



UCLG AFRICA
United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis d'Afrique
CGLU AFRIQUE

AFRICAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE (ACoC)

SUMMARY NOTE ON THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final

24 March 2026

PREAMBLE

This "Summary Note" is a complementary and technical document to the proposed "Terms of Reference" for the African Capital of Culture.

This document was drafted by a team comprising Culture et Développement (Valeria Marcolin) and the "UCLG World" Committee on Culture (through its coordinator, Jordi

Pascual) to illustrate the discussions and proposals adopted in the preparation of the Terms of Reference for the African Capital of Culture.

The document includes the debates that took place during the drafting of the initial document (July 2023), written by Antoine Guibert and developed in collaboration with the UCLG Africa team and its Secretary General, Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi. It also incorporates more recent exchanges and suggestions (December 2025 to February 2026) within the UCLG World Committee on Culture, with external support from experts Alessandro Lamonica, Cristina Farinha, Jordi Baltà and U-seok Seo, and in constant liaison with the UCLG Africa Secretariat.

A. MAIN POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Diverse administrative capacities and risk of exclusion

The initial document assumed uniform administrative capacities, whereas there is a significant gap between cities such as Rabat and Brazzaville in terms of knowledge, resources and available tools.

2. Risks identified

Costly outsourcing of skills, low local skills development, concentration of the process in better-equipped cities, weaknesses in planning and monitoring.

3. Financial model less suited to the sub-Saharan African context

The initial financial model was too linear, with a heavy dependence on states and donors, and an excessive weighting of the budget in the evaluation criteria. Many local authorities depend on unequal and unpredictable transfers from states. On the other hand, they can raise exceptional investments for events that then promote the development of current budgets dedicated to culture (e.g. Dakar). The requirement to provide cultural budgets for a given number of years is problematic in sub-Saharan Africa, where funding depends on variable transfers from the state. It is not required in the European programme.

4. Selection criteria and general vocabulary

The criteria were heavily inspired by European and Latin American models, with language that was sometimes vague ("minimum scope", "adequate") and a need for reinforcement and additional anchoring to African references both in the texts and in cultural practices (Agenda 2063, Charter for Cultural Renaissance).

5. Deadlines and process

The application (6 months) and pre-selection deadlines were considered too short in relation to local realities. More flexibility should be integrated into the provisional timetables. They have been changed to 9 months (one expert suggests 12 months); the support mechanism between the two phases of the application process could be strengthened.

6. Underrepresented cross-cutting issues

- a) **Multilingualism**: linguistic diversity, oral tradition, illiteracy to be taken into account
- b) **Digital divide**: attention must be paid to the balance between optional digital criteria and international visibility requirements
- c) **Traditional and informal economies and cultural practices**: references to these aspects should be improved as they are still predominant in Africa
- d) **Governance and anti-corruption**: need for mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest
- e) **Inequality of opportunity between territories**: wording and criteria tend to favour large capitals/metropolises
- f) Proposal for a **workshop** option entitled "Seven Keys"; possibility of using "Culture 21 Plus" as an alternative

B. MAIN MEASURES INCLUDED

1. Stronger anchoring through explicit references to Agenda 2063, the African Cultural Renaissance Charter, etc.
2. Integration of concepts and wording aligned with practices ("populations and communities" rather than citizens), emphasis on specific features such as informal practices, communities and learning, traditional modes of transmission, culture as a tool for mediation and conflict resolution, importance of social cohesion and living together, culture of peace, etc.
3. Encouragement of multilingualism and the promotion of local languages, including in the communication campaign (e.g., oral dissemination).
4. Consideration of digital technology as an opportunity but also a limitation (digital divide within the continent and territories).
5. Possibility of joint applications: cost sharing and capacity building, possible synergies.
6. Revision of budgetary requirements in the pre-selection and selection process, revision of weightings in the overall evaluation; clarification and illustration of certain terms such as "realistic budgets"; integration of budget proportionality in relation to city size (to encourage applications from medium-sized cities).
7. Revision of the weighting of infrastructure and clarification of terminology.

8. Clarification of the role of the State to avoid excessive interference (to be checked with UCLG-Africa).
9. Revision of overall evaluation criteria.
10. Addition of a reference to the possibility of creating advisory councils alongside the Jury.
11. Revision of references to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, taking into account that these practices are not widely used, particularly in the cultural field; there was an internal contradiction between requiring candidates to have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism (which is relevant as it is appropriate for the programme) and a mechanism that would be provided by UCLG-A. This point needs to be reviewed across the terms of reference to ensure that expectations are feasible in relation to local capacities, including in the assessment of the final evaluation (should it be more of a capacity-building mechanism?).
12. Addition of references to sustainability issues (which are however absent from the evaluation criteria > integrate them?)
13. Balance between references to intra-African and international cooperation.
14. Addition of the four pillar actions of the programme: Culture Ministers Forum, Mayors Forum, professional days, African and Afro-descendant Culture Day.

C. OTHER MEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT (IN PARTICULAR, UCLG-AFRICA)

1. Add a requirement for candidates to present **mechanisms for managing potential conflicts of interest** (e.g. links with governance and/or financial links with the technical and artistic teams of candidate cities; ongoing missions for candidate cities)?
2. **Composition of the jury:** open call for applications to avoid bias or conflicts of interest?
3. **Support for intermediate cities/equal opportunities:** Publication of an annotated guide for candidates (UNESCO FIDC model) and a guide for public evaluators (European programme model)?
4. Review **the roles and responsibilities of UCLG Africa**
5. Addition of **roles and responsibilities** for UCLG – World.

This document has been written in the frame of:



A programme by:



With the support of:

