PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE ACCREDITATION:
Consultation and scoping programme

Libraries Connected: Invitation to Tender

Title: Recruiting an organisation to deliver a programme of consultation and scoping for an accreditation framework for English public libraries.

Deadline for receipt of tender proposals: 9am on Monday 25 November 2019

Return to: Robert.davies@librariesconnected.org.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

This Invitation to Tender (ITT) specifies the requirements for the delivery of a programme of consultation and scoping for an accreditation framework for public libraries in England.

The programme is led by Libraries Connected with funding support from Arts Council England.

We want to work with the public library sector, stakeholders, funders and users to:

- Consult how an accreditation scheme will be useful as a service development tool
- Scope the framework and application and review process for the accreditation scheme.

The following details are outlined in this document:

- Background
- Objectives
- Guiding principles
- Governance and evaluation
- The brief for an expert delivery organisation
- Contract management
- Workplan and milestones
- Budget
- The terms of business relating to the award of any contract
- Process for submitting proposals
- Further information
- Compliance.
2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Libraries Connected [www.librariesconnected.org.uk](http://www.librariesconnected.org.uk)
Libraries Connected is a charity founded in 2018. It builds on 20 years’ experience as The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL). We are now partly funded by Arts Council England as the Sector Support Organisation for public libraries. We have a small team of staff and trustees but we are proud to remain a membership organisation comprised of every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies.

Libraries Connected takes a leading role in the development of public libraries, advocating for continuous improvement on behalf of local people, and leading the debate on the future of the public library service.

*Our vision is an inclusive, modern, sustainable and high-quality public library service at the heart of every community in the UK. We work to promote the value of libraries, broker national partnerships, share best practice and drive innovation in the sector.*

2.2 The public library sector

- Local authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/57) ‘to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons’ for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7). The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities or providing access to wifi and computers).
- There are 151 library authorities in England responsible for approximately 3,260 Council-run libraries supporting more than 225m customer visits each year, and nearly 96m more online. The UK currently spends around £853m a year on public libraries, which is just a little more than £1 per month per capita. [Source: CIPFA]
- A number of library services are now delivered by trusts or other forms of spin-out. However, the statutory responsibilities remain with the local authority who also remain the core funder of these services.
- Along with other local authority services, libraries have experienced a funding decline of 30% since 2010. In that period, about 10% of branches have closed and there has been a 40% reduction in staff since 2005.
- Over the last decade, the public library sector has innovated to develop new services and delivery models, to meet changing user needs with reduced resources. However, there is evidence that provision has become variable in quality between library services with different levels of provision that reflect resource constraints rather than community need.
3. INTRODUCTION TO ACCREDITATION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries in England currently have no set standards to meet. Each local authority defines how it will deliver its responsibilities under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture Media and Sport has the duty to superintend and promote the improvement of library services, and to ensure that local authorities are meeting their library service responsibilities.

However, what the Act actually means in practice is often open to debate, as responsibilities within the Act are drafted very broadly, and discussion often centres on the local authority’s duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.

Libraries are facing a period of unprecedented change, driven by the dual forces of financial restraint and technological change. In response, libraries have become hotbeds of innovation, and developed new services designed to meet changing user needs, deployed new technology and tested new governance and funding models. Library leaders and staff have ambitions to develop and improve their library services, despite the challenging environments they are working in. However, development is patchy and uneven, and the impact of funding reductions and differing responses to this means that library provision is becoming very variable and in places under severe strain.

Many library leads, users and campaigners have been calling for clearer definitions under the Act, and establishment of some type of standards or an accreditation scheme that can work as a self-improvement tool and support DCMS’s work of superintendence.

From 2001-2008, there were set standards for public libraries that designated what each library service needed to provide. Each authority had to create an Annual Public Library Plan which DCMS then used to review each service and to “help define what is meant by a comprehensive and efficient service”. In 2008, the standards were replaced by a National Indicator for public libraries, which in turn was abolished in October 2010.

The situation varies across the UK:

- In Wales there is the Welsh Public Libraries Standards
- In Scotland, “How Good is Our Public Library Service”, 5 quality indicators
- In Northern Ireland, Public Library Service Standards and annual reporting.

Museums and archives have an accreditation standard which serves to underpin the statutory responsibilities of local authorities that deliver them. These standards work as self-improvement frameworks, supporting each archive and museum to define how to deliver its responsibilities to its collections and users within its own specific context. Accreditation has driven improvement in specific services, developed more consistency nationwide, and provided the sector leadership bodies with a raft of information and data to help design and deliver improvement and support programmes.

However, for public libraries in England, there is currently no framework to support their planning and service design and to guide decision making.
Research for the Libraries Blueprint identified a clear appetite across the sector to develop something that will work as an improvement framework, in alignment with superintendence of the 1964 Act, and that will support libraries to deliver to the needs of their communities and foster national consistency. 

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Initial discussion with the public library sector and stakeholders has identified these design principles. They will be reviewed and revised through the new process of consultation and scoping.

Our ambition is to develop a scheme that will:

- Focus on public libraries in England. However, consultation with the sector UK wide and the broader libraries sector will explore the appetite to expand the coverage of the standard in the future
- Be developed through the principle of sector-led design to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Be built around user and community need
- Link to the statutory responsibilities in the Libraries Act to help define what “comprehensive and efficient” means for each library service and its local circumstances
- Support library services to deliver to their local authority’s priorities
- Provide a nationally consistent definition of quality, where services are designed in response to local needs and capacities
- Be aligned with CILIP’s ethical standards
- Work as a service development tool, not as a minimum standard which could encourage a race to the bottom
- Embed the Universal Library Offers
- Be authoritative so it has value as an advocacy tool and a quality mark for funders and key stakeholders
- Have a robust system for application and approval, so it bears weight
- Not be over-engineered so that it does not consume too much time for libraries to complete their application
- Provide a raft of intelligence for library leadership bodies to use to map sector development need and potential, in order to inform the design of their development and support programmes and drive investment
- Be knitted into a development offer, to support roll-out and so support can be targeted at services in need
- Harness support from key library stakeholders, and from local government and funders
- Have the ability to adapt over time as library structures change
• Be neutral on governance models, while providing clarity on statutory responsibilities and where they sit.

The scheme will provide a comprehensive assessment of a library service to demonstrate how it:
• Monitors and responds to user and community needs
• Develops resources, activities, services and collections to meet these needs
• Is managed, funded, staffed and resourced to meet these needs.

5. GOVERNANCE

Libraries Connected has established a Programme Board which will be chaired by its President. The Board will bring together key sector bodies:

• Libraries Connected
• Arts Council England
• CILIP (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)
• The National Archives.

Additional board members may be added as the work evolves.

6. THE BRIEF FOR THE EXPERT CONTRACTOR

We are seeking contractors with this experience:

• Designing and delivering processes of consultation and co-design
• Developing standards or improvement regimes.

The successful contractor will be required to evidence the relevance of their skills and experience in order to deliver these activities:

• To design and deliver a consultation with the library sector, public, funders and stakeholders and to provide a clear analysis of the findings to inform the design of the scheme (or to recommend a scheme is not viable)
• To deliver a design process, using co-creation methodologies with the library sector, public, funders and stakeholders
• To develop a comprehensive yet simple design of the scheme, including the application and assessment process
• To present in the final report a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for future development.

The successful contractor will need to work to these processes and project relationships:

• To work closely with the Libraries Connected contract manager throughout the project, deploying sound project management skills to ensure the work is delivered on time, within budget and to the required quality
To work with the project reference group which will act a sounding board throughout the project to ensure we develop a fit-for-purpose scheme
To report to the Project Board, to elicit their expert insight, manage risk and to ensure sign off at key project milestones
To work closely with the Libraries Connected Communications Manager to develop and deliver a multi-stranded communications and engagement strategy as a core element of the programme to ensure buy-in from key stakeholders
To provide interim reports as required throughout the programme.

7. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The contract will be managed by the Sector Development Project Manager at Libraries Connected.

The successful contractor will report into a Programme Board which will comprise members of Libraries Connected staff, the Board of Trustees, CILIP, Arts Council England and The National Archives.

They will also be required to gather data and costs to enable timely reporting to Arts Council England throughout the programme.

8. WORKPLAN AND MILESTONES

The expert contractor will deliver the programme in four phases:

1 Plan: Jan – Feb 2020
   • Refine and agree project plan and methodology
   • Establish project reference group

2 Consult: Mar – Oct 2020
   • Desk research to understand context for this scheme, and to identify schemes in other sectors that may provide useful example or insights
   • Consultation with library sector, public, funders and stakeholders to identify if they feel a scheme will be useful, and to confirm the key design principles. We envisage consultation will be through a range of methods, including workshops, surveys, targeted interviews.
   • Output: report summarizing consultation response and identifying key design principles to take forward in Design phase.

3 Design: Nov 2020 – Sep 2021
   • Co-creation with library sector, public, funders and stakeholders to develop a scheme based on the identified design principles. We envisage this will be an iterative process, using workshops, online development, surveys and targeted interviews.
   • Output: draft report setting out a designed scheme and mechanism to deliver it.
4 Closure: Oct – Nov 2021
   • Final report writing and budget reconciliation
   • Output: Final project report setting out the designed scheme and delivery mechanism, plus lessons learned/recommendations for further development

An outline project timetable and methodology has been drafted, and this can be evolved by the successful contractor as long as the final project milestone is met and plans are within the allocated budget.

9. BUDGET

A maximum of £68,000 is available for this project inclusive of VAT and all Contractors’ expenses.

10. THE TERMS OF BUSINESS RELATING TO THE AWARD OF ANY CONTRACT

Payment at key milestones in four instalments subject to satisfactory delivery of programme phase and report to Programme Board.

11. PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

11.1 Procurement timetable
   Invitation to tender sent out w/c 28 October 2019
   Deadline for proposals 9am 25 November 2019
   Possible interviews w/c 2 December 2019
   Appointment and initiation December 2020

11.2 Proposal submission
   Please submit proposals by email to Robert.Davies@librariesconnected.org.uk
   Proposals must be submitted by 9am on Monday 25 November 2019.
   Proposals should be no more than 2500 words and should include:
     o Understanding of the brief.
     o An outline methodology for achieving the brief.
     o Your experience in delivering processes of consultation and co-design.
     o Your experience in developing or working with standards or improvement regimes.
     o 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.
     o 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.
• Two contactable referees who could provide a relevant reference of your suitability to work on this project.

11.3 Evaluation of proposals
We will evaluate proposals using these criteria:

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<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>WEIGHTING</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extent to which proposal demonstrates an understanding of the brief</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge and experience relevant to the project in relation to standards and/or improvement regimes</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Quality of methodology and experience in relation to consultation and co-design</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Proposed team composition and management</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Cost (value for money)</td>
<td>10</td>
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12. FURTHER INFORMATION
For an informal discussion about the work, please contact:
Libraries Connected Chief Executive Isobel.hunter@librariesconnected.org.uk

13. 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.