Guidelines for Building Learning Cities

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

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United Nations
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Planning

These guidelines for building learning cities, which were developed in consultation with international experts from all five UNESCO regions, draw on insights emerging from the case studies collected in the publication *Unlocking the Potential of Urban Communities: Case Studies of Twelve Learning Cities*. The guidelines aim to provide cities with strategic approaches for building dynamic and sustainable learning cities. They contain a set of actionable recommendations that can be referred to at every stage of the process of becoming a learning city.

The guidelines are divided into the following six key areas of action, which should be tailored to every city's unique context: develop a plan for becoming a learning city; create a coordinated structure involving all stakeholders; initiate and maintain the process with celebratory events; make sure that learning is accessible to all citizens; establish a monitoring and evaluation process; and ensure sustainable funding.

Develop a plan for becoming a learning city

Strong political leadership and steadfast commitment should be reflected in a concrete action plan.

- Involve city leaders and representatives in identifying the main issues that need to be addressed based on the city's unique challenges and priorities.

- Take stock of what has already been achieved by gathering information on relevant activities implemented by different sectors and stakeholders.

- Develop an understanding of what building a learning city involves by organizing capacity-building workshops for various sectors and stakeholders.

- Devise a concrete action plan and give it a catchy title. This plan should define the medium- and long-term objectives and means of evaluation, using the *Key Features of Learning Cities* as a basis.

- Develop a city charter outlining the actions that need to be taken to improve learning in the city. These actions should be aligned with the central government's strategies for building a learning society.

Involvement

Celebration

Create a coordinated structure involving all stakeholders

All organizations and citizens are stakeholders in a learning city. A structure that involves all stakeholders in building the learning city through dialogue and consensus should therefore be created.

- Establish a learning city development committee comprising representatives from different sectors. This committee should reach a consensus on the principles for developing, implementing, monitoring and financing the learning city.

- Ensure that all stakeholders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in designing and implementing the learning city plan.

- Create a learning city forum where people can contribute and share experiences.

- Form alliances with other cities, both nationally and internationally, in order to exchange experience, knowledge, ideas and best practice.

- Join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and any other networks or associations that could add value.

- Maintain strong contact with the ministry of education or any other related ministry to link the local with the national development.

Initiate and maintain the process with celebratory events

Generating enthusiasm is crucial to the success of a learning city. The more people and organizations that react positively to the idea of a learning city and engage with it, the better its chances of flourishing are.

- Organize a learning festival in places where people gather. Make this a joyful event and invite all relevant organizations to exhibit their courses, products and materials and offer hands-on activities that encourage all citizens to get involved.

- Hold a conference to deliver the learning city message. Invite one or more twin cities to participate and share their experience, knowledge, ideas and best practice.

- Invite the media to promote and celebrate learning.

- Renew the interest of all stakeholders in the learning city agenda by organizing regular celebratory events.

Accessibility

Monitoring and Evaluation

Make sure that learning is accessible to all citizens

Learning must be made enjoyable, available and accessible to all citizens so that they are inspired and empowered to continue learning throughout life.

- Provide adequate information, guidance and support to all citizens, including maps of learning provision in the city.

- Establish, promote and maintain community-based learning spaces and provide resources for learning in families and communities.

- Identify and respond to the learning needs and interests of citizens.

- Develop procedures that identify, validate and accredit the learning outcomes of non-formal learning, in particular.

- Provide special support in the form of flexible arrangements for marginalized groups, including families with migrant backgrounds, citizens with special learning needs and unemployed people.

- Help public and private organizations to become learning organizations.

- Foster a learner-friendly environment in the city and its institutions.

Establish a monitoring and evaluation process to ensure learning city progress

In order to assess progress made in providing lifelong learning for all in the city, it is important to monitor and evaluate performance continuously.

- Define the measures for performance and progress in the city based on your action plan and the Key Features of Learning Cities.

- Establish mechanisms for documenting the process, assessing citizens' interests and needs, and collecting data.

- Commission regular reports that capture the lessons learned and make suggestions for improvement.

- Establish collective strategies for informing all stakeholders and gathering feedback.

Funding

Ensure sustainable funding

In order to realize the multiple benefits of becoming and sustaining a learning city, multiple sources of sustainable funding should be secured and allocated in a fair way.

- Secure sufficient financial resources to build and maintain the basic structure of the learning city action plan.

- Develop sustainable cost-sharing mechanisms involving multi-stakeholder partnerships with companies, foundations, philanthropists, international partners, local and national governments, and supranational organizations.

- Make effective use of the learning resources of all stakeholders.

- Conduct cost-benefit analyses in order to compile evidence of the benefits of learning.

- Make special provisions for marginalized groups and individuals.

In order to support cities as they follow these recommendations, the secretariat of the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), which is based in the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), will lead the following actions:

- Facilitating and disseminating research on the enrichment of the concept of the learning city
- Developing tools and instruments for building learning cities
- Serving as a clearing house for successful practices in establishing learning cities
- Developing and providing capacity-development programmes for members and partners
- Promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities
- Advocating the importance of lifelong learning for all as an organizing principle for education policy and promoting policy reforms that support the building of learning cities

Enjoy the benefits of becoming a city that effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education; to revitalize learning in families and communities; to facilitate learning for and in the workplace; to extend the use of modern learning technologies; to enhance quality and excellence in learning; and to foster a culture of learning throughout life.

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