The Archive Testbed Fund
Frequently Asked Questions

About Collaborate and Innovate

What is the Collaborate and Innovate Fund?
The Collaborate and Innovate funding programme is funded by The National Archives. The programme is focused on both empowering archives to use creativity and innovation to develop ideas and solutions, and on encouraging the work of networks, leading to outcomes that will make a positive change to archives in the UK.

Collaborate and Innovate supports a drive towards collaborative approaches to problem solving, innovative practice and the development and testing of original ideas. This will be delivered through two funding streams: the Networks for Change Fund and the Archive Testbed Fund.

What are the aims and outcomes of Collaborate and Innovate?

Aims
1. To empower archives to use creativity and innovation to develop ideas and solutions, especially for the key themes of digital capacity, impact and resilience
2. To enable grantees to undertake pilot projects which might not ‘succeed’ in the traditional fashion and to share the learning outcomes of all projects funded
3. To increase resilience, efficiencies and collaboration through the development of strong archive service networks
4. To help archives build fundraising skills and confidence through the application process.
5. To manage the fund in an objective and transparent manner.

Outcomes
1. Innovative, creative approaches will be piloted and tested.
2. The learning outcomes of pilot projects will be made freely accessible to the entire archive sector.
3. New networks will be created where they are most needed and beneficial to the sector.
4. Existing networks will be strengthened, developing robust and sustainable bodies capable of delivering shared interest projects.
5. Archivists and sector professionals will have the confidence to advocate for innovative projects and secure new funding to further support such projects.

How much funding is available via the Innovate & Collaborate programme?

In year one £80,000 is available, which will be split between the two funds:

- £60,000 is available via the Networks for Change Fund
- £20,000 is available via the Archive Testbed fund

Since both of the streams are rolling programmes, this funding will be allocated throughout the year evenly:

- Networks for Change will fund 4 grants at a maximum value of £15,000 each
- Archive Testbed Fund will fund 4 grants at a maximum value of £5,000

Who is administering the fund?

The Collaborate and Innovate funding programme will be administered by Beth Astridge and Lucy Davis, both of whom currently administer the Archives Revealed funding programme. Our contact email address is: candi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

How is the Collaborate and Innovate different from Archives Revealed?

The Archives Revealed programme is a partnership programme with the Pilgrim Trust with funding contributed from other trusts and foundations, including the Wolfson Foundation. Archives Revealed consists of two funding schemes focused on opening up collections and making them more accessible – Cataloguing Grants and Scoping Grants.

The Collaborate and Innovate programme is currently funded exclusively by The National Archives. The focus of Collaborate and Innovate is in encouraging a collaborative, sustainable and innovative archive sector that can utilise existing sector skills to embrace challenges, and work together to achieve positive change by developing creative and innovative ideas and solutions.

There is a key difference in geographical coverage between these funds as Archives Revealed covers archives across the UK, whereas Collaborate and Innovate can only fund archives based in England, reflecting The National Archives’ remit.

Can I apply to Archives Revealed programmes or the Archives Testbed fund if I have received funding from Networks for Change? (or vice versa)

Yes – you can apply to the Archives Revealed programme if you have made a successful or unsuccessful application to the Collaborate and Innovate programme.
If you are part of a network that has made an application to the Networks for Change Fund, and your archive service also wishes to make an application to the Archive Testbed Fund, this is also permissible.

If you are in receipt of an Archive Testbed Grant and your organisation is part of network that would like to apply to Networks for Change Fund, which is fine too.

**Can I apply to the Collaborate and Innovate funds again if my first application is not successful?**

Yes - you can apply to the Collaborate and Innovate fund again if you are unsuccessful the first time. You must have a feedback call with the Sector Grants and Development team if you wish to do so. If your application is not successful on the second attempt, we do not advise that you apply to the scheme again for the same project.

**Can I get feedback on my Innovate and Collaborate application?**

Yes – we will provide every applicant, whether successful or unsuccessful to the fund, with application feedback. Feedback will usually be delivered during a pre-arranged telephone call.

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**About the Archive Testbed Fund**

**What is the Archives Testbed Fund?**

The Archives Testbed scheme is one of two funds within The National Archives’ Collaborate and Innovate funding programme.

The Archive Testbed funding scheme provides grants of up to £5,000 for archives who would like to test, explore, or evolve a new idea that has the potential to lead to positive change or improvement to how we keep, preserve, promote and enable access to archives.

The aim of the scheme is to encourage services to trial new approaches, giving applicants room to experiment even if the initiative might ultimately fail. The results and learning outcomes of our support will be shared with the wider sector.

**How much money is available for applicants?**

The Archive Testbed Fund will award grants of up to £5,000. We are currently a modest fund and should be able to fund 4 to 6 projects each year. We hope to increase the funding available for the scheme to enable more projects to be supported.

**What sort of ideas does the Archive Testbed funding programme support?**

The Archives Testbed Fund supports innovation and the development and testing of ideas that could lead to change for the individual archive and/or the sector more widely. We encourage archives to formulate ideas based on their own skills and
experience, and indicate which theme in the Archives Unlocked Action Plan the idea helps to deliver – digital capacity, resilience or impact.

For example:

- Archives may have identified a problem in some aspect of their service that they have an idea about how to solve
- Archives may want to investigate a different method for a common process to see if it would be more efficient
- Archives may have discovered a potential new service that needs further exploration to determine if it can be realistically delivered

Any of the above could be funded through the Archive Testbed funding programme. We encourage archives to be creative and imaginative to identify an idea they wish to develop. The idea could be simple or radical – but it should have the potential to bring about positive change in the archive organisation and beyond.

Please see the Archive Testbed Fund page on the Collaborate and Innovate website for further advice and tips for identifying and streamlining ideas for projects.

**What outcomes are expected for funded projects?**

The outcomes for a funded project will be unique to that project depending on what the archive service has applied for. It may be that the result of the project is not as predicted in the application, and this is still a justifiable result which will have a valuable learning outcome.

Our aim for the scheme is that archive services will be able to develop and test ideas, produce a learning outcome, and share this with the sector, which may then lead to the development of new idea and future projects. This process is illustrated in the following diagram:
What if the funded idea does not work?

The National Archives embraces experimentation and believes that failure can be a pathway to success. The development of new and innovative ideas are often interrupted by setbacks, but failure is a learning experience that enables increases in knowledge and develops resilience to continue to drive towards improvement.

We do not expect that all funded ideas will deliver a positive result, since we are aware that a negative result can be useful. We also do not expect that all funded ideas will result in a clear output. However, we do expect that a learning outcome will result from the activity whether the result is positive or negative, or when there is no tangible output. Archives will describe this learning outcome as part of the reporting process for the Archives Testbed Fund.

If within a few weeks of starting to test the funded idea the archive realises their idea will not work, then we encourage archives to get in touch with us to determine how to proceed. We would still expect a learning outcome report to be delivered to record the idea and result. It may also be that we can suggest a new approach if this seems appropriate.

Who can apply

Am I eligible to apply to the Archive Testbed?

Applications to the Archive Testbed Fund can come from all parts of the archive sector including local authority, university, charity, and business archives, as long as the following eligibility criteria can be met:

- The organisation must hold and manage an archive collection
- The organisation must make their collections accessible to people outside their organisation
- The organisation must have access to professional archive expertise
- The organisation must have the potential to be an accredited archive service, if they are not already accredited
- The parent organisation must submit a letter of support for the project and grant application
- The organisation must provide 10% of the required funding in cash or in-kind support
- This fund can only make awards to organisations based in England. Archive services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not currently eligible for the Collaborate and Innovate programme

I am a not-for-profit organisation but I am not a registered charity – can I still apply to the Archives Testbed fund?

We advise applicants who are a not-for-profit but are not a registered charity to talk to us in advance of their application to discuss the eligibility of their organisational governance and operating structure.
What projects and ideas are not eligible for funding?

We would like organisations to be as creative and imaginative as possible to identify a potential idea or project that may eligible for funding and therefore we do not impose many rules on eligibility. However there are a small number of areas that we are unable to fund with this scheme:

- Projects to undertake cataloguing or a scoping assessment (please see the Archives Revealed programme for funding this type of project)
- Activities that are considered to be part of the core work of the archive service
- Prospect analysis work as part of a fundraising strategy

We suggest that applicants contact the Sector Grants and Development team in advance to discuss their idea and project if they are at all concerned about eligibility. Our contact email address is: candi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

The application and assessment process:

When is the scheme open to applications?

The Archives Testbed scheme is an open scheme with a rolling deadline. This means applications can be submitted at any time.

Is there a deadline for applications?

No, the scheme is always open and therefore applications can be submitted at any time. The panel meet to assess applications 4 times per year and therefore there will be four cut off dates when applications will be sent to the panel for assessment. These dates are advertised on our website.

How do I make an application?

All applications are made using our online application software. Each applicant should create an account using our application portal and can then apply for any of our funding programmes using the portal.

Where can I find out more information about making an application?

We provide full guidance on how to make an application on our website. Please see: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/archive-testbed-fund/how-to-apply

Can I speak to anyone about my application?

We would be happy to talk to you about your project and your application. Please contact us at candi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.
I am not sure that the project I have in mind will be suitable for funding as part of the Archive Testbed scheme. How can I find out more?

Please refer to the guidance made available at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/help-with-your-application](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/help-with-your-application) and contact the programme administrators to discuss your idea.

I have a great idea but my parent organisation is not keen on me making an application. What can I do?

This can happen, especially when innovative/creative ideas are being considered. We will need your parent organisation to commit to supporting your project. If you need support with advocacy, please take a look at our web pages where you can find an e-learning module which addresses [building a case for support](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/help-with-your-application).

In addition please contact our [Regions and Networks Team](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) who may be able to help.

I think I have a good idea that could be developed, but I need some help to define it better and think things through before making an application? Can you help with this?

Please take some time to read the inspiration guide which has been developed to support applicants and can be found here: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/help-with-your-application](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/help-with-your-application).

We then encourage you to consider the idea with your colleagues and work with them to define the idea.

Once you have done these two things please contact Beth Astridge or Lucy Davis at [candi@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:candi@nationalarchives.gov.uk) to discuss your idea.

**Assessment**

How will my application be assessed?

The assessment for the Archive Testbed Fund is focused on establishing whether the idea described by the applicant is innovative, has a robust testing/exploration proposal, and whether the change it will enable has a significant impact on the archive service and the wider sector.

Assessing innovation can be challenging as the concept of ‘innovation’ tends to have a broad definition. For this programme, the Archives Testbed fund defines innovation as:
Reflecting new ideas, fresh perspectives, or new/improved ways of approaching a problem that will lead to positive change and a significant impact on the sector, resulting in archives being better managed, access and used.

A pool of panel members from relevant departments across The National Archives has been recruited. In addition, a guest panel member will be invited to assess each round, based on the type and subject matter of the applications received. This approach will ensure we have sufficient expertise to enable appropriate and successful assessment in each round, especially if a specialist topic is involved. Based on the type and range of applications we receive, we will widen our assessment panel accordingly.

Applications will be assessed based on the archives responses to the questions in the application form. Each application will be scored against an objective criteria by at least 4 panel members.

The panel will be chaired by the programme administrators Lucy Davis and Beth Astridge. The administrators are not permitted to contribute to assessment discussions, other than to facilitate the process, or to score and assess applications.

A conflict of interest register will be completed before each round of assessments, in the case of a conflict of interest that panel member will be asked not score the application, and the other panel members scores will be averaged to compensate. In the event of a conflict of interest panel members will be asked to absent themselves from the relevant discussion.

When will I hear about the outcome of my application?

We will endeavour to let you know the outcome of the panel meeting as soon as possible. You will be advised of the outcome of your application via email, and in the majority of cases this will be within 48 hours of the panel meeting.

Monitoring and Evaluation

What sort of monitoring and evaluation will Archive Testbed grantees be asked to undertake?

Successful applicants will be asked to complete short reporting and monitoring forms demonstrating the outcomes and learning experiences gained from undertaking the funded project. You will be encouraged to share your learning outcomes and experiences with the rest of the archive sector. The National Archives may organise
events and activities to promote the programme and celebrate its impact, and you may be invited to participate in those events and activities. The National Archives may also publish information about projects undertaken with Archive Testbed funding, to share the learning outcomes with the rest of the archive sector.