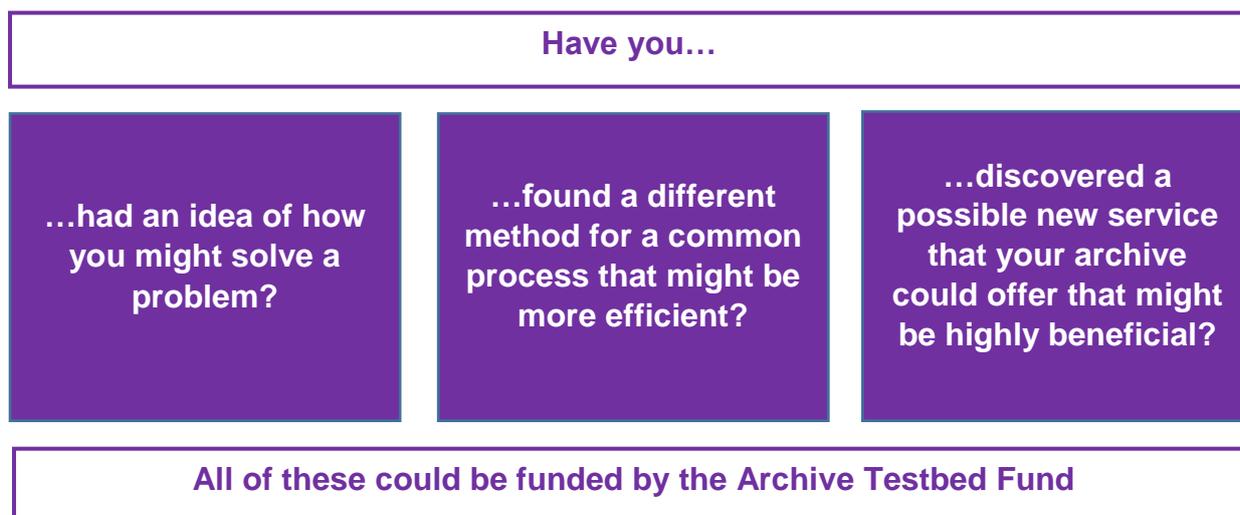# Collaborate and Innovate
Archive Testbed Fund Inspiration Guide

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.

This guide is a resource to help stimulate your creativity to inspire ideas that will could form part of an application to the Archive Testbed fund.

What sort of ideas could be funded by the Archive Testbed Fund?

Archive Testbed Funding supports innovation and the development and testing of ideas. Archives should be creative and imaginative to identify an idea you wish to develop. The idea could be simple or radical, but it should have the potential to lead to positive change for an individual archive service and/or the sector more widely.

Have you…

…had an idea of how you might solve a problem?	…found a different method for a common process that might be more efficient?	…discovered a possible new service that your archive could offer that might be highly beneficial?

All of these could be funded by the Archive Testbed Fund

Any of the above could lead to an idea that could be funded by the Archive Testbed Fund to help you test if the idea works, trial whether it can be realistically delivered, or explore its impact more widely.

Who should come up with an idea?

Applications should come from the archive sector – this means from organisations that hold and manage an archive collection. The archive sector employs a wide range of skilled and experienced people with creativity and talent who formulate ideas for projects, systems, processes and methods that potentially have a transformative impact on their organisations and the work of the archive sector in the UK.

The Archive Testbed Fund enables these ideas to be developed and explored further to determine if they might be successfully delivered without opening the archive service to challenging financial risk if the idea does not work.

We actively encourage archive services to collaborate with other organisations in developing ideas. Museums, galleries, libraries and arts organisations often do things differently, and there is great potential to learn from others in collaborative projects and test their applicability in the archive sector.

Selecting an Archives Unlocked theme

Archives Unlocked, The National Archives' vision for the archive sector, expresses the ambition that archives can inspire trust, enrich society, and cultivate openness and accessibility. Three themes are identified to help achieve these ambitions for the sector.

Applicants should indicate which theme in Archives Unlocked is most relevant to their idea. The following information may help to stimulate thinking and inspire ideas as to what your archive may wish to explore. Its purpose is to inspire creativity by asking a series of questions relating to each theme. However, you are not limited to these areas and your ideas can be wide-ranging, unique and imaginative. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss your idea and the relevant theme further.

Digital	Resilience	Impact
Growing digital capacity, preserving digital records, increasing discoverability of digital archives	Building resilience, being open to new skills, developing a more diverse workforce, increasing income generation, developing innovative service models	Demonstrating impact, expanding audiences, identifying new ways to use data and evidence, discovering wider impacts of archives, working with IT, commercial and knowledge sectors

Digital

Digital Capacity

- Is there an existing model or approach for improving digital capacity that you would like to test for your archive service?
- Do you have an idea for a new potential model for improving digital capacity that you would like to explore?

Standards and good practice

- Are there partnerships outside the sector that could be explored? Could your project explore and evolve a relationship with an IT company or a digital leader to benefit your organisation or the wider sector?
- Can you test an approach for better management of hybrid archives that will be relevant for Archive Service Accreditation?

Born digital records

- Can you think of a better way for born-digital records to be transferred to archives?
- Do you have any thoughts for how cultural property protections have relevance to born-digital records?

Digitisation

- Do you have an innovative digitisation project in mind?
- Can you approach digitisation in a new way?
- Is there a different method to follow or system/software to be tested?
- Can open-source software be more utilised in digitisation projects?

Digital preservation

- Can you trial a way of doing digital preservation better?
- Is there a collaborative way to approach digital preservation that you would like to explore? Regionally? Locally? Within an archive service network?
- Do you have an idea for how to improve the infrastructure needed for preserving born-digital records?
- Can you improve an existing digital preservation system?
- Can you pilot a new approach to deploying digital preservation more widely?

Digital access

- Do you have a potential solution to making archive catalogues easier to understand and navigate?
- Is there a way to make archives more findable in a catalogue?
- Do you have an interesting new way to catalogue digital records that you would like to test?

- Have you developed an approach to cataloguing born-digital material that you would like to trial more widely?
- Is there a potential new way to approach web archiving that you would like to test?
- Have you come up with a method for archiving social media content that you can pilot or test?
- Can you find a way to catalogue or secure access to heritage datasets that would be useful to the archive and records sectors?

Digital engagement

- Have you considered a new way of approaching engagement with collections after a digitisation project?
- Are there different ways you could use websites to engage audiences?
- Is there a new digital approach to test that will help with audience engagement?
- Is there an example of engagement from the wider museums and library sector that could be worth testing in an archive environment?
- Do you have a new way of approaching digital storytelling that could have a positive impact on engagement with your collections?

Digital platforms and applications

- Can an open digital platform be used for archive collections – in cataloguing, preservation or engagement?
- Can digital apps be developed and tested for use by your archive service?
- Have you found a use for virtual reality technology to aid an element of your archive service?
- Can artificial intelligence be utilised to improve how your archives are accessed, managed or preserved?

Resilience

Governance

- Do you have a new governance model that you would like to explore more fully?
- Can you trial a new leadership training approach that would ensure a strong and resilient leadership structure in your organisation?
- Do you have an idea for a new organisational structure or department structure that needs to be tested or evolved to test for viability?

Strategic Planning

- Do you have a new approach to defining your vision and mission that will improve your strategic direction?

- Have you identified a potential business planning model that might work well for the archive service?
- Have you seen a business development idea in another sector that you would like to test in the archive sector?
- Have you seen a competitor undertaking a project that you would like to test for viability in your organisation?
- Can you determine a new approach to evaluating your strengths and identifying commercial opportunities that you would like to test for effectiveness?
- Do you want to apply entrepreneurial thinking to a problem you need to solve in your archive service?

Funding and Finance

- Have you considered a new potential commercial opportunity that you would like to pilot in your archive service?
- Have you seen a new income generation idea elsewhere that you would like to test?
- Can you test a new approach to financial sustainability in one of your services?

Staffing

- Do you want to test a new way of involving and engaging staff in the development of the archive service?
- Can you develop a new training programme for staff to lead to a stronger more resilient workforce?
- Do you have a new approach to volunteer management or support that could be tested or piloted in your archive service?

Relevance

- Have you developed an idea for how to express the relevance of your service to your community or to your organisation?
- Can you design a new approach to advocating for your archive service within your organisation to strengthen your visibility and the wider understanding of your role in the strategic plan?
- Do you have an interesting idea that helps your archive service to explore the value of archives and your archive service?

Stakeholders and Partnerships

- Can you develop a system that enables better or deeper relationships with existing stakeholders leading to increased engagement with your archive service and opening up potential opportunities?
- Have you seen a useful partnership model that you would like to develop in your archive service?
- Can you expand existing partnerships to develop strategically important areas of your archive service?

Impact

Audience Development and Users

- Would you like to explore your audiences more deeply, carry out an audience segmentation exercise, and work on a new approach to audience development for your archive service?
- Is there a specific audience group that you would like to increase engagement with (this could be a new audience you have not engaged with before)?
- Would you like to deepen your relationship with an existing user group and explore ways of doing this?
- Have you identified good practice in audience development and user engagement in a museum or library context and would like to pilot this technique for your archive service?

Outreach

- Is there a new event you would like to try?
- Is there an approach to developing an exhibition using archives that you would like to test?
- Have you trialled a way of producing accessible exhibitions that you would like to expand on and roll out to other collections?

Measuring impact

- Is there a different way of collecting impact data that you would like to trial?
- Have you encountered a useful way of measuring impact that you would like to implement in your archive service?
- Would you like to explore impact measurement for the first time and need to test your proposed approach?

Well-being

- Do you have a project that could have an impact on user's well-being and mental health?
- Do you have an interesting approach to measuring the well-being of your users?