

Press Release  
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## The Audience Agency receives funding to boost digital development in heritage organisations

The Audience Agency is among the successful organisations awarded funding by The National Lottery Heritage Fund **Digital Skills for Heritage** initiative, to increase digital skills and confidence across the UK heritage sector. National Lottery funded **Digital Skills for Heritage** has expanded thanks to an additional £1 million from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund.

The Audience Agency's **#digital7 Digitally Democratising Archives** project is one of 12 grants announced on 18 March 2021. These grants were awarded to address three distinct areas: driving digital innovation and enterprise, providing answers to organisations' most pressing concerns, and empowering collaborative work to achieve common aims. The funding will be used to support and train the archive practitioners to develop their digital engagement skills to build and sustain relationships with communities.

The Audience Agency will work with partners Golant Innovation and The National Archives, as well as a steering group and consultant Lara Ratnaraja. The centrepiece of the project will be a number of action research projects that are designed to digitally engage communities with archives. The projects will be selected from an open call, in partnership with The National Archives' [Digital Archive Learning Exchange](#) network, combined with targeted invitations to ensure representation from across archives and different communities.

Digital skills are more relevant and necessary than ever as heritage organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic look toward a more resilient future. In October 2020, The National Lottery Heritage Fund published the findings of its survey of over 4,000 staff, trustees and volunteers at 281 heritage organisations, identifying the current digital skills and attitudes of the sector. The

hello@theaudienceagency.org  
www.theaudienceagency.org

results highlighted what tools and training organisations needed to weather the coronavirus pandemic and move forward into a more resilient and creative future.

Anne Torreggiani, CEO of The Audience Agency says:

*“We feel strongly that investment in heritage through archives should have a genuinely democratising effect particularly through the opportunities that digital offers. I am enormously excited about the prospect of working with creative people in the sector to find new and inclusive ways of opening up our heritage through the many and varied archives which represent the lives of our communities . We’re also looking forward to sharing learning more widely and playing a part in shaping future practice.”*

Emma Markiewicz, Head of Archive Sector Development, The National Archives says:

*“The National Archives is excited to be working with The Audience Agency on such an important and innovative new project. Opening up archives and engaging new audiences is key to a sustainable and vibrant sector with digital skills at its heart.”*

Lara Ratnaraja, Associate and key member of the project team says:

*“Lockdown saw an exponential rise in the engagement of digital culture for a wider diversity of audience. I am delighted to be working with The Audience Agency on the Digital Democratising project to further open up access to archives for people to explore their culture and identity. This approach to inclusive archives ensures unheard stories are centred and this project gives people agency to tell their own stories and discover how to do this digitally.”*

Josie Fraser, Head of Digital Policy at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, says:

*“Throughout the coronavirus pandemic we have all seen the essential role that digital*

[hello@theaudienceagency.org](mailto:hello@theaudienceagency.org)

[www.theaudienceagency.org](http://www.theaudienceagency.org)

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*skills have played in helping heritage organisations continue to work, communicate and connect. We are proud that our National Lottery funded **Digital Skills for Heritage** projects have provided the sector with practical support when it has been most needed.*

*The £1 million Culture Recovery Fund boost from DCMS recognises the value of digital skills and allows us to expand the initiative. These new grants focus on what organisations have told us they need most - digital innovation, enterprise and business skills to improve and rethink how the sector operates.”*

Caroline Dinenage, Minister for Digital and Culture, says:

*“I have been really impressed by the innovative ways that sites and projects have already pivoted during the pandemic, but now more than ever it is essential that our heritage sector has the latest digital skills to bring our history to life online. This £1 million boost from the Culture Recovery Fund will ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills they need to keep caring for the past and conserving for the future through the sector's reopening and recovery.”*

Read more about the awards here: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/digital-skills-projects-will-support-resilience-and-creativity-heritage>

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For press enquiries, interviews, quotations or further information contact: Rosie Hanley, PR & Communications Manager, The Audience Agency  
E: [rosie.hanley@theaudienceagency.org](mailto:rosie.hanley@theaudienceagency.org)

hello@theaudienceagency.org  
www.theaudienceagency.org