**Invitation to Tender: Reading Friends Digital Business Analyst**

**Introduction**

Reading Friends is an exciting new UK-wide project that will use reading to empower, engage and connect isolated older people, including people with dementia and their carers thanks to a £2.1 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

It’s a unique befriending programme that uses reading to start a conversation by bringing community volunteers and vulnerable and isolated older people together to read socially either one-on-one or in groups. It is a truly co-produced model developed with partners and vulnerable older people including people with dementia and carers, providing a supportive and dynamic social network that connects lonely and isolated older people with friends, family and wider community networks. Reading Friends uses reading to get people talking and keep them mentally active, culturally engaged and socially connected as part of a wider reading community.

**Contract requirements**

The Reading Agency is offering a contract for an experienced digital business analyst or consultancy, to work with us over the period April to August 2017 to scope the research and design of the digital services and web platform supporting the Reading Friends programme. This work will include a strong co-production element to ensure the proposed digital model meets the needs of:

* Reading Friends and Reading Buddies[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Partners co-ordinating and managing Reading Friends’ activities
* The Reading Agency and its wider digital programme offer

**Methodology and approach**

We require the supplier to undertake the following tasks although we would also welcome suggestions for enhanced approaches that can be accommodated in the existing budget.

* To work with the Reading Friends team to specify the optimum model for the Reading Friends digital presence and services
* To develop and deliver an integrated consultation strategy to ensure that key partners and the targeted community of users are fully involved in the scoping and development process
* To map existing Reading Agency web platforms and research their relevance to Reading Friends requirements
* To map existing Reading Agency and partner tools and propose how they can be adapted to become user-friendly and accessible for older people including people with dementia
* To consider key issues relevant to Reading Friends digital service development including:
	+ Costs and specifications for paywalls and user identification mechanisms
	+ Models for including user generated content including reading recommendations
	+ Options for sharing ideas and issues (e.g. online forums)
	+ Options for sign up and geographically matching individuals with existing projects
	+ Provision for the inclusion of on-line training resources
* Research best practice in website accessibility for older people and ensure the proposed model reflects this
* Ensure the proposed Reading Friends digital platform/website fits within the family of Reading Agency websites
* Work with the Reading Friends team to test web functionalities with target users before investing in them
* Develop specification documents for web development agencies and supporting the procurement process together with the Reading Friends project manager

**Outputs:**

* A written report setting out the findings from the internal, desk and primary research with the target audience and providing recommendations for the website specification and implementation by 31st July 2017
* A specification to support procurement of a supplier to deliver the production and delivery phase of the work by 31st August 2017

**Timetable**

March/April Contract awarded

April–July 2017 Research period

July 31st 2017 Draft report setting out findings from research phase

Early August 2017 Meeting with Reading Friends team to discuss implications from research phase

August 17th 2017 Draft specification for web developer delivered

August 31st 2017 Final report and specification delivered

**Budget**

The **maximum budget available for this project is £21,000** including VAT and expenses. Some travel will be required to partners in Scotland and Wales and you will need to attend at least 4 meetings at our offices in London over the course of the contract.

**Tender requirements**

**Tenders should aim to provide the following details:**

* An elaboration of the project purpose and intended outputs
* Details of the proposed approach
* Key considerations you think we need to take into account in successfully designing a web presence for Reading Friends
* Risks: tenders should clearly set out the key risk factors for the success of the project and a proposed risk management approach
* Proposed way of working with the Reading Friends team at the Reading Agency and the wider organisation
* Relevant information about the individual or organisation tendering
* CVs for any staff involved in the project setting out their relevant experience and expertise
* Staff time commitment to the project (in days)
* Timetable
* Detailed project budget

It is requested that tenders do not exceed 15 pages in length in total (this is a maximum rather than a target length).

**Staff:** The individual or team proposed to deliver the work should have a high level of expertise and significant experience in conducting similar pieces of work, ideally with relevant knowledge about delivering accessible websites for vulnerable and/or older people and/or websites supporting volunteering and specifying requirements for paywalls and other enhanced features. Tenders should briefly describe the skills and experience of each individual and their expected contribution.

**Skills and expertise**

* The key things that we are looking for from the partner that we commission are as follows:
	+ Experience of assessing the needs and costs of digital development projects in the cultural and community sectors
	+ Experience of supporting the development of websites for community based projects and of specifying and supporting the creation of accessible websites
	+ Experience of consulting with users before developing website
	+ Understanding of the needs of older people and people with dementia
	+ Creative thinker, able to come up with new and innovative solutions
	+ Critical assessment approach, particularly with regard to what is essential and what is not in relation to web development specifications and costs
	+ Any staff should be team workers, flexible and able to integrate with the Reading Friends team where required, comfortable to work with teams remotely

**Costing**

Project costsshould be itemised under the following headings:

* Salary costs for each project team member to be involved in fulfilling the contract (along with the daily rate and number of days input for each project team member)
* Other administrative costs
* Consultation costs
* Travel and subsistence
* Overheads (if applicable)

Costs should be inclusive of VAT and state whether VAT is chargeable.

**Timetable**

The timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

* Tenders invited: week commencing 20th March 2017
* Submission deadline: 13th April 2017
* Interview date (at our offices in London): 26th April 2017
* Project commissioned: 28th April 2017

**The closing date for receipt of tenders is at 5pm on 13th April**. A full electronic copy of the tender including any annexes and supplementary material in MS Word or PDF format should be emailed to jenny.holder@readingagency.org.uk

1. Reading Buddies are the volunteers supporting and befriending Reading Friends [↑](#footnote-ref-1)