

Funding



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Preparing funding applications for preservation and conservation projects

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Making the most of funding opportunities for preservation and conservation projects

Introduction

Competition for funding has never been greater with the result that funders are looking for excellence in projects and well-crafted, compelling applications. The guidance offered here is designed to help you make the most of the opportunities available to support the preservation and conservation of library and archive collections and to develop excellent applications for great projects. This booklet focuses on applications for funding from grant giving bodies (such as trusts and foundations) with particular emphasis on the information you need to include to support the preservation and conservation elements of an application.

Terminology

Preservation

All managerial, technical and financial considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of collection materials to ensure their continued availability¹.

Conservation

Interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of the item to ensure its continued availability².

¹ Eden, P. et al., A model for assessing preservation needs in libraries, London: British Library Research and Innovation Centre, 1998

² PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management, London: British Standards Institution, 2009

Getting started

Preparation

There is a great deal that can be done at the very beginning, before a project is even scoped, to better understand funding opportunities. Think creatively about the full range of funders who might be interested in supporting your project – your parent organisation, corporate bodies, individual benefactors, as well as self-generated income and sponsorship. When researching grant-giving organisations, spend time looking at the aims of different funding bodies to understand what they want to achieve and the type of projects they support. Talk with others who have made successful applications – their experience is often invaluable and can go a long way towards helping to define a project.

Before embarking on the application itself, think carefully about what is driving your project. For example, is it a project to preserve fragile materials, to develop skills and improve facilities, to enhance access through cataloguing, or to attract new users? It is often possible to align multiple objectives with a funder's criteria.

Be creative and don't miss an opportunity! Preservation and conservation activities can be funded as part of larger projects or in collaboration with other activities. For example, improved standards of storage or upgrades to environmental management can be included in large scale building projects. Additional funding for conservation treatments can usually be included in digitisation projects – preparing library and archive material for image capture is part of the digitisation process, and is therefore a legitimate expense. Cataloguing projects can include a preservation component, such as boxing or re-housing in protective enclosures, as can collection moves.

Scoping the project

Once you are clear about what you are hoping to achieve and have identified an appropriate funder you can begin to scope your project in more detail. Start by defining the aims of your project very clearly and double-check that what you are hoping to achieve aligns with the awarding criteria of the funder. Look carefully at the language used by different funding bodies – it can vary. For example, note how capital and revenue funding are defined and be sure you understand what the

funder will, or will not, support. Getting this right is important – it will prevent your application falling at the first hurdle.

Once the aims are defined, the next logical step is to set out exactly what you expect to deliver – this will provide the overall scope of the project. Be clear about outputs (the project deliverables), outcomes (the changes that result from the outputs) and impact (the difference the project will make). The significant outcomes could be educational, enhancing access to the collection, or engaging the public in new and interesting ways. You should also think about how much money you need to apply for (you need not apply for all the funding from a single source), whether there is a particular timescale for the project (for example, an anniversary), and other broad resourcing issues such as, who is going to do the work?

Completing the application

Having defined the key elements, you need to set them out in a comprehensive, succinct description of the project, sometimes called the case for support. Make your case compelling – hook the reader, but be sure to stay within the set criteria. Use the best possible evidence to support your case – evocative stories illustrating how the collection is used and by whom, credible statistics and images can all be used effectively.

Most applications for preservation and conservation grants will also require very specific types of information. For example, information about current preservation practice within your organisation, how preservation/conservation priorities have been identified or the details of proposed conservation treatments.

Setting out current preservation practice

Organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) require a review of existing preservation practice or details of the standards to which your organisation works, as benchmarked against best practice. This information will help expert advisors evaluate the stewardship within your organisation in terms of existing practice and approach. Do not worry

unduly if your organisation does not meet best practice. By including an assessment of current practice against best practice, you will show your funder that you understand the issues involved and are taking steps to address any weaknesses. There are many good resources available to help you assess preservation standards:

*Benchmarks in collection care 2.0*³

Preservation Assessment Survey (Preservation Advisory Centre)⁴

PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management
(British Standards Institution)

PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections (British Standards Institution)

PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials
(British Standards Institution)

Providing evidence of preservation and conservation priorities

Applicants will usually be expected to set out why funding is required and to explain how preservation and conservation priorities have been established. Preservation and conservation priorities can be hard to define, but a good formula will include evidence in three key areas – significance, use and condition.

Significance

Making a convincing case for the importance of the collection or item requires careful consideration, since it will be assessed against competing collections/items. It is sometimes useful to provide expert opinion from researchers, who are often well placed to explain the significance of the collections or items. How rare is the collection/item? What is its importance within a larger national or international context? How does this collection/item compare with other collections/items? A significance assessment will take into account 'the value (e.g. social, cultural, intellectual, financial and rarity) of an item or group of items' as well as well as 'the relevance of an item or group of items to the scope of the collection'⁵. For

³ www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/benchmarks-for-collections-care

⁴ www.bl.uk/blpac/paslib.html

⁵ PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management, London: British Standards Institution, 2009

more information, refer to 'Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections'⁶.

Use

How often is the collection or item used? Is it expected to have greater use in the future? If so, by whom? It may be that use is quite low, so consider how your project can promote access. Be specific and honest as experts review the applications and will easily spot unrealistic claims.

Condition

An assessment of the condition of a collection may form a very large part of a grant application. The method of establishing the condition will depend on the scale of the project, but it will normally involve some form of survey to collect detailed information on the physical condition of the collection. For a large collection, a statistically valid sample may be the most effective means of gathering detailed information. For a smaller collection, an item-by-item condition survey may be feasible, providing detailed information for each and every item in the collection. Condition surveys can be used to help direct resources and determine individual conservation treatments.

In some cases it may be possible to use a standardised tool such as the Preservation Assessment Survey to provide combined evidence of significance, use and condition as well as information on the organisation's current preservation practice⁷. Bear in mind that any standardised tool will use pre-set categories and scoring systems to evaluate the collections.

Providing information about conservation treatments

If the focus of your application is on the conservation of individual items, you will

⁶ *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Collections Council of Australia, 2009 www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/pubs/significance20.pdf

⁷ The Preservation Assessment Survey is a sample-based tool which provides an overview of preservation needs and priorities. It looks at the preservation measures in place alongside demand, usability, and significance. It assesses damage to items because this influences how items can be used as well as giving an indication of any remedial conservation required, www.bl.uk/blpac/paslib.html

need to consult a conservator to jointly determine appropriate treatment proposals. The conservator will most likely charge a fee for time spent providing estimates and agreeing treatment proposals, but it is usually money well spent, since the project budget will be carefully scrutinised and must be accurately costed.

The advice given by a conservator is likely to focus on two aspects:

- The condition of an item and how it can be improved
- The general environment in which it is kept.

If you are commissioning a report from a conservator you can expect:

- An examination report setting out the physical character of the item/s and the nature and extent of damage, usually including images.
- A set of recommendations designed to prolong the useful life of the item/s.
- Detailed proposals for any remedial treatments and repairs necessary to stabilise the condition of the item/s (including details of the materials to be used)⁸.
- Information on the personnel undertaking the work and their credentials.

Conservators are often able to provide a range of treatment options or preservation strategies which may be determined by factors such as intended use (both the type of use and the level of demand) or available funds. Bear in mind that the different options presented may also depend on the conservator's skill and experience. Talking to an accredited conservator early in the application process will ensure that you have a good understanding of what is possible and an indication of the costs involved⁹.

If the work is to be done outside your organisation you should find out about the conservation studio's security arrangements and insurance cover (for collection items and professional liability). Extra costs may be incurred if the valuation of the collection item/s exceeds the cover provided by the conservator's insurance. You should also find out what cover is provided by your own organisation's insurance

⁸ A **treatment proposal** is a report which details the examination of the item/s *and* offers suggested treatment options including the associated costs.

⁹ A conservator accredited by Icon, the Institute of Conservation or the Archives and Records Association. For more information refer to Guidelines for choosing and working with a conservator at www.conservationregister.com/picon-workingwithaconservator.asp

while items are in transit and on the conservator's premises. Provide details of arrangements for collecting and delivering the completed work.

Project management

How will the project be managed? Funders need to be assured that project leaders and management expertise are in place, particularly for large-scale projects. If this expertise is not available within your organisation, think about bringing in outside help. Check your funder's criteria to see whether this can be considered a legitimate cost of the project.

Individual funding organisations sometimes provide specific guidance about the level of project management information they want to see as part of an application. You may not need to include all the information below in the application itself, but as part of your own project plan, you should:

- Identify the project leader.
- List the project deliverables and their benefits.
- Establish realistic timetables. For large projects it is essential to establish milestones against which to measure progress.
- Identify key project team members and their responsibilities.
- Prepare project briefs for the conservator and other specialised staff, whether you are using in-house staff or contracting external consultants. The brief should include a description of the whole project and a description of the work required by that specialist. For example, the conservation element should describe the level of treatment appropriate for the collection/s or item/s, based on significance, use and condition.
- Carry out a risk assessment of the project.
- Describe how you will monitor and evaluate the project.
- Draw up a budget for completion of the work.
- Describe how you will communicate project achievements.

Conclusion

Many libraries and archives, whether large or small, will be seeking additional funds for preservation and conservation projects. In order to stand the best possible chance of success, you should:

- Spend time making the best application possible, and ensure your project fits with the criteria set out by the funding body. A clear grasp of the precise remit of individual funding schemes is crucial to developing successful bids.
- Ensure the language you use matches that of the funder.
- Ensure that the project has well-defined aims and objectives and the significance of the collection/s or item/s is made clear.
- Provide good supporting evidence. Be honest – it will be obvious if costs are unrealistic or timetables are not achievable.
- Consult with other professionals who have experience which may be of help to you when preparing your application, for example, the funder, other impartial colleagues or heritage organisations.
- Take the time to develop a relationship with the funding body (if they are open to the idea). They have a mutual interest in making the most of their investment and are often willing to offer advice, or provide a mentor to help you through the process.

If your project is unsuccessful, find out why and use the information to help you improve future applications. Don't be too disheartened, other projects may just have been stronger in that application round and yours may be successful next time.

If you are successful, remember to thank your funder for their support and keep them updated regularly with your project's progress. Establishing a good track record with a funder can bring substantial long term benefits.

Online resources and additional reading

Directory of Social Change publish a wide range of funding publications and host a subscription-based service called Trust funding. Hard copy publications are often available in local libraries.

Directory of Social Change funding websites

www.dsc.org.uk/FundingWebsites

Directory of Social Change fundraising sources

www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/Fundraisingsources

Directory of Social Change fundraising techniques

www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/Fundraisingtechniques

Heritage Alliance funding directory

www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/fundingdirectory/main/fundinghome.php

Heritage Lottery Fund guidance notes

www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/furtherresources/Pages/furtherresources.aspx

Institute of fundraising (professional body for UK fundraising)

www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/home/

Preservation guidance booklets

The following booklets can be downloaded free of charge at www.bl.uk/blpac/publicationsleaf.html.

Free printed copies are also available.

Basic preservation for library and archive collections

Building blocks for a preservation policy

Cleaning books and documents

Damaged books

Guidance for exhibiting library and archive materials

Library and archive storage furniture

Making the most of funding opportunities for preservation and conservation projects

Managing pests in paper-based collections

Managing the digitisation of library and archive materials

Managing the library and archive environment

Managing the preservation of library and archive collections in historic buildings

Packing and moving library and archive collections

Photocopying of library and archive materials

Prevention and treatment of mould outbreaks in collections

Preservation of photographic material

Understanding and caring for bookbindings

Using library and archive materials

The Preservation Advisory Centre promotes the benefit of good preservation practice and provides support in the form of information services, training and preservation management tools.

www.bl.uk/blpac

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