



Chelsea Physic Garden

Audience Strategy 2026-2036

Brief for Consultant

Date: October 2025

Project lead and contact details:

Project Director – Laura Ferguson lferguson@chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

Key Stakeholders:

Head of Learning & Public Engagement

Visitor Experience Director

The Director

Commercial Director

Development Director

Project Director

Project Start Date: on award of the contract – Autumn 2025

Project Completion Date:

Phase 1 – Audience Strategy: by March 2026

Phase 2 – Learning & Engagement Plan: by October 2026

1. Overview

Chelsea Physic Garden (CPG) is London's oldest 'outdoor classroom', with stories as powerful today as they were when the Garden was founded in 1673. With a footfall of circa 55,000 visitors and learners per annum, we are looking to develop a new audience strategy that aligns with CPG's vision, encompasses all our touchpoints as a conduit to sustain existing audiences and grow new ones. The Garden's new vision, summarised below:

- We champion horticultural innovation and craft to safeguard biodiversity
- We create enriching experiences so that a greater diversity of people can find wellbeing in the natural world
- We cultivate curiosity and inspire lifelong learning by connecting people with nature
- We will reimagine our natural, built, and digital environment by regenerating our estate to enhance, protect and sustain our green space
- We will ensure a sustainable future; environmentally, socially and financially

As we look to the future, our focus remains on the broadening and diversifying of audiences, bringing in new perspectives, and expanding our reach locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. A key aim of our strategy will be to deepen engagement with our plant collections and historic archive, through on-site experiences and off-site outreach and engagement.

The new audience strategy will bring to life our vision *‘to inspire wonder, wellbeing and discovery by uniting people with plants that heal’* and our mission to *demonstrate plants’ medicinal, economic, cultural, and environmental value*. At the heart of this will be experiences that excite and inspire. A key outcome of the audience strategy will be to increase the impact of the garden for our visitors, and to contribute to its financial stability.

It is envisaged that the audience strategy will form the overarching framework informing several delivery plans, such as; visitor experience, commercial, volunteers, learning and public programmes.

The audience strategy will provide the rationale for our future built environment and what activities will be supported, as part of a longer-term architectural masterplan. It will help us improve visitor experience, enabling richer content programming, and inform the spaces required to deliver them. A review of the Garden’s current on-site facilities has been undertaken to highlight the priority areas for redevelopment;

- Welcome spaces and visitor facilities
- Whole site accessibility
- Learning capacity and facilities
- Indoor venue hire spaces
- Catering and retail spaces
- The interconnectedness of the Garden and enabling buildings

We are committed to remaining relevant to a broad a range of audiences, from diverse backgrounds and with a range of lived experiences. This new strategy recognises that relevance cannot be one-size-fits-all, and we will continue to collaborate with our audiences to co-create formal and informal programming and learning experiences.

Audience Insights

As part of the underpinning work for the architectural masterplan, we commissioned research with Focus Consultants (June 2024) into business planning for new spaces, and subsequently audience development research with Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM)(February 2025).

Key recommendations from Focus included a move to Saturday opening, targeted and enhanced programming and investment in marketing resource. They also noted that separate audience research was needed as well as a detailed review of the public and family programmes.

MHM were then commissioned to undertake this research which revealed a potential for growth in two key target groups, however highlighted low market awareness and perceptions of CPG as being inaccessible (price point, location, demographics). In addition to externally commissioned work, the internal team carried out a review of existing public programme, as well as recommending the mapping of non-user audiences.

Engagement Objectives

As part of our major NLHF-funding project (2019 – 2023), a set of learning principles were developed (see below). We have now reached the end of the current plan and wish to develop new priorities and deliverables from 2026-2031, based on the above

findings and in alignment with our masterplan redevelopment aims (including a review of new NLHF process and what could be delivered through its support). Our programmes aim to plant the seeds of lifelong learning and to create a deep connection with nature, climate and environment. We plan to grow and revitalise our programme, to develop content to reflect the Garden's historic and botanical heritage, while continuing to adapt to the needs of today's learners and visitors.

- **Discovery through stories:** opening the Garden and its collections to reach and engage with audiences
- **A Garden for All:** developing programmes of activities to promote inclusion and to reduce social isolation, whilst teaching people skills for life
- **Healthy Cities & Communities:** generate understanding of the role of urban green spaces and personal wellbeing to create healthy cities and communities
- **Environmental Ownership:** promoting behavioral changes to empower and enable everyone to care for the planet, developing skills for life.
- **Strong Foundations:** establish sustainable practice throughout the management of the department, to contribute to the vision, mission, values and organisational sustainability of Chelsea Physic Garden.

Stories and Content

The audience strategy will review and organise our current interpretation plan, programming approach and will define the future content targets and process within a site wide content framework. It is our aim to link our plant collection with wider Garden stories and collections content, based on a thematic approach and in a structured manner. We expand our reach by working collaboratively with partners, horticulturalists, ecologists, artists, creatives, and community organisations. We want to introduce elements of co-creation into our programming by working with communities and target audiences to create authentic content. Another programming aim is to create experiences that inspire people to use horticulture in their everyday lives and support people wishing to enter the sector, especially those facing barriers. All content should feed back into our interpretation planning and hierarchy for a holistic approach.

2. Consultant Brief

CPG seek to appoint a consultant to carry out two phases of work which will be appointed sequentially.

Phase 1 – Audience Strategy

We seek a consultant to work with the Garden's leadership team through the Project Director (Director, Deputy Directors, Head of Learning), public engagement and learning team to develop an audience strategy.

The audience strategy will define our current as well as potential audience groups. It will provide clarity on how these groups can be centered on the Garden's mission and vision as well as highlighting how the Garden is uniquely placed to deliver high-impact outdoor engagement experiences across the board.

It will set high level audience targets / goals and define individual audience delivery plans required to achieve them.

The audience strategy will provide the rationale for future changes envisaged to the Garden – physically, operationally, financially and culturally.

This strategy should be based over a 10-year period and consider the likely changes over that period looking short, medium and long term at the Garden and determining what is achievable at each scale. The detail will sit within each delivery plan but the overarching strategy must form clear aims / targets to ensure a continuous approach.

Deliverables - Phase 1 – Audience Strategy

- Organisation contextualization exercise
- Gap analysis and critical evaluation of existing material
- Workshops with key stakeholders to gather feedback and expectations
- Define audiences and targets/goals in alignment with CPG vision
- Define required delivery plans as well as high level aims / targets for each
- Outline structure of content framework
- Draft Audience strategy 2026
- Final Audience strategy 2026

Phase 2 – Learning & Engagement Plan

Following the creation of the audience strategy we will then look to develop each of the portfolio's delivery plans starting with the learning and engagement plan.

This plan will define how learning and engagement will be achieved over the next 10-years. Considering short, medium and long term deliverables broadly defined within the audience strategy.

The plan should allow the Garden to connect its engagement objectives (defined in the audience strategy) with all areas of the business to provide a continuous offer. As part of this plan a site wide content framework should be refined based on a review of the existing interpretation plan and relevant data and reports. The plan should outline a sustainable funding model, whether through income-generating activities or external funding opportunities. It should define initiatives that maximize engagement with key audiences, particularly considering fundraising for Masterplan and delivery of the 10-year vision. This means that we need to view delivery on multiple scales and timelines.

- a) 1 – 3 year – Improving what we can deliver within our current constraints / small scale changes
- b) 3 - 5 years – Planning for and delivering of masterplan
- c) 5 years plus - Setting our long-term ambition and requirements that will enable us to enhance our offer and growth model post masterplan

The outcome will be a robust commercial programme for learning and engagement that offers a dynamic year-round calendar of events, while co-curating initiatives designed to engage and reach underrepresented audiences, to make the Garden a truly inclusive space for everyone.

Deliverables - Phase 2 – Learning and engagement plan

- Define the gardens learning and engagement objectives
- Benchmarking exercise – Provide an understanding of opportunities open to the garden, pitfalls of other institutions, highlight where the garden is unique (this needs to be scalable with the institution)
- 10-year delivery programme (Considering what is achievable with garden resourcing now, what is achievable to deliver during masterplan delivery, what could be achieved with future improvements, what steps we would need to do achieve this, including additional NLHF funded deliverables)
- Defined approach for the following,
 - Insight evaluation plan
 - Prioritised storytelling and interpretation and themes (related to CPG Mission and audience strategy targets)
 - Detailed site wide content framework and interpretation plan review and recommendations for future changes / improvements
 - Ways to connect content holistically across all aspects of the institution (tactile and digital)

- Recommendations for new initiatives / platforms we are not yet delivering (tactile and digital) – including target growth and expected results
- Recommendations for potential growth of current initiatives (tactile and digital) and rationalization of what is being delivered – including target growth and expected results (what are we doing well and could improve on and what is not working)
- Alternative plan / offer during masterplan delivery (based on a reduced offer and visitor numbers)
- Recommended content delivery channels
- Growth plan with projections of expected results (Business Planning)
- Draft learning and engagement plan 2026-2036
- Complete learning and engagement plan 2026-2036 report, ready for publication

4. Timescales (Indicative)

Date	Activity
October 2025	Tender and brief published
November 2025	Application deadline
November 2025	Consultant selected and contract awarded
Phase 1 – Audience Strategy	
November 2025	Planning and onboarding
November 2025-January 2026	Research, analysis, writing, workshops
January-February 2026	Editing, diagram and coordination
March 2026	Final version delivered
Phase 2 – Learning and engagement plan	
May – July 2026	Research, writing, case studies, content development, workshops
August - September 2026	Editing, diagram and coordination
September 2026	Final version delivered

5. Application Requirements

Please provide the following application requirements to lferguson@chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk:

Provide a lump sum fee proposal (for each phase)

- a) Fee proposal for Phase 1 – Audience Strategy
- b) Fee proposal for Phase 2 – Learning and engagement plan

Include for each,

- Outline of process and resourcing (noting any exclusions)
- Two relevant case study examples of delivered strategy projects, include, methodology, resourcing, key learnings

Include_1 set applicable to both fee proposals;

Quality assurance documents

- CV
- At least two organisations that we can approach for references
- Consultancy rate schedule for time charges

Deadlines and responses

Pre submission questions should be sent to the Project Lead by: 31st October (responses by end of day 4th November)

Submission Deadline: 7th November

Interviews: w/c: 17th November

Appointment Announcement: 21st November

6. Selection Criteria

Criteria	Weighting
Writing clarity and persuasiveness	25%
Experience with strategic documents	15%
Project management and analytical skills	15%
Understanding of outdoor learning contexts	15%
Ability to meet deadlines and work within time constraints	10%
Value for money/indicative budget	10%
Total:	100%

Note - Chelsea Physic Garden will provide on appointment:

- Access to internal data including learning and public programme activities, the Directors and key staff
- Meeting space (if required)
- Support from the learning and engagement teams