

# Brief: SSN Consortium Coordinator

# Background

Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs) have existed in one form or another for many years in support of developing the professional knowledge and understanding of the sector and wider.[[1]](#footnote-1) In 2003, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council recognised the importance of SSNs and set up a programme of support and funding. This continued in one form or another with Arts Council England delivering ad hoc discreet funding strands for SSNs.

There are approximately 40 SSNs in the UK across a wealth of different collections areas for example the Musical Instruments Resource Network, the Rural Museums Network, and Sporting Heritage.[[2]](#footnote-2) All SSNs operate as skills sharing networks, subject specialist networks, and sector support networks. The majority of SSNs have a UK wide remit. SSNs differ from each other in the ways they operate and the services they provide. However, as a group, SSNs have core aims which unite them: 1) to advocate for specialist collections; 2) to share and exchange information and knowledge about specialist collections; and 3) to ensure excellence in care and access of collections.

The SSN Consortium is an unconstituted joining of SSN leads within the UK. It is managed voluntarily by the SSNs themselves and funded through the SSNs own funding. The aims to support the development of subject specialism activity in the UK at a strategic level. Our underlying outputs include collections removed from risk, greater access for new and different audiences to heritage, and a wider understanding of specialist knowledge and where it exists. Our membership is drawn from the SSNs across the UK, and we work to support new and emerging networks as much as those now established. Our three aims are:

**ADVOCACY:** To advocate for the role and centrality of SSNs across all elements of SSN delivery including professional development, collections care and management, grassroots support, and in terms of our impact on wider agenda and policy areas, for example, education, health and wellbeing. We will provide a voice in strategic planning at high level policy and decision making to support those who are working more directly with collections and archives. We will work towards a clear strategy for SSNs and lever in support and funding which secures their long-term future, recognising the indispensable role they play in developing and supporting collections care, management and access.

**SHARING AND SUPPORT:** This purpose is two-fold. 1) To better understand each other and develop mechanisms for sharing information, objectives, and opportunities for sharing skills. To establish measurable benchmarks for the work of the SSNs and their impact; and 2) To ensure we are supporting all those working and volunteering or wishing to work or volunteer with collections from grassroots upwards through sharing information and expertise. Our purpose is to ensure that specialist advice and guidance is easy to access, relevant, and inclusive.

**EXPERTISE:** SSNs by their very nature draw together specialists and experts with extensive knowledge and understanding of discreet subject areas. A purpose of the SSN Consortium is to ensure that this expertise is recognised and supported wherever it exists; and that access to expertise is facilitated.

The SSN Consortium has been successful in securing funding from Art Fund to engage a consultant Project Coordinator to deliver a programme of activity in 2020.

# 2. The role and purpose of the brief

The role of the Project Coordinator will be to support the development of the SSN Consortium over the next year. It will be a crucial piece of activity which supports the Consortium to work together to create a clear strategy and long-term plan including opportunities for investment; and to increase awareness of the consortium across the sector and partners through our digital engagement and awareness raising.

The Project Coordinator will report to the SSN Consortium Executive Committee and will be managed day-to-day by Dr Justine Reilly, Director of Sporting Heritage. The SSN Consortium is not currently a constituted organisation, as such the responsibility for this work and contracting of the role will be led by Sporting Heritage on behalf of the SSN Consortium.

# 3. Scope of the work and outputs

**There are three key elements to this work:**

1. **To support the strategic direction of the SSN Consortium**

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating a strategic planning event in May / June 2020 and a follow-up network meeting in September/October 2020.

The Project Coordinator will facilitate the strategic planning event. We expect this event to engage 20 of the SSN representatives. There is an additional budget to support room hire / catering for this event dependent on need.

The main outcome will be the production of a practical, stream-lined strategic plan which includes direction on the governance and structure of the SSN Consortium itself, as well as the examination of:

Governance and Finance – what are the current SSN governance structures? What structures are available? How are SSNs funded? What are the opportunities to raise income for SSNs? What opportunities are there for economics of scale?

Digital networks – how can and do SSNs use their online profiles? Practical support to develop activity provided

Collections and subject specialist issues and opportunities – what are the key issues which need addressing and how do SSNs do this? What are the key opportunities and how can we take these?

The follow up networking event will allow for time to discuss the plan, consider its recommendations, and discuss opportunities for increased investment to deliver the outcomes.

1. **To deliver digital resources to support SSN creation and long-term sustainability**

There is a need to establish high-quality digital advice and guidance on our website which enables a) the new creation of an SSN; b) the development of an SSN; and c) the long-term resilience of an SSN. Some elements of the digital content will be delivered by a procured specialist or specialist by the SSN Executive Committee and will have an additional allocated budget.

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for liaising with the successful specialist (s) and ensuring the successful creation of the following content:

1. 3 “How to films” which cover the key questions asked when starting a network around the themes of governance, funding and finance, growing a network, advocacy, and research which will also form the start of a YouTube Channel which can be grown as the Consortium develops
2. 5 podcast case studies which draw together SSN leads to discuss specific subject specialist topics including at-risk collections; collections basics; ensuring relevant collecting; and where to find help and guidance which will also form the start of a SoundCloud channel which will grow as the Consortium develops

The Project Coordinator will also be responsible for collating a series of resources from across the SSNs and uploading to the website for easy access, and supporting the consortium to share with the sector as follows:

1. Downloadable model templates and guidance sheets including SSN constitutions; key policy frameworks and finance templates informed by those which are currently employed by SSNs. This will allow sharing of good practice and easy availability to these resources for new and emerging SSNs
2. The coordination and delivery of a Museum Hour twitter event

The results of the digital activity must be unique in their content and distinct from other advice and guidance provided by different organisations. It must also be embedded within our website at [www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk](http://www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk)

1. **To inform a range of opportunities the SSN Consortium might pursue to secure follow on funding in support of its work in the longer-term**

The SSN Consortium aims to ensure it is established as the over-arching network of support for specialist collections activity in the UK. To do this it needs to have sustained investment and capacity to coordinate and draw together the various SSNs across the UK, understand their needs, and implement activity to best support them. We would envisage the Project Coordinator would use the findings of the strategic planning event and networking activity, to inform access to future funding which may maintain the role into the future.

**The key outputs of this activity will be:**

* The delivery of a strategic planning event and follow-on networking event with the production of minutes
* The production of succinct strategic plan
* The oversight and successful delivery of a suite of digital resources
* The production of a succinct final report
* The delivery of a Museum Hour twitter event (@museumhour)
* Identification of suitable follow-on funders, and where appropriate, approaches made to these funders

It is expected that the successful candidate (s) will outline the time commitment available to deliver their intended methodology of approach to time and to budget.

# 4. Budget and timescale

The activity will begin **w/c 2nd March 2020** and be completed on **11th December 2020**

The budget available for this work is:

* **£8325.00**

The successful candidate(s) will be responsible for their own tax and national insurance contributions.

Invoicing will be to Sporting Heritage CIC on the completion of successful milestones as follows:

30% after completed workshop

30% after delivery of digital assets

* 40% on receipt of a satisfactory reporting on funding and successful completion of all project elements as outlined in the associated brief.

Professional indemnity insurance to the value of £100,000 should be held by the successful candidate(s).

There is a small budget available to support the successful candidate (s) travel connected to the project at standard rate rail costs and budget accommodation. All relevant use of this funding should be discussed and confirmed with the Project Director before use.

# 5. Response to the brief

Deadline for responses is **14th February 2020 at 12pm**.Unfortunately, any tenders received after this time will not be included in the selection process.

Responses to the brief should take the following form:

* Understanding of the brief – no more than 1 side of A4 at a min size of 12pt
* Methodology of approach – no more than **2** sides of A4 at a min size of 12pt
* Suitability for the role – no more than **1** sides of A4 at a min size od 12pt
* An up-to-date CV
* Two applicable references, including the most recent or current client / employer

N.B It is important that applicants are able to demonstrate they have a proven track record of delivering this type of work by referencing examples of having done so within their application and also the experience skills and knowledge as listed below.

Responses should be in word format and sent by email with the subject heading: **SSN Consortium Project Coordinator** to arrive on or before the deadline to: **justine@sportingheritage.org.uk**

A confirmation email will be sent upon receipt of your response (please allow 24 hours). Should you not receive this confirmation, please contact 07971 008037 to check we have your application.

Questions about the brief should be sent by email to justine@sportingheritage.org.uk

# 6. Selection process

**We expect the successful candidate will have:**

Experience and skills:

* Ability to coordinate a national project and manage contractors
* Experience of facilitating strategic planning activity
* The ability to write a clear, concise strategic plan
* Experience of working with a range of funders and delivering externally funded projects
* Excellent networking skills and experience

Knowledge & understanding:

* Knowledge of subject specialist networks and their work across the UK
* Knowledge of organisational sustainability and resilience
* An understanding of the heritage sector and the position of SSNs within it
* Commitment to equality and diversity and an understanding of how this applies to this role

Flexible and remote work arrangements will be put in place with communication conducted in the main via email, telephone and online platform, and occasionally in person. However, we would expect the successful candidate to be flexible in their approach, and able to participate in meetings across the UK where necessary (an additional support budget can be provided for standard rail travel).

**Timeframe:**

1. The closing date for applications is **12pm 14th February 2020**
2. **Interviews for the post will be held w/c 24th February 2020**
3. The successful candidate will be notified by the **28th February 2020**
4. Inaugural meeting will take place **2nd March 2020**
5. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email and feedback provided on request. Please note we are a small team so feedback will be limited to key, headline points.

We welcome applications from everyone irrespective of gender, disability, and ethnic group. Appointment will be based solely on merit and ability to deliver the brief.

1. For example, The Army Museum Ogilby Trust was established in 1953. the Social History Curators Group in 1975, and NatSca 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Further information about the range of SSNs and contact information can be found at www.subjectspecialist networks.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-2)