



Invitation to Tender

Title: Evaluation of the Archives Revealed Funding Programme 2026 - 2029

Date of Issue: Monday 2 February 2026

Deadline for Receipt of Tenders: 5.00pm, Monday 9 March 2026

Return to: procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Organisation: The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, TW9 4DU

Website: [The National Archives](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this procurement process is to select a supplier to evaluate the [Archives Revealed funding programme](#) between 2026 and 2029. This invitation to tender outlines the requirements for potential suppliers.

2. Overview

2.1 The National Archives

The National Archives is a non-ministerial department and the official archive and publisher for the UK Government. We are the guardians of over 1,000 years of iconic national documents, expert advisers in information and records management, and are a cultural, academic and heritage institution.

We also fulfil the leadership role for archives in England, and have wider responsibilities for (c. 2,500) archives across the UK. To deliver our leadership role, we have provided grant funding to the archive sector, through open, competitive grant programmes selected by expert panels, for nearly 20 years.

2.2 Archives Revealed

Archives Revealed is a grant funding programme for the archives sector, delivered by The National Archives and funded by The National Archives, [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#), the [Wolfson Foundation](#) and the [Pilgrim Trust](#). The purpose of Archives Revealed is:

“to ensure that significant archive collections, representing the lives and perspectives of all people across the UK, are made accessible to the public for research and enjoyment.”

Since 2006, the programme has been supported by a partnership of funders including The National Archives, the Wolfson Foundation and the Pilgrim Trust. It has made over 150 awards for cataloguing and delivered over £5.25 million in grant funding. In 2024, The National Lottery Heritage Fund joined the funding partnership, expanding the financing of the programme to £6 million, with over £5.1 million to be awarded to the archives sector between 2024 and 2027.

The programme will provide:

1. at least **75 Cataloguing Grants** of up to £50,000;
2. at least **8 Consortium Grants** of up to £150,000 and;
3. at least **75 Scoping Grants** of up to £3,000

as well as a sector development programme of training, networking and cohort working, curated by The National Archives. Funded projects will run for up to two years, between 2025 and 2029, with the last awards to be made in March 2027.

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We define an archive as: *“Materials created or received by a person, family or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in them or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order and collective control; permanent records.”*

There are up to 2,500 archives in the UK, in Government, education, the charity sector, business, the cultural sector and elsewhere. While usually thought of as handwritten or typed documents on paper, archives also commonly include: printed documents, photographs, digital objects (such as e-mail, databases etc), audio/visual material, sketches, drawings, maps and plans

Cataloguing is the process of writing detailed descriptions of the records that you are managing and how they relate to each other. It enables the records to be searched for and interacted with, using descriptions and titles within catalogues allowing individuals to find specific items of interest. Cataloguing is a vital enabler of research, access and engagement in an archival collection.

For further information on cataloguing please see: [Cataloguing archive collections – Archives sector \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk) which contains detailed guidance.

The programme has historically focused on the scoping and cataloguing of significant archival collections. However, new investment from the Heritage Fund has enabled, in addition:

- 1. Greater focus on inclusion, access and participation:** funding participation and public engagement work in every project for the first time.
- 2. Enhanced sector development:** a programme of training, knowledge-sharing, mentoring and cohort working, to further support our grantees and the wider archives sector.
- 3. New ways of grant-making:** piloting larger grants with the potential for greater impact.
- 4. Increased scale:** funding more projects, in more archives, with greater reach.

We will partner with an evaluator throughout the remaining project period (2026-29), to embed monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning activity longitudinally throughout the programme’s delivery phase.

By March 2026, the new Archives Revealed programme will have awarded around 90 grants, to archives in a huge diversity of geographical and institutional contexts. These range from large university, local authority or cultural sector institutions to small charities or community groups staffed largely or wholly by volunteers.

A number of [case studies can be found on our website](#), and project summaries of all of the grants awarded thus far can be found below:

1. [Cataloguing Grants](#)

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2. [Consortium Grants](#)

3. [Scoping Grants](#)

Further detail about the Archives Revealed programme can be found on the programme website: [Archives Revealed - Portals \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk).

3. Evaluation aims and purpose

The Archives Revealed programme is seeking an evaluation partner to help us understand the:

1. (direct and indirect) impacts of the fund (impact evaluation) – what has changed as a result of the programme;
2. process of funding (process evaluation) – whether the delivery method is optimised for the changes we want to see;
3. the contribution that the fund makes to defined outcomes and goals for its stakeholders (contribution analysis) – what contribution to change in the wider ecosystem the programme has facilitated.

This summative evaluation should gather learning about the programme as a whole, including both the grants awarded and the associated sector development activity. We want to develop our understanding of our grantees and applicants' experience with the programme; consult with the sector and key stakeholders, generating quantitative and qualitative data to support its evolution and refinement; and create advocacy and knowledge products for the sector, and for existing and potentially future funders.

There are a variety of stakeholders who are potential audiences for the evaluation, and we have listed these in the table below, alongside potential aims and intended outcomes for each stakeholder group. The evaluation supplier should propose methods, measures and outcomes that relate to the aims of the stakeholder groups, and that are realistic and proportionate to the size of the grants offered and to the capacity of the archives sector. These should be shaped into an ambitious but viable evaluation plan.

The programme's existing aims are included as Appendix 1, and the key deliverables for the National Lottery Heritage Fund's grant to The National Archives are included as Appendix 2. We require the successful supplier to develop these, and other stakeholder perspectives, into a logic model and/ or Theory of Change to help guide the programme's delivery and explain its purpose and design.

The evaluation will be used to:

1. produce reliable and useful information to inform decision-making
2. iteratively improve the programme's delivery during implementation
3. inform future funding provision and
4. support advocacy for the fund and sector.

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4. Stakeholders

Key to the evaluation process will be a participatory approach which values and understands programme stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but key stakeholders' aims may include:

Stakeholder	Key outcomes
The funding partnership (The National Archives, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery against the programme's key aims (Appendix 1) 2. Improvements to the programme's delivery to inform future funding provision 3. Delivery against the key deliverables of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's funding award (Appendix 2), and the Heritage Fund's four investment principles. 4. Delivery against the charitable objects of the Pilgrim Trust and Wolfson Foundation, and the Government's vision for archives.
The archives sector	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A wider range of people using archives and engage with archival collections. 2. The creation of an advocacy and evidence base that demonstrates the societal value of archives and can be used to secure future funding, including from the existing funding partners.
Users of archives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased access to archival collections, with barriers lowered to use, representation and participation.

The capacity of archive grantees varies widely. We are therefore looking for evaluators to engage with grantees to identify suitable measures and outcomes for individual projects and services. We would also like to support archives to build in measures relevant to their own strategic objectives where possible.

5. Work thus far

Some initial work took place on this evaluation in the 2025 calendar year, between The National Archives and an evaluation supplier, and the chosen bidder will have access to all of the material produced under that contract.

This includes a draft theory of change; draft monitoring and evaluation framework, with accompanying evaluation forms/surveys; an EDI review; data gathered from interviews with members of the funding partnership, including its Steering Group; and monitoring forms produced by the programme team, with some data collected from Round 1 grantees.

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It is for potential suppliers to determine how much (if at all) they rely upon these existing outputs – however we anticipate that the chosen supplier will want to apply their own methodology and process to the evaluation.

6. Outputs / Deliverables

We expect the following key deliverables to be produced by the chosen supplier:

1. Development of a **monitoring and evaluation framework** - including refining the existing Theory of Change for the project, and developing evaluation methods and measures for the programme, including viable evaluation question sets for grantees to complete, with a plan for data analysis (May 2026);
2. A **baseline report**, working with existing data to create baselines from which to measure impact and including results from initial stakeholder engagement, data analysis and recommendations for ongoing project delivery (December 2026);
3. An **interim report and mid-term review**, sharing results from initial data-gathering with process evaluation of the funding programme.
4. A **final report** detailing the impacts of funding, lessons learned, recommendations and proposals for the fund's sustainability and future. (June 2029);

in addition to ongoing consultation with the Archives Revealed team, key stakeholders and grantees, as well as periodic reporting.

Each report must be an honest, independent and practical assessment of the project, capturing both its successes and failures. Reports must be written in an accessible format, with the expectation that they will be made available publicly. The report's format and content will be agreed in advance with the programme team.

For the avoidance of doubt, the copyright and IP in any evaluation outputs will be owned by The National Archives.

7. Indicative Timeline

An indicative timeline for the evaluation is outlined below, subject to discussion with the chosen supplier before work begins:

In Year 1 (April 2026 - March 2027):

- Create (or revise the existing) Theory of Change for the programme, working with the programme's Steering Group, funders and operational team. Outcomes and outputs of the programme are to be mapped against The National Lottery Heritage Fund's four investment principles, and the method for generating the Theory of Change should include: activity, output, outcomes (short-, mid- and long-term) as well as impacts. This should be underpinned by Assumptions and Resources.

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- Create (or revise the existing) evaluation framework for grantees, ensuring that the programme is asking appropriate evaluation questions that align with the programme's aims, are testable and verifiable, and that grantees are empowered to respond to in an informed manner.
- Agree data collection methods and sources, with an agreed approach to data analysis.
- Work with existing data including The National Archives' review of grant-making since 2017, and existing surveys/datasets about the archives sector collected by The National Archives and others, to create baselines from which to measure impact.
- Produce the monitoring and evaluation framework and baseline report as above.

In Years 2-4 (April 2027 - June 2029):

- Support the Archives Revealed operational team in building the capacity of grantees and the wider archives sector to monitor and record data. This may include delivering training, and collaboratively producing guidance. We encourage evaluators to think creatively about how archives might be encouraged and equipped to carry out evaluation.
 - Particular attention will be given to public engagement and participation work, which is being funded by the programme for the first time (this might require e.g. recording of demographic data).
- Independently generate qualitative data through Key Informant Interviews and stakeholder consultation with grantees and applicants.
- Work with the Archives Revealed team to analyse and interpret evidence as it is generated by grantees, and to consider the programme's contribution to change in comparison to baselines.
- Create case studies during and after project delivery.
- Observe, and consider the process of application and award-making, suggesting improvements to operational delivery where appropriate.
- As individual grant funded projects close (Year 3 onwards), explore the direct and indirect outcomes of grant funding and associated sector development work through mixed-methods analysis.
- Produce mid-term review and final report as above.

8. Methodology

8.1 Outline

Potential suppliers should set out proposals that will meet the aims of the brief and deliverables as set out in Sections 1-6 of this Invitation to Tender. We envision that, given the breadth of the brief and the longitudinal nature of the evaluation, a number of different methodologies will be deployed in a mixed-methods evaluation that generates both quantitative and qualitative evidence. We are open to discussing different methods of data capture.

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Given the size of our sector and number of grantees, sampling or surveys will need to be managed appropriately by the supplier. Your proposal should provide detail on your approach to sampling and data collection including information rights - in particular data protection - and analysis. You should also detail how you will manage ethics in research, ensuring that work will be conducted in a way that minimises harm and risks.

In completing their evaluation, providers may want to use:

- Grant applications, supporting documents, case papers or the minutes of the Expert Panel;
- Materials generated by funded projects, including scoping reports and catalogues of archival collections;
- Monitoring data recorded over the delivery period;
- Social media and other online outputs created by grantees throughout the project;
- Observational reflections of the assessment and awarding process;
- Visits to projects and events associated with the Archives Revealed programme;
- Consultations and interviews with the programme's management function (including its Steering Group), funders, applicants and grantees including operational staff and volunteers, as well as other key stakeholders as directed by the funders;
- Feedback from project and other stakeholder meetings;
- Material produced or data gathered under our initial evaluation contract (2025)
- Any other evidence, information or data gathered directly by the supplier.

Suppliers should be conscious of the requirement to evaluate the programme's package of sector development, training, mentoring and communications, as well as the projects delivered by our grantees.

The suppliers will work closely with Archives Revealed and The National Archives staff throughout, and The National Archives will identify a lead officer for the work.

The National Archives will:

- provide the chosen supplier with access to relevant literature, research reports and data that it holds;
- support the chosen supplier in sampling and identifying stakeholders and interviewees, using its existing sector knowledge and segmentation, and its stakeholder mapping;
- act as a point of liaison between the chosen supplier and its funders, stakeholders, grantees and the wider archives sector, where necessary.

8.2 Skills

The successful supplier should possess, or be able to access, the specialist knowledge, skills and expertise required to deliver this work.

This must include:

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- Experience in developing and implementing monitoring, evaluation systems and frameworks.
- Experience of analysing monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment data to draw meaningful conclusions and reports.
- Understanding of Theory of Change and the logic-model approach to evaluation.
- Knowledge of methodologies for evidence metrics in the creative and cultural sectors (collection, analysis and dissemination).
- Facilitation and consultation skills, including conducting purposeful interviews.
- Research and analytical skills.
- Previous experience of supporting programmatic development.
- Expertise in presenting complex data in a compelling manner.
- Previous experience in evaluating heritage programmes and knowledge of or a willingness to learn about the archive sector.
- Strong report writing, presentation writing and presentation delivery skills to engage a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.
- The ability to differentiate evaluative methods to a wide range of grantees, producing evaluation methods and tools (e.g. surveys and question sets) that work for organisations in a wide range of geographical and institutional contexts, with different levels of capability e.g. in collecting data.

In particular, the Archives Revealed team would be eager to work with a supplier with existing experience in the archives or cultural heritage sectors; and/or experience of working on programmes funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund or other similar funders. This will enable a fast start, especially as our Round 1 projects are already finishing.

We are open to funding consortia of bidders that can deliver on these requirements; for example, an evaluation provider working in tandem with an organisation with experience of the archives and/or cultural sector.

9. Contract Management

9.1 Contract Details

The contract period will be from April 2026 to the programme's closure in June 2029.

The budget for evaluation will be **£145,000** over the five-year period inclusive of VAT, travel and all other expenses.

The day-to-day management of the evaluation will be led by The National Archives, with the appointed organisation also having accountability to partner funders including The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust and the Wolfson Foundation.

Payments may be linked to milestone delivery, and an indicative payment schedule is included below – however, we are open to additional payment stages or other payment schedules, subject to negotiation with the chosen supplier:

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1. Contract signature – 10% contract value (March 2026)
2. Client approval of the monitoring and evaluation framework – 20% contract value (May 2026)
3. Delivery of a client-approved baseline report – 20% contract value (December 2026)
4. Delivery of a client-approved interim report and mid-term review – 15% contract value (March 2028)
5. Delivery of a client-approved final report – 35% contract value (June 2029)

9.2 How to respond

If you have any clarification questions related to your Tender Response, please submit these to procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk by 5.00pm, Friday 13 February 2026.

If you intend to submit a Tender Response, please let us know by emailing us at procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk by 5.00pm, Friday 13 February 2026.

If you have informed us of your intention to submit a Tender Response, you will be invited to make a face-to-face presentation of your work-in-progress proposal during week commencing 23 February 2026. The aim of this discussion is to provide additional insight to potential suppliers that may help shape final submissions, and it is not a scored component of the tender evaluation.

Please submit your Tender Response to procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk by 5.00pm, Monday 9 March 2026.

It is for you to determine what format your Tender Response should take, so as to describe your offer in a clear, comprehensive fashion. However please ensure that your Tender Response includes the following as a minimum:

- **Methodology and timeframe:** provide a project proposal outlining in detail the approach, methodology and timeframe you would propose to deliver this project and engage with the internal project team.
- **Team composition:** please explain your experience in providing similar services and provide at least two examples of recent outputs and evaluation reports. These will only be used for assessing suppliers as part of the evaluation process.
- **Experience:** please explain your track record in the provision of monitoring and evaluation services; how this aligns with the heritage sector and with Archives Revealed's funding organisations; and provide examples of previous customers. Please include the contact details of one relevant organisation from whom we can obtain a telephone or written reference, should we choose to do so.
- **Pricing:** this should include whether VAT is included, a breakdown of each person working on the project and what their day rates are, as well as how many days each member of the team will be allocated, as well as any budgeted expenses.

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- **Social Value:** please explain how your proposed approach and methodologies will consider social value in delivering the evaluation. We would recommend that applicants focus their response on managing the environmental impacts of your proposal. For further information on Social Value please see the UK Government Cabinet Office guidance available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources>

10. Evaluation Criteria

Your Tender Response will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum available unweighted score	Weighting	Maximum available weighted score
Methodology and timeframe	10	x4	40
Team composition and management	10	x2	20
Experience in similar projects	10	x3	30
Pricing	10	x2	20
Social Value	10	x1	10

The bidder submitting the lowest price will be awarded the maximum of 10 (unweighted) points in the Pricing category. All other bidders will be awarded a (unweighted) points score by applying the following formula:

$$((\text{lowest submitted price}/\text{bidder's submitted price}) \times 10)$$

Other categories will be evaluated according to the table below, however a minimum unweighted score of at least 7 must be achieved against the 'methodology and timeframe' criterion, and a minimum unweighted score of at least 7 must be achieved against 'experience in similar projects', for the proposal for to be considered. Proposals that do not achieve these minimum scores will be considered a fail.

Once all of the submissions have been evaluated, the top three ranked bidders will be invited to present their proposals (in person or via MS Teams, depending on each supplier's preference) to TNA's evaluation panel. After those presentations have taken place, the top 3 ranked bidders' submissions will be re-scored (taking the presentation into account) applying the criteria specified in the Evaluation Criteria table on this document – After which a contract award decision will be made.

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For avoidance of doubt, the scores achieved by bidders at Stage 1 of the procurement process will not be taken into account at this Stage 2

10 Points	Outstanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Supplier has provided a response that addresses all parts of the requirement Potential Supplier has provided evidence to support all elements of their response The evidence supplied is convincing and highly relevant to the requirement Potential Supplier's response is clear and easy to understand Where relevant, Potential Supplier has demonstrated a high level of capability to deliver new and innovative service approaches
7 Points	Good: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Supplier has provided a response that addresses all parts of the requirement Potential Supplier has provided evidence to support most elements of their response The evidence supplied is good and relevant to the requirement Potential Supplier's response is clear and easy to understand Where relevant, Potential Supplier has demonstrated some level of capability to deliver new and innovative service approaches
4 Points	Average: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Supplier has provided a response that addresses some parts of the requirement Potential Supplier has provided evidence to support some elements of their response, but not all The evidence supplied has some limited relevance to the requirement Potential Supplier's response is not always clear and easy to understand Where relevant, Potential Supplier has demonstrated limited capability to deliver new and innovative service approaches
1 Point	Poor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Supplier has provided a response that fails to address most parts of the requirement

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Supplier has provided little or no evidence to support most elements of their response • The evidence supplied is very weak and has very limited relevance to the requirement • Potential Supplier's response is not always clear and easy to understand • Where relevant, Potential Supplier has demonstrated little or no capability to deliver new and innovative service approaches
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11. Procurement Timetable

The procurement timetable is as follows:

Ref	Description	Date
1	Invitation to Tender published	Monday 2 February 2026
2	Deadline for Potential Suppliers to submit clarification questions to procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk	5.00pm, Friday 13 February 2026
3	Deadline for Potential Suppliers to confirm intention to submit a Tender Response to procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk	5.00pm, Friday 13th February 2026
4	Face to face meetings to discuss proposal	w/c 23 February 2026
5	Deadline for Potential Suppliers to submit Tender Responses to procurement@nationalarchives.gov.uk	5.00pm, Monday 9 March 2026
6	Evaluation of submissions completed	Friday 13 March 2026
7	Interviews with shortlisted suppliers	Thursday 19 or Friday 20 March 2026
8	Mandatory Standstill Period Begins	Monday 23 March 2026
9	Mandatory Standstill Period Ends	Wednesday 1 April 2026
10	Contract Award	Thursday 2 April 2026

* Any clarification question received that TNA deems to be relevant to more than one Potential Supplier may be shared with all Potential Suppliers

12. Contract Terms

The contract will be awarded subject to our standard terms and conditions, which can be found at [Information for our suppliers - The National Archives](#)

The National Archives and the Archive Revealed programme reserves the right not to award and to complete its objects through other means.

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Appendix 1: Archives Revealed Programme Goal and Strategic Aims

The purpose of Archives Revealed is: *“to ensure that significant archive collections, representing the lives and perspective of all people across the UK, are made accessible to the public for research and enjoyment.”*

To achieve this goal, the programme has five strategic aims and desired outcomes from these aims:

1. **Significance:**

Aim: to make significant collections accessible to national and local audiences which would otherwise remain hidden.

Outcome: Archive services identify and prioritise the cataloguing of collections representing significant people, organisations, communities, events and cultures in the UK to make them more accessible to audiences.

2. **Diversity and inclusion**

Aim: to be an inclusive and responsible funder that supports diversity across the archive sector.

Outcome: Archive services of all types and size, and from all regions of the UK, are more accessible to people for research and enjoyment. Archives Revealed has a reputation for equitable decision-making and enables a wide variety of projects from across the UK to be supported with funding.

3. **Audiences, engagement and improvement to access**

Aim: to increase the visibility and use of archive collections across varied audiences, revealing the stories and experiences of people, communities and events.

Outcome: Archives make connections with relevant audiences, building relationships of trust based on engagement with archive collections. Archives engage audiences with archive collections in creative ways that make a difference to people's lives. Audiences see their backgrounds, experiences and perspectives represented in the archive. Archives can communicate the results of their projects to highlight archive collections to relevant audiences, communities and the wider public.

4. **Impact and value of archives**

Aim: to highlight the value of archives in making a difference to people's lives.

Outcome: Archives can advocate for their service and collections to ensure continued support from within their own organisations and beyond – and secure matched resources for the catalogued collections. Heritage and archive funders are engaged in the Archives Revealed programme, understand its value, and contribute to funding to ensure its continued success. The archive sector can draw on a body of evidence to advocate for their service and adjust their engagement work accordingly.

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5. **Standards and approaches to cataloguing**

Aim: fund projects that represent examples of excellence in cataloguing and discovery.

Outcome: Appropriate and effective cataloguing methods are utilised that meet archive standards and best practice guidance, and that result in collections being highly accessible and usable by audiences.

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Appendix 2: Archives Revealed – Key Deliverables for the National Lottery-funded grant to The National Archives:

1. To award 75 Scoping Grants in quarterly rounds of funding between 2024 - 27
2. To award 75 Catalogue Grants in five funding rounds between 2024 – 27
3. To award 8 Consortium Grants between 2024 – 27
4. To update assessment criteria and the monitoring and grants policies to ensure robust processes
5. To appoint an Expert Panel to assess catalogue and consortium grant applications with a range of expertise, geographic spread and diverse representation.
6. To support grantees to embed inclusion, access and participation and ensure compulsory engagement activities at 20% of grant award funding.
7. To implement training programmes responding to grantee needs across a range of topics and skills, supporting the delivery of all four of The National Lottery Heritage Funds Investment Principles.
8. To facilitate cohort working, peer-to-peer mentoring and a knowledge sharing platform for grantees to connect.
9. To provide support for publishing collections on Discovery, The National Archives online catalogue.
10. To produce a new microsite with case studies and refreshed branding.
11. To deliver a communications programme to advocate for the sector and improve public understanding of archives.
12. To recruit two new full time staff members (Archives Revealed Programme Manager, Archives Revealed Sector Development and Engagement Manager)
13. To commission a consultant to undertake project evaluation.
14. To ensure appropriate acknowledgment of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Wolfson Foundation and the Pilgrim Trust within the programme and by grantees.