

# 3. Pilot projects



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Deciding how to turn the findings of our research into activity has not been easy. There are many areas where a small intervention could make an exciting difference. We have tried to balance pragmatism, interest and significance to create a programme that provides practical benefits to business and the sector, as well as demonstrating the value of good relationships between the two.



Here, we have outlined a three-tiered structure for Phase 2 of the Knowledge Transfer Programme, focused on practical interventions to make a tangible difference to the relationship between our sector and business. At the core, a group of four projects that we believe form a tight and coherent piece of work, which will be funded by the London Development Agency (LDA). Around this are several other projects that, with the support of partners, we hope to develop and run. Finally, we have a series of policy and practical recommendations that will be reinforced by the outcomes of the pilot projects. These we want to spread as widely as possible so that people in central, local and regional government and higher education as well as the sector and business begin to talk about the ideas we hope to release through this programme of research and activity.

### **A note on targets**

The output targets that we have set ourselves are based on LDA monitoring requirements. We have also added targets relating to the desired outcomes of each programme of activity.

Evaluation should begin shortly after the programme activity. It will involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods: we do not want to lose the personality which has characterised our investigation so far, but will also need to be rigorous. The targets will help us to demonstrate the value of investment, and thereby provide further arguments for the wider applicability of our research findings.

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# Tier 1. The core four



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‘Relationships are what make everything happen.  
That’s what we need to focus on.’

Library professional

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**These pilots form a core of developmental activity, which will be an anchor and a resource for some of the wider projects that we want to instigate. Specifically targeted and measured, they will develop and extend good practice in some of the most significant areas we have identified through our research.**

They fall into two broad programmes of work: one for museums and archives, and one for libraries. At the heart of each programme is an individual – the bridge builder – who will guide the work, building partnerships and developing relationships that can last beyond the timescale and scope of the projects. They will be supported by a group of sector, business and knowledge transfer professionals, and will themselves be an important output of the pilot programme: trained in a new role which they can develop and advocate as their careers progress.

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*‘Local libraries are a great office. There are no distractions, you can go in the morning and leave in the evening having done a full day’s work.’*

Small business owner

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## 1a. The Modern Local Business Library

### **The current situation**

There is a staggering range of relationships between public libraries and their local business communities. In the course of our research, we spoke to librarians who had provided market research that got new businesses off the ground, had established reading groups for employees of a multi-national based in the area, had run information and networking events for local business people, had provided the instruments of an office – computers, meeting spaces, even support for product testing – for unpremised startups.

The barrier here is primarily one of clarity and communication. Provision varies wildly between services, and there is relatively little opportunity for librarians to share their areas of expertise. The picture for business users is inevitably one of confusion: in one library they may be allowed to work all day on a computer while in another, just a mile down the road, the system will lock them out once their allotted hour is up. The offer needs to be clearer.

### **Our programme of work**

We will take a group of 3-4 local authority libraries to be pioneers of an improved business support service. Building on their existing areas of expertise, and drawing in learning from partners such as the British Library Business and IP Centre and Business Link, we will help them to develop a unique and clear offer to the businesses – large and small – in their borough.

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# 'A meeting in a library is different. Something leaks out of the books.'

## Business person

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The participating authorities will become the hub of a wider learning programme. All London local authorities will be invited to participate in a knowledge-sharing network that will do two things. First, it will help other library services to reconsider their business provision, in the light of the experience of our pioneers. Secondly, it will raise awareness of the areas of expertise within London library authorities – so if one borough cannot provide a particular service, they will know which other borough can. This ties in closely to other MLA London work, particularly the Local Government Cultural Improvement Programme, one strand of which is the London Library Change Programme which examines the feasibility of streamlining provision in other library service areas.

The result for businesses will be a smoother service across London, a clearer understanding of what their local library can do for them and, perhaps most importantly, access to the valuable resources that London's public libraries can provide. This pilot programme provides an exceptional opportunity to work with minority-led enterprises, since black and Asian people are more likely to visit libraries than any other ethnic group.

Output/outcome	Measurement
Output: 30 businesses engage in a new way with the public library knowledge base, including at least 11 minority-led enterprises	Ongoing monitoring by public libraries
Outcome: Libraries improve and are more confident in their offer to business	Qualitative interviews with business users and librarians
Outcome: Libraries have an improved awareness of each others' areas of expertise	Survey of librarians before and after participating in learning network

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*‘I was at a public library looking for some information. The librarian found it in three different places – I don’t think I would have found it in one.’*

Business person

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## 1b. Information literacy training programme

### **The current situation**

People are increasingly responsible for finding and handling their own information. The first – and often last – resource is the internet. In many instances this is fine: Google or Wikipedia are enough to check a fact or find an address. However, when it comes to more complex information needs, people are not always able to sort the meaningful results from the irrelevant, misleading or just plain wrong.

Many of our business interviewees were uncomfortable with the increasing reliance they had on these unresponsive search tools. Information professionals were often more forthright, citing instances where incorrect information, sourced from the web, had led to costly mistakes. Perhaps even more important is the loss of contact with librarians and other information professionals – people who can interpret the search results on Google but who can also suggest alternative, sometimes better information sources that may never appear on an internet search.

### **Our programme of work**

We will use the expertise of librarians, archivists and curators to develop an accredited training programme for delivery to business people. The programme will equip people to handle information more effectively, and to know how and when to call on information professionals. Librarians will be trained to deliver this programme in their own settings, helping them to become more comfortable with business information needs and introducing business people to the library as a workspace.

Working with a business-facing human resources organisation, we would have access to HR managers in large organisations. The modern local business library programme will give us access to small and medium sized enterprises.

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‘The problem is that stuff is freely available on the web, but it’s rubbish – people use the wrong material and don’t realise.’

**Information professional**

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<b>Output/outcome</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
<b>Output:</b> 10 librarians develop skills in delivering information literacy training programmes	Ongoing monitoring
<b>Outcome:</b> Improved information handling skills in training participants	Survey of business people before and after participating in training
<b>Outcome:</b> Increased understanding of museum, library and archive sector skills and assets and their value to business in training participants.	Survey of business people before and after participating in training

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*‘I encourage business staff to visit, I encourage opportunities to work together because there’s so much inbuilt knowledge in our sponsors that can help the museum to evolve.’*

**Museum professional**

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## 2a. Exchange programme

### **The current situation**

Some businesses understand how they can get the most out of their relationships with museums and archives. Some museums and archives have thought through and developed a coherent offer to their business partners. We have found examples of product development, staff development and organisational development in businesses (large and small) supported by relationships with a cultural asset.

However, these cases tend to be the exception and not the rule. Relationships are often limited to a logo on a poster or an annual subsidy to maintain the company archive in storage. Or they are haphazard, under the radar, and cannot be sustained or developed into a really meaningful offer.

### **Our programme of work**

We will take around half a dozen sector professionals, and an equivalent number of business people, and place them on a six-month ‘exchange’ programme. Through a structured monthly meetings, each focussing on a different aspect of the possible knowledge transfer relationships between the sector and business, we will create a conversation space where both groups can begin to think more strategically about their relationships with each other.

Graduates from the exchange programme will become advocates for these different ways of working within their organisations, and as their careers progress they will take their learning to new organisations as well. We hope that one result of this work will be to create a new career path which is seen, not as a diversion, but as an alternative route to the museum or archive's growth and success.

This work is based on the success of exchange programmes in higher education knowledge transfer offices.

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‘Museums are very open to doing things differently, but first they need to understand what the business wants.’

**Business person**

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<b>Output/outcome</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
<b>Output:</b> 6 business people and 6 museum and archive staff develop skills in engaging effectively with each other	Survey of participants before and after involvement in the programme.
<b>Outcome:</b> Increased understanding of the role that museums and archives can play in business for all participants	Survey of participants before and after involvement in the programme.
<b>Outcome:</b> New relationships between the museums and archives and businesses participating in the programme.	Survey of participants after involvement in the programme.

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*'I give one talk a week to outside groups – people who are likely to be customers [of the business]. It's a subliminal form of advertising'.*

Business archivist

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## 2b. Innovation Fund

### **The current situation**

Museums and archives can support businesses in a variety of ways. However, at present the scope to develop their activities in this area is limited. Innovative sector professionals do not always have the time, money or authority to develop their ideas, which can sometimes be seen as a risk, or distraction from the main business of curation and display.

We also found that there is no single model for relationships between the sector and businesses. Each example of good practice was based upon very specific needs and opportunities which had been brought together, sometimes by clever positioning on the part of the museum or archive but often through serendipitous encounters or relationships. It is not possible to guarantee that what works in one situation will work everywhere. Partnerships are much more successful where people are given the freedom and space to organise themselves.

### **Our programme of work**

We will establish an innovation fund for museums and archives which have an idea for developing a business offer. The money will serve a practical purpose of freeing up time and developing resources. However, it will also place value on this kind of work, helping entrepreneurs in museums and archives to build the case for investment in their ideas.

Any museum or archive funded under this stream will have to work with a business as part of their project: it will not be enough simply to develop the offer. We would expect to see staff working in close conjunction with a business to create an offer that they know will be valuable.

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'It's quite sad that the main business use of museums is corporate events. For most, the museum is no more than a nice bit of decoration round the edges.'

**Business person**

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<b>Output/outcome</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
<b>Output:</b> 8 businesses engage in a new way with the museum and archive knowledge base.	Ongoing monitoring, survey or interviews after programme is finished.
<b>Output:</b> 8 museums and archives develop skills in working with businesses.	Ongoing monitoring, survey or interviews after programme is finished.
<b>Outcome:</b> New products and services developed by museums, archives and businesses.	Survey or interviews after programme is finished
<b>Outcome:</b> Better understanding of the process by which a successful business offer is developed.	Survey or interviews after programme is finished

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# Tier 2. Partnership opportunities



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The thrust of these programmes is very much about communicating, across a variety of platforms, the value of museum, library and archive resources to business. From an academic study to a whimsical guide book, they offer our partners and stakeholders an opportunity to engage with our research findings.

### **Professional of the year**

An award for the most business-engaged museum, library or archive professional would have many benefits. It would publicise excellence. It would give people something to work towards. And the ceremony itself would bring together all the people who are engaged in knowledge transfer between business and the sector, creating a forum for them to discuss their past successes and future plans.

This project could be developed within existing awards programmes, either in the cultural or knowledge transfer communities. Integrating it into existing programmes has the added bonus of raising awareness among a wider audience.

### **Trustee orientation programme**

Board members of museums, libraries and archives have considerable power over the strategic direction of their organisations. This board development programme would help them to consider what kind of offer their organisation could make to business, and why that might be valuable to the museum, library or archive as well.

Making this training part of existing development programmes will reinforce our message that knowledge transfer work with business can be a core part of a museum, library or archive's work.

### **London's hidden (MLA) workplaces**

One major barrier identified in the research is a lack of information for business people about what the sector can offer as a workplace. Using a magazine format, rather like *Time Out*, we would produce a guide to London's hidden treasures for business people seeking a temporary office or a meeting space with a difference. The guide would provide practical information – internet availability, room capacity, cost – but would also give a flavour of the unique experiences that can be had within London's collections.

### **Establishing a value proposition**

An econometric study which attempts to measure the actual value of business engagement with museums, libraries and archives would really help underline the findings of the Knowledge Transfer Programme. Working in partnership with a respected research organisation or an academic would add credibility to the study.

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# Tier 3. Spillovers, arguments and wider changes



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**We have identified some important messages that need to be communicated to people in museums, libraries and archives and businesses alike. Some are practical ideas, some are arguments that need to be built and developed. Many messages will be supported by activity within our planned pilot projects, but we want to articulate them through other work undertaken by MLA London and its partners as well. All these messages have the aim of helping people within the sector and within business to think critically and constructively about their relationships with each other.**

**Hosted open days** emerged as an interesting way to explore the museum, library or archive's offer to business in conjunction with the proposed users. This may begin as an extension of activities under the Tier 1 exchange programme, but could eventually be run by enterprising sector organisations under their own steam.

**Improving the sector's appeal to business** is a critical theme of our research findings. The Tier 1 pilots will begin to address this, but we will also emphasise that this is something all museums, libraries and archives can begin to consider independently.

**Demonstrating the value of reflection** to business people is a major challenge identified during the research phase. Through the evaluation of the pilot projects, and by linking in with the growing literature about the importance of 'slow time', we will seek to build consensus around this message.

**Acting as the heart of a business network** is a very interesting model which emerged from our research. Museums, libraries and archives can act as a physical and intellectual home for emerging groups of businesses or individual practitioners within a particular discipline. We see a real opportunity for specialist collections to explore and develop this role, as well as the work that should be done with small businesses through the public libraries strand of Tier 1 pilots.

**Cultural self-assessment** is a concept that we would like to pursue with a few enlightened businesses. It would be an opportunity for them to consider their existing relationships with museums, libraries and archives, and to reflect upon how they could get more value out of their portfolio of connections.

**A museum, library and archive engagement toolkit**, comprised of practical, accessible tools emerging from the pilot programme evaluation, would help business people to think about and build their engagement with museums, libraries and archives.

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Published September 2008

