Practical considerations for National Commissions in administering the UNESCO Prizes application process
This policy brief agrees with the conclusions of UNESCO’s 2012 evaluation of prizes
A rigorous, open and transparent application process is central to ensuring that UNESCO’s prizes are awarded to the most deserving candidates who will safeguard the integrity of UNESCO and the nominating Member State.

**OBJECTIVES**

In this session:

We focus on *practical considerations* for National Commissions when administering prize applications, rather than UNESCO’s excellent 2012 prizes strategy.

We outline the *main challenges* that we have faced and offer some of our *proposed solutions*.

We hope to *stimulate discussion* among National Commissions to learn from each other’s experience and *improve our processes*.
UNESCO’s prizes serve to increase UNESCO’s visibility, by shining a spotlight on projects and people that are aligned with UNESCO’s mandate. With this comes a certain level of reputation risk.

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO prizes offer financial and reputational reward.

It is important that nominations are of the highest quality in order to protect the integrity of the prize, of UNESCO and of the nominating Member State.

The UKNC developed a consistent accreditation policy for all UK nominations.
ACCREDITATION POLICY

1. Applicant contacts UKNC at the earliest opportunity with an expression of interest
2. UKNC confirms eligibility and application process
3. UKNC identifies a minimum of three experts from its pro bono expert network to review application
4. Experts asked to declare any conflict of interest
5. Experts anonymously review application and recommend either endorsement, endorsement with further improvements or not to endorse
6. In cases where there is a limit to the number of nominations a country can submit, applications with higher scores from reviewers will be nominated
7. If application is successful, UKNC will send a letter of endorsement to UNESCO with application
8. If application is unsuccessful, UKNC will send a letter outlining how the application could be strengthened in future years
9. UKNC stays in contact with the applicant after submission
Drawing upon a series of interviews with previous UK-based prize applicants and peer reviewers, we have identified some of the main challenges in processing UNESCO prizes in the UK.

CHALLENGES – before application

- **Challenge**: Information can be unclear/difficult to locate
- **Implication**: Deters candidates from applying
- **Risk**: Gives the impression that the prize lacks transparency

- **Challenge**: UNESCO’s Call is often near to the submission’s deadline
- **Implication**: Limits time prize can be advertised & application can be developed/reviewed
- **Risk**: Puts pressure on applicant and comprises quality
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**CHALLENGES – during application**

- **Challenge**
  - Nominations can be made by other organisations, e.g. Previous winners
  - Application forms not user friendly

- **Implication**
  - Applicants receive inconsistent support. Previous winners in same sector as applicant
  - Formatting issues
    - Word count inaccurate

- **Risk**
  - Quality varies. Compromises neutrality
  - Time consuming
    - Leaves less time to work on the content
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**CHALLENGES – after application**

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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tr>
<td>Applicants and Nat Com not informed if application unsuccessful</td>
<td>Missed opportunity for further engagement with potential UNESCO supporters</td>
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<td>Prizes have been postponed/cancelled after application submitted</td>
<td>Wastes applicant and expert reviewers’ time</td>
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<td>UNESCO prize statutes do not always outline what is expected of winner</td>
<td>Winner does not budget for making a film of work / travelling to Paris etc</td>
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We have developed some solutions to responding to these challenges.

### SOLUTIONS

| Centralised information | • Online annual planner  
|• Resources all in central location  
|• Nat Com Contact Details |
| UK deadlines | • UK deadline set four weeks prior to UNESCO deadline  
|• Interested applicants submit expression of interest before submitting application |
| Peer review | • UKNC assigns expert reviewers to assess application  
|• UKNC draws on expert feedback to decide whether to endorse, endorse with final improvements or not to endorse |
| Aftercare | • UKNC meets with previous winners to learn about value and impact of prize  
|• Winners are invited to join expert network |
In order to further improve the process, we welcome National Commissions to share their own experiences of managing the prizes process so that we can learn from each other’s approaches.

NEXT STEPS

- Online knowledge exchange platform for National Commissions
- Nominations to come from National Commissions only
- Exploration of further challenges and approaches with National Commissions
To exchange information please email: uknatcom@unesco.org.uk