



Manchester Literature Festival

DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MLF

(Freelance Contract)

Manchester Literature Festival is seeking a consultant(s) to develop a strategic plan that builds on the organisation's achievements and aspirations to guide the Festival's development over the next 5 years.

Manchester Literature Festival (MLF) was established in 2006 and provides unique and imaginative opportunities for audiences to experience high quality live literature.

It has established itself as one of the most imaginative and highly regarded festivals in the UK's cultural calendar. A firm believer in the transformative power of words and stories, MLF showcases and commissions some of the most interesting voices in fiction, poetry, literature in translation, song-writing, activism and culture. Featuring both established and emerging writers, the Festival provides a platform for women writers, LGBTQ+ writers, working class writers and writers of colour to reflect the rich diversity of Manchester.

Having grown out of the Manchester Poetry Festival, MLF has tripled in size attracting an audience of 13,000+ to annual 16-day festivals featuring 75+ events. Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, we produced a scaled down, digital iteration of the Festival in October 2020. #MLF20 comprised 17 events featuring high profile authors, poets, artists and activists from across the globe, including conversations with Tori Amos, Angela Davis, Nick Hornby, Maaza Mengiste and Kae Tempest. It attracted an audience of 5000 people from 53 countries.



As well as presenting an annual Festival and Spring programme of live literature events, MLF also produces a year-round education programme which engages children, young people and their families in creative activities, specifically targeted in areas of the city where there is a low level of cultural engagement and high levels of child poverty.



Previous MLF guests have included Booker-prize winning novelists Margaret Atwood, Roddy Doyle, Anne Enright, Bernardine Evaristo, Howard Jacobson, Marlon James, Ben Okri and Arundhati Roy; Poet Laureates Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy, Seamus Heaney, Jackie Kay and Tracy K Smith; Children's Laureates Malorie Blackman, Lauren Child, Michael Morpurgo and Michael Rosen; musicians Tori Amos, Brett Anderson, Guy Garvey, Johnny Marr, Neil Tennant and Tracey Thorn; comedians Jo Brand, Susan Calman and Sarah Millican; and other cultural figures including Angela Davis, Alan Johnson, Mona Eltahawy, Graham Norton and Vivienne Westwood.

Events take place in venues across Manchester, including Central Library, Royal Northern College of Music, Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama, the International Anthony Burgess Foundation and Elizabeth Gaskell's House.

The Festival is committed to developing and delivering work that offers children and young people access to the very best in contemporary writing from across the world. This is done through the delivery of projects and events as part of the annual Festival, and a year-round programme of opportunities in schools and libraries across Greater Manchester supporting children and young people to be creative.



Led by the MLF Chair, the Festival was central to the designation of Manchester as a UNESCO City of Literature in 2017, working in partnership with Manchester City Council, The University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and partners across the city's cultural sector.

Festival Patrons are Rachel Cooke (author and Observer critic), Carol Ann Duffy (former UK Poet Laureate), Jackie Kay (Scottish Makar and Chancellor of Salford University), Dame Jenni Murray (broadcaster and former anchor of BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour), Miranda Sawyer (broadcaster and journalist), Michael Schmidt (poet, founder and editorial director of Carcanet Press & PN Review), Kamila Shamsie (author and lecturer at the University of Manchester's Centre for New Writing) and Erica Wagner (author, editor and broadcaster).

MLF employs two Co-Directors, a Children and Young People's Programme Producer and a team drawn from a network of freelancers covering PR, marketing, social media, fundraising, volunteering, event and project management, and outreach delivery. In 2019, MLF recruited a new Chair, Peter Mearns and is currently in the process of recruiting new trustees to replace outgoing members of the board.

MLF is a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Festival holds National Portfolio Organisation status with Arts Council England and is also supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Culture Fund and Manchester City Council, with The University of Manchester as its Higher Education Partner. Other funds and support are secured from a range of partner organisations, businesses and trusts and foundations.



www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

Company Registration No. 4369668 and Charity Registration No. 1121276

MLF'S STRATEGIC PLAN: CONTEXT

Following a period of review, the Festival now wishes to work collaboratively with a consultant(s) to develop a strategic plan that builds on the organisation's achievements and aspirations.

To inform the move to developing a new strategic plan, the Board, Co-Directors and team members (along with stakeholder and partners) participated in an organisational review in 2019 and a follow-up awayday in early 2020.

The brief for the commencement on the work on the strategic plan has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has also meant that the usual ways of presenting the Festival (in venues with audiences) have also been challenged. Therefore, this brief will now need to incorporate looking at ways in which the Festival can be agile, develop its digital capacity, and embrace change by considering a range of models and alternative ways to present the Festival's work and engage with audiences.

It should be noted that the Festival operates with a very small team that shapeshifts depending on the number of events or activities presented through the year. The two Co-Directors and the Children & Young People's Programme Producer form a 'core', with freelancers used to support and deliver in areas such as fundraising, marketing, PR, box office, front of house, administration, volunteering and hosting events.

THE BRIEF

In the first instance, the consultant(s) developing the strategic plan will need to establish a collaborative working partnership with the Festival team and Board Members, agreeing the timeline and processes required to develop and sign-off the plan.

In addition, they will need to consult and liaise with funders, partners and stakeholders (e.g. Arts Council England, University of Manchester, UNESCO Manchester City of Literature, Manchester City Council) to understand the Festival's position and potential in Manchester, and also engage with other (literature) festivals or arts organisations nationally and internationally to provide a wider context, to inform benchmarking and business modelling.

Importantly, the strategic plan will need to set out how the Festival can become more resilient and operate sustainably to generate long term impact.

The delivery of the plan and its impact on MLF as a small organisation is a key factor throughout, so in order to develop an effective plan, the consultant(s) will need to understand current ways of working, as well as the organisation's aspirations, needs, and any artistic, audience or operational 'gaps'.

The strategic plan going forward will need to encompass areas including:

- The organisation's vision, aims and objectives, targets and priorities
- Artistic programme, incorporating hybrid physical/digital events as well as projects and activities for Children and Young People
- Financial planning and projections, fundraising and ways to maximise income
- Governance and leadership
- Management and staffing
- Marketing, brand and PR
- Audience development and community engagement
- Customer services and box office
- Operations, event delivery/production and facilities/venues
- Articulation of how we engage with the Creative Case for Diversity, Arts Council England's *Let's Create* and Manchester City Council's *Our Manchester* strategies

The plan will also need to consider and address:

- Charity commission and legal compliance
- Risk analysis and testing the plan
- A phased implementation that is realistic and achievable
- Monitoring and evaluation, measuring success and progress

As an output, the Festival will need a strategic plan that:

- Is well researched and developed in collaboration with MLF and its partners
- Clearly and coherently sets out the organisation's strategic direction for the next 5 years
- Considers all aspects of the organisation's activities, operations and finances
- Demonstrate a good awareness of the external environment and the wider arts/cultural landscape

- Provides an action plan for delivery, with deadlines and milestones, phases and measures of success
- Is a tool that supports the organisation working towards common goals and enables the Board to fulfil its duties to exercise prudent stewardship and governance
- Is short and to the point, with the core plan (excluding appendices) of around 20 - 25 pages long, and is presented in a readable font
- Is a 'live' internal document which can be reviewed, revisited and revised annually
- Integrates text and finance to tell a consistent and coherent story
- Openly acknowledges challenges and risks, and identifies management strategies

The draft plan will be reviewed by the Chair, Board, Co-Directors and MLF staff, with further consultation and peer-review as necessary. Ultimately, the Board will sign-off the final iteration of the plan for delivery.

PRACTICALITIES

The Festival requires a consultant(s) with solid, demonstrable experience of developing business and strategic plans. Experience of working with/in the arts coupled with a strong understanding of the cultural sector and festivals is vital.

It is envisaged that the plan will be developed through a combination of desk research, information review, data and financial analysis, and consultation. Excellent communications skills are essential, as is the ability to communicate effectively with a diverse range of people.

Timeline:

- Deadline for receipt of proposals: **5pm on Friday 8 January 2021**
- Socially distanced in-person or Zoom/Skype interviews: **Week of Monday 18 January**
- Consultant appointed to start: **Week of Monday 25 January**

The consultant(s) and MLF will agree the detailed delivery timeline, though it is envisaged that a draft plan would be presented to MLF in early March, with sign off by 31 March 2021. The implementation of the strategic plan would commence in April 2021.

Contract Period

- The allocation of time will be agreed by the consultant(s) and the Festival between the commencement date in January 2021 to the end of March 2021.

Workplace:

- Most of the work will be carried out from the consultant(s) own base/office or in meeting locations as the work demands.
- The MLF office is extremely small and unfortunately cannot accommodate a desk space.

Fee

- A fee of **£6,000** is available. There is some additional budget to bring in digital capacity building expertise if required.
- The consultant(s) will be responsible for paying their own Tax and National Insurance contributions

Expenses

- This brief will need to be carried out in adherence to the UK Government's COVID-19 (Coronavirus) social distancing and other safety guidelines. In normal circumstances and should this brief cover post-COVID-19 restrictions, reasonable travel expenses can be claimed for travel to agreed meetings.

Equal Opportunities

MLF is committed to promoting equal opportunities and to ensuring that the organisation is representative of the people of Manchester.

The Festival encourages applications regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation and from communities or groups that are under-represented in cultural organisations.

If the role holder is disabled, every effort will be made to supply all necessary equipment or support so that they can carry out the duties of the role.

Consultant(s) may be required to undergo a DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) check.



HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

If you/your company feel that you have the requisite skills and experience, MLF would be delighted to hear from you. To submit a proposal, please provide the following by email:

- A CV, biography or company information (no more than two sides of A4)
- An accompanying document setting out relevant experience, your approach to developing the strategic plan and your interest in the brief
- A completed Equality & Diversity Monitoring Form (downloadable from the Festival website)

Proposals should be emailed to Cathy Bolton, MLF Co-Director, by 5pm on Friday 7 January 2021.

- Email: director@manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

If you would like to arrange an informal conversation about this brief, please contact:

- MLF's Chair, Peter Mearns, by email: peter.mearns@live.co.uk
- MLF's Co-Director, Cathy Bolton: director@manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk



Thank you for your interest in Manchester Literature Festival.

Manchester Literature Festival

The Department Store

5 Oak Street

Manchester M4 5JD

[**www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk**](http://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk)

Twitter: [@McrLitFest](https://twitter.com/McrLitFest)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/McrLitFest

Instagram: [mcrlitfest](https://www.instagram.com/mcrlitfest)

Company Registration No. 4369668

Charity Registration No. 1121276