

Manchester City of Literature

Brief for Evaluation of the Manchester-Nanjing Artist Exchange project

Project Background

[Real Contentment](#) is a British Council-funded project that aims to create a lasting partnership between Manchester, UK and Nanjing, China, building on the fact that both are UNESCO Cities of Literature and UNESCO Cities of Lifelong Learning.

At the heart of the 9-month programme to launch the partnership is an artist exchange which brings Chinese and UK poets, illustrators and playwrights together to create new work. Creative outputs launched/performed in each city will include a bilingual illustrated poetry collection from 4 artists working collaboratively (2 poets, 2 illustrators, one from each city) and a play (written by 2 playwrights, one Chinese, one from UK). The creative collaborations will be responding to the ecological theme of Real Contentment, from the poetry of Han Dong specifically the line '*real contentment...[of] a ray of sunlight / Shining in a woodland glade*' (Let Me Describe The Rainstorm, 1986 translated by Nicky Harman). Han Dong, an award-winning poet, novelist and essayist, is published in both China and the UK. This creative brief is being refined as artists are being appointed and will have a strong focus on rivers and waterways in both cities.

At a time of increased geo-political tensions, suspicion and conflict, all partners want to create lasting partnership and deepen inter-cultural understanding. This resonates strongly with the UNESCO mission to "*build the defences of peace in the minds of people*". By bringing together professional artists and young people [in a parallel schools engagement project], we will develop understanding across two generations (at least) and by creating work for touring and for publication, the fruits of the collaboration will reach wider audiences in both China and the UK. The theme of the project responds to the climate emergency in the fourth year of record temperatures [<https://wmo.int/media/news/wmo-climate-statement-past-4-years-warmest-record>] by nurturing an interest in the natural world and in increasing an appetite to preserve and appreciate what we have, before it is lost.

This project will also create a new multi-partner infrastructure to support future exchanges: online or hybrid. As well as the UNESCO offices, equal partners in the project will be Creative Manchester/University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Poetry Library & School of Art), Confucius Institute Manchester, Nanjing University and Nanjing University of the Arts. Learning and collaboration from this partnership can directly support ways of extending existing activity e.g. Confucius Institute Manchester may use this collaborative playwright model for its 2026 play commission; Manchester City of Literature will commission a multilingual poem from poets working in partnership in Nanjing and Manchester.

Overview of the Evaluation Tender

Manchester City of Literature wishes to appoint an experienced consultant to help us capture, analyse and reflect on the learning of the artist exchange programme and how this will inform future collaboration between partners and artists in Manchester and Nanjing. The final document will also be made available publicly to the British International Collaboration Grants community and to other



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interested parties, not as a 'how to' guide but as a series of considerations, insights and case study/studies to help other planning cross-cultural collaboration between the UK and mainland China.

We are seeking an external consultant with expertise in qualitative evaluation practices and an appreciation of the complexity and sensitivity of working cross culturally.

Outputs

The consultant will:

- Design and implement a programme of qualitative evaluation to capture learning from the project between now and June 2025. The programme should link to the British Council's research objectives for the International Collaboration Grants programme and wider international partnerships.
- Develop an evaluation methodology that is likely to include guidance on reflective journals or learning logs for the artists; 121 or group interviews with the Manchester and Nanjing artists; 121 or group interviews with the Manchester and Nanjing programme partners.
- Write a report that analyses the learning and considerations for anyone working cross-culturally between the UK and China for sign-off in July 2025.
- The report should share the learning journey of artists and partners robustly and directed at external audiences: artists, artist networks, producer, cultural organisations, policy bodies and funders.

Consultant criteria

We are looking for a consultant with:

- Experience of evaluating qualitative arts and culture projects
- Experience or understanding of working cross-culturally
- Experience of engaging artists in the evaluation process
- Experience of facilitating reflection workshops and providing tools for self-reflection
- Experience of creating engaging written materials for professional audiences

Budget

There is a fee of £3,000 (inc VAT) for this work between now and July 2025. This should cover all costs of the evaluation delivery and report writing including any travel expenses if in-person workshops are proposed. Manchester City of Literature can provide rooms for interviews, access to a Pro Zoom account and will oversee the production of the final report.

Please provide a budget for the evaluation that is broken down against individual stages or tasks as outlined in your methodology.

Application process

Please contact Ivan Wadeson, Executive Director, if you have any questions about this tender.

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Applications should be submitted to ivan.wadeson@manchestercityofliterature.com by 12 noon on Tuesday 18 February 2025.

Your application should include a cover letter describing your suitability for the role and your approach to this evaluation tender including costings (a maximum of 4 sides of A4), a CV, and any links to any relevant reports or case studies that you wish to share.

Timeline for the consultant:

UK Artist briefing and onboarding 4 February 2025 (announcement of artists to follow)

Deadline for applications: Tuesday 18 February 2025

Online Interviews: Monday 24 February or Tuesday 25 February

Appointment confirmed: by Friday 28 February

Commissioning meeting: tbc

UK artist visit to Nanjing: circa 20 March for 7 days

Nanjing artist visit to Manchester: w/c 2 June 2025

Final draft of report submitted: July 2025 exact date tba.

Real Contentment is funded by the British Council's International Collaboration Grants, which are designed to support UK and overseas organisations to collaborate on international arts projects.



Manchester City of Literature is supported by:

