Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:

Monitoring & Evaluation Contract for Culture Nature England Project: In collaboration with Libraries Connected

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| 1 | Could you confirm the budget? | We have estimated the value of this contract at £25,000 - £35,000, excluding VAT. Natural England does not generally disclose exact budget amounts for opportunities, as we are keen to find best value for money, alongside cost effectiveness. |
| 2 | In your RFQ you mention that libraries involved with the project will receive funding for activities, training, support and materials. Please can you confirm when this funding period is for – and when you envisage that libraries will be rolling out activities and training in order that evaluation approaches can be adequately tailored to their timelines. | Funding period runs from September to March 2025 for libraries. Libraries will be delivering activities throughout this period. |
| 3 | You state that “Throughout the project there are identified milestones for monitoring and the collection of both quantitative and qualitative evidence that will further inform future iterations of the project.” – please can you provide these milestones as I cannot see them in the RFQ. | Milestones for each library include:Application and Identification of targeted audience groupsIdentification of project delivery partners for each libraryAdvertising of events as per individual libraries activities delivery scheduleEvents and participation numbersDelivery of audience tailored activitiesBook loans within project periodFootfall of libraries during the projectAfter activity feedbackThere may be a selection of these milestones dependent on the libraries activity plan and audience groups identified. |
| 4 | There are a series of research questions in the RFQ – please can you confirm that each of these is directly related to activities and training which all libraries will be engaging with (and therefore if an evaluation was to take place, questions regarding – for example – ‘green infrastructure mapping’ would be relevant to all libraries). | Yes, all libraries will have a set of necessary activities that all will take part in. This provides the consistent structure of the project and comparable evaluation opportunities. These will then be added to dependent on individual library and audience aims. |
| 5 | You state that pre and post evaluation of knowledge and value of protected sites locally and further afield forms part of the evaluation process. It is understood that this is focused on library users but may also include library staff. Can you confirm the intended audience and stakeholders for the evaluation please. | Both library staff and audiences understanding of protected sites will be evaluated. The information gleaned from the final evaluation will be intended Natural England and associated .gov bodies and Libraries Connected. Further general publication and sharing with interested parties will follow. |
| 6 | To what extent will activities and training be standardised across the participating libraries? | Nature Connection training will be sourced by each library through a local provider but will follow similar lines as per the 5 Nature Connections Handbook. https://findingnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/the-nature-connection-handbook.pdfActivities will be tailored to individual library audience requirements, however they will all aim to establish Nature Connection, Nature positive actions, knowledge and understanding of Protected Sites, use of GI Maps as a local communication and understanding tool, and activities that benefit Health and wellbeing. |
| 7 | You state that the project will engage with ‘up to 30 libraries’ and that it is expected that c.25% of the evaluation will be carried out face to face – are you able to share any more information regarding the scale of the study in order that we can resource and determine an appropriate methodology within the scope of the budget. For example, if 30 libraries are included, we’d expect to visit up to 8 of these and the remaining interviews undertaken online, with each of the participating libraries requiring pre and post evaluation, including a variety of stakeholders (e.g. library staff and library users). Please can you comment on this and if possible, provide a greater level of detail on the intended scale and scope to aid our planning. | We aim to work with the appointed contractor to establish a set of simple evaluation techniques and tools that libraries can deliver themselves- both pre and post activities, e.g. nature in self-scale, comment cards, participation numbers, footfall, ideas walls, collation of information gathered from local audiences on GI Maps and then collated. This library-delivered work will be fed into the overall evaluation and the interviews conducted by the evaluation contractor. |
| 8 | Additionally, if possible, at this stage can you please provide details on preferred regional and geographic spread of participation – and the intention or otherwise for in-person evaluation to be regionally disparate in order that we can properly cost-in travel and accommodation where appropriate. | The project is being run England wide. The aim will be to select through set criteria Libraries that represent the widest possible demographic and geographic representation within England. Libraries will of all sizes and locations. The project aims to use evaluations of a variety of situations in order to create a matrix of understanding with the evaluator that can then be shared with wider Natural England family, Libraries Connected and NGO’s working in Partnership – to support wider roll out of the project across England. |
| 9 | Are you anticipating the contractor undertaking primary research directly with beneficiaries of the programme, e.g. members of the community, or should this be limited to libraries and key stakeholders? For example, we note one of the evaluation questions focuses on the effects on health and wellbeing of participants. Will data or insight on this be measured in any other way? | Interviews online will form part of the primary research. This may be with audiences and participants, library staff, NE staff, and contributing local contractors/organisations and NGO’s. Without the benefit of a longer study health and wellbeing outcomes are difficult to measure… however the other evaluation data gathered at various milestones may offer further insight. These include:Milestones for each library include:Application and Identification of targeted audience groupsIdentification of project delivery partners for each libraryAdvertising of events as per individual libraries activities delivery scheduleEvents and participation numbersDelivery of audience tailored activitiesBook loans within project periodFootfall of libraries during the projectAfter activity feedback |
| 10 | We note that you anticipate face to face visits to approximately 25% of libraries. Do you require the researcher to engage virtually with all the remaining libraries or a sample (just thinking about the available budget)? | Yes, we would require at least one engagement online with all remaining library groupings. We aim to work with the appointed contractor to establish a set of simple evaluation techniques and tools that libraries can deliver themselves- both pre and post activities, e.g. nature in self-scale, comment cards, participation numbers, footfall, ideas walls, collation of information gathered from local audiences on GI Maps and then collated. This library-delivered work will be fed into the overall evaluation and the interviews conducted by the evaluation contractor. |
| 11 | Response question 2.1 states CVs should be included, however CVs are asked for in the detailed criteria of response question 2.2. Please can you clarify where CVs should be provided and that these are additional to the page limit of whichever question they apply to? | In question 2.1 Please state the key members of the team that will be involved and that CV’s for these individuals are attached. Please attach to 2.2. – or again state that they are attached in this response. Yes they are additional to the page limit. |
| 12 | The detailed criteria for response question 3.2 asks for quality assurance information, yet this is the main focus of question 3.3. Please can this be clarified? The page limit for 3.2 looks very tight for everything being asked for here so we wondered if this could be perhaps revised so that quality assurance is just asked in question 3.3? | Bullet points in 3.2, that point to longer response in 3.3 is acceptable. |
| 13 | Is there a page limit for response question 4.1? | We would expect this to be no longer than 3 A4 sheets. |
| 14 | I’d like to follow up on your response to question 7: “We aim to work with the appointed contractor to establish a set of simple evaluation techniques and tools that libraries can deliver themselves- both pre and post activities, e.g. nature in self-scale, comment cards, participation numbers, footfall, ideas walls, collation of information gathered from local audiences on GI Maps and then collated. This library-delivered work will be fed into the overall evaluation and the interviews conducted by the evaluation contractor.”This is now clearer, regarding the contractor creating monitoring and evaluation tools and techniques to be delivered by libraries themselves. However, we would welcome clarification of what the intended scope of interviewing will be. With up to 30 libraries being part of the study, with a potential 8/9 requiring on-site evaluation, can you confirm that ‘interviews conducted by the evaluation contractor’ encompasses all libraries including online and in-person, pre and post engagement with training and events. We’d be grateful if you can be explicit about your intentions regarding how you would like a contractor to approach this as it is a key determinant of methodological design and project resourcing. Alternatively, if this is at this stage unknown and you would like to work alongside a contractor to determine the scale and scope please confirm and we will ensure this is built into our response. | It is envisaged that alongside the 8 visits to libraries to conduct interviews and gather feedback, that online interviews will be conducted with a small group or a key individual in a library. A pre activity/project start questionnaire would enable information gathering at the start most efficiently, and a post activity interview would glean the most information if conducted after events and activities. The full scope and approach is not known as yet and we aim to work alongside the chosen contractor to develop this methodology further. |
| 15 | Additionally, and relatedly, regarding your response to question 8: Please can you confirm whether NE will be selecting the participating 30 libraries to ‘represent the widest possible demographic and geographic representation within England’, or whether the contractor would be working alongside NE to determine a selection strategy. Again, we are presuming that the c.25% of participating libraries to be visited in-person would be selected based on a range of indices to form part of the methodology. If this is incorrect, please advise. | Natural England and Libraries Connected will select the libraries based upon established criteria that has been developed over the last two iterations of the project. The criteria for selection aims to identify the most diverse range of audiences, and at the same time geographical area. The target audience groups outlined by library staff in their application forms an equal part of this selection process. The details of the criteria and the original application completed by libraries highlighting their reasoning for application and audience selection will be shared with the contractor and therefore will inform /add to the methodology. |
| 16 | What is the geographical spread of the 30 libraries? | Across England |
| 17 | Has mapping of green infrastructure been undertaken as part of the project, or is this a primary research element of the contract? | GI mapping information will be shared with libraries once they have been selected. The resulting use of GI maps with local library audiences and library staff will be part of “the toolkit” that all libraries who are selected will receive in order to enhance their chosen activities and to establish knowledge and accessibility to green and blue spaces locally, in line with the . The GI mapping tool is available to all here:[https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/MappingAnalysis.aspx](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdesignatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk%2FGreenInfrastructure%2FMappingAnalysis.aspx&data=05%7C02%7CNE_Contracts_Finder%40naturalengland.org.uk%7Ce31de34171ad45cd7f8e08dcc3677861%7C770a245002274c6290c74e38537f1102%7C0%7C0%7C638600096364487661%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=pNL9NGps8slkVTcZldJvEjQRoen81Y%2Fsj8eQTDZbGYQ%3D&reserved=0)This aligns with  “Green in 15” policy aims:[https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambitious-roadmap-for-a-cleaner-greener-country](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fambitious-roadmap-for-a-cleaner-greener-country&data=05%7C02%7CNE_Contracts_Finder%40naturalengland.org.uk%7Ce31de34171ad45cd7f8e08dcc3677861%7C770a245002274c6290c74e38537f1102%7C0%7C0%7C638600096364502245%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=V7aFPedjfCe7lQ2aLR82PzqcvcQicc1GM%2FJazK7AEcE%3D&reserved=0)Evidence around knowledge, accessibility thoughts and ambitions for local spaces and places are part of what will  provide insight throughout the project. |