

Request for Proposal (RFP) for scoping a Wellcome Data Prize (WDP) in Pain

1. RFP Background & Objectives

Wellcome is running a series of data prizes to use the power of data to transform how science solves urgent health challenges facing everyone. Wellcome Data Prizes (WDPs) provide seed funding to multidisciplinary teams and support them to use existing data to tackle important questions that meet [Wellcome's strategic ambitions](#) in mental health, infectious disease, climate and health, and broader [discovery research](#).

WDP participants will co-create digital solutions, such as new software packages, algorithms or scripts, to help address a particular health research or treatment challenge. More detailed information on the principles and aims of WDPs can be found in this [webpage](#). The first WDP will be in Mental Health and is currently in its set-up phase. We are now looking to scope the feasibility, remit and potential impact of a WDP in Pain as a future prize in this series.

Chronic pain is a leading cause of disease and disability worldwide. At least 1 in 5 adults live with chronic pain that limits their daily activities. It can occur as a primary health problem and is a common, cross-cutting symptom of many other physical and mental health conditions. Pain is complex, distressing and has profound effects on quality of life. Collectively, it constitutes an enormous physical, emotional, societal, economic and political burden.

To address the problem, many research efforts have focused on understanding the body's cellular and molecular pain mechanisms and on developing drugs to disrupt them. While these have led to important discoveries and innovations, it has proved highly challenging to produce effective treatments for everyone. One key reason for this is that comparatively little attention has been given to integrating the complex role played by the brain, as well as social, cultural, demographic and environmental factors, in modulating pain perception and treatment response. Consequently, there are significant disparities in prevalence and management across different groups: underserved populations experience pain disproportionately, and gender and racial bias have been shown to affect diagnostics and treatment. There is a need for an inclusive and equitable approach to tackle pain.

Wellcome's Discovery Research team has been leading a process to transform pain discovery by placing an alternative emphasis on the neural, cognitive and behavioural brain mechanisms that contribute to pain, in concert with body mechanisms. A complete, cross-systems understanding of pain will require integration of multimodal data and multidisciplinary expertise, underpinned by a robust computational approach. A Wellcome Data Prize in Pain could add significant value to this effort by enabling new teams of pain, brain, mental health, social and data scientists to ask novel questions of existing data that deliver conceptual leaps in our understanding of pain.

The envisioned WDP in Pain will:

- Create multidisciplinary communities with diverse skills, incentivised to work on pain-relevant data.
- Bring a multifaceted approach to pain research that delivers data-driven solutions to improve diagnosis, measurement and/or treatment of pain.
- Embed the priorities of people with lived experience of chronic pain.

- Provide a showcase example of trustworthy use of data to address the health burden of pain.

The objective of this RFP is to commission a Supplier that will carry out a 3-month scoping exercise to:

- Identify and refine the WDP question(s) that will deliver the most transformative impact on the pain research landscape.
- Identify potential data sources, relevant geographies and requirements for access to address the WDP question(s).
- Advise on the feasibility of running a WDP in Pain given: 1) the data sources available, and 2) the principles and overarching aims of WDPs, in alignment with Wellcome's mission.

2. RFP specification

- **Identification of WDP question(s):** The approach will involve desk research and interviews/engagement with relevant external stakeholders to identify question(s) that would have the most transformative impact on advancing the pain research agenda, with a focus on integrating understanding of pain's brain, body and/or social factors. Wellcome's preliminary development work has identified several research questions a WDP in Pain could address, and we encourage the consideration of additional questions:
 - How can we improve pain diagnostics and management?
 - What are the neural, cognitive and/or behavioural brain mechanisms contributing to pain perception, and to transitions from acute to chronic pain?
 - How do pain's brain mechanisms interact with pain's body mechanisms and with social, cultural, demographic and environmental factors?
 - How can we understand pharmacological, psychological and/or neuromodulatory pain treatment effects at neural, cognitive, behavioural and social levels?
 - What insights into pain's brain-body mechanisms might be relevant to understanding and managing mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety?

The Supplier will evaluate the feasibility and impact of addressing the selected question(s). External stakeholders that we expect to be engaged are researchers (e.g., neuroscientists, biologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social scientists, epidemiologists and health economists, from academia, medicine and industry), data scientists and stewards, funders of pain research, and patient groups/communities with lived experience of chronic pain. While the commissioning team at Wellcome will be suggesting some contact to engage with as a starting point, it is expected that the supplier will identify a long list of relevant stakeholders to engage with. The outcome of this activity should be a well-defined starting question, or set of possible questions, informed by the needs of research and patient communities that are unmet by current funding support.

- **Identification of potential data sources:** In parallel to refining the WDP question(s), a data landscaping exercise will be conducted to identify pain-related data sources that could be used in the WDP (e.g., phenotypic, genetic, physiological, imaging, behavioural, cognitive, mental health, physical health, lifestyle, sociodemographic). We envision including datasets directly relating to pain, as well as datasets not necessarily labelled as "pain" but with the potential to

offer important insights. The Supplier will identify go/no-go criteria for the inclusion of datasets in the WDP in an iterative consultation process with the commissioning team at Wellcome. We expect the Supplier to review various data sources and through collaboration with Wellcome to decide which ones may be a useful source for the WDP. We expect an emphasis to be put on identifying sources that include data from underserved communities that experience pain disproportionately. The Supplier should also consider the regulatory frameworks that manage access to proposed already anonymised datasets; we expect that recommendations on the feasibility of securing access to proposed data sources, as well as any legal requirements and/or ethical considerations, are provided. Our intention is to include data sources from the UK and North America as a minimum, and we encourage the inclusion of datasets from a broader range of geographies if the Supplier identifies alternative opportunities.

- Determination of the feasibility of running a WDP in Pain:** Based on the information gathered, the Supplier will give a recommendation on the feasibility of implementing a WDP in Pain. The Supplier, with the support of Wellcome, will determine criteria for assessing feasibility, in addition to identifying risks associated with running a WDP in Pain and potential ways of mitigating them. Wellcome will make the final decision about whether to implement a WDP in Pain, informed by the Supplier’s recommendation.

Deliverables to be included are (but not limited to):

1. A report detailing the scoping activity and research in line with the three objectives above. The report should include details of the stakeholders and data sources researched and specify the Supplier’s recommendation on the feasibility of implementing a WDP in Pain given the data sources available and the overarching aims of the WDPs.
2. Regular presentations/reviews with Wellcome to enable an iterative process
3. A final presentation of the report to teams at Wellcome.

We anticipate the work will take **3 months** to complete and we expect to receive bids up to a maximum budget of **£50,000 excluding VAT**. However, this is an outcome specification and Suppliers should request the budget needed to deliver the required outputs within the timeframe.

3. RFP Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issue to Suppliers	Wellcome	Monday 13 th September
2	Submission of questions from Suppliers	Supplier	5pm BST Monday 27 th September
3	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	5pm BST on Monday 4 th October
4	RFP Evaluation Period	Wellcome	Tuesday 5 th October to Tuesday 12 th October
5	Advice to Suppliers as to whether they have been invited to present their full	Wellcome	Wednesday 13 th October

	proposal. Return of Supplier Q&A to shortlisted Suppliers (collated response to all at the same time).		
6	Supplier Presentations. Suppliers to submit the TPSRA2 and contract feedback form prior to the presentation.	Wellcome & Supplier	Wednesday 27 th to Thursday 28 th October
7	Notification of Contract Award	Wellcome	Monday 1 st November
8	Contract Negotiation	Wellcome & Supplier	Tuesday 2 nd to Friday 3 rd December
9	Contract Start Date	Wellcome & Supplier	Monday 3 rd January 2022

4. Response Format

Supplier Q&A

Prior to the submission of your RFP response, Suppliers are provided the opportunity to submit any questions they have about the exercise. All questions are to be submitted to the Wellcome Contact by e-mail in accordance with the RFP timetable

RFP Questions

This section requests responses from Suppliers. The specific questions in relation to this RFP exercise are outlined in the table below.

#	Question	Max
1	Outline your methodology for delivering the key activities and objectives of this RFP. In your summary, please make sure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stages and timeframes in which you propose to meet our requirement. Your approach to working closely with the delivery team at Wellcome. 	600 words
2	Provide 2 case studies where you have successfully completed similar scoping exercises. If relevant, please specify previous experience in a data and/or pain research topic.	400 words
3	Provide a cost proposal which details and justifies the proposed costs to meet our requirement. Please note that the upper budget limit for this scoping exercise is £50,000.	200 words
4	Please provide summaries of the background and skillset of members of your team that would be working on this project.	200 words

Based on the answers to these questions, we will shortlist up to 3 Suppliers for presentations before selecting the Supplier Wellcome will commission to undertake this scoping exercise. We will use the assessment criteria below to make this selection.

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
How well the proposal meets the specification of requirements	50%
Track record and previous experience in running similar challenges	30%
Value for money and suitability of the budget in relation to the proposal	20%

5. About Wellcome

Wellcome supports science to solve urgent health challenges facing everyone. We support researchers, we take on big health challenges, we campaign for better science, and we help everyone get involved with science and health research. We are a politically and financially independent foundation. Find out more about Wellcome and our work: www.wellcome.org

6. Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality

Prospective Suppliers should be aware that inappropriate publicity could have a serious effect upon Wellcome’s business. The information contained within this document or subsequently made available to Prospective Suppliers is deemed confidential and must not be disclosed without the prior written consent of Wellcome unless required by law.

7. Prospective Suppliers Personnel - IR35 and Off Payroll Working Rules

Before the RFP response deadline, Prospective Suppliers must make the Wellcome Contact aware if they are intending to submit a proposal where the services will be provided by any individuals who are engaged by the Prospective Supplier via an intermediary i.e.

- Where the Prospective Supplier is an individual contracting through their own personal services company; or
- The Prospective Supplier is providing individuals engaged through intermediaries, for the purposes of the IR35 off-payroll working rules.

8. Independent Proposal

By submission of a proposal, Prospective Suppliers warrant that the prices in the proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, agreement or understanding for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices, with any other potential supplier or with any competitor.

9. Funding

For the avoidance of doubt, the output of this RFP exercise will be funded as a **Contract** and not as a Grant.

10. Costs Incurred by Prospective Suppliers

It should be noted that this document relates to a Request for Proposal only and not a firm commitment from Wellcome to enter into a contractual agreement. In addition, Wellcome will not be held responsible for any costs associated with the production of a response to this Request for Proposal.

11. Sustainability

Wellcome is committed to procuring sustainable, ethical and responsibly sourced materials, goods and services. This means Wellcome seeks to purchase goods and services that minimise negative and enhance positive impacts on the environment and society locally, regionally and globally. To ensure Wellcome's business is conducted ethically and sustainably, we expect our suppliers, and their supply chains, to adhere to these principles in a responsible manner.

12. Accessibility

Wellcome is committed to ensuring that our RFP exercises are accessible to everyone. If you have a disability or a chronic health condition, we can offer adjustments to the response format e.g. submitting your response in an alternate format. For support during the RFP exercise, contact the Wellcome Contact.

If, within the proposed outputs of this RFP exercise, specific adjustments are required by you or your team which incur additional cost then outline them clearly within your commercial response. Wellcome is committed to evaluating all proposals fairly and will ensure any proposed adjustment costs sit outside the commercial evaluation.

13. Diversity & Inclusion

Embracing [diversity and inclusion](#) is fundamental to delivering our mission to improve health, and we are committed to cultivating a fair and healthy environment for the people who work here and those we work with. As we learn more about barriers that disadvantage certain groups from progressing in our workplace, we will remove them.

Wellcome takes diversity and inclusion seriously, and we want to partner with suppliers who share our commitment. We may ask you questions related to D&I as part of our RFP processes.

14. Wellcome Contact Details

The single point of contact within this RFP exercise for all communications is as indicated below:

Name: Ekin Bolukbasi

Role: Data Prizes Manager

Email: datapriz@wellcome.org

15. Wellcome Evaluation Panel

The evaluation panel for this RFP exercise will consist of the following individuals:

Ekin Bolukbasi (Data Prizes Manager, Data for Science and Health)

Louise Marshall (Portfolio Manager, Discovery Research)

Becky Knowles (Project Officer, Data for Science and Health)

Thomas Bray (Portfolio Manager, Discovery Research)