

Northern Roots

Evaluation Consultancy Brief

Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund



Welcome to Northern Roots

We're creating the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park in the heart of Oldham, Greater Manchester, including a £12million Visitor and Skills Centre, opening in 2026. We're a unique new community asset and visitor destination, already benefitting people, planet and place.

We're harnessing the potential of 160 acres of urban green space, next to some of the most deprived communities in England. Formerly the site of cotton mills, a coal mine, and the Council tip, by 2030 we will be the UK's largest urban farm and eco park.

We're transforming neglected land, connecting communities and creating opportunities for all to grow. It's the UK's most ambitious project to bring contaminated urban green space back into use as a community asset.

The people on our doorstep will benefit from heritage, nature, creativity, learning, leisure and growing to improve their health, wellbeing and livelihoods. Landscape, water and wildlife will be revitalised - to flourish once again.

It's a bold and innovative plan, with a sustainable model to engage and support our communities.



Now we need support from an Evaluation specialist to deepen relationships with, and understanding of, our local communities; to empower them to help shape Northern Roots in the run up to the opening of our Visitor Centre in 2026; and to help evaluate how effectively we are serving these local communities. This work will feed into an Interpretation Strategy designed to help engage our communities effectively in all aspects of our site, including heritage and nature, and a Marketing Strategy designed to attract new visitors to the site. The work forms part of a project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help us build our organisational sustainability to better save heritage, protect the environment, and engage communities in our heritage.

www.northern-roots.uk

The role:

We are looking for a specialist evaluation consultant/agency/partnership with experience in participatory research, and in carrying out formative, real-time and summative research into place-based economic and social development projects with a strong heritage focus. They must have experience of training and supporting community researchers to design, conduct and evaluate this research, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Experience of work assessing organisations with a focus on natural heritage, and a very diverse range of audiences, would be an advantage.

They will undertake training of our team of four Citizen Researchers, and then work with them over the course of the project to carry out research both to inform the development of aspects of the project including events and activities, and the Marketing and Interpretation Strategies, and to assess the impact of the project. They will also work with the Citizen Researchers and wider staff to collate lessons learnt from the project in a format that can be shared with staff and with a policy and stakeholder audience.

The successful candidate will be able confidently to work with a very diverse group of Citizen Researchers and our local communities, then plan effective research strategies for empowering these communities to meaningfully evaluate and shape the project, and the development of Northern Roots more broadly.

The consultant will need to work in parallel with an Interpretation Planning consultant and a Marketing consultant, whose work will focus on how to attract new audiences to Northern Roots, and then to engage those audiences and participants in the natural and industrial heritage of Northern Roots, once they are on the site. They will also work with a newly recruited Learning Manager who will be responsible for developing the learning and skills offer for opening in 2026. The work of the Evaluation Consultant and the Citizen Researchers will, in part, inform the work of these consultants/colleagues.

Deliverables:

The selected consultant will be responsible for devising and delivering training to the Citizen Researchers, and then working with them to conduct, analyse and write up the following research and evaluation outputs between March 2025 and May 2026:

1. *Training of four Citizen Researchers in:*
 - Quantitative and Qualitative research techniques (Focus groups, depth interviews, vox pops, surveys etc).
 - Developmental/formative, real-time and evaluative research.
 - Techniques for analysing, writing up and sharing research findings with different audiences.
2. *Supporting Citizen Researchers to design the evaluation plan, and carry out and analyse baseline and endline research:*
 - To inform the design and delivery of the project.
 - To evaluate the impact of the project.
3. *Supporting Citizen Researchers to design, carry out and share real time spot research to inform:*
 - The development and delivery of heritage engagement programmes and activities delivered during the project.
 - The Interpretation, Marketing and Learning strategies to be developed as part of the project.
4. *Supporting the Citizen Researchers to run a second round of the Northern Roots visitor and engagement survey developed and conducted by the University of Salford as part of our previous NLHF project, Beautiful Oldham – Why Not? in 2024.*
5. *Supporting the Citizen Researchers and Northern Roots staff:*
 - To capture and write up the methodologies developed, lessons learnt and impact delivered during the project as a Final Report.
 - To share these lessons learnt in different formats (from short films to policy papers) with a range of public, policy and stakeholder audiences.

Methodology

The consultant will be expected to use a combination of desk research, existing specialist knowledge, and consultation with our CEO, staff, board, Community Champions and Citizen Researchers, and key partners to develop the evaluation plan.

We will be able to share existing documents including our Business Plan, Visitor Centre plans, recent visitor and engagement survey (by University of Salford), evaluations from previous tentpole events, recent Rebranding exercise, and ongoing results of our Community Champions' consultation to help inform the work.

While some of the work can be undertaken off site, we would expect the consultant to be present at Northern Roots site at contract start to train and support the Citizen Researchers and develop the evaluation plan, and to present the final report (see below). It may be necessary to undertake further visits to site to liaise with the Interpretation Planning and Marketing consultants and Northern Roots staff and stakeholders during the contract period, as well as to support the Citizen Researchers.

Evaluation Plan and Final report

The Evaluation Plan and Final Evaluation Report should be presented by the Consultant with the Citizen Researchers as written reports, with face-to-face presentations to key staff and stakeholders.

Contract management:

The contractor will report to Rebecca May, Heritage Engagement Manager, Northern Roots
rebeccamay@northern-roots.uk

The contract will start in February 2025 and must be completed by June 2026.

The fee for the contract is £15,000 inclusive of any VAT or expenses.

The fees will be paid as follows:

- 25% on exchange of contracts and start up meeting
- 25% on approval of the Evaluation Plan
- 50% on submission of final report and presentation

As this contract is funded through a grant from National Heritage Lottery Fund, it is essential that it is completed on time. No budget increase will be possible.

Failure to complete the contract and submit the final report by the specified date will result in reduction in final instalment.

How to Apply

Please submit your proposal, covering the points below, to Northern Roots at info@northern-roots.uk by **12 midnight on Sunday 2nd February 2025**. Before writing your proposal, please see the award criteria below and incorporate them into your answers.

- 1) Details of staff allocated to the project, the project manager / lead contact should be identified. A brief CV, or the CVs of key personnel who would be working on the project, which sets out your skills and experience relevant to this role. (maximum 2 x A4 pages or 4 x A4 pages for a partnership/agency)
- 2) An outline of the internal responsibilities and liaisons, the allocation of days between members of the team, and the daily charging rate of individual staff involved
- 3) At least three examples of previous work demonstrating how you have successfully delivered a similar project (maximum 4 x A4 pages).
- 4) Explain how you would approach the brief and the key activities and milestones you envisage during the contract period, including working with Citizen Researchers and other consultants.
- 5) An overall cost for the work, broken down by milestones.

- 6) Names, organisations and contact details of at least two referees who can provide confirmation of your experience and ability to deliver the brief. Please ensure referees are aware they may be contacted by us prior to the interview date.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview at Northern Roots, or online, on **Tuesday 4th or Thursday 6th February 2025**.

A final decision will be made following interviews, and all shortlisted candidates will be informed by **Monday 10th February 2025**.

Award criteria

Candidates will be assessed against the following criteria:

Criteria	Assessed by	Scoring		Total Marks
Understanding of the types of demographics that Northern Roots seeks to engage	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	5	5
		Partially meets	2-4	
		Does not meet/barely meets	0-1	
Understanding of arts, culture, heritage and natural heritage sector projects	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	5	5
		Partially meets	2-4	
		Does not meet/barely meets	0-1	
Experience of action research and developing community researchers from deprived and diverse communities	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	5	5
		Partially meets	2-4	
		Does not meet/barely meets	0-1	
Experience of deploying a range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to empower harder to reach communities to engage with heritage and creative co-production	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	5	5
		Partially meets	2-4	
		Does not meet/barely meets	0-1	
Experience of working or ability to work with an interpretation/marketing consultant	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	3	3
		Partially meets	2	
		Does not meet/barely meets	0-1	
Experience of capturing and sharing research findings in a variety of compelling formats tailored for different audiences	Written application and interview	Fully meets or exceeds	5	5
		Partially meets	2-4	
		Does not meet	0-1	
		Level 6 or 7 CIM qualification	2	
Not CIM qualified	0			
TOTAL MARKS				28