Independent Evaluation of Research Culture Change Initiatives – Request for Proposals

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Wellcome is committed to fostering a healthier, more inclusive, and sustainable research culture. Through the Institutional Fund for Research Culture (IFRC), we supported UK institutions to experiment with approaches that embed cultural change and strengthen collaboration, equity, and wellbeing in research environments. Alongside the funding call, we established the Institutional Research Culture Community (IRCC), bringing together all applicant teams to share learning, build cross-institutional support, and collaborate on sector-wide change.

We now seek an independent evaluation with three core aims:

- Assess the IFRC scheme—what worked well and what could be improved.
- Evaluate the funded projects—their outcomes, and impact.
- Examine practices across the entire Institutional Research Culture Community, both funded and unfunded teams, to identify what has and has not worked in promoting research culture change.

The core aim of the evaluation is to generate actionable insights and lessons learned to inform future strategies for Wellcome's UK Equitable Research Ecosystems team, that advance equity and research culture across the sector. While we outline suggested areas of focus, we recognise that evaluators bring valuable expertise in designing robust and meaningful evaluations. We therefore invite proposals that explain how you would approach this work, including any innovative methods or frameworks you believe will best meet these objectives.

Wellcome Contact Details

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

	Hardip Dhaliwal
Role	Procurement Manager
Email	RFP@welllcome.org

1.1 Background, Eligibility and Objectives

Wellcome has a history of providing institutional funding to UK institutions in line with its mission. The most recent iteration of this, the Institutional Fund for Research Culture (IFRC), was launched in 2023 to support UK institutions in experimenting with and embedding cultural change in their research environments. This was a closed funding call, inviting the top 42 Wellcome-funded UK organisations (see Appendix 1) to apply for up to £1 million to deliver ambitious projects that advance research cultures and create environments that are equitable, diverse, and supportive. Further details about the scheme and the projects which were funded are provided in the scheme sheet: Institutional Funding for Research Culture | Grant funding | Wellcome, on or website: Funded grants | Grant Funding | Wellcome and in this article: The Luck of the Draw: Wellcome's ... | Wellcome Open Research.

Alongside the funding call, we invited all applicant teams to join a community of practice, the Institutional Research Culture Community (IRCC). This community was designed to foster shared learning on improving research cultures across the sector, encourage cross-institutional support and collaboration, and build momentum for sector-wide change. More information about the community and it's progress is available here: Launching Wellcome's Institutional Research Culture Community and here: What is needed to nurture research culture? | Wellcome Open Research

The aims underpinning the IFRC and IRCC were to sustain momentum for research culture change, building on Wellcome's 2020 campaign to #ReimagineResearch by:

- Funding fresh ideas and innovative actions for advancing research culture, in research intensive institutions
- Equipping key stakeholders most likely to be involved in or responsible for advancing research culture change with the resources needed to do so
- Creating a sense of community around research culture change enabling the exchange of ideas and responses to common challenges

Recognising the paradox inherent in delivering a research culture funding competition, we intentionally opened the associated community to all 42 institutions invited to apply for funding, regardless of whether their application was successful. This approach was designed to foster collaboration, transparency, and shared learning across the sector. To curate and support this community, we commissioned Studio Susegad, a Bristol-based creative production, research, and consultancy studio as embedded social researchers. Studio Susegad have played a facilitative and evaluative role, supporting the IRCC's exploration of inclusive research cultures and enabling collective, joined-up learning across participating teams through a programme of in-person and online activities. Studio Susegad are currently evaluating the conditions required for promoting research culture change including the impact of the IRCC community itself, focusing on how participation has shaped team experiences, relationships, and ways of working, and are developing early insights into what has and has not supported research culture change in practice. More information about their work and their preliminary findings can be found in this publication: What is needed to nurture research culture? | Wellcome Open Research.

The work proposed for commissioning is intentionally distinct from, and complementary to, this activity. Rather than evaluating the community directly, the supplier will synthesise and interpret evidence about what activities have worked or not worked to promote research culture change at both the team and programme level. Building on Studio Susegad's initial findings, the supplier will draw on a wider range of additional resources to deepen and extend their insights. This will help build a more detailed picture of what works and what does not work, in promoting research culture change within specific projects and across multiple teams and explore what conditions enable or hinder culture shifts. The focus will be on translating emergent and contextualised learning into clear reflections, lessons, and recommendations to inform Wellcome's future strategy, funding design, and practice.

IFRC was designed and delivered by Wellcome's Research Culture & Communities team, which later became part of Wellcome's Equitable Research Ecosystems team in the new Equity department in July 2025. The work of Wellcome's Equity department is underpinned by its impact statement to "drive equitable health outcomes, Wellcome advances inclusive practices that broaden the range of people leading, participating in and benefitting from science." More about the work and ethos of the Research Culture & Communities team can be found in An Ode to Research Culture & Communities: Inspiring Change and Funding Things, a reflective piece by Shomari Lewis-Wilson that celebrates the team's values, contributions, and evolution.

Eligibility

International evaluators are welcome to apply. Familiarity with UK research culture context is essential.

Conflict of interest
Evaluators must declare any prior involvement with IFRC-funded projects, including providing evaluation services for individual grants. Proposals should outline:

- The nature and extent of any previous engagement.
- How independence and impartiality will be maintained.

Objectives

- Evaluate the IFRC scheme to identify what worked well and what could be improved both from a process and strategic perspective.
- Assess the impact of funded projects on institutional policies, practices, and culture taking into consideration the changing social and economic landscape.
- Examine practices across the entire Institutional Research Culture Community, both funded and unfunded teams, to identify what has and has not worked in promoting research culture change, and to surface trends, commonalities, and differences across approaches. We are particularly interested in understanding patterns that indicate scalable or transferable practices, as well as contextual factors that influence success.

1.2 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. 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 work
We encourage evaluators to propose a methodology that best fits the complexity of this evaluation and clearly explain their rationale. We see reviewing applications, end-of-grant reports, conducting interviews, and analysing existing data as key elements of the work and welcome approaches that go beyond standard Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) metrics and practices to meet the aims above.

Given the nuanced and often 'messy' nature of research culture, where impact can be difficult to measure, assess, communicate, and understand, we invite a range of innovative and adaptive methodologies. These may include (but are not limited to): flexible and iterative learning processes, creative mixed-methods designs, participatory approaches (e.g., focus groups or co-created insights), and narrative impact storytelling. We are particularly interested in approaches that foster a culture of reflection throughout the evaluation process and generate meaningful insights that go beyond quantitative indicators alone.

Activities include:

1. **Review applications and End-of-Grant Reports**
   Evaluators will be expected to review the successful IFRC grant applications (proposal length 3,000 words) and the corresponding end-of-grant reports (template included – Appendix-2) for all funded projects. This will enable a comprehensive understanding of each project's aims, delivery, and outcomes. The IFRC supported 22 grants across 24 organisations (one application was a collaboration between three universities). End-of-grant reports will include reflections on project delivery, impact, stakeholder engagement, evaluation methods, and sector-level insights. Suppliers should note that IFRC grants conclude between March 2026 and January 2027, and End-of-Grant reports will be submitted throughout this period.

2. **Conduct Interviews or Focus Groups**
   Engage with a sample of funded and unfunded teams to explore their experiences. Areas of exploration may include, but not limited to:

- Recommendations for improving future funding schemes
- How their project was designed and implemented
- Barriers and enablers to success
- Institutional support and leadership engagement
- Collaborations and networks that have emerged

- Experiences of inclusivity, equity, and wellbeing
- Unintended consequences or ripple effects beyond the project
- Sustainability and legacy of initiatives

Evaluators may propose additional or alternative areas of focus. As unfunded teams are not required to submit End-of-Grant reports, it will be important for the evaluator to engage with a selection of these teams to understand their activities and experiences within the IRCC without IFRC funding. Once the contract is finalised, Wellcome will contact the IRCC community to identify teams interested in taking part in the study and will then connect the evaluator with a selection of those who opt in.

3. **Analyse Existing Data collected by the social research team and from the final IRCC event**

Review the data collected by Studio Susegad, the social research team supporting the IRCC. Between November 2025 and April 2026, Studio Susegad will gather insights on what teams perceive as enabling or hindering research culture change, as well as the conditions needed to support such change, through a series of themed events. Ahead of the final IRCC event, teams will be asked to submit a brief project update for inclusion in a team guide (maximum one A4 page). At the event, teams will also have the option to deliver a short lightning talk (up to five minutes) outlining their work.

The volume of data is not yet confirmed. For planning purposes, you should assume approximately:

- 6–8 one hour event summaries,
- Up to 40 team-guide submissions, and
- Notes or transcripts from up to 40 lightning talks.

These figures are indicative and may change.

Deliverables

- **Evaluation Plan**: Detailing methodology, sampling approach, and data analysis strategy.
- **IFRC Evaluation Report**: Comprehensive analysis, including:
  - Impact* assessment
  - Case studies
  - Recommendations for future funding for Wellcome and the sector
- **IRCC project summary report**: A synthesis of what worked and what did not work to promote research culture change identified by IRCC teams for use by the wider sector

*For the purposes of this evaluation, Wellcome defines “impact” as changes that advance healthier, more inclusive research cultures. This includes:

- Institutional change: Evidence of meaningful shifts in policies, practices, and behaviours that foster equitable, supportive research environments.
- Sector influence: Identification of approaches, insights, or models that show potential for scalability or transferability across the wider research ecosystem.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI): Tangible improvements in inclusivity, wellbeing, and representation within research communities.
- Sustainability and legacy: Actions, structures, or relationships that enable continued progress beyond the funded period, including embedded practices and long-term collaborations.

Impact may be evidenced through quantitative indicators, qualitative insights, and narrative accounts of change, recognising that cultural shifts are often complex and context-dependent.

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 9-12 months. Payments will be linked to milestones, which the supplier will agree upon.

1.3 RFP Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issue to Suppliers	WT	26 January 2026
2	Submission of Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A to Wellcome Contact	Supplier	16 Feb 2026
5	Return of Supplier Q&A to Suppliers	WT	3 March 2026
5	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	7 April 2026
6	RFP Evaluation Period	WT	8 April – 24 April 2026
8	Supplier Presentations	Supplier	5 May - 12 May 2026
9	Notification of Contract Award	WT	May 2026
10	Contract Negotiation	WT & Supplier	May – June 2026
11	Contract Start Date	WT & Supplier	June – July 2026

Supplier Presentations

Following a submission of the proposal successful proposals will be invited to an in-person or virtual meeting the duration will be confirmed. This may comprise of a PowerPoint presentation, demo etc (depending on the activity) followed by question and answers session. We may also require a brief follow-up call after these presentations.

1.4 Contract Terms and Conditions

Wellcome will be looking to put a contract in place using Wellcome's Standard Terms and Conditions. Suppliers submitting proposals should review Wellcome's Standard terms and Conditions document

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

2 Responses Required

2.1 Section 1. Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A

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.

2.2 Section 2. Proposal

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

#	Question	Max words
1	**Methodology:** Provide a short proposal outlining how you would approach the work and the proposed methodology, including any frameworks or methods you recommend. Please also include how you will adapt your methodology if data volume or complexity changes and how you will approach data protection when handling data and how the data will be managed and destroyed. **Data Governance:** Plans to manage data security	750 words
2	**Equity Diversity and Inclusion:** Outline your approach to equity, diversity and inclusion, both concerning your proposed methodology for the project and within your organisation.	250 words
3	**Experience:** 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	**Team:** Outline what makes you best placed to fulfil Wellcome's requirements within this request.	250 words
5	**Delivery and outputs:** Provide a proposed delivery plan outlining the project deliverables and timelines.	N/A 1 table or Gantt chart
6	**Communication:** Describe your approach to working with the Wellcome team.	250 words
7	**Feasibility:** Outline any significant risks and challenges you foresee with meeting Wellcome's requirement. Please include your mitigation strategies for these risks and challenges.	250 words
8	**Experience**: 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	**Budget:** Provide a detailed cost breakdown which details and justifies the proposed costs to meet our requirement.	N/A 1 table

3 Evaluation Criteria

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	*Coverage:* How well are the desired focus areas (as outlined in the specification) covered in the proposed methodology? *Quality:* Is the proposed methodology aligned with our objectives? *Utility:* Will the proposed methodology deliver the desired, credible, and useful results? *EDI:* Has appropriate attention been given to equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations in the proposed methodology?	40%
Team and experience	*Skills and Experience:* Does the applicant/s have the relevant skills, experience, and contextual understanding to deliver this work?	25%
Delivery and outputs	*Communication*: Is there a good plan for communicating with the Wellcome team?	25%

	Delivery plan: Is the proposed delivery plan appropriate and achievable? *Feasibility:* How feasible is the delivery plan? Are there significant risks associated with the proposed timelines, and how well are they mitigated? *Data Governance:* Plans for confidentiality, consent, and data security.	
Budget	*Value for Money*: Is the proposed work within budget and good value for money?	10%
	TOTAL	**100%**

Supplier Presentations

Following a submission of the proposal successful proposals will invited to a virtual, on-line meeting which will last 60 minutes in total. This will usually be in the format of a PowerPoint slides presentation given by the Supplier to a Wellcome interview panel, followed by questions and answers session.

4 General Information

4.1 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.
Successful Suppliers will be asked to complete a TPRM or TPSRA assessment this is for Wellcome to assess how you handle data.

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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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). 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

4.6 Funding

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

4.7 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

4.8 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.

Appendix-1 – List of invited organisations

- University College Cork
- University of Nottingham
- University of York
- University of Lancaster
- Kings College London
- University of Strathclyde
- University of Leicester
- Queens University Belfast
- Liverpool School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- University College Dublin
- Institute of Cancer Research
- University of East Anglia
- Oxford University
- University College London
- University of Durham
- Newcastle University
- Glasgow University
- University of St Andrews
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Birmingham
- University of Cardiff
- Birkbeck University
- University of Dundee
- University of Sheffield
- Queen Mary University
- University of Galway
- University of Exeter
- Imperial College London
- Goldsmiths University
- University of Cambridge
- University of Leeds
- Warwick University
- Keele University
- University of Sussex
- Southampton University
- University of Bristol
- Trinity College Dubin
- University of Liverpool
- London School of Topical Medicine
- University of Manchester
- St Georges, University of London
- University of Aberdeen

Appendix-2 – EOGR template

Institutional Fund for Research Culture – End of Grant Report

1. Project Overview (up to 500 words)

- What were the original aims of your project and the challenge you sought to address?
- Did your approach change during delivery? If so, what prompted these changes?
- Briefly describe the key activities undertaken.

2. Stakeholders and Engagement (up to 400 words)

A. Internal stakeholders (up to 200 words)

- Who were the key internal stakeholders (e.g., team members, leadership)?
- How were roles and responsibilities shared within the team?
- What decision-making processes were used internally, and how did you ensure transparency and inclusion?

B. External stakeholders (up to 200 words)

- Who were the key external stakeholders (e.g., community partners, collaborators)?
- How were they involved at different stages of the project (design, delivery, evaluation)?
- What steps did you take to build trust and ensure equitable participation?

3. Reflections on Delivery and Impact (up to 700 words)

- What worked well and what didn't?
- Were there any unexpected insights or results?
- Describe significant moments of learning or change.
- What impact did the work have within your organisation and externally?
- Were there any positive or negative consequences?

4. Collaboration and Inclusion (up to 300 words)

- How did your team approach collaboration and inclusion throughout the project?
- Please reflect on:
    - How diverse perspectives shaped decisions
    - Any challenges or successes in embedding equity, diversity, and justice in practice
    - Lessons learned about creating inclusive processes

5. Evaluation Reflections (up to 600 words)

- What evaluation methodology or framework did you use?
- How did you gather feedback from those affected by the work?
- What did the evaluation reveal about outcomes, processes, and assumptions?

6. Communication and Influence (up to 400 words)

- How have you communicated your project outcomes?
- Have any results or practices been embedded within your organisation or shared more widely?
- What relationships and networks were established or strengthened, and how have they informed your work?
- What evidence or indicators do you have of influence or uptake beyond your organisation?

7. Outputs and Resources (up to 300 words)

- Are there any key outputs (e.g., tools, frameworks, reports, policies) that others might benefit from?
- Please attach or link to relevant materials and briefly describe their intended use or audience.

8. Future Plans (up to 400 words)

- What are your plans for sustaining or building on this work beyond the grant period?
- What support (internal or external) will be needed to continue this work?
- What barriers or risks might affect sustaining the work, and how could they be addressed?

9. Sector Reflections (up to 400 words)

- What does your project reveal about the evolving goals, challenges, and opportunities for research culture in the sector?
- Please include any examples or evidence that illustrate these reflections if you have them