Collections Consultant

Role: We are seeking a collections consultant to support our 'Streamlining the collection to create a sustainable museum for our community' project at Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life
Location: Working from home and at Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, Devon
Fee: £6,000 (including all associated costs) plus VAT
Status: Freelance Consultant
Reporting to: Pippa Griffith, Museum Director
Period of contract: Fixed term, starting February 2027 and to be completed by 30/07/2027

Introduction

This brief sets out the requirements for a collections consultant to support a funded project 'Streamlining the collection to create a sustainable museum for our community' for Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life. The consultant will be required to work closely with Museum staff and volunteers, as well as other consultancies commissioned as part of the project. The consultant will report to the Director.

1. Background

1.1 Tiverton Museum is a vibrant, award-winning and much-loved museum that provides extensive displays on the history of Mid Devon; a lively events programme, including temporary exhibitions, guided walks, talks, holiday craft activities and lots more. The museum contributes to the local economy as a key visitor attraction and works closely with its local community. We offer a range of activities for schools and families and are an important resource in an area where poverty and geographical factors increase the risk of isolation. The museum makes it possible for teachers and parents to access good quality learning opportunities outside the classroom. We also provide a successful reminiscence service for older people in care and residential homes, and a monthly memory group based at the museum. The museum runs the town's Tourist Information Service.

1.2 Tiverton Museum's project 'Streamlining the collection to create a sustainable museum for our community' is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

With this project, we will undertake a review of our collection with a strong element of community engagement to ensure we have a relevant, dynamic collection that we can use to celebrate a sense of local identity and place. It is particularly important to review the geographical scope of the collection (currently matching Mid Devon District Council) given the likely move to a Devon unitary authority. Creating a streamlined collection will enable our limited resources to adequately care for a collection that is meaningful for our local community.

This project is part of our longer-term plans to secure a sustainable future for the collection. These plans include capital development work, and redisplaying and re-interpretating our galleries. We want to undertake this review before that work starts so we don't waste resources packing, storing and moving items we won't keep in the long term. The project will take place over 15 months and involves the following elements:

- Employing a fixed term Collections Officer supported by Collections and Community Engagement Consultants (providing professional knowledge and expertise) to deliver the project.
- Recruit a team of supporting volunteers.
- Invest in learning and skills to ensure volunteers and staff receive training to gain relevant heritage management skills.
- Review the geographical collecting area involving community consultation ensuring the museum provides and sustains a spirit of place for our community.
- Work with two subject specialist consultants to undertake significance reviews of
    - Farming collection
    - Costume and textile collection

  This will enable us to understand those large sections of our collections better, and will involve identified community groups as consultees within the review.
- Create a review methodology following consultation ensuring the collection is aligned with the museum's overall mission and vision, and that we better understand how the collection is relevant to our local community. To assess information on provenance, significance and usage.
- Engage the public through facilitated workshops, social media and a temporary exhibition (co-curated by the community). The workshops will be about the collections, what we hold, what we should retain and what we should collect in the future. To engage with underrepresented groups and people in the collections, and should include young people (which may lead to the creation of a young trustee position on the board). This work will expand public access to the collections.
- Undertake a review of the collection.
- Undertake rationalisation following the reviews and consultation.

This project will leave an ongoing legacy of 3 years beyond the project end, including more collection volunteers, better understanding of our collection and the needs / interests of our community with whom we will maintain closer connections. All of this will feed into board decisions about the museum.

2 Objective

An experienced consultant is required to support the Collections Officer in delivering the first six months of the project. This will involve advising, shaping and helping to deliver the following pieces of work:

- Work with museum colleagues and the Community Engagement Consultant to agree the project timetable.
- Working with the Director to advise on familiarisation of Collections Officer with the museum's collection, undertaking collection reviews and rationalisation (including training and peer visits).
- Establishing a communication strategy alongside the Collections Officer, the Community Engagement Consultant and the Director.
- Review of geographical collecting area (with stakeholder and community engagement and consultation), working with the Collections Officer, the Community Engagement Consultant and the Director.
- Supporting the Collections Officer to recruit volunteers, and source external training for them to assist the project.

- Supporting the Collections Officer (alongside the Director) to establish a methodology for the collections review meeting sector standards and ethics.
- Support the Collections Officer to prepare a temporary exhibition (co-curated by consultees) to communicate the project to museum visitors.
- Advise on the delivery of the significance review of the farming collection (to be undertaken by a specialist consultant), which will include community and stakeholder consultation.
- Advise on the delivery of the significance review of the costume and textile collection (to be undertaken by a specialist consultant), which will include community and stakeholder consultation.
- Support the Collections Officer in starting to identify and review items for potential rationalisation (including areas of duplication).
- Support the Collections Officer in starting to undertake rationalisation from the collection subject to the outcomes of the reviews.
- Provide information required by the project Evaluation Consultant.
- The end of project report detailing the work that has taken place must include funder logos as required.

All documents produced will be the intellectual property of Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life.

3. Legal requirements

- The appointed consultant / company will be responsible for their own income tax and National Insurance contributions.
- If the work involves accessing personal data, the appointed consultant needs to be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office.

4. Selection Criteria

We require demonstrable understanding and experience in:

- Collections management, including collections review and rationalisation
- Working with small independent museums or heritage sites
- Previous funded projects
- Team working with museum staff and other consultants
- Strong communication and report writing skills

5. Timetable

- Closing date for applications is 9:00am Monday 21st December
- The candidates will be shortlisted by the Director and a Trustee.
- Interviews will take place on Wednesday 20th January via Zoom.
- The work should begin in February 2027
- The work will be complete and report should be presented to the museum by 30/07/2027

6. Budget

The fee is £6,000 plus VAT (£7200 if VAT applicable). The tender costs should include travel and all other costs associated with the work.

Suggested payment will be 25% upon appointment, 50% for the first draft and 25% on receiving the final report and presentation

7. Proposal

Your proposal to undertake this project should include:

- Credentials for the consultant/company and all those who will have input into the work.
- Examples of similar projects undertaken recently.
- A methodology of how you propose to meet the requirements of the brief.
- A programme indicating how you would deliver the project and key dates for tasks.
- A costing breakdown.
- Details of two referees for whom you have done similar work (these would be contacted after interview).

Please email applications to Pippa Griffith, Director at director@tivertonmuseum.org.uk. For an informal chat please contact Pippa on 01884 256295.