



Invitation to tender: development of guidance for libraries and archives on navigating local government reorganisation

1. Introduction

We are seeking an expert contractor to work with focus groups of heads of library services and archives to develop a suite of guidance to support them to successfully navigate local government reorganisation.

Libraries Connected is a national charity and the membership organisation of public libraries across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies. We are working in partnership with The National Archives, that is the lead for the archives sector in England, and with the Local Government Association that is the national membership body for local authorities.

The government has announced that it will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation [LGR] for two-tier areas and for those unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries may be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality services for their residents.

Currently, nearly 40 top-tier authorities have expressed interest in reform which may mean mergers with Districts, and boundary changes for existing top-tier authorities.

This will have major impacts for many archive and library services. They have buildings with specific geographical locations, but more fundamentally their services and collections serve the whole geographical area of their existing parent authority. Boundary changes could have fundamental implications for how they operate, how they design and deliver services, how they manage collections and how they secure funding. It will not be a simple process of "lift and drop" into the new authority.

We want to commission a suite of guidance, developed with focus groups of heads of archive and library services, to support them to navigate LGR, including advice and insights from those who have recently experienced LGR, and a range of options and models for different authorities to consider.

The timetable for reorganisation is tight:

- By 21 March 2025 – initial plans submitted to government
- By 28 November 2025 – full plans submitted to government

In this period, authorities will focus on the strategic and political decisions relating to mergers, boundary changes etc. In-depth planning for service delivery will begin in earnest after this date.

However, whilst the high-level planning is taking place, we want to support library and archive Heads of Service to prepare for the period of service planning, so they can engage with it most effectively.

2. About us

2.1 About Libraries Connected

We are an independent charity that supports, promotes and represents public libraries. Our work is driven and led by our membership, which includes almost every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies (Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man). Across the areas we serve there are 176 individual library services with around 3,000 library branches serving over 61 million people.

Our unique approach is to bring these services together to share experience, expertise and evidence – driving innovation and impact across the public library sector. While senior library leaders sit on our board and committees, we work with library staff at all levels.

As well as providing practical support, training and advice to libraries, we represent them to government and raise their profile in the media. We also develop and lead national library projects with cultural, academic and corporate partners.

We work to a strategic plan that runs until 2027, organised around four themes: drive, grow, connect and engage.

2.2 About The National Archives

The National Archives (TNA) is the official archive and publisher for the UK government, and for England and Wales. We are the guardians of some of our most iconic national documents, dating back over 1,000 years. We are an accredited archive service.

Our role is to collect and secure the future of the government record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible and available as possible.

We are also responsible for leadership of the archives sector in England and our approach is framed by the strategic vision for archives Archives Unlocked. TNA's business plan, Archives for Everyone, positions leadership of the archives sector as a key priority for us. Our approach to the leadership role is a collaborative one, supporting partnership working to encourage a sustainable and innovative archives sector.

2.3 About the Local Government Association

The LGA is the national membership body for local authorities and works on behalf of its member councils to support, promote and improve local government. It is a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils in England and Wales.

3. Deliverables

Libraries Connected is working with the Local Government Association and The National Archives to develop a jointly branded package of support for heads of archives and heads of library services.

Archives and libraries are often aligned within local authority management structures, and share similar issues, so it makes sense to develop an integrated support package.

The partnership of Libraries Connected, The National Archives and LGA will ensure we are able to reach into our respective membership and networks for expert advice and insight. Furthermore, LGA will support dissemination of the guidance beyond our networks to senior officers and elected members.

The focus of the work is be on practical/professional issues as well as advice on effective engagement with the process.

The support package includes:

1. Peer groups to share confidential information, share advice and mutual support, and to help develop guidance:
 - For libraries facilitated by Libraries Connected
 - For archives facilitated by CALG (Chief Archivists in Local Government) via the TNA Archive Sector Leadership department
2. Webinars facilitated by Libraries Connected for library and archive HoS on key themes and to share insights from those who have recently experienced local government reorganisation.
3. Liaison with key bodies including DCMS and ACE to support services to be compliant with statutory responsibilities and Archive Service Accreditation.

[Elements 1, 2, 3 are delivered by Libraries Connected and The National Archives with support from LGA.]

We now want to commission element 4:

4. A suite of guidance for archive and library HoS, developed with a reference group of library and archive HoS, and with input from LGA, to include:
 - briefings for elected members and senior officers
 - insights from those who have recently experienced reorganisation

- top-tips and checklists
- case studies
- models for different approaches to shared and stand-alone library services and archive services, to support authorities to choose what works best for them.

Materials and key messages should aim to align with information and messages developed for councillors and senior leaders, as well as other service areas, as published on the [LGA Devolution and LG Reorganisation Hub](#).

4. Outcomes

Heads of Libraries and Archive services are supported with advice and insights to help them navigate LGR to get the best outcome for their services, parent organisations and users.

5. Contract governance

The contractor will report to the Libraries Connected CEO, and a project board with representatives from The National archives and LGA.

6. Workplan and milestones

(Work in italics will be delivered by Libraries Connected and TNA).

Phase 1: getting prepared

- *March – Nov 2025: 4 webinars on key themes*
- *July 2025: establish Reference Group to work with contractor to develop the guidance*
- *August 2025: procure expert contractor with understanding of local government, archives and public libraries*
- *Aug-Nov contractor work with Reference Group to develop the guidance*
- *November 2025: initial guidance published*
- *December 2025 – Jan 2026: analysis of the impacts of plans for reorganisation*

Phase 2: supporting change

- *Jan 2026- Mar 2027: 6 webinars on key themes*
- *Jan 2026 – June 2026: further work with Reference Group to develop the guidance to its final form*

7. BUDGET

There is a budget of £20,000 for this work, inc VAT and expenses.

8. PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

8.1 Timetable

- Invitation to Tender published: 17 July 2025
- Deadline for clarifications: 1 August 2025
- Closing date: 8 August 2025
- Appointment of successful contractor: 22 August 2025

8.2 Proposal content

Proposals should be no more than 2500 words and should include:

- Understanding of the brief
- An outline methodology for achieving the brief
- A statement of your skills and experience in context of this brief including names and experience of each person assigned to the project. Examples and links to relevant reports you have written or contributed to should be included
- An outline work plan and timetable for this work
- A clear breakdown of costs which includes all rates, fees, and expenses you are anticipating for the project. If you are VAT registered this must be included in your costings
- A statement showing understanding of and commitment to the values of Libraries Connected <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/about-us>
- Two contactable referees who could provide a relevant reference of your suitability to work on this project

8.3 Proposal submission

Please email proposals to info@librariesconnected.org.uk by 9am on xx

8.4 Evaluation of proposals

We will evaluate proposals using these criteria:

- Extent to which proposal demonstrates an understanding of the brief 25
- Knowledge and experience relevant to the project, including experience of running consultation processes and strategic planning 25
- Quality of methodology 25
- Proposed team composition and management 15
- Cost (Value for money) 10

9. TERMS OF CONTRACT

We usually pay an instalment at the start, and then staged payments at project milestones and a final payment when the work is fully signed off. However, this is negotiable depending on the size, nature and length of the project. We are conscious of the cashflow needs of smaller organisations, so we make sure we pay invoices promptly.

10. COMPLIANCE

Libraries Connected reserves the right to disqualify any provider's response to this ITT if it does not fully comply with the requirements contained therein. This is particularly relevant in relation to the stated closing date and time of applications.

Libraries Connected is not responsible for and will not pay for any expenses or losses you incur during, but not limited to, the application preparation, visits, negotiations, or interviews in relation to this procurement process.

It is your responsibility to ensure that any consortium member, sub-contractor, and adviser abide by the conditions set out by Libraries Connected. In submitting a response to this ITT, it will be implied that you accept all the provisions of this ITT including these conditions.

If Libraries Connected needs to change any information contained within this ITT before the closing date, you will be written to advise you of these changes, which includes the extension of any submission deadlines.

Libraries Connected reserves the right to cancel or suspend this ITT process at any time but will notify you in writing as soon as possible if this occurs.

It is expected that the contractor will work within the values and behaviours of Libraries Connected and this will be part of the contract of engagement.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

For an informal discussion about the work please contact:

Isobel.hunter@librariesconnected.org.uk