The Third Cycle of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award)
Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines

The Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) aims to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). It focuses on advancing Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11), promoting the localization of SDGs, echoing on the Global Development Initiative (GDI), and incentivizing cities to find systematic solutions for sustainable urban development. The award also serves as a platform for advancing UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, flagship programmes and the Global Urban Monitoring Framework.

The establishment of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) was officially announced by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat at the first session of the 2022 Executive Board of UN-Habitat on 30 March 2022. In October 2023, UN-Habitat and China successfully completed the inaugural cycle of the award and co-organized the first award ceremony in Shanghai, China. The second award ceremony was co-hosted by UN-Habitat and Egyptian Government in connection with 2024 Global Observance of World Cities Day in Alexandria city of Egypt on 31 October 2024.

The Call for Applications for the **third cycle** of the award is **now open until 10 June 2025**.

I.   Scope and Theme

The award is **open to cities all around the world** to recognise and honour their progress and achievements on implementing the SDGs and the NUA at the city level since 2016 when the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was formally initiated.

The general theme of the award is "**Building a Sustainable Urban Future for All**". Cities around the world striving for sustainable development are encouraged to apply to join the global discussion on sustainable urban development solutions.

Echoing the themes of World Cities Day 2025 and World Habitat Day 2025, and in response to the emerging priorities in international urban sustainable development, cities that have made significant progress in one or more of the following areas are particularly encouraged to apply:

Area 1: Adequate housing for diverse needs

Including but not limited to:

a) provide affordable housing in appropriate locations and with adequate facilities, improve the housing supply system, and strive to provide adequate housing for all.

b) optimize public space design, renovate accessible housing and community facilities, create safe and healthy living environments, build complete communities that are friendly to all ages, meeting the diverse housing needs of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

c) improve the infrastructure in slums and informal settlements to provide equal access to basic infrastructure and social services for all, and ensure their integration into the social, economic and cultural development of cities.

d) plan for post-disaster housing recovery efforts, provide temporary shelter for affected families, and initiate housing reconstruction projects in a timely manner.

Area 2: Building people-centered smart cities together

Including but not limited to:

a) optimize urban spatial resources allocation, improve urban management efficiency and urban service through big data and artificial intelligence technology.

b) develop smart transportation solutions to alleviate traffic congestion, improve travel efficiency, and ensure equitable access to mobility for all.

c) construct and upgrade intelligent municipal infrastructure, improve early warning for safety hazards and emergency response capabilities, and ensure the safe operation of municipal infrastructure.

d) bridge the urban digital divide, make digital tools more accessible to the marginalized groups and residents of informal settlements; increase public participation in urban planning and policymaking, and ensure equal access to digital urban services for all.

e) promote the use of digital platforms and tools, including geospatial information systems (GIS) and city information modeling (CIM) platforms to improve regional and urban planning, construction, and governance in the long term.

Area 3: Green & resilient development responding to climate change

Including but not limited to:

a) adopt nature-based solutions to enhance the diversity and service capacity of urban ecosystems, build cities and settlements that mitigate and adapt to climate change.

b) promote zero-waste initiatives, encourage resource recycling, promote the use of renewable energy, and reduce energy consumption in urban construction and operations.

c) adopt disaster risk monitoring technology to improve cities' ability to prevent and respond to various disasters such as extreme weather, enhance cities' ability to ensure smooth operation.

d) protect the poor and vulnerable, enhance the safety and resilience of their housing and communities, and improve their resilience to shocks.

Area 4: Effective governance for vibrant cities

Including but not limited to:

a) encourage policy, legislative and institutional innovation to promote multi-stakeholder participation, promote sustainable financing for urban and community development.

b) foster an enabling environment for innovation, entrepreneurship and business, provide adequate and decent employment opportunities, and enhance dynamism in the urban economy.

c) improve urban and community governance through collaborative local actions by government, society, and businesses, ensuring all residents have equal access to public space, infrastructure and public services.

d) preserve and appropriately utilize local cultural heritage and unique cultural assets, integrating them into urban development, and foster an equitable and inclusive social environment while driving sustainable economic growth.

II.   Eligibility

Cities and municipalities around the world are eligible to be applicants for the award. Cities demonstrating the following are especially welcome to apply:

- Outstanding performance in social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable urban development since 2016.
- Remarkable progress and innovation in sustainable urban development since 2016, with significant potential for further growth and development.
- A commitment to further realizing and advancing the ambitious goal of sustainable urban development.
- Best practices in sustainable urban development that can be promoted around the world to inspire and motivate other cities to jointly implement sustainable development actions.

III.   Prize and award

The third cycle of the award will be given to no more than five cities. An award ceremony is planned to be held during the observance of World Cities Day 2025 and winners of the third cycle will be presented with a plaque and a trophy. The outstanding practices and achievements in sustainable urban development from the winning cities will be added to the best practices database of the NUA platform and the Shanghai Manual 2025 annual report, which will further showcase and enhance the visibility of the cities' efforts on sustainable urban and human settlement development. The winning cities will also be invited to attend important international events, gaining potential opportunities, such as engaging in city networks, exchanging best practices with other cities, boosting potential investment, and creating new opportunities for local economic development.

IV.   Application

(1) Application platform

The application form can be completed and submitted through the Shanghai Award official website at https://shanghaiaward.org, where more information, guidance and resources for the application process are also available. Cities are encouraged to align the application with their Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR).

(2) Application materials

The application includes two approaches: i) self-application; and ii) application with nomination. The Application Form can be completed on the online application portal of the award website, where applicants can also upload supporting materials. The application can be revised at any time before the Call for Applications closes. Requirements for the application are as follows:

a.   Self-application:

All applicant cities/municipalities are required to submit an official Application Letter to confirm that the city/municipality decides to apply to the third cycle of the award. The Application Letter must include the official letterhead and an official stamp/signature of the mayor (or the equivalent) of the applicant city/municipality. A template for the Application Letter can be downloaded via the online application portal.

b.   Application with nomination:

Member States of the United Nations (UN), UN agencies other than UN-Habitat, organisations and institutions that have consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or that have been specially invited by UN-Habitat can nominate. An official Nomination Letter and a Confirmation Letter by the city/municipality are required. The nominator must write an official Nomination Letter, with an official letterhead and the stamp of the nominator, to state that they nominate the city/municipality concerned to apply to the third cycle of the award and explain why they make the nomination. The Confirmation Letter must include the official letterhead and an official stamp/signature of the mayor (or the equivalent) of the applicant city/municipality and confirm that they agree to be nominated and apply to the award.

(3) Language of the application:

English

(4) Terms and conditions

1) The applicant city/municipality is responsible for completing and submitting the application following the Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines.

2) The applicant city/municipality is responsible for the authenticity and legality of the submitted materials.

3) Applications will be disqualified in the following situations:

    a.   Failure to observe the Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines

    b.   Presenting misleading and false information regarding the supporting documents

    c.   Inability to provide sufficient information for the assessment of the application

    d.   Unethical behaviour, including undue pressure on any person involved in the evaluation and selection process.

4) Incomplete applications or late submissions will not be considered. The task force for the award may request supplementary materials from applications on the condition that the original application was completed according to the Rules and Guidelines and the timeline, and that additional information is helpful for further assessments of the application against the core selection criteria.

5) Questions marked with an * are required to answer, and the rest are optional. Please note that the applicant must answer all required questions. Incomplete applications will be disqualified. Applicants fail to provide the required quantitative indicators in the questions should provide a brief description related to the conditions.

6) You are encouraged to provide supporting materials with your submission, for example, photographs, videos, media reports, promotional materials, procedural documents, supporting bylaws or city regulations and policies (brief), or working standards, etc. These are not compulsory but will help to strengthen your application.

7) The applications can be revised before the Call for Applications closes. Once the Call for Applications is closed, the materials submitted will not be returned. The applicant should back up the original documents as needed.

8) Where the Application Letter from the applicant city/municipality is submitted, all materials in the applications will be available for international exhibition, demonstration, publication, and media coverage. The award task force will cite the source of the information while using it but will not be required to seek further permission for any such use.

9) Where the submission of an application is made by someone assigned by the applicant city/municipality, it is assumed that they have been given permissions for the submission and the terms indicated in point (8) above.

10) The prize for the winning application will be awarded to the city/municipality named in the application form.

V.   Selection criteria

The applications will be assessed according to four core criteria.

(1) **Impact:** The achievements, progress, and proven impact on implementing the 2030 Agenda and the NUA.

(2) **Sustainability:** The strategies, plans and actions that underpin the long-term implementation of the SDGs and the NUA in the city.

(3) **Innovation:** The innovative approaches, methods, practices, technologies, or instruments to enable the realisation of the SDGs and the NUA.

(4) **Adaptability:** The extent to which the city's experience can be replicated, adopted, or scaled up by other cities or in similar scenarios.

In addition to the core criteria, the applicants will be ~~given~~ awarded bonus points if they have accomplishments in the areas that are closely related to the approaches that UN-Habitat promotes for realising the SDGs and the NUA.

VI.   Selection process

After the closing date of the Call for Applications, the award task force will conduct screening according to the eligibility and compliance of the applications. A technical review team will be set up to conduct initial shortlisting.

An International Jury will be established as the core assessment body of the award. The International Jury will give its review report and the recommendations for winners.

UN-Habitat will confirm the list of winning cities based on the International Jury Review Report after consulting with internal and external stakeholders.

The "Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award)" is jointly established by UN-Habitat and Shanghai Municipality. Please visit the official website: https://shanghaiaward.org for this Application Rules and Guidelines (in six UN official languages). Should you have any questions or encounter any problems during the application process, you can send your inquiries to the award task force at siqi.chen@un.org and outreach@shanghaiaward.org.

The Shanghai Award Task Force reserves the rights of final interpretation of the Third Cycle of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines.