

# CARE PRACTICES FOR THE CULTURAL SECTOR IN PANDEMIC TIMES



## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21: ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY

**RESILIENCE, WELL-BEING, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES,  
TOURISM, HEALTH, COVID, CRISIS**



## 1. Medellín and culture

Medellin is the second largest city in Colombia and the capital of the department of Antioquia. It is one of the most populated urban centres in the country with more than 2,500,000 inhabitants. Economically, the city is notable as one of the main financial, industrial, commercial, and service centres, and as one of the largest cultural hubs in the country. In addition, it holds important and recognized local, national, and international festivities such as the Festival of the Flowers.

**MEDELLÍN HAS PURSUED A FIRM COMMITMENT TO PROMOTE SELF-CARE PRACTICES THAT WOULD PREVENT ALL CITY EVENTS FROM BEING SUSPENDED OR POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19.**

## 2. Project goals and implementation

### 2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The Department of Citizen Culture of the City Hall of Medellín has been working to combat the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has pursued a firm commitment to promote self-care practices that would prevent all city events from being suspended or postponed, while also implementing protocols to ensure the safety and protection of artists and attendees.

To mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the cultural sector, three lines of action were taken: support for the artistic sector, promotion of culture, and initiating projects between the public and private sectors to redefine the sphere and promote government support.



## 2.2. Project development

COVID-19 was a challenge that the District Administration took on by not stopping or suspending a single city event. Through a strategy of general care and self-care, the first large-scale in-person public event in Colombia and Latin America since the pandemic was held: The 2021 Festival of the Flowers (hereafter referred to as the Festival), with the theme “Celebrate Life”. This was the city’s most important emotionally and socially important event. It is the most emblematic celebration in Medellín, and it is a pillar of regional culture where a wide variety of events and shows are offered.

Likewise, events such as DanzaMed, Myths and Legends, Altavoz Colombia, the International Tango Festival, the Book and Culture Festival, and the Christmas calendar events, among others, have been held since the beginning of the pandemic. Cultural events were reworked to make it possible for people to attend in person without putting artists or the public at risk.

City events were held but with a limited capacity, complying with public health safety protocols. In addition, people had to prove their vaccination against COVID-19 in order to enter the Festival’s events.

**THE 2021 FESTIVAL OF THE FLOWERS WAS THEMED “CELEBRATE LIFE”, AND WAS THE CITY’S MOST EMOTIONALLY AND SOCIALLY IMPORTANT EVENT.**



## 3. Impacts

### 3.1. Direct impacts

Despite COVID-19, culture continued to build connections and shorten the distances that separated the city, even in its most difficult times. The government commitment made it possible to directly benefit 3,300 artists in the city, as well as the over 500,000 citizens who enjoyed the Festival's different events.

The program had \$11,514,817,754 COP (€2 million) used for talent, economic reactivation, the silletera tradition, job creation, and the city's revitalization, where 55% of the funds were used directly for the artistic and cultural reactivation of citizenship through hiring artists and granting incentives under the Call for Art and Culture Promotion and Funding.

Almost 27,000 people were expected to enter the city during the Festival. The people entering the city directly supported the hotel sector. From these people alone it was estimated that the city received close to \$18 million USD (€16 million) during the Festival.

**CITY EVENTS WERE HELD BUT WITH A LIMITED CAPACITY,  
COMPLYING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH SAFETY PROTOCOLS.**



### **3.2. Assessment**

The overall balance of the Festival showed that this was the first major city event to be held in all of Latin America after the emergence of COVID-19. Some of factors used to analyze the success were based on:

- Artists impacted
- Economic revenue
- Events held
- Event attendance

### **3.3. Key factors**

The key factors of the program were:

1. Efficiency in the implementation of best practices for ensuring safe spaces for artists and citizens.
2. Large-scale promotion for more than 28 stages with limited seating capacity that met the attendance threshold.
3. The cultural sector, one of the industries most affected by the pandemic, was able to obtain vital resources during this program to generate proposals within the framework of the Festival and maintain its artistic spaces and productions.
4. The work carried alongside more than 10 cities across the country in order to preserve the cultural traditions of other regions throughout Colombia, as well as to maintain a national dialogue.

### **3.4. Continuity**

In 2022, which saw improved conditions for cultural events, the Festival was continued and expanded, which saw more investment and even better results for the cultural sector of Medellín. In addition, through the Creative Economy strategy, 14 craft markets were held in San Alejo with the participation of 523 artisans and other craft



markets were therefore bolstered; incentives were granted within the framework of the Call for Art and Culture Promotion and Funding for \$1,083,600,000 COP (approx. 215,000€); the strategy to diversify cultural events through tourism development was initiated; the Cultural Farms contest was also held within the framework of the Festival, making it possible for artists, managers, organizations, and citizens to meet on culture, cultural heritage, creative economies, the circulation of the arts, and creative tourism.

The Festival, which has now established itself as the most important cultural event in Medellín will be held from July 28th to August 7th in 2023.

## 4. Further information

Medellin was a candidate for the fifth UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September of 2022, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices implemented under Agenda 21 for culture.

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