDP growth
- GDP per capita, PPP
- Labor force with tertiary education
- Enrollment, tertiary education
- Ease of getting out (diplomatic relations)

Universities were chosen according to amount of IT students, university ranking (mid- to mid-lower ranked unis), and overall growth potential. And accordingly we chose the universities to work with.

- **GCP from that project:** Russia managed to raise 9 IT EPs in web programming from the SU TSPU in one month.

## MC steps to start an SU:

1. Start SUs based on your national focus programs. It should be a program-based strategy (e.g. if OGIP IT is your focus then start SUs that would grow that market).
2. Do a detailed research of all the universities in your country/territory.
3. Ensure that all your top universities have AIESEC operations whether as LCs or SUs as long as they are supporting the growth of your focus programme. Only expand in universities or cities that have market potential to be successful after your research and don't expand just for the sake of expansions. (e.g. Expand to all your top IT universities)
4. It's preferable to define from the beginning which universities should have LCs (with SU frameworks) and which universities should have SUs permanently so that the expectations are set from the beginning with the SU EBs whether they are expected to grow into an LC or not. The reason for that is so SUs that currently don't have potential for other programmes don't waste resources by diverging their focus on different programmes. E.g. In Egypt it was decided from the beginning that SUs starting in Cairo will stay as SUs because the ICX market is covered by the existing LCs for now and that universities outside of Cairo will start as LC expansions with an SU framework because they have potential in all programmes.
5. If the external reality changes and an SU wants to become an LC, the SU needs to apply for LC status and be approved by the national plenary.
6. Ensure that LCs that are starting SUs are already large LCs and have extra resources to capitalize on starting SUs (they should not be struggling LCs). The LC's main focus should still be the main campus.
7. Make sure that every LC or SU have less than 150 members so as to become more efficient in each operational unit and so that members have a higher quality experience (look up Dunbar's number theory).
8. Start recruiting your SU leaders and follow the structure-related advice in this document.

## How do I start an SU in my entity?

### 1. SU to LC Reporting

The reporting depends on the reality of your country/territory and the operational capacity you have. Below are some suggested options:

- a. Have the SUP report to the LCVP of the exchange function (e.g. LCVP OGIP). This is the best scenario but it is only applicable if the LCVP of that function has the capacity to handle the LC's operations while also leading the SUP. That LCVP will be leading his/her own Team Leaders and also leading the SUP/s.

The international platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential

**Advantage:** The LCVP already has functional knowledge and is directly connected to the MCVP OGIP.

**Challenge:** The LCVP does not have knowledge in other supporting functions.

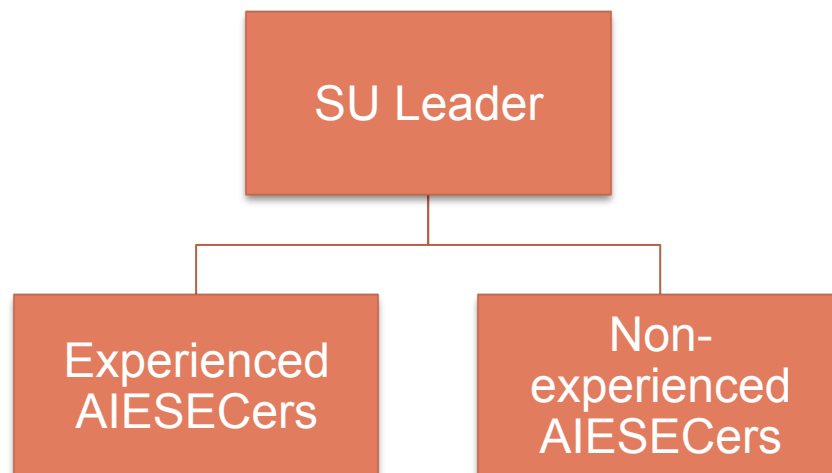
- b. Have an LCVP SUD responsible for tracking different SUs under the LC (maximum 3 SUs).

**Advantage:** This person can focus on SU development, and will have knowledge about other functions.

**Challenge:** This person will not be an expert in the exchange function and might be a bottleneck for communication.

- c. The SUP can report to the SU Coach if the SU is initiated in the middle of the LC EB term and the LC EB does not have the capacity. Ensure that this SU Coach is getting the right knowledge and information.

## 2. SU Leadership



**Experienced AIESECers:** This usually happens when you have members in LCs who are originally from other universities or cities that were not previously AIESEC entities. Capitalize on these members to initiate an SU in their own campus/city. This option is preferred over non-experienced AIESEC initiators.

**Non-experienced AIESECers:** This is usually needed when starting in cities where AIESEC does not exist (tested in Indonesia, Honduras, and Egypt). Make sure that SU leaders go on exchange first or do a CEEDership in one of the LCs before they initiate the SU.

**Challenges:**

- a. Non-experienced AIESECers lack operational and strategic AIESEC knowledge.
- b. Non-experienced AIESECers need to be integrated into the AIESEC culture to be able to implement it in their new entities.
- c. Non-experienced AIESECers can easily lose the drive to work in AIESEC because they are new and working in a leadership position under pressure that requires a lot of time and patience.

**Some suggested solutions:**

- a. Create campaigns to encourage non-experienced AIESECers to stay and commit to AIESEC (e.g. the top SU in the peak will be granted subsidy for national conferences or XPROs).
- b. When starting a term for the first time with non-experienced AIESECers, set the roles for a six-month contract and change the SU leadership body bi-annually. This can keep TLs committed and engaged for a shorter period of time. Eventually the term can be extended to one year.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**1. How do I overcome communication challenges?**

It's very easy for SUs to have communication challenges (especially LC-Led SUs) because information flows from the MC to the LC, then to the SUs. After some research we realized that we need to ensure the strength of the communication line between the LC and the SU. Some suggested solutions are listed below.

**Suggested Solutions:**

- a. Define constant and approachable channels for communication between the SU EB and MC/LC coaching them.
- b. Have an SU Coach from the LC for every SU in the initial stages. This person could be an experienced member/Team Leader/LCVP or a recent alumnus who is responsible to be with the SU EB team step by step, helping them with planning and implementation. The SU Coach should be working very closely with them and on daily basis in the initial stages. The SU Coach should be a temporary position of six months to approximately one year.
- c. Host an SU Summit right after the SU EB selection. This summit is for all SU coaches and SUPs (maybe also SUVPs). The purpose of the summit is to make sure the SU team is aware of the 'Why' of AIESEC and why SUs are needed in the entity, as well as to set a timeline for the peak with all the SU leaders (since the SU team will have limited knowledge to set

The international platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential (timelines themselves). Moreover, in this summit you can give more information about AIESEC activities, goals, and culture and introduce the team to the operational and strategic knowledge they will need to drive their SU. Overall, the summit is to deliver knowledge, create a plan, and ensure commitment.

- d. Make sure SU EBs and members attend all national and local conferences (if applicable).
- e. Make sure SU EBs attend LC meetings at least once per month to understand AIESEC's impact and to live the culture and meet interns (in case the SU is only OGX).
- f. LCVP SUD should be aware of the different realities of the SUs that he/she is leading.
- g. An LC should not lead more than 3 SUs. Leading more than 3 SUs will put the LCVP SUD in the LC under too much pressure and will inhibit effective communication with SUs.
- h. The SUP needs to have leadership experience so that he/she knows how to lead an entity towards growth.
- i. The SU EB needs to have clarity of why they are doing AIESEC.
- j. SU EBs and members need to have a clear understanding of their roles and of the reporting system to know who should be communicating with them, what events they can or cannot attend, etc.
- k. Have the LCP as the SUP leadership coach, similar to how MCPs lead LCPs.
- l. Have specific tracks for SU EBs in conferences.
- m. Have MC Managers ensuring communication to the SUs, with JDs for those managers dependent on the reality. They could be divided by geography, by function, or by types of SUs (e.g. an MC Manager for SUs that only have an SUP, an MC Manager for SUs that have full structures, etc.). MC Managers can be responsible for the summits, conferences and ensure the information flow, planning, and implementation in all SUs (through structured educational cycles for SUs).
- n. Depending on LC reality, LCVPs can also each coach a different SU if there is a lack of capable SU coaches.

## 2. How can I reach non-AIESECers?

- a. Release a national campaign all over the country specifically in cities and universities you want to start SUs in. A good case practice is AIESEC Indonesia's "The Start Up Program", which was successful in attracting young leaders around the country that wanted to expand.
- b. It is advised to have this team around 4 months before the peak.

See *Indonesia's GCP here for SU implementation*:  
<http://www.myaiesec.net/content/viewwiki.do?contentid=10236290>

### 3. What is the best way to recruit members in my SUs?

- a. Promote on the idea that these members will be pioneers and the first people ever to take part in starting this branch of the global organization.
- b. If one of the functions of your SU is OGIP or OGCDP, capitalize on re-integrating your EPs to be your first members in the organization. Returnees have the commitment, drive, and knowledge about the program and they are examples who can showcase their experience to for future EPs.

### 4. What kind of financial model should SUs follow?

SUs are a successful framework because they use a simple structure. It is therefore best to strive for simplicity in everything when first developing an SU. Do not have a VP Finance, but instead have the finances managed by the SUP or one of the SUVPs.

An MC-Led SU follows the same financial model as the LCs in the respective country/territory and is not financially connected to any other LC.

An LC-Led SU might not be an independent financial entity (if the mother LC assumes this responsibility). In this case, the mother LC should create the SU budget, managed by the SUP on an application basis submitted to the mother LC.

### 5. What do I need to consider if I want to start an LC expansion through an SU framework?

Expand into new LCs but only start with one or two exchange functions before taking on all exchange functions (see Case 4 – Egypt on page 6).

Benefits: This ensures a focused approach to drive the main programs as well as effective capacity development and resource management. This also ensures that non-experienced AIESECers as expansion leaders do not feel overwhelmed or confused and eventually fail to drive results.

#### Things to Consider:

1. Check your compendium and legislate a process that would integrate the concept of SUs and LC expansions together.
2. Ensure that entity members understand the difference between LC expansions that are starting through an SU framework and other SUs that cannot become LCs (due to a lack of potential in the market for other programs or because existing LCs are already covering those markets).

## 6. How can I make sure that the concept of SUs is positioned properly in my country/territory?

Avoid having people misunderstand or mistreat the concept of SUs, as this can lead to a decrease in membership interest to be part of it. Be very clear and set expectations from the beginning with all SU EBs to maximize the entity pipeline for future leadership positions. Things to consider when positioning SU EBs in the entity:

- a. Create a track for SU EBs in conferences if needed or just ensure that they know where exactly they need to attend and that the content is relevant for them.
- b. Make sure SUs pay affiliation fees to the MC or LC (if they have a separate budget).
- c. Grant SUs voting rights in the local and national plenary (e.g. the mother LC EB has 3 votes and the SU EB has 1 vote).
- d. Encourage SUIPs to apply for MCVPs (since they might be driving an operational capacity that is bigger than that driven in an LC).
- e. SUIPs are a very good pipeline for LCVP SUD because they have experienced the perspective of being led by that person and they understand what kind of challenges they will potentially face.
- f. Ensure that the SU EB understands their respective roles in different situations in the LC or the national plenary (e.g. which track they need to attend, how they are going to vote, etc.).
- g. Make sure that the differences & similarities between SUIPs and LCVPs are clear in your entity.

### Useful Tips

1. SUs wanting to become LCs when they can't:
  - Position the SU concept clearly with defined expectations, measures of success, and direction aligned with the reality of the market.
  - Nationally, everyone should be clear which universities should become LCs and which ones shouldn't for the time being because of their market potential. This could be done according to research done by the MC.
  - Ensure that SUs are legislated by the national plenary in case they want to become full member LCs. This guarantees that the mother LC doesn't enforce a permanent status on an LC-Led SU, or create an LC without the agreement of the national plenary.
2. University Relations:
  - It is important to build a good relationship with respective universities from the beginning as this would boost SU growth.
  - The university does not know the difference between an LC or an SU. Do not overcomplicate but make sure they understand that you want to open a branch there.
  - Make sure to have students from the university with you in all meetings with the university to demonstrate student engagement



The international platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential (or have the students exclusively approach the university management).

3. In some universities, it may be more appropriate to sell AIESEC as a leadership organization instead of an exchange organization in the case that AIESEC is a strong competitor with the university exchange or internship department.
4. Customer Experience Management: It is crucial to provide high quality experiences in all the exchange programs and in TMP/TLP to position AIESEC credibly in the university/city.
5. SU stages:
  - a. Create criteria for opening an SU in the entity to avoid expanding to areas with no market potential or that have LCs in closer proximity to the SU than the LC expanding (e.g. LCs should submit a researched report before applying to start an SU).
6. Create and define a concrete timeline with the plans and goals of the SU teams.
7. Ensure that there is a final responsible for every SU (e.g. the SUP).

Have a nice time expanding 😊