

Guidelines for Canadian cities seeking membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

1. Context

Launched in 2004, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) aims to strengthen cooperation with and among cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development as regards economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022, has further recognized culture’s strategic role and reaffirmed culture as a “global public good”. The MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration advocates for a systemic anchoring of culture in public policies at the local level by calling for stronger efforts to engage and mobilize different stakeholders, notably through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

By joining the network, cities acknowledge their commitment to: sharing best practices; developing partnerships that promote creativity and the cultural industries, with the public and private sectors as well as civil society; strengthening participation in cultural life; and integrating culture in urban development plans. The network further commits to supporting the United Nations frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes among its 17 goals a specific objective to ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music.

Although the designation is based on the strength of a city in the specific cultural field, membership in the network should not be seen as a recognition and celebration of past achievements. Rather, it is a commitment that cities will support sustainable development through culture, today and in the future. Member cities are expected to participate actively in the network and invest in mobilizing their cultural sector as an instigator and generator of sustainable development.

Currently, four Canadian cities are members of the network: Montreal (Design, 2006), Toronto (Media Arts, 2017), Quebec City (Literature, 2017), London (Music, 2021).

For further information:

- [UCCN Mission Statement](#)
- [MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration](#)
- [Global Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities](#)

2. UCCN governance and requirements of member cities

UNESCO coordinates the network at the global level, including the membership process and convening the UCCN Annual Meeting. A Steering Group, comprised of representatives of each creative field, acts as a liaison between UNESCO and the 7 creative fields.

UCCN member cities are expected to:

- implement activities in line with the [UCCN Mission Statement](#);
- participate in a [periodic reporting exercise](#) every four years, starting on the year of designation;
- participate in the UCCN Annual Meeting;
- participate in Canadian UCCN quarterly meetings;
- participate actively in the creative field activities.

National Commissions play a role in the process for becoming a member of UCCN. Applicant cities must consult the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO)**. Applications will be subjected to an independent peer review process convened by CCUNESCO. Successful applicants will subsequently be invited to submit a full application to UNESCO.

3. Process for membership in the network

A call for applications takes place every two years (2023, 2025, 2027 etc.). The final decision on membership remains the prerogative of the Director-General of UNESCO, based on recommendations provided by external experts and the UCCN Steering Group. Applicant cities submit their application directly to UNESCO and **must include a mandatory endorsement from the National Commission**. For more information on building a complete application, consult the most recent [call for applications guidance on the UCCN website](#).

Expression of interest

Candidates are asked to formally express their interest to CCUNESCO **by 30 September 2024**, by:

- Filling out the expression of interest form
- Submitting a support letter from the municipal administration signed by the mayor

A review committee will select which candidates are invited to move forward with a full application by **November 1, 2024**.

4. Steps & Timeline

Steps	Timeline	Actions
1	30 September 2024	The candidate sends an expression of interest; CCUNESCO confirms receipt.
2	1 October – 30 October 2024	Committee reviews expressions of interest.
3	1 November 2024	CCUNESCO provides feedback and invites successful candidate(s) to submit full application.
4	6 January 2025	Complete application submitted to CCUNESCO.
5	13 January 2025	CCUNESCO confirms receipt.
6	15 January – 31 March 2025	Peer assessment and application review process; CCUNESCO provides feedback and support to ensure a comprehensive application.
7	April 2025	CCUNESCO submits its recommendation to its Executive Committee for endorsement.
8	1 June 2025	CCUNESCO issues an endorsement letter.
9	June 2025 (Exact date TBD)	City submits full application to UNESCO/UCCN Secretariat.
10	July-August 2025	UCCN Secretariat acknowledges receipt and reviews applications.
11	Fall 2025	UCCN Secretariat announces list of new members.