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UNESCO World Book Capital Programme

Application Guidelines

Overview

What is the UNESCO World Book Capital programme?

Launched in 2001, UNESCO World Book Capital (WBC) programme actively supports creativity, education and knowledge through books and reading. Cities designated as UNESCO World Book Capital carry out activities with the aim of encouraging a culture of reading, storytelling, literacy, freedom of expression and international exchange.

The designated cities commit to promoting books and fostering reading during a 12-month period and beyond.

How are the cities chosen?

The Call for Applications is open to all cities of UNESCO's Member States and Associate Members. A special effort is made to involve all regions of the world in conformity with the principle of geographic balance. The **Director-General of UNESCO** designates the World Book Capitals.

The selection process consists of a pre-screening for eligibility and external consultations with members of the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee examines applications to the WBC programme and makes recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO.

The Advisory Committee is made up of one representative of each from UNESCO, the **International Authors Forum** (IAF), the **International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions** (IFLA), the **International Publishers Association** (IPA) and the **European and International Booksellers Federation** (EIBF). The Committee meets once every year.

The **Director-General of UNESCO** designates the World Book Capitals, in line with the values and objectives guiding the Organization, and in conformity with the procedure set out below.

One city is appointed each year. Designation indicates recognition of the quality, relevance and feasibility of the strategy and proposed action plan outlined in the Application. Achieving the title of World Book Capital does not entail a financial award from UNESCO.

To ensure a balanced regional representation, UNESCO does not designate cities the same region[1] in two consecutive years. The annual Call for Applications will specify which region is ineligible year by year. A city in a country that has previously hosted a UNESCO World Book Capital will only be considered if at least 10 years have passed since the designation of the previous host city.

[1] According to its own criteria based on operational needs, UNESCO distinguishes five regions: Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Criteria

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- The city's vision for candidature.
- Activities to be implemented in an inclusive manner during the city's mandate as World Book Capital, with long-term benefits for society at large.
- Quality and scope of past or ongoing activities organized by the applicant city in collaboration with local, national, regional and international professional organizations representing writers, publishers, translators, booksellers, librarians or other representatives of the book sector.
- A budget proposal including a detailed breakdown of expenses foreseen, accompanied by fundraising strategies.
- Monitoring and evaluation plans of the impact of the programs.
- Any other noteworthy projects – including partnerships with cities in the Global South – promoting and fostering reading, storytelling, linguistic diversity and literacy.
- Conformity with the principles of freedom of expression, freedom to publish and the right to public information, as expressed in the UNESCO Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions.

Application

Online form

All applications must be submitted through the UNESCO online form available on UNESCO's World Book Capital webpage. Candidates who encounter problems submitting in this manner, or who have questions concerning the procedure, may write to: wbcc@unesco.org.

Applicant cities should provide answers to each section avoiding simple 'lists' of activities or initiatives. The application must be consistent and succinct, and written in English or French. Applications submitted in other languages will not be taken into consideration.

Applications that do not conform to the required standard format, as well as those that are incomplete and/or received after the deadline will not be considered. It is the sole responsibility of applicants to ensure that submissions are delivered to the Secretariat on time. An email acknowledgment will be sent to the applicant once the application file has been received.

Questions and content of the online Application Form

(Section 2 of Application Form) Presentation of the main geographical, demographic, cultural and economic characteristics of the city, its governance structure and international connections. Vision for plan of action.

- The overall cultural profile of the city. Overall vision and uniqueness of the application. The city's main assets.
- Main reasons why the city chose to apply for UNESCO World Book Capital. The role of literature, books or storytelling in the city's history and development.
- The current economic importance of the book sector in the city, evidenced by the latest data and statistics. The number of enterprises in the book sector.
- Current governmental measures at national and local level to promote the book sector and support its growth. Public policies established to tackle the issue of freedom of expression and protect copyright.
- Projected and targeted long-term impact of designation. Plans to sustain the impact of the World Book Capital programme beyond the year.
- The city's expertise in organising local, national and international fairs, conferences, exhibitions and cultural activities including for the promotion of the book sector. The main facilities and infrastructure of the city conducive to hosting such events.
- Outline of target groups who will benefit from the designation. Particular attention may be paid to the inclusion of marginalized groups and communities, as well as the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity.

(Section 3 of Application Form) Presentation of the capacity and scope of activities to involve public, private and civil society operators as well as national, regional and international professional organisations representing writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and the educational and literary communities. Reference may be made to how the city plans to leverage books and literature to overcome development challenges, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy, and the UNESCO 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration and UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education.

The design and preparation of the application submitted by the city must involve stakeholders from the world of books, literacy or human rights, drawn from the private and public sectors, academia and civil society, as well as writers, professionals and educators.

- How each of these groups has been consulted and/or engaged in the process of preparing the application. How each group will benefit from the designation.
- How activities for the year were chosen, how the local/national government or ministries were involved, and how the local population will be engaged. The extent to which links will be developed between the book sector and other creative fields.
- Plans for sustaining the activities after the year of designation, including a vision for the medium-term (four years) cultural, social and economic impact of designation on the city.
- Evidence for plans on how such impact will be monitored and evaluated.
- Plans to raise awareness of freedom of expression, freedom to publish, copyright/the public right to information among government and individuals.

(Section 4 of Application Form) Presentation of an appropriate activity programme describing the main initiatives that the city commits to undertaking, within the framework of its designation, such as conferences, book fairs, festivals, exhibitions, contests, book clubs, author sessions, lectures, performances, or other activities like training, publications, book donations and distribution, support and enlargement of reading facilities. The proposed initiatives must be specifically conceived for World Book Capital. They should be implemented during the year of designation, but with long-term benefits for partners and society at large. Applicant cities must possess thorough understanding of these documents before filling in this section.

Presentation of a **minimum of 5 projects** in total – at least 3 at the local (city) level, and at least 2 with an international element – and structure of the activity programme, including the range and diversity of the activities/main events that will mark the year.

The proposed initiatives should be concrete, coherent and feasible. It is recommended to describe the main planned initiatives rather than multiple theoretical lists of actions. Initiatives, involving the public and private sectors, marginalised or vulnerable groups, writers and translators, civil society, professional associations, cultural institutions, libraries, publishing houses, foundations, etc. are encouraged.

- Strategy to attract the interest of an international audience. Regional and international collectives, associations, organisations and cities with which cooperation is envisaged.
- International partnerships the city has already established or plans to establish, especially in favour of strengthening North-South and South-South cooperation, are encouraged.
- Extent to which city plans to develop links with, and between, previous World Book Capitals in its programme of activities.

(Section 5 of Application Form) Presentation of a relevant plan for communication and awareness-raising for the year of designation and beyond.

- The city's intended marketing and communication strategy, with at least five key messages to communicate.
- Full details concerning the communications team.
- Main target groups of the communication campaign and how they will be engaged.
- Inventive plans to ensure media coverage and for related promotional partnerships.
- Evidence of existing, or previous, links with the press or other media-channels.
- Quality of plans for monitoring and evaluation in both the short- and long-term.

(Section 6 of Application Form) Presentation of a general outline of expenses foreseen and fundraising strategies; a realistic budget, showing the degree of certainty on each budget line; the various assured or potential donors from government, foundations, private sector or others.

- Overall feasibility and coherence of budget as related to action plan. Demonstrate how the budget has been calculated and its precise usage. Existing commitments from the authorities (city, region, country) to cover operational expenditure.
- Fundraising strategy to seek financial support from public and private sponsors. Clear and convincing presentation of related timeline.

(Section 7 of Application Form) Essential supplementary documents.

The following documents must be uploaded in a PDF or Word format (either in English or French):

- A letter of support from the Mayor of the candidate city.
- A letter of endorsement of from the National Commission for UNESCO of the country in which the city is located.
- Two letters of support from an active national professional association[2] related to the book industry.
- The "Grant of Rights from for image usage" form duly filled out.

The following files must be uploaded in PNG or JPEG (minimum 300 DPI):

- Three photos of your city related to promoting books and reading.

No other document or attachment will be accepted and considered in the evaluation process. A maximum of two URL links to relevant websites may be entered in the online form. The applicant city is also encouraged to provide information related to social media platforms.

[2] For example, a letter of endorsement from the national writers' association, national library, etc.

Preparation

Ahead of application

The city should first establish a dedicated management or coordination team within the municipality or within a specific department, center or entity. This team should appoint a focal point or director to serve as the primary liaison with UNESCO. This team will hold ultimate responsibility for drafting the application.

If the application is successful, it is highly recommended that this same team, along with a municipal representative, take charge of implementing the proposed program.

The application must be driven by local public authorities. It should also be informed by wide stakeholder consultation and reflect the voice 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 writers, editors, translators, publishers, librarians, educators, policy-makers, campaigners or other book sector representatives.

Key factors to consider during the preparation stage are:

- **Participatory process:** The preparation and formulation of the application must be driven by the municipality but should result from a participatory process with all the relevant stakeholders and partners of the public and private sectors as well as civil society. The applicant should show evidence of this participatory process.
- **Sustainable action plan, capacities and resources:** The application should include a strategy, to be implemented following designation, for the city to achieve both short (the year of designation) and longer-term goals at the local and international level.

Following submission of application

Candidates will receive an email to confirm their submission. Upon completion, there will be the option to download your entire application; it is recommended to save your application.

Designated cities commit to submitting an interim report during the first part of the year of designation, and a final report on the activities implemented during the entire year. Successful cities will sign an agreement with UNESCO in which they agree to organise an opening ceremony to which UNESCO and members of the Advisory Committee will be invited.

UNESCO, with the members of the Advisory Committee, will assist the chosen capital in the planning and implementation of its activity programme (during the years prior to its mandate). If the preparatory work does not meet the required standards or

expectations, UNESCO may revoke the title from the city at any time, with one month's notice.

Application steps

- **Submission**
  Applications must be submitted using an online form. Late submissions or those in a non-standard format will not be considered.

- **Technical pre-screening**
  UNESCO Secretariat examines the eligibility of each application (e.g. all required documents are provided; form duly completed; formal letters attached as per Guidelines).

- **Evaluation by the Advisory Committee**
  The Advisory Committee conducts a review of all eligible applications using the criteria set above.

- **Designation and announcement by the Director-General of UNESCO**

Frequently Asked Questions

When will we know if our city's application is successful?

The announcement of the designation will be published on the WBC website. The eligible cities whose applications were evaluated will be informed of the result in the days following the designation announcement.

Can we involve the adjacent areas of the city in the candidature?

It is possible for the applicant city to involve the adjacent or surrounding region in the application process and reflect the latter's contribution to the proposed strategy and related action plan. However, the applicant city must bear primary responsibility and accountability for the application and plan of action.

Does the size of a city matter?

There is no limitation to the number of inhabitants in a city applying for the designation.

Can we insert images, charts or diagrams directly in our application?

It is not possible to include **images, charts or diagrams directly** in the Application Form, with the exception of three photos of the applicant city that must be uploaded. However, the designated city can submit these additional materials with a view to reinforcing communication and outreach.

Which considerations should guide the proposed budget in the application?

There is no minimum or maximum amount foreseen for the provisional budget included in the application. However, the evaluators will assess the quality of the strategy and 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.