

# Guidelines for Starting A New FOYM Chapter

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This document outlines some suggestions for starting a chapter of FOYM in the US.

*Disclaimer: The contents of this document are accurate to the best knowledge of the authors.  
All facts must be verified using an independent source.*

## Welcome to FOYM

If you are reading this, you are probably interested in starting a new chapter of FOYM in your area. We appreciate and welcome your interest in FOYM and would like to make it easy for you to be able to start a new chapter.

First, please make sure you are in contact with one of the core members of FOYM-Rice University. You can contact us from the FOYM web-site at <http://www.foym.org/>. There are certain minimum requirements that a new chapter needs to satisfy before it can be designated as an FOYM chapter: The most up to date requirements are available on the FOYM web-site.

Be sure to identify the goals of the group and then think about activities that will help achieve those goals. One of the main activities of FOYM-Rice has been a computer drive: we have been sending second hand computers from the US for the use of underprivileged children in schools in various parts of India.

We present some tips on how to start a similar computer drive in your organization.

## Things to do in the US

### Identify Volunteers

There are many possible working models that can be effective. The model that has worked for FOYM-Rice so far has been to identify two sets of volunteers—a core group and a support group. The core group members are the ones who are regularly involved in the FOYM activities and the support group members can be called upon from time to time to provide assistance on specific issues.

### Storage and Packing

It is ideal to have a large storage space where the computers can be tested, packed and stored till they are moved to the shipping agent. If there is not enough storage space, one option is to test and pack the computers a few at a time and then move them to some rental storage place. Alternately, one could also request the shipping agent to provide storage space (free of cost or at nominal rates) for a few months.

If there is a large number of computers and enough storage space, then the suggested way to pack the computers is to stack them on a pallet. In case the physical characteristics of the various components to be packed vary widely then one could potentially use bubble wrap / Styrofoam and put them in good boxes.

### Shipping Resources

The shipping rates are usually around \$1200 from Houston to Mumbai for a 20 ft container. Rates from and to other cities vary a little. It is good to negotiate for a few things before the

shipment. Request for more time for clearing the shipment at the receiving end (usually, the shippers would easily give 2-3 weeks of time).

## **Possible sources for computers**

There are many potential sources for computers and some of them are listed below.

1. Donations from individuals and small businesses: It is important to have good publicity to be able to target a large audience. Once this mechanism is reasonable well established in the local region, it can be a good constant source for a small number machines. This also requires some volunteer effort in terms of coordinating the whole collection, testing and packing mechanism. Good sources of advertising the organization or the particular drive are at Indian gatherings, restaurants, movie theaters, local university groups or local Indian associations.
2. Corporate donations: If a good working relationship can be established with a big corporation for regular donation / cheap sale of used computers that can be ideal. One of the problems with this approach for small NGOs is that it requires a lot of resources (both money and people) to successfully handle the possibly large scale operation.
3. Auction (Green sheet) mechanisms in schools and offices: One has to be wary of the condition of the computers purchased. This could potentially provide a huge source of machines, at throw away prices, on a periodic basis.
4. Purchasing second hand machines through dealers: Again one should make sure that most of the computers are in working condition. Also, try to get the computers in a reasonably well packed form. Usually, newsgroups can be a good source for buying reasonably priced machines both from individuals and from dealers.

## **Possible Funding Directions**

1. University student funds: Some universities have seed monies for startup student organizations.
2. City wide funds: Many cities have grants available for non-profit service based organizations. However, one should make sure if the city expects some benefits for its own community.
3. Individual donations.
4. Grants from corporations or NGOs: Many organizations like Asha / AID have a mechanism for funding proposals from other groups for specific purposes.

It is suggested that the monetary donation request be targeted towards a specific activity (like shipping cost / packing costs) rather than towards a general working fund. We feel this helps maintain the focus on the actual computer drive.

# Things to do in India

## Potential Recipients

It is important to identify the potential recipients of the computers much before the actual shipment. If possible, the contents of the shipment should be tailored to meet the requirements of the recipient school / organization. For example, if there is a lot of specialized software / educational CDs then a CD drive and suitable applications should be available / installable on all the machines.

## Customs

There is a customs duty waiver only if the computers are shipped to,

1. government schools,
2. government aided schools, or
3. schools run by nonprofit organizations.

The computers can be sent to these schools via a non-profit organization. However, it is believed to be easier to clear the customs if the machines are directly addressed to the various schools rather than through a NGO. One could add a clause saying the machines are sent through the NGO but the letter has to make it clear that the NGO is just a facilitator. A copy of the customs waiver notification is available on the FOYM web-site.

## License

The receiving party needs to have an SIL—Special Import License. This is a *one time* license for importing goods. It is issued by JDGFT—the Joint Directorate General for Foreign trade, New Delhi. Apparently, this is not a requirement anymore because some people have convinced the customs office that this activity should not be seen in the same light as commercial importing. So, in principle, any government school(s) recognized by the education department can import computers with some registered NGOs forming the bridging link. However, it is suggested that the receiving party clarifies this issue with the relevant officials ahead of time.

## Redistributing the Computers

If sending to more than one school but fewer than, say, 5-6 schools, one could address all the computers to one school. That school's principal can sign for everything and, after getting it cleared from customs, redistribute the computers to the other schools after getting appropriate signatures from their respective principals.

## Bill of Lading

The bill of lading should be sent as soon as it is feasible. If possible, even before the ship leaves the port of departure in the US. With the bill of lading (and a few other documents mentioned below) the recipient organization should take it to the education department and get it cleared—meaning, they need to get a letter from the education department to the effect that those computers would indeed be received by the recipient school(s) from the donor organization. This letter will be very helpful in clearing the computers through the customs. The recipient group needs to identify a clearing / forwarding agent and work with them on this.

## Certificate of Origin

A certificate of origin must be sent. This document has to be prepared by some other group than the group which is actually shipping the machines. It could be some shipping agent / NGO in the same city.

## Invoice

A complete and accurate invoice of the items sent in the shipment must be sent to the receiving party and the invoice should have a serial number. The organization that sends the shipment could use an internal serial number to identify that particular shipment.

## Container Booking

While booking the container one should ask the shipper for ‘14 free days’—this means the shipping company will allow use of the container for 14 days after reaching the Indian port. Otherwise, one has to pay for the time it awaits customs clearance. This is best done before booking the container as the shipping agency is more likely to comply with requests to get the business. Of course, more than 14 free days are always welcome.

## Demurrage

If it is going to take some time for the recipient to get the paper work in order and clear the shipment, then, two steps can be taken to minimize the demurrage and other charges.

1. The recipient should move the computers to a warehouse and store them there. The customs department will still have a seal on the machines, but, paying rental charges to a warehouse is, usually, much cheaper than paying the demurrage to the port.
2. If it will take more than 14 days (which is the time one would have the container for free, assuming this had been negotiated with the shipper), then the recipient should get the computers *bonded*—meaning, the computers should be stored directly in the warehouse rather than occupying, and paying for, the container.

## **Evaluation**

It is advisable to have the computers evaluated by a chartered engineer—a CPA might work too.

## **Import Restriction**

The computers need to be less than 10 years old to be imported for non-profit work. In practice, as long as the collected computers are Pentium and above there should not be any problems.

## **Contact**

For more information on current activities of FOYM, or if there are any issues that you need clarified, do not hesitate to contact us through our web-site at <http://www.foym.org/>.