



MEMBERSHIP MONITORING REPORT

2020

Executive Summary

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Over the past four years, what it means to be a UNESCO City of Literature has changed significantly. When Iowa City was first designated in November 2008, it was the first such City of Literature in the United States, the third in the world, and one of fewer than 15 Creative Cities worldwide. Today, it is part of a vast global network, one of 39 Cities of Literature, and part of the 246-member Creative Cities Network. In addition, what is asked of a Creative City is fundamentally different, as the call to promote and support the local literary sector has been joined by larger, more global charge.

Increasingly, cities are asked to bring their creativity to bear on the weightiest issues in our world: Those addressed in the United Nations' 2030 Strategic Development Goals. In the case of Iowa City, this has involved macro and micro efforts. For example, at the city level, the government adopted a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan that outlines 35 actions to be taken by the community and City which will result in an 80 percent reduction of community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. At the City of Literature organization level, this has included efforts to raise awareness of the SDGs locally and regionally and to foster conversation about ways they can be addressed through individual and group efforts.

At the same time, the focus has remained on literature – its creation, its consumption, and its promotion. Iowa City earned its designation in large part because it is among the primary destinations for those in the United States – and increasingly, the rest of the world – who want to improve their writing.

The independent nonprofit organization formed to manage the designation on behalf of the city is a partnership among the cities of Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty; the University of Iowa, the Iowa City Public Library, Johnson County, and the Iowa City/ Coralville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (now known as Think Iowa City). The area business community, local foundations and charitable organizations also provide support, while thousands in the community attend events, read, write and financially support those efforts.



In 2016, the City of Literature organization set out five goals in a strategic plan designed to guide its operations through 2020. These included raising the profile of the city's designation and of the organization, evaluating needs of stakeholders, resourcing the organization, serving as a leader in the literary sector, and fulfilling the requirements set out by UNESCO for membership in the Creative Cities Network. While many of the goals in this plan were accomplished, work remains on evaluating needs of stakeholders, work that is expected to be completed in 2021 and 2022 in concert with other area arts and culture organizations.

In fall 2020, the organization approved a new plan to guide it through 2024. Its goals are inward- and outward-facing, seeking to strengthen its own operations to better facilitate the work called for to enhance the greater cultural community.

- 1. Programming innovations focused on collaboration and on connecting with new communities:** Explore options for increasing engagement online, within communities not currently reached by the City of Literature organization, and through collaborations with related and like-minded groups.
- 2. Board effectiveness enhancements:** Harness more of the talent and expertise among board members in support of the organization through such means as establishing board committees, developing financial modeling tools, and formalizing processes.
- 3. Marketing messaging:** Ensure the newly articulated mission and core values are clearly reflected in the City of Literature brand identity and messaging, and refine the website to support critical activities in a more robust manner.

As part of this work, the organization updated its Mission and Vision statements, and approved a set of Core Values:

MISSION

We build and support diverse communities of writers and audiences through the transformative power of story.

VISION

We foster collaborations with the goal of enriching local literary programs and expanding our global engagement.

VALUES:

Collaboration: We engage in complementary and cooperative work.

Community: We foster inclusive engagement to create connection locally and globally.

Creativity: We seek, engage, and support innovation.

2.1. Name of the city: Iowa City

2.2. Country: United States

2.3. Creative field of designation:
Literature

2.4. Date of designation: 2008

2.5. Date of submission of the current report: Dec. 31, 2020

2.6. Entity responsible for the report:
Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature organization

2.7. Previous reports submitted and dates: Nov. 30, 2016

2.8 Focal points of contact

Focal point:

John Kenyon

Executive Director

Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature
123 S. Linn St.

Iowa City, IA 52240 USA

(319) 356-5245

john-kenyon@iowacityofliterature.org

City government liaison:

Wendy Ford

Economic Development Coordinator

City of Iowa City

411 E. Washington St.

Iowa City, IA 52240 USA

(319) 356-5248

wendy-ford@iowa-city.org

Throughout this report, projects and programs not only will be seen as meeting one or more of the organization's stated strategic goals for the 2016-2020 period, but, when appropriate, will be explicitly linked with the areas of action set forth in the UCCN Mission Statement and with goals outlined in the UN's 2030 Strategic Development Goals.



3.1 Number of UCCN annual meetings attended in the last four years:

Three (no meeting in 2020). All City of Literature subnetwork meetings also have been attended.

3.2 Hosting of a UCCN annual meeting and dates:

N/A

3.3 Hosting of a working or coordination meeting addressed to one or more UCCN creative field representatives (including sub-network meetings):

Iowa City hosted the 2018 annual meeting of the Cities of Literature, welcoming 35 representatives from 22 of the network cities. Iowa City also hosted the first meeting of the U.S. Creative Cities in 2018.

3.4 Hosting of an international conference or meeting on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with a large participation of members of the Network:

N/A

3.5 Financial and/or in-kind support provided to UNESCO in order to strengthen the sustainability of the UCCN in different areas including management, communication and visibility (dates, types of contribution, factual or estimated amounts, main objectives, etc.)

The Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature organization provides significant in-kind support to UNESCO in the form of review of applications for designation, promotion of the network, staff time to interact with UNESCO and the cost of attending annual meetings (the latter approximately \$6,000 USD over the past four years). Its efforts also support UNESCO by raising awareness about the organization.

3.6 Serving as cluster coordinator or deputy coordinator and period

N/A

3.7 Participation in the evaluation of previous applications (number of applications evaluated per year), of previous Membership Monitoring Reports (number of reports evaluated per reporting exercise):

The City of Literature organization, composed of its director and board of directors, evaluated and provided feedback on all submitted applications in 2017 (13) and 2019 (18), and the organization participated in the process at the subgroup level to provide feedback and scores related to all applications. Iowa City led this process for the Cities of Literature in 2019.

Iowa City conducted subnetwork reviews of the four monitoring reports submitted in 2017.

Major Initiatives

Implemented at the Local and City Level
to Achieve the Objectives of the UCCN

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The Major initiatives by Iowa City – both by the City of Literature organization and by other entities – outlined in this section can be placed into three larger categories: literary programming for adults, literary programming for children, and governmental actions designed to address larger issues related to climate and sustainability.

4.1 Literary programming for adults

Programming from the City of Literature organization seeks to achieve several goals, both internal and as they relate to UNESCO and UN objectives. It includes the Iowa City Book Festival, an annual week-long celebration of the written word and storytelling; MusicIC, an annual festival noting the intersection between classical music and literature; and other shorter programs, such as the LITtalks series, Writers on the Fly video interview series and more.

Of particular note is the organization's Paul Engle Prize, established in 2011, which now offers a \$20,000 cash prize.

The prize is named for Paul Engle (October 12, 1908 – March 22, 1991), who while best remembered as the long-time director of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and founder of the UI's International Writing Program, also was a well-regarded poet, playwright, essayist, editor and critic. The award is presented annually by the City of Literature to an individual who, like Engle, represents a pioneering spirit in the world of literature through writing, editing, publishing, or teaching, and whose active participation in the larger issues of the day has contributed to the betterment of the world through the literary arts.



The poem "Writers in a Café," written by former Iowa Poet Laureate Marvin Bell, commemorated Iowa City's designation in 2008 as a City of Literature. It is now part of a piece of public art in the city's downtown Pedestrian Mall.

This prize has become the City of Literature's way to single out extraordinary writers from across the country who go beyond the page to make a difference in our world, rewarding them for their work to date and encouraging them to continue. These writers are addressing challenges such as racial injustice, immigration, socio-economic hurdles, the status of women, gender-identity issues and more.

These events and programs seek to connect readers with writers and their work, and to build an audience for authors. They also serve as gathering places for people from the community to learn about and discuss new ideas and to further the dialogue about existing issues. In addition, writers are given the tools to hone their craft and get their work into the world.

Other entities in Iowa City program events that contribute to these goals. These include:

- The Mission Creek and Witching Hour festivals, produced by the Englert Theatre and a number of community partners;
- International Writing Program programs that include dozens of events during the program's annual fall residency, which has hosted more than 1,500 writers from more than 150 countries since 1967.
- The Iowa Summer Writing Festival which offers writing instruction through dozens of weekend- and week-long courses taught by writers with ties to the University of Iowa;
- Author readings at Prairie Lights Books

These programs and events achieve the following Creative Cities Network objectives:

- Strengthening the creation, production, distribution and enjoyment of cultural goods and services and fostering the creative economy*
- Improving access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals, including women and youth*
- Developing hubs of creativity and innovation and broadening opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector*
- Making creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society*

4.2 Literary programming for youth

While the City of Literature designation, when conferred, reflected the work of past and current writers, poets, editors, publishers and more, the work of a City of Literature must involve providing a firm foundation for the future. Not content to rest on laurels, Iowa City spends considerable time nurturing the talents of its youngest writers, using the resources of the City of Literature to encourage young readers and writers across the country.

The City of Literature's One Book Two Book Children's Literature Festival, is among these endeavors. It celebrates writing for and by children. While it offers many traditional programming components – visiting authors, workshops, a book fair, and craft opportunities – the key aspect is focused on student writing. In particular, the festival provides opportunities for students at schools with lower socio-economic status that may lack such outlets when compared with schools in other parts of the community. The festival solicits original writing from students in grades 1-8 (ages 7-14). These pieces are evaluated by ACT, a world leader in academic and workforce testing and evaluation,



One Book Two Book includes creative activities, student readings, and interactions between young writers and local authors.

and the best are singled out for recognition. The festival traditionally draws nearly 1,000 submissions, and over the past four years, a number of student winners were recognized multiple times, the festival helping to encourage their continued growth as writers.

The University of Iowa has a number of programs that educate and support young writers:

- Between the Lines, produced by the International Writing Program since 2008, has hosted young writers at the UI for a cultural exchange program that focuses on the art and craft of creative writing. Participants, aged 15-18, come together in Iowa City for an intensive two-week session that includes creative writing workshops and global literature seminars designed to broaden their literary horizons and deepen their empathy for and understanding of one another’s identities and stories.
- The Iowa Young Writers' Studio for high school students offers a summer residential program and online courses. The Studio gives promising high school-age creative writers the opportunity to share their writing with teachers and peers, receive constructive critique, participate in writing exercises and activities, and attend (actually or virtually) readings and literary events. Students spend two weeks taking core courses in fiction writing, poetry writing, or creative writing with teachers who are students or graduates of the renowned Iowa Writers' Workshop.



- The Iowa Youth Writing Project is an arts outreach organization that engages K-12 youth throughout Iowa using language arts and creative thinking provided at little or no cost. Every year, instructors visit more than 20 schools and community centers to run weekly writing workshops, hold 20-30 special events with visiting writers, and offer literary summer camps. Events include writing workshops conducted by winners of the City of Literature’s Paul Engle Prize. A workshop with 2019 winner, Dina Nayeri, is pictured at left.

These programs achieve the following Creative Cities Network objectives:

- Making creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society
- Strengthening the creation, production, distribution and enjoyment of cultural goods and services and fostering the creative economy
- Improving access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals, including women and youth

SDGs addressed by the programs and activities in 4.1 and 4.2:



4.3 Governmental responses to climate change and sustainability

During the period 2016–2020, the government of Iowa City took several significant steps to address climate change and to promote and foster sustainable practices.




On Dec. 16, 2016, the Iowa City City Council formally resolved to reduce 2005–level greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025, and 80 percent by 2050, matching the U.S. commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.

This Climate Action and Adaptation Plan for the City of Iowa City outlines 35 actions to be taken by the community and City which will result in an 80 percent reduction of community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Implementing these actions will allow Iowa City to adapt to climate change and remain a resilient, healthy community, for current residents and for future generations. These actions

reflect local responsibility toward reducing the causes of global climate change and its negative affects around the world, and to do so in an equitable manner.

ADAPTATION

- ▶ The City planted **prairies and native plants** at its properties and some of its parks, promoting a diverse ecosystem.
- ▶ The City planted a total of **400 trees** this last year, more than doubling the previous year's total, and launched **Root for Trees** to help fund trees on residential properties.
- ▶ The City awarded more than **200 Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Grants** last year.



In 2019, the city council created a Climate Action Commission to:

- advise the council on climate issues
- research, promote, and analyze climate actions with particular attention to equity
- engage the public on climate and sustainability goals
- assist City staff, City Council, and members of the community with implementing approved initiatives that support the City's climate and sustainability goals.

The City of Iowa City reported on progress toward its Climate Action and Adaptation Plan goals at the end of 2020, including updates on progress in the areas of Adaptation, Buildings, Sustainable Lifestyle, Transportation and Waste.

These programs and initiatives achieve the following Creative Cities Network objective:

–Making creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society

SDGs addressed by these efforts:



Major Initiatives

Implemented through inter-city cooperation to Achieve the Objectives of the UCCN

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5.1 Sub-Network Annual Meeting

The Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature organization celebrated the 10th anniversary of its designation by hosting the 2018 annual meeting of the Literature sub-network in April of that year. This four-day gathering allowed members from 22 of the then-28 cities to come together for discussions, tours, demonstrations and fellowship.

The meeting was convened with two goals beyond the usual agenda of internal work: The first to give guests from around the world a better sense of the history, programs, and assets that make Iowa City a City of Literature, and to help them to form connections with the people behind those programs. The second was to use the meeting to draw attention locally to the designation, the city's anniversary and the things happening in the local literary community.

The agenda was in some ways typical of such meetings, with introductions to new members of the network, discussion of project proposals, and strategizing about internal governance for the sub-network. This was augmented by meetings with various constituencies within the literary community, as well as residents interested in the workings of the sub-network. Among the most meaningful occurrences was a reception at the University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium that allowed the city representatives to meet with people from the Iowa City community. This facilitated conversations where the Iowa Citizens could share information about our city and learn about what is happening in other parts of the network. This led into a panel discussion where representatives from five Cities of



Literature spoke about specific projects and engaged in dialogue with Iowa City residents.

A second highlight was the programming on the last day of the meeting, where the city representatives toured a number of the city's literary hubs, including the International Writing Program and Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, the UI's Center for the Book, and Special Collections at the UI Main Library. It was helpful for the Iowa City office staff to see the city through the eyes of its guests and to realize there was untapped potential in terms of awareness and collaboration to be found.

The event was held in conjunction with two other major happenings in Iowa City: the annual Mission Creek Festival, and the Senior Men's Freestyle Wrestling World Cup. This allowed for interesting interactions and served as a way to celebrate Iowa City's status among the world elite in literature and

wrestling. The Iowa City/Coralville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (since rebranded Think Iowa City) created a short film commemorating the convergence, “Cultivation.” (the film can be viewed at www.thinkiowacity.com/cultivation)



Representatives from the Quebec City, Edinburgh, Melbourne, Reykjavik and Nottingham Cities of Literature speak at a panel discussion during the 2018 Cities of Literature annual meeting in Iowa City..

These programs achieve the following Creative Cities Network objectives:

- Strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development;
- Stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society.
- Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector.

5.2 U.S. Creative Cities annual meeting

Just prior to the sub-network meeting, Iowa City hosted six of the other eight U.S. UNESCO Cities for the first annual meeting of that group. At the conclusion of that meeting, the representatives were able to participate in the beginning of the literature meeting to provide a similar, if more intimate opportunity to create cross-disciplinary connections. Though such meetings have happened informally during annual Creative Cities Network meetings, those are usually fleeting, a conversation over a quick lunch. This longer gathering with an agenda gave representatives the chance to meet – sometimes for the first time – and learn more about one another’s cities and organizations.



Representatives from Paducah, Kansas City, Detroit, Seattle, Santa Fe, and San Antonio attended the first U.S. Creative Cities annual meeting held in 2018.

Discussions included the potential for collaborative projects, ways to help to amplify the messaging from sister cities, and strategies to speak with a more unified voice when addressing issues related to UNESCO and the U.S.'s status as a non-member.

The last of these included a conversation with Christopher Merrill, director of the University of Iowa's International Writing Program and a then-member of the U.S. National Commission to UNESCO. Also with us was Merrill's fellow commissioner, Mary Hammond, the representative from the Paducah City of Crafts and Folk Art. The group discussed efforts to lobby the U.S. Congress to allow the United States to rejoin UNESCO, and effort that has continues to this date.

This program achieved the following Creative Cities Network objectives:

- Stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society.
- Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector.

SDGs addressed by these meetings:



5.3 #17Booksfor17SDGs

Iowa City has participated in several collaborative projects initiated by other Cities of Literature, including World Poetry Day (Granada), Slam O Vision (Melbourne) and the handprinted book of poetry presented to the City of Krakow at the 2018 Creative Cities Network Annual Meeting (Heidelberg). It also has taken part in UNESCO level projects, such as creating annual programming in collaboration with the music community in Iowa City to celebrate International Jazz Day.

In 2019, the Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature organization created a collaborative project of its own. "17 Books for 17 SDGs." Staff identified books with local ties that addressed one of the UN's 2030 Sustainable



Iowa City poet Lauren Haldeman inks a poem for the Heidelberg project, which involved presenting a handwritten book to Krakow.

Development Goals (SDGs). These books were then shared through social media in postings that paired the book jacket with the UN-generated icon for each SDG. Information was shared about the goals behind the specific SDG and how the selected book addressed that topic. Some connections were explicit, such as non-fiction books that specifically deal with an issue such as poverty, water quality or the status of women and children. Others were more implicit, such as novels or poetry collections whose themes include these larger challenges.

Realizing the potential in the project to communicate about and raise awareness of the Creative Cities Network and of writers from each of the Cities of Literature, the other network cities were invited to join the project. More than a dozen other Cities of Literature participated, creating a broad-based international reading list and generating hundreds of social media posts that raised awareness about the SDGs and the network.

For Iowa City on Twitter, 18 of the 20 top tweets from Dec. 2-18, 2019, on our account were from the SDG campaign, and during the month of December tweet impressions were up 6,500 from the previous month. Participating cities also saw gains.

The project was replicated in December 2020, with even more cities adding their voices to the conversation. The collaboration was an example of sharing experiences, knowledge and best practices.

This program achieved the following Creative Cities Network objectives:

- Strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development
- Stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society.

In addition to promoting all 17 SDGs, the project specifically addressed:



In this example from Iowa City, SDG 15, Life on Land, is promoted using the book Tallgrass Conversations by Iowa writers Cindy Crosby and Tom Dean. The book was published by Iowa City-area publisher Ice Cube Press.



Proposed Action Plan

for the forthcoming mid-term period of four years

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The Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature organization in 2020 approved a four-year strategic plan designed to take it to the next required UCCN Monitoring Report (see Executive Summary).

In addition, most of the projects outlined in section 4 of this document will be maintained, and in some instances, will be expanded.

6.1 Presentation of a maximum of three initiatives, programs or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network locally

6.1.a. Study of the Community's Arts and Culture Sector

In 2019, eight arts nonprofits housed in downtown Iowa City came together informally to create what became the Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance. Members include a professional theatre company, an independent cinema, a performing arts theatre, an umbrella organization for music and art festivals, an independent press, and a multi-disciplinary arts center.



The goals of this group were to share information, explore the sharing of resources, and to find ways to connect and collaborate to our shared benefit. One of the goals of this organization is a broader task carried over from the City of Literature's 2016 strategic plan: to survey the community about how arts and culture needs are being met, what gaps exist, and how best to close those gaps. This would address the literary culture of the community as part of a larger effort coordinated by other organizations.

With this information in hand, the organization can better determine scale and scope of the sector, its economic impact, and, by setting this as a benchmark, its growth. Policy as it relates to the promotion and support of those in this sector can then be addressed, as well as ways to direct resources. This also will reveal ways these organizations can find ways to collaborate and partner across disciplines.

Conversations over the past four years have focused in part on the infrastructure in the city that exists to support artists, including housing, office space, performance and gallery space, funding sources, and commercial opportunities. These topics will be surveyed and will be addressed in subsequent policy discussions with city, culture and business leaders.

6.1.b. Response to Black Lives Matter/Freedom Riders calls for action

The killing of George Floyd in May of this year by police in Minneapolis sparked protests throughout the world, and Iowa City saw the rise of groups that protested both police actions and cultural shortcomings in our community as they relate to race. One group, calling itself the Freedom Riders, issued a list of demands that included items related to how African Americans are represented and given opportunities to participate in the arts in the Iowa City-area.

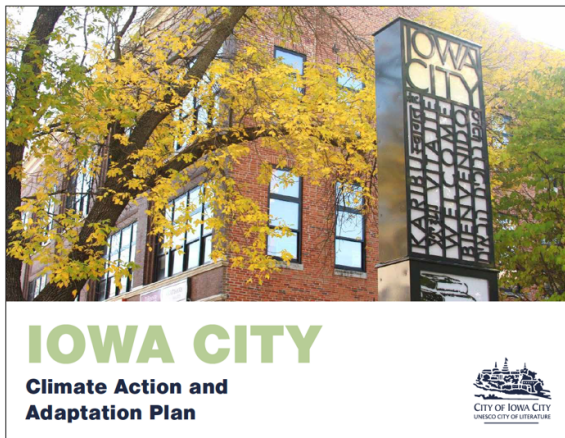
The City of Literature organization issued a statement of support for these efforts in June:

The Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature's mission is to connect readers and writers through the power of story. We are listening to the powerful stories and testaments of Black people and other people of color in our community and in our country, and we are working to amplify BIPOC voices to educate, build empathy, and pursue equity and justice. We know we have a lot of work to do, and listening and amplifying voices is not enough. We pledge to do more, to be a resource in our community, and to address areas where we have fallen short. This includes immediate steps to increase diversity and representation in our organization, on our board of directors, and in all aspects of our festivals and programs. Where we are now is a beginning, not an end.

The immediate impact has been changes in our board of directors and a greater awareness of how we program our events, and this work will continue as staff seek training to better understand the issues and seek new partners and collaborators to broaden our perspectives. The organization is crafting a statement related to diversity, equity, and inclusion that will provide further guidance.

6.1.c Work with City staff on ways to use literature in pursuing climate action plan goals

As the City of Literature organization has learned more about the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, it has become clear that Iowa City already is pursuing action on many that are relevant to our community. As we look for ways to use literature in our efforts to educate residents about the SDGs, we will look for ways to work with the city to use these tools help achieve its climate goals.



As outlined in section 4.3 of this report, the city has a comprehensive plan designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. In a letter from then-Mayor Jim Throgmorton that introduced that 2016 report, he stated, “for us to succeed, all parties will need to be moving in a common direction. City government will need to establish or build upon existing collaborative partnerships with other jurisdictions, businesses, industry, and community-based organizations.”

As one of those organizations, the City of Literature will work to harness the transformative power of story to assist the city in communicating its goals and the strategies it will employ to meet them. This can take the form of enhancing programming related to climate and sustainability, such as promoting authors and their work in these areas, or tailoring children's programming so our young writers are addressing these issues in their own work. Collaboration with other arts organizations, businesses, or governmental agencies -- which is at the core of nearly all of our programs -- can lead to innovative solutions to these challenges locally, and the results can be shared with the rest of the Creative Cities Network.

6.2 Presentation of a maximum of three initiatives, programs or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on an international level, particularly those involving other member cities of the Network.

6.2.a. Translators Digital Summit

Work on this project, first introduced in 2016, continues. The format may shift given the success of an in-person literary translation program undertaken by the Lviv City of Literature in 2019. This online project is a collaboration with the Melbourne City of Literature, and would provide a framework for a network of international literary translators to share best practices and connect with one another.

6.2.b. Expand international aspects of MusicIC festival

This festival celebrates the intersection between literature and classical music, and has been produced by the City of Literature organization for five of its 10 years of existence. With a better understanding of the festival and its production, the 2016 goal of collaborating with other cities in the network is more achievable.

The festival involves a series of concerts each centering on music that was inspired by literature, or featuring music that inspired literature. These events seek to increase patrons' knowledge of these connections, and to enrich the listening and reading experience as a result.



A student reads his work while the Solera Quartet performs at the Iowa City Public Library.

As the festival slowly evolves to embrace new work in addition to compositions drawn from the classical canon, plans call for direct collaborations with other UCCN cities sometime in the next four years. As we found in the 2016-2020 period, this is largely dependent on funding, and sources will be sought to allow us to pursue this goal. Ideally, a composer from a City of Music would be commissioned to create a new work inspired by writing from an Iowa author. In the future, such works could be inspired by writing from authors in other Cities of Literature. The music then could be performed either remotely from Iowa City and shown elsewhere, or could be performed in the other cities by ensembles based there.

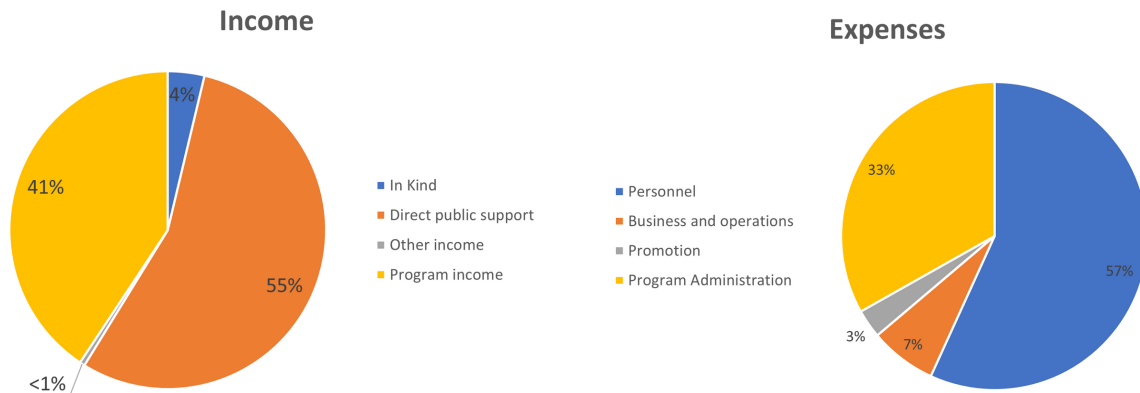
6.2.c. Collaboration with other Cities of Literature

With the continued growth of the Creative Cities Network, opportunities for collaboration with other member cities has grown exponentially. The influx of proposed programs is often overwhelming, and the staff must select only the handful of opportunities that are possible given limits in funding and time. To better address this, the organization has created a staff position with the express purpose of gathering, organizing, and promoting these opportunities to our community, with the goal of a greater level of participation from Iowa City writers and others in the literary sector.

6.3 Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan

This budget information only relates to the City of Literature organization; the City of Iowa City, as well as other partner governmental entities and organizations all have separate budgets that will affect the amount of funding given to arts and cultural pursuits in our broader community.

Specifically, our organization receives public support from the City of Iowa City, the City of Coralville, the City of North Liberty, the University of Iowa, and Johnson County. Much of the in-kind support comes in the form of office space and equipment contributed by the Iowa City Public Library for the City of Literature office. Programmatic income is a mixture of contributions, sponsorships, grants, and earned income from the sale of merchandise or vendor space. The organization seeks grant funding on a regular basis, at the local, state, and national levels. Also note that staff time, while spent predominantly on programming and promotion, is not reflected in those categories.



6.4 Communications and Awareness Plan

The City of Literature organization’s communication plan is a multi-tiered, multi-platform approach that seeks to raise awareness locally, on a state level, nationally, and internationally. The organization also works with partners to promote the designation, including the Iowa City-Coralville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (now Think Iowa City), the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association, and Travel Iowa.

Localized communication is more event and asset based; specific opportunities are communicated to share the richness of the community’s literary culture with residents and frequent visitors. Regional and national communication is broader, communicating more general details about the community and its literary assets in an attempt to drive tourism or those interested in relocation or retirement.

Per its new strategic plan, the organization in 2021 will seek to consolidate its many websites into one main site (www.iowacityofliterature.org) with subdomains dedicated to major programs, streamlining its message and making it easier for visitors to understand how individual programs fit within the organization’s portfolio. It also maintains Facebook and Twitter accounts for all but the last of these.

Other channels, such as email newsletters and event-based advertising also are used. The impact of these promotions is an increased awareness of the city’s literary sector and of its UNESCO designation. The plan will be expanded as additional audiences are identified and resources are secured.

As the first COVID-19 cases were reported in the U.S., the City of Literature organization was launching its One Book Two Book Children's Literature Festival. The precautions at the time involved having extra hand sanitizer throughout the space. Within two weeks, the office, like those across the city and throughout the country, closed and people began to work from home. This led to the eventual cancellation of dozens of cultural events over the final nine months of 2020, including all in-person programs scheduled for our MusicIC festival and Iowa City Book Festival, and other events and festivals in the community. International collaborations also were put on hold. Iowa City was to be the guest City of Literature at the Granada Book Fair, but this was postponed due to travel restrictions.

Our organization addressed this in three primary ways. The first was to solidify connections with other entities in the local arts and culture scene. An informal group of leaders from eight downtown Iowa City arts organizations was formalized as the Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance. This group met weekly in the first months of the pandemic, sharing information about mitigation strategies, funding possibilities, and programming ideas.

The second was to build on that work by serving as an information clearinghouse for the literary community. While this is a large part of the organization's efforts in normal times, it was enhanced over the past several months as we sought to serve as a line of communication within and without this sector. We shared information about when book stores would be open, whether they were offering curbside pickup, and what their protocols involved when they did open. We offered information to local writers and artists about writing and funding opportunities. And we kept our community apprised of programming changes and offerings,



The third was to offer our own projects and programs. With so many projects moving online, we sought to provide opportunities for people to stay off of their computers. This began with simple things like creating reading lists of local books with a sports focus to offer those missing out on the opportunity to attend or watch sporting events a chance to indulge that passion in other ways.

We took one of our more recent projects, the LITtalks author series, online. This occasional series, which features authors discussing new books that deal with political or social engagement, was held twice, once with Jesse Wegman discussing his book, *Let the People Pick the President: The Case for Abolishing the Electoral College*; and another with W. Joseph Campbell, author of *Lost in a Gallup: Polling Failure in U.S. Presidential Elections*. Both were held online, with the latter also rebroadcast on the C-SPAN television network. Both events emulated their in-person precedents with discussion of timely issues, sharing of



ways for people to get involved, and a robust back-and-forth between presenters and audience.

Another endeavor was a series of community reading projects led by University of Iowa Assistant Adjunct Professor Anna Barker. Barker, also a City of Literature board member, led programs where participants read *The Decameron*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Gilgamesh*. In each, Barker led more than 300 members through daily readings and discussions, drawing participants from throughout our community and around the world. These will continue with a project to read *War and Peace* and other classics in 2021.

Two of the organization's three major festivals also moved online during the pandemic year. MusicIC, which celebrates the intersection between literature and music, typically features three or four multi-disciplinary concerts in mid-June. The 2020 festival was abbreviated, with two of the scheduled performers offering short solo video performances, and two more creating musical accompaniment for a story time in partnership with the children's department at the Iowa City Public Library.

The Iowa City Book Festival, the organization's largest annual event, moved online in October 2020. This program, which typically includes more than 50 events featuring about 100 presenters over seven days, was scaled back to 12 events. These were made available to a live audience which allowed for robust discussion via chat as well as interaction with the authors through moderated Q&A. The programs were recorded and are hosted on the organization's YouTube channel, where they continue to be viewed.

One highlight of the annual festival is the awarding of the organization's Paul Engle Prize. Named for the longtime director of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and co-founder of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, the prize seeks to recognize writers who, like Engle, "represent a pioneering spirit in the world of literature through writing, editing, publishing, or teaching, and whose active participation in the larger issues of the day contribute to the betterment of the world through the literary arts. "

This year's winner, Dr. Eve L. Ewing, took part in the award ceremony from her home in Chicago. Though she was unable to accept the award in person, Dr. Ewing will undertake tasks similar to those of her fellow winners from prior years, including plans to lead a writing workshop in February 2021 via Zoom for students in the Iowa Youth Writing Project. This longtime partner of the City of Literature offers writing instruction and activities for junior high and high school students in our community. Keeping these connections intact while we await the return of in-person programming has been an important part of the organization's efforts throughout this year.

While programming will remain virtual through at least the first half of 2021, the organization is poised -- and eager -- to return to in-person programming as soon as it is prudent.



IOWA CITY UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE



United Nations
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Member of the UNESCO
Creative Cities Network
since 2008

Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature staff

John Kenyon, executive director
Rachael Carlson, director of operations
Brooke Sarrazin, marketing assistant

www.iowacityofliterature.org
info@iowacityofliterature.org

Photos

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p. 18: Book jackets from publishers; musician
photos courtesy of the artists (Miki-Sophia
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