

GUIDE FOR INTERESTED CITIES AND PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

UNESCO Cities of Literature

We are a global network of cities who specialise in the literary arts; the UNESCO designation 'City of Literature' recognises excellence and places an obligation on cities to nurture their art form and collaborate internationally by sharing best practice, supporting freedom of speech and running projects which ensure literature reaches as wide and diverse an audience as possible, locally and internationally.

The Cities of Literature are part of a wider UNESCO Creative Cities Network currently made up of 246 UNESCO Creative Cities globally. Members from over 70 countries covering seven creative fields: Crafts & Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music and Media Arts have all received UNESCO designations which recognise past, present and future: a strong cultural heritage, a vibrant and diverse contemporary cultural scene, and aspirations to extend culture to the next generation at home and to other cities in a global partnership.

Designation as a UNESCO City of Literature is awarded in perpetuity, and the applications process demands significant resource in terms of partnership working, business planning and formulating a shared cultural vision for your city, to ensure that the network is vibrant and sustainable. As a result, it may seem like an intimidating process. This guide is intended to give interested cities some pointers and examples of good practice to help them get started.

Values

As UNESCO Cities of Literature, we have committed to the following internal values that should guide our work, relationships and activities:

1. We will build a welcoming and cooperative network that reflects the diversity and richness of the world's languages and literatures;
2. We will promote the value of dialogue and freedom of speech and expression in all our activities;
3. We will pursue international opportunities through the network that benefit our local and national literary sectors;
4. We will work to strengthen the relationships between all creative cities around the globe;
5. We will be active and proactive in our communications with each other and our partners.

Looking to apply?

We love the work that we do and the international collaborations that the Creative Cities Network makes possible, and we actively encourage new cities to think about applying. We are particularly interested in forging links with countries or regions that aren't currently represented.

We welcome enquiries from any offices that would like to explore the possibility of applying in the future. We can work with you in an advisory capacity throughout your application process, engaging with you in a practical way and helping you to understand the network. In fact, we recommend all cities to go through this process, to ensure that their application contains what we consider to be all the criteria for success. The following document outlines what we feel to be the most important performance indicators, and what we can contribute during what we hope will be a time of exciting change and development for your city.

For further details, please contact the Chair of the Cities of Literature subgroup, John Kenyon at john-kenyon@iowacityofliterature.org.

Mentoring

We are prepared to 'mentor' applicant cities, with a representative from the group consulting with you via phone, video call and email as you develop your applications. This mentoring could cover practical advice on budgets, service level agreements, effective approaches to programming and communications, as well as strategic guidance, partnership brokering, etc.

If you are interested in joining such a "buddy system", please contact our Cities of Literature Chair, John Kenyon at john-kenyon@iowacityofliterature.org.

Communication and Partnerships

Partnership working is absolutely vital: a City of Literature office's work goes further and deeper when it harnesses effective partnerships of creative organizations such as literature development agencies, literature houses, booksellers, publishers, festivals, venues and universities, their networks stretching into the private sector, civil society, government and academia. As UNESCO states, the current importance and dynamism of the cultural sector, and particularly the creative field concerned, in the city's development should be demonstrated in the design and preparation of the application.

How to move ahead

All this work is underpinned by a budget and funding strategy. Before committing to the process of applying for the UNESCO designation, your city needs to establish finance and backing for the programme, and an office or a coordinating institution to take this on. Financing and running a UNESCO designated city varies from city to city. Your city's management model will depend on local cultural infrastructure, partnerships, and funding opportunities. We can share business and operational models of existing practices that can help find the best solution for your city.

Cities of Literature need to be able to spend their budget in local, international, cross-sectorial and joint projects, and as such fundraising, reporting and evaluation to stakeholders are at the heart of sustainability for many city members of the network. We're all having to demonstrate *impact*, introduce *measures of success* and put *accountability systems* in place to our funders.

As well as well-developed mechanisms for creating, producing and promoting literature, it's also important to demonstrate that your city actively engages people in cultural life, and particularly for marginalized or vulnerable groups. As well as excellence and breadth of art form, we want to hear about the social and political concerns that motivate your work. The Cities of Literature group includes representatives from organisations that specialise in freedom of speech, cultural diversity, programming for young people, engaging communities and other socially motivated aspects of literature development. If you are grappling with pressing social problems or targeting specific forms of deprivation in your city and region, we may be able to assist in unexpected ways.

Freedom of Speech

Working with writers internationally, we are often asked about freedom of speech. It is our belief that dialogue and channels of communication can support writers in their work. Your writers inevitably want to be part of a wider world, and becoming a City of Literature is one way of encouraging this.

Resourcing the Network

The sustainability of the Cities of Literature network is entirely dependent on the collaborative efforts of its members, and we are anxious to ensure that applications demonstrate capacity for this. A poll of Cities of Literature representatives in 2017 estimated that half a day to a day per week's labour, reporting directly to the Subgroup, is the minimum expectation. This might be spent in publicising the network locally and internationally, taking part in Working Groups at the request of the Subgroup chair, assessing new applications to the network, commenting on UCCN strategic papers, developing collaborative projects with partner cities in the network, etc. The salary and office resource for this need to be paid for locally, along with the costs of a city representative attending at least one international meeting per year.

Next Steps

In advance of your application, we encourage you communicate with us actively. And feel free to come and visit us, too! Tell us about what you do and explore how we might collaborate. The assessment will consider whether applicants have made contact with members, with whom and how substantive that contact was. This is another integral criteria.

Letters of Support

Collectively, our position is that we don't issue letters of support for a city, but we do encourage you to develop meaningful relationships with other cities of literature. We need to believe that you have the credentials and commitment to be a City of Literature. We do not sign contracts or any other binding

agreements with applicant cities. Please note that letters of support are not required for the UCCN application.

Checklist

UNESCO's ambition is for a global network of several hundred cities to fuel research into concepts like the creative economy, cultural tourism, city diplomacy and sustainable urban development. We hope that these notes have provided a vision of how our expansion and collaboration feed into this longer-term plan. Remember, you can never stop being a City of Literature!

On your road to submitting an application, here are some steps we think you should consider.

- Contact the Chair of the Cities of Literature and express your interest in applying
- Review the websites and social media pages of all the existing members to find out more about their projects and programmes – www.citiesoflit.com
- Read the applications written by the members and observe what they emphasized
- Consult with the Chair of the Cities of Literature on the values and priorities of the sub-network
- Contact the Cities of Literature to inquire about their experiences in the network
- Prepare an answer to the question, “Why are we bidding?” and “10 Things to Know About...[Insert Your City of Literature Name]”. This is your ‘elevator pitch’, your key message to communicate your politicians, newspapers, etc.
- Speak to your National Commission as soon as possible to discuss your potential bid
- Hold public meetings with stakeholders and the public in order to gather feedback about the needs of the literary sector and how the accreditation can help the sector
- Educate your stakeholders about the accreditation. Draw attention to the fact that it is not a prize, but an obligation and long-term commitment to improving the well-being of the city through creativity, and specifically literature

FAQs:

Who is the main point of contact for the group?

As the group's coordinator, John Kenyon serves as the main contact and can help you create all the necessary connections you might need to make your application reflect your strengths, as well as the goals and objectives of the network and subnetwork. All members serve as fantastic contacts, and you are free to reach out to every member prior to application.

Please be mindful that lobbying is heavily discouraged and in fact, only demonstrates a misunderstanding of how the network and application process work. Relationship building is the most important thing. While it's interesting to know how many libraries and bookstores there are in your city, what is more useful is to know what your vision for the future is and how you believe you can cooperate with other members. Refrain from sending promotional and informational material without context or established relationships with the members. Communicate with John and he will advise on the next steps.

So this is a prize that we can win for being the best?

The City of Literature designation is not a prize, trophy or accolade. It is recognition for the municipality's literary and creative heritage; health, depth, scope and vibrancy of the contemporary scene; cohesive vision and development strategy. It is an investment in the future and enormous responsibility, often marking a new stage for the city as it opens itself up to a long-term global partnership.

It is also an opportunity, because it expands the possibilities and ways in which you can support and elevate your local literary and creative sectors. The designation helps to not only integrate and engage citizens, writers and artists, but also institutions, the private and tourism sector, and more, through diverse literary activities, local, national and global cooperation and strategies.

Will UNESCO give us money for our projects?

This is a common misconception. Membership in the network is not connected with any kind of financial subsidies, nor with access to funds. All expenses connected to the municipal UNESCO programme should be factored into the municipal budget or in the budget of the institution that will be implementing the programme. However, the network gives member cities the opportunity to cooperate on external funds, either national or international.

Where can I find information about how many people work in the various Cities of Literature offices and how they organize their work?

John can send you a summary of this information.

Each city organises their office in a way that makes sense for them, and there is no one model that you need to adopt. Feel free to contact John if you want to find out who would be useful to talk to, or any other coordinator that you've identified as an interesting case for you.

How much money do I need to run my programme?

This is the quintessential 'How long is a piece of string?' question and you will have to find the answer from examining your goals and expectations.

At the very least you will need the following:

- Annual salary of a director of the office
- An office space for this person
- A budget for website development and maintenance
- A budget for organising events or at least having a presence at other larger events / the hosting of meetings between literary agencies and organisations etc.
- A budget for promotional material
- A travel fund for attending UNESCO conferences twice yearly

You should create strategy documents for your city, and outline what your vision and goals are. This will help you identify what human and financial resources you need.

I'm just starting to write our UNESCO City of Literature application, any tips?

The designation is for the city, and so the application should be written by the city. What we mean by that is this application should be as widely a group effort as possible, because the designation should provide benefit and positively influence the local sector as broadly and effectively as possible.

You will need the help and advice of many experts and stakeholders, so assemble them together to help you. This is about your city and must be a shared endeavour. These are the people who will go on to support you in your work after designation. Start by calling together any interested parties you can think of, so you can ascertain that enough will and drive exists within the city to help in gaining the designation, and then drawing benefit from it afterwards.

Work with the Mayor's office and local cultural departments from the beginning so you don't have to convince them AFTER you've done all the work. They should also be involved from early on in drawing up the bid.

Speak to existing Cities of Literature to broaden your knowledge and understanding of the work that others do in the world of literature – this will temper or broaden your expectations and get you started on networking, communicating and exchanging ideas. If at all possible, video call and visit current member cities.

Be really clear about why you want to bid to be a UNESCO City of Literature and what difference the designation and the programmes you will run will make to your city and the people who live there. Everyone will ask you this question so be ready.

I'd like to reach out to existing members and learn from their experience. Where can I find all the contact details for the coordinators?

Email the current Cities of Literature coordinator, John Kenyon at john-kenyon@iowacityofliterature.org and he will give you the relevant contact details. These are, of course, already available on the UNESCO Creative Cities Network website but the contact with the coordinator can really help in achieving a better overview of the network and who may be best to answer all your questions.

Resources

[UNESCO Creative Cities Network website](#)

[UNESCO Cities of Literature Subnetwork website](#)