



Request for Proposal (RFP) for a scoping activity exploring the sustainable food systems research field and ecosystem needs to accelerate impact in Europe

1. RFP Background & Objectives

Wellcome's Climate & Health strategy aims to put health at the heart of climate action. We will deliver our strategy by supporting transdisciplinary research which brings together researchers from different disciplines e.g., climate, health, and social sciences, together with policy and implementation partners, to undertake research and take action to address policy and implementation challenges in Climate & Health.

[Food systems](#) feed us, support economies and livelihoods, influence our identities and cultures, and how we interact with the natural world. However, food systems [drive, and are impacted by](#), climate change and environmental degradation, as well as contribute to a [food insecurity and large burden of disease](#), disproportionately those from [lower socioeconomic, marginalised or vulnerable groups](#). This has been described as a [Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change](#). Transforming food systems is [essential for achieving the Paris Agreement and adapting to climate change](#), whilst safeguarding food safety, security, nutrition and health for all in these transitions.

Wellcome has been a significant research funder in sustainable food systems, helping to catalyse interdisciplinary and systems approaches to solving food systems challenges. For example, research funding and partnerships have identified significant opportunities to drive climate action with health co-benefits, particularly through dietary patterns in line with the [EAT Lancet Planetary Health Diet](#), as well as [economic](#) and [equity](#) challenges and opportunities.

There is increasing evidence and momentum, particularly in [mainland Europe](#) and the [UK](#) focused on [transforming food systems](#) across [public research funders](#), [philanthropy](#), [policy](#), [industry](#) and [civil society](#). Despite this momentum, transitions towards sustainable food systems [remain blocked and policy opportunities remain unrealised](#), minimising the impact from this growing research field. Therefore, understanding the blockers, including the role of lock-in and path dependencies, lobbying, polarisation, backlash and political hesitancy, as well as how to strengthen the growing research field to the next stage of maturity, could help Wellcome, working in coordination with other funders and civil society, navigate this complex area with more impact. For example, this could include context-specific, sufficiently granular but harmonised [data](#), [evidence and frameworks](#) to help explore challenges, solutions, visions, and pathways for transitions to food systems in innovative ways, as well as how to unlock [finance](#).

Wellcome seeks to understand where we can best play a catalytic role in strengthening the already seeded research field, as well as how we can best support research and broader ecosystems that help accelerate transitions to sustainable food systems. This work will focus



specifically on opportunities related to mainland Europe and the UK, where we have identified the most established evidence, research field and civil society momentum, as discussed in the above paragraphs.

2. 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. Wellcome seek value for money in RFP exercises and will be guided by the supplier as to what a reasonable budget is for this activity, whilst delivering ambitious and innovative outputs.

All our content should be WCAG 2.2. AAA compliant. Any documents being provided to Wellcome 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.

The aim of this scoping activity is to help inform Wellcome's future investments in this area and inform other organisations research agendas, policy and practice, to help bring evidence closer to action on sustainable food systems in mainland Europe and the UK.

Objectives:

- 1) **Review the research field and identify gaps that are currently limiting impact** – review at what stage the field of research is at, identifying key academic communities contributing to knowledge generation as part of this, including what is needed to increase policy uptake and impact. How does the body of research need to evolve in order to achieve greater real-world impact?
- 2) **Analyse barriers and opportunities for transitions to sustainable food systems** – undertake desk-based analysis, identify and consult with key stakeholders (funders, researchers, policymakers, civil society and industry) to explore current and future food systems decision-making requirements. What are the barriers and opportunities for evidence to be maximised in decision-making to increase impact? What are the best opportunities for changes to policy and practice, and when, by whom and how can they best be leveraged?
- 3) **Co-create a strategic research and action agenda** – engage with key stakeholders to socialise the findings, analyse existing research agendas and activities that are working to fill gaps and overcome barriers, identify remaining opportunities, and co-create research, policy and broader ecosystem actions needed to help accelerate the transformation to sustainable food systems.

What organisations are we looking for?

- This RFP requires the relevant skills, experience, connections and contextual understanding to deliver this work, including connections across food systems, climate and health disciplines and stakeholders



- Due to the different skillsets required for the different objectives, we encourage consortia to apply, where different partners may help strengthen and help fulfil the different needs of the project.
- We expect the supplier to identify and build off existing work undertaken by themselves and/or others (including Wellcome) in this space.
- We are looking for organisations who can think critically, pragmatically, inclusively and innovatively about food systems transitions to identify barriers and opportunities for impact in mainland Europe and the UK
- Further details about what we're looking for can be found in the evaluation criteria.

Deliverables

Most of the work should be delivered between **May to November 2025**. We require the supplier to provide inception and interim deliverables throughout the project which may be used to identify where there are quick win opportunities for funding urgent and important projects. Where possible, the proposal should take advantage of existing events and networks to engage a wide range of stakeholders efficiently. Whilst it is expected that some travel will be required by the suppliers and stakeholders, the proposal should consider how to effectively engage and meet the needs of the RFP, whilst minimising carbon emissions. An inception meeting will help define the scope and agree deliverables with the supplier. We expect that there will be bi-weekly check-ins with Wellcome staff over the duration of the project.

Key deliverables include an inception, interim and final report which should provide:

#	Deliverable	Research and Policy Questions
1	<p>Review the research field and identify gaps that are currently limiting impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key communities and stakeholders contributing to and using knowledge in this area • Undertake an analysis of the research field using suitable and rigorous methodology to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for stronger establishment and real-world impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the key communities and stakeholders creating and using knowledge in this area? • How established is the research field and what could help to strengthen it and achieve more real-world impact? • What is needed in the broader ecosystem to help accelerate the use of evidence in the real world e.g. evidence synthesis, data visualisation, knowledge brokering etc?
2	<p>Analyse barriers and opportunities for transitions to sustainable food systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a rigorous analysis exploring the barriers and opportunities for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the key decision-makers within this area, how do they make decisions and what are they influenced by?



#	Deliverable	Research and Policy Questions
	<p>change using a suitable approach e.g. political economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a suitable futures approach e.g. foresight or horizon scanning, to identify potential or emerging issues and opportunities to help future-proof strategic decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When, and how, does evidence have most impact and how does evidence influence what is politically feasible? What emerging scenarios could help unblock progress and what would help to prepare for and maximise these opportunities?
3	<p>Co-create a strategic research and action agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse existing research agendas and activities that are working to fill gaps and overcome barriers Design and deliver a series of surveys, interviews and/or workshops to help engage stakeholders and build consensus on the priority research gaps and actions needed Produce an external facing strategic research and action agenda disseminated through suitable events, briefings and/or published in a scientific journal Produce an external facing policy report and recommendations aimed at policymakers working at the EU and national level Produce an internal report and presentation summarising the findings and a set of internal recommendations for how Wellcome could support action in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the priority research and data gaps that existing research agendas are already addressing? How, where and with whom should Wellcome support action in this area? Are there quick wins that Wellcome should explore as priorities? What is the state of the evidence, barriers and opportunities as relevant for policymakers?

Scope

The project should focus on data, knowledge, innovations, policy solutions and actions that help unlock progress towards sustainable food systems transformation in Europe and the UK where:



- A [food systems approach](#) is used to explore challenges and opportunities across all stages of the food chain from production to consumption, including the '[Missing Middle](#)'
- The areas of food systems with the most potential to contribute to direct health and climate mitigation co-benefits through the prevention of ill health, or minimising the worst health effects NB. Whilst this activity is framed as sustainable food systems, actions which have co-benefits for climate adaptation and climate-resilient food systems, should also be included
- Data and knowledge across local, national and regional scales i.e. European Commission, should be considered
- Under-represented voices or different disciplines or communities could be better integrated in problem and solution exploration, for example, farmers and food systems workers, lower socio-economic and/or marginalised groups, as well as opportunities for integration of health communities
- Due consideration is taken to appropriately engage and manage power dynamics across research, food industry, civil society organisations, policymakers and other decision-makers e.g. investors and funders

3. RFP Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issued on Contract Opportunities webpage	Wellcome	9 January 2025
2	Submission of Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A	Supplier	23 January 2025
3	Return of Supplier Q&A to successful Suppliers, and invitation to Successful Suppliers to submit a full proposal to Wellcome. (Please only submit a full proposal if you have been invited to do so)	Wellcome	31 January 2025
4	Notification of unsuccessful Suppliers from Expression of Interest stage	Wellcome	31 January 2025
5	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	13 February 2025
6	RFP Evaluation Period	Wellcome	14 February 2025 – 7 March 2025
7	Supplier Presentations	Supplier	3 March 2026 – 14 March 2025



8	Notification of Contract Award	Wellcome	31 March 2025
9	Contract Negotiation	Wellcome & Supplier	April 2025
10	Contract Start Date	Wellcome & Supplier	May 2025

4. Response Format

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

Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A

Suppliers are asked to submit a short expression of interest by e-mail to the lead contact in accordance with the RFP timetable, which should contain the following information (in no more than a 2-page document attached to the email):

- Outline your proposed approach to this work (max. 250 words)
- Outline why you think you are best placed to meet the needs of the RFP, focusing specifically on your experience and skills across research, knowledge transfer and policy (max 250 words)
- Outline how you will work across food systems, climate and health disciplines and stakeholders inclusively, innovatively and impactfully (maximum 250 words)
- Confirming whether you are a company or individual, if company please provide Full company name, address, and company registration number.
- Please provide information at EOI stage on all of the partners you intend to have in the full proposal
- A non-binding cost estimate as a single figure in GBP
- Any questions you have about the exercise and activity.

Prior to the submission of your full proposal to the RFP, 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.

We will review expressions of interest to ensure that proposals fit within the scope of the RFP. As we expect a large number of proposals for this activity, Wellcome is expecting the EOI stage to be used to shortlist suppliers should we receive a large number of applications. We will invite organisations to submit a full proposal to the RFP in accordance with the RFP timetable. Please note that you should only submit a full proposal to the RFP if you have been invited to do so.



If you intend to include other partners, please aim to have as many identified at EOI stage, but you can add additional partners for the full proposal.

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

RFP Response

Suppliers submitting a full proposal should cover the following areas in their response:

#	Question	Max 12 pages
1	<p>Provide a short proposal outlining how you would approach the work including the proposed methodology to meet the RFP requirements with details including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you will undertake an assessment of stakeholders and the research field • What other analytical approaches you will undertake e.g. political economy, food systems, futures approaches • How you plan to supplement desk-based research with stakeholder engagement e.g. interviews, workshops, events • How you plan to build consensus and prioritise the recommendations 	3 pages
2	<p>Outline the proposed project team with a brief description of their relevant experience (do not include CVs) and how you are best placed to meet the needs of the RFP with details including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your experience in food systems, climate and health as relevant to the needs of the RFP • How you will work with stakeholders (Wellcome and others) to cover any gaps in your knowledge 	3 pages
3	<p>Provide two case studies where you have successfully provided services like those described in this RFP (one link to an output per case study can be included). Please include two references for these case studies who we may contact for further information, if needed.</p>	2 pages
4	<p>Outline what equity, diversity and inclusion considerations you will embed throughout the design, delivery and evaluation of this work with details as a minimum including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you will ensure diverse disciplinary and stakeholder views are included • How you plan to minimise power imbalances 	1 page



5	Provide a proposed workplan outlining the project deliverables and timelines. Please include a communication plan with the Wellcome Team.	Gantt chart, 1 page
6	Outline any major risks and challenges you foresee with meeting the requirements of the RFP, including your proposed mitigation strategies.	Table, 1 page
7	Provide a detailed budget including breakdown justifying the proposed costs to meet the RFP requirements.	Table, 1 page

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Detail	%
Methodology	<i>Coverage:</i> How well are the desired focus areas (as outlined in the specification) covered in the proposed methodology addressed? <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?	40%
Experience	<i>Skills and Experience:</i> Does the supplier have the relevant skills, experience, connections and contextual understanding to deliver this work? <i>Case studies:</i> Do the case studies demonstrate the skills and experience to successfully deliver this work?	25%
Delivery & Outputs	<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? <i>Feasibility:</i> How feasible is the delivery plan? Are there significant risks associated with the proposed timelines, and how well are they mitigated?	25%
Budget	<i>Value for Money:</i> Is the proposed work good value for money?	5%
EDI	Do they outline relevant equity, diversity and inclusion considerations and describe how they'll be embedded throughout the work?	5%
Accessibility	All our content should be WCAG 2.2. AAA compliant. Any documents being provided to Wellcome 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. *	N/A
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. This is the suppliers' opportunity to provide negotiation points on Wellcome's terms and conditions.

Clause #	Issue	Proposed Solution/Comment



Suppliers submitting proposals as a registered company should review Wellcome's Standard Terms and Conditions [Wellcome General Terms and Conditions.pdf](#)

Individuals submitting proposals as a sole trader (not registered) should review this document [Wellcome-Consultancy-Agreement-individual.pdf](#)

Individuals submitting proposals through their own personal services company please highlight this to the Wellcome contact immediately (see point 6 below).

Data Protection

Wellcome is committed to upholding data protection principles and protecting your information. The [Wellcome privacy statement](#) 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 UK 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 UK [GDPR article 30](#) requirements.

Suppliers will be asked to complete the Third-Party Supplier questionnaire via Process Unity system if selected for Presentation, you will sent an email to log in and complete. This will enable 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 a questions and answers session.

5. About Wellcome

Wellcome improves health for everyone by funding research, leading policy and advocacy campaigns, and building global partnerships. Collaborative research that involves a diverse range of people from different fields of interest is key to progress in health science – and to achieving our aim of fostering a healthier, happier, world. We're taking on the biggest health challenges facing humanity – climate and health, infectious disease, and mental health – to find urgent solutions and accelerate preventions. Find out more about Wellcome and our work at: wellcome.org.

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. Equity Diversity and 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. We want to cultivate an inclusive and diverse culture, and 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.

8. 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.

All our content should be WCAG 2.2. AAA compliant. Any documents being provided to Wellcome 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.

9. 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.

10. Funding

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



11. 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.

12. Environmental Sustainability

Wellcome is playing its part tackling the climate crisis through its mission-driven Climate & Health strategic programme.

In addition, our [Sustainability programme](#) aims to address the environmental impacts and carbon emissions of our activities and operations.

Our suppliers have a key part to play delivering on our sustainability ambitions.

We expect all our suppliers to take active steps to:

- Address their environmental impacts, for instance as part of a certified Environmental Management System.
- Reduce the carbon emissions of their products and services, for instance by adopting Science-Based targets and plans to deliver them.
- Embed environmental considerations in the sourcing and delivery of goods and services to Wellcome, across all stages of their life cycle.

13. Wellcome Contact Details

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

Name: Hardip Dhaliwal
Pronouns: She/Her
Role: Procurement Manager
Email: RFP@wellcome.org