



Respond and Reimagine: A Brief for Income Generation Consultancy

Deadline for submissions is 21 January 2022

Contact for enquiries regarding this brief:

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Background

The past 18 months have been a struggle for the cultural sector, and continue to be so, and Sunderland Culture venues have been no exception.

Having been closed to visitors for almost 12 months, we have seen a significant drop in visitor numbers which has then impacted on the level of donations, shop takings, workshop and course fees being generated. An added complication for National Glass Centre has been the initial inability to deliver our popular glassmaking experiences due to Covid social distancing restrictions. We have since re-launched our experiences in a slightly modified way.

We have been successful in securing support from the Art Fund to help us respond and adapt to Covid-19, and therefore we are looking for a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to undertake a review of income generation opportunities at National Glass Centre to help us to grow and sustain our business in the wake of Covid-19.

Sunderland Culture

Established in 2017, Sunderland Culture aims to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture. We are an innovative place-based delivery model for arts and culture, bringing together the city's most important cultural assets and activities. We deliver a high quality, diverse arts and heritage programme across Sunderland reaching over 1m people; address low cultural engagement by encouraging everyone to get involved; and work to strengthen the city's creative economy.

Founded through a partnership between University of Sunderland, Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Music, Arts & Culture Trust (MAC Trust), Sunderland Culture is an independent company limited by guarantee and registered charity. We are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation for 2018-2022.

We deliver a creative programme of visual and performing arts across four venues, aligned to an overall audience development plan. We curate and deliver the cultural programme in: Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens and Arts Centre Washington for Sunderland City Council; National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art for the University of Sunderland; as well as city-wide cultural projects. In 2021, we took on the operation of the Fire Station; a new mid-scale performance venue. Each partner retains ownership of its buildings and collections, with Sunderland Culture having responsibility for all curatorial, programming, learning and audience development activities.

To increase access to culture by local communities, socio-economic diversity is an audience development priority. Programmes are delivered for artists, participants and audiences from the city's most deprived areas. Local and national partnership working enhances our programme. Targeted initiatives for children, deprived schools, older people, diverse communities and people with additional needs encourage participation and engagement.

Our Annual Report can be accessed via this link: <https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/annual-review/>

National Glass Centre

National Glass Centre is the centre of national excellence supporting the research, teaching, production and exhibition of contemporary glass as a visual arts form.

We are located on a university campus in Sunderland on the banks of the River Wear, about 2 miles from the city centre.

Open seven days a week, entrance to National Glass Centre is free, with charges applied for glassmaking and ceramic experiences, adult courses, and some family learning activities. No charges are applied for temporary exhibitions or daily glassmaking demonstrations. In a normal year, we attract around 205,000 visitors.

Formerly an independent charitable trust, the University of Sunderland took on National Glass Centre in 2010, building on its long and distinguished role in glass education and research. National Glass Centre is a public gallery and home to the University of Sunderland's Glass and Ceramics Department.

National Glass Centre's arts programme exhibits exceptional work by national and international artists; commissions new work; supports experts to develop and share their practice; encourages emerging artists and creates opportunities for visual artists to explore the potential of glass. Sunderland's glass heritage is celebrated in its permanent gallery.

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art is located within the building and offers a regularly changing programme of established and emerging contemporary artists' work.

Our resident glass makers are trained in the art of turning molten glass into beautiful pieces of art, the glass blowing team create all manner of things, from glass baubles at Christmas to hearts for Valentine's Day. This can be enjoyed at one of the daily glass demonstrations, or visitors can take part in glass making experiences.

We are dedicated to creating opportunities for everyone to have a go and be involved in arts and culture. Our learning team deliver an extensive family crafts programme with lots to do for all ages, such as glass painting, glass sandcasting, glass fusing and ceramic crafts. There is a varied curriculum-based offer for primary and secondary school visits. We also offer a year-round programme of adult courses and workshops in glassmaking and ceramics.

National Glass Centre sells souvenirs and stunning examples of glass art and craft in our gift shop and The Glass Yard Cafe has views out onto the River Wear. Although we are a national centre, we are also part of the local community and we wish to keep working well with our more regular customers and visitors.

Where we are now

Pre-Covid, turnover from commercial activity and visitor donations at National Glass Centre was around £500,000 per year and was generated by the following activities: -

- **Shop sales:** The shop sells a wide range of product, but broadly speaking the product fits into the following categories: - glass and ceramics; factory made glassware; gift and homewares;

jewellery; cards and stationery products; and children's product. We also have a small range of cards, prints and mugs displaying National Glass Centre brand and local scenes.

We have a relatively new online shop, which was created during lockdown using Shopify: <https://shop-nationalglasscentre.com/>

- **Sales of Studio glass.** These are vases, baubles etc made onsite by our glassblowers.
- **Commissions:** Bespoke glass commissions, often by corporate clients, e.g. awards and gifts.
- **Visitor donations.** We have 3 physical donations boxes and have used Art Fund to invest in contactless, portable donations boxes.
- **Rent from 6 artists' studios.**
- **Course fees** from adult courses and classes; family workshops and school visits.
- **Fees from participatory experiences**, e.g., bauble-blowing sessions.
- **Hire fees for the Hot Glass Studio.**
- **Charges for group visits.**
- **Ticketing.** Sunderland Culture manages its own box office system (Spektrix) which has the capacity to charge commissions and ticket fees in a variety of ways for the events booked. At present we are using a one size fits all approach of adding a small booking fee to all tickets booked online and would like to review the approach to this.

N.B. A third party run the onsite café, The Glass Yard, and all room hires and events at National Glass Centre. Their contract is managed centrally by the University's Estates and Facilities team and no income is received by National Glass Centre.

Statistics on visitor spend and audience segmentation at National Glass Centre will be shared with the successful applicant.

Issues

- There is a need to generate more income to fill future funding gaps and help the sustainability of our organisation post-Covid.
- The hot glass studio is a huge visitor draw – we want to know how we can capitalise on this in a more tangible way.
- Glassmaking experiences and adult courses are major sources of earned income. There is a major risk that this income will not recover to pre-March 20 levels if we cannot safely deliver glassmaking experiences or visitor perception is that it is not safe.
- Research, development and delivery costs of activities are high.
- We have limited reach to regional, national and international audiences beyond in-person visits to National Glass Centre.
- How do we support the development of commercial skills and empower entrepreneurial thinking?
- We have never fully examined the customer/visitor journey through the venue and we think there is potential for resulting increased revenue.

- Departments within National Glass Centre tend to work in siloes and this inhibits the organisation's capacity to maximise earned income.
- We have a distinctive offer, but have not challenged staff to trial new ideas, develop new resources or products or explore options for participatory learning and experiences that can be accessed by audiences in venue and at home.
- Our catering offer currently sits within the University contractor relationship, but we are open to looking at this in a little more detail to ensure we are making the most of our on-site catering offer.

The support we are seeking

We now wish to commission a consultant with suitable expertise to help us maximise our income-generation capability.

We would like to see:

1. A review, analysis and fresh look at all areas currently generating income with a cost/benefit analysis of all areas so teams can see the impact of the current mode of delivery.
2. A gathering of ideas from staff, perhaps through creative thinking sessions.
3. Proposals for new income streams based on benchmarking research of other comparator venues and 1. and 2. above.
4. A set of possible income streams to help us in the event of Covid (or other) related closures of the building.

This will result in the development of an action plan for the next 4 years which has: -

- The best mix of income streams for us to develop, with stretching, but realistic, costed plans for doing so.
- Recommendations on the level of resource, training and capacity to achieve this.
- Consideration of how our marketing and comms resource can help build income more effectively.
- Consideration of how our internal processes and practices can help to develop an appreciation of the importance of income generation across the teams and develop an entrepreneurial culture.

What are we looking for?

We are looking for an income-generation specialist with an exceptional track record in working with comparable cultural venues to work with the team to help us test our assumptions and develop an ambitious 4-year plan to increase our revenue.

We are looking for an individual or agency that has: -

- A proven track record of achieving results with like-minded visitor attractions and cultural venues.
- The ability to benchmark us with similar size visitor attractions who have a distinctive offer.
- The ability to think beyond traditional income streams in venue.
- Demonstrable experience of training and working with staff teams to achieve positive results.
- The ability to develop a clear strategy for the direction the business needs to go in and achievable income and margin targets.

Proposal requirements

Proposals should include:

- Full details of how you will meet all of the requirements as detailed in this document;
- Your approach to delivering this brief, including your methodology and details of your proposed work plan (number of days allocated to the contract etc);
- Evidence of previous experience in providing similar services – including two examples of previous projects with like-minded cultural venues.
- Individual/organisation CV with current references.
- Details of pricing structure.

Available budget

Please propose a budget of up to **£6,500 including VAT**.

Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria (in order of importance):

- 1 How well the proposal understands and reflects the brief;
- 2 Approach, methodology and work plan;
- 3 Quality and achievement of previous work;
- 4 Price.

Proposals will be assessed by Sunderland Culture, who reserve the right to seek the advice of external experts. Sunderland Culture reserves the right to assess proposals on a variety of criteria.

Instructions for submitting proposals

Send your proposal outlining your responses to the specification and questions above to

Izzy McDonald-Booth
Craft and Design, Retail Manager

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Proposals should be no longer than 4 A4 pages and CVs of key staff should be appended.

Proposals must be received by email no later than 21 January 2022.

Selection and contract timetable

We wish for work to start as soon as possible on this brief and be complete by **April 2022**.

17 December 2021 Brief advertised

21 January 2022 Deadline for submission of proposals in response to the brief

1 February 2022 Proposed interviews. Contract awarded and all applicants notified.

A timetable for activity will be developed between National Glass Centre and the successful applicant.

April 2022 Final report or presentation presented to Senior Management Team.

Further information and questions

If you need clarification of this documentation or have any further questions regarding this brief, please contact:

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