

Brief for Citizens' Jury

1. Background

Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT) is the charity that cares for the city's collection of 1m objects and nine museum sites on behalf of the Birmingham City Council (BCC). The collection is Birmingham's greatest cultural asset and a priceless resource for learning, creativity, health & wellbeing. Pre-Covid, 10m people experienced the city's heritage annually, as visitors, in outreach to schools & groups, through digital engagement or at venues across the world where objects were on loan.

BMT employs 153 full and part time staff and over 340 volunteers caring for and sharing the City's Museum collection with the public. Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) and Thinktank play vital roles in bringing schools, families, and visitors to the city centre. The Museum Collections Centre is our main store and is open to the public every week for behind-the-scenes access. Our six historic properties are popular community facilities with free-to-access green spaces, education, and creative opportunities. We actively reach beyond our sites to engage people across the city in their neighbourhoods.

In 2020, under the new leadership of co-CEOs' Sara Wajid & Zak Mensah, BMT began a multi-year transformation towards a world class, socially purposeful entrepreneurial museum rooted in the distinctive cultural heritage of the region.

Since BMT was established in 2012, its public funding has been reduced, with a 35% drop (excluding inflation) in regular revenue funding from ACE and BCC since 2015. More recently, BMT has seen a deepening of engagement with Birmingham City Council, and a £16m capital investment, funded by BCC and ACE MEND fund, in essential electrical and roof works at BMAG is currently in progress.

BMT received significant Covid Recovery Funding which provided an essential financial lifeline to survive the pandemic, however since then, rising costs and loss of earned income create significant financial challenges for BMT. Combined with the trust's vision of democratising BMT to enable many more people from more diverse backgrounds to enjoy their heritage, we are at a critical point of risk and opportunity.

A radical rethink of all aspects of the organisation is required to become financially sustainable and inspire a sense of hope and belonging, championing inclusion, creativity and social justice. BMT has begun to engage its trustees, workforce, stakeholders, community partners and the public. However, the trust now needs to make a more fundamental change in how it operates and functions, deepening our vision and translating it into an organisation capable of responding to the challenges and opportunities of 21st-century Birmingham.

2. BMT Vision

By unlocking Birmingham's cultural heritage with its citizens, visitors and industries, we want to create hope, social trust and belonging. We stand in solidarity on key issues that are meaningful, shaping the future of this diverse, creative and ambitious global city.

3. Laying the Foundations for the Transformation of Birmingham Museums Trust

Museums have been vowing to overhaul themselves in line with progressive social agendas for a generation, and mainly failing to deliver. Sara and Zak are the first job-sharing Black and Asian co-leaders of a major museum in the UK, are the only global majority leaders on the NMDC and they follow in the footsteps of the former BMT Director, Rita McLean who was the first Black museum director in the UK. Sara is the first British Asian museum director in the UK and together they are committed to re-shaping the museum using intersectional, feminist anti-racist principles of leadership. Their job-sharing leadership is not merely 'inclusive working practices' it is about confidently embodying and projecting a form of creative cultural collaboration and convivial multiculturalism (to quote Paul Gilroy's) which is distinctively Brummie.

This new project, starting in autumn 2023, is the first phase of a fundamental transformation of BMT to a resilient and financially sustainable organisation with the structure, culture, skilled workforce, and audience insights to deliver its ambitious vision. This first phase will lay the foundations - building insights, research and development that will shape the organisational transformation and help realise the vision of BMT for an open, participatory entrepreneurial and sustainable museums trust that plays a key role in the cultural and economic growth of Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region.

The Laying the Foundations phase includes:

- Organisation review and new business strategy development and working towards organisation transformation.
- Development of Theory of Change & Logic Model.
- Evaluation, including organisational culture and capacities baseline, creating an evaluation framework and a post project review.
- Existing and New Audience research.
- Development of Citizen's Jury to inform and shape BMT.
- Communication strategy and plan.
- Fundraising and income diversification strategy and plan.

4. Birmingham Museum Trust: Threats and Opportunities

Birmingham has the youngest population of any large European city and is one of the first minority-majority cities in the UK. It also has above average levels of poverty and deprivation and has the lowest level of museum provision (per 100,000 people) of the UK's ten Core Cities. Pre-COVID audiences did not reflect the city's demographic, with poor, poorly educated people, people of colour and disabled people significantly under-represented. Their cultures were also under-represented in the museum, as were the creative and heritage cultures of this young city. While we get a million visits across our nine sites, audiences have not returned to pre-COVID levels and BMT could easily, and within a generation, sink into irrelevance. Combined with severe financial problems, these mean that BMT needs to reinvent itself completely, with as dramatic an intervention in the life of the city as BMAG was when it opened in 1885.

While we are inspired by the Victorian heritage of ambition and belief in progressive public service embodied in the museum, we wish to move away from the paternalistic and hierarchical elements of that legacy, creating a radically democratic museum. To do this, BMT aims to take a leadership role in the city, promoting a place-based sense of belonging and a 'convivial multi-culturalism' which emphasises what is shared, while also celebrating positive differences and facing up to negative heritages. We are aware of the risks of doing this in a polarised political environment, but also confident that Birmingham can find a way forward, which will model how people in the UK can live together in a super-diverse society. We are also aware of the need to reinvent the funding model for museums, and to draw on a far wider and more diverse range of supporters if we are to realise our ambitions for BMT and for the city. Income generation needs to be integrated with the rest of our programme, driven by our values, and seen as a form of engagement. Radical change on this scale needs both the creative input of the city and the additional authority that a CJ will bring.

5. Context

Since 2020 Mark O'Neill has been a key advisor to Birmingham Museums Trust and the team have benefitted from his extensive experience to develop plans for the citizens' jury, which he will continue to support as a critical friend. Over the course of his 30-year career, Mark has become an authority on the role museums play in promoting social justice and inclusion. Mark has written extensively on the topic and, as Head of Glasgow Museums, was at the forefront of the city's transformation into a hub of culture and art.

BMT is also commissioning major experts to review its Governance, Business Model and Fundraising, with a view to recommending new approaches and the structures, skills and capacities to deliver them. The Citizen's Jury is integral to this work and the Citizen's Jury consultants will be expected to participate in three programme overview meetings with the leaders of the other workstreams.

6. Why a Citizens' Jury

In this context the Citizens' Jury is a foundational component of our plan for change. We have decades of experience of working with target groups, especially with people minoritized based on ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, and disability. What we need however, is to have representatives of all sections of society, whether they are relatively 'included' or 'excluded', involved in a single conversation about what Birmingham means to them and what roles the museum could play in enhancing the life of the city. We wish to go deeper than is possible in focus groups, advisory panels and surveys, and host at least 30 hours of facilitated conversations with at least 25 people who are representative of the city. This will be the first of a series of long-term deliberative democracy initiatives on the part of the museums, but as the first, the success of this CJ is critical. It is also a major Action Research initiative, laying the foundation for our Research Centre for Cultural Citizenship, which aims to ensure that BMT's delivery is evidence-based. It will be used to drive the direction of the Laying the Foundations work set out in the introduction above and the sessions should be timed to inform those milestones. This will be discussed further with the successful candidate.

We are looking for consultants to:

1. Carry out the required planning, design, liaison and project management.
2. Work with us to set up the Oversight Group, which will involve key people who have the authority to make decisions in response to the CJ recommendations.
3. Facilitate Oversight Group meetings, including liaison and preparation.
4. Work with the Oversight Group to identify key expert witnesses that the first CJ meetings will hear from. Source other expert witnesses to address topics raised by the participants.
5. Recruit through reliable sortition processes a representative sample of at least 25 people to take part in the CJ.
6. Organise support for participants (onboarding, child-care etc).
7. Planning sessions with participants and facilitation of CJ sessions.
8. Management of participants' vouchers, based on living wage, refreshments, stationery etc.
9. Launch event.
10. Public closing event, where participants present their results to Oversight Group, media and museum staff.
11. BMT can provide a venue free of charge, but all refreshment costs should be included in the submission.
12. Commission a documentary film of the event. The foundational nature of this event means that we need to capture the representativeness and depth of the conversations, beyond what can be said in a final report.
13. Final Report.

7. Timescale

This is negotiable, but given the centrality of the CJ to our democratising plans, we would like to begin as soon as possible. Our outline timetable proposes the following:

- Commence April 2024
- Recruit Citizens Jury by end of June 2024
- Session(s) to take place August 2024 – January 2025, with work and final report concluded by February 2025.

But we invite you to advise and propose a suitable timetable.

8. Budget

Budget is set at £50,000 due to the funding available. It may be possible to allocate further funding to this workstream. If additional value can be demonstrated by increasing this sum, please set this out in your response and how it would benefit the overall deliverables and quality of outputs for our consideration. However, there is no guarantee that this will be possible.

9. What we're looking for:

The collective team will bring to the table big ideas and ambition that creatively respond to the vision, unafraid to challenge accepted norms, collaborating to support the client in further refining their vision and objectives, rooted in community needs. The team should have a strong sense of Birmingham and its unique characteristics and super-diversity.

You will need to have a deep understanding of this area of work, but you do not necessarily need to be a bricks and mortar consultancy firm. We welcome responses from individuals, companies, or collaborations.

Ultimately, we do not mind who you are (although if you are not based in the city, we hope that you would see the benefit of spending ample time here to get under the skin of its residents). Our teams are diverse, as is our city, and your work will recognise, celebrate, and respond to this.

If you consider yourself suitable for certain parts of the brief but not the whole, we would still like to hear from you as we are looking to create the right team who can bring something to the table, which may involve a certain amount of matchmaking with those who have different skill sets.

We want you to understand our passion for change, appreciate the exploratory nature of this work, and be robust and brave with your assertions.