

WCC-Award of Excellence for Handicrafts

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Award of Excellence for Handicrafts was established by UNESCO in 2001 under the name of Seal of Excellence. Owing to its success, the programme was expanded worldwide. Since 2014, WCC is continuing the programme of the award under the patronage of UNESCO within the Asia Pacific Region and now, WCC AISBL (International). The Award is coordinated by the following partner organizations:

Africa, Asia Pacific Region, Europe, North America, Europe and Latin America.

The WCC “Award of Excellence for Handicrafts” aims to encourage designer-makers, artisans and craft makers to produce and create new forms of handicrafts using traditional, heritage and/or contemporary craft resources and practices to ensure the continuity, sustainability and innovation of craft systems. It is WCC’s flagship programme for supporting makers (In this document, ‘makers’ will be used to encompass artisans, craft maker and designer-makers).

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Establish rigorous standards of excellence for handicrafts

The WCC “Award of Excellence for Handicrafts” aims to promote quality crafts that uphold rigorous standards of excellence. It aims to maintain the integrity of craft practices and to benchmark quality when purchasing awarded products that are made responsibly, both socially and environmentally.

Objective 2: Encourage innovation

While it seeks to promote the continuation of traditional skills and/or manual practice, the WCC Award also encourages innovation in order to explore the frontiers of handicrafts while ensuring that craft products and practices (traditional and/or otherwise), and manual skills remain relevant, valuable, and marketable in modern life.

Objective 3: Offer training and support services

The WCC programme aims to facilitate capacity-building and training workshops to assist makers to improve their products, practices and protection of their intellectual property rights.

Objective 4: Provide new opportunities to ensure sustainability of handicraft industries

The handicraft sector plays an increasingly significant role in local economic development, poverty alleviation and the wellbeing of a community. By providing new market opportunities, the programme aims to enable makers to establish sustainable livelihoods. This will be achieved through developing networks of makers and buyers through exhibitions and trade fairs.

Beyond economic sustainability, conferring the Award on craft products will also enhance the visibility and confidence of the maker and craft practice amongst the local community.

HANDICRAFTS

Handicrafts are defined as products that are produced either completely by hand or with the help of tools. Mechanical tools may be used as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. Handicrafts are made from raw materials and can be produced in unlimited numbers. Such products can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally expressive, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant.

(Adapted from the definition for crafts/artisan products at the UNESCO/ ITC International Symposium on "Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification", Manila, Philippines, October 1997).

The Award will be granted only to handicrafts produced from one or a combination of natural, recycled or composite materials. Following is a list of some of the materials from which products can be made, and/or from a combination of materials. This list is provided as a guide for producers and is by no means exhaustive:

- Textiles (e.g. cotton, silk, linen)
- Natural fibers (e.g. bamboo, vetiver, grass, rattan)
- Ceramics (e.g. clay, earthenware, pottery, stoneware, porcelain)
- Wood (including paper and lacquer ware)
- Metal (e.g. silver, gold, bronze, iron, pewter)
- Stone (e.g. precious, semi-precious, jades)
- Others; materials not included in the above. There are two sub-categories:
 - Other Natural resources (e.g. animal hide, shell, horn, bone, etc)
 - Composite Materials (e.g. Acrylic Glass, Polycarbonate, etc)
 - Recycled materials

BENEFITS

The producers of awarded products benefit in the following ways:

Certificate of excellence

Each product recognized with the WCC Award is given a certificate. The certificate can be used as a promotional tool (for a specific product or a product line) to attest the quality and authenticity of a product.

Training and capacity-building

WCC assists national members and sub-regional partners in facilitating workshops on product assessment, design and promotion for the makers of awarded products and programme applicants.

WCC Award of Excellence for Handicrafts conducts training programmes and quality innovation workshops to upscale the capacities of artisans and the craft sector. It also provides opportunity for awarded products to be marketed at international fairs.

THE PROCESS

- **Submission**

Makers of handicraft products and product lines from participating countries are invited and encouraged to submit their highest quality items for consideration.

- **Evaluation**

The evaluation generally takes place after the selection phase. Products that meet the programme standards receive the “Award of Excellence for Handicrafts”.

- **Awarding**

Products that have obtained the “Award of Excellence” will be announced on May 2022. The number of certificates awarded is at the discretion of the evaluation panel, which assess each submission, and may vary every cycle.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PRE – CONDITIONS

Products that are granted the “Award of Excellence” meet the highest level of craft quality that is environmentally friendly in design, materials and production techniques which are distinguished as a benchmark of excellence. An international panel of experts, nominated by WCC / WCC APR / Region and Sub-Regions evaluates submissions based on meeting ALL of the following four **criteria**:

- **Excellence**

Demonstrated excellence and standard-setting quality in craftsmanship: determined by the use of high-quality materials, a high standard of technique and the special attention to manufacturing and finishing details.

- **Authenticity**

Expression of cultural identity and traditional aesthetic values: demonstrated by a well-achieved application of aesthetic and cultural expression or traditional crafting techniques found in materials, tools, skills, the cultural characteristics of the products and even in the experience of the maker.

- **Innovation**

Innovation may be revealed through design, function, material, tools, skills, techniques and production, demonstrated by an effective and successful blend of conventional and contemporary.

- **Marketability**

Marketability of the craft products is defined as its appropriateness for its local, domestic and international markets and that the value of the product is fair, achieving a well-balanced price-quality relationship.

To be eligible and enter the evaluation, all submissions must first fulfill **two pre-conditions**. Products and processes must be:

- ***Eco-friendly***

Respect for the environment in materials and production techniques: Exemplified through the sustainable use of natural dyes, natural fibers, recycled materials and the use of materials and production processes that are environmentally friendly. Products that are functional, safe and not harmful to potential users.

- ***Fair***

Social responsibility: The producer must affirm that no labour law or copyright was violated and no individual or group exploited unfairly at any stage in the production of a handicraft submitted for the Award programme.

PROGRAMME REGULATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

1. The Award is granted every two years by the World Craft Council (WCC), in collaboration with regional partners.
2. The Award is open to individuals, community groups, cooperatives, designers and other craft organizations that produce commercial handmade product lines, and are capable of maintaining adequate stock levels to fulfil orders.
3. The applicant must reside permanently (for individuals) or be registered (for organizations) in one of the participating countries.
4. Only finished “handicraft” products will be accepted. Please refer to the definition of handicrafts below:
 - **Products of a purely artistic nature are not eligible**; the potential for replication/production while not infringing on the value or integrity of the product must be considered.
 - Sections of large products (i.e. carpet sample) to represent the actual product or semi-finished products (i.e. roll of textiles) will not be considered.
5. Products submitted without a complete and signed application form will automatically be invalid.
6. The Award is only valid for one product or one product line and the certificate or name cannot be used for the promotion of other products manufactured by the same maker if these products have not been submitted to and awarded by the program.
7. The certificate can be reproduced in unlimited number for promotional purposes. **Applicants who are not direct producers are responsible for sharing the certificate and programme information with the artisan.**
8. (a) Awarded products will be retained for educational and promotional purposes by WCC or its partners.
(b) Products not awarded can be returned to the producer **at their own cost upon written request**, through the national partners or national commissions, depending on the local organizational structure.
9. All patent, copyright and other reproduction rights are retained by the maker.