

Invitation to Tender for:

**Signature Events Spring 2023**

**September 22 to April 23**

**Contract No. EVENT/22/2**

1. OVERVIEW
   1. We require the services of an established and highly experienced organisation, with a proven track record in this field, to develop our existing concept, and lead on all aspects of project management, delivery, community development, additional income leverage, and evaluation for our final Seed Event in Ashford Town Centre for Spring 2023.
   2. Alongside this Specification, please also refer to the Draft Form of Agreement to ensure obligations can be met, including ABC’s Service Support obligations.
2. SCOPE OF SERVICE
   1. Set in the heart of Kent, with a mix of urban areas, market towns, idyllic countryside and new developments, Ashford is one of the fastest growing areas in the South East. Undoubtedly, Ashford’s highly accessible national and international transport links play a major part in the attraction of Ashford as a destination to work, live and experience. As Ashford’s population increases, and the landscape changes, so has its level of activity and interest in festivals, events and the demand for a visible cultural offer by residents and key cultural partners.
   2. Many lessons have been learnt from the experience of ABC directly delivering, commissioning out, piloting, hosting and supporting events in Ashford, especially over the last 5 years. This experience has been used to set a new and clear direction for ABC’s support and delivery for festivals and events in the Ashford borough, in the Ashford Festival & Events Framework, which was adopted by Cabinet on the 16th December 2021.
   3. This framework includes an overview of Ashford’s current offer with a delivery plan that links to the Corporate Plan 2022-24 and the benefits festivals and events can bring. The framework includes proposals for two key seasonal “Signature Events” and two “Seed Events” for the Council to commit to, to help ensure the borough has a broad, diverse, and attractive programme. These seed and signature events hope to build upon the success of recent events such as [The Fabric of Ashford](https://www.ashford.gov.uk/news/latest-news/fabric-of-ashford-weaves-magic-back-into-the-high-street/), [Carnival of the Baubles](https://www.ashford.gov.uk/news/latest-news/carnival-of-the-baubles-is-back-with-a-bang/), and compliment ABC’s most recent commissions for 2022 to celebrate Ashford and the Railways with [All Change for Ashford](http://www.thecompanyuk.com/#future), the marking of the [Queen’s Platinum Jubilee](https://www.ashford.gov.uk/news/latest-news/ashford-to-mark-queen-s-platinum-jubilee-in-2022-with-community-led-programme/) and [Create Music Village](http://www.createmusicvillage.co.uk).
   4. ABC is keen to ensure that Ashford’s cultural activity and profile is appropriate for such a rapidly expanding and evolving place. It is also vital that these Signature and Seed Events contribute to meeting the council’s Corporate Plan key themes: Green Pioneer; Caring Ashford; and Targeted Growth and we know that there are a multitude of opportunities and benefits that new commissions and programmes of events can deliver against.
   5. The themes, objectives and key opportunities highlighted in the Ashford Festival & Events Framework are;
   6. **THEME 1: Strengthening culture, identity and civic pride.**

* **Objective CA4:** Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility.
  + **Outcome:** Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding.

**KEY OPPORTUNITY:** Strengthen Ashford’s reputation as a caring borough by commissioning and supporting events that embrace inclusion and empowers communities.

* 1. **THEME 2: Enlivening spaces to support Ashford and the town centre become renowned for quality experiences**
* **Objective TG4:** Support growth in the visitor economy.
  + **Outcome:** Ashford is a ‘year-round’ visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences.
* **Objective TG5:** Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents, visitors and business.
  + **Outcome:** Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities.

**KEY OPPORTUNITY:** Establish a strong calendar of events that maximises Ashford’s location, assets, and recent event successes in the town centre.

* 1. **THEME 3: Developing arts, culture and creativity to support the local economy and environment**
* **Objective TG1:** Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough.
  + **Outcome:** The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes.
* **Objective CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment.** 
  + **Outcome:** Local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability.
* **Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles** 
  + **Outcome:** Communities urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment.

**KEY OPPORTUNITY:** Ensure events attract, support and grow our creative industries, wider job creation and connects with strategic agendas.

1. SUGGESTED SEED EVENT

**Context**

* 1. The following suggested ‘Seed Event’ for Spring 2023 will represent ABC’s second seed event commission.
  2. Our first commission [Create Music Village](http://www.createmusicvillage.co.uk) led by [Revelation Ashford](http://www.revelationashford.co.uk) has reimagined the much loved Create Music Festival by empowering a consortium of local businesses, working alongside a music programming arts venue, to create a grassroots ‘Music Village’ in the Town Centre.
  3. This new brand and concept has already started to attract significant sponsorship and investment from a range of funding bodies including Arts Council England.
  4. The approach has already started to positively provide a strategic and coordinated response to programming high quality local talent, attracting new audiences to come to the town and is supporting the night-time economy. There are also lots of skills development and social impact opportunities for local volunteers, Ashford College students, and young people on employment programmes, and we hope to continue to grow this work in partnership over the coming years.

**Early concept & working title**

* 1. ***Ashford Street Mural Festival*** is a suggested working title for Spring 2023. It is a Street Art Festival or trail, with the aim of temporarily transforming some Ashford Town Centre locations with high quality mural paintings and bespoke integrated artwork.
  2. In year one we would like:
     1. High quality creative commissions animating blank walls, bring back to life vacant retail units, and animate our public realm.
     2. To use this opportunity to bring together some of Ashford’s most creative individuals and entrepreneurial stakeholders.
     3. To engage our residents in imaginative experiences, as well as amplify key positive messages (such as green and healthy lifestyles).
     4. To be able take visitors (walking and cycling) to places they wouldn’t normally – helping us to change perceptions of an area.
     5. A small associated programme of events and activities that help develop skills locally and attract new audiences to Ashford.
     6. Additional investment (financial and/or in kind) to maximise and grow opportunities.
     7. A new brand created and developed, with a suitable Marketing & Communications Plan.
  3. This event will be part of one of many initiatives undertaken by ABC to deliver public realm improvement schemes and interventions in the town centre to build confidence in the town centre and as a place for wider investment.

1. CONTRACT PERIOD
   1. Approximately an eight month contract with potential to recommission following review.
2. DELIVERY APPROACH AND PROJECT
   1. To maximise available resources, a cross-department officer group will commission, set KPIs and monitor the new programme of events in close collaboration with the successful applicant.
   2. It is suggested that the Long-term outcome measures (KPI’s) for the Festival & Events Framework are:
      1. Increase in the % of residents saying that they feel part of the community.
      2. Increase in the % of residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
      3. Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that their local area is a good place to live.
      4. Footfall increases in the town centre on event days and across the year as a whole.
      5. % of residents who come into the town centre regularly during the day and at night.
      6. Increase in turnover that supports local businesses, developments and initiatives.
      7. Development of the arts and cultural industry offer in Ashford.
      8. Support the development of local creatives and community groups to put on more events and activity.
      9. Develop more identity for Ashford through the delivery of a large scale town centre events.
      10. Reduce Vacancy Rates in Ashford Town Centre.
3. ABC’s SUPPORT AND OBLIGATIONS:
   1. ABC and a newly formed internal working group will work with the successful bidder to:
      1. Outline roles and responsibilities for all organisations and partners involved.
      2. Develop your proposal with expertise in the Culture and Economic Development team.
      3. Facilitate any collaborations with other individuals, organisations, landlords and businesses if relevant to your proposal, providing contacts and networks to elevate the activity.
      4. Provide guidance from ABC’s Safety Advisory Group, Planning, Heritage, Town Centre, Communications and Licencing teams.
      5. For further information on ABC’s Support and Obligations, please see Service Support section in the Draft Form of Agreement.