

UCHF Action Plan and Strategic Orientations for 2026–2027

Strategic Vision

During its first two years of operation, UCHF will establish itself as a **credible, transparent, and needs-driven multi-donor platform** supporting the protection, stabilization, rehabilitation, and sustainable development of Ukraine’s cultural heritage and cultural and creative sectors.

Building on internationally recognized standards and ethical principles, UCHF will combine **rapid emergency response, structured grant-making, and institutional capacity building for the benefit of the heritage and wider culture sector in Ukraine**, while progressively consolidating its governance, fundraising, and operational systems in line with Belgian ASBL good practice and expectations of international donors, with the long-term with the long-term strategic ambition of progressively anchoring its presence and operations in Ukraine.

UCHF will engage, where relevant, with **Ukrainian public institutions, professional communities, and active civil society organisations**, while drawing on relevant international expertise in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and culture, in order to ensure **responsiveness to needs on the ground**.

A. Strategic Priorities (2026–2027)

UCHF’s action plan will be structured around **four complementary strategic pillars**, fully aligned with its Granting Scheme and statutory mandate.

1. Emergency Protection and Prevention

UCHF will prioritize urgent, needs-based interventions aimed at preventing irreversible loss of cultural heritage, including:

- Emergency documentation (including 3D documentation) and stabilization of heritage sites and monuments threatened or damaged by war;
- Emergency storage solutions for relocated or evacuated collections;
- Preventive conservation, risk preparedness, and basic safeguarding measures;
- Protection, packing, and securing of movable heritage including museum collections;
- Preservation and visibility of contemporary cultural heritage (including contemporary art in any form affected by or created in response to the war).

This pillar draws directly on lessons learned from large-scale emergency actions implemented in Ukraine since 2022, notably in relation to collections protection and storage upgrades.

2. Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Early Restoration

As conditions permit, UCHF will progressively support:

- Technical studies, damage assessments, and preparatory documentation in line with Ukrainian legal requirements;
- Stabilization and early rehabilitation and on damaged heritage assets;
- Pilot restoration projects demonstrating sound methodologies and scalability;
- Integration of cultural heritage considerations into early recovery and reconstruction frameworks.

Interventions under this pillar will emphasize technical rigor, local ownership, and sustainability, in line with international professional standards.

3. Capacity, Knowledge, and Sector Resilience

Additionally, UCHF will support initiatives that strengthen professional capacities, institutional resilience, knowledge systems, and cultural production in Ukraine. This includes strengthening the wider ecosystem of actors contributing to cultural heritage protection, including non-governmental organisations active in the heritage and cultural sectors.

This pillar aims to reinforce the ability of Ukrainian heritage and cultural actors to operate effectively during wartime and early recovery, while safeguarding continuity, transmission, and access to culture.

For operational purposes, this pillar will be implemented through two complementary sub-pillars, with distinct objectives and funding logics.

3.1 Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening

This sub-pillar focuses on people, institutions, and systems that underpin the protection and sustainable management of cultural heritage and culture.

UCHF will support:

- Training and professional development for heritage and cultural professionals;
- Institutional strengthening of cultural organizations and public authorities;
- Improvement of operational standards, management practices, fundraising and governance;
- Knowledge exchange, mentoring, and peer-to-peer cooperation at national and international levels.

Actions supported under this sub-pillar will prioritize long-term impact, institutional ownership, and alignment with international professional standards.

3.2 Documentation, Digitalization, and Cultural Production

This sub-pillar focuses on content, continuity, access and artistic freedom, supporting initiatives that ensure the documentation, transmission, and active expression of cultural heritage and culture.

UCHF will support, subject to availability of designated funds:

- Documentation and digitization of collections, archives, and heritage assets;
- Support to digital tools and platforms enhancing protection, accessibility, and knowledge with a strong focus on sustainability;
- Targeted support to cultural and creative industries and artistic production, including initiatives that safeguard artistic independence and freedom of expression;
- Professional mobility and support for artists and cultural practitioners, particularly where such support contributes to artistic freedom, safety, and continuity of practice.

Actions supported under this sub-pillar will emphasize clear outputs, measurable results, and responsiveness to evolving contexts.

4. Governance, Ethics, and Institutional Consolidation

During its first two years, UCHF will focus on consolidating its institutional framework through:

- Assembling and establishing operations governance bodies (Board, Expert Committee, Audit Committee, Ethics and Governance Committee);
- Application of rigorous but proportionate selection, monitoring, and reporting procedures;
- Enforcement of ethical standards, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and transparency obligations;
- Commitment to ethical heritage governance, including respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine as recognised by the UN, to provenance, cultural integrity

and decolonisation approaches, and to operating in full compliance with applicable international legal frameworks, including sanctions measures relevant to the protection of cultural heritage;

- Respect for cultural diversity and rights and artistic freedom as guiding ethical principles, in line with international standards;
- Structured fundraising and donor engagement, encompassing public and private partners, local and national co-funding, supported by proportionate due-diligence and compliance mechanisms to ensure integrity, transparency, and alignment with the Fund's ethical framework.

This pillar ensures accountability, credibility, and donor confidence, in accordance with the UCHF Rules of Procedure, Code of Ethics, and other internal policies adopted by the Board of Directors.

B. Pilot Grant Phase 2026-2027

To operationalize its mandate and test its systems, UCHF will launch a **first series of pilot grants** in the first half of 2026, followed by a **first call for projects for small and medium-sized grants** planned in the second half 2026. UCHF will proactively develop project portfolio through adoption of a full-cycle support model. Where possible and feasible, capacity building and institutional strengthening will be integrated within project design mainly through on-the-job training.

Objectives of the pilot grant:

- Respond rapidly to clearly identified priority needs;
- Deliver visible, exemplary projects to demonstrate UCHF's added value;
- Refine grant-making, evaluation, and decision-making procedures.

Indicative focus areas for pilot projects include:

1. Stabilization of a war-damaged historic landmark

A targeted intervention focused on enabling rehabilitation through the emergency stabilization and safeguarding of a selected war-damaged historic site or monument, aimed at preventing further deterioration, enabling safe access where relevant, and subsequent restoration phases.

2. Upgrade of storage spaces and emergency storage solutions for relocated collections

Support for the adaptation, equipment, and securing of temporary or permanent storage facilities hosting evacuated museum and archive collections, including climate control, security measures, fire prevention, and basic conservation infrastructure, in order to ensure minimum preservation standards under emergency conditions.

3. Emergency digitization, inventory, and documentation actions

Rapid documentation and digitization initiatives focusing on museum collections (possibly on libraries and archives) from war-affected areas, including inventories, photographic and technical documentation, and basic digital records, to support risk mitigation, traceability, and future conservation or recovery efforts.

Potential additional areas, subject to the availability of designated funds, include:

1. Intangible cultural heritage initiative

A pilot project aimed at safeguarding endangered intangible cultural heritage practices affected by war, through documentation, transmission, and community-based activities involving practitioners and bearers, with a focus on continuity, intergenerational transmission, and local ownership.

2. Contemporary cultural heritage preservation and representation

An initiative prioritising the preservation and safeguarding of contemporary Ukrainian cultural heritage and artistic production affected by and created in reaction to the war, with funding focused on sustaining creation, documentation, and presentation of works, primarily in situ or through heritage-oriented formats, while selectively enabling international exhibitions and representation of Ukrainian cultural heritage abroad as a means of protection, visibility, and continuity.

Pilot grants will be limited in number and scope, closely monitored, and documented to inform the design of subsequent funding cycles.

Implementation Modalities

- Grants will be awarded following a **rigorous but proportionate selection process**, based on relevance, quality, feasibility, and sustainability;
- Due diligence will be carried out on all grantees;
- Local organizations from Ukraine will be the main group of recipients of grants however in cases of demonstrated needs for additional expertise and strong cases of international and regional cooperation can also be considered;
- Independent expert assessment and advisory opinions for grants above EUR 300,000 will support Board decisions;
- Payments will generally be made in instalments, linked to progress and reporting milestones;
- Reporting requirements will include interim and final narrative and financial reports, adapted to project size and risk level.

C. Expected Outcomes by End 2027

By the end of 2027, UCHF aims to have:

- Positioned itself as a key funding instrument for cultural heritage and culture in Ukraine during wartime and early recovery, anchored in Ukrainian priorities and embedded in international cooperation networks, with structured input from Ukrainian and international expertise;
- Established fully operational governance, ethics, and control mechanisms at the UCHF headquarters in Brussels and local UCHF representation in Kyiv;
- Successfully implemented a first series of pilot grants;
- Supported a balanced portfolio of emergency, recovery, and capacity-building interventions through the pilot projects and first Call for Projects;
- Built a diversified base of public, institutional and private contributors.