



RFP N100027

Reimagine Research 2

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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.

If you are interested in working with Wellcome on this activity, please review the information below this explains the activity in which Wellcome is seeking proposals for, timetable, what questions Suppliers need to complete and how to engage with us further, to ensure you are successful please read the whole document and answer the questions within the section(s). Responses should be made via the Oracle portal. Responses will not be accepted outside of the system.

All suppliers are required to register on Oracle if they have not already done so. Please allow at least three working days before the final submission date to ensure you complete registration and receive approval in time to meet the deadline.

The first stage is the opportunity for the Supplier to input into RFP and ask any questions you may have on the information provided. Known as the Q&A (Question and Answer).

Once question section is closed Wellcome will upload the Answers to all questions, so you can use this to formulate your answers to the Full proposal response. At this point we will open the next stage for you to be able to submit your proposal. Please note that you will see "Not Applicable" in the evaluation criteria until this final stage is open.

We are aware that one of our links is broken for the sole trader T&Cs. You can access this link [here](#)

Wellcome Contact Details

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

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1 Synopsis

Wellcome is commissioning a supplier to conduct research to help us understand how research culture has evolved since our landmark 2020 study *What researchers think about the cultures they work in*. Over the past six years, the research sector has seen significant action to tackle the problems in culture, from specific funding schemes, assessment reform, to new equity, diversity and inclusion approaches, alongside societal shifts such as the Covid 19 pandemic and the rise of hybrid working.

This request for proposal invites experienced researchers to help Wellcome understand what changes have taken place and assess whether these shifts have meaningfully improved researchers' day to day experiences. The work will deliver two core outputs: a sector wide landscaping report mapping how research culture policies, practices and structures have changed since 2019, and a newly adapted, mixed methods study capturing researchers' current perceptions and experiences, designed to be comparable with the original 2020 study.

The findings will strengthen the global evidence base on research culture and directly inform Wellcome's Equitable Research Ecosystems strategy, supporting action to create more inclusive, supportive and sustainable research environments.

1.1 Background and Objectives

Wellcome is a global philanthropy with the vision of creating a healthier future for everyone. We do this through our mission of supporting science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone by investing in research, engaging people, and influencing change.

In 2020 Wellcome published a report called ["What researchers think about the cultures they work in"](#) based on a survey of more than 4000 researchers in the UK and globally and nearly 100 in-depth interviews. The study highlighted that while 84% of researchers were proud to work in the research community, only 29% felt secure pursuing a research career. In fact, the majority of respondents (55%) used negative words to describe their research cultures. Poor research cultures were leading to unhealthy competition, bullying and harassment, mental health issues, lack of career stability, and researchers felt there was too much focus on quantity over quality which stifled creativity. The study also showed experiences were often worse for those that were more marginalised such as women with caring responsibilities, those living with a disability or from a racially minoritised background.

Following the report publication, in 2020 Wellcome held several [townhall meetings](#) across the UK and also invited researchers to join the conversation locally by hosting their own [research culture cafes](#) using our cafe culture toolkit. Together, these enabled more people to join the discussion around the report's findings and come up with potential solutions to research culture problems. To finish this campaign, in 2021 Wellcome held an online [Reimagine Research Culture Festival](#) that invited the sector to reimagine what a positive and inclusive research culture could be like.

While the 2020-21 campaign painted a picture of persistent research culture issues, it also generated a rallying cry for change, building on research culture work from the [Royal Society](#) in 2017 and the [Nuffield Council on Bioethics](#) in 2014. The sector needed to dramatically shift to value the people

behind research as much as the research output itself. Now in 2026 there have been substantial shifts in how research culture is discussed and there has been a lot of action from multiple sector actors, from funders to universities. At Wellcome we have shifted our approach to drive more positive and inclusive research cultures. This includes:

- Providing longer grants to give researchers more career stability and time to ask bold, creative and high-quality questions.
- Assessing how individuals will drive more positive and inclusive cultures in our grant application assessments through the [Research Environment section](#), and by using the Narrative CV.
- Launching the [Institutional Funding for Research Culture](#) to support universities to advance their research cultures, which included an embedded [Institutional Research Culture Community](#) to promote knowledge exchange.
- Working on our internal structures, including introducing a new [Equity team](#) to create a more equitable research ecosystem guided by our Equity Framework.

Beyond Wellcome, new research culture roles, initiatives and programmes are emerging at universities, research institutes, funders and elsewhere. In 2021, the UK government published its [R&D People and Culture Strategy](#), and UK Research & Innovation started working on the proposed [Good Practice Exchange](#) to enable institutions to learn from each other and scale up good practice. There has been adoption of the Narrative CV by funders to capture research culture contributions beyond publications and a focus on reforming research assessments to diversify recognised research outputs and activities through the global [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#). Furthermore, research culture will be assessed in the 2029 Research Excellence Framework through the new [Strategy, People, and Research Environment \(SPRE\)](#) component.

Overall, there has been a great deal of activity in the sector, but now 6 years on from the original [#ReimagineResearch](#) campaign, Wellcome is looking to assess whether any of these sectoral shifts have materially improved researchers' day-to-day experiences of, opinions and perceptions on research culture. Therefore, we are launching this request for proposal to find a suitable supplier to help us complete a scoping study to understand how the sector has changed and to run an updated "What Researchers think about the cultures they work in" research study. It is important that the new study acknowledges the major events that have redefined the world of work and research since the original study data was captured back in 2019. This includes the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, the widespread introduction of remote and/or hybrid working, the university financial crisis and huge social and cultural shifts such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the changing opinions about Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

This work will play a critical role in expanding the evidence base around research culture and its impacts. Insights from this RFP will inform the Equitable Research Ecosystems (ERE) UK team strategy, and guide decision making to improve research culture, in line with Wellcome's Equity framework goal to diversify who leads, participates and benefits from research.

Information from the original Wellcome study that could be useful to understand this research project in addition to the [published final report](#), including the survey design, interview guide, and ethics framework are included in the links below:

- Research article – [Understanding Research Culture: What researchers think about the culture they work in](#)
- [Qualitative research](#) – What Researchers thinking about the cultures they work in
- [Quantitative research](#) – What Researchers thinking about the cultures they work in

- [Literature review](#) - Extended Review
- Understanding Research Culture: Extended Data (Appendix 1)
- Understanding Research Culture: Underlying data (Appendix 2)

Other text that could be useful to review to understand the context of this work

- [Wellcome Research Culture Town Hall report](#)
- [The contributions made by the technical workforce to research culture](#)

Eligibility

- Demonstrated experience of running large research projects
- Ability to engage a diverse and representative pool of respondents
- Capability to run a global study including a robust UK-specific analysis alongside regional and international comparisons

Objectives:

We are looking to commission an external supplier that can deliver two major outputs.

1. Sector landscaping report to identify what has changed from 2019- Present day, in terms of institutional policies, practice and culture, from funders, universities to government.
2. Develop and run a newly adapted "What Researchers think about the cultures they work in" research study, using qualitative and quantitative methods, so it can be compared to the current 2019 study.

1.2 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 will be guided by the supplier as to what is a reasonable budget for this activity as we do not want limit ambition or innovation.

All our content should be WCAG 2.2. AA 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. All deliverables must be available under the Creative Commons

Attribution license (CC-BY).

Scope of Work

The proposed work builds on the previous work that Wellcome completed between 2020-2021 to understand how researched perceived and experienced the cultures they work in. This work comes 7 years after the initial data was captured and aims to gain a pulse check on where the sector is now regarding research culture.

We encourage suppliers to propose a methodology that best fits the aims of this RFP and clearly explain their rationale. The RFP should deliver the following activities by June 2027. Noting that academia is very quiet from mid-December to early January, so project timelines should anticipate this.

Activities include:

1: Landscaping report

A landscaping report evaluating how the UK Research and Development sector has changed since 2019 regarding research culture. The report will provide insight into specific sector shifts that have occurred in terms of research culture, from specific institutional actions, funder-led activities, to researcher-led initiatives.

The supplier can propose the best methodology that they will use to capture these insights. We are open to both qualitative and quantitative methodologies that enable us to get a general understanding of how the sector has moved over time. We are particularly interested in new initiatives, policies, practices, assessment frameworks, incentive structures, and equity, diversity and inclusion approaches that have been developed to improve research cultures. The aim is to provide an overview report that clearly outlines patterns and trends in what the sector is doing in terms of research culture.

Key questions we would like to understand are:

- How has the sector's thinking and understanding of research culture changed from 2019 to 2026?
- What has the sector done in the last 7 years as an attempt to improve research culture? (e.g., new initiatives, policies, practices, SPRE, narrative CV, training, EDI, funding, etc).
- What structural shifts have happened in the wider research ecosystem since 2019? (e.g. increasing financial pressures, expectations, social landscape etc).

- How do changes align with the promises that were made? (e.g. those in the R&D People and Culture Strategy)
- What has enabled or held back progress on solving research culture issues in the sector?

We suspect that findings from this landscaping report phase would be helpful in designing the researcher level survey and interviews required to deliver on output 2.

2: What researchers think about the cultures they work in (2026 update report)

A key component of this work will be the development and adaption of the original "What researchers think about the cultures they work in" study. The original study had over 4000 survey responses from researchers and nearly 100 qualitative interviews. We would like this study to be adapted and re-run in a manner that captures the day-to-day experiences, perceptions and opinions of active researchers and recent leavers, in addition to the impact of cultural and societal shifts, and research culture changes highlighted in output 1. The new study should be designed to be comparable to the initial study published in 2020, both in scale and quality. Similar to the 2020 study, we would expect the majority of the responses to be from the UK, with responses also from international researchers.

As this work is led by the UK Equitable Research Ecosystems team, we would like a UK specific analysis in addition to other geographies and this UK segment should include a regional analysis. The study should result in the production of a clear, concise, and open access report providing insights on the survey and interview data that draws out key findings. It should include an executive summary and anonymised raw survey data. Similar to the 2019 study, we will publish the methodology and results in an open access manner.

To ensure the resulting survey and interview design are as relevant as possible, the supplier should expect to work closely with the UK Equitable Research Ecosystems team and a cohort of active researchers.

Key questions to be answered through this work are:

- What do researchers in 2026 think about the cultures that they work in?
- What has changed since 2019?
- What issues have persisted or worsened? What has improved?
- What new pressures or expectations define research work in 2026?

- How have major shifts (pandemic, hybrid working, Equity diversity and inclusion, assessment reform, quality frameworks) reshaped how researchers experience research culture?
- What are researchers' perspectives on the sector changes since 2019?
- What are the experiences of those from marginalised groups?

Similar to the original 2020 it should include:

- UK-based researchers and possibly other university staff
- Researchers in universities and institutes and possibly industry
- All researches, not only those with Wellcome funding
- Geographical diversity within the UK
- Different seniority levels from students to professors

The original 2020 had some limitations in terms of whose data was included which we would like to rectify in the 2026 study. Therefore, we are looking for a supplier that has a strong plan on how they will reach researchers that were underrepresented in the original study. We are looking to increase the representation of the following researchers:

- Researchers from racially minoritised backgrounds
- Researchers living with a disability

Where possible, we will use our networks to support recruitment, but we expect the agency to have sufficient reach to recruit an appropriate sample.

3: Creative dissemination

We want both reports to be as easy to understand as possible, so in addition to traditional report outputs, we are looking for more digestible output formats, such as, but not restricted to visual approaches (for example, infographics, summary reports, visual abstracts or summary slide decks) or audible approaches (for example, podcasts) etc. We are open to suggestions from suppliers on how this can be best done. Suppliers will be able to coordinate with our communications team to ensure the outputs can be shared as widely as possible.

Expertise required

We are seeking a supplier, or group of suppliers, who can demonstrate:

- Expertise in mixed method research using qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups and stakeholder engagement), quantitative analysis (survey design, data analysis and statistics), and evidence synthesis (literature reviews, benchmarking and case studies).
- Able to recruit a large and diverse cohort of researchers, including a range of career stages and researchers underrepresented in our previous 2020 study.
- Experience writing clear, concise, engaging and audience appropriate reports.
- Experience project managing a large-scale research project
- Understanding of the UK research landscape, in particular academia.
- Able to provide creative ways of disseminating research findings beyond a traditional report.

Deliverables

- Project plan:
 - Detailing methodology, sampling approach, and data analysis strategy
- Landscaping report:

- Comprehensive analysis including sector patterns, themes and if feasible case studies.

•2026 What researchers think of the cultures they work in report:

- Develop an updated research study that is comparable to the 2020 published study.
- Produce a clear, concise and open access, detailing findings and key themes.
- Provide anonymised raw data outputs.

•Creative dissemination:

- Produce creative outputs for both reports that are easy to digest for a variety of audiences.

1.3 Timetable

#	Activity	Responsibility	Date
1	RFP issue to Suppliers	Wellcome	16-Jun-2026
2	Submission of Expression of Interest and Supplier Q&A	Supplier	29-Jun-2026
3	Return of Supplier Q&A to Suppliers	Wellcome	13-Jul-2026
4	Submission of RFP Response	Supplier	03-Aug-2026
5	RFP Evaluation Period	Wellcome	04-Aug-2026 to 24-Aug-2026
6	Supplier Presentations	Supplier	14-Sep-2026 to 25-Sep-2026
7	Notification of Contract Award	Wellcome	
8	Contract Negotiation	Wellcome & Supplier	Oct-2026
9	Contract Start Date	Wellcome & Supplier	30-Oct-2026

1.4 Guidance on Submission and Process

Submission:

- Suppliers submitting a full proposal should answer the following questions listed below
- All sections should be completed as fully as possible for Wellcome to review and score your responses once the submission period is closed. Please ensure you attach all information.
- Supplier's responses should be submitted via the Oracle portal. Once you have submitted your response you will be notified that it has been received
- Suppliers are allowed to revise their submitted response until the close date.
- Throughout this process Wellcome will ensure you are notified and contacted when you have been successful and unsuccessful

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.

1.5 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

* Response is required

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

*1. A non-binding cost estimate as a single figure in GBP.

Comments:

*2. Any questions you have about the exercise and activity. Please limit your questions to no more than five. You will be limited to 500 words.

Comments:

2.2 Section 2. Full Proposal Submission

1. After you have reviewed each of the questions below in Section 2:

Methodology (750 words)

Experience (750 words including 2 case studies)

Delivery and Outputs (500 words plus 1 table or a Gantt chart)

Budget (1 table)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies (250 words)

Please upload a single document detailing your proposed response, ensuring you keep within the word limit as specified for each question.

We have locked down your ability to answer directly in the sections below and you should say YES or NO when you have added your answers to the full proposal section, for Wellcome to receive a consolidated document.

2.3 Section 3. Methodology

1.
 1. Provide a short proposal outlining how you would approach the work and the proposed methodology. Please include how you will approach data protection when handling data and how the data will be managed and destroyed. [Max 750 words]

Please ensure that you state Yes/No to ensure that this questions has been added into your full proposal response in section 2

2.

Coverage: How well are the desired focus areas (as outlined in the specification) covered in the proposed methodology addressed?

Quality: Is the proposed methodology aligned with our needs?

2.4 Section 4. Experience

1. Skills and Experience: Does the supplier have the relevant skills, experience, and contextual understanding to deliver this work? Is there a good LE plan for the network (e.g. LE in the leadership of this network, LE training included or features such as LE mentoring)

2.5 Section 5. Delivery and Outputs

1.
 - 1 - Provide a proposed delivery plan for the work outlining the project deliverables and timelines [1 table or Gantt chart].
 - 2 - Outline any anticipated risks and challenges you foresee with meeting the RFP's requirements. Please include your mitigation strategies for these risks and challenges [250 words].
 - 3 - Describe how you plan to engage with Wellcome during the contract, including communication plans and progress reporting [Max 250 words].

Please ensure that you state Yes/No to ensure that this questions has been added into your full proposal response in section 2

2.6 Section 6. Budget

1.

Provide a detailed budget including all costs and expenses, specifying all day rates of individuals involved [1 table].

Time contribution and roles of the various team members (if supplier is a team)

Costs (including a comprehensive breakdown of expenses, including how many FTEs and number of days that will be required)

Please ensure you state Yes/No to this question to ensure that this has been added to your full proposal as detailed in section 2

2.7 Section 7. Equity Diversity and Inclusion

1.

Outline your EDI policies and how you will ensure equity, diversity and inclusion consideration are embedded throughout the planning, development and delivery of the project? [Max 250 words].

Please ensure you state Yes/No to this question to ensure that this has been added to your full proposal as detailed in section 2

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	Details	Weight %
Expression of Interest and Supplier Q and A		N/A
Full Proposal Submission		N/A

Methodology	2. Explain how you will embed equity, diversity and inclusion in your methodology to ensure that the research conducted is inclusive and representative of the UK research workforce. How will you prevent bias from being introduced into your methodology. [Max 250 words] Please ensure that you state Yes/No to ensure that this questions has been added into your full proposal response in section 2 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?	35%
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Experience	1. Provide a brief overview of your organisation, including your track record and expertise relevant to the activities set out in the RFP. Please also provide a brief description of who would be involved in the project team, their experience and expertise and their main role and responsibilities and the management plan [250 words] 2. Please provide 2 case studies demonstrating your successful delivery of similar services to those described in this RFP. Please provide links or attachments as evidence where possible. [Max 500 words] Please ensure that you state Yes/No to ensure that this questions has been added into your full proposal response in section 2	25%
Delivery and Outputs	Communication: Is there a good plan for communicating with the Wellcome team? 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?	25%
Budget	Value for Money: Is the proposed work within your budget and good value for money?	10%
Equity Diversity and Inclusion	Do they have EDI policies and are these being put into practice in the proposal?	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%

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 and TPSRA assessment this is for Wellcome to assess how you handle data.

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.