

# Supporting city-to-city collaboration

## How Yokohama is at the frontier of city development cooperation and public-private partnerships

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Yokohama is a bustling port city near Japan's capital, Tokyo, and was the first port to open to foreign traders in the 19th century. It continues to be one of the main hubs for Japan's trade with the outside world.

Its history makes us appreciate the value of collaborating with cities around the world—looking beyond our own shores to find innovations, ideas, and insights that make life better for our own citizens.

Until the early 1970s, Japan experienced a positive rate of population growth. Insufficient growth in infrastructure and city service provisions means that the country's urban centers face challenges similar to those cities in emerging economies face today.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now provide a common basis for all governments to advance a shared set of interconnected challenges reflected in the fight against climate change, inequality, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

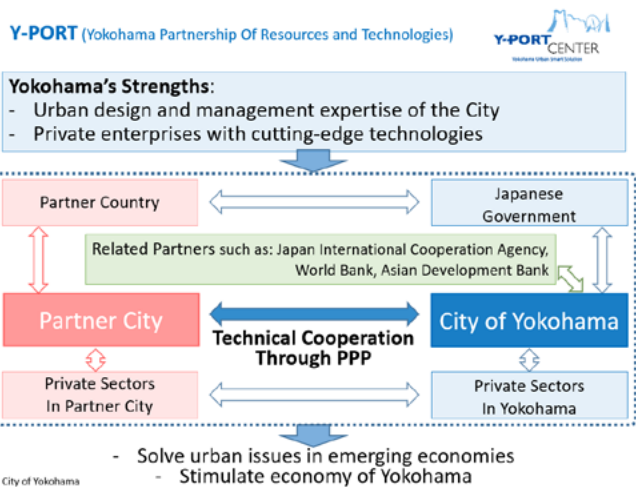
In short, we only stand a fighting chance of achieving the SDGs if we work together and learn from each other. To do this, Yokohama has developed a model of city-to-city development cooperation. As one of the fastest-growing cities in Japan, we have experience in solving our own infrastructure, pollution, and service provisions challenges, and are now seeking to help other cities in emerging economies do the same.

### Public-private partnership and city development cooperation

In 2011, we initiated [Yokohama Partnership of Resources and Technologies \(Y-PORT\)](#), a public-private partnership and international cooperation program. Its explicit goal is to export Yokohama's expertise in sustainable urban development to other cities. A lot of our know-how and technological capacities come from Yokohama-based private companies, so Y-PORT brings on local firms as key partners in the program.

Through the program, Yokohama takes several steps that enable its partner cities to adopt solutions that will advance the SDGs:

- **Involve the private sector from the outset:** Compared to more traditional technical aid, which might focus exclusively on government-to-government assistance, Y-PORT's activities heavily involve private firms. They are invited from the outset to offer their expertise and solutions to specific challenges based on their experiences.
- **Co-create solutions:** Y-PORT seeks to present solutions to other cities that will enable them to leapfrog to ready-made green innovations, based on Yokohama's decades of experience. However, we also need to translate these solutions into the partner's city-unique context and community structure. That is why mutual dialogue with partner cities is central to Y-PORT's model. Yokohama and its partner



cities regularly host joint workshops, called “urban solution forums.” This is where we jointly formulate with our counterparts urban master plans, policy guidelines and private sector-led pilot projects with partner city counterparts. Aid agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank join to provide policy and technical advice, while private firms offer insights to their solution concepts.

- **Provide tailored technical assistance:** Yokohama provides other cities and city developers with know-how, particularly City Management as a Service (CMaaS), where our public and private actors have developed expertise. For instance, Yokohama [has helped](#) Cebu in the Philippines, Da Nang in Vietnam, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in Thailand, revise their city plans to improve urban public services. JICA supports these partnerships with technical and financial support. Through these technical advisory engagements, we facilitate, introduce, and co-create private sector-led projects that deliver urban solutions and technologies. Some of the main sectors include solid waste management and recycling, wastewater treatment, water supply, climate change mitigation, and energy savings. For instance, we helped introduce a

[policy framework for recycling](#) in the metro area of Cebu, and one Yokohama-based firm has set up a solid-waste management project.

- **Expand networking and knowledge sharing:** Y-PORT acts as a knowledge hub for sustainable cities solutions and smart city management available to its partner cities. When the Y-PORT program expanded into a Y-PORT center in 2015, city staff and business staff collocated in the same space to facilitate collaboration and house their joint expertise under one roof. To further disseminate this know-how and introduce cities to urban solutions, we host the annual Asia Smart City Conference.

## The benefits to Yokohama

To justify this international development to our taxpayers, we needed a clear value proposition. Part of it is intangible, through the projection of our global city identity and brand. Our global engagements bring more attention, visitors, and even conventions to Yokohama.

Business involvement also brings visible returns to Yokohama. Some of the knowledge partners from the private sector have eventually entered in business arrangements through these cooperative activities, which brought jobs and growth to the city. This link to the SDGs also increases the visibility of our business community towards Environment, Social and Governance (ESG)-focused investors.

## Conclusion

Cities have a unique opportunity to drive action on the SDGs, but we need to learn how to collaborate better together and, crucially, leverage the expertise of the private sector. As ESG-focused investment has become more common in capital markets, innovations that foster better connections between businesses and advancing the SDGs can help cities accelerate their progress.