



**Request for Proposal (RFP)**  
**Catalytic Environment Funding to drive progress in Digital Mental Health research**

## **1. RFP Background & Objectives**

Wellcome is a politically and financially independent global charitable foundation. We improve health for everyone by funding research, leading policy, and advocacy campaigns, and building global partnerships. In 2020, Wellcome announced our new strategy. We fund curiosity-driven research, and we are taking on three of the biggest health challenges facing humanity: mental health, infectious disease, and the impact of climate change on health.

### **1.1 Mental Health Vision and Mission**

Our vision for mental health is a world in which no one is held back by mental health problems. To advance this vision, our mission is to drive a step change in the ability to intervene as early as possible in the course of anxiety, depression, and psychosis.

We recognise that current diagnostic categories are imperfect but removing all categories or creating new ones also presents difficulties and may limit engagement with the field. Included in our definition of anxiety, depression, and psychosis are all forms of anxiety, depressive and psychotic disorders including obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, post-partum psychosis, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

Wellcome has two core goals in mental health:

- A. improve understanding of how the brain, body and environment interact in the trajectory and resolution of anxiety, depression, and psychosis
- B. find new and/or improved usable ways to predict, identify, and intervene as early as possible in anxiety, depression, and psychosis

We are aiming to support a vibrant global mental health science community to produce a pipeline of breakthrough discoveries that are rapidly translated to develop targeted, effective, and scalable early interventions in one or more of anxiety, depression, or psychosis.

Wellcome is planning to launch a digital mental health funding call in 2024. Ahead of this call, we will be issuing four contract opportunities focussing on digital mental health in June and July 2023, available on our [Contract Opportunities website](#).

### **1.2 Digital mental health**

Digital mental health solutions (DMHS) have the potential to improve diagnosis and treatment through a user-centred model that can be offered at a lower cost than in-person diagnostics and therapeutics. DMHS can include:



- Diagnostics that can use a variety of data (such as sensors or questionnaires) to accurately diagnose mental health conditions, and monitoring and prognostic tools to predict relapse or worsening of symptoms
- Triaging tools to filter people seeking mental health treatment or guidance into appropriate care pathways
- Therapeutics that provide effective treatments for mental health conditions, either as standalone digital products (such as apps, programmes, games) or through a therapist-monitored or -guided model of care.

The potential benefits of digital therapeutics are broad, including the potential for personalised and convenient care, wider access to care, and reduced burden on in-person care services.

However, significant challenges remain in the path to enabling effective, equitable and connected digital mental health solutions reaching people with mental health problems. These challenges range across the design, translation, and evaluation pathway; examples include how best to embed equitable and inclusive design practices, how to measure effectiveness, and how to navigate unclear regulatory pathways. Solutions to these complex challenges need to be developed in order to enable those within and beyond services to benefit from digital mental health solutions.

Solutions to these challenges will require focussed effort and interdisciplinary collaboration to bring together the range of skills needed to tackle these complex issues and take an idea to implementation at scale.

At Wellcome we want to understand how different kinds of models might promote and create 'catalytic environments' that can accelerate and unlock progress in digital mental health research.

We define catalytic environments as research collaborations that are focused on a specific research challenge, and where funding is provided to cover both the research and the necessary core-structure to coordinate research teams to use their expertise, knowledge, and skills to advance ideas through the translation pathway to help achieve their mission.

Examples of catalytic environments might include those where diverse researchers and others are brought together in a number of ways such as:

- Research platforms e.g., [Wellcome's Discovery Research Platforms](#)
- Centres, e.g., the [NIHR MindTech](#), [The Centre for Digital Mental Health](#)
- Institutes, e.g., [The McLean Institute for Technology in Psychiatry](#), the [Oxford Institute for Digital Health](#)
- Focused Research Organizations – standalone 'moonshot' organisations with ambitious aims, e.g., [E11 Bio](#)



- Hub and network models, e.g., [UKRI Mental Health Platform Hubs](#)

Our expectation is that the RFP will review existing models in digital mental health and digital health more widely, to capture the current landscape and best practice.

## 2 RFP Specification

This section sets out the specification of goods for this RFP exercise. Suppliers should use this section to fully understand Wellcome's requirements and to inform their response.

Wellcome is planning to launch a digital mental health funding call in 2024. Ahead of this call, we will be issuing four contract opportunities focussing on digital mental health in June 2023, available on our [Contract Opportunities website](#).

### 2.1 Research Objectives

This RFP is centred on understanding whether and how catalytic environments may enable progress in digital mental health research.

We are commissioning a focussed piece of analysis which should include:

- 1) An overview of existing catalytic environments for digital health research:
  - a. Named examples of catalytic environments in digital health, and their sources of funding.
  - b. A description of the structure of this model, including who the partner organisations in the collaborative model were, the range of expertise involved, and the diversity and geographical spread of the organisations in the model.
  - c. Which of these examples has demonstrated successful progress and/or impacts? How do such environments measure success, what impact measures they use, and over what timeframe are they measured?
  - d. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these examples, and are there any defining features that sets these apart from other, less impactful models?
  - e. Whether and how lived-experience expertise is incorporated into these examples of catalytic environments.
  - f. A critical appraisal of the equity dimensions of catalytic environments, particularly those that include high- and low and middle-income country partners. This should include considerations relating to skills transfer, intellectual property, and follow-on investment.
  - g. The long-term sustainability plans for this kind of research model, and what the exit strategy for funders could be.
- 2) Focusing on potential digital mental health:
  - a. What attributes (e.g., skills mix, resources, approaches to co-production with lived experience advisors, research management experience, and networks)



would be important to enable an institution to successfully lead a catalytic environment in the digital mental health context?

- b. What skills and attributes should be included within the partners of a catalytic environment for digital mental health, in order for it to be impactful?
- 3) Recommendations for Wellcome:
- a. Which kind of catalytic environments would be likely to deliver value in advancing Wellcome's mental health strategy in the field of digital mental health interventions? What structure and attributes would this include?
  - b. What would best practice for collaboration and co-production of research with lived experience look like, in a catalytic environment?
  - c. How might Wellcome consider the long-term sustainability and/or exit strategy from such a research model?

## **2.2 Key Deliverables to be included are:**

- D1) An inception report outlining the detailed methodology and remit (including an agreement on the defining characteristics of a catalytic environment), to be agreed with Wellcome. This report should include how you propose to identify and engage with experts and key stakeholders and how you plan to meaningfully involve people with lived experience throughout this RFP.
- D2) Formation of a governance/evaluation structure that will consist of (at least) expert consultants (such as academic and industry experts with experience of catalytic environments) and Wellcome contacts.
- D3) Draft analysis report to be shared with Wellcome in advance of the end date to allow Wellcome staff time to discuss feedback, raise questions, and make recommendations for further improvement.
- D4) Final report: a professionally formatted, clean, and final copy which will be delivered one week after the receipt of feedback on draft report from Wellcome. This report will include an executive summary, details on the methods of analysis and findings, including caveats and assumptions. The report should also include recommendations for Wellcome.
- D5) Handover of report.
- D6) A slide deck of summary findings and recommendations.
- D7) A presentation of the findings to the Wellcome team. Note that other Wellcome members of staff may be invited to the presentation.



The Supplier may provide suggestions for extra Deliverables, for example interim reports. The final Deliverables will be agreed at the contract negotiation stage but please note that we expect the final deliverable by 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 at the very latest.

We expect the supplier's team to be diverse in membership and inclusive in practice. We expect the supplier to engage meaningfully with experts by lived experience in all areas where their input could conceivably be of use.

## 2. RFP Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issue to Suppliers	WT	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2023
2	Submission of expression of interest to RFP	Supplier	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2023
3	Submission of Supplier Q&A to Wellcome Contact	Supplier	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2023
4	Return of Supplier Q&A to Suppliers	WT	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2023
5	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023
6	RFP Evaluation Period	WT	4 <sup>th</sup> September – 6 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
7	Shortlisted Suppliers presentations scheduled	WT	25 <sup>th</sup> – 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
8	Supplier presentations	Supplier	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> October
9	Notification of Contract Award	WT	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
10	Contract Negotiation	WT & Supplier	24 <sup>th</sup> October – 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
11	Contract Start Date	WT & Supplier	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
12	Final deliverables	Supplier	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024

## 3. Response Format

The following headers support the timetable by providing further detail of the key steps.

### *Expression of Interest*



Suppliers are asked to submit a short expression of interest by e-mail to [RFP@Wellcome.org](mailto:RFP@Wellcome.org) in accordance with the RFP timetable, which should contain the following information.

- Confirming whether you are a company or individual, if company please provide Full company name, address, and company registration number.
- A non-binding cost estimate as a single figure in GBP

Suppliers are asked to submit a short expression of interest by e-mail to the Wellcome Contact in accordance with the RFP timetable.

### **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 and the activity. All questions will be collated, anonymised, answered and returned to all Suppliers who have submitted an expression of interest in the RFP process. Please make sure you ask all questions at this stage. Once Wellcome have responded to all questions If you have any additional questions after this deadline these will not be answered to ensure that this is a fair and equitable process.

### **RFP Proposal**

Suppliers are required to submit proposals which respond to the following questions:

#	Question	Max Words
1	<b>Experience:</b> Outline your experience in the area and how you will work with experts (both Wellcome appointed and others) to cover the gaps in your knowledge. Include names of team members and their roles in this project, and any relevant experience completing landscaping analyses.	500 words
2	<b>Methodology:</b> Detail your approach for completing this analysis, including: a) Methodology (described in section 2, RFP Specification) b) Proposed project plan including timelines c) Management plan, including role of team members d) Plan for engagement with Wellcome during contract e) Plan for production of final report, including copy editing, formatting and graphics. f) Diversity and inclusion planning (how you will ensure that: the literature reviewed, and interviews conducted will be inclusive to different groups of people and locations; your methodology does not introduce bias) g) How will you involve people with lived experience at relevant points of this project	2000 words



	h) Justification of chosen countries to focus on as part of this research.	
3	<b>Delivery &amp; outputs:</b> Describe anticipated risks and challenges and ways to mitigate them and quality assurance for your work.	500 words
4	Please consider Wellcome's Diversity & Inclusion principles (see Section 14 below) and outline previous relevant experience working with researchers based in LMICs.	500 words
5	Provide a timeline for the work, including key milestones and deliverables against each of these.	300 words
6	<b>Budget:</b> Provide a detailed budget including all costs and expenses, specifying all day rates of individuals involved, the allocation of days between members of the team, and the cost of activities. The budget must include allocation of funds for at least two senior academic consultants.	300 words

***Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:***

<b>Experience</b> 30%	<i>Skills and Experience:</i> Does the supplier have the relevant skills, experience, and contextual understanding to deliver this work?
<b>Methodology</b> 30%	<i>Coverage:</i> How well are the desired focus areas (as outlined in the specification) covered in the proposed methodology address? <i>Quality:</i> Is the proposed methodology aligned with our needs? <i>Utility:</i> Will the proposed methodology deliver the desired, credible, and useful results?
<b>Delivery &amp; Outputs</b> 20%	<i>Communication:</i> Is there a good plan for communicating with the Wellcome team? <i>Delivery plan:</i> Is the proposed delivery plan appropriate and achievable? Have Wellcome's Diversity and Inclusion principles been considered? <i>Feasibility:</i> How feasible is the delivery plan? Are there significant risks associated with the proposed timelines, and how well are they mitigated?
<b>Budget</b> 20%	<i>Value for Money:</i> Is the proposed work within budget and good value for money?

**Contract Feedback**

This section allows Suppliers to provide specific feedback to the contractual agreement which will be used should their proposal be successful. Contract feedback is to be incorporated into your proposal as an annex and in the following format;

Clause #	Issue	Proposed Solution/Comment



Suppliers submitting proposals as a registered company should review Wellcome's Terms and Conditions which can be found [here](#).

Individuals submitting proposals as a sole trader (not registered) should review this [document](#).

Individuals submitting proposals through their own personal services company please highlight this to the Wellcome contact immediately (see point 7 below).

### **Wellcome Data Protection Compliance**

Under [GDPR/Data Protection law](#), Wellcome must keep a record of all personal information it is processing (i.e., collecting, using, and sharing). This record will be made available to the Information Commissioner's Office upon request.

This is Wellcome's record of data processing activities which meets GDPR article 30 requirements.

Suppliers are asked to complete the [TPSRA2](#) assessment before the RFP submission deadline for Wellcome to assess how you handle data.

### **Supplier Presentations**

Following a submission of the proposal successful proposals will be invited to a virtual meeting which will last 50 minutes in total and will be a PowerPoint presentation followed by questions and answers session.

## **4. About Wellcome**

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone. We support discovery research into life, health and wellbeing, and we're taking on three worldwide health challenges: mental health, climate and infectious diseases. Find out more about Wellcome and our work at: [wellcome.org](http://wellcome.org).

## **5. 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.

## **6. 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.

## **7. 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.

## **8. Funding**

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

## **9. 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.

## **10. 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.

## **11. Disability Confident**

The Wellcome Trust is proud to be a Disability Confident Employer (DC Level 2) and we encourage all our partners and suppliers to do the same. More information about this can be found on the government website [Disability Confident employer scheme and guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/disability-confident-employer-scheme). Disability Confident is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

## **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: Olivia Donovan  
Role: Procurement Officer  
Email: [RFP@wellcome.org](mailto:RFP@wellcome.org)