

Invitation to Tender - An Audience Strategy for The National Archives

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 About the National Archives

The National Archives (TNA) is a non-ministerial government department and an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. TNA is well known for its high profile public role as the official archive and publisher for the UK government, and for England and Wales. It is guardian of some of the most iconic national documents, dating back over 1,000 years. Its 21st century role is to collect and secure the future of the government record, both digital and physical. Further information about TNA's role, its plans, policies, performance and projects can be found on its website [here](#).

From 2016 onwards TNA is adopting an audience-focused approach to its organisation-wide, four year [business plan](#) and has identified the following audience segments: Public, Government, Academic/Research, and the wider Archives Sector. We will build links to deliver the business plan in terms of communication and engagement with these groups, and TNA wishes to improve and extend its acquisition, management and use of data relating to these audiences.

For this piece of work we are interested principally in the public audience and in visits to the Kew site. However we are mindful that amongst our academic, government and archive audiences there are individuals who fit into our public segment also. We are interested in the relationship between onsite and online content.

1.2 Current Public Engagement

We engage with these audiences in the following ways:

1. Online. We have just over a million visits to our [website](#) a month. The majority of these are to access our [online search facility](#) (family history and academic or professional research are the most popular activities)
2. Onsite - visitors to the reading room to research (family history and academic or professional research are the most popular activities)
3. Onsite - visitors to the site for events and activities (individuals)
4. Onsite - visitors to the site for events and activities (groups, including schools and community groups)

We are a public service and our Kew site welcomes c. 75,000 visitors a year. We are equipped with large reading rooms for general and specialist researchers, a talks room, a permanent exhibition of treasures ('the Keeper's Gallery'), a small conference facility, teaching suites, coffee shop and canteen and pleasant outdoor spaces. We have a free public car park and are a 10 min walk from KewGardens station on the District line. We are also near the M4/M25 intersection.

The majority of our visitors are currently 'self-directed' in that they are attracted to our site to undertake their own research. They arrive with a question or area to research (e.g. their family tree or a PhD thesis) and our staff assist them to find the documents that will support their research. The numbers of these visitors are in long term decline. This is in part due to the greater availability online of the most popular family history record series.

However, the majority of our records are not and never will be digitised, so there will always be a need for a reading room and access to original material. We see this service continuing to be central to our offering but we do not anticipate any increase in 'self directed' visitors at our Kew site. Instead, we are seeking to grow our public engagement through an expanded programme of 'facilitated'

engagement. By this we mean activities and learning opportunities where we provide/curate/deliver to the public. This would include:

1. An exhibition programme
2. An events programme for adults
3. An events programme for children and young people
4. Volunteer activities
5. Education activities for schools
6. Outreach activities with community groups

Activities 1-2 are marketed directly to individuals and are open to anyone.

Activities 5-6 are bespoke activities or curriculum based programmes, developed dynamically with community organisation leaders and/or schools. Participation in the session is always mediated through a group or school leader and is not open to the public at large.

Activities 3-4 fall somewhere between the two – children and young people are not necessarily the decision makers or the target of the marketing and volunteer programmes are subject to interview and clearances.

Currently, only a small, but growing, proportion of our visitors are attracted by our [events and activities programme](#). This 'What's On' programme has been active for eighteen months and has proved successful. It's the first stage in an ambitious programme to support this transformation, which includes:

- Capital programme to redevelop the visitor areas of our Kew site
- Realignment of staff resources
- Major HLF bid

1.3 Goals for Audience development

We want to 'grow our audience by connecting with new users' and to be identified as a cultural institution and destination. Current priorities are:

- Younger audiences
- Families
- Exhibition goers and attendees
- Local audiences
- Interested in archives/history/research – curious minds

1.4 Challenges for Audience Development

Our principal challenges in engaging this broader audience are:

- Our location in South West London – off the beaten track for a cultural institution. We are a 10 minute walk from the tube and our building stands alone in a residential area. Although we are close to Kew Gardens, which attracts c 6 million visitors a year, this does not translate to any influx of visitors through our doors.
- We are not known as a cultural destination, nor well understood outside of specialist research circles
- Our existing audience is largely comprised of self-directed researchers
- Our existing audience is ageing
- Archival research is not as easily accessible to the uninitiated as a museum or a gallery. If you just 'turn up' there is not necessarily anything for you to do or see, unless you have an active research question and the skills to undertake archival research.

1.5 Sources of Information

Information available (confidentially) to the successful supplier includes:

- Information regarding existing events and activities programme (18 months of data and feedback)
- Information relating to National Archives' readers' ticket holders
- Information relating to sales in the bookshop (online)
- Data on visitors to the site (but not comprehensive) and customer satisfaction (online and onsite)
- Data regarding visitors to the web
- Data relating to our email subscribers (limited background)

We are working with an existing supplier to make our customer information more accessible, useful and joined up. This is an ongoing project.

2. THE REQUIREMENT

We are seeking a partner to help create an audience strategy for the National Archives. The key elements of this work will be:

- To assess the viability/suitability of our audience engagement plans
- To create direction and focus for our audience engagement
- To provide a simple framework for segmenting audiences and strategy for growth
- Use industry knowledge and analysis to make recommendations for effective engagement with target audiences (formats, timings etc.)
- Make suggestions towards language and tone to apply to future branding work

This should be produced using a good understanding of The National Archives current public engagement and audiences and future ambitions in public engagement. It should also make comparisons with other cultural institutions.

We anticipate the deliverables comprising (at a minimum):

- A report covering the above
- A set of Powerpoint slides to convey the headlines internally and to partner organisations
- Guidelines for future segmentation and analysis of our data

Our maximum available budget for this piece of work is £20,000 (ex VAT).

3. HOW TO RESPOND

Please submit your tender response – specifying how you will meet the requirement described in Section 2 above – to procurement@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk by **5pm on Friday, September 23rd**. Please ensure this response describes your proposed deliverables, methodology, delivery timetable and price. Please also ensure that you supply evidence of your expertise and experience in this area.

If you have any clarification questions, please submit these to procurement@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk by **5pm on Monday, September 12th**.

Submissions will be evaluated as follows:

- **Quality of Response** 70%
- **Cost** 30%

The successful supplier will be required to accept TNA's contract terms and conditions for services, published [here](#).

4. TIMESCALES

TNA anticipates evaluating tender responses and making an award decision during **the week commencing September 26th**.

TNA would ideally wish the successful supplier to begin work immediately, with an interim report being completed by **mid-November, 2016** and the assignment being completed by **the end of December, 2016**.