



**The National Archives
Collaborative Development Networks Evaluation Report**

3 October 2017

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1. Executive Summary

The archives sector is inherently collaborative. Networks have been operating for many years in a variety of forms. The National Archives (TNA) has acknowledged the potential in these collaborative forums, and the Sector Sustainability Fund was set up to support sector development including that of networks.

[Archives Unlocked the national strategic vision for the archives sector developed in collaboration with the sector and TNA, and](#) published in 2017 identifies the important role of networks in realising the potential of archives. The vision outlines an ambition to develop archives in three specific areas: building digital capacity, engineering resilience and demonstrating impact. The National Archives wants to include all archives in developing the capacity and knowledge to realise the vision for archives, through 'sharing, co-location, collaborative networks and consortia, all archives will be able to access the skills and infrastructure they need to achieve their goals in the digital world.'

Between April and July 2017 an evaluation of investment by The National Archives in development networks across England was undertaken by Mairead O'Rourke (CultureRunner). The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the impact of the Sector Sustainability Fund (SSF) on archive networks. This report highlights the lessons learned and identifies the best ways to support new and existing archive networks in the future. The findings of this evaluation are based on interviews undertaken with TNA staff, 20 network leads and a survey which was completed by 36 network members.

Headline findings about networks:

- 10 networks funded throughout England
- Over £240K invested (includes TNA funding and match funding brought in by the networks from other sources)
- Only 1 network has ceased to operate in the period after receiving SSF funding
- They are all developing in different ways and have different governance and management structures (some have membership fees)
- Administration time needs careful consideration and planning
- Services have more power and authority when working collectively
- Developing a clear shared vision and sense of purpose is key to the success of a network
- The support from TNA has:

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- Enabled one of the networks to become a new, constituted organisation (Archives West Midlands became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2016)
- Strengthened existing working relationships and enabled archive services to look beyond their own day-to-day operations
- Helped to raise the profile of services among senior council leaders
- Allowed individual archive services to tackle big challenges (especially digital archives)

Network members expressed an interest in continued support from TNA – not just financial – for the future. There is a consensus that in light of ever-increasing challenges facing all archive services, archives must collaborate and share knowledge, resources and time. Through this they can build their resilience and strength in a way that is enjoyable and therefore more likely to last:

“I enjoy the opportunities to network and share experiences and learn from one another. I think we succeed in this every time we meet!”

Key recommendations (see section 8, page 26 for a complete list):

1. TNA should continue supporting networks, with funding and especially with staff time.
2. Maintaining a self-selection approach to funding (as opposed to TNA identifying potential recipients) is recommended best practice for grant holder engagement.
3. The requirement to have match funding should continue.
4. The role of networks in improving standards (specifically Archive Service Accreditation) should be firmly acknowledged in future network activity.
5. TNA could provide additional support through training programmes to support leadership, governance and management.
6. TNA should consider broadening funding and support opportunities to include other established networks (For example: the Business Archives Council and the Religious Archives Group.)

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2. Background

The Sector Sustainability Fund (SSF) was set up in 2013 by the Archives Sector Development (ASD) department at The National Archives. The aim of the fund was to support collaborative networks to transform the way archive services operate so that they are more adaptive and resilient. Details of the fund and its objectives are outlined in Appendix 1.

The National Archives has supported a diverse range of archive networks across private archives and public archive services. While there may be reference within this report to private archives in relation to subject groups, the primary focus of this evaluation is on the networks which have received funding through the SSF. These are networks which are predominately led by local authority archive services.

Since its inception, a total of 10 networks have been supported through the SSF. The following success measures for funding were outlined within grant guidelines for the networks:

- Networked archives are more adaptive and have improved efficiency
- Networks clearly demonstrate value for money (maximise use of existing assets, including collections, staff expertise, digital preservation, conservation facilities.)
- The impact of the investment on the development partnerships collectively, including joint working
- Where networks have specifically explored the potential for income generation, fundraising or inward investment, and to capture the lessons learned
- The extent to which archive services have developed service standards to meet the Archive Service Accreditation standard
- Where networks have developed digital infrastructure and service delivery and to capture the lessons learned
- How effective the governance structures have been in taking the network forward beyond the close of the initial project

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3. Methodology

The research was undertaken through a four-stage process.

- Initiation: meeting and documentation review
- Consultation: interviews and survey
- Compilation: analysis and report writing
- Dissemination: sharing event

3.1 Initiation

An initiation meeting took place between Mairead O'Rourke (CultureRunner) and Tina Morton and Isobel Hunter (TNA). The overall approach, methodology and logistics for the research were agreed at this meeting. Following this, information relating to each network was collated. This included grant agreements, project plans, meeting notes and reports from network facilitators.

Due to the nature of how the Sector Sustainability Fund was initially established the available data was not consistent. The SSF developed over time so networks had slightly different grant agreements, and approaches to the grants changed in the first few years. These changes were about match funding and TNA expectations in relation to activities and reporting. In future, TNA's monitoring can keep a clear and consistent account of the funding allocated and match funding raised.

Following the data review a series of interviews took place. This began with six staff at TNA, and then with nineteen representatives from funded networks i.e. typically more than one representative per network. Interview questions are outlined in Appendix 2 and 3.

Staff interviewed at TNA included the Head of Archive Sector Development Isobel Hunter and ASD Sector Development Managers. They were asked questions related to how they have seen networks develop from their perspective, what they have perceived as the greatest success and challenges and where they see the need for network support in the future.

Network representatives were, in most cases, the Chair of the network and one other nominated network member. These contacts were identified by the relevant regional Sector Development Manager (formerly Engagement Manager) at The National Archives. The network members were encouraged to talk about their experience of the network and how they have seen it develop. There was also a series of interview questions used to capture:

- Who was involved in setting up the network, how was it established
- What activities were funded by the Sector Sustainability Fund
- What impact the SSF funding has had on archive services in that network
- Lessons learned through the process (what worked well/could be done differently)
- What are the key pointers for anyone considering developing a collaborative service

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network (dos and don'ts)

3.2 Survey

The survey was designed to capture feedback and comments from the wider network members, beyond those interviewed. A survey of ten questions was circulated to approximately eighty network members via the relevant lead representatives. The exact number of members is not certain as some members are no longer active and some people are members of more than one network group. A total of 36 people responded to the survey which is just less than half of the estimated number of members. For future monitoring and reporting it would be useful to maintain an up to date record of membership.

The questions posed in the survey related to the objectives of the Sector Sustainability Fund. They investigated to what extent the investment (both financial and staff time) by TNA:

- Enabled archive services to be more adaptive and resilient
- Improved the development of partnerships and joint working
- Improved the engagement levels of Heads of Service i.e. senior leaders in the local authorities of archives taking part in the SSF funded networks
- Supported the improvement of service standards to meet the Archive Service Accreditation standard
- Enabled the exploration of income generation, fundraising and inward investment
- Improved engagement with users and local communities
- Enabled the maximisation of existing assets, including collections, staff expertise, digital preservation, conservation facilities
- Supported new approaches to governance and management (if relevant)

The survey questions are available as an appendix to this report (appendix 3).

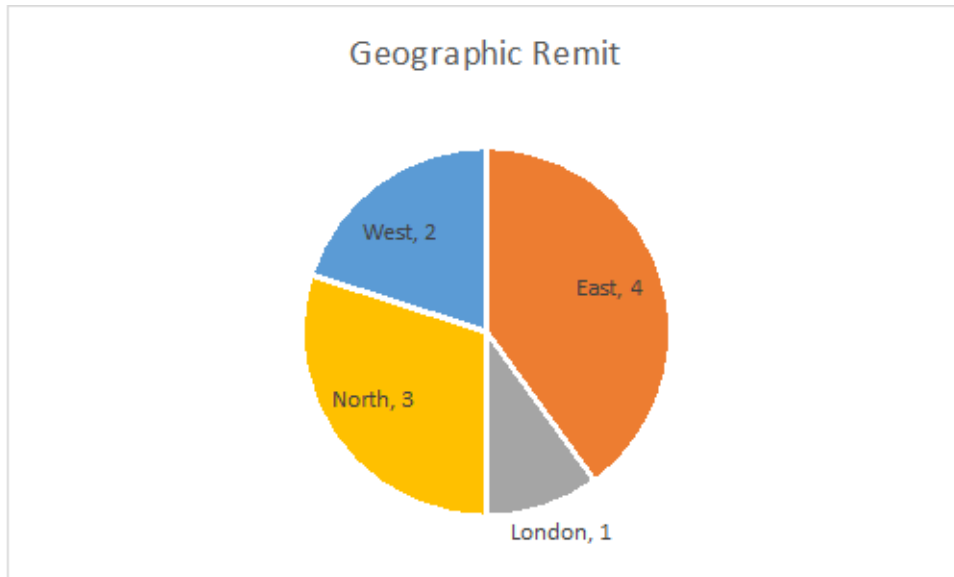
Collectively the data, interviews and survey responses have generated the findings of this report and its recommendations.

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4. Development networks

To date, 10 development networks have been supported by The National Archives through the Sector Sustainability Fund. The networks vary in size, location and length of time in operation. A chart of the geographic remit is presented below. The areas are aligned with the geography which has been covered by Engagement Managers at The National Archives up until January 2017 - the regions have since changed and these officers are now Sector Development Managers.



For the purposes of this research two phases of TNA funding have been identified.

Phase 1 = Networks which were funded prior to 2016

Phase 2 = Networks in receipt of Sector Support funding since 2016.

The following table outlines the participating networks and the phase of funding they have received.

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Network	Geographic remit	Phase of funding
Archives First	South of England	1
East Midlands Regional Archives Council	East	2
East of England Regional Archive Council	East	1
The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP)	East	1
London Archives Partnership	London	1
Archives for Yorkshire	North	2
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	North	1
South Yorkshire Archives Partnership	North	2
Archives West Midlands	West	1
South West Fed	West	1

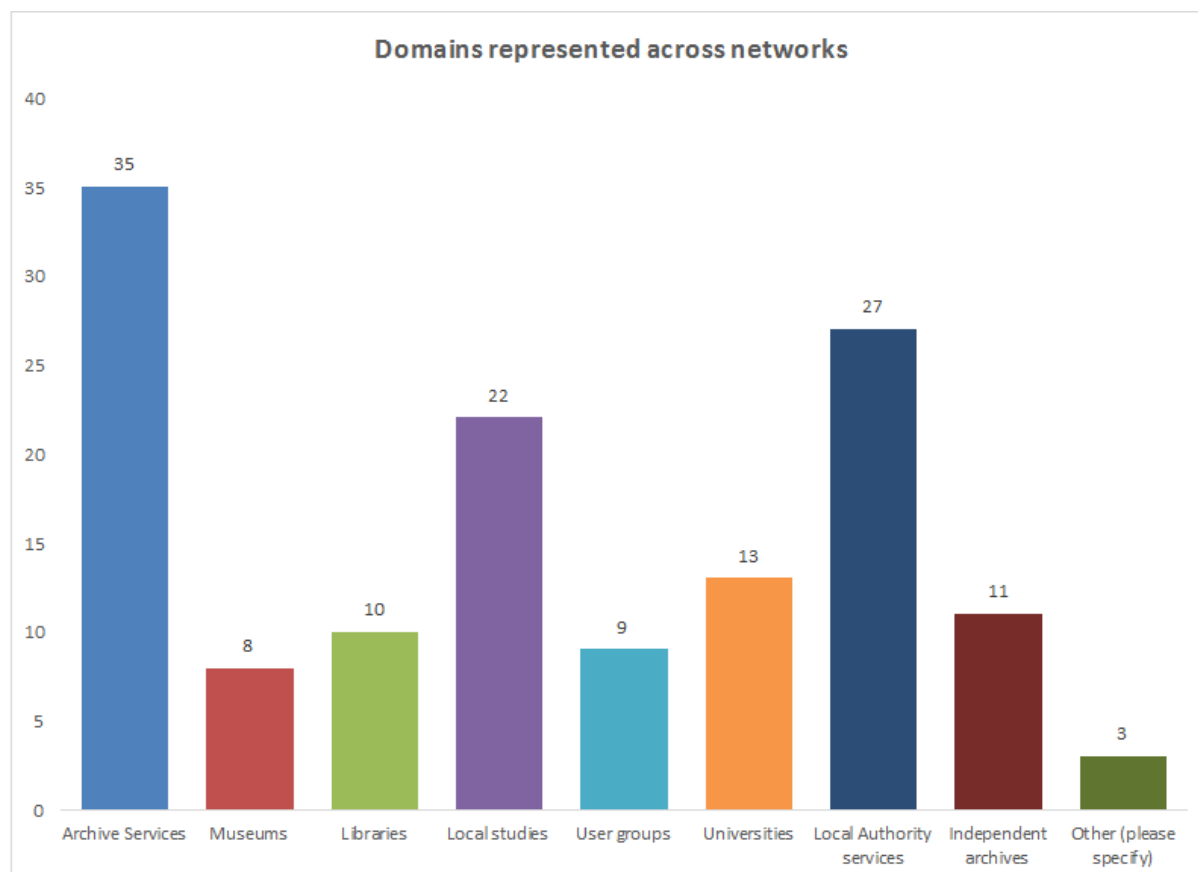
4.1 Domains

While this research is focused on networks which have been funded through the Sector Sustainability Fund, it is worth noting that other archive networks are in operation, which may often overlap with the membership of the SSF funded networks. These include networks which cover particular thematic groupings or areas such as the Business Archives Council, and the Religious Archive Group, as well as the Archives and Records Association's regional and subject specialist networks. It is worth bearing these in mind when considering the capacity of the sector to contribute to a range of networks. The survey responses highlighted the range of organisation types – 'domains' – represented within the networks. Understandably most respondents listed archive services (35) followed by local authority services (27)¹, local studies centres (22) and universities (13). See graph below for details.

¹ Not all of the 35 archive services which responded were part of a local authority service.

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4.2 Funding

In the early stages of the Sector Sustainability Fund, networks had wide-ranging objectives which varied from network to network, and they were not required to provide match funding. This has changed in recent years and all funding agreements since 2016 ask for networks to ‘match’ the TNA funding in cash, in kind or both. The contribution will depend on the financial ability of the network members to contribute, so ‘match’ may not mean equal to the SSF grant in each case. It was noted by some network members in interviews that having to ask for the match funding often helped to raise the profile of their archive service in a positive way, especially as it was also supported by The National Archives.

“Funding – bit surprised had to match fund 100% Helped in the long term. Pushed them towards the subscription model.”

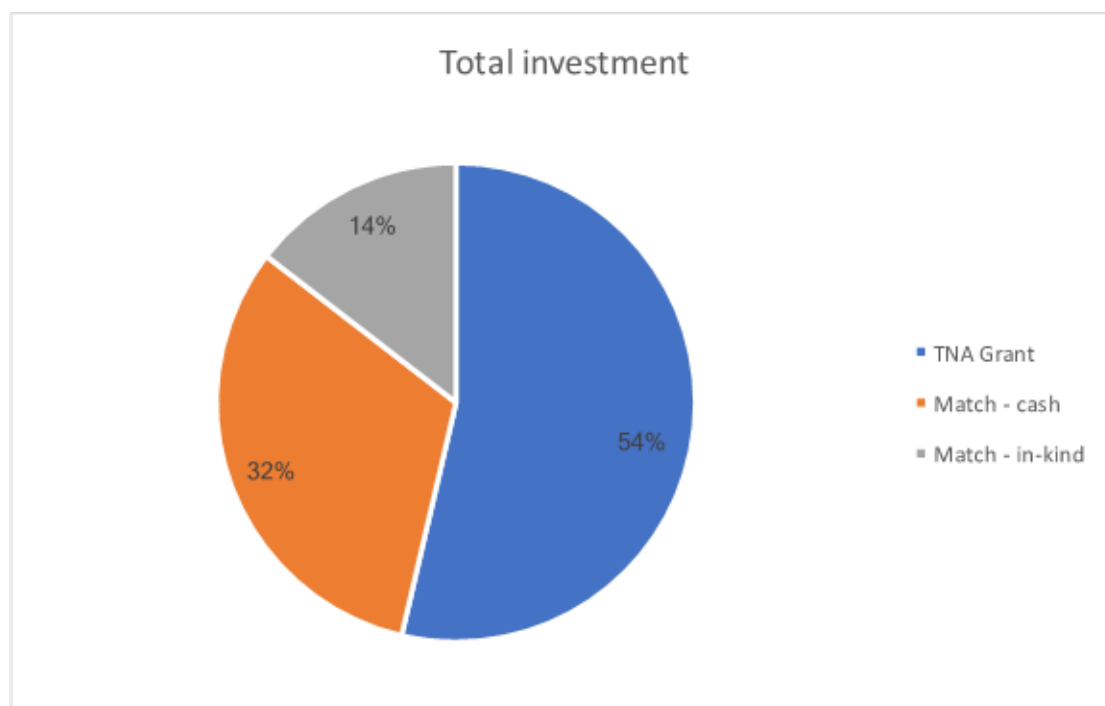
To date, TNA have invested a total of £144,160 in networks through SSF financial grants across both stages of funding. This has been matched with circa £102,354 (this estimate is based on the total value of cash and predicted in-kind contributions made by networks). The average amount of SSF grant awarded is £10,000. A detailed breakdown of grants awarded is outline in Appendix 4. The chart and table below highlight the investment made by the National Archives and how much was contributed as match.

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Investments in networks	TNA SSF Grant Awards	Match	Match: cash	Match: in-kind
Totals	£144,160.00	£124,554.00	£85,500.00	£39,054.00
Total TNA grant and match	£268,714.00			

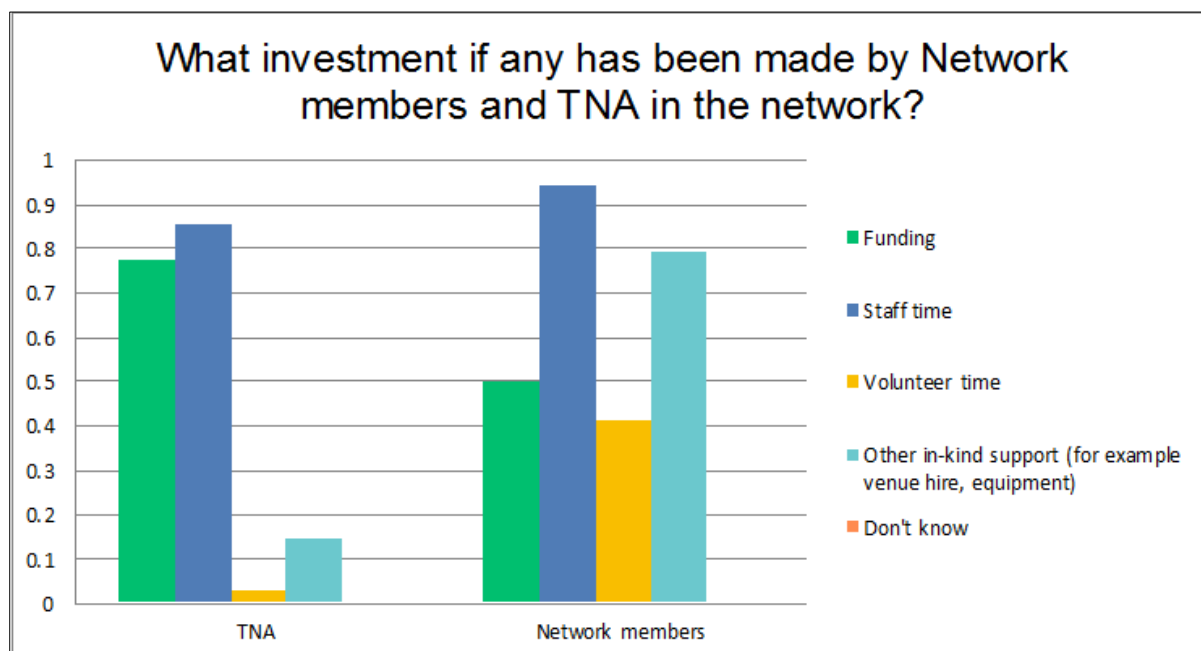
Match funding accounts for 46% of the overall investment in networks, with most of this being cash (32% of total investment), with in-kind estimated at 14%.



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There is a strong awareness among network members of the investments made by both TNA and the network itself. The following chart highlights the responses to the survey question ‘what investment if any has been made by TNA and network members in the network?’



Of 36 responses, most people (27) identified financial and staff investment (30) from TNA. A smaller number (17 respondents) identified financial investment by the network members. Staff time from the networks was recognised by 32 respondents. Network volunteer time was identified by 14 people, and 27 people indicated other-in-kind support from the networks. This included use of equipment and facilities, and venue hire and admin support.

In interviews and responses to the survey, the investment of time by network members was raised as both a challenge and an essential element in operating as a successful group. A question on the survey about the challenges networks have encountered elicited the following responses:

“Our network severely lacks capacity. We all have demanding full-time jobs and this limits what can currently be achieved.”

“Creating capacity alongside the day job has been a challenge. We have just recruited a support officer to help us using membership funds.”

“Time out of the office to attend meetings is always a problem - a meeting with every service represented is almost impossible.”

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“Staff capacity - we are a small service with very limited resources, therefore we cannot dedicate as much time to working on projects as some of the larger services. But where we can support and help deliver the objectives of the network and its delivery strands, we make every effort to.”

4.3 Membership

Most of the 10 funded networks existed in some form prior to the support from the Sector Sustainability Fund. The exceptions were SEMLAP, LAP and Archives First. The others have been in operation in some form over several years. In response to the question: ‘What do you enjoy most about the network and what in your opinion have been the key successes?’, many respondents referred to benefits of being part of a collective membership. They included:

“Empowering a larger voice”

“Sharing best practice, making contacts, keeping up to date”

“Collaborative and supportive approach of core members”

“Broader discussion of services, professional expertise and advice. Sharing ideas”

“The enthusiasm and passion of colleagues - a real boost and matches my own.”

Knowing and trusting other members was listed as one of the important factors in ensuing a network is working effectively (respondents rated having a clear mission and purpose and having a clear plan for activity as most important, and public awareness and support as least important).

In the instances where an existing relationship among network members was not already present, the networks encountered significant challenges. In the case of SEMLAP it was a key reason for the network being unable to progress:

“We were all too different in where we were and where we were expected to be by our respective authorities. We had never worked together before on anything as we all looked in other directions - Beds to East of England, Bucks to Oxon and Berks, Northants to the Midlands. Being only archive services not attached to wider cultural services (except MK which was the other way round) we did not have a big enough presence in our authorities for the network to gain any support.”

Archives West Midlands have implemented a subscription fee for members of £500. No other network has adopted this approach. However, all network members contribute to the match funding requirement of the SSF. This is either split evenly across members or is scaled according to size and budget. EERAC members have shared the cost of Archivemata.

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4.4 Objectives

The Sector Sustainability Fund aimed to support the development of sustainable, efficient and high-quality modern archive services through network partnerships. The Archive Sector Development department at TNA set out the following objectives for the SSF:

- Establish a sustainable collaborative service partnership across each network of archives
- Identify strategic development opportunities for the archives in a funded network, with a focus on improved efficiency and maximising use of existing assets, including collections, staff expertise, digital preservation, conservation facilities
- Maintain local identities alongside economies of scale
- Improve service standards to meet the Archive Service Accreditation standard
- Develop partnerships and joint working to explore
 - Potential for income generation, fundraising or inward investment
 - Digital infrastructure and service delivery
- Generate a positive vision for the network of archives
- Establish a governance structure for each funded network to take the work forward beyond the close of the initial SSF project

The following outcomes were identified for all funded networks to deliver:

- Collaborative vision agreed by the partnership and owned by senior management of member services
- Costed business plans derived from a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan
- Governance structure established

This is a summarised list of objectives for the fund, edited from the full list of SSF objectives from TNA data and interviews, which was extensive (complete list outlined in appendix 1). The objectives from TNA provided ideas for uses of the funding and for many, longer established networks that was very helpful. However, for some this was confusing, when their service had been identified by TNA as a potential network participant and funding recipient i.e. they had not put themselves forward. This meant for some that the TNA objectives felt 'other' and were not owned strongly by the network, and the purpose of the funding was less evident. A self-selecting approach was introduced in the second phase of funding and has been a much more effective way of increasing engagement amongst funded networks. Where the members of the networks identified their own objectives and developed their own network consensus, their progress has been much less challenging than those who were not sufficiently clear about why they were working together.

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Not all participating networks have yet (September 2017) achieved the required deliverables as, for some, the funding agreements had only recently been signed to confirm what their deliverables should be.

The table below outlines:

- The original objectives of the networks
- Progress made to date on activities undertaken through the Sector Sustainability funding
- Governance and membership arrangements

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Network	Network objectives	Activities/ Progress to date	Governance/ Membership
Archives First	To form a collaborative vision and to generate a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options.	The network worked with an external facilitator to help them identify priorities for development. This included engaging a wide range of people through improved digital access and the opening up of new income streams through the development of products/approaches that would be of interest to commissioners	Project board and a Memorandum of Understanding between 11 members representing archive services across the South East and South West
Archives for Yorkshire	To support the creation of an archives-led collaboration in the Yorkshire region, with the specific purpose of developing and marketing an ancestral tourism offer and product(s)	Shared draft Accreditation applications Consultant's report on ancestral tourism potential in Yorkshire is in draft.	Open to all archives across Yorkshire
Archives West Midlands	Support the development of a formal framework for archival collaboration across the West Midlands and raise the profile of archive services within local government	Has been constituted as a new organisation (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) A Prospectus and launch was held to showcase the organisation as a formal partnership Successful delivery of the Arts Council England funded collaborative Strong Rooms project: http://strongrooms.org.uk	The CIO has a board and members pay an annual subscription

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Network	Network objectives	Activities/ Progress to date	Governance/ Membership
East Midlands Regional Archives Council (EMRAC)	The development of the network and its strategic plan	Work will begin (September 2017) with the support of an external facilitator	Established in 1999 it includes representation from heads of service and user groups. An Executive Committee undertakes strategic planning for the group
East of England Regional Archive Council	Test solutions for digital preservation	Has progressed with Archivematica, a digital preservation project	EERAC has been operating for 25 years representing archives across the East of England since the early 1990s
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	A feasibility study to explore how archives in Greater Manchester can work more effectively together	On the recommendation of a feasibility study, a formal Partnership was established in 2012. An overarching strategy and development plan was created. Specific progress has been made in relation to leadership and advocacy skills, volunteering, digital futures, raising standards, storage and digital preservation.	A Practitioner group (archivists and local studies officers) reports to a Board (Senior Officers). The Board monitors progress and reports in turn to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Statutory Functions Committee' (AGMASFC) ²

² AGMASFC has oversight of connections between the Greater Manchester County Record Office and the districts.

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Network	Network objectives	Activities/ Progress to date	Governance/ Membership
London Archives Partnership (LAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the public with the best possible access to the documented history of London • Increase the awareness and use of the rich and diverse collections • Maximise scarce resources by working together • Invest in digital access to resources and collections • Secure funding for collaborative projects collaboratively 	<p>Development has taken place in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Image Portal • London Boroughs 50th Anniversary • London Archives Digital Discovery • A London-wide approach to data collection and benchmarking <p>L AP is also interested in developing projects around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancestral tourism • Joint working the London Museum Development team • Colleges and universities • The GLA’s London Curriculum • Digital capture 	Overseen by a board and steering group. LAP is a cooperative venture with all partners committed to the overarching purpose
SEMLAP	How archive services can work more effectively together to improve services while achieving savings targets in the current challenging financial environment Generate a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options	The network investigated ways of working together and identified differing priorities and so disbanded. The relationship between Bucks County and Milton Keynes has strengthened because of the work	No longer in operation

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Network	Network objectives	Activities/ Progress to date	Governance/ Membership
	Heads of Service can then decide collectively the best options to pursue, as joint or single service initiatives.		
South West Fed	Examine the skills requirements of museums in relation to their archive collections and how these compare to those available across the wider archives sector in the South West of England. It will support cross-sector skills sharing	Skills requirements have been identified – practical ways of working have yet to be implemented	Membership group led by museums
South Yorkshire Archives Partnership	Enable the development of the South Yorkshire Archives Partnership and its strategic plan	Recently signed off a 5-year action plan which prioritised 8 areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising resources for improvement • Focus on audiences • Demonstrating impact and raising profile • Digital engagement • Digital preservation and access • Working to achieve excellence • Sharing skills and knowledge • Governance 	A partnership established in 2016 between Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield local authorities

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5. Survey and interview findings

The purpose of the interviews and survey was to establish the impact of the Sector Sustainability Fund, and specifically, in relation to how the SSF has supported networks of archive services in the following areas:

- Partnership working
- Advocacy, profile raising and re-positioning
- Identifying, developing and implementing opportunities:
 - Adaptation and resilience
 - Meeting the Archive Service Accreditation standard
 - Income generation, fundraising and inward investment

5.3 Partnership

Partnership was listed by many members as key to having an effective network and as a motivating factor in their own personal involvement. Comments captured in interviews included:

"[We] know and support each other. Not trying to take over, it's an equal partnership."

"We are part of a big powerful professional service. We can tap into skills and funding opportunities, all of which would be impossible if we were on our own."

"We enjoy each other's company. There is a feeling of trust amongst us which allows people to share which leads to adaptive approaches. Trust is important."

"The partnership is helping LMA [London Metropolitan Archives] to define its role. It has been a framework and network to talk to each other. Can help us all – small grouping."

"[The networks are a] driver to working collaboratively [to] take control and shape the agenda rather than just getting smaller and smaller."

"We are all in it together. The network provides a framework for sharing concerns and getting advice. Because everyone already knew each other, there is good base to start from, the relationship was already there."

Responses to the question 'What do you enjoy most about the network and what in your opinion have been the key success?' included:

"Sharing best practice, making contacts, keeping up to date."

"Collaborative and supportive approach of core members."

"[The] 'Strong Rooms' art project was exciting and showed possibility of further joint working. Recent submission for Digital Pathways trainee placements, although unsuccessful, did show very

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good collaborative approach of partners and willingness to push forward with the AWM joint working ethos.”

“Having structured partnership to drive work forward.”

“I enjoy the opportunities to network and share experiences and learn from one another. I think we succeed in this every time we meet!”

“Working alongside other archivists who are facing comparable difficulties.”

“It is a move away from competitive working.”

“Opportunities to meet, exchange best practice and develop relationships across services. The representation of the network at WDYTYA [Who Do You Think You Are?] Live has been a successful pilot for the network, as it demonstrated the value in working together.”

5.2 Advocacy

Many of the comments captured in interviews and in response to the survey highlighted the power of networks to support advocacy and awareness raising. One network (GMALSP) referred extensively to the success of developing an advocacy document, featured in an accompanying case study to this report.

One question in the survey asked members the extent to which awareness of archives had been raised by sharing a positive vision with other network members, Heads of Service (senior managers within local authorities), elected members of local authorities, archive staff and other stakeholders.

The responses below highlight that this was achieved across all these groups by ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’, with the greatest impact perceived among network members and heads of service. Areas where the highest responses indicated ‘not at all’ or ‘don’t know’ were with elected members and other stakeholders. This indicates there may be more work required but that there is also potential for networks to engage these groups.

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The following comments were made in response to the survey question ‘What do you enjoy most about the network and what in your opinion have been the key success?’:

“Empowering a larger voice”

“Sharing knowledge and experiences – good advocacy tool for senior managers and members.”

“Opportunities to work on a different level including new and challenging tasks within the partnership – opportunities that are often not available at local level. A supportive board who are reporting to a higher authority – what we are doing is being recognised, reported and celebrated at a higher level.”

“Advocacy built through document which highlighted case studies and key information through infographics – a ‘1 pager’ for people to say look at what we are contributing to specific areas – this was new for archives.”

“Building internal advocacy – staff take pride in their service.”

“Greater Manchester resources were able to go beyond political boundaries.”

“The network has enabled advocacy lines to senior staff/managers within local government. There are ‘blurred lines’ and it is really important to engage with senior staff. It puts archives with other bits of culture. Advocacy for wider value for archives.”

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There was also reference made to the role of TNA, through Archive Sector Development staff in helping to advocate for regional networks:

“[TNA involvement gives] everyone a feeling that TNA are behind, helps build awareness with senior members.”

“The attitude to TNA has changed.”

“[TNA is seen] as supportive and actively involved.”

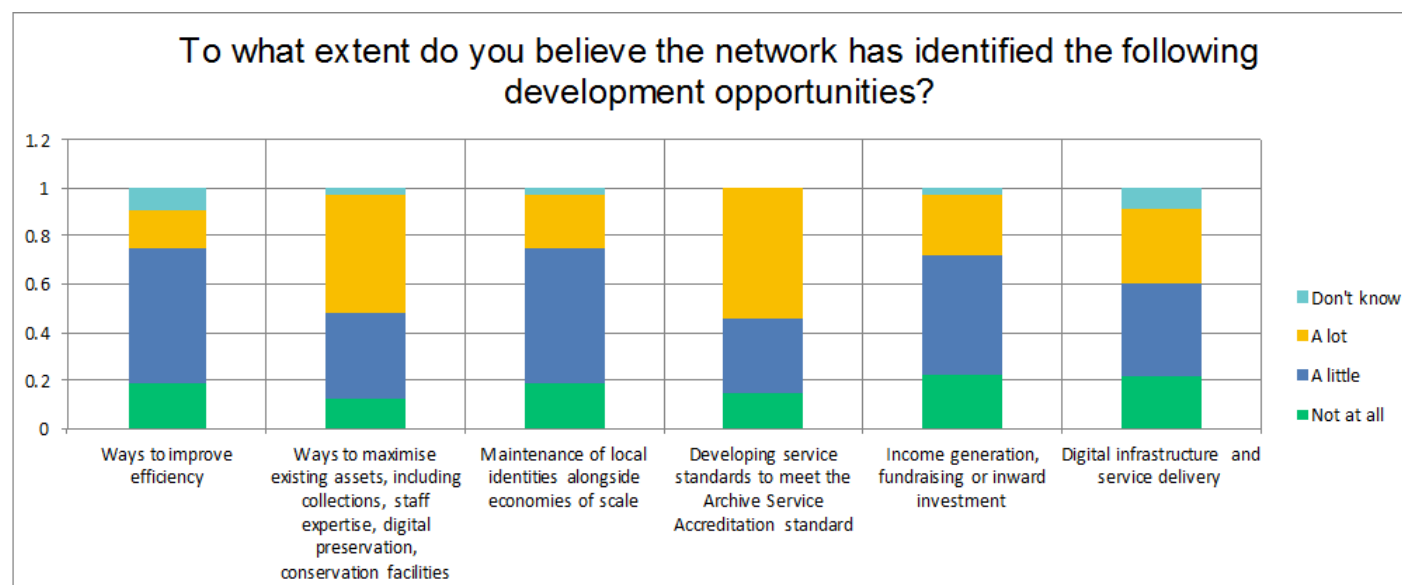
5.3 Development Opportunities

The chart below indicates the extent to which opportunities for development have been identified by networks across the following areas:

1. Ways to improve efficiency
2. Ways to maximise use of assets
3. Maintenance of local identities alongside economies of scale
4. Improving service standards to meet Archive Service Accreditation
5. Income generation, funding or inward investment
6. Digital infrastructure.

All areas were rated as having either ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ of recognition; there were few ‘not at all’ or ‘don’t know’ responses regarding progress across the development opportunity areas.

‘Improving standards to meet Archive Service Accreditation’ is an area where it is seen that there is most potential, followed by ‘ways to maximise use of assets’. Income generation and digital infrastructure delivery were areas where there is less certainty about development opportunities. This was also reflected in interview responses along with uncertainty about joint finance arrangements and other back office functions.

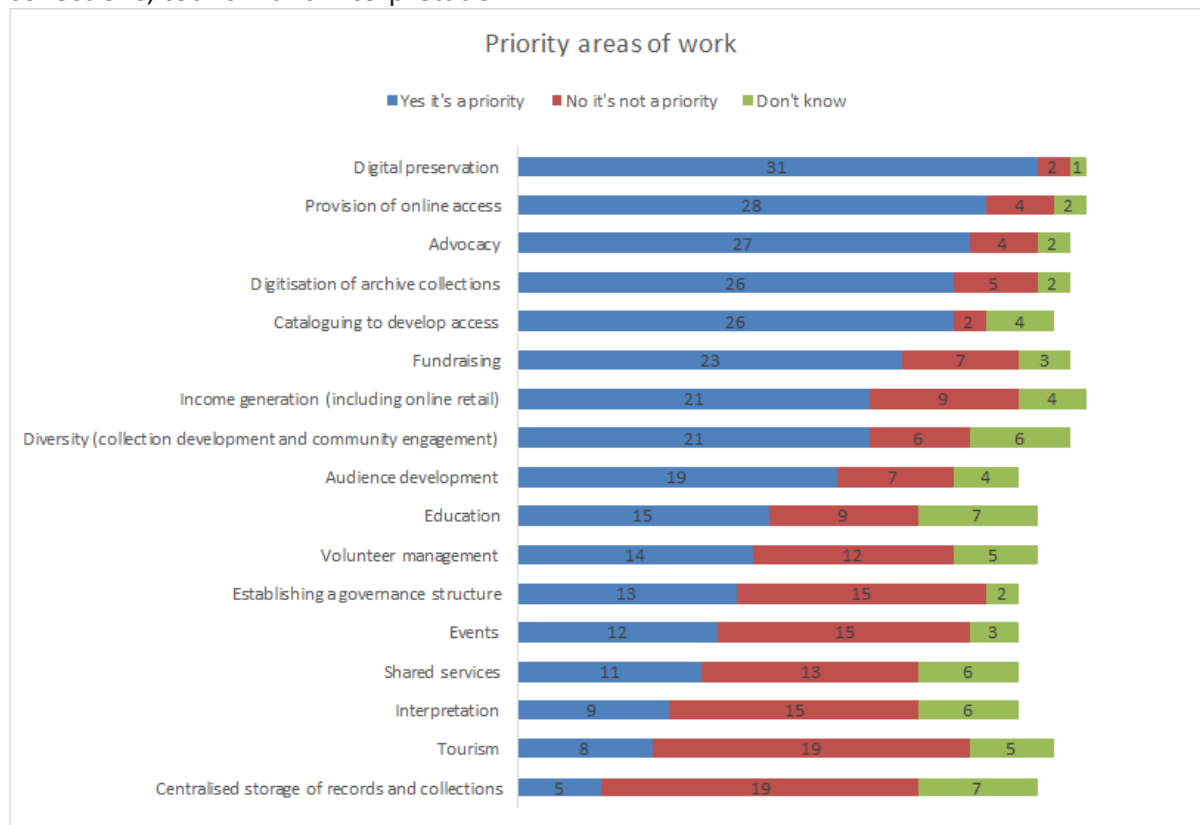


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5.4 Priority areas of work

The table below highlights the areas that network members have identified as priorities. Digital preservation is the most popular priority followed by provision of online access and then advocacy. The areas identified as being of lowest priority are centralised storage of collections, tourism and interpretation.



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6. Future role for TNA

In interviews and in response to the survey network members were very positive about TNA having a future role in the support and further development of networks. When asked 'In your opinion how should TNA support networks in the future?' respondents highlighted financial investment and staff time as being the most useful, often pointing out that staff time was more valuable. Comments included:

"[TNA should] not be timid - reach out to the networks - identify the core partners - not always obvious, but identify those who are committed; don't always think the biggest or most familiar service is in a position to be core partner."

"Finance was undoubtedly useful, but the initiation to get a group in the same room was even more critical."

"The presence of members of the TNA in the early stages kept the momentum going. Facilitate thinking, share knowledge of what's going on elsewhere around the country, and knowledge of what has and hasn't worked elsewhere. Showing how to link the work of the network with TNA strategic thinking."

"TNA should send a representative to all networks meetings and offer TNA support to worthy projects created by the networks."

"Support in the form of our Engagement manager has been critical to our development. Need to find ways to learn from other networks and share successful models. TNA could use the development networks to host TNA training outside of London."

"Provide low levels of investment to lay foundations e.g. to undertake research, bring together baseline data etc."

There was also a point raised about the possibility of TNA viewing networks as a means of 'alternative provision':

"There's a danger that TNA sees Development Networks as an alternative to service provision. While services (especially local government ones) are cut to unsustainable levels, concentrating on Development Networks risks diverting attention from the actual scale of the problem. That said, Development Networks do need input of staff and money from TNA if they are to be successful. Few of us now have sufficient of either to put into projects outside our service."

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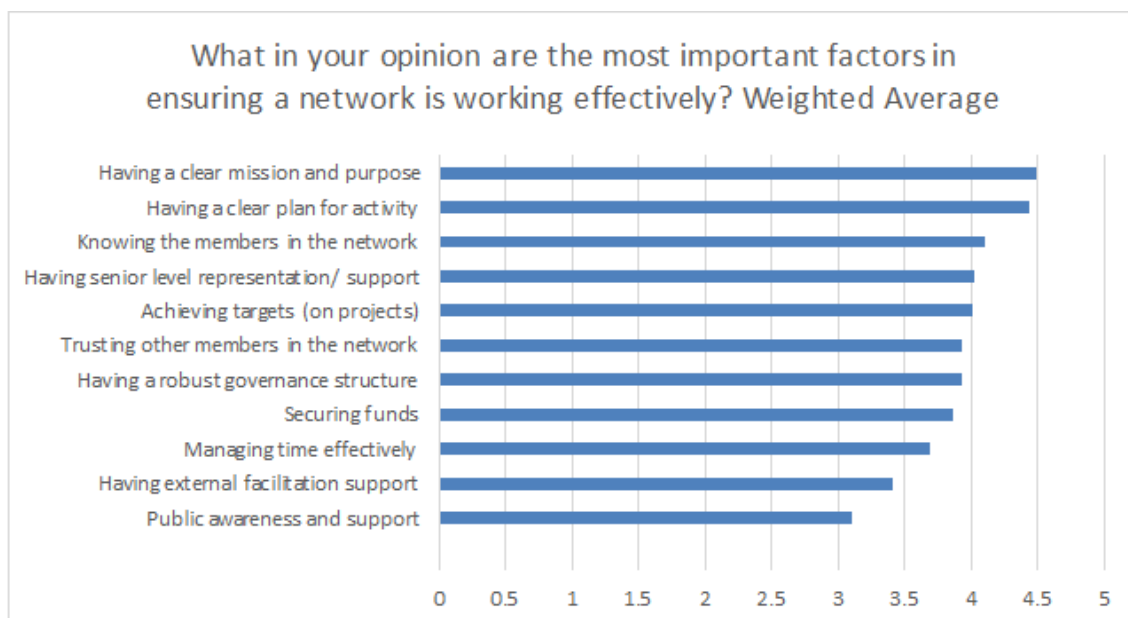
7. Lessons learned

7.1 Effective networks

When asked about the factors which ensure a network is working effectively, respondents to the survey rated having a clear mission and purpose as the most important. This was followed by having a clear plan for activity and knowing the members in the network. The least important factor was public awareness and support.

Having external facilitation support was not considered most important in the survey responses but was referenced as a positive factor in interviews and in one survey response:

“Consultants are more or less essential for this sort of thing, given that this is not an area archivists are trained to operate in.”



7.2 Challenges

The key challenges identified by network members in response to the survey and in interviews related to lack of capacity and resources. In response to the question about challenges and ways they were overcome, comments included:

“Our network severely lacks capacity. We all have demanding full-time jobs and this limits what can currently be achieved.”

“Sometimes getting cover to get to meetings when we are a small office, but the network is generous with its time. We doubled up two surveys for efficiency but it did not really work as the digital survey was the priority and so the second survey topic timescale drifted.”

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“It has been difficult to progress funded projects with different services where they are struggling for survival and therefore not able to commit funding or professional expertise.”

There was also one respondent who noted a challenge with the governance structure:

“Lack of confidence in the governance structure and the role of representation led me to step down and nominate other representatives to reinforce my belief that broad and dynamic representation is important to keep the body relevant and useful. Not sure this did anything but the governance structure now seems much stronger.”

And one who noted the importance of having an external facilitator to help with identifying priorities:

“Differing opinions re priorities/ways forward. Having external facilitator to address these differences and facilitate way forward has ensured partnership continues to develop.”

7.3 Advice for new networks

The following points were raised in interviews when network members were asked to provide advice to others developing networks:

- Know that partnership can be daunting or confusing at times, but go in with an open mind and assume progress is possible.
- Allow enough time. It can take a while to get started/sett up (especially in relation to the availability of consultants and procurement process). Schedule meetings appropriately – regular but not too often.
- Draw up a tight brief when contracting a consultant. Do not just go with the things that are easy to do. Identify what is intrinsic and what is a nice-to-have.
- Identify partnerships which are already there and work to your strengths, including people’s generosity to each other. Having a mix of people on the board gives strength. Listen to what everyone is saying in the group to identify the shared priorities.
- Get the buy-in from the senior managers. This will make your contribution known and heard. Work from the bottom up and get engagement from stakeholders (Bottom up not top down). Get out and promote.
- Focus on specific projects. Use your capacity creatively to identify and act on priorities.
- Enable information sharing and run events that are relevant to how members operate.
- When taking anything on, ask – ‘Does it align with our core focus?’

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8. Recommendations for TNA

Network members are very grateful for the support received from TNA to date. There is a recognition of the role of archive networks in delivering '[Archives Unlocked](#)'. The following recommendations are outlined as suggested ways to enable the sector to benefit most effectively from any future support and investment from The National Archives.

- Network members note that progress would not have been made if it were not for the investment from TNA, both financially and in staff time. TNA should therefore continue supporting networks, with funding and especially with staff time. This should continue to be clearly incorporated into TNA job role descriptions in the Archives Sector Development department and specifically the Regional and Networks Team.
- The funding is allowing archives to take risks and this is required if services are going to innovate and find new ways of working. A healthy risk appetite has evolved and this should be supported by TNA in word and deed.
- Mapping the progress of funded projects was challenging as the information available relating to funded networks was not consistent. Maintaining a self-selection approach to funding (as opposed to TNA identifying potential recipients) is recommended best practice for grant holder engagement. Using a pro-forma or diagnostic for grant applicants which allows the applicant to present their own priorities, but with direct reference to TNA's objectives for the fund overall, would empower individual networks and enable TNA to consistently monitor progress for the Sector Sustainability Fund as a whole.
- The match funding requirement has helped archive services to raise their profile and go through an internal process of advocacy. The requirement to have match funding should continue.
- The network members are keen to know more about other networks and see a role for TNA in enabling the sharing of ideas and opportunities.
- Many network members noted that the network had provided a forum to improve standards, specifically in preparing for Archive Service Accreditation. This role should be firmly acknowledged in future network activity, given the established importance of Archive Service Accreditation for the professional standards of the sector, whether archives are in a network or not.

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- Leadership, governance and management were identified as skills gaps for networks. TNA could provide additional support through training programmes to support this and/or tailor support for networks seeking to develop their governance practice.
- Some networks had not previously worked with consultants or managed a procurement process. This should be indicated at application stage for future funding and TNA should support network members to develop their skills in these areas, also through training programmes.
- The range of networks across the archives sector goes beyond local authority services and those thus far funded by the Sector Sustainability Fund. TNA should consider broadening funding and support opportunities to include other established networks (For example: the Business Archives Council and the Religious Archives Group.).

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9. Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to compile this research and report without the valuable input from network members and staff at TNA. A big thank you to everyone for their insightful contributions. Below is a list of people interviewed as part of the research.

Caroline Edwards, *County Archivist, Hampshire Record Office*
Chris Bennett, *County Archivist, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies*
Chris Webb, *Keeper of Archives, Borthwick Institute for Archives, The University of York*
Gary Tuson, *County Archivist, The Archive Centre, Norfolk Record Office*
Geoff Pick, *Director, London Metropolitan Archives*
Janene Cox, *Commissioner for Culture and Communities, Staffordshire County Council*
Jenny Moran, *Keeper, Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland*
Lorna Lee, *Head of Cultural & Heritage Services, LB Waltham Forest*
Mark Dorrington, *Keeper of Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham*
Mary McKenzie, *Acting Museums and Archives Manager, Shropshire Museums and Archives*
Nick Partridge, *Service Manager Libraries Archives & Information Services, Sheffield Council*
Nikki Nuttall, *Executive Officer, South Western Federation of Museum and Art Galleries*
Paul Stebbing, *Archives and Local Studies Manager, Barnsley Archives*
Pete Evans, *Archives & Heritage Manager, Sheffield City Council*
Philip Cooke, *Citywide Services Manager, Manchester Libraries and Archives*
Shane Downer, *Heritage Officer, Milton Keynes Council*
Sheena Macfarlane, *Head of Heritage, Libraries & Arts, Oldham Council*
Simon McKeon *LB Bexley, Local Studies and Archives Manager, London Borough of Bexley*
Wendy Walker, *County Archivist West Sussex County Council*

TNA staff

Hannah Jones, *Sector Development Manager (East)*
Isobel Hunter, *Head of Archives Sector Development Department*
Keith Sweetmore, *Sector Development Manager (North East and Yorkshire)*
Matt Greenhall, *Head of Academic Engagement*
Owen Munday, *Sector Development Manager (London)*
Tim Powell, *Sector Development Manager (South West)*
Tina Morton, *Head of Regional and Networks Team*

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Appendices

1. Sector Sustainability Fund

TNA's Engagement Team has a small budget to support the development of collaborative archive service networks.

The archives sector is facing considerable challenge, as it is a period of exceptional financial constraint allied with a need to transform the way archive services deliver their services and care for their collections. The sector has recognised the value of collaborative approaches to development – by sharing their existing resources of collections, staff expertise, audience networks and specialist equipment.

TNA hopes to build on existing networks and partnerships, to create sustainable collaborative service networks that will help individual archives become more adaptable and resilient and enable them to focus on the needs of users and local communities and on producing best value for money.

This development projects will engage Heads of Service, archive staff, elected members and other key stakeholders in a development process to agree the potential for collaboration, in order to generate a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and to identify the most appropriate governance model for the collaborative partnership.

CRITERIA

TNA's sector investment fund can make grants of up to £12,000 to support the development of collaborative service networks.

Proposals for project investment will need to demonstrate that they meet all these criteria. These criteria are derived from "lessons learned" from collaborative service projects in Greater Manchester, London and the South East Midlands.

Finances and procurement

Match funding from the participating services (ideally, 50%)

Local partner with ability to receive and manage the grant and match funds, and to meet auditing and reporting requirements

Local partner with ability to procure and contract expert facilitators and consultants

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Participation and Leadership

Commitment to develop collaborative approaches, with a focus on identifying practical strands of work to take forward beyond the initial phase of the project

Existing relationship between services – ideally at the archive manager and senior management level, and strategic commitment to develop these relationships

Participating archives can come from all parts of the archive sector – including local authority, university, charity, business. It is envisaged that local authority services will form the backbone of any partnership

Commitment by participating services to attend steering group, project board and other project meetings – including securing attendance by relevant senior managers

Willingness by one or more service to lead the project, and to lead key strands of work as they develop

Willingness by each service to share data and analytical information across the partnership, to support research, analysis and scoping

Administration

Administrative support from one of the partners (e.g. may include organising meetings, collating papers)

Ability of partners to provide free meetings venues

OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

Objectives

Each project will establish a sustainable collaborative service partnership across a network of archives. The project will consult with heads of service, archive managers and staff and other key stakeholders in order to:

- Identify strategic development opportunities for the archives with a focus on:
 - Improved efficiency
 - Maximising existing assets, including collections, staff expertise, digital preservation, conservation facilities

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- Maintenance of local identities alongside economies of scale
- Developing service standards to meet the Archive Accreditation standard
- Partnerships and joint working
- Potential for income generation, fundraising or inward investment
- Digital infrastructure and service delivery
- Generate a positive vision for the development of this network of archives, shared by heads of service, elected members, archive staff and other key stakeholders
- Generate a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan. Potential areas to explore include:
 - Digitisation of archive collections and provision of online access and retail
 - Audience development to provide a range of experiences for a wide range of people and a channel shift in customer experience
 - Community engagement and collection development to reflect the increasing diversity of the local populations
 - Development of an international online market and inward tourism (including heritage and genealogy tourists, academic researchers)
 - Cataloguing and interpretation projects to develop access to collections
 - Centralised storage of records and collections
 - Establish a governance structure to take the work forward beyond the close of the initial project

Deliverables

- Collaborative vision agreed by the partnership and “owned” by senior management
- Costed business plans derived from a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan
- Governance structure established

Project selection by TNA

The programme as a whole will be managed by the Engagement Team at TNA. Potential collaborative partnership projects will be identified by the Engagement Managers, in liaison with archive services. The Engagement Manager will then bring the proposal to a panel at TNA, which will approve project development, if the proposal meets all the programme

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criteria.

Project governance and management

Each partnership project will have a local governance structure, ideally with budgets and project management devolved to the local level, with TNA representation on the project board. For each project, governance structures will be designed to suit the specific circumstances of the project and partners. However, as a starting point, TNA suggests a two layer structure of Project Board and Steering Group:

Project Board: remit and membership

To take strategic overview of the work, review and sign off at agreed milestones and project completion, agree plan to take forward the recommendations beyond the end of this project.

Membership: senior manager for the participating services and TNA's Engagement Manager.

Steering Group membership and remit

To advise during the research phase of the project to help identify opportunities and constraints, and to take operational responsibility for delivery beyond the close of this project.

Collaborative vision agreed by the partnership and "owned" by senior management Costed business plans derived from a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan Governance structure established

GOVERNANCE

Membership: archive service managers from each archive service and involvement of TNA's Engagement Manager

ARCHIVE DEVELOPMENT: NATIONAL POLICY AND VISION **Archives for the 21st Century** is the government policy on archives that was published in November 2009. The policy makes five recommendations to support an effective, relevant and sustainable archives sector:

- develop bigger and better services in partnership - working towards increased sustainability within the sector;
- strengthened leadership and a responsive, skilled workforce;
- coordinated response to the growing challenges of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future;
- comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitised archive content;
- active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of

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identity and place within the community.

In summer 2012 a refreshed action plan was published to reflect the evolving policy environment: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archives-21-century.htm>

The new **Archive Service Accreditation Standard** is currently being developed in partnership with archives sector stakeholders across the UK. It will be the UK standard for archive services. The standard defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development.

In a time of exceptional financial constraint and competition for resources, the need for archives to demonstrate their value robustly and consistently has never been greater. Archive Service Accreditation will help organizations become more adaptable, resilient and sustainable by embedding a culture of sector-led continuous improvement, focusing on the needs of users and local communities and on producing best value for money.

2. Interview questions – TNA

- Has TNA investment supported the creation of ‘sustainable collaborative service networks’? Did it help:
 - *Individual archives become more adaptable and resilient?*
 - *Archives to focus on the needs of users and local communities?*
 - *Archives to produce best value for money?*
- How were the network established in your area(s)? (who was involved)
- What was outlined within the funding agreements – how many have there been?
- What activities were funded by the Sector Sustainability Fund?
- What impact did the fund had on archive services (what, if anything, changed as a result)?
- What are the lessons learned through the process (what worked well/could be done differently)?
- Do you have any key pointers for anyone considering developing a collaborative service network (dos and don’ts)?
- What, if any, potential do you see for developing networks in future – what should stay/change/not be repeated?

Prompts

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Have the networks (to your knowledge):

- Identified strategic development opportunities for the archives (including; improved efficiency, maximising assets, maintenance of local identities, developing service standards, partnerships, funding)?
- Generated a positive vision for the development of the network?
- Generated a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan?
- Established a governance structure?

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3. Interview questions – Network leads

- In your opinion has TNA investment has supported the creation of ‘sustainable collaborative service networks’? Did it help:
 - *Individual archives become more adaptable and resilient?*
 - *Archives to focus on the needs of users and local communities?*
 - *Archives to produce best value for money?*
- How was the network established? / What was outlined within the funding agreements/ what were the expectations on both sides?
- What activities were funded?
- What impact has the fund had on archive services? (what, if anything, changed as a result)? The following may be asked as follow on questions depending on responses.
 - *Did it help individual archives become more adaptable and resilient?*
 - *Did it enable archive services to focus on the needs of users and local communities?*
 - *Did it support services looking at ways of producing best value for money?*
- What (if any) lessons have you learned through the process (what worked well/could be done differently)?
- Do you have any key pointers for anyone considering developing a collaborative service network (dos and don’ts)?
- What remit (if any) do you see for TNA and the sector supporting networks in future – what should stay/change/not be repeated?

Prompts

Has the network:

- Identified strategic development opportunities for the archives (including; improved efficiency, maximising assets, maintenance of local identities, developing service standards, partnerships, funding)
- Generated a positive vision for the development of the network
- Generated a list of strategic development opportunities with potential resourcing options and outline action plan
- Established a governance structure

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4. Survey questions

1. Which archive network are you a member of? If you are a member of more than one network please focus on one for the purpose of this survey.

- Archives First
- Archives for Yorkshire
- Archives West Midlands
- East Midlands Regional Archives Council
- East of England Regional Archive Council
- Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)
- London Archives Partnership
- SEMLAP
- South West Fed
- South Yorkshire Archives Partnership

2. From the list below please indicate all areas you believe to be represented across the network – (please tick all that apply)

- Archive Services
- Museums
- Libraries
- Local studies
- User groups
- Universities
- Local Authority services
- Independent archives
- Other (please specify)

3. What investment if any has been made by TNA and Network members in the network? (funding/ staff time/ volunteer time/ other in-kind/ don't know)?

- TNA
- Network members
- If other please comment

4. From the list below please indicate if these are areas of priority or not for your network

- Digital preservation
- Cataloguing to develop access
- Provision of online access
- Advocacy
- Digitisation of archive collections
- Diversity (collection development and community engagement)
- Fundraising
- Audience development
- Income generation (including online retail)
- Education
- Volunteer management
- Shared services

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- Interpretation
- Events
- Establishing a governance structure
- Tourism
- Centralised storage of records and collections

5. *To what extent do you believe the network has identified the following development opportunities?*

- Ways to improve efficiency
- Ways to maximise existing assets, including collections, staff expertise, digital preservation, conservation facilities
- Maintenance of local identities alongside economies of scale
- Developing service standards to meet the Archive Service Accreditation standard
- Income generation, fundraising or inward investment
- Digital infrastructure and service delivery

6. *To what extent do you believe the network has achieved the following?*

Generated a positive vision of archives (among the network members)

- Shared a positive vision with heads of service
- Shared a positive vision with Elected members
- Shared a positive vision with archive staff
- Shared a positive vision with other key stakeholders
- Please comment on your response above

7. *What do you enjoy most about the network and what in your opinion have been the key successes?*

8. *What in your opinion are the most important factors in ensuring a network is working effectively?*

- Having a clear mission and purpose
- Having a clear plan for activity
- Knowing the members in the network
- Having senior level representation/ support
- Achieving targets (on projects)
- Having a robust governance structure
- Trusting other members in the network
- Securing funds
- Managing time effectively
- Having external facilitation support
- Public awareness and support

9. *Please highlight any challenges you have encountered working with the network and if you found a way to overcome them.*

10. *In your opinion how should TNA support networks in the future? Please also share here any additional comments you may have about the Development Networks.*

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5. Grants Awarded

Network	Grant awarded	Match funding	Cash	In-kind
Archives First	10,250.00			
Archives First	7,000.00	9,300.00	800.00	8,500.00
Archives for Yorkshire	1,200.00	800.00	300.00	500.00
Archives West Midlands	1,710.00	1,404.00		1,404.00
Archives West Midlands	10,000.00			
East Midlands Regional Archives Council	12,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	
East of England Regional Archive Council	7,000.00	7,000.00	7,000.00	
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	10,000.00	14,000.00	14,000.00	
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	7,000.00	4,000.00		4,000.00
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	3,000.00	1,500.00	1,000.00	500.00
London Archives Partnership	25,000.00			
London Archives Partnership	8,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00	
London Archives Partnership	6,000.00	4,750.00		4,750.00
SEMLAP	10,000.00	7,000.00		7,000.00

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South West Fed	5,000.00	10,400.00	10,400.00	
South West Fed	5,000.00	6,900.00	3,000.00	3,900.00
South West Fed	10,000.00	5,500.00		5,500.00
South Yorkshire Archives Partnership	6,000.00	6,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Totals	144,160.00	124,554.00	85,500.00	39,054.00
Grant and match	268,714.00			

Network	Grant awarded	Match funding	Cash	In-kind
Archives First	10,250.00			
Archives First	7,000.00	11,500.00	800.00	8,500.00
Archives for Yorkshire	1,200.00	800.00	300.00	500.00
Archives West Midlands	1,710.00	1,404.00		1,404.00
Archives West Midlands	10,000.00			
East Midlands Regional Archives Council	12,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	
East of England Regional Archive Council	7,000.00	7,000.00		
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	10,000.00	£14,000		
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	7,000.00	4,000.00		4,000.00
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)	3,000.00	1,500.00	1,000.00	500.00
London Archives Partnership	25,000.00			
London Archives Partnership	8,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00	
London Archives Partnership	6,000.00	4,750.00		4,750.00
SEMLAP	10,000.00	7,000.00		7,000.00

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South West Fed	5,000.00	£10,400 (ACE Funding)		
South West Fed	5,000.00	6,900.00	3,000.00	3,900.00
South West Fed	10,000.00	5,500.00		5,500.00
South Yorkshire Archives Partnership	6,000.00	6,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Totals	144,160.00	102,354.00	54,100.00	39,054.00
Grant and match	246,514.00			