Project China 2023-2025 Outcomes



DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL | kaunihera a-rohe o Ōtepoti

dunedin



Introduction

In the period 2023-2025, Project China was focussed on rebuilding 'guanxi' and recovering the opportunities to benefit Dunedin through relationships with Chinese cities that were diminished during the Covid pandemic.

Travel restrictions stopped all in person contact between Dunedin and Chinese partners between early 2020 and early 2023. In some institutions on both sides of the relationships international staff had been made redundant, in other institutions there had been staff turnover.

For Dunedin this loss of experience and capacity was particularly felt at secondary schools and the Otago Polytechnic, which was also impacted by the process to establish Te Pūkenga and then it's subsequent reversal. In Shanghai the leadership at Yu Yuan changed and it appeared the previously very close relationship with Lan Yuan would change. The leadership at Guangming High School in Shanghai also changed during the Covid pandemic. Guangming's Sister School partnership with Otago Girls and Otago Boys High Schools led to around 30 long term student enrolments at the Dunedin schools under the previous Guangming leadership. This highly productive relationship has not been recovered and demonstrates the value of close personal relationships to underpin cooperation and trade.

In 2023, Enterprise Dunedin worked with Jerry Clode to inform development of a framework for the next phase of Project China activity. Jerry Clode has more than 20 years-experience working on China related business, consumer insight, branding and marketing strategy activity. He was based in Dunedin at the time and had lived and worked extensively in China including senior roles in Shanghai focused on consumer and digital culture through his consultancy work and media commentary. His clients have included Disney, Budweiser, Synlait, NZ Avocado, and Rockit Apples.

This paper is a summary of the outcomes achieved using the 'reset, maintain, or grow' framework to rebuild relationships with Chinese partners.

Highlights from 2023-2025 Project China

Highlights from 2023-2025 Project China include:

Shanghai Vice Mayor Hua visits Dunedin July 2023, his first international visit anywhere in the world following the end of travel restrictions

Dunedin receives 11 Municipal Government level delegations from Shanghai and other cities in 2024 in addition to non-government delegations. This was twice as many delegations as usual showing high regard on behalf of Chinese partners to reset relationships with Dunedin

Memoranda of Understanding renewed with government partners for education, health, tourism, science and technology, screen sector, libraries and with Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and Business South

Mayor Radich meets with Shanghai Mayor Gong in 2024, and the meeting is more than 90 minutes long, where national leaders only meet with the Shanghai Mayor for 30 minutes

Student enrolments from China recover to 55% of 2019 numbers by the end of 2025

Five joint research projects funded between Dunedin and Chinese partners.



New Zealand	Dunedin	EDS Themes	Options Moving Forward			Goals
			Reset	Maintain	Grow	Outputs, Outcomes, Milestones
Free Trade Agreement Chinese Global Investment Open Door to China APEC National R&D Policy World Opening Post- COVID (including international education)	Dunedin as one of the world's great small cities Economic Development Strategy Job creation and Income Goals Treaty Partnership – mana whenua Carbon Neutral Policy	BUSINESS VITALITY	Coordinate with Dunedin companies and Economic Development Strategy partners on re-engagement with Shanghai – including Business South and SH Chamber of Commerce Support Te Pūkenga on reinstating Project China relationships	Establish training for Dunedin exporters to access SH opportunities Discussion with SFF to co-exhibit at CIIE annually , attend CIIE sister city events	Dedicated trade mission as part of Mayoral delegation (NZTE and MFAT support) Preparation before-hand focused on business peering and transactional support	✓ Sign new MOUs with Business South and SH Chamber of Commerce ✓ Regular participation with one/more of SH's post-Covid sister city initiatives ✓ Create transactional plan for how Te Pūkenga can operate in SH-DUN sister city relationship after merger ✓ Establish regular exhibition of Dunedin goods and services in Shanghai
		ALLIANCES AND INNOVATION	With Economic Development Strategy partners identify collaboration pitch to SH – UNFDG3 – Health and Development (NCD, OU))	Meet with SHSTC updating SH stakeholders on the recent collaboration and desire to collaborate more	Renew and expand MoU with SHSTC to reflect new areas of planned and potential collaboration particularly Gaming through C.O.D.E.	✓ Establish new expanded protocol with SHSTC and SH stakeholders on collaboration on *Health and Development* ✓ Provide further context for innovation exchange and funding from Shanghai
		HUBS AND SKILLS	Identify stakeholders in creative economy in Dunedin – film, documentary, gaming – who wants to engage with Shanghai	Reinstate SH/ Dunedin screen writer exchange and consider China Film Festival to celebrate Lan Yuan's 15th anniversary with SAAF Use as context to discuss broader collaboration in creative fields	Present "Creative Dunedin" at future Mayoral Forums Expand MoUs with SMG and SAAF to include documentary, education and "Gaming for Good"	✓ Expand context of creative collaboration to include documentary education and gaming content ✓ Create the twin benefit of content for SH, that markets as an education destination and place to invest
		LINKAGES	Reactive Sister Schools relationships Commence discussion with Shanghai Museum and Ngāi Tahu to exhibit for 30th anniversary 2024 Progress activities under SH Dunedin Libraries MOU	Create promotional resource focused on secondary school exchange Present and engage SHEC to renew and expand MoUs	Establish protocol with SHEC and partner schools - eForum Renew Dunedin Shanghai Education Partnership to reflect post-COVID plan	✓ Recommencement of regular student exchanges under Sister Schools ✓ Establish full pairing for all participating schools, and establish protocol for accepting SH students outside of Sister Schools
		COMPELLING DESTINATION	Commence discussion of media plan for Shanghai – as a destination for education and travel	Create promotional resource focused on secondary school exchange Present and engage SHEC to renew and expand MoUs Prepare for new SH Dunedin MOU in 2024	Launch campaign as part of mayoral visit in Shanghai #visit your smart southern sister	✓ Creation of Shanghai Media Plan ✓ Launch of plan with support from SMG and SHEC through MOU provision

Focus on City-to-City Reset

Shanghai Vice Mayor, Mr Hua Yuan led a government delegation to Dunedin in July 2023.

He said, "We are very happy to have the opportunity to visit our sister city, the city of Dunedin, and to renew our friendship." Vice Mayor Hua acknowledged the photo of Shanghai's mother-river, the Huangpu, in the Municipal Building, saying, it had great significance, and the photo made the delegation feel at home. Mayor Radich was invited to meetings in Shanghai. Project China produced a short video documenting Vice-Mayor Hua's visit to Dunedin; it was shared amongst city leaders in Shanghai to demonstrate a warm reception on a cold day in Dunedin.

Dunedin City Council, Chief Executive Officer, Ms Sandy Graham led a staff delegation to Shanghai and Qingyuan in August 2023.

This was the Council's first outbound delegation since the Covid pandemic. The delegation met with different working partners including Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai Art Film Federation (SAFF), Yu Yuan, Silver Fern Farms, Science and Technology Commission and political leadership in Shanghai including Shanghai Vice-Mayor Hua shown in the picture below and Qingyuan Mayor Wen as well. In Guangzhou the delegation visited Vocational Universities to support Otago Polytechnic. The delegation reset relationships with key partners in Shanghai and Qingyuan and established the basis for formal agreements that would be signed during the Mayoral delegation later that year.



Shanghai Vice Mayor Hua meets with Dunedin Mayor Radich

Mayor Radich led a city delegation to Shanghai and attended the Shanghai International Friendship Cities Cooperation Forum in November 2023.

Mayor Radich opened the Forum on behalf of all the international cities attending the Forum. He also met in person with Vice Mayor Hua, and they discussed the example of Dunedin and Shanghai's cooperation.

The 30th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship in 2024 was marked with a range of cultural exchanges, exhibitions at Yu Yuan and Lan Yuan and through Mayoral delegation meetings.

By the end of 2025 Council had hosted 20 civic delegations to the city and celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship with Shanghai.







CEO Graham meets Vice Mayor Hua. Mayor Radich at Shanghai International Friendship Cities Cooperation Forum and meeting Mayor Gong.

Business Vitality Outcomes

In June 2023 a delegation led by Qingdao Municipal Government, Deputy Secretary General, Mr Wang Dongxiang, visited Dunedin to strengthen cooperation between the two cities.

They signed an agreement with Business South shown in the photograph below and visited Scott Technology who have a manufacturing and engineering plant in Qingdao.

In 2024 Mayor Radich met with the Qingdao Mayor and invited Scott Technology leadership from their Qingdao operations to join his delegation. This led to Qingdao government support for Scott Technology through business introductions and referrals for opportunities.

During the November 2023 Mayoral delegation, Business South renewed their MoU with Shanghai Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT Shanghai), also known as Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. Shanghai Chamber of Commerce has more than 30 years of cooperative relationship with Business South (Otago Chamber of Commerce). Business South and Project China staff at Enterprise Dunedin provide advice and introduction to Dunedin businesses seeking to do trade in China. The formal MOU relationship establishes assurances on both sides of the business transactions.

In 2024 Shanghai sent a delegation representing Small and Medium Enterprises to Dunedin. Their focus was innovation, enterprise research and trade. They had meetings with various city businesses, researchers and staff at Council, Business South, Petridish and School of Business. This has led to further business exchanges to Dunedin through the relationship built with delegation leader Mr Wang Leyi.



MOU signings between Business South and Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, and with Qingdao Municipal Government.

Silver Fern Farms exhibited at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in 2023, 24, 25. In 2026 Project China staff will support twofurther businesses to establish market stalls at the CIIE.

Mayor Radich visited the ADInstruments and Silver Fern Farms offices in Shanghai in 2023. ADInstruments joined the Mayor and Business South leadership to meet the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, and they also organised a visit for the Mayor to view ADInstruments work with Jiao Tong University Medical School. Jiao Tong Medical School have subsequently signed an MOU with University of Otago.

In 2024 Lindsay Kaan (Kaans Catering) joined the Mayoral Delegation to Shanghai and Qingdao. He attended delegation meetings with the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and the Mayor's meeting with Shanghai Mayor Gong. Lindsay also met with various businesses in Shanghai. In Qingdao the delegation had meetings at Qingdao Chamber of Commerce, and at Haier the parent company of Fisher & Paykel.

By the end of 2025 Business South had renewed and entered new MOU with partners in China, Dunedin businesses in China were supported, and new businesses introduced to opportunities to trade in China.



Alliances for Innovation Outcomes

By 2019 the ground-breaking China/New Zealand joint research programme, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) project had just started with staff at University of Otago partnered with staff at various Shanghai research institutes and Universities.

Project China staff:

- arranged civic visits to Shanghai Science and Technology Commission and hosting their return delegation to Dunedin
- facilitated renewal of the MOU with Shanghai Science and Technology Commission
- worked with Dunedin projects to support their application for funding through the MOU with Shanghai Science and Technology Commission

By the end of 2025 a further five joint research projects were funded, representing around $600,000 investment and benefits to reputation and rankings.

During Vice Mayor Hua's time in Dunedin in 2023, he also visited Lan Yuan and the University of Otago Faculty of Dentistry. This was seen as an indication of high-level support for the Dental School who were subsequently successful in a bid for joint research funding through the Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission. Later in November 2023 Mayor Radich witnessed the signing of an MOU between Jiao Tong's No9 Hospital and the Dental School in Shanghai for research into the 'Role and Mechanism of the Osteoblast Mechanosensitive Calcium Channel Piezo1 in Regulating Osteoclast Function via STAT3 During Orthodontic Tooth Movement'.



Shanghai No 9 Hospital is the top dental school in Shanghai, during the Mayor's visit he also witnessed the unveiling of a plaque for the Shanghai-New Zealand Joint Laboratory of Dentistry – Centre for Fundamental and Craniofacial Research. In addition to joint research projects this establishes the basis for student and staff exchanges between the two Dental Schools.

Cr Andrew Whiley joined the staff working delegation to Shanghai in 2024, paying his own travel and in that time led meetings to discuss Digital Interactive Health collaboration with potential Shanghai partners.

Shanghai Science and Technology Commission (SSTC), Deputy Director General, Madam Huang led a delegation to Dunedin in 2025 this included meetings at Dental School. During working meetings with Enterprise Dunedin staff, Madam Huang said Shanghai values the cooperation that is happening through health science partnerships and welcomed building on this success in other areas for joint research. In 2026 Project China staff have worked with energy researchers at University of Otago to broker relationships for joint research with Shanghai Science and Technology University. Staff have also identified the opportunity to extend the partnership into science communication projects and have started working with the NZ International Science Festival based in Dunedin.

The 10 projects between Dunedin and Chinese science and research partners that have been funded by Chinese agencies since 2017 are listed below.







MOU signings between Business South and Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, and with Dunedin CEO Graham meets with SSTC Madam Huang, Mayoral delegation visit Fudan University,

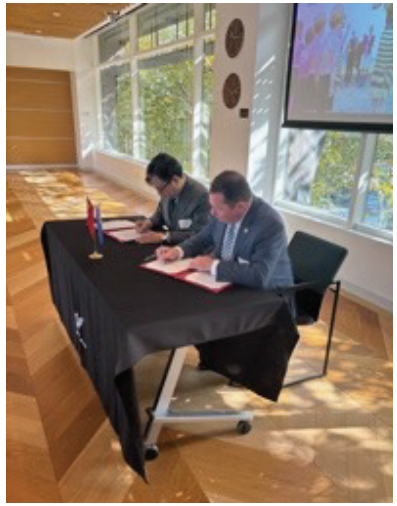
Hub For Skills and Talent Outcomes

During the Mayoral delegation in 2023, a MoU was signed between Shanghai Art Film Federation (SAFF) and Enterprise Dunedin. SAFF and Enterprise Dunedin had worked together prior to Covid for film festival and screen writer exchange projects.

In 2024 Enterprise Dunedin and SAFF screened the feature film set in Dunedin 'One Winter' to Shanghai screen industry leaders and other city partners. Mayor Radich spoke at the screening and welcomed Shanghai screen executives to visit the city. In 2025 CEO Sandy Graham met with SAFF leadership to discuss shaping the sister city screen sector partnership to enable the development of Co-Productions utilising the China New Zealand Co-Production Treaty. SAFF have offered to lead a screen sector delegation to Dunedin at which time discussion with industry leadership will explore the opportunity further.

Project China provided extensive support to Otago Polytechnic to rebuild relationships for joint teaching programmes with Vocational Universities from Guangzhou.

Enterprise Dunedin Director John Christie signs MOU with SAFF Director Mr Jin Hui, Mayor Radich speaks to Shanghai screen industry representatives before screening of 'One Winter' feature film, MOU signing meeting between Qingdao University of Science and Technology and Otago Polytechnic.







Linkages Beyond our Borders Outcomes

In 2019, Chinese student enrolments provided around $78M to the city economy. Enterprise Dunedin prioritised support to recover education partnerships and rebuild student enrolments.

Project China staff:

- worked alongside the leadership at city schools and the Otago Polytechnic in meetings with their Chinese partners
- supported agent visits and cultural capability building for schools' staff hosting agents and visiting China
- worked with Shanghai Municipal Education Commission to restart Sister School partnerships where viable, and renew the MOU
- provided extensive support for University inbound delegation visits and outbound delegations.

By the end of 2025 Chinese student enrolments had recovered to around $48M to the city economy.

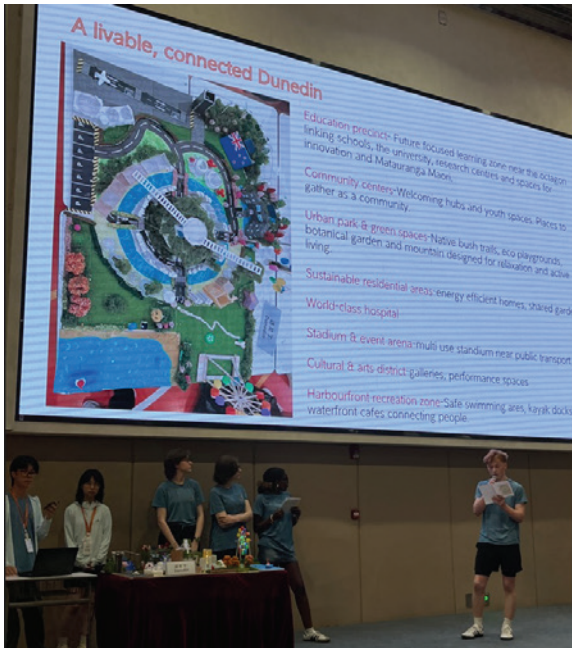
Shanghai Municipal Education Commission visited Dunedin in December 2024. During this visit, Enterprise Dunedin re-signed the MoU with Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (SMEC).

As a result of the MOU renewal with SMEC five Dunedin high schools' students and one teacher have been hosted for a two-week Sister City International Summer Camp. Shanghai covered all the local costs for the two weeks and students pay their own airfares. Dunedin participants not only get to experience Shanghai they get to build friendships with students and staff from 30-40 other countries representing various Sister City partners of Shanghai. This has been described as life changing and amazing professional development opportunity by the Dunedin participants.

In 2024 Dunedin based education agent, Scott Hou travelled to Shanghai and Qingyuan to support Queens High School and Bayfield High School international directors to meetings with schools. Queens and Bayfield both entered Sister School partnerships with schools in Qingyuan.

Mayor Radich visited Lan Ting Primary School in Qingdao to affirm their newly established Sister School relationship with St Clair Primary School in Dunedin. On the same Mayoral delegation visit to Qingdao the Mayor witnessed the signing of a MOU between Qingdao International Secondary School (QISS) and Enterprise Dunedin. In 2026 QISS sent a large study group to explore Dunedin and Central Otago.

Project China supported the hosting of an Education New Zealand organised visit from leading Chinese agents to Dunedin in 2024.






Dunedin students present their home city vision to students from around the world. Joshua Hopping from Kaikorai Valley College visiting water village. Mayor Radich meets with Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Director General, Mr Zhou Yaming.

Compelling Destination Outcomes

At the end of 2025 tourism spend in Dunedin by Chinese tourists was $11M, national data shows Chinese visitor numbers have recovered to around 60% of 2019 levels.

As a result of the travel restrictions caused by the Covid Pandemic three Dunedin based Chinese tour companies stopped trading, similar businesses have not been established yet.

In China travel agent businesses are run by Municipal and District Governments. Prior to covid Enterprise Dunedin had brokered a relationship with the Huangpu District Culture and Tourism Bureau who in addition to managing tourism companies oversee Yu Yuan. Yu Yuan is China's second most visited tourism attraction after the Great Wall.

Huangpu District Government is a sub-city within Shanghai and includes its central CBD and historic areas. The MOU with their culture and tourism bureau establishes a commitment to promote Dunedin through the travel agency businesses, creates agreement to cooperate with special projects and is the high level agreement for the 'sister gardens' relationship between Yu Yuan and Lan Yuan.

Lan Yuan opened in 2008. It features structures built using traditional Chinese materials and methods. Several of these buildings now require maintenance and renovation. In the period 2020-2023 senior leaders at Yu Yuan changed and Dunedin needed to start again to develop the 'guanxi' that existed with previous leadership to maintain support for the care and development of Lan Yuan.






Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust chairman Malcolm Wong (left) takes a delegation of Shanghai Chinese garden maintenance experts on a tour of Lan Yuan with members of Friends of the Garden and the Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust. PHOTO: GERARD O'BRIEN

Shanghai advisers visit Dunedin garden

Project China staff:

- facilitated senior staff and Mayoral delegation visits to Yu Yuan in 2023, 2024 and 2025
- facilitated the renewal of MOU with Huangpu Culture and Tourism Bureau and between Yu Yuan and Lan Yuan
- facilitated a significant delegation from Yu Yuan to Dunedin in 2025 to discuss the city approach to conservation and heritage management in buildings, collections, and public parks.
- coordinated council departments and external partners to present a unified position around Lan Yuan needs and opportunity.

By the end of 2025 Shanghai had sent specialist staff to Dunedin to advise on repairs and maintenance at Lan Yuan, had organised and paid for construction of bespoke windows for the Pavilion at Lan Yuan, and had invited senior staff from DCC Property Services to visit Yu Yuan to work alongside their staff.



Delegations 2023-2025

2023

Inbound delegations:

1. Qingdao Civic Delegation
2. Qingyuan Civic Delegation
3. Shanghai Chamber of Commerce Delegation
4. Shanghai Vice Mayor Delegation (Important)
5. Guangzhou Huali College International College Delegation

Outbound delegations:

1. Dunedin City CEO Delegation
2. Dunedin Mayoral Delegation

2024

Inbound delegations:

1. Shanghai University Delegation (University lead)
2. Shanghai Fudan University Delegation (University Lead)
3. Shanghai Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) Development Delegation
4. Shanghai Huangpu District Deputy Party Secretary Delegation
5. Shanghai Youth Choir Group Delegation
6. Shanghai Huangpu tourism & Yu Garden Delegation
7. Shanghai Library Delegation
8. Shanghai Health Commission Delegation
9. China Acrobats Association Delegation
10. Education NZ China Agents Delegation
11. Shandong Weifang Standing Committee Delegation

Outbound delegations:

1. Dunedin Working Delegation – Education
2. Dunedin Mayoral Delegation

2025

Inbound delegations:

1. Shanghai Administration Bureau Delegation
2. Shanghai Financial Delegation
3. Shanghai Science & Technology Commission Delegation
4. Shanghai Yu Garden Delegation

Outbound delegations:

1. Dunedin City CEO Delegation

Research Collaboration

No.	Project Year	Project Type	Project Name	Chinese Cooperation Region	New Zealand Partner Institution
1	2017	Belt and Road International Joint Laboratory Development	International Joint Laboratory for Neurological Diseases	Dunedin	New Zealand-China Non-Communicable Disease Research Cooperation Centre
2	2018	Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission Intergovernmental International Science and Technology Cooperation	Cross-Ethnic Genetic Study of Primary Gout	Dunedin	University of Otago
3	2019		Identification and Validation of Biomarkers for Alzheimer's Disease and Clinical High-Risk Syndrome for Psychosis: A Targeted Metabolomics Study	Dunedin	University of Otago
4	2020		Electrophysiological Characteristics and Electrical Stimulation Modulation of Cognitive Processes Associated with Apathy in Patients with Parkinson's Disease	Dunedin	University of Otago
5	2022		Study on the Mechanism of FTO-Mediated RNA m6A Methylation in Renal Fibrosis	Dunedin	University of Otago
6	2023		Role and Mechanism of the Osteoblast Mechanosensitive Calcium Channel Piezo1 in Regulating Osteoclast Function via STAT3 During Orthodontic Tooth Movement	Dunedin	University of Otago
7	2024		Study on Interfacial Composition Regulation and Mechanisms of Nonwoven Sodium-Ion Battery Fiber Separators	Dunedin	University of Otago
8	2024		Interaction Between Light and Terahertz Waves in High-Quality Optical Microcavities	Dunedin	University of Otago
9	2024	Belt and Road Young Scientists Exchange Programme	Screening of Antibacterial Bicyclic Peptide Inhibitors Using Phage Display	Dunedin	University of Otago
10	2024	Ministry of Science and Technology Intergovernmental International Cooperation	New Mechanisms of Kidney Injury and Repair — New Therapeutic Strategies	Dunedin	University of Otago

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