

University Museums Group
Consultancy on UMG governance

Summary

1. The University Museums Group (UMG) are seeking to appoint a consultant to review its current role and to make recommendations on its future governance, organisational structure, objectives and financial sustainability.
2. Please ensure that tenders are submitted to Nicholas Thomas (njt35@cam.ac.uk) and Nicola Kalinsky (n.kalinsky@bham.ac.uk) by **8 April 2019**. These should consist of a proposal outlining how the work would be approached, of no more than 2 pages, a summary CV, and a fee proposal.
3. Shortlisted applicants will be notified by **16 April 2019**. If required, interviews will take place in person or by skype on **18 April 2019** (please inform us of your availability).
4. Please ensure your Tender includes a methodology, timescale and costing.
5. The UMG Committee have agreed to a budget of up to £3000.

Introduction

The UMG Committee have recently agreed to commission a consultant to undertake research that will strengthen the organisation and ensure that its governance and financial arrangements render it eligible to bid for funding, for example from the Arts Council of England (as a Sector Support Organisation).

This will enable UMG to work to support the needs of member institutions more effectively, over a challenging period.

The consultant will review and make recommendations concerning the governance of UMG. The Committee expect the recommendations to include revisions to UMG's constitution, membership arrangements, accounting and auditing.

Specifically the consultant will:

- Review UMG's current constitution and its organisational status with a view to recommending a revised model, or appropriate options, to the UMG committee. This may include a comparator review of other sector support organisations and an assessment of the potential for UMG to seek charitable status.
- Review UMG's financial structure, including the role and responsibilities of the Treasurer; its accounting and auditing arrangements, and its membership fees. This may include a review of other sector support organisations (such as AIM, SSNs, GEM etc.).

The consultant should prepare

- A draft, revised constitution
- Specific guidance regarding appropriate banking, accounting and auditing arrangements
- Guidance regarding the costs and potential benefits of securing charitable status

Background

The University Museums Group has, since 1987, represented and actively campaigned for the sector. It represents the interests of University Museums to funders and stakeholders, and has established an international reputation in advocacy by promoting the interests of University museums to government, Arts Council England, and national organisations such as the former Higher Education Funding Council of England, now Research England, and the Museums Association. Its membership includes university museums and collections across England, Wales and Northern



Ireland. It has worked with both UMIS, representing university museums in Scotland, and other international networks and organisations.

The sector

University Museums comprise approximately 2.3% of all Accredited museums in England, but 24% of museum collections that are Designated by DCMS as being of national and international significance. In essence, they constitute a distributed collection of equivalent quality to national museums. The largest and best known of the 100 or so University Museums serve as the main cultural providers in their regions, while more than 100 museums across the country are visited by many tens of thousands of people annually and bring depth and distinctiveness to the museums sector. A further 300 or so collections serve as vital University research and teaching resources.

The breadth of collections and subject knowledge that University Museums can draw on enables them to respond flexibly and imaginatively to the needs of schools, linking them with researchers and providing rich and stimulating learning resources, as well as work experience opportunities. University museums are taking advantage of cutting edge digital and technological research and development, and exploring how this can bring benefit of a wide range of audiences.

In a climate of reduced regional museums funding, University Museums are dynamic centres of international collections-focused research and scholarship, and the expertise of their staff brings considerable benefit to the wider museums and cultural sector. The university culture of enquiry and experimentation means University Museums are spaces where people with diverse backgrounds and approaches come together to explore new ideas, stimulating and invigorating the wide sector, and ensuring its activities are rooted in a sound basis of scholarship. University museums play a key role in delivering research impact and knowledge transfer, while student learning is enhanced and invigorated by collections-based teaching; many University Museums contribute through innovative programmes to widening participation in HE, raising and broadening the aspirations of children,



their families and teachers. University museums are at the forefront of meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships between universities and their local and regional communities, and are often prepared to take risks in developing new ways of working with audiences to explore complex and challenging issues. The breadth of collections and subject knowledge that University Museums can draw on enables them to respond flexibly and imaginatively to the needs of schools, linking them with researchers and providing rich and stimulating learning resources, as well as work experience opportunities. University museums are taking advantage of cutting edge digital and technological research and development, and exploring how this can bring benefit of a wide range of audiences.

Thus, the excellence of the University museums sector in England and Wales is fundamental to the wider museums and cultural sector, both in this country and internationally. Yet, with more than 100 museums and 300 collections, and with larger high-profile museums contrasting with modest-sized but high quality specialist collections, it remains one with very considerable unexploited potential. All these museums and collections have value to both their HEI and to the wider museums/cultural sector, but smaller University museums in particular often have limited resourcing and are not able to engage with the wider museums sector or UMG itself. As universities root themselves in their civic communities and take up pivotal placemaking roles, University Museums are critical in enabling a two-way flow of ideas between HEIs and local communities. The most proactive University Museums are already engaged in these activities; we wish to exploit the potential of the rest, in particular where other cultural provision is faltering.

Advocacy role

UMG played an active role in the 2016 HEFCE review of University Museums and Galleries, successfully advocating for inclusion of museum professionals on the review



panel; for changes to the terms of the review; and on performance metrics to be used for monitoring funded organisations.

UMG is represented on the Arts Council cross-sector agencies group alongside NMDC, AIM, HLF, Art Fund, and Museum Development.

This considerable impact has been delivered by an enthusiastic and energetic UMG committee entirely voluntarily, in addition to their existing high-profile leadership roles. The 2013 campaign succeeded due to valuable support by ACE and Universities UK but current resourcing levels prevent us maintaining this degree of impact.

Each year, UMG annual conferences provide fora for addressing key areas of work and major challenges confronting the sector. Successful delivery, however, requires substantial commitment and in-kind resourcing from host institutions at levels that may not be sustainable. In particular, the activity level (and therefore impact) of UMG entirely depends on time input by its committee members and co-chairs.