UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
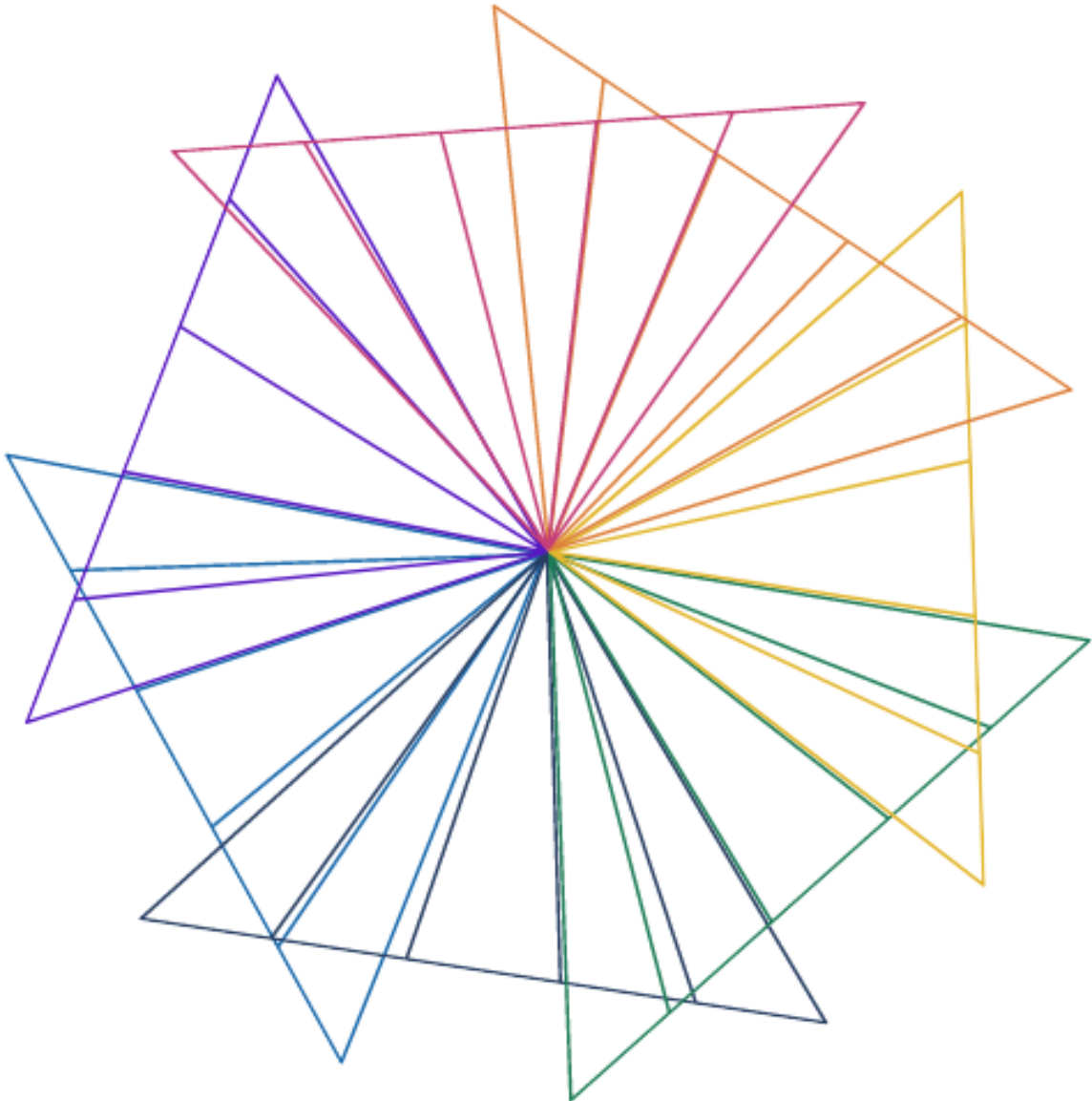# 2023

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK
2023 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS THE UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK?

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to foster international cooperation within and across cities worldwide that utilize culture and creativity as a strategic lever for sustainable urban development.

The Network brings together cities from all continents and regions with different geo-demographic, economic, social, cultural and environmental settings. They work together towards a common mission: placing culture and creativity at the core of their urban development plans to make cities safe, resilient, inclusive, sustainable and future-proof in linewith the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network is composed of cities committed to pooling their resources, experiences and knowledge for the common objectives set forth in the Network's Mission Statement, and to actively cooperating at the international level through inter-city partnerships.

As a laboratory of ideas and innovative practices, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network brings a tangible contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through people-centered policymaking as well as place-based projects and initiatives. The Network further brings forth cities' central role in sustainable development, highlighting the importance of the local dimension in the process, in line with UNESCO's programmatic priorities in the field of culture.

As a follow-up to the adoption of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development in September 2022, which reaffirmed culture as a "global public good", the Network is committed to supporting the systemic anchoring of culture in public policies at the local level through strengthened engagement and mobilization of local stakeholders and partners.

WHO CAN APPLY?

The Call for Applications is open to all cities of UNESCO's Member States and Associate Members.[1]

UNESCO reserves itself the right to restrict the Call for Applications, by taking into account specific geographical or thematic priorities, and may limit the maximum number of designations. For the 2023 Call, **a maximum of two applications from a same country, and in two different creative fields, can be eligible for designation**.

Moreover, applications from under-represented regions within the Network[2], especially those from Africa and the Arab States, will be encouraged in order to enhance the Network's geographic representation. The specific Cooperation Framework will be made available to cities from these two regions in the current Call (please refer to the Annex for further details

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1 Please refer to the complete list of UNESCO's Member States and Associate Members at https://en.unesco.org/countries.

2 Regions defined by UNESCO are Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean. For more information, please refer to: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380873 (pp.141-143).

on the Cooperation Framework).

Cities that have submitted **two consecutive unsuccessful applications** to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, shall respect a **moratorium of 4 years before presenting a new application**.

UCCN member cities recognize the importance of sustainable and inclusive urban development, and therefore commit to enhancing the contribution of culture and creativity to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

> **NB**
>
> ➢ The Call for Applications is open to cities of UNESCO's Member States and Associate Members.
>
> ➢ Each application shall include, among other required documents, **an official letter of intention signed by the Mayor of the city**, as well as **an official letter of support by the National Commission for UNESCO** concerned.
>
> ➢ For the 2023 Call for Applications, **a maximum of two applications in two different creative fields from a same Member State or Associate Member can be submitted.** Consequently, the National Commission concerned can endorse a maximum of two applications in two different creative fields from the country.
>
> ➢ In order to strengthen the geographical representation of the Network, please note that the Cooperation Framework specifically targeting applicant cities from Africa and Arab States, which are currently under-represented within the Network, is being continued for the 2023 Call. Please refer to the Annex hereto.

SELECTION CRITERIA

A city may be designated as a UNESCO Creative City based on its assets and capacity in culture and creativity, but also on the content, impact and outreach of its proposed action plan. It shall also demonstrate its potential contribution to the Network's overall vision and objectives, as well as its commitment to UNESCO's mandate and priorities, including that of promoting cooperation, solidarity and dialogue at all levels, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Director-General of UNESCO is responsible for the designation of the cities in conformity with the guidelines set out below, following an internal technical pre-screening and an external evaluation by:

(i)   UNESCO-designated independent experts specialized in the seven creative fields covered by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and other cultural and creative sectors, and/or in urban development;

(ii)   The member cities that are representative of the seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music.

The UNESCO designation indicates recognition of the quality, relevance and feasibility of the strategy and the proposed action plan outlined in the application to implement the objectives of the Network.

Applications shall focus primarily on the chosen creative field among the seven creative fields covered by the Network. Applicant cities are nevertheless also encouraged to address other creative fields covered by the Network, highlighting existing and/or potential synergies

between them.

Applicant cities must commit to the implementation of all the objectives laid out in the Network's Mission Statement, as well as respond to all the criteria set out below, which will be used to guide the evaluation process:

(1) **Motivation for the application and the primary development opportunities and challenges to be met, global development vision, strategies and policies as well asexpected impact of the designation** (Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Application Form):

– Demonstrated commitment of the applicant city to helping achieve the Network's objectives, at both the local and international level;

– Existing development strategies and policies that strengthen the role of culture and creativity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

– Coherence of the objectives and priorities of the applicant city with the objectives and fields of action of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network; and

– Expected mid- and long-term impacts of the designation on the sustainable development of the city.

(2) **Process for preparing the application** (Section 9 of the Application Form):

– Demonstrated involvement of the municipality in the design and preparation of the application and in the potential implementation of the proposed strategy and action plan in case of designation;

– Association of public, private and civil society stakeholders on a common project supported by the city; and

– Participation of the local creative sector concerned (creators, professional organizations, cultural enterprises, etc.) in the design and preparation of the application.

(3) **Comparative assets that the applicant city would bring to the Network** (Section 10 of the Application Form):

– Existence, at the time of application, of a development strategy or actions and initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of culture and creativity in the socio-economic development of the city and in urban regeneration;

– Historical importance and role of the creative field concerned for the applicant city as well as the field's contemporary economic and social context;

– Potential contribution of the cultural and creative assets of the applicant city, particularly in the creative field concerned, towards achieving the Network's objectives;

– Expertise of the city in organizing local, national and/or international fairs, conferences, conventions, exhibitions and other activities aimed at professionals and experts, as well as the general public;

– Quality, diversity and impact of mechanisms set up to promote creativity, arts education, professional training, capacity building and research in the creative field concerned;

– Existence and/or development of cultural facilities and infrastructures aimed at professionals and the general public dedicated to the practice, production, promotion and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services in the creative field concerned;

– Quality, relevance and impact of programmes to foster greater participation in

cultural life, especially those aimed at disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of society;

– Capacity to involve main professional organizations and non-governmental organizations representing civil society in realizing the proposed plan of action;

– Scope, quality and diversity of the international cooperation initiatives developed by the city in the creative field concerned;

– Quality, impact and innovative nature of the policies and measures implemented to support the creation and growth of dynamic local cultural and creative industries,notably in the creative field concerned; and

– Experience in local and international development of cross-cutting projects creating synergies between the creative field concerned and other creative fields covered by the Network.

(4) **Contributions to achieving the objectives of the Network** (Section 11 of the Application Form):

– Fostering and making use of the principal cultural and creative assets of the city in the proposed action plan;

– Relevance, coherence and feasibility of the proposed action plan in terms of achieving the Network's objectives at local and international level;

– Scope, quality, diversity and innovative approach of the initiatives proposed in theaction plan to achieve the Network's objectives at both local and international level;

– Inclusion of inter-city cooperation initiatives involving cities from the global south;

– Capacity to create synergies between the creative field concerned and other creative fields of the Network;

– Adequacy, feasibility and sustainability of the funding strategy and the proposed budget;

– Establishment of a specific structure to manage and execute the action plan involving stakeholders from the public and private sectors and civil society; and

– Quality and relevance of the communication and awareness-raising plan regarding the Network and the impact of the proposed action plan, aimed at attracting the interest of a broad public.

The designated cities must commit to submitting the quadrennial Membership Monitoring Report. This exercise ensures their full engagement and active contribution to achieving the Network's objectives and UNESCO's mandate and priorities, as well as to promoting the exchange of information and good practices between member cities. The information collected through the monitoring exercise will also contribute to the comprehensive Global Report on Cultural Policies to be developed in line with the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, which will help support evidence-based global advocacy for culture in the international post-2030 agenda.

II. GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING

HOW TO APPLY?

To become a member of the UCCN, applicant cities must submit an application that clearly demonstrates their assets, commitment and capacity to contribute to the Network's objectives through the implementation of the city's action plan proposed in the application.

These guidelines are intended to assist applicant cities in developing and completing the Application Form.

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER DURING THE PREPARATION OF AN APPLICATION

In the preparation of an application to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, it is highly advised that applicant cities carefully consider the following factors:

- **Participatory process:** the preparation and formulation of the application must be led by the municipality and should result from a participative process involving relevant stakeholders and partners of the public and private sectors as well as civil society.

- **Forward-looking approach:** the cultural heritage and current creative assets of the applicant city should be the pillars to build a consistent and progressive action plan, which contributes to the sustainable urban development of the city in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Inclusive sustainable development:** UNESCO Creative Cities foster sustainable urban development building on culture and creativity as levers to achieve development goals. In this context, when formulating their activities and programmes of the action plan, applicant cities are required to demonstrate their engagement to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development notably at the city level, building on an inclusive and transversal approach encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

- **Long-term commitment:** cities should take note that the designation as a UNESCO Creative City implies a continuous and active commitment towards UNESCO's value and mandate, as well as the implementation of the UCCN's objectives as outlined in the Mission Statement. In particular, applicant cities must be committed to preparing and consistently implementing their action plans, regularly reporting on their achievements through the quadrennial Membership Monitoring Report, actively participating in the UCCN Annual Conferences, as well as supporting and contributing to activities undertaken by UNESCO and the UCCN Secretariat through direct participation and/or voluntary contributions, amongst others.

- **Sustainable action plan, capacities and resources:** the application should include a proposed strategy for the city, accompanied by a four-year action plan setting out specific projects and initiatives at the local and international level to be implemented following the possible designation. The action plan should also provide detailed indications of priorities, capacities and resources (both financial and human). The expected outcome and impact of the proposed initiatives and projects to be undertaken by the city (if designated) will be subject to an evaluation through the aforementioned monitoring and reporting process.

- **Exchanges and cooperation:** exchanges among member cities are critical for the development, reinforcement and credibility of the Network. It is therefore important for applicant cities to demonstrate both their commitment and capacities to develop collaborative activities and initiatives at the national, regional and international level with UNESCO and other UCCN member cities.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

Who should be involved in the application process?

The city should first establish a management/coordination team within the municipality or designate a specific department, centre or entity in charge of developing the application. A focal point should be designated, acting as the liaison person with UNESCO. This team will be ultimately responsible for drafting the application. In case of designation, the team along with a representative of the municipality may also be responsible for carrying out the day-to-day management of activities related to the Network.

Although the application must be led by local public authorities, it should also reflect wide stakeholder consultation and support across the city and genuinely speak on behalf of the communities concerned, the public and private sectors, as well as civil society of the city. It is therefore important to elaborate the application in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and actors such as creators, professionals from the cultural and creative industries, universities and academia, policy makers, youth leagues, non-governmental organizations and associations, as well as different relevant public authorities or departments in the areas of culture, education, social affairs, economic development, urban infrastructure, communication, planning, etc.

Once relevant stakeholders have been identified, it is strongly advised to establish a consultative group that will support the preparation of the application. Such a consultative group can be made up of a diverse range of stakeholders and actors, including high-level representatives from the municipal government, representatives from civil society, cultural practitioners and producers, key operators of the creative sector, and other related professional associations and organizations.

Sequence for preparing an application

Although there is no universal and standard process for the preparation of an application, the following chart with the highlighted main steps of the process could be used as inspiration:

A PREPARATORY TIMELINE

1   Municipality (Mayor) decides to prepare application

2   Establish management/coordination team and focal point

3   Identify relevant stakeholders – within the city and at regional and international level

4   Establish a consultative group involving relevant stakeholders from all sectors

5   Implement relevant background research and prepare mapping of creative assets of the city

6   Draft a mid-term (4-year) strategy and action plan implementing the Network's objectives at local and international levels

7   Plan management unit responsible for undertaking the day-to-day activities of the Network (in case of designation)

8   Propose adequate budget and explore funding opportunities

9   Mayor writes formal letter presenting the application

10   Obtain formal support from national professional associations

11   UNESCO NATIONAL COMMISSION   Obtain formal endorsement from the National Commission for UNESCO

12   Submit application with all required documents by submission deadline

When adapting this proposed sequence to an applicant city's context, please consider the following issues:

- Drafting and submitting an application can take longer than anticipated. Adequate time needs to be dedicated to the preparation phase, the constitution of a management team and the consultative group.

- The management team and the focal point should start by reading carefully the UCCN Mission Statement, Application Form and the present Application Guidelines. Additional information on the Network and its activities is available on the website: http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/.

- It is important to ensure an active participation of all the relevant local stakeholders and actors to reinforce engagement and ownership of the process. It also serves to gather the necessary information on the cultural assets, experiences and expertise of the city, sketch out the main lines of the city's vision, strategy and action plan.

Filling the Application Form

Applications must be submitted using the **official 2023 Application Form** available on the UCCN website. The standard Application Form is prepared by the Secretariat of the UNESCO CreativeCities Network and shall not be altered in any way. Applicant cities should only use this standard form for submitting their application.

Please note, a word limit has been set in each section of the Application Form. Therefore, it will not be possible to enter additional text once the limit is reached. Applicant cities can use the 'Word Count' function to keep track of the word limit.

All the sections of the Application Form must be completed to be considered complete and valid.

Applicant cities are encouraged to provide relevant information following the instructions provided in the Application Form. The information provided should not be repeated across different sections unless it is relevant to the concerned sections. It is thus important to note that providing irrelevant information is strongly discouraged.

Applicant cities should provide brief answers to each section and avoid a simple listing of activities, initiatives or infrastructures. Information provided should be updated and relevant in order for the evaluators to assess the city's cultural and creative assets as well as the feasibility and potential of its proposed action plan.

In case the applicant city has no relevant information related to a particular section or field, the city is requested to enter the following phrase "No relevant information to provide" for the part concerned.

The application must be consistent and succinct, and written in clear and fluent **English or French**. Applications submitted in other languages will not be taken into consideration. When neither of the working languages is familiar to the team/person drafting the application, we recommend writing the application in a native language and then translating the final version through a certified translator. Poorly translated applications may lead to confusion in the evaluation phase.

The application must be submitted via email to ccnapplications@unesco.org, with the subject: **"2023 Application of [name of the applicant city]".** This email must include the following attachments:

(i)   A complete list of all the documents included in the application file;

(ii) The completed formal 2023 Application Form in its standard Word format (.doc) available on the UCCN's website;

(iii) A formal letter of intention from the Mayor of the applicant city presenting the candidature and the support of the municipality;

(iv) A formal letter of support of the candidature from the National Commission for UNESCO of the country in which the city is located;

(v) Two formal letters of support from active main national professional associations in the creative field concerned[3];

(vi) Three photos of the applicant city closely related to the creative field concerned (JPEG, max. 3MB each); and

(vii) The form "Cession of Rights and Register of Photos", which is annexed to the Application Form, dully filled for each of the three respective photos.

NOTE: There is no form or precise format requirements for the above-mentioned letters. However, it is recommended that they should be brief (no longer than 2 pages each) and that they clearly indicate the main reasons of the signatory's full support to the application. The total size of the email with all required attachments included must not exceed 30MB.

No other document or attachment will be accepted and considered in the evaluation process. A maximum of 2 URL links to related websites may be included in the Application Form, providing additional information about the city and/or the creative field concerned (please refer to the Form). The applicant city is also encouraged to provide information related to social media handles for the city (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

> **NB** **The Application Form, in its preconceived standard Word format accompanied by the documents described above, must reach the UNESCO Secretariat through one single email:**
>
> **Via: ccnapplications@unesco.org**
>
> **Deadline for submission: 30 June 2023, (11:59 pm CET)**

Applications that are not received in the required standard format, as well as those that are incomplete and/or received after the above-mentioned deadline will not be considered.

UNESCO will not be responsible for the late delivery of submissions due to the lack of anticipation or possible technical difficulties (such as due to the size of the attachments). It is the sole responsibility of the applicant cities to ensure that submissions are received by the Secretariat on time. Please note that a strict deadline is applied with no exceptions made. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the applicant city through email once the UCCN Secretariat receives the submitted application file.

For the 2023 Call for Applications, a set of tutorials has been updated to assist applicant cities to better understand the UCCN application process. These tutorials provide a comprehensive overview of: i) the objectives of the Network; ii) the main activities of the Network; and iii) what a UNESCO Creative City is; amongst other significant issues closely related to the Network.

Applicant cities are highly encouraged to go through these tutorials before commencing the application the preparation. The video tutorials can be accessed using the following link: 2023 Call for Applications | Creative Cities Network (unesco.org).

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[3] For example, if applying to the creative field of literature, a letter of endorsement from the National Writers' Association would fulfil this requirement.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE OF THE 2023 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

21 March	**Launch of the Call**
30 June	**Deadline for Submission** *Only applications submitted to **ccnapplications@unesco.org**, using the **standard UCCN 2023 Application Form** and received **by 30 June 2023, (11:59 pm CET)**, will be processed. Applications received in a non-standard format will not be considered*
Until 16 July	**Technical Pre-screening** *Technical pre-screening by UNESCO Secretariat to verify eligibility of the applications (required documents provided; form duly completed; formal letters attached as per Guidelines, etc.)*
17 July – 17 September	**Parallel Evaluation** *Evaluation in parallel by independent experts appointed by UNESCO and the UCCN member cities of the same creative field*
Until 30 October	**Finalization of the Evaluation Process**
31 October (World Cities Day)	**Announcement of the Designation** *Designation announcement by the Director-General of UNESCO (to be made available on the UNESCO website and through its communicationchannels and networks)*

III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do cities apply?

Cities are invited to during the opening period of the Call for Applications. As aforementioned, applications must be submitted by email using the standard Application Form. Applications submitted in any other formats or altered versions of the standard document will not be considered.

Where can applicant cities find additional information on the UCCN and the application process?

To better understand the Network and its main objectives, activities, member cities and other key information, the UCCN Secretariat has updated a set of tutorials to support applicant cities in the current Call for Applications. The tutorials illustrate the application process and the key steps that need to be taken into account while preparing the application. To access the tutorials, kindly visit: 2023 Call for Applications | Creative Cities Network (unesco.org).

When is the application deadline?

The deadline for applications is announced on the UCCN website under the Call for Applications section 2023 Call for Applications | Creative Cities Network (unesco.org). For the 2023 Call, the deadline is **30 June 2023, (11:59 pm CET)**. Please kindly note that incomplete applications or those received after this date will not be considered.

In which languages should the application be submitted?

Applications can only be submitted in either **English or French**. However, when an application file is submitted in French, an official translation in English is highly recommended to facilitate the evaluation process.

Which additional documents should be provided with the application?

A valid Application Form must be accompanied by all the other documents required in the Application Form. Please note that no other documents will be taken into account during the evaluation process.

How do we send our application?

The complete application file must be submitted via one single email to ccnapplications@unesco.org, with the subject: **"2023 Application of [name of the applicant city]".**

The total size of the email with all required attachments included must not exceed 30MB. Due to technical restrictions, emails that exceed this size limit may not reach UNESCO. The Organization is not responsible for any technical shortfall during the transmission of the application.

Please contact us at ccnapplications@unesco.org in case that you encounter technical difficulties during the submission process.

How many cities per country can receive the endorsement of the National Commission for UNESCO concerned to submit their application?

For the 2023 Call for Applications, **a maximum of two applications in two different creative fields** from a same Member State or Associate Member can be submitted. Consequently, the National Commission for UNESCO of the country in which the applicant city is located can endorse a maximum of two applications in two different creative fields from the country.

Kindly note, a formal letter of support from the National Commission concerned is required to complete the application file. Incomplete application files including those lack of the letter of support will result in the applications being automatically deemed invalid.

How many cities per country may be eligible to the designation?

As of the 2021 Call, a maximum of two applications from the same country, and in two different creative fields, may be eligible for designation.

When and how will the designation be announced?

The designation announcement will be made on the UCCN website and through other UNESCO communication channels and networks on **31 October 2023[4]** (the confirmed date will be announced on the UCCN website in due course). A formal letter will be sent to each of the eligible cities (whose applications will be evaluated) to inform the result in the days following the designation announcement.

To allow for a considered and impartial evaluation of the applications, we kindly ask applicant cities to refrain from requesting information on their applications or the evaluation results during the process.

Who evaluates the application?

The evaluation process is implemented and coordinated by UNESCO. The process foresees a technical pre-screening and a parallel evaluation by independent experts and the member cities of the Network. To ensure the independence of the evaluators, no information on their identity nor evaluation is communicated.

Applicant cities are required not to exert any influence or lobby during the evaluation process. The final decision on designation lies with the Director-General of UNESCO, following consultation with external advice provided by independent experts as well as by the member cities organized in the seven creative fields.

How to proceed in the event of technical problems with the application?

It is advisable that all applicant cities prepare their application as early as possible. The UCCN Secretariat will only be able to provide technical assistance with your application (such as for issues related to the submission of the application file) should there be sufficient time available.

Moreover, it is not UNESCO's responsibility to either follow up on the individual application process of the applicant cities or give specific orientations or guidance for each case.

Please contact us at ccnapplications@unesco.org for any technical difficulties or general inquiries about the application process.

Should a creative field be specified in the application?

Yes, a creative field must be specified, and the application submitted must focus on that particular creative field. The creative fields covered by the Network are the following: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music.

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[4] The United Nations General Assembly designated 31 October as World Cities Day, by its resolution 68/239.

Can a city apply for more than one creative field?

Please note that an applicant city can choose only one of the seven creative fields covered by the Network. This field should be considered as the focus of the application albeit such creative field may interact with other creative fields. Innovative and transversal approaches across various creative fields are encouraged.

Can adjacent areas of the city be involved in the application?

It is possible for the applicant city to involve its adjacent region in the application process and reflect the latter's contribution to the city's proposed strategy and action plan. However, the applicant city must bear primary responsibility and accountability for the application and the proposed strategy and action plan put forward in the application. In case of designation, only the city will receive the designation and become a member of the Network.

Does the size of a city matter?

Currently, there is no limitation to the number of inhabitants in a city applying for the membership of the Network. However, only cities can be members of the Network.

We have additional media items we would like to attach to our application, how could we provide these?

Submissions can only be made using the standard Application Form through email. Items in hard copy will not be accepted.

However, a maximum of two external website links can be provided in the Application Form, alongside the information related to social media handles for the city (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

Can images, charts or diagrams be directly inserted in the application?

In order to standardize the evaluation process, it is not possible to include **images, charts or diagrams directly** in the Application Form, although three photos of the applicant city must be included in the application file. However, in case of designation, a city can submit these additional materials with a view to reinforcing its visibility.

Which considerations should guide the proposed budget in the application?

There is no minimum or maximum set amount foreseen for the provisional budget included in the application. However, the evaluators will assess the quality of the strategy and the action plan through the consistency, feasibility and sustainability of the proposed budget corresponding to the planned activities. The budget proposed should fit a city's size, resources and ambitions.

COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
FOR APPLICANT CITIES FROM AFRICA AND ARAB STATES

Promoting cultural diversity and strengthening geographical outreach: a global commitment

UNESCO stands for cultural diversity as a source of enrichment for all of humanity. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network, an international network of exchange and cooperation for cities, aims to ensure geographical representation of cities across all world regions. It is committed to strengthening cooperation with and among cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development as regards to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. Building partnerships and exchanging knowledge and good practices among member cities are one of the Network's founding principles and objectives.

Beyond significant efforts to improve the cultural diversity and geographical representation of the Network, cities from the Global South are still under-represented among its members. A majority of around 90 countries represented in the Network are from the Global North. This imbalance was acknowledged by UNESCO and the UCCN member cities as a key challenge to be addressed.

First introduced in 2017, the specific cooperation framework was open to applicant cities from the Africa region. During the 2019 Call for Applications, this mechanism was further extended to technically support applicant cities from the Arab States as well.

With the objective to further this effort, for the 2023 Call for Applications, the cooperation framework will be continued to encourage applications from Africa and the Arab States regions[5].

Ensuring the diversity of the Network's member cities is critical to ensure the Network's sustainability and outreach, as well as its capacity to demonstrate the power of creativity for sustainable development in diverse economic, social, cultural and environmental contexts.

Opening up the Network to cities from the Global South also offers the opportunity to explore new dimensions of creativity, often closely linked to local development, which can be a source of mutual learning for member cities. The enhancement also aligns with UNESCO's commitment to strengthening North-South and South-South cooperation towards building sustainable and resilient cities of tomorrow and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Creating effective cooperation: pairing applicant cities with member cities

Cities from the Global South have specific expectations from the Network, including receiving practical support and possibilities of mentoring. Similarly, some member cities have expressed their willingness to commit to broader, more systematic cooperation with their counterparts from the Global South to support their applications and active participation in the Network.

Through this specific Cooperation Framework, UNESCO invites applicant cities from Africa and the Arab States to express their interest in cooperation with current member cities in the preparation of their application, but also, eventually, in the implementation of their action plan in case of their designation. Meanwhile, UNESCO encourages its Creative Cities to commit to this Cooperation Framework and to express their interest in this city-to-city partnership.

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[5] Regions defined by UNESCO are Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The list of Member States and Associate Members that are eligible for participating in the Cooperation Framework can be found here: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380873 (pp.141-143)

Expressions of interest from applicant cities of these two regions shall reach UNESCO no later than 3 April 2023. The UCCN Secretariat will then coordinate with the creative clusters concerned to identify member cities interested in partnering with the requesting applicant cities. If successful, the Secretariat will liaise with the paired cities so as to establish the cooperation between them by **13 April 2023**.

> **NB** While the cooperation framework aims to improve the graphical representation within the Network, **it does not prejudge the final decision on the designation**, which is based on the evaluations undertaken by independent experts and member cities.

Selected applicant cities will receive technical support from their counterpart city in the preparation of their application. The support may be provided in the form of technical assistance, field missions and/or partnering according to the pair's mutual agreement. Partner cities are encouraged to pursue their cooperation if the applicant city is designated, so as to facilitate the smooth implementation of the proposed action plan as well as extend the scope and the impact of this Cooperation Framework through potential collective activities and projects.