

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL - Royal School of Needlework

Project Lead- Fragile Threads NLHF funded project – we are seeking a consultant to undertake this work over a two-year period. It not intended to be a full-time consultancy role.

Background

The Royal School of Needlework (RSN) is the International Centre of Excellence for the Art of Hand Embroidery. Based at the historic Hampton Court Palace, we have been dedicated to preserving and innovating in the art of hand embroidery since 1872. Our thriving education programme offers courses for all levels, from beginners to degree level, and we teach onsite and online in locations across the UK, and internationally in America, Japan, and Australia. Our renowned Embroidery Studio creates bespoke embroidery for fashion, art, and royalty and offers expert conservation and restoration services for valuable and historical embroidered pieces.

Fragile Threads (FT) is a new collaborative programme led by the Royal School of Needlework to help raise awareness, and increase understanding around climate change and species loss through the medium of hand embroidery.

Thanks to a £247,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), this new purpose-driven programme will help drive our ambition to preserve the future of hand embroidery by enriching lives through inspiring, teaching and innovation and offering far greater access to our knowledge and skills. In the UK, historic stitching techniques are in continual danger of disappearing. Fragile Threads projects will focus on introducing rare, often regional, techniques into many areas of its programme as well as allowing participants to express their own biodiversity stories.

Nature has inspired extraordinary embroidery heritage. Fragile Threads is the RSN's call to tackle the fragility of our natural world and ongoing species loss. By collaborating with partner organisations, we will work with and empower a diverse range of people to learn new skills and tell their stories through embroidery.

Partnerships with a number of visionary organisations include :

- Action for Conservation – a bespoke embroidery project to explore the importance of sustainable textiles; traditional craft; consumerism and fashion; biodiversity and activism.
- Hope For Home – working with socially isolated carers of advanced dementia patients to create simple nature-inspired embroidery piece.
- Global Generation – a series of workshops interpreting nature-based solutions through sustainable hand-stitching.
- Intoart – teaching artists with learning disabilities to create nature-based themed pieces, exploring sustainable materials, natural dyes and embroidery techniques.
- QEST – supporting QEST scholars to research and develop a single nature-based narrative through embroidery, working in diverse, non-textile mediums using sustainable materials.

- Around the World in 80 Fabrics – developing and understanding knowledge about the significance of plant, animal, bio-based and recycled materials, communities and craftspeople.

As part of the initiative, we will also host a symposium and an exhibition towards the end of the programme. Additional projects and events will be weaved into our existing Educational Programme, including the BA Honours Degree in Hand Embroidery taught at Hampton Court Palace, and short courses for leisure stitching.

Scope of work

This is a part time consultant role and is anticipated to be for a two-year period. The Project Lead will work closely with the Project Manager who will deliver the project on a day-to-day basis.

Key responsibilities are as follows

NLHF Project

1. Overall accountability for delivery of the FT NLHF project:
 - a. Manages all projects risks and issues
 - b. Overview of and responsible for project budget and liaison with Finance Team where appropriate
 - c. Ensures programme is reviewed at appropriate stages and timescales are met
 - d. Oversight of project evaluation during project and completion of external evaluation
 - e. Liaise with the Project Manager on delivery of the NLHF project and related activities
 - f. Reports to SRO on project delivery and future strategic scoping and direction and RSN staff as required
 - g. Report on NLHF progress and developments to RSN stakeholders as required, including Project Board, Advisory Group.
 - h. Ensure that the NLHF compliance requirements are being maintained and submitted as required
2. Delivery of NLHF project approved purposes
 - a. Oversee management and delivery of the 4 core projects with external partners, as detailed above
 - b. Liaise with all partners as required ensuring that stated objectives for each project are met
 - c. Oversee management and delivery of 2 connected partnerships with QEST and Around the World in 80 Fabrics
 - d. Identify and secure exhibition venue for end of NLHF project exhibition (no budget has been allocated for this – so assume pro-bono)
 - e. Oversee and contribute to the development of the FT NLHF exhibition content, interpretation and participation.
 - f. Oversee and contribute to the development of a high-profile FT NLHF talk/symposium.
3. Communications for the NLHF FT project:
 - a. Contribute to and support the development of the FT communication plan
 - b. Contribute to and support the development of FT branding
4. Contribute to and support the development of the FT microsite.

Future FT development

1. Responding to and supporting the delivery of the RSN's strategic plan and objectives, review and refine the FT strategic action plan
2. Develop a maximum of 5 new FT partnership projects– all new projects are funding dependent
3. Develop and evaluate the potential of a single compelling mass-participation embroidery project
4. Liaise with Fundraising colleagues on potential funders and targets for the 5 new projects and mass-participation embroidery project:
 - a. Support and contribute to FT trusts and fundraising applications.
 - b. Consider and explore HNW support options and viability

Timeline

The NLHF project runs from June 2025 to March 2027.

Budget

The NLHF grant for this consultancy work is a total of £23k. Your proposal should state how you will deliver the work required for within this budget.

Qualifications/Experience

- Experienced creative leader with knowledge of NLHF funded projects
- Experience of leading and managing creative projects across a wide range of disciplines and partners, including planning, reporting and evaluation
- Experience of working with community partners

Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically to HR at HR@royal-needlework.org.uk

Your proposal should include the following:

- A CV and cover letter that describes the consultant's qualifications and experience
- An overview of how the consultant will deliver the NLHF project and how their qualifications and experience meet the brief
- Two references from previous clients.

Deadline

All applications to be submitted by close of business on **Friday 28th March**

