



September 27th, 2026

Written testimony of Anaghime Esmeralda Ziani

Co-Principal Investigator, *Staging Heritage: Policy Lessons from Global Cultural Events for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games*
Fellow, UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy

submitted to the Joint Hearing of the Special Committee on International Sporting Events: Olympic, Paralympics, and World Cup Soccer and the Joint Legislative Committee on the Arts
(Senator Ben Allen, Chair)

to complement the oral testimony of Professor Tawny Paul presented at the October 14, 2026 informational hearing titled
The Cultural Olympiad, Community Festivals, and Arts and Cultural Plans for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Legislature’s joint informational hearing on cultural planning for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Staging Heritage examines cultural planning around the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup, and Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We use these historic examples to draw lessons for LA28. Our research draws on official evaluations, government and organizing-committee reports, institutional records, published research, accessibility and visitor guides, and interviews with cultural- and event-sector stakeholders.

Cultural institutions in LA face significant opportunities but also significant challenges in preparing for LA28. Contrary to what we might expect, our research shows that visitor numbers at cultural institutions has tended to drop during major sporting events. Furthermore, many institutions will need to close due to their location within security perimeters.

Our research helped us understand how organizers and institutions responded when attendance, access, or delivery did not unfold as expected. It also captured what participants considered effective, what limited their work, and what some would approach differently with the benefit of hindsight. The research points to several practical considerations and questions that museums, cultural organizations, public agencies, and funders can address before 2028.

Planning for Varying Conditions

LA28 will affect cultural institutions unevenly. A museum near a competition venue will face different opportunities and constraints from one outside the principal transit network. An institution dependent on international tourism may experience the Games differently from a neighborhood organization with a strong local audience. Some museums will remain open, some will modify their operations, and others may face temporary closure or restricted access.

The Paris 2024 case study illustrates this variation. The Louvre experienced a considerable decline in visitor numbers during the Games period.¹ *Five Museums for the Games* connected separate institutions through a common narrative and visitor route.² La Monnaie de Paris benefited from a particularly legible connection to the event: it had minted and exhibited the Olympic and Paralympic medals. The museum reported a 62% increase in average attendance during the two Olympic competition weeks compared with the preceding two weeks. Comparable increases were not reported by several other prominent museums in the city. La Monnaie’s example highlights the potential value of cultural programming with a clear and recognizable connection to the Games. The Grand Palais, already closed for renovation, used a temporary venue to sustain recognizable programming.³

During the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar Museums presented museums, exhibitions, public art, and heritage sites as parts of a shared cultural journey. Common visitor guides, multilingual information, and event-relevant programming helped people understand what was available and how it could fit around the tournament schedule.⁴ Cultural activity also extended into fan environments, public spaces, heritage districts, and routes to stadiums, to meet fans where they were. Stadiums included cultural buffer zones, where pedestrians could experience performances and pop-up exhibitions on their way to stadiums.

¹ Musée du Louvre, 8.7 Million Visitors to the Musée du Louvre in 2024 (2025), <https://presse.louvre.fr/8-7-million-visitors-to-the-louvre-in-2024>; City of Paris, Olympic Games Opening Ceremony: Answering Your Questions (2024), <https://www.paris.fr/en/pages/olympic-games-opening-ceremony-answering-your-questions-27668>

² Musée d’Orsay, *Five Museums for the Games: A Puzzle Adventure* (2024), <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/program/whats-on/tours-and-workshops/five-museums-games-puzzle-adventure>

³ Atout France, *The Grand Palais Unveils Its Temporary Structure* (2019), <https://www.france.fr/en/article/grand-palais-structure-wilmotte>; GrandPalaisRmn, *Grand Palais: Site Olympique et Paralympique de Paris 2024* (2024), <https://www.grandpalais.fr/fr/grand-palais-site-olympique-et-paralympique-de-paris-2024>

⁴ Qatar Museums, *A Football Fan’s Guide to Qatar Museums* (2022), <https://qm.org.qa/en/stories/all-stories/football-fans-art-culture-guide>; Qatar Creates, *The Power of Culture Guide 2022*, <https://info.qacreatives.com/hubfs/QC%20Pocket%20Guidebook%20English.pdf>

Across cases, museums prepared for modified, restricted, and off-site operations by including: host sites, traveling programs, collection loans, satellite displays, neighborhood clusters, digital interpretation, shared visitor routes, and partnerships through which an open institution supports one affected by closure. Each option raises practical questions about staffing, insurance, transportation, interpretation, collections care, credit, and cost.

Designing Cultural Programs Around Audience Behavior

During a mega-event, cultural programs can fail to reach audiences if access is unclear. Competition schedules, transport changes, security perimeters, unfamiliar booking systems, and limited free time are all factors that affect attendance.

The Qatar 2022 case study provides a useful model of cultural information designed around the visitor journey: Qatar Museums described museums and heritage sites as experiences before, after, or between matches and brought opening hours, reservations, maps, and multilingual resources into shared guides, with adjustments for tournament hours.⁵ Stakeholders interviewed emphasized the value of short and clearly defined experiences. For a visitor with one available hour, a legible route through an institution could be helpful for planning purposes. The FIFA Museum exhibition inside the Al Bidda Park Fan Festival received approximately 179,000 visits during its four-week run.⁶ Organizers attributed this success to a willingness to meet audiences where they were already gathering.

For Los Angeles, visitor communication should be treated as part of cultural delivery: hours, booking requirements, transit guidance, baggage policies, language provision, sensory conditions, accessibility services, expected visit length, and nearby activity all influence participation. Institutions can also design focused encounters that last 15, 30, or 60 minutes: a gallery route, object encounter, demonstration, family activity, small exhibition, or performance excerpt. These formats can make cultural visits and participation possible within a schedule built around sport, transport, and public celebration.

Clear communication will also be needed across the wider cultural landscape. The official Cultural Olympiad will exist alongside City, County, institutional, tribal, neighborhood, consular, and community activities that could greatly benefit from public visibility. The Paris 2024 Cultural Olympiad label enabled broad affiliation, but some project leaders reported limited public recognition of the label, and affiliation did not necessarily include financial support.⁷ A shared affiliation umbrella can expand participation, although it does not necessarily provide participating institutions with additional capacity or resources, which may ultimately affect the extent to which cultural institutions participate during the Games period.

Supporting Participation Across Communities and Institutions

Calls for participation can open a cultural program to many organizations. Their practical value depends on whether organizations have the resources to respond. Smaller institutions may hold trusted relationships, language knowledge, archives, artists, and local expertise while lacking staff, cash flow, insurance, venues, accessibility support, or grant-management capacity.

The Paris 2024 Cultural Olympiad labeled 2,596 projects and 111,066 activities across four years, with 70% of projects offered free of charge.⁸ That scale is significant, and encompassed organizations with varying

⁵ Qatar Museums, A Football Fan's Guide to Qatar Museums (2022), <https://qm.org.qa/en/stories/all-stories/football-fans-art-culture-guide>; Qatar Creates, The Power of Culture Guide 2022, <https://info.qacreatives.com/hubfs/QC%20Pocket%20Guidebook%20English.pdf>

⁶ FIFA Museum, "Almost 400,000 Visitors Worldwide: New Visitor Record for the FIFA Museum" (2023), <https://www.fifamuseum.com/en/explore/about/media/almost-400-000-visitors-worldwide-new-visitor-record-for-the-fifa-museum>

⁷ Beatriz García, Cultural Olympiad Evaluation: Paris 2024, commissioned by Paris 2024 (2024), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64d11ec5a9dd7e4e83dac000/t/683ee84d9daea35cfe21147/1748953177385/Paris2024-RAPPORT-OLYMPIADE-CULTURELLE_ENG.pdf

⁸ Beatriz García, Cultural Olympiad Evaluation: Paris 2024, commissioned by Paris 2024 (2024), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64d11ec5a9dd7e4e83dac000/t/683ee84d9daea35cfe21147/1748953177385/Paris2024-RAPPORT-OLYMPIADE-CULTURELLE_ENG.pdf

resources, and many labeled projects did not receive funding through the affiliation process. At the time of the evaluation, only 19% of projects had completed the project survey. The result illustrates how difficult it is to secure consistent participation and evidence across a large cultural field when delivery and reporting capacity vary.

For LA28, funding, affiliation, and technical support should be communicated as distinct forms of participation. Organizations need to receive clear information regarding what a designation provides, what costs remain with them, and whether accessibility, translation, insurance, staffing, or evaluation expenses are eligible. Simple applications, early decisions, technical assistance, and proportionate reporting requirements can widen the range of organizations able to contribute.

The same principle applies to community participation: an invitation to appear in a program does not answer who develops the work, who is paid, who controls interpretation, or who retains the resulting materials and relationships. The Qatar 2022 case study offers examples of place-based cultural presentation through oral histories, first-person testimony, craft, public art, heritage districts, and cultural landscapes.⁹ Stakeholders also described communities near stadiums helping to determine what they wished to present along visitor routes.¹⁰ These approaches linked the cultural offer to people and place as well as to the event.

Los Angeles's tribal nations, diaspora communities, neighborhoods, artists, and institutions will enter LA28 with different histories and forms of authority. Their participation will require different relationships and resources. Practical planning questions include who is approached, how early they are involved, which decisions they influence, how knowledge and consent are handled, what support is available, and what remains in the community after the event itself.

Accessibility Across the Cultural Experience

While accessibility is often discussed as a feature of a venue, case studies have shown that it also depends on ticketing, information, transport, commissioning, staffing, interpretation, and the ability to participate in the cultural narrative and offer.

The London 2012 case study provides a strong example of accessibility being built into cultural production. *Unlimited*, the largest commissioning program for deaf and disabled artists undertaken in the United Kingdom up until the Games, placed deaf and disabled artists, producers, and disability organizations at the center of the Cultural Olympiad. More than 800 participating artists were identified as deaf or disabled, while *Unlimited* and the *Unlimited Festival* at Southbank Centre presented 29 new commissions involving deaf and disabled artists, disability organizations, producers, and mainstream cultural institutions. The program was supported through a partnership involving the Olympic Lottery Distributor, the London organizing committee, and the United Kingdom's arts councils.¹¹ For LA28, this model shows how disability arts can become a visible cultural priority through dedicated commissioning, funding, and institutional partnerships that develop across the Cultural Olympiad and culminate during the Paralympic Games.

During Qatar 2022, accessibility was integrated across museums, fan zones, public activations, and city services, including information on sensory access, sign-language interpretation, quiet spaces, assistive

⁹ National Museum of Qatar, About the Galleries, official interpretation materials; Msheireb Museums, Bin Jelmood House, Mohammed Bin Jassim House, and Company House, official exhibition materials; Staging Heritage, Indigenous Inclusion and Cultural Authority, Qatar 2022 case study

¹⁰ Staging Heritage, Planning for LA28 Audiences, Qatar 2022 case study and cross-case findings, based in part on project stakeholder interviews

¹¹ UK Government, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and partners, 2012 Games Meta-Evaluation: Report 5—Post-Games Evaluation, Community Engagement Evidence Base (2013),

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ce9c5e5274a2c9a484e3b/Report_5_Community_Engagement_Evidence_Base_FINAL.pdf; UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport, "Unlimited Festival Celebrates Inspiration of Paralympics," August 30, 2012,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unlimited-festival-celebrates-inspiration-of-paralympics>; British Council, "Unlimited: London 2012 and Unlimited," <https://www.britishcouncil.jp/en/programmes/arts/disability-arts/unlimited>.

technology, and other services.¹² Paris 2024 incorporated accessibility into commissioning, dedicated funding, staff training, evaluation, and institutional policy. At the Panthéon, Cultural Olympiad programming contributed to revised procedures, staff training, and digital interpretation where physical access remained constrained.¹³

Physical, sensory, linguistic, digital, financial, and informational access each require appropriate expertise and resources. Institutions should also document which measures were provided, who contributed to their design, and how visitors and participants used them. Where Games-related planning and funding supported accessible spaces, visitor services, staff training, or institutional policies, these improvements could continue serving museums and their communities after the event. Accessibility can therefore form an important part of the LA28 cultural legacy by strengthening both museum infrastructure and institutional capacity well beyond the Games.

Planning Cultural Legacy

Across the case studies, cultural legacy took several forms: permanent artworks and infrastructure, continuing commissions and partnerships, accessibility improvements, professional skills, community relationships, and changes in institutional practice. These outcomes were most durable when they extended priorities already held by institutions and communities and when responsible organizations had the resources to carry them forward.

For LA28, legacy planning can begin while projects are still being developed. A permanent work, community partnership, digital platform, accessibility improvement, youth program, or institutional collaboration should identify what is expected to continue, who will own and maintain it, what resources continuation will require, and which communities should benefit. This approach gives funders and participating organizations a clearer basis for distinguishing a short-term activation from an investment in longer-term cultural capacity.

Evaluation should be considered part of that planning. Our research found that host-city records use terms such as visits, engagements, activities, and projects inconsistently. A small set of shared fields could document where activity occurred, whether it was free, which audiences and communities participated, what accessibility measures were provided, whether participants were paid, and what was intended to remain. Quantitative measures are most useful when accompanied by accounts from participating institutions and communities.

The Legislature's informational hearing creates an opportunity to establish these expectations while cultural plans are still developing. The cultural opportunity of LA28 extends well beyond the programs presented in 2028. It can strengthen institutions' ability to welcome audiences, improve access, support community authority, and preserve a more complete public record of Los Angeles's third Olympic Games and first Paralympic Games.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I hope these findings will assist the Legislature as it considers how LA28 can contribute to a more accessible, connected, and durable cultural landscape for Los Angeles.

¹² FIFA, Final Sustainability Report: Accessibility at the Tournament (2023), <https://publications.fifa.com/de/final-sustainability-report/social-pillar/accessibility/accessibility-at-the-tournament>; Qatar Foundation, Qatar for All: Your Accessibility Guide (2023), https://assets.ctfassets.net/2h1qowfuxkq7/4MMus2DFrPgYDdTc8PxGkB/1a3aff97ad790629129094ecbfff303a0/Accessibility_Guide_TEXT_ONLY_2023_Aug.pdf

¹³ City of Paris, Accessible Paris (2024), <https://cdn.paris.fr/presse/2024/08/27/7b13716d9fbbef0e95852e2cbaebda2.pdf>; García, Cultural Olympiad Evaluation: Paris 2024