

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
OPEN TENDER COMPETITION – PODCAST PRODUCTION
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS – 5PM (UK TIME), 24 FEBRUARY 2023

The National Archives has received a number of clarification questions relating to the above opportunity. Those questions, and their associated responses, can be found below.

Q1: *Can you clarify the format of the podcasts you are looking for? Would you like us to quote as if we are making the exact format of a regular On The Record or to allow for additional components? E.G. music.*

A1: We are open to changing the format for the podcast and aspire to be more conversational (within the parameters of the Civil Service Code). So please do include costs for any recommended formats. We would expect to need to licence some music for the show, please do show this within the costs. However, so that we can benchmark across the submissions please include how much it would cost to produce content of a similar length/style to what we produce currently – i.e. a one hour episodes and 30 minute in-series episodes.

Q2: *Are there any stipulations re: recording locations? e.g. will we need to travel to the National Archives to record content?*

A2: Travel to The National Archives is not required, however we are open to in-person recording and have suitable spaces to do so if it is advised (and within budget)

Q3: *Are there any studio resources / other technical audio recording resources available at the National Archives or should we plan to use our own / external studio resources?*

A3: We have Rode microphones, some sound and pop shields and Audacity on staff laptops. Additionally we have a broadcast studio which is set up as our best space to record on site.

Q4: *Should our budgets include host or contributor fees or host training?*

A4: We offer guest hosts and contributors a small set fee for their time, this is budgeted for separately outside of the money allocated to this contract and therefore does not need to be accounted for in your submission. We would be interested in host training for our staff, however this should be costed separately (outside of the costs we need for benchmarking).

Q5: *Should our budgets include Format Development or marketing?*

A5: We would be interested to hear how much format development would cost. We have in-house press and marketing teams, whilst we are always keen to hear any ideas for these areas we would not expect this work to be covered by the podcast producer under this contract

Q6: *We're interested as to whether there is any rationale for tendering the project at this precise point in time?*

A6: Due to the volume and value of podcast work, the producer contract needs to be competitively awarded. We are coming to the end of our current contract and are therefore inviting submissions again.

Q7: *The archive resources that you feel you have yet to showcase fully through your podcast content (are there certain collections)?*

A7: With over 11 million orderable documents there are almost endless opportunities for us to showcase the collection in the podcast. We have planned out an ideal release structure for the upcoming financial year and topics for the first half of the year, however they will not be confirmed until a supplier has been chosen as we will need to look at their fees and the budget. To give you an idea of the topics, those for the early part of the year are as follows: Coronations through history; Windrush (most likely broader than just that one ship); the Women's Land Army.

Q8: *How satisfied are you with your current listening figures and, regardless, would you be wanting additional support in marketing and promotional asset creation as part off the pitch?*

A8: We are on track to meet our target for unique downloads this financial year but are very keen to grow the podcast. We have an ambitions to double those figures by 2025. We have in-house press and marketing teams, whilst we are always keen to hear any ideas for these areas we would not expect this work to be covered by the podcast producer under this contract.

Q9: *How would you like a production company to support you going forwards e.g. take the strain of internal workloads, help timelines, provide analytics and post campaign analysis etc?*

A9: Once the successful supplier is selected we will work with them to agree new processes and workflows. Naturally we will always be keen to make the process less resource intensive so are open to suggestions on how this may be achieved. Currently our team here uploads episodes to Libsyn and we have a customer insight team who compile stats etc.

Q10: *Quality of response is 70%, please could you provide any detail on how you will be breaking this up?*

A10: We will take the non-commercial parts of the bid into account for the quality score, specifically “the experience you have in delivering these types of services and how you would use that experience to meet our needs” and the indicative production timeline.

Q11: *Is there a word limit? Or a word count we should aim for?*

A11: There is no word count.

Q12: *Are you able to share any data for the show?*

A12: We are on track to reach 25,000 unique downloads this financial year. Progress for us would mean that we have achieved our aims of growing the audience (no specific targets have been set yet for 2023-24) and reaching new audiences, whilst retaining high levels of audience satisfaction.

Q13: *What is the purpose for the 2 years and what are you aiming to achieve?*

A13: We feel that 2 years is a good length for the contract and fits with a key milestone in 2025 for our Public Engagement Strategy.

Q14: *Who is the target audience?*

A14: Our audience at The National Archives is generally over 55s, with the podcast we want to attract younger audiences. We would also be keen to engage with national and international audiences and those from diverse backgrounds. There is not a specific audience segmentation that we use for the podcast, however we do have them more broadly at The National Archives.
Format (voices, segments, length)

Q15: *Do you have an idea of the number of voices you'd like on the show?*

A15: We do not have any requirements for the number of voices featured however, as detailed in the invitation to tender two of our priorities are to showcase our in-house experts and to invite guests who can add a different perspective to a subject – perhaps with expertise on a subject which fills the gaps within our collection.

Q16: *Are you wanting to do multiple seasons within the show? Or would it be an always on continuation? Or are you open to our suggestions?*

A16: We have planned out an ideal release structure and topics for the upcoming financial year, however this will not be confirmed until a supplier has been chosen as we will need to look at their fees and the budget. Next financial year we would ideally like to release content every other month. We are open to other structure suggestions, so please do include any recommendations in your submission.

Q17: *Do you have a concept in mind? Or are you happy for us to pitch concepts?*

A17: We are open to new format and concept suggestions, as long as they align with our values and aims – as detailed in our invitation to tender.

Q18: *Is this tender price only for production, or would you like to understand promotional services we can run for the podcast too?*

A18: We have in-house press and marketing teams, whilst we are always keen to hear any ideas for these areas we would not expect this work to be covered by the podcast producer under this contract.

Q19: *Is the quoted budget inclusive of talent? Would you like us to provide some options?*

A19: We offer guest hosts and contributors a small set fee for their time, this is budgeted for separately outside of the money allocated to this contract and therefore does not need to be accounted for in your submission.

Q20: *Depending on the concept, format, and promotion, this will alter the cost per episode, and amount of episodes we can produce for the budget. Would you like us to pitch one option, or would you like to see multiple options?*

A20: We are happy to see multiple options and are open to changing the format for the podcast. So please do include costs for any recommended formats. However, so that we can benchmark across the submissions we are asking all potential suppliers to also include how much it would cost to produce content of a similar length/style to what we produce currently – i.e. a one hour episodes and 30 minute in-series episodes.

Q21: *Do you want the podcast production company to provide new hosts?*

A21: At the moment we do not have hosts chosen for the upcoming content, as you will hear they are usually our in-house experts and we have had one guest host. We offer guest hosts and contributors a small set fee for their time, this is budgeted for separately outside of the money allocated to this contract and therefore does not need to be accounted for in your submission. You are welcome to suggest hosts within your submission however whether we are able to use them will largely depend on costs.

Q22: *Why is The National Archives looking to switch production providers at this stage?*

Q23: Due to the volume and value of podcast work, the producer contract needs to be competitively awarded. We are coming to the end of our current contract and are therefore inviting submissions again.

Q23: *Can you share who else is competing on the tender?*

A23: We do not share details of other bidders. Details of the winning supplier will be published on Contracts Finder in due course.

Q24: *What would need to be true for you to be happy with your progress when we're having a conversation a year into working together?*

A24: Progress for us would mean that we have achieved our aims of growing the audience (no specific targets have been set yet for 2023-24) and reaching new audiences, whilst retaining high levels of audience satisfaction. We would be happy if the content produced fulfilled our other aims e.g. showcasing our collection and experts and becoming more conversational. Lastly, we would want to feel that successful processes and collaborative working practices had been established with the supplier.

Q25: *The tender mentions connecting with new and diverse audiences--are there specific listener groups you're looking to reach/grow?*

A25: Our audience at The National Archives is generally over 55s, with the podcast we want to attract younger audiences. We would also be keen to engage with national and international audiences and those from diverse backgrounds. There is not a specific audience segmentation that we use for the podcast, however we do have them more broadly at The National Archives.

Q26: *Are there any other specific goals beyond what was generally shared in the tender?*

A26: There are no specific goals other than those mentioned in the invitation to tender.

Q27: *Could you please clarify the budget for the project? We appreciate that available budget is up to £110k across the 2 years but that the last contract was £50k. Is it being judged on an episodic cost?*

A27: The £110,000 figure represents a ceiling for the duration of the contract, which will not be exceeded. For clarity, if this ceiling is reached before the contract is due to end, the contract must be terminated at that point. We feel it only fair to point out that (based on previous experience and current assumptions) this ceiling figure is unlikely to be reached, however it gives us scope to consider additional expenditure based on numerous factors including organisation/department budgets, success of project(s) etc. For the purposes of evaluating bids, we have asked suppliers to provide (as stated in the ITT):

Your proposed rate card, taking care to show how it would be applied to our projects i.e. how much it would cost to produce a 30 minute episode.

An indicative production timeline showing how long each episode/series would take to produce and what the production process could look like.

Q28: *Is there a preferred format in which we should send the response? E.g. Word Document, PDF; are we able to format into a presentation/slides? Is there a word limit?*

A28: No. It is for you to determine what format your Tender Response should take so as to describe your offer in a clear, comprehensive fashion. Please make it as clear and concise as possible, and bear in mind the content may be used to populate the contract schedules should you be successful.

Q29: *How much does the response need to address proposed content / format / structure of the podcast?*

A29: We would welcome ideas about content/format/structure, however the content is driven by our collection and our expertise therefore TNA will take the lead on deciding themes and have content ideas mapped out for the upcoming financial year.

Q30: *Do we need to include suggestions for marketing/promoting the podcast?*

A30: Again, any ideas are welcome, however we do have in-house marketing and media teams therefore we would not expect the podcast producer to be responsible for these areas.

Q31: *We've enjoyed listening to the existing episodes of 'On The Record'. Are you looking for more of something similar, or are you open to new format suggestions? - provided content stays in line with your values and aims for the project, of course.*

A31: We are certainly open to new format suggestions, as long as they align with our values and aims.

Q32: *You mention having set fees for external speakers and talent. Could you please expand a little on this? Would said fees be expected to come out of the budget?*

A32: We offer guest hosts and contributors a small set fee for their time, this is budgeted for separately outside of the money allocated to this contract and therefore does not need to be accounted for in your submission.

Q33: *While you can't commit to a minimum spend, is there a number of episodes you're expecting to commission on award of the contract?*

A33: There is not a minimum number of episodes that we would like to produce. However, as mentioned in the invitation to tender, we expect the content produced to span the life of the two year contract.

Q34: Do you have a release cadence and structure in mind or is this something you want us to develop?

A34: We have planned out an ideal release structure and topics for the upcoming financial year, however this will not be confirmed until a supplier has been chosen as we will need to look at their fees and the budget. Next financial year we would ideally like to release content every other month. We are open to other structure suggestions, so please do include any recommendations in your submission.

Q35: *You mentioned content would be produced for 'On the Record', but producers might be asked to work on other projects. For clarity, would these still be audio projects?*

A35: Yes they would be other audio projects, likely other podcasts. To be clear, there are no plans for The National Archives to produce other shows, however we wanted to include an option for this within the contract in case projects develop over the coming two years.

Q36: *Are there any guest, companies, or institutions to avoid when it comes to episode planning to negate any potential conflicts of interest? With other archives or collections for example.*

A36: As a government department we do need to be careful when partnering with other organisations as we have to remain balanced and politically neutral. However, each episode would be planned in conjunction with our digital engagement team, press and marketing colleagues and relevant collections experts so any conflicts would be flagged at that point.

Q37: *Regarding the Podcast Producer ITT, I wanted to ask whether, if all costs are included in the rate card as requested, applications by sole traders with an extensive network for any additional support (if needed) would be considered?*

A37: Yes, your pricing should reflect the total cost to TNA. If you intend to subcontract any elements this would be a matter for you, but I would suggest you outline what those proposed arrangements might be and your intended subcontracting partners.

Q38: *I wondered whether you would accept a presentation deck as part of my proposal?*

A38: The format of your submission is entirely a matter for you. Please make it as clear and concise as possible, and bear in mind the content may be used to populate the contract schedules should you be successful.

Q39: *Is this opportunity primarily for individual producers (not agencies or teams of podcast creators)?*

A39: This is an open competition, so anyone is able to apply, be they private individuals, sole traders, partnerships, limited companies or any other trading arrangement.

Q40: *Shall we quote based on a three-episode series? We see that's how you would usually release the podcast?*

A40: As indicated in the invitation to tender please quote for a three episode series and a one hour out of series episode, including information about production times/process. This is so that we can benchmark across the submissions. If this format is not what you are proposing in your submission, please additionally quote for what you would propose.

Q41: *Do we need to include any budget for presenters/hosts?*

A41: We offer guest hosts and contributors a small set fee for their time, this is budgeted for separately outside of the money allocated to this contract and therefore does not need to be accounted for in your submission.

Q42: *Do you want any graphic design/video in this year's project?*

A42: Currently we do get video trailers made in Headliner and are open to other forms of promotional material. So please do include anything in your submission that you would recommend, quoting for these services separately so we can look at it in relation to our budget.

Q43: *Are there specific parts of the Archives (subjects) that they want to cover in this next round?*

A43: We have planned out an ideal release structure for the upcoming financial year and topics for the first half of the year, however they will not be confirmed until a supplier has been chosen as we will need to look at their fees and the budget. Next financial year we would ideally like to release content every other month. The topics for the early part of the year are as follows: Coronations through history; Windrush (most likely broader than just that one ship); the Women's Land Army.