

Manchester Museum – Consultancy Brief

Recognising and Embedding Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and Data Sovereignty in UK collections management practice

1. Introduction and Context

Manchester Museum is a values-led institution and one of the UK's largest university museums, caring for over 4.5 million objects from across its Humanities and Natural Sciences collections. As part of The University of Manchester, the Museum is deeply embedded in a research-rich environment and is committed to social responsibility, inclusion, and sustainability.

The Museum's mission is to build understanding between cultures and contribute to a more sustainable world. This mission is underpinned by three core values:

- Inclusion – fostering collaboration and co-production, foregrounding diverse perspectives, and ensuring relevance to the communities it serves.
- Imagination – engaging with big ideas, storytelling, and critical inquiry to explore important questions and research.
- Care – caring for people, relationships, and objects to build empathy, understanding, and love for our world and each other.

These values are not abstract ideals but are actively embedded in the Museum's operations, programming, and strategic direction. In 2023, Manchester Museum completed a major redevelopment designed to create inclusive, welcoming spaces and to foreground community collaboration and co-creation. This includes a commitment to confronting colonial legacies and supporting the unconditional repatriation of cultural heritage to communities of origin where a clear case is made.

The Museum is now seeking to extend this values-led approach into the realm of collections information and data governance, particularly in relation to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty. While UK law currently lacks formal recognition of Indigenous data rights, Manchester Museum aims to take a leadership role by formally recognising these rights and giving them quasi-legal status within its practices. The Museum was recently awarded full accreditation status by Arts Council England and has a solid base of policies and procedures on which to build upon.

This consultation brief is a key step in that journey. It seeks expert input to help the Museum align its policies and procedures with international best practice, including the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics). The Museum's goal is to embed cultural rights and traditional knowledge into its documentation and data-sharing practices in ways that are ethical, equitable, and community-led.

2. Purpose of the Consultation

The Museum is commissioning a consultation to:

- Review and synthesise national and international best practice in ICIP and Indigenous data governance.
- Develop practical tools, policy statements, and procedural guidance to embed Indigenous rights and values into museum practice.
- Support the Museum in aligning with the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics).

3. Scope of Work

The consultation will deliver the following outputs:

1. Best Practice Reviews

- A review of UK-based best practice in ICIP, data sovereignty, and cultural rights within heritage and related sectors.
- An international review focusing on heritage organisations in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, and North America.
- To be delivered as a written report that compares the different approaches and challenges.

2. Policy and Procedural Development

- Draft policy statements for integration into the Museum's existing Spectrum (UK Museum Collection Management Standard) aligned policies.
- Recommendations for adapting existing Museum procedures to recognise and observe Indigenous cultural rights, practices, and traditional knowledge. This will require an overview of current procedures sufficient to inform relevant recommendations, but not a full procedural review.

- Templates for agreements that would include but are not limited to: Memorandum of Understanding; Indigenous Data Sharing Agreement; Cultural Protocol Agreement; Traditional Knowledge Licensing Agreement.

3. Object-Level Documentation Guidance

- Examples and models for embedding and recording cultural rights, knowledge, and practices into object-level documentation.
- Guidance on integrating the CARE Principles into collections information systems and workflows.

4. Summary Review

- Presentation/learning session delivered to the Museum team

4. Stakeholder Engagement

The successful consultant will be expected to engage with organisations whom are leading the sector in this area as part of the consultation process. This would include, but not be limited to, the following organisations:

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- Australian Museum
- Field Museum, Chicago
- Localcontexts.org
- Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia
- National Museum of the American Indian
- Te Papa Tongarewa (Museum of New Zealand)
- U'mista Cultural Centre
- Whakatāne Museum and Arts

5. Budget and Timeline

- Budget: £10,000 - £20,000 (exclusive of VAT)
- Project Completion Deadline: End-December 2025 (with some room for flexibility)

6. Response Requirements and Award Criteria

We are open to collaborative or consortium proposals and to international submissions; but at least one member of the team should have a good understanding of the UK specific context for this work. Interested parties are invited to submit a proposal that includes:

Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A CV and narrative outlining project personnel expertise in this area- 2 examples that demonstrate experience of working on similar projects- Please also provide contact details for a referee that demonstrates your ability in these areas	40%
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A statement of understanding of the brief and its aims- A proposed methodology and outline workplan along with specified deliverables	40%
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A fixed fee for the work including expenses- A breakdown and indicative timetable that outlines the number of days you will commit to the project and when- Breakdown of what you have and have not included in the scope of your response	20%
Contacts	Contact details for all correspondence, including email address, postal address and telephone number(s).	

7. Submission and Contact

We're asking for submissions and references to be returned by **4pm Monday 13 October**

Please send questions and submissions electronically to:

John Peel

Collections Information Manager

Manchester Museum

john.peel@manchester.gov.uk

Receipt of submissions will be acknowledged by email.

Submissions will be informed of the outcome along with feedback by Friday 17 October