

Brief for Consultancy: Future Strategy for the Greater Manchester Festival of Libraries



Background

Manchester City of Literature wishes to appoint a consultant to undertake a strategic review of the Greater Manchester [Festival of Libraries](#) and to develop recommendations for its future direction from 2028 onwards.

The Greater Manchester Festival of Libraries is an annual celebration of libraries, literature, creativity and community engagement across the ten Greater Manchester boroughs. Led through partnerships between library services, cultural organisations, HEIs, artists and local communities, the Festival presents a wide-ranging programme of events, commissions and participatory activity that showcases libraries as vital civic and cultural spaces. The Festival seeks to increase participation in reading, writing and culture; strengthen local partnerships; support artists and creative practitioners; and connect communities through shared experiences. The Festival won Best Event at the Manchester Culture Awards 2024 and was voted the Second Most Inclusive Literature Festival in the UK in 2025. The full programme for the 2026 edition of the Festival can be found [here](#).

As the Festival continues to grow in ambition, reach and profile, Manchester City of Literature is seeking an external consultant to review the current model and provide strategic recommendations to inform the next phase of development.

Scope of the Consultancy

The consultant will:

- Review the current Festival of Libraries model, including artistic programming, governance, partnerships and delivery structures;
- Assess the strengths, challenges and opportunities for the Festival from 2028 onwards;
- Consider the Festival's role within the wider cultural, library and civic landscape across Greater Manchester;
- Identify opportunities to strengthen artistic ambition, audience engagement, partnership working and long-term sustainability.

The consultancy should result in clear, practical and evidence-based recommendations for the future strategic direction of the Festival.

Methodology

The consultant will be expected to:

- Review existing Festival documentation, [evaluation reports](#), funding bids and relevant programme information;
- Undertake interviews and consultation with:
 - library partners across Greater Manchester;
 - key stakeholders and funders;
 - local festival producers and cultural partners;
 - members of the Festival delivery team;
- Benchmark relevant examples of comparable festivals, cultural networks and partnership models where appropriate;
- Identify emerging opportunities, risks and priorities for the Festival's future development.

Outputs

The consultant will produce:

- A draft strategic review report by 30 September 2026;
- A final report incorporating feedback from Manchester City of Literature and partners.

The final report should include recommendations relating to:

- The future artistic programme and curatorial approach;
- The future partnership and governance model;
- The most appropriate creative lead organisation and delivery structure for the Festival from 2028 onwards;
- Potential funding, audience development and strategic growth opportunities.

Timeline

- Invitation to submit expressions of interest opens: 8 June 2026
- Deadline for expressions of interest: midday on 21 July 2026
- Online Interviews: 30 July 2026 tbc
- Consultant appointed: 4 August 2026
- Consultation and research period: August – September 2026
- Draft report submitted: by 30 September 2026
- Final report submitted: by 20 October 2026

Fee

There is a fee of £6,500 (inc VAT) for this work between commissioning and final report. This should cover all costs of the evaluation delivery and report writing including any travel expenses if in-person workshops are proposed. Manchester City of Literature can provide rooms for interviews, access to a Pro Zoom account and will oversee the production of the final report.

Application process

Please contact Ivan Wadeson, Executive Director, if you have any questions about this tender.

Applications should be submitted to ivan.wadeson@manchestercityofliterature.com by 12 noon on Tuesday 21 July 2026.

Your application should include:

- Relevant experience and suitability for the tender
- Your proposed approach and methodology
- An indicative timetable and breakdown of activity
- Your costs including daily rates

Please keep this to a maximum of 4 sides of A4. You can also include a CV and links to any relevant reports or case studies that you wish to share.

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Manchester City of Literature is supported by:

