

UCLG INTERNATIONAL AWARD – MEXICO CITY – CULTURE 21

7th EDITION

PEER-LEARNING EXERCISE AND AWARD CEREMONY

7, 8 AND 9 OCTOBER 2026

MEXICO CITY

PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The 7th edition of the **UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award** aims to recognise cities, local or regional governments and prominent figures who have excelled in promoting innovative practices linked to the exercise of cultural rights, citizenship and sustainable development.

The Award reaffirms Mexico City's leadership in the relationship between culture and sustainable development, as well as UCLG's commitment to positioning culture as a fundamental dimension of sustainable cities.

To mark the conclusion of this edition, a peer-learning exercise will be held in Mexico City **from 7 to 9 October 2026**. The programme is structured around the two thematic axes of the 7th edition:

- Cultural rights and care.
- Cultural policies and gender equality.

Both themes will be explored over the three days, drawing on the experiences of the winning candidatures, the special mentions, the two award-winning personalities, as well as other cities participating in this edition and members of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network.

A working group of approximately 40 people is expected to attend, including representatives from cities and local governments participating in this edition of the Award, award-winning figures, members of the Jury, as well as representatives from the host city and local cultural organisations and stakeholders. This group will work over two and a half days, during which they will take part in discussions, present their projects, compare their experiences with those of other cities, and establish professional contacts that will underpin future collaborations.

THE TWO AXES OF THE AWARD

a) Cultural rights and care. Care, understood as the collective organisation of life and the relationships that underpin it, is increasingly present in local cultural policies. From this perspective, culture is conceived as a space for reconfiguring the bonds between people and with nature, generating new forms of coexistence, well-being and justice. Cultural policies, programmes and projects based on cultural rights and care recognise the value of creativity, diversity and heritage as resources for regenerating community life. Linked to local strategies on health, inclusion and

wellbeing, they address social, economic and environmental justice in an integrated manner and redress the legacies of discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, these cultural policies, programmes and projects can be understood as a care infrastructure when they give concrete form to the relationships that underpin community life.

b) Cultural policies and gender equality. Gender equality is a common cross-cutting approach across municipal responsibilities and actions. Cultural policies, programmes and projects can help to re-examine gender narratives from a feminist perspective and incorporate an intersectional approach that ensures equity. These cultural policies, programmes and projects contribute to creatively transforming the narrative and collective imagination of cities and territories, so that they reflect the history, identity and values of the populations that inhabit them in a diverse, inclusive, pluralistic and representative manner. Taking cultural factors into account – and how these facilitate or hinder the exercise of human rights – is essential to understanding that cultural representations, and in turn social norms and behaviours, can be at the root of gender inequalities and the inability of women and girls to fully exercise their rights.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PEER-LEARNING EXERCISE

This peer-learning exercise aims:

- To foster learning amongst the winning cities, those that have received a special mention, and other candidate cities in this edition, by comparing policies, programmes and projects that place cultural rights, care and gender equality at the heart of local public action.
- To bring international experience into dialogue with the reality of Mexico City, involving people from the host city as active participants in the exercise and not merely as organisers.
- To identify potential avenues for collaboration between the participating cities and to document specific commitments for follow-up.

METHODOLOGY

This peer-learning exercise combines plenary sessions, breakout group work and a shared programme of field visits.

The opening sessions will combine presentations by Mexico City, the winning cities, special mentions and/or good practices, alongside visits to key sites within the local cultural ecosystem, group work exercises and discussions on the Award's two thematic areas.

Mexico City proposes visits to UTOPIÁS, facilities, programmes or project sites linked to care, gender equality and territories.

With the aim of decentralising the programme, it is hoped that some of the working sessions can be held at the venues visited. Each visit may include a contextual presentation, a guided tour, city presentations and a structured dialogue or working session linking the local experience with the practices of the participating cities.

The afternoon of Thursday 8th is set aside to allow for preparation, travel and attendance at the Award Ceremony. Friday 9th will be devoted to summarising what has been learnt, including the identification of potential collaborations and bilateral contacts organised between cities, as well as to preparations for the next edition of the Award.

AGENDA

7 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
08:00	Meeting point TBC (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel
09:00– 09:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Official opening. Mexico City Secretary of Culture and UCLG.
09:30– 11:15	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Session 1. Cultural policies and gender equality.
11:15– 11:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Coffee break
11:30– 13:15	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Session 2. Cultural rights and care.
13:15– 14:45	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Lunch
14:45– 16:30	UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor	Presentation of the project and working session in the venue itself, with city presentations and a group discussion. Participatory exercise to share the day's conclusions. Group photo.
17:15– 18:45	Floating Garden Tlallipan / University of the Arts (Tlaxcoaque Square). Murals	Visit 1
18:45– 20:00	Floating Garden Tlallipan / University of the Arts (Tlaxcoaque Square). Murals	Welcome cocktail
20:00– 20:20	Floating Garden Tlallipan / University of the Arts (Tlaxcoaque Square). Murals	Return to the hotel

8 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
08:00	Meeting point TBC (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel
10:00– 11:45	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Visit 2. Itinerary. Presentation of the project and working session in the venue itself, with city presentations and a group discussion.
11:45– 12:00	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Coffee break
12:00– 13:30	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Session 3. From experiences to action: cultural rights, care and gender equality. Towards a new generation of cultural policies.

Time	Venue	Activity
13:30–14:15	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Lunch
14:15–16:15	UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo	Return to the hotel
From 16:15	---	Free afternoon to prepare for and organise the Award Ceremony.
18:45	Meeting point TBC (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel
19:00–22:00	José Luis Cuevas Museum	Award Ceremony for the 7th edition of the UCLG International Award – Mexico City – Culture 21, and cocktail.
22:00–22:20	José Luis Cuevas Museum	Return to the hotel

9 OCTOBER 2026

Time	Venue	Activity
08:35	Meeting point TBC (Hotel lobby)	Departure from the hotel
9:00–10:00	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Visit 3. Itinerary. Presentation of the project and working session in the venue itself, with city presentations and a group discussion.
10:00–10:30	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Coffee break
10:30–12:30	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Summary of learning outcomes, including the identification of potential collaborations and bilateral contacts organised between cities, as well as preparations for the next edition of the Award.
12:30–13:00	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Closing of the exercise and group photo.
13:00–13:20	The Foyer, Esperanza Iris City Theatre	Return to the hotel

- **UTOPIA Elena Poniatowska Amor (Coyoacán)**

UTOPIAS – Units for Transformation and Organisation for Inclusion and Social Harmony – are a project proposing a profound social transformation with social and urban impact: a space for encounter and wellbeing for families and communities. This UTOPIA takes its name in recognition of one of the most important authors in contemporary Mexican literature, and of her lasting commitment to social causes, historical memory and the defence of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

- **Floating Garden Tlalipan (elevated pedestrian walkway)**

Grounded in everyone's right to public space, Floating Garden Tlalipan is a safe pedestrian corridor that reclaims Calzada de Tlalpan, one of the city's most important thoroughfares, alongside the La Gran Tenochtitlan cycle path.

- **University of the Arts**

A new public, tuition-free institution built on the historic Plaza Tlaxcoaque, offering 19-degree programmes with no entrance exam, including Restoration, Dance, Theatre and Music.

This University is a project shaped by the voices of artists, communities and young people who understand that art also transforms and educates for freedom.

- **UTOPIA Centli in Topilejo (Tlalpan borough)**

This venue honours the cultural, food and environmental value of maize, as well as the Indigenous peoples of San Miguel Topilejo in the south of the capital.

It forms part of the Peace and Equality Territories (Territorios de Paz e Igualdad) strategy – a total of 32 territories across the city – which develops four pillars that strengthen citizen participation, promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts and drive coordination among Mexico City Government agencies, with the aim of building communities with greater wellbeing.

- **José Luis Cuevas Museum**

The former convent of Santa Inés is today home to the José Luis Cuevas Museum, dedicated to the work and collections of the artist of the same name. The building dates back to 1600 and was reconstructed at the end of the eighteenth century. It currently houses around 1,860 works of art, mostly by twentieth-century Latin American painters and illustrators.

- **Esperanza Iris City Theatre**

Built in the early twentieth century at the request of the renowned actress and singer Esperanza Iris, who asked architects Ignacio Capetillo and Federico Mariscal for a venue resembling La Scala in Milan. For over a decade it was considered Mexico's foremost theatre, staging world-class artists such as Enrico Caruso, Anna Pavlova and Titta Ruffo.

Today, the venue hosts the finest productions in theatre, dance and interdisciplinary performance – high-quality stagings that have established it as an essential stage.

TECHNICAL AND LOGISTICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE PEER-LEARNING EXERCISE

Interpretation

- Spanish-English interpretation will be provided throughout the two-and-a-half days of the workshop by one interpreter.
- Interpretation devices, receivers and headphones will be provided for all participants.

Coffee breaks

- Coffee, tea, water and light refreshments will be provided during the scheduled coffee breaks over the two-and-a-half days of the event.
- Lunches for participants on Day 1 and Day 2 will be provided.

Transport and accessibility

- Transport to some of the venues will be provided for all participants.