Anahuacalli Mundialista: Where Heritage, Football & Community Meet

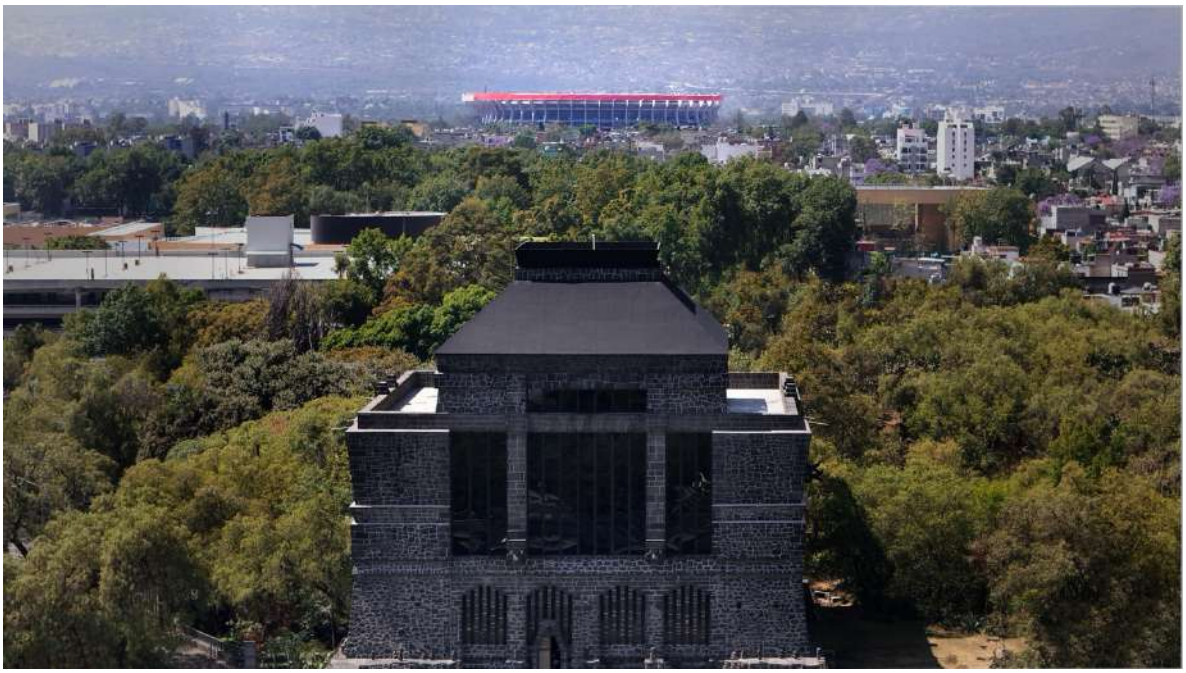
Submitted for ICOM COMMS Awards 2026
Category 3: Best Audience Engagement Initiative

Anahuacalli Mundialista transformed the outdoor **spaces of Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli into a cultural meeting point** during the World Cup 2026. *The project connected the Mesoamerican ballgame, Diego Rivera's pre-Hispanic collection, and the contemporary ritual of football to welcome new audiences into the museum through a shared public experience.*

6 public events	**16,853** attendees	**13K+** registered contacts
15+ nationalities	**6.25M** documented reach	**52/48** gender balance

Museum: Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli, Mexico City
Project period: *June-July 2026*
Team: Direction, Communications, Digital Communications, Education, Operations, PR, Security, and Visitor Services Teams of the Anahuacalli Museum.

1. The Problem: Museums often compete with large-scale social events for public attention. During the World Cup, **audiences gather around screens, public squares, food, friends and national emotion. For Anahuacalli, the challenge was not how to pull people away from that experience,** but how to join it without losing the museum's cultural mission.



Challenge	Question
Audience barrier	How could we invite people who may not usually identify museums as spaces for them?
Heritage relevance	How could a collection of pre-Hispanic objects become meaningful in a contemporary social context?
Public safety	How could we receive thousands of people in a safe, respectful, family-friendly environment?
Long-term engagement	How could a temporary event create an ongoing relationship between audiences and the museum?

Our insight was simple: football, like the Mesoamerican ballgame, is more than play. It is a ritual of belonging, identity, movement and collective emotion. That connection allowed the museum to participate in a global celebration while opening a doorway to the cultural memory preserved at Anahuacalli.

2. The Solution: *Anahuacalli Mundialista* was designed as an audience-engagement journey, not only as a screening program. We turned the museum's outdoor areas into a public cultural square and built a bridge between the World Cup and the museum's identity.

Cultural anchor	The Mesoamerican ballgame and objects from the pre-Hispanic collection framed football as part of a longer history of play, community and ritual.
Accessible invitation	Free public screenings with registration lowered the entry barrier and made the museum present in a familiar social moment.
Welcoming environment	The experience was organized for families, young people, visitors, older adults and people with different access needs, supported by security and civil-protection protocols.
Communication ecosystem	Digital registration, media relations, social content, institutional alliances and on-site documentation converted attendance into a continuing relationship.

The experience included: public screenings, audience registration, cultural interpretation, press work, brand alliances, hydration and food areas, orderly access, and extended opening time around each game. This allowed visitors to arrive before the match, participate in the museum environment, share the game and leave safely.

Key shift: We did not ask football fans to become museum audiences first. We welcomed them through a social ritual they already understood, and then connected that ritual with heritage.

3. Results and Evidence

Across **six public events**, the initiative reached a level of participation uncommon for a museum-based engagement program while maintaining a safe and culturally meaningful framework.

Indicator	Result
Total attendance	**16,853 people**
Average attendance	**2,809 people per event**
Highest attendance	**4,175 people for Mexico vs. Czech Republic**
Attendance for Mexico matches	**10,253 people across the first three screenings**
Predominant age range	**17 to 45 years old**
Gender distribution	**52% men / 48% women**
Community database	**More than 13,000 registered contacts**

The most attended event - *Mexico vs. Czech Republic* - brought **4,175 people to the museum**, demonstrating that a cultural institution can become part of a major social event while preserving its educational and community-oriented identity.

4. Communication Impact and Audience Conversion

The communications strategy positioned Anahuacalli as a cultural alternative inside a city-wide World Cup ecosystem. The project was covered not only as a place to watch football, but as a museum experience that connected sport, pre-Hispanic heritage and community.

Documented media impacts	**27**
Different sources	**20**
Documented reach	**6,251,255**
Digital portals	**22**
Print media	**4**
TV	**1**
AAA impacts	**15**

The coverage developed five dominant narratives:

- Anahuacalli as a free venue;
- The union between football and culture;
- The museum as part of the city's public offer;
- The public experience itself; and
- The Mesoamerican ballgame as a distinctive cultural element.

Selected media included: Excélsior, El Universal, Aristegui Noticias, Merca2.0, Reporte Índigo, Chilango, La Razón, 24 Horas, CDMX Secreta and Hosteltur España.

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Reference links / media articles and publications:

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5. Why This Belongs in Best Audience Engagement

Anahuacalli Mundialista expanded what engagement can mean for a museum. It did not begin with an exhibition label or a formal guided tour. It began with a shared emotion - watching a World Cup match - and used that emotion to create a bridge toward heritage.

It reached new audiences	**Thousands of visitors**, many between 17 and 45 years old, came to the museum through a cultural-social experience rather than a conventional museum program.
It activated heritage	**The Mesoamerican ballgame and the pre-Hispanic collection were not presented as distant past**, but as living references to play, movement, community and identity.
It built community	**More than 13,000 registered contacts** created a long-term communication channel for exhibitions, workshops, concerts, family activities and future programs.
It changed perception	**The museum was seen as a living public space**: safe, open, festive, international and able to participate in contemporary cultural moments.

The project showed that museums can participate in mass events without diluting their mission. When thoughtfully designed, popular culture can become an entry point to deeper cultural understanding.

Extra Materials

Link to the development of the exhibition materials *"The Mesoamerican Ballgame,"* created by the Anahuacalli Communications Team: https://bit.ly/juegopelotaanahuacalli

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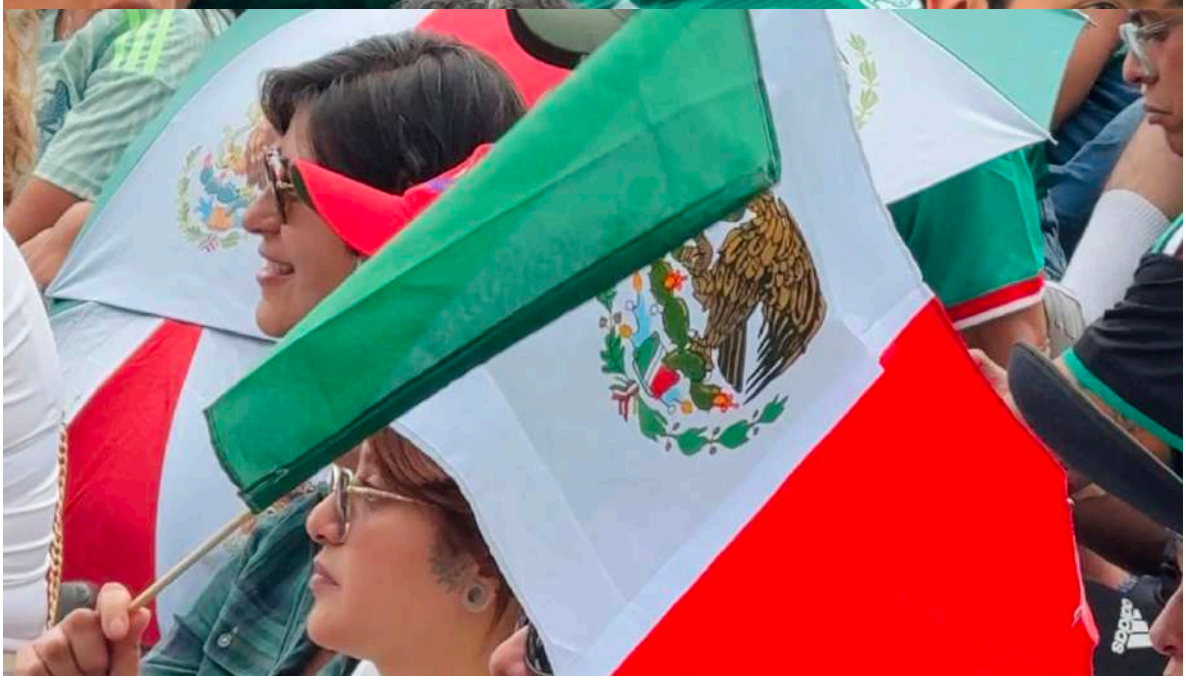

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