

Guidance notes

Opening Archives: Bringing communities and archives together using digital technology

About us

The Audience Agency is a not-for-profit organisation specialising in the arts, culture and heritage sector. We are passionate about the value of culture and heritage to society and work with organisations to help them understand, grow and diversify their participants, audiences and visitors. More information about the work we do can be found on our website:

<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/>

About the programme - 'Opening Archives: bringing communities and archives together using digital technology'

The Audience Agency is delivering a digital project in collaboration with the archive sector, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund [Digital Skills for Heritage](#). The project aims to support the archive sector in democratising archives through using digital technology and on the other hand enable community access and involvement with archives. Working with The National Archives, the centrepiece of the programme will be 10-15 action research projects, where archives and communities come together to develop and deliver projects using digital technology. Supported throughout with a programme of mentoring, training and sharing events, the action research projects will equip archive practitioners with the digital skills to engage diverse communities with archives and will engage and empower communities to add their voices to the historic record.

What are we looking for?

Action-research means delivering a project or activity which is exploring an idea, taking a risk or experimenting with new approaches, the results of which are tracked, including understanding the unpredictable outcomes. The important thing is that an archive (or new archive) and a community collaborate to try out something new.

The archive or archiving involved may be a digitised collection which already exists - whether photographic, video or aural or one which can be developed through born digital collection.

N.B: This opportunity will not support digitisation of existing physical collections.

Examples of projects that might be suitable include but are not limited to:

- A local history group which wants to encourage members of the local community to submit and/or help identify and tag images relating to the heritage of the local area.
- A community of interest which wishes to collaboratively collect relevant material and/or create digital stories (for any online platform) that provide insight into their lived experience or document change in their community.
- A small archive that wants to grow its online community in order to crowdsource submissions for its digitised collection.

What are archives?

The National Archives describe ‘archives’ as collections of information - known as records.

These come in many forms such as:

- letters
- reports
- minutes
- registers
- maps
- photographs and films
- digital files
- sound recordings

Archives can contain records with a local focus or specialise in a particular theme such as railways.

Personal archives range from those relating to a well-known public figure to your own collection of family letters, photographs and memorabilia. For more information, visit:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/start-here/what-are-archives/>

What support is available?

Each project will receive:

- **A £1k-£5k grant** to support a new activity or piece of work that uses digital technology to engage communities with archives and archiving.
- **Training and development** to help get project ideas off the ground and support to evaluate the outcomes.
- **A mentor** will offer one-to-one guidance, expertise and support through project specific tailored sessions.

Projects should be able to say how they will achieve the following outcomes:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage (National Lottery Heritage Fund mandatory outcome for all funded projects).
- An archive was enriched by communities adding their lived experience and different perspectives to the collections or process of collecting.
- Digital technology is used to build, broaden or deepen collaboration and/or make an archive more accessible.
- All those involved in the project learned more about archives and archiving and developed new digital and other skills.

Projects are expected to involve one or more the following:

- Digital storytelling using existing digitised archives OR
- Digital storytelling through contemporary collecting (born digital assets or digital platforms to influence participatory or archival practice) OR
- Crowdsourced metadata or collaborative tagging (metadata, transcription, cataloguing)

And the following:

- A community - of interest, geographic, socio-demographic - which can come together and gain benefits from engaging with archives or archiving
- An organisation which cares for/may care for the archive digitally and benefit from the legacy of the project
 - N.B: the latter two could be one and same organisation or an organisation may come together with a community or vice versa

What can the funding be used for?

Projects can use any type of digital technology to support their collaborative practice. The funding can be used for the following:

- Travel expenses e.g. of participants and organisers, to events or activities
- Materials
- Equipment hire
- Room/space hire and refreshments
- Project manager or facilitators (on a reasonable day rate)
- Any other expertise required by the project (N.B. this may be able to be provided through the project)

We recognise that in light of the Covid-19 pandemic that in person work may be limited or subject to social distancing, so please plan projects which can be delivered safely or flexibly in person and/or remotely and respect the concerns or requirements of those you would like to collaborate with. Advice will be provided on how to do this for projects that are selected for funding.

Eligibility

Projects must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must have either existing digital material to work with or use digital technology to develop an archive which can be stored digitally (in the case of contemporary collecting)
- Projects should have a plan for how collaboration will form part of the activity associated with the archive or developing an archive.
- A project would be expected to arrange weekly contact of some sort between participants.
- The application must be from a constituted organisation of some kind, for example, a charity, constituted community group or social enterprise. Groups or individuals without

a formal structure are encouraged to partner with a constituted organisation who can apply for and administer the grant on behalf of the partnership.

- Ability to deliver the project between September 2021 and February 2022
- The applying organisation must be based in England.
- Any newly created 'digital outputs' from the project must meet the National Lottery Heritage Fund's [Open Licensing Requirements for Digital Projects](#), which briefly means it has to be free and open for anyone to look at and explore and be kept online for not less than 5 years. For this reason, for applicants without an existing online archive, it may be more straightforward to partner with an established archive. Please note we can provide further advice and guidance about this aspect (see contact details below).
- Project organisers and participants should be available to be involved in training and mentoring to support their project which will be tailored to the needs of each project.
- Project organisers and participants should be prepared to share their experiences, challenges and outcomes through the evaluation facilitated by The Audience Agency.

Key Dates

Deadline for applications: Friday 13 August 2021, midnight

Successful projects announced: w/c 6 September

Project delivery dates: September 2021 - February 2022

Final showcase event: April 2022 (date TBC)

For more information or if you have any questions about the application process, please contact liam.smyth@theaudienceagency.org

