

MEMBERSHIP MONITORING REPORT

2017 - 2021

YAMAGATA UNESCO CITY OF FILM

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
2. GENERAL INFORMATION
3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAMME'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT
4. MAIN LOCAL INITIATIVES
5. MAIN INTER-CITY & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
6. NEXT FOUR YEARS' ACTION PLAN
7. INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Yamagata benefits from a rich environment for fostering visual culture, including its own world-renowned Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (hereinafter "YIDFF"). In addition to the field of film, Yamagata is known for various cultural arts. The Yamagata Creative City Promotion Council, the core body to forward the city's creative initiatives, consists of 21 organizations, including various local entities such as creative sectors, universities, broadcasters, newspapers, tourism associations, and the municipal government. As a result of the high evaluation of Yamagata's diverse culture centered on film, cultural assets, and creativity, the city joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (hereinafter "UCCN") to become Japan's first UNESCO City of Film on 31 October 2017.

Yamagata has actively used creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development in economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects. Continuous support to the filmmaking industry enriches the city's local industries by introducing the appeal of its diverse culture. This generates solid incentives for filmmakers and tourists to visit, which in return benefits the local economy and tourism industry. The city sees community learning as a key driver to empower its future and takes pride in two of its universities—Yamagata University and Tohoku University of Art and Design—offering film programs. Since 1989, the YIDFF has always been a hub of creative talents and garnered over the years a good reputation for valuing diversity and addressing global issues through film, including challenges towards achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda. In addition, the city has initiated a vast range of projects to encourage inter-city and international cooperation to share its expertise and experiences of joining the UCCN in and out of Japan.

Yamagata remains committed to achieving the UCCN mission statement and the Sustainable Development Goals while supporting its development using culture and creativity as key drivers.



2 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Name of the city	Yamagata
2.2 Country	Japan
2.3 Creative field	Film
2.4 Date of designation	31 October 2017
2.5 Date of submission of the current report	30 November 2021
2.6 Entity responsible for the report	SATO Takahiro, Mayor of Yamagata
2.7 Previous reports submitted and dates	N/A
2.8 Focal points of contact	

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3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAMME'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

3.1 Number of UCCN Annual Conferences attended in the last four years

2018	–	Krakow and Katowice, Poland
2019	–	Fabriano, Italy
2020	–	Santos, Brazil (postponed due to COVID-19)
2021	–	Santos, Brazil (postponed due to COVID-19)

* Yamagata attended the two-day online meeting “UNESCO Creative Cities: Build back better from COVID-19” and learnt best practices from all over the world.

3.2 Hosting of a previous or future UCCN Annual Conference

None

3.3 Hosting of working or coordination meeting(s) addressed to one or more UCCN creative field representatives

None

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

One of Yamagata's international creative projects, the annual *Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference*, was held by inviting focal points of domestic and/or overseas creative cities and various speakers from the film industry, holding symposiums themed on film and creative cities, reflecting on the creativity and possibilities found in film culture and sustainable urban development.

Participating guests were from the following cities:

2017 (prior to designation):	Bologna, Italy (City of Music)
2018:	Bradford, UK (City of Film)
2020:	Busan, South Korea (City of Film)
2021:	Tsuruoka, Japan (City of Gastronomy) and Valladolid, Spain (City of Film)

In 2020, the conference was held online through archive streaming and English subtitles were added to the symposium feed. According to a YouTube analysis, 66 percent of the viewers as of November 2021 were from outside of Japan.

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

None

3.6 Serving as cluster coordinator or deputy coordinator and period

None

3.7 Participation in the evaluation of previous applications, and/or of previous Membership Monitoring Reports

Application	2019: two cities	2021: two cities
Membership Monitoring Report	2020: three cities	2021: one city

4 MAIN LOCAL INITIATIVES

4.1 YAMAGATA – THE BEST SUPPORTER FOR FILMMAKING

As a part of Yamagata's ongoing commitment to the mission of the UCCN, the city actively supports filmmaking through two unique projects: *Yamagata Renaissance Project* and *Yamagata Film Commission*.

YAMAGATA RENAISSANCE PROJECT

Yamagata Renaissance Project is a filmmaking project aiming to produce a series of films that introduce the appeal of Yamagata's diverse culture and offer local film talent a chance to hone their skills. It also promotes cross-sectoral collaboration by highlighting themes like traditional crafts, gastronomy, and performing arts. In order to introduce the films to a broader audience worldwide, the project has three unique characteristics: 1) providing and lending the films for free; 2) making both an original Japanese version and one with English subtitles; and 3) uploading past works to an [official YouTube channel](#).

Works produced through this project have been screened on various occasions, such as during the world-renowned YIDFF and other screening events in and out of Japan. Some films have been selected and screened at the annual Busan Intercity Film Festival from 2019 to 2021. This project aims to reframe the city's culture through film production, leading to the "Renaissance of Yamagata culture."

YAMAGATA FILM COMMISSION

Blessed with beautiful nature, scenic views and historical buildings, Yamagata has become increasingly popular as a filming location due to its rich and diverse appearance. The *Yamagata Film Commission* is the best partner for filmmakers looking to shoot in the Yamagata area. It has expanded its services to five neighboring cities and two towns outside Yamagata city to offer better support and meet more comprehensive filmmaking needs. Its services attract film and TV productions to create employment and boost investments in the area through the use of local workforce and businesses. This includes hotel stays, money spent in local restaurants, the rental of vehicles and equipment, and many other services. Local Tohoku University of Art and Design students join shootings as crew members to hone their skills, and over 450 citizens are registered as extras to be available to engage in these projects. The commission has successfully supported more than 800 visiting production teams and receives more than 100 inquiries every year. In 2018 and 2019, it has supported overseas production teams including the one of Thailand's highly popular drama *Dung Duang Haruetai* and of *Love Talk*, a Taiwanese film made in collaboration with Malaysia and Japan.

There are also additional benefits arising from screening tourism. For example, the city published its "Yamagata Location Map" to boost screen tourism by introducing filming locations in Yamagata and attract creativity-minded tourists by promoting the diversity of the city's culture. The leaflet is written in Japanese and English to maximize its potential to attract a more widespread range of tourists. The Yamagata Film Commission generates solid incentives for filmmakers and tourists to visit Yamagata, which in return benefits the local economy and tourism industry.

Yamagata believes that the above support programs meet the following objectives of the UCCN mission statement:

- stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the private and public sectors and civil society;
- strengthen the creation, production, distribution, and dissemination of cultural activities, goods, and services; and
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector.

Targeted SDGs



4.2 COMMUNITY LEARNING – EMPOWER THE FUTURE OF YAMAGATA

Yamagata sees community learning as a key driver for sustainable urban development and empowerment of its future. In this regard, the city has developed four community projects: *Film Workshop for Children, Creative Café, Yamagata Film School for Citizens, and Creative Conference.*

FILM WORKSHOP FOR CHILDREN

The city implements an annual *Film Workshop for Children* in collaboration with the YIDFF office since 2011. In this workshop, children learn how to 1) build a simple cinematographic projector, 2) create draw-on-film animation, and 3) project their hand-drawn film with their handmade projector. Through the process, children can learn and experience the mechanism and technique of film projection.

CREATIVE CAFÉ

The *Creative Café* is a series of talk events and workshops dealing with various themes such as film and the other creative fields of the UCCN, but also initiatives to make creativity a strategic component of urban development. It aims to review the city's culture, provide opportunities to consider the role of culture, and develop local communities by utilizing the power of creativity. The project has enhanced partnerships involving the public and private sectors, professionals, creators, schools, and civil society by inviting guest speakers. The past speakers included film directors, professors, writers, dancers, musicians, high school students, and even a modern-day samurai. Since 2020, the event has taken place online, attracting participants of a wide range of age groups from around the globe.

YAMAGATA FILM SCHOOL FOR CITIZENS

The *Yamagata Film School for Citizens* is held to improve citizens' access to and participation in cultural life, notably film. It started in 2016 as a series of screening events with guest speakers. The 2017 edition's guests included Japan's famous film director OBAYASHI Nobuhiko and the award-winning director and president of the Tohoku University of Art and Design, NEGISHI Kichitaro. Since 2018, it has incorporated outdoor cinema to provide citizens an extraordinary film experience in the fresh air. In 2018, the screening was held at the Bunshokan, one of the most famous shooting locations in Yamagata, under the leadership of the high school volunteer team for the YIDFF. In 2019, as a pre-event of the festival, the city concurrently organized the outdoor film screening with the Yamagata Hanagasa Festival, the biggest summer dancing event in the city, to maximize its potential to connect citizens with the city's cultural events. Even after the outbreak of COVID-19, the city continued outdoor screenings in 2020 and 2021 as a way to enjoy film in COVID-19-mitigated circumstances.

CREATIVE CONFERENCE

The *Creative Conference* is part of the contents of the Yamagata Creative City Platform Project "Q1" (see page 11) and held to discuss how to connect creativity and industry in daily life with the aim to reflect such discussion in Yamagata's sustainable society. It is an open planning meeting where researchers, creators, and business people discuss a wide range of ideas on what to develop in Yamagata and how to realize them to build a sustainable creative city.

Yamagata believes that the above community projects meet the following objectives of the UCCN mission statement:

- improve access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, and fostering youth engagement;
- make culture and creativity an essential component of sustainable development, policies and actions, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society; and
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector.

Targeted SDGs



5

MAIN INTER-CITY & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

5.1 YAMAGATA INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

Yamagata is home to the *YIDFF* and its film archive, the *Yamagata Documentary Film Library*.

YAMAGATA INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL (YIDFF)

The YIDFF was launched in 1989 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the city and has since been held biennially in October, the most delightful season in Yamagata. It is one of the few film festivals in Asia devoted exclusively to the documentary form. Its scope, however, reaches beyond simply screening recent ground-breaking works in its International Competition. New Asian Currents, the competition program introducing emerging filmmakers from across Asia, has over the years become one of the festival's vibrant centers of attention as a meeting place of raw energy. By featuring special events and programs shedding light on the history and diversity of filmmaking, the YIDFF has worked hard to create a new hub for producing alternative and independent non-fiction films and documentary discussions as a form of expression. In 2018, the YIDFF was included on the Documentary Feature Qualifying Festival List for the annual Academy Awards®. Grand prize winners of the YIDFF's two competitive sections, the International Competition and New Asian Currents, become eligible for Oscar consideration in the Documentary Feature category the following year. The 2021 edition was held online for the first time due to COVID-19 pandemic, but Yamagata showed its creativity by providing Yamagata-specific programs online. (See page 17 for details.)

Yamagata believes that the YIDFF meets the following objectives of the UCCN mission statement:

- stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the private and public sectors and civil society;
- strengthen the creation, production, distribution, and dissemination of cultural activities, goods, and services; and
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector.

Additionally, because the films screened at the YIDFF deal with diverse themes around the globe, Yamagata considers the festival to contribute towards **ALL Sustainable Development Goals**.

YEAR	2017	2019	2021 *ONLINE
Number of works submitted	1,791	2,371	1,972
Number of films screened	161	176	49
Number of countries and areas participating	128	130	124
Audience (*Viewers)	22,089	22,858	21,790

“ The impact of Yamagata's UCCN designation is remarkable, particularly in the numbers observed for the YIDFF. The amount of works submitted to the YIDFF **hit its peak in 2019** following the UCCN designation that bestowed further international recognition to Yamagata as a UNESCO City of Film. For the 2021 edition, despite the difficulties due to COVID-19, as much as 1,972 entries were submitted from around the world. ”

YAMAGATA DOCUMENTARY FILM LIBRARY

The *Yamagata Documentary Film Library* is a film archive to collect and preserve outstanding documentary films, including films submitted to the YIDFF. Yamagata sees these documentary works as a valuable cultural resource for generations to come and provides space for citizens and film lovers to access them for free. The library has a full complement of facilities, including a well-equipped theater room, video booths where individuals can watch videos, and a collection of related books and materials. Organized by the YIDFF office, the library's monthly screening event, the *Friday Theater*, screens works from the library collection, provides time for citizens to devote to documentary films and incorporates film into their daily life. As of 2021, more than 19,000 videos and films have been archived for citizens, students, and researchers to visit the film library.

5.2 YAMAGATA – A WINDOW TO THE WORLD

In addition to the word-renowned YIDFF, the city encourages inter-city and international cooperation by implementing three creative projects: *Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference*, *Yamagata Artists-in-Residence*, and *Yamagata Film Package to the World*.

YAMAGATA CREATIVE CITIES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The *Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference* was held by inviting focal points of domestic or overseas Creative Cities and various speakers from the film industry, holding symposiums themed on film and creative cities, reflecting on the creativity and possibilities found in film culture and sustainable development. It aims to help citizens recognize the role of culture in the city's sustainable development, discuss how creativity can contribute to the creation of sustainable cities and promote understanding of the UCCN. Furthermore, Yamagata sees this as an opportunity for citizens to build awareness as members of the international community and share a vision of working together on social issues.

The past projects included the following themes and panelists:

2017	Theme	Creative Tourism – Activating Cultural Assets In conjunction with YIDFF 2017
	Panelists	Andrea Meneghelli , Head of Film Collections at the Cineteca di Bologna (Bologna City of Music, Italy) HAYAMA Shigeru , Researcher at the Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities Center for Transdisciplinary Innovation & research assistant professor at the National Museum of Japanese History (Japan) Teddy Co , Jury of New Asian Currents YIDFF 2017, film historian & archivist (Philippines) WATANABE Ryuichi , Executive director of the FIDEA Research Institute Corporation & representative director of Asia Media Promotion Co., Ltd. (Japan)
2018	Theme	The Possibility of “Cities of Film” – How Film Enhances a City’s Appeal In conjunction with National Conference of Community Cinemas 2018 in Yamagata
	Panelists	SATO Takahiro , Mayor of Yamagata (Japan) David Wilson , Director of Bradford UNESCO City of Film (UK) Hyun Soo KIM , Representative of Corner Theater (Busan City of Film, South Korea)
2019	Theme	The Film: The Potential to Connect the World In conjunction with YIDFF 2019
	Panelists	OTOMO Keishi , Film director & script writer (Japan) MASHIMA Hidekazu , Actor (Japan) KURASAKI Ken , Director of Japan Broadcasting Corporation (Japan)
2020	Theme	The Film: The Potential for Pioneers of the Future *Online Event
	Panelists	SHINOHARA Tetsuo , Film director (Japan) HASHIMOTO Manami , Actress (Japan) KIM Jigon , Film director (Busan City of Film, South Korea) KIM Anika Eunhye , Focal point of Busan City of Film (South Korea) Facilitator: MIURA Go , President & CEO of Kantana Japan Corporation (Japan)
2021	Theme	The Power of Gastronomy and Film *Online Event Co-hosted by Tsuruoka City of Gastronomy In conjunction with YIDFF 2021
	Panelists	OKUDA Masayuki , Owner chef of Al-ché-cciano (Tsuruoka City of Gastronomy, Japan) YAMAGUCHI Mika , Professional Vegetable Sommelier (Yamagata City of Film, Japan) SODA Kazuhiro , Film director (Japan) Juan Manuel Guimerans Rubio , Focal point of Valladolid City of Film (Spain) Local Support Collective BAQSAN (Yamagata City of Film, Japan) Facilitator: KOSAKA Akane , Announcer

YAMAGATA ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

Yamagata Artists-in-Residence is a residency program that invites domestic and overseas artists to a set in Yamagata for a specified period of time and provides them with valuable space, resources, and networks to support them in developing their creative projects.

The first edition was held in 2018 and invited filmmakers from Indonesia and Malaysia to stay at Zao, a famous hot spring resort in Yamagata, to work on the medium of their film project. They joined a four-day workshop, bringing the participants together with five Japanese filmmakers and six international professional mentors, including Japanese world-renowned documentary filmmaker SODA Kazuhiro. They also deepened their relation with Yamagata citizens through the local project *Creative Café* (see page 6), a workshop for elementary and junior high school students, and community screenings. Furthermore, they made a short video about Yamagata from their perspective.

In 2019, as a collaborative project with Busan City of Film, the 3rd Busan Intercity Film Festival, and the Busan Independent Film Association, Yamagata invited South Korean director KIM Hwi Geun and his team to stay in Yamagata for ten days to make the short narrative film *Return*. The Yamagata Film Commission supported the team in finding the appropriate location to fit in the screenplay. As a result, the film was screened in Busan Inter-city Film Festival 2019 and Ngilngig Asian Fantastic Film Festival Davao 2019.

In fiscal 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19, it was challenging to invite artists from abroad. Yamagata looked at the future past COVID-19, in how local industries could recover through the power of creativity. As a result, the city supported producing a unique script set in Yamagata by inviting Japanese leading film director SHINOHARA Tetsuo and ABE Mika, a screenwriter born in Obanazawa City, Yamagata prefecture. Taking COVID-19-mitigation measures, they conducted interviews with citizens and did research by visiting various places within the city.

In 2021, while the pandemic continued, Yamagata effectively used YouTube as a global communication tool to introduce the attraction of the city's famous tourist spots with beautiful music. It invited two YouTuber pianists: Yomii, a popular composer with 1.61 million followers, and Jacob Koller, an arranger with 260,000 followers, to shoot their videos. A total of ten videos were produced and uploaded on YouTube and hit the total number of over 370,000 views (as of November 2021).

YAMAGATA FILM PACKAGE TO THE WORLD

Based on the concept of sharing diverse cultures and values, *Yamagata Film Package to the World* contributes to international exchange and cooperation by delivering films made in Yamagata to developing regions in Asia and other Creative Cities. It is a developed and continuous initiative to promote the films made through the *Yamagata Renaissance Project* (see page 5) and reach wider audiences by adding subtitles in various languages. It has incorporated online exchange between high school students since 2018 and encouraged discussion and communication through film.

YEAR	AREA
2017	Papua province / Indonesia
2018	Papua province / Indonesia
2019	Busan City of Film / South Korea *Cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic
2020	Thailand
2021	Chiang Mai City of Craft and Folk Arts / Thailand

Yamagata believes that the above projects meet the following objectives of the UCCN mission statement:

- 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;
- strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector; and
- improve 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.

Targeted SDGs



5.3 OTHER INTER-CITY COLLABORATIONS

Yamagata has actively participated in inter-city collaborations and showcased the impact of joining the UCCN while introducing its creative initiatives on various occasions. In addition, the city participates in the monthly film sub-network meetings and the annual conference of UNESCO Creative Cities in Japan.

2017

- Participated in the **Consultative Meeting on the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in Northeast Asia** held in Qingdao, China (20-22 June).

2018

- NAGASAWA Kohei, staff of the Yamagata City of Film office, was invited to the **2018 Global Creative City Forum in DAEGU** as a panelist and presented the city's initiatives as a City of Film (18 and 19 September). In collaboration with Daegu, South Korea (City of Music)

2019

- As a collaborative project between Yamagata University and the University of Bologna called **"Caleidoscopio Giappone,"** ABE Koji, a board member of YIDFF and the vice president of Yamagata University, visited Bologna (City of Music), screened and introduced documentary films of OGAWA Shinsuke at the Cineteca di Bologna to and gave a lecture on the YIDFF's initiatives at the University of Bologna (February).
- Participated and screened the short documentary film *Yamagata Maiko* in the **3rd Busan Inter-city Film Festival** held in Busan, South Korea (City of Film) (31 May to 3 June).
- SUGIMOTO Hajime, the focal point of Yamagata City of Film, was invited to be a panelist for the **Qingdao Film and Television Exposition**, and shared the city's best practices at its forum on the Future Development of the World's Film Capitals (25-29 August). In collaboration with Qingdao, China (City of Film)
- Participated in the **Asia Pacific Creative Cities Conference** held in Adelaide, Australia (City of Music) (23-26 October).
- AIKO Nami, the English assistant and public relations staff of the Yamagata City of Film office, was invited to the **ASEAN Cultural Creative Cities for Sustainable Development**, organized by the Ministry of Culture of Thailand, and shared the expertise and experiences of joining the UCCN and the creative initiatives of the city (5-7 December).
Place: Chiang Mai, Thailand (City of Craft and Folk Arts)

2020

- Screened a short documentary film *Yamagata Tea Ceremony* in the **4th Busan Inter-city Film Festival** (5-12 December) held in Busan, South Korea (City of Film). *Online screening

2021

- HATA Ayumi, the executive director of the YIDFF, was invited to the **Meeting Event Re: KINO vol.1 History of Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival** to present the festival's history and screen the documentary film *The Crosses*, the selected work from the International Competition 2019 (6 March). In collaboration with Hamamatsu, Japan (City of Music)
- AIKO Nami was invited to the **Chiang Mai Creative Cities Network Forum 2021** as a panelist, presented Yamagata city's process and impact of becoming a UNESCO City of Film, and screened the short documentary film *Yamagata Maiko*, subtitled in Thai (8-10 April). In collaboration with Chiang Mai, Thailand (City of Craft and Folk Arts). *Online participation
- Screened a short documentary film *Yamagata Kokeshi* in the **5th Busan Inter-city Film Festival** (3-5 September) held in Busan, South Korea (City of Film).
- TAKAHASHI Takuya, a board member of YIDFF and film producer, was invited to the **Nishiki-2 SDGs Film Festival** held in Nagoya to screen a documentary film featuring Tsuruoka's gastronomy and do a presentation about the history of the YIDFF (14 November). In collaboration with Nagoya, Japan (City of Design) and Tsuruoka, Japan (City of Gastronomy)

6

NEXT FOUR YEAR'S ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2026

6.1 YAMAGATA: THE CENTER OF CREATIVITY AND CULTURE



YAMAGATA CREATIVE CITY PLATFORM PROJECT "Q1"

Yamagata launched a renovation project to establish the hub of Yamagata Creative City after its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Film in 2017.

Objectives of this project are as follows:

- 1) Showcasing the diverse creative culture of Yamagata;
- 2) Offering space for creators to network with enterprises and citizens;
- 3) Promoting entrepreneurship and job creation in the creative sectors; and
- 4) Improving access and participation in creative life.

The building selected for renovation into a creativity hub is a former elementary school located in the city center and constructed in 1927, classified a Registered Tangible Cultural Property and a Heritage of Industrial Modernization of Japan. The new facility will be equipped with a theater room, a live streaming studio, and a film editing room, providing complementary space and an environment for creators and citizens to promote their film-related activities. Additionally, the platform will have diverse contents such as an open kitchen for gastronomy workshops, an open atelier and gallery for local artists to create, show, and sell their work, and a salon for matching art creators with local businesses. It will open in the fall of 2022 and become the symbol of creativity of Yamagata, UNESCO Creative City of Film.



CREATIVITY

LIFESTYLE

INDUSTRY

A PLATFORM TO UNITE THE CITY'S CULTURE,
ART, APPEAL, AND INDUSTRY

MAKE YAMAGATA'S LIFE
MORE **ATTRACTIVE** AND **CREATIVE**
THE HUB OF YAMAGATA CREATIVE CITY



NEW YAMAGATA CIVIC AUDITORIUM CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Yamagata citizens have always cherished the current Civic Auditorium as the hub of cultural activities, a place to access performing arts that also served as the main venue of the YIDFF; however, its facilities and equipment have become decrepit and need renewal. Therefore, the city will construct the **New Yamagata Civic Auditorium** in the city center by 2028 to foster the city's culture and art activities. In line with this project, the *Yamagata Documentary Film Library* (see page 7), a repository of modern visual history, will be relocated to the new auditorium to strengthen the film-related research environment and make it more accessible to citizens, students, researchers, and professionals.

The city planned the construction of the new auditorium from 2020 to 2028, aiming towards the following goals:

- 1) Inherit and develop the role of the current civic auditorium as the city's hub of culture and art activities;
- 2) Create a vibrant facility with features that enable citizens, tourists, and other visitors to visit casually;
- 3) Establish an open platform where everyone can gather and promote social inclusion;
- 4) Contribute to foster an attractive and distinctive community by harnessing the power of creativity;
- 5) Form a landscape with a sense of history and culture by harmonizing with the surrounding facilities;
- 6) Make facilities equipped with measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in the post-COVID world;
- 7) Respond to the changing needs through diversification of cultural art and education;
- 8) Build a disaster-resilient building where citizens are safe and protected; and
- 9) Apply the universal design concept to make the auditorium accessible to all.

YAMAGATA CITY CULTURAL AND CREATIVE CITY PROMOTION ORDINANCE & YAMAGATA CULTURAL CREATIVE CITY PROMOTION ACTION PLAN

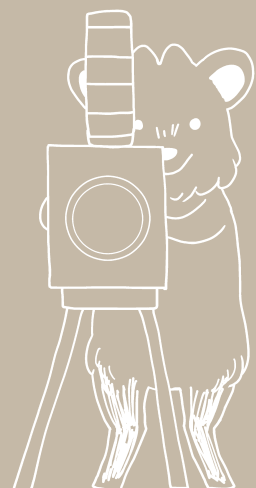
While Yamagata, as a sustainable creative city, has upheld culture and creativity as a key driver for development, it has also struggled with an aging population, decreasing practitioners of culture and art, and a weakening impact of culture on urban tourism and economy. In response, Yamagata will review the current *Yamagata City Culture Promotion Vision* and enact the ***Yamagata City Cultural and Creative City Promotion Ordinance, effective from April 2022***. It aims to fully integrate culture and creativity into the city's sustainable development strategies, share common goals within the city, promote citizens' spontaneous activities, and implement action plans in partnership with a wide range of organizations and individuals around the globe.

Further, based on the above ordinance, Yamagata will formulate and implement the five-year ***Yamagata Cultural Creative City Promotion Action Plan for 2022 to 2026***. With eyes on the post-COVID world, the action plan will address practical and effective measures to promote Yamagata as a sustainable cultural creative city.

“

While the ordinance will help the city, its citizens, and various working partners to contribute to sustainable urban development using creativity as a strategic factor, the action plan also works as a boost to forward Yamagata towards becoming a more resilient and creativity-oriented city, using the UCCN as a key tool.

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6.2 YAMAGATA: THE WINDOW TO THE WORLD

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO STRENGTHEN INTER-CITY COLLABORATION

Yamagata will develop the city's current international film festival and events to strengthen inter-city collaboration within the UCCN and beyond.

It has now been 32 years since the biennale YIDFF, the city's most prominent film event, has been established and has since become a global hub for documentary filmmakers. This festival is remarkable because it has been maintained for so many years through the continued support of the citizens of Yamagata through a subsidy of 100 million JPY (approximately 910,000 USD) for festival years and 50 million JPY (approximately 45,000 USD) for preparation years. The YIDFF has garnered a good reputation for valuing diversity and addressing global issues through cinema, including challenges towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. To further develop this world-renowned film festival into a greater hub of international collaboration, Yamagata plans to create a new program to invite top-quality documentary films produced in the UNESCO Creative Cities from all over the world starting from the 2023 edition of the festival. The selected films will be shown as part of the official selection subtitled in Japanese and English to be introduced to the participating domestic and foreign audience which includes film directors, producers, distributors, cinema managers, and moviegoers. The program will widen opportunities for filmmakers in Creative Cities, promote exchanges, and become a starting point to develop new inter-city collaboration projects.

Furthermore, the Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference has offered a range of symposiums and programs to discuss the power and potential of creativity and film in sustainable urban development since 2017. From 2021, it has shifted its focus on cross-sectoral collaboration on how film can mutually enhance other creative sectors and discuss how to utilize creativity and culture as the sustainable engine to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The 2021 theme was "The Power of Gastronomy and Film." As a collaborative project with Tsuruoka UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, Yamagata livestreamed several online film screenings, dialogues, and panel discussions to introduce each's gastronomy, compare different appeals, and discover potentials of cross-sectoral collaboration. By inviting focal points of the Creative Cities, professionals, and practitioners of creative and cultural industries, the conference will continue to be the destination of brand-new cross-sectoral collaboration among Creative Cities.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK

Since its designation as the first and only UNESCO City of Film in Japan, Yamagata has continued to support the development of the UCCN, particularly to candidate cities wishing to join it. The office and board members of the Yamagata Creative City Promotion Council have showcased the impact of joining the UCCN and introduced the city's creative initiatives on various occasions in and out of Japan. AIKO Nami, the English assistant of the Yamagata City of Film office, advised and translated the UCCN application form of Asahikawa City into English. As a result, the city achieved the designation as a member of UNESCO City of Design in October 2019.

Yamagata will continue to enhance the UCCN by communicating the meaning and advantages of being a part of this global organization and supporting domestic and foreign applicant cities by accepting inspection, giving advice, and sharing experiences, knowledge, and best practices. Moreover, the city will also promote the further acceleration of the movement to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Japan by strengthening cooperation among domestic Creative Cities and creating synergy by leveraging the strengths of each city.

“ Yamagata City of Film believes that the key initiatives within the next four year's action plan directly respond to the mission statement of the UCCN and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The city remains committed to supporting the development of the UCCN and achieving its aim of promoting sustainable urban development using culture and creativity as key drivers. ”

6.3 ESTIMATED ANNUAL BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

According to the Yamagata City Development Plan 2025, the city will implement various initiatives, including the proposed action plan, to promote Yamagata as a UNESCO Creative City. From 2022 to 2026, the estimated average annual budget will be approximately 20 million USD. 8.5% of that are subsidies from the central government. It covers the project and construction fee and management of the cultural facility, including personnel. 80% will go to local projects, including renovation and construction of creative hubs (see pages 11 and 12), while 20% will go to international projects.

The budget dramatically increased compared to the 2017 application because the designation as a UCCN member raised the awareness of the importance of culture and creativity for the city's sustainable urban development. In addition, there are ongoing construction projects between 2022 and 2028. The construction budget for the New Yamagata Civic Auditorium is estimated at approximately 90 million USD.

6.4 PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

Yamagata City of Film will continue to update activities and development of creative projects on its official website in Japanese and English and keep posting updates on the shared Cities of Film website (citiesoffilm.org). It has set up accounts on well-established social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, as effective and broad-reaching publicity methods but also as networking tools with other Creative Cities and stakeholders through mutually sharing best practices. Media outreach will use not only texts and photos but also video, as fit for a Creative City of Film.



In addition to the online platforms, the Yamagata City of Film office also put substantial efforts into public advertisement, publications, and the production of original goods to raise the awareness of Yamagata's status as a UNESCO City of Film at local, national, and global level. Arriving guests at the Yamagata Station will be warm-welcomed by a banner delivering a message of how proud Yamagata citizens are to be part of the UCCN. The biweekly newsletter from the Yamagata city hall, which is distributed to all city households, has a spot to provide news and progress of the creative activities of the city. People will discover every attraction of the Yamagata's seven creative sectors dedicated to the UCCN through an official pamphlet. The goods include calendars, memo pads, and reusable shopping bags, which are all favorite gifts of guests and participants in various events.

Yamagata will keep sending the message of how it utilizes the power of creativity and culture as a strategic factor of its sustainable urban development through the above communication tools. At the same time, members of its office will appear and speak at a range of events across the globe to raise awareness of what it means to be part of the UCCN and share and learn best practices.



7

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

FILM: YOUR BEST FRIEND TO STAY HOME

Facing the worldwide spread of COVID-19, Yamagata City of Film provided online content to citizens and a more extensive range of audiences to provide learning opportunities about the UCCN and the city's culture during their stay home period.

ONLINE FILM SCHOOL (March 2020)

In response to COVID-19, Yamagata initiated the *Online Film School* in collaboration with a diverse set of partners, including the YIDFF office, cinema managers, film producers, directors, writers, and the academia. The initiative focused primarily on students studying at home due to the closure of schools in Japan.

The week-long online program comprised seven specific courses covering various aspects related to the film sector in Yamagata. These included the history of film, the basics of filmmaking, economic and social values related to cinema, and the presentation of international cooperation platforms, including the UCCN. The creation of this series of online lectures strengthened the partnership between the public and private sectors, youth engagement, and citizens' access and participation in cultural life during a hard time.

MUSIC EMPOWERS THE CITY – Yamagata launched a crowdfunding project to save its professional orchestra (June - September 2020)

Yamagata citizens have grown up with the music performed by the Yamagata Symphony Orchestra (hereinafter "YSO"), the first professional orchestra in northern Japan. It usually holds over 150 concerts annually, inviting world-famous musicians like Radek Baborák, and also actively holds school concerts to promote youth engagement in music.



The COVID-19 pandemic affected the YSO so that as many as 60 concerts had to be cancelled, resulting in a large loss in income. Therefore, the city initiated the crowdfunding project "Music Empowers the City" to support the orchestra's operations and the continued presence of music in the community. During the campaign period, Yamagata, as a City of Film, has successfully used film as a communication tool to attract people to join this funding effort. The professional musicians of the YSO performed a local dancing song popular among Yamagata citizens at various famous tourist spots within the city and streamed the series of performance videos on the official YSO YouTube channel. As a result, over 200,000 USD was donated from across Japan, along with warm messages of how the music encouraged people in this striving time of pandemic.

In order to acknowledge wide support from citizens of Yamagata as well as all over Japan, the YSO held a Special Thanks Concert in August 2021, inviting top Japanese artists such as the conductor BAN Tetsuro and the violinist MAEHASHI Teiko. After the COVID-19 situation subsides, the YSO plans to perform in the city center, where local restaurants have been agonizingly harmed by the pandemic, and support the community by the power of joy and creativity brought by music.

YAMAGATA CREATIVE CITIES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020 (ONLINE STREAMING from December 2020)

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference* (see page 8) was held online. The conference aimed to share experiences, knowledge, and best practices of front runners of the film industry in Japan and Busan while disseminating how intensely COVID-19 affected the film industry and its stakeholders.

The conference included four online sessions: Introduction to Yamagata City of Film, a travel program "A film director, SHINOHARA Tetsuo's Visit to Yamagata City of Film," a keynote speech of SHINOHARA Tetsuo "What We Need from Film," and the symposium "The Film: The Potential for Pioneers of the Future." The four videos are available on the official Yamagata City of Film website and YouTube channel, and the introduction and symposium parts have English subtitles. Significantly, the symposium was held online between Tokyo, Yamagata, and Busan through archive streaming, welcoming front runners of the film industry in Japan and South Korea: SHINOHARA Tetsuo, a Japanese leading film director, HASHIMOTO Manami, an actress born in Yamagata, KIM Jigon, a film director based in Busan, and KIM Anika Eunhye, a focal point of the Busan City of Film. As pioneers of the film industry, they discussed the following topics: souvenirs of shooting a film in Yamagata; the current situation and challenges they face during the COVID-19 pandemic; and how they will move onward and overcome the situation "with COVID-19." The symposium became an opportunity to share information on the film industry's current situation dealing with COVID-19 and discuss overcoming difficulties, sharing knowledge and best practices, strengthening international cooperation between Busan and Yamagata, and making the audience realize the power of film and creativity as drivers for sustainable urban development.

Economic ripple effect and value of Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference 2020

The quantitative data below analyzes the economic ripple effect and value of Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference was held online and uploaded on YouTube. According to a YouTube analysis, the total viewers of the four sessions were 1,429 as of April 2021. Among them, over 50 percent of the viewers were from overseas. The videos uploaded on YouTube have a huge advertising effectiveness, and as it is calculated as per the data below, the conference had the economic value of 112,692 USD in total.

Direct Effect

18,115 USD

Indirect Effect

30,321 USD

*Indirect effect is calculated by the Excel tool provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan.

Indirect Economic Impact and values of "Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference 2020" uploaded on YouTube

● Unit price of commercials (per 15 seconds)

Broadcasting Station in Urban area 9,152 USD

Broadcasting Station in Local area 228 USD

*Price reference: <https://www.kokoku-direct.jp/>

● Seconds of "Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference 2020"

Part 1 900

Part 2 1,277

Part 3 1,782

Part 4 3,505

Total 7,414

**Economic value of the Yamagata Creative Cities International
Conference 2020**
= (7,414 ÷ 15) × 228 USD

112,692 USD

YAMAGATA INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL 2021 ONLINE (October 2021)

Since its establishment in 1989, the YIDFF has been at the core of Yamagata's efforts to promote creative vision. The YIDFF is a gateway to appreciate cultural diversity that transcends borders. The city has always hoped the participants take this opportunity to deepen their mutual understanding of different cultures, discover and experience Yamagata - UNESCO Creative City of Film, and have a memorable time.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 edition was held entirely online. Yamagata saw this crisis as an opportunity to show its flexibility to develop new audiences while conveying the spirit that the festival has cultivated over the years. The fixed time schedule for screenings and director Q&A sessions at this year's YIDFF reflects an attempt to create conditions for participants to have an experience akin to watching a film in the theater - that is, a once-in-a-lifetime encounter.

Besides the rich lineup of emerging documentaries, the festival's most unique and popular feature is the way it facilitates director-to-audience and intra-audience exchange. The festival office organized 34 live Q&A sessions, 14 online talk events, three online symposiums, and one online workshop with the filmmakers from various countries, as well as the virtual hangout space "Online Komian Club" for seven nights during the festival. The Komian Club, long beloved as a gathering venue for filmmakers and festival fans, could no longer host events due to the closure of the long-established pickle shop Maruhachi Yatarazuke that maintained it. For this year's festival, the Komian Club was moved online as a virtual space where festival participants could enjoy sharing time together. Also, the film *Pickles and Komian Club*, which depicts memories of the shop's 135 years of operation and of the Komian Club, was shown as the YIDFF 2021 opening film.

LIVE Q&A SESSIONS



The 2021 edition was the biggest challenge for the city, festival office, filmmakers, audiences, and all involved. Yet, Yamagata showed its creativity and successfully achieved the one of the YIDFF's primary goal: bringing people and films, and people and people together.

KOMIAN CLUB



ONLINE KOMIAN CLUB



