



Request for Proposal (RFP) to gain a deeper understanding of the Research Cultures in Southeast Asia - opinion research

1. Summary

The Reimagine Research study, Wellcome conducted in 2019, provided significant insights into the current issues within the research culture in the UK. In 2023, Wellcome also commissioned a study in Africa to investigate the research cultures in/across Africa. Wellcome needs to be aware of the issues within the research cultures in Southeast Asian countries to widen its lens on research environment evidence and issues from the more UK-focused Reimagine Research study and the African research cultures review. Wellcome is therefore inviting proposals for developing and delivering a project to gain a deeper understanding of the research cultures in different settings in Southeast Asia, the impacts of these research cultures and how they could be improved.

This project could be explored in various ways, including a literature review, virtual focus groups, interviews and/or an extensive online survey of academic researchers. However, we are open to other approaches to achieve a similarly robust result.

The supplier will have the required expertise, partners, and track record to undertake this work, and as such this RFP is open to consultancy organisations and/or research groups who meet that criterion. The team must include individuals from Southeast Asia with extensive experience in living and working in Southeast Asia, particularly in research settings.

2. RFP Background

Wellcome is a politically and financially independent 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 30-year strategy to tackle three global health challenges: mental health, infectious disease, and the impact of climate change on health. Wellcome also funds basic curiosity-driven science via Discovery schemes. Further information on Wellcome can be found at www.wellcome.org, and all prospective suppliers are encouraged to visit the website for further insights into the organisation.

Wellcome's investment has helped improve the health and lives of millions of people but, there is increasing evidence emerging about the negative culture surrounding these research achievements. In 2019, Wellcome undertook an ambitious study, Reimagine Research, to explore the current research culture and set the agenda for change. This study highlighted several issues in the current research culture¹. The picture was not uniform, with variation observed between different institutions, but there were several common themes. These themes included unhealthy levels of

¹ We use the [Royal Society definition of 'research culture'](#) referring to the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes, and norms of our research communities that influence researcher career paths and determine how research is conducted and communicated. The structure of the research system, its incentives and the behaviours and practices of individuals and institutions all shape research culture.



competition, concerns about job stability, limited career prospects, bullying and harassment, mental health issues and poor management practices. The study also highlighted issues in the way researchers are commonly rewarded and recognised. In particular, the potentially limited definition of 'excellence' in research over-emphasises what a researcher produces while under-valuing how it was produced. More information can be found in the published [report](#).

The Reimagine Research study provided significant insights into the current UK research culture. Wellcome now wants to expand on this study and investigate the current research culture in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. This is motivated by a recent change to Wellcome's [Discovery Research](#) funding schemes that feature 'plans to promote positive and inclusive research cultures' as part of the assessment criteria, but with the understanding that 'research culture' itself is a term that has been defined by institutions in High-Income Countries. In 2022/2023, Wellcome commissioned a study examining the research cultures across Africa. This study highlighted many of the same issues as the study in the UK. There were also some key differences, such as issues associated with the out-migration of researchers to high-income countries, limited infrastructure, power imbalances in partnerships and limited access to publications, data and information on global conferences. For more information, see the [report](#). Wellcome now wants to expand on this to look at the research cultures across Southeast Asia, where two of its Major International Programmes ([OUCRU](#) and [MORU](#)) and several grant recipients are based.

Wellcome wants to deepen its understanding of what constitutes 'positive and inclusive research cultures' in Southeast Asia. As Wellcome is now assessing how applicants will contribute to their research environment as part of its applications, Wellcome needs to be aware of the issues within the research cultures in Southeast Asia. Therefore, we seek to commission a high-quality research study to understand the research cultures that people work in, in Southeast Asia. We are looking for proposals to work with Southeast Asian research communities to explore their opinions and perceptions of the culture of research in their setting, the drivers of this culture, their vision for what excellent research culture would look like and what could change to deliver this.

3. Eligibility

The team and leadership of this project should include individuals from and with lived experience of Southeast Asia, particularly in a research context, and across several countries. This does not preclude teams which include members who are not from the region, but most members must either be from or have long-term and demonstrable experience of regional research environments and cultures.

4. Objectives

- Provide an overview of the research cultures across Southeast Asia
- Provide an outline of how the research culture varies across Southeast Asia
- Determine what the drivers are of the identified research culture issues
- Develop a list of recommendations for funders



5. RFP Specification

This section sets out the specification of services for this RFP exercise. Suppliers should use this section to fully understand Wellcome's requirements and to inform their response. We are happy for suppliers to work in partnership. If this route is chosen suppliers must carefully outline how they will work together to ensure the project is a success.

Scope of requirements

We are seeking bids from organisations to conduct robust work and deliver a clear, concise, open-access report of the findings. This work must be inclusive and reach diverse voices from different places across Southeast Asia.

We are looking for an agency/researcher to develop the methodology and deliver a robust research study to explore the following:

- Southeast Asian researchers' opinions and perceptions about the cultures of research in their specific context
- How this varies across Southeast Asia, with a breakdown of how it varies by country
- How this varies in different settings, such as government-funded, private, and externally funded institutions
- The drivers of this culture
- Their vision for what a great research culture looks like
- What could change to deliver this

Approach

This project could be carried out in a range of ways. This would preferably include an extensive online survey of academic researchers and could include a literature review, interviews and virtual focus groups. However, we are open to other approaches to achieve a similarly robust result. Qualitative engagement must include engagement with individuals in Thailand and Vietnam (as these are the prominent locations of Southeast Asian Wellcome funding), amongst other areas.

The sample should include:

- Southeast Asian researchers and possibly other university staff from a range of disciplines
- Researchers in universities and institutes (including those funded through and run in partnership with UK institutions² but excluding NGOs)
- All researchers, not only those with Wellcome funding
- Both government-funded and internationally-funded researchers

² UK-funded institutes, such as the [Wellcome-funded institutions](#) – the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) and Mahidol Oxford tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU), should be considered separately to local institutions to determine if there are differences in the perceived research culture.

We will use our networks to support recruitment where possible, but we expect the supplier to demonstrate sufficient networks and reach to be able to recruit an appropriate sample.



- Researchers where research is either their primary or secondary occupation.
- A balance of genders
- Geographical diversity across Southeast Asia
- Different seniority levels, from postgraduate student to professor

We will give appropriate guidance/policies for handling reports of adverse experiences that emerge during any discussions.

Deliverables

- Clear, concise, open-access report that outlines the key findings and how the research cultures vary across Southeast Asia. Must include an executive summary and key recommendations for funders.
- PowerPoint Presentation and slide deck.
- Anonymised raw survey data.

All deliverables must be available under the Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC-BY).

This is an outcome specification, and suppliers should request the budget needed to deliver the required outputs over 5-6 months. Payments will be linked to milestones, which the supplier will agree upon.

6. RFP Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issue to Suppliers	WT	19 January 2024
2	Submission of Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A to Wellcome Contact	Supplier	22 February 2024
5	Return of Supplier Q&A to Suppliers	WT	1 March 2024
5	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	11 April 2024
6	RFP Evaluation Period	WT	15 – 26 April 2024
8	Supplier Presentations	Supplier	6 – 17 May 2024
9	Notification of Contract Award	WT	May 2024
10	Contract Negotiation	WT & Supplier	May – June 2024
11	Contract Start Date	WT & Supplier	June – July 2024

7. Response Format

The following headers support the timetable by providing further details of the critical steps.

Expression of Interest

Suppliers are asked to submit a short expression of interest by e-mail (RFP@wellcome.org) to the Wellcome contact as per the RFP timetable, containing the following:

- Full company name and number.



- Registered company address.
- A non-binding cost estimate as a single figure in GBP, excluding VAT.
- The requested currency of payment.
- Any questions you have about the exercise and activity.

Supplier Q&A

Before submitting your RFP response, Suppliers are allowed to submit any questions they have about the exercise. All questions are to be submitted to the Wellcome Contact by email along with your Expression of Interest in accordance with the RFP timetable.

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. Submitting an EOI is not a binding commitment to submit a full proposal should your organisational priorities change, you will not then be penalised for future opportunities. Please note, if we have an overwhelming response, we may choose to use this EOI stage as a selective phase, this is at Wellcome's discretion.

RFP Proposal

Suppliers are requested to submit a full proposal which respond to the following questions;

RFP Questions

Suppliers are required to submit proposals which respond to the following sections;

#	Question	Max words
1	Provide a short proposal outlining how you would approach the work and the proposed methodology (including how you will incentivise a broad range of researchers to participate and the proposed sample size/number of focus groups or similar). Please also include how you will approach data protection when handling the survey data and how the data will be managed and destroyed.	750 words
2	Outline your approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, both concerning your proposed methodology for the project and within your organisation.	250 words
3	A brief overview of your organisation, including your track record and expertise relevant to analysis of the type outlined in this RFP. Please also include a brief description of who would be involved in the project team, their qualifications, their main role and responsibilities and the management plan.	250 words
4	Outline what makes you best placed to fulfil Wellcome's requirements within this request. This could include networks, previous experience, cultural ties to the region etc.	250 words



#	Question	Max words
5	Provide a proposed delivery plan outlining the project deliverables and timelines.	N/A 1 table or Gantt chart
6	Describe your approach to working closely with the Research Environment team at Wellcome.	250 words
7	Outline any significant risks and challenges you foresee with meeting Wellcome's requirements, including engaging with researchers across a large geographical area, obtaining ethical approval and staying within budget. Please include your mitigation strategies for these risks and challenges.	250 words
8	Provide 2-case studies of where you have successfully provided services similar to those described in this RFP, including links to outputs if applicable.	500 words
9	Provide a cost proposal which details and justifies the proposed costs to meet our requirement.	N/A 1 table

During the RFP evaluation period the evaluation panel will independently evaluate your proposal against the criteria outlined below. All scores will be collated, discussed and a decision will be agreed on who progresses to the next stage of the procurement exercise.

Criteria	Detail	%
Methodology	<p><i>Coverage:</i> How well are the desired focus areas (as outlined in the specification) covered in the proposed methodology?</p> <p><i>Quality:</i> Is the proposed methodology aligned with our objectives?</p> <p><i>Utility:</i> Will the proposed methodology deliver the desired, credible, and useful results?</p> <p><i>EDI:</i> Has appropriate attention been given to equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations in the proposed methodology? Do you have EDI policies and are these being put into practice in the proposal?</p>	40%
Team and experience	<p><i>Skills and Experience:</i> Does the applicant/s have the relevant skills, experience, and contextual understanding to deliver this work?</p>	25%
Delivery and outputs	<p><i>Communication:</i> Is there a good plan for communicating with the Wellcome team?</p> <p><i>Delivery plan:</i> Is the proposed delivery plan appropriate and achievable?</p> <p><i>Feasibility:</i> How feasible is the delivery plan? Are there significant risks associated with the proposed timelines, and how well are they mitigated?</p>	25%
Budget	<p><i>Value for Money:</i> Is the proposed work within budget and good value for money?</p>	10%
TOTAL		100%



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 this [document](#).

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 10. below).

Information Governance

Wellcome is committed to upholding data protection principles and protecting your information. The [Wellcome privacy webpage](#) explains how, and on what legal basis, we collect, store, and use personal information about you. This includes any information you provide in relation to this proposal.

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.

8. About Wellcome

Wellcome is a global charitable foundation established in 1936. Through our work we support science to solve the urgent health issues facing everyone. We fund [curiosity-driven research](#), and we're taking on three of the biggest health challenges facing humanity – [climate change](#), [infectious disease](#) and [mental health](#). We also work with policy makers, run advocacy campaigns, and form partnerships with other organisations to ensure everyone, everywhere benefits from advances in health science. Find out more about Wellcome and our work at: [wellcome.org](#).

9. 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.



10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Funding

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

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.



16. Accessibility

Supplier 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.

Document accessibility

All our content should be WCAG 2.2. AAA compliant. Any documents being provided to Wellcome as part of the contract delivery must pass accessibility requirements. If you are unable to produce accessible documents, budget must be set aside to employ a suitable agency to do this work.

17. 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.

18. Wellcome Contact Details

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

Name: Hardip Dhaliwal

Role: Procurement Officer

Email: RFP@wellcome.org