Invitation to tender: Marketing the library

PURPOSE: TO DEVELOP LIBRARIES’ ABILITY TO DELIVER TARGETED, EFFECTIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS: 9AM, MONDAY 22 MARCH 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

To support two networks of libraries to develop a targeted marketing campaign and deliver these once libraries reopen after lockdown.

The following further details are outlined in this document:

* The service to be provided
* The information to be provided by tenderers
* The terms of business relating to the award of any contract
* Anticipated timetable for the programme.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 About us – Libraries Connected

Libraries Connected is a charity partly funded by Arts Council England as the Sector Support Organisation for libraries. We are also proud to be a membership organisation, made up of every library service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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

* Represent the public library sector to communicate the value of libraries
* Connect partners to local libraries by brokering national relationships with a wide range of organisations and individuals
* Improve library services by developing and sharing best practice, providing training for library staff and facilitating a network of library leaders in the UK
* Drive innovation and new thinking on the role of libraries in a modern society.

Libraries Connected are also committed to promoting and demonstrating transformative recruitment and tendering practices to attract more people from diverse communities. We therefore encourage responses from individuals or organisations that are led by people from global majority communities, people with disabilities and women, who are all currently underrepresented in library management.

2.2 The context

The public library sector does not have extensive marketing expertise. Although there are some stand-out exceptions, in many cases libraries’ ability to develop proactive and professional marketing campaigns has been hampered by factors that include:

* Being part of complex local authority structures that may place constraints on use of social media and advertising, and lack expertise in cultural marketing
* Being universal services, so focused on marketing to everyone rather than taking a segmented and targeted approach
* Limited budgets and lack of expert marketing staff within library teams.

During the pandemic, many libraries developed a more active approach to digital marketing, using social media with short films, animations, posters, etc. to promote the revised services they offered.

However, the experience has made them aware of the limitations of their current capacity and the need to develop their marketing skills to attract audiences back into libraries once they restore more of their services. As one Head of Service commented:

*‘Libraries aren’t very good at strategic / targeted marketing – we struggle to pull out the ‘who’ and ‘why’ and we struggle to sell the benefits (we tend to promote the service)’.*

Library footfall has obviously decreased during the pandemic, due to the limitations on access to library buildings. According to our surveys, when libraries reopened over summer, footfall fell to around 20%-30% of pre-pandemic levels.

Many libraries have identified a need to encourage users back to libraries, and to grow new users for their physical, digital and outreach services. This is even more important now as we emerge from the latest English lockdown.

2.3 The programme

This programme will support two networks of libraries to develop two separate targeted marketing campaigns. We aim to deliver the first one in late summer, once some level of library activities is restored, and the second in the new year, when we hope services will have returned to something like normality.

These networks will serve as two pilot projects, with the learning from the first campaign informing the second. We aim to share the knowledge and experience gained from campaign planning, as well as the campaign results, with the wider library sector through a strategy and planning toolkit, two campaign evaluation reports and a series of three webinars. We hope that our members will use these to inform future local and regional marketing campaigns for their services.

While we are aiming to deliver a successful marketing campaign for the two library networks, we are also keen to test new approaches and channels that individual library services may not be able to within their local authorities to help build their confidence and the evidence base for future work.

Key skills that we are hope our members will gain from this project include audience segmentation, key message development, costing campaigns/ROI, social media advertising and campaign analysis. We would also like to help libraries to identify partners they can work with to help disseminate the key messages and maximise the reach of marketing campaigns. These could include national/regional suppliers like Overdrive, or regional agencies like Transport for London.

As a result, we are keen to work with an individual or agency with a strong test and learn approach, that can help us build the marketing capacity within our membership as well as deliver a targeted campaign. The successful candidate will therefore be creative and reflective with some understanding of the constraints of operating within a local authority environment.

3. DELIVERABLES

The programme is focused on helping the library networks to create their campaigns in a way that develops their own marketing skills and understanding and produces resources to support other libraries around the country.

* Training and development
  + A marketing toolkit for use by our members that is developed through collaboration with the participating library networks and based on the learning gathered from delivering the two marketing campaigns
  + Three webinar sessions where the contractor and two library networks can share lessons learned, skills and methodology with the wider library sector.
* Marketing campaigns
  + Support library staff from two networks to develop a targeted marketing campaign aimed at lapsed or non-library users to include: identifying target audience, crafting and testing key messages, selection of appropriate marketing channels (to include organic and paid digital and offline media)
  + Support the creation and delivery of off and online marketing collateral.
* Evaluation  
  The contractor will work with the two library networks and Libraries Connected to establish a simple evaluation framework that will enable libraries to:
  + Monitor the effectiveness of the two marketing campaigns. The contractor will be expected to use this framework to produce two campaign evaluation reports in November and March on the immediate impact/results of the campaigns, in partnership with the two library networks.
  + Measure the longer-term impact of the campaigns to include increased visits, retention, etc.

In addition, the contractor will provide an evaluation framework that will allow Libraries Connected to gather evidence of the two library networks’ skills and knowledge development, as well as the knowledge gained by our membership as a whole. This should include the participants’ progression and the effectiveness of the webinars and include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

4. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The contract will be managed by Marsha Lowe, Marketing and Communications Manager, Libraries Connected.

This project will report to the project board established to oversee the work. The project board that will consist of the Libraries Connected Marketing team, one of our trustees and representatives from the participating libraries (up to six individuals).

5. WORKPLAN AND MILESTONES

We envisage the project will follow this workplan, but proposals can set out an alternative timetable to meet the deliverables.

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| --- | --- |
| Activity | Time period |
| Project initiation | Apr 2021 |
| Training/Planning campaign 1 | May-Jul 2021 |
| Webinar 1: Planning and audience insights | Jul 2021 |
| Campaign: Network 1 | Aug-Oct 2021 |
| First draft toolkit | Oct 2021 |
| Evaluation/Planning campaign 2 | Oct-Dec 2021 |
| Webinar 2: Campaign learning | Nov 2021 |
| Campaign: Network 2 | Jan-Mar 2022 |
| Final draft toolkit | Apr 2022 |
| Webinar 3: Launch of toolkit | Apr 2022 |

6. BUDGET

We are proposing to split the budget as follows but we are open to alternate proposals as long as the overall budget does not exceed £40,000:

* £20,000 to deliver the training programme, develop the toolkit and deliver the webinars including VAT, travel and expenses
* £10,000 per network for collateral production, delivery and advertising costs.

Libraries Connected will provide or pay for venues and catering for meetings integral to the work. It will also provide some administrative and project management support to engage with members as required.

7. PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

7.1 Procurement timetable

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| --- | --- |
| Action | Deadline |
| Invitation to tender sent out | 18 Feb 2021 |
| Deadline for proposals | 22 Mar 2021 |
| Selection | 5 Apr 2021 |
| Appointment and initiation | 12 Apr 2021 |

7.2 Proposal content

The proposals should outline:

* Understanding of the project and deliverables
* Experienced suited to the project subject and proposed methodology
* Names and experience of individual/s assigned to the project, and details of their involvement in each phase or unit of the work
* Costs breakdown for each phase or unit of work, day rate of each individual and any other costs or expenses.

In addition, we would like to receive the contact details of two clients who would be willing to discuss your previous or existing work for them.

7.3 Proposal submission

Please submit proposals by email to marsha.lowe@librariesconnected.org.uk

**Proposals must be submitted by 9am, Monday 22 March 2021.**

7.4 Evaluation of proposals

We will evaluate proposals using these criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Weighting |
| Extent to which proposal demonstrates an understanding of the brief | 20 |
| Relevant marketing knowledge and experience, including understanding of digital, marketing strategy and campaign planning/execution | 30 |
| Experience in relation to training and capacity development within public and/or third sector teams | 30 |
| Proposed team composition and management | 10 |
| Cost | 10 |

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

For an informal discussion about the work, please contact: marsha.lowe@librariesconnected.org.uk