

Bioimaging Technology Development Awards

This award will fund teams of technology developers and users to create novel bioimaging tools at the cell-tissue scale. Successful teams will develop technologies that answer ambitious research questions or that overcome barriers to bioimaging work in low-resource settings.



On this page



Scheme at a glance

Career stage: Leading a research programme

Where your administering organisation is based: UK, Republic of Ireland, Low- or middle-income countries (apart from India and mainland China)

Level of funding: Foundation phase: up to £500k; Scale-up phase: you should ask for the resources you need for your programme – see the 'What we offer' section on this page. You will need to justify this in your application.

Duration of funding: Up to 8 years, spanning two phases: a foundation phase for the first 18 months, followed by a scale-up phase up to a maximum of 6.5 additional years.

Next deadline

Application deadline: 30 April 2024

View all key dates

with the application process.

About this call

The call supports ambitious technology development programmes led by proficient and diverse teams. Awarded teams will develop tools and technologies to overcome barriers to progress in bioimaging. Specifically, they will advance technologies to investigate biological phenomena at the cell-tissue scale. Potential areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Cell atlasing – how can novel bioimaging technologies and their combination with other omics help identify all cell types at the molecular level?
- Connectomics – how can novel bioimaging technologies pave the way to a full map of the neuronal connections in the mammalian brain?
- Dynamic biology – how can novel technologies improve temporal resolution in bioimaging to advance our understanding of how organisms function, adapt and respond to their surroundings?
- Systems – how can novel bioimaging technologies allow the characterisation of dynamics and structure of complete biological systems?
- Imaging data handling – novel data management strategies are needed to simplify image acquisition, analysis and data sharing. New tools are needed to support the integration of bioimaging data with other types of biological information.
- Overcoming barriers to bioimaging in low-resource settings – how can novel or existing technologies be adapted to advance discovery research in low-resource settings?

We believe that the best way to achieve technological innovations to answer biological questions is to develop them in collaboration with the researchers who will use them. Therefore, a key criterion for selection will be for teams to include both technology developers and researchers using bioimaging technologies to answer important discovery research questions.


- significantly lower barriers to bioimaging in low-resource settings

The teams and their technological innovations must be guided by a research question that aims to improve understanding of human life, health or wellbeing.

The Bioimaging Technology Development Awards will be run and assessed in two phases:

- Foundation phase: initially, successful applications to this funding call will be funded for 1.5 years.
- Scale-up phase: 12 months into the foundation phase, funded programmes will be invited to apply for the scale-up phase in a closed competitive funding call. Programmes that are successful for the scale-up phase will be able to request support for up to 6.5 additional years.

Eligibility and suitability

Who can apply, who can't apply, what's expected of your administering organisation 

Lead applicant

You must be able to demonstrate that you can drive and lead a substantial collaborative research programme focused on technology development.

Moreover, you must have the following:

- international standing as a leader in your field
- experience of leading innovative and creative research
- a track record of managing and training others

You must be able to contribute at least 20% of your research time to the programme.

Your salary must be paid by your administering organisation for the duration of the award. If you are based in a low- or middle-income country, you can ask for a contribution to your salary if you hold a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract that states that you have to get your salary from external grant funding.

If you have less than three years remaining on your contract at the point of application, you must have secured your next position at an eligible organisation and provide a letter of support from them.

Coapplicants

Coapplicants can be at any career stage and based anywhere in the world apart from mainland China.

Each coapplicant must make a significant and essential contribution to the research proposal. For example, designing the research, writing the application and/or managing the programme. They must be able to contribute at least 20% of their research time to the programme.

Coapplicants must be based at an eligible organisation that can sign up to our grant conditions.

The organisation can be a not-for-profit or a commercial organisation. A not-for-profit organisation could be a:

- higher education institution
- research institute
- non-academic healthcare organisation
- charity or social enterprise

Coapplicants can request their salary if they have a permanent, open ended or long-term rolling contract that states they have to get salary recovery from external grant funding, or they are employed by a charity, social enterprise or

only request salary in the following circumstances:

- If they will spend at least 80% of their time on this grant, they can request their full salary. Their post does not need to be underwritten and can be contingent on the application being successful.
- If they will spend less than 80% of their time on the grant, they can request salary proportionate to the time they will spend on the grant. The host organisation must guarantee space and salary support if they cannot get it from other sources for the period of time they are working on the grant. Their post cannot be contingent on the application being successful.
- Are employed on the award as postgraduate research assistants. If they are to spend 100% of their time on the award, their post does not need to be underwritten by the host organisation and can be contingent on the application being successful.

Alternatively, coapplicants may get their salary through employment on another grant or from their employer.

Coapplicants can be based in the same or in different organisations, and come from any discipline, but their added value to the team must be clear.

Team size will depend on the proposed research. For the initial application, the team must include between 3 to 5 applicants. This includes the lead applicant. During the foundation phase, funded teams may identify additional coapplicants, for example to cover potential expertise gaps. In this case, it will be possible to expand the size of the team for the scale-up phase. Teams can include a maximum of eight applicants for the scale-up phase, including the lead applicant.

Time spent away from research

You can apply if you've been away from research (for example, a career break, maternity leave or long-term sick leave). We'll allow for this when we consider your application.

What's expected of your administering organisation

The lead applicant must be based at an eligible administering organisation that can sign up to our grant conditions.

It must be in one of the following:

- UK
- Republic of Ireland
- a low- or middle-income country (apart from India and mainland China)

It must be a not-for-profit organisation. It can be one of the following:

- higher education institution
- research institute
- non-academic healthcare organisation
- charity or social enterprise

We expect organisations based in the UK to meet the responsibilities required by the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers for institutions, managers and researchers.

Any organisation with Wellcome funding that is based outside the UK is expected, at a minimum, to follow the principles of the Concordat.

We also expect your administering organisation to:

- Guarantee that the space and resources you need have been agreed and will be made available to you from the start date through to the end date of your award.
- Explain how your research fits with the strategic aims of the organisation.
- Give you, and any staff employed on the grant, ten days a year (pro rata if part-time) to undertake training and continuing professional development

join the organisation and/or start the award.

If your administering organisation itself receives core Wellcome funding, a Bioimaging Technology Development Award should not replace or lead to a reduction in existing or planned core support for your team.

About your proposal

Cost breakdown and assessment criteria

Teams will be expected to align to the principles of equitable partnerships and actively promote a diverse, inclusive and supportive research environment within the team and across the host organisations.

Cost breakdown

Your application must include a detailed cost breakdown for the foundation phase (the first 1.5 years of the programme), which cannot exceed £500k. You will also need to include an approximate, high-level estimation of costs for the subsequent scale-up phase as a separate table in your proposal section. This indicative budget for the scale-up phase will be considered flexible since teams will be allowed to add collaborators or amend their initial cost estimate when applying for the scale-up phase. You will need to justify costs in your application – please refer to the 'What we offer' section on this page for more detailed information on allowed costs.

Programmes that are selected for the foundation phase will be required to activate their award within two months of receiving their award letters.

Assessment criteria

The proposal should summarise the body of work that will be carried out in the two phases of the project (foundation and scale-up) with an emphasis on how the work carried out in the first 1.5 years will increase feasibility of the work planned for the scale-up phase. This could include expanding the team and

a scale-up proposal which should provide details of the body of work that will be carried out during the scale-up phase. Scale-up applications should also indicate how the initial plans might have changed or evolved based on the outcomes of the foundation phase.

Both the foundation and scale-up Bioimaging Technology Development Awards will be assessed on three key criteria, which will be scored independently and weighted as follows:

1. Proposal (50%)

- In this section you will be asked to provide details on the aims and key deliverables of the programme, background and justification, details of planned activities and a timetable/milestones.
- This section should also articulate the relevance of the proposed technology in terms of the added value that it will bring to specific research communities and potential plans for promoting or disseminating the technology.

2. Team (25%)

- We will review:
 - your research outputs and contributions to the research community
 - your previous contributions to, and plans for, developing team members and other researchers
 - how the programme will be managed and led
- Each applicant should complete this section by highlighting skills and experience that are relevant for the proposed programme.

3. Research Environment (25%)

- We will review:
 - how your research environment(s) will support you with the proposed plans

Funding level, duration of award, costs and research expenses ×

Duration of award: Up to 8 years, including an initial foundation phase of 1.5 years.

staff	+
continuing professional development and training	+
materials and consumables	+
animals	+
equipment	+
access charges	+
overheads	+
travel and subsistence	+
overseas allowances	+
fieldwork expenses	+
inflation allowance	+
open access charges	+
clinical research costs	+
public engagement and patient involvement costs	+
contract research organisations	+
other costs	+

We only provide a salary for coapplicants in certain circumstances – see 'staff costs' for further details.

See 'Other costs' for the costs we will and will not provide.

How to apply

Stages of application

1. Before you apply

Make sure you read everything on this page.

2. Submit your application to your administering organisation for approval

Complete your application on Wellcome Funding.

View the sample application form [PDF 620KB] – applicants will use identical forms for both the initial application and scale-up phase application.

Submit it to the 'authorised organisational approver' at your administering organisation for approval. Make sure you leave enough time for the approver to review and submit your application before the deadline. The approver may ask you to make changes to your application.

Get some guidance on using the Wellcome funding platform.

3. Host organisation reviews your application and submits it to us

Your application must be submitted by 17:00 (GMT/BST) on the deadline day.

4. Eligibility checks

We will check your and your team's eligibility for the scheme and that your application demonstrates how you will collectively meet the aims of the scheme. If your application is ineligible or does not demonstrate how you will meet the

Your application will be reviewed by an Expert Advisory Committee. They will assess the body of work that is proposed for the two phases of the project (foundation and scale-up) with a specific emphasis on how the work carried out in the first 18 months will increase feasibility of the work planned for the scale-up phase. There will be no interview at this stage.

6. Final funding decisions

Final funding decisions for the foundation phase will be made by the Discovery Research Decision Board. You will receive an email notification of the funding decision soon after the decision has been made.

Please note funding provided at this stage will be for the foundation phase only.

7. Scale-up application

If your application for foundation funding is successful, your team will be invited to submit a revised application for scale-up funding approximately 12 months following the start of your foundation award.

The Expert Advisory Committee will review the scale-up proposals and interview the teams. Final funding decisions for the scale-up phase will be made by early 2026.

You will receive further details and guidance on the assessment process for scale-up funding in due course.

8. Feedback

Written feedback will be provided to all unsuccessful applicants at each decision point, including the reasons for a decision.

[Start your application](#)

You must submit your application by 17:00 (GMT/BST) on the deadline day. We don't accept late applications.

30 April 2024

Application deadline

July 2024

Foundation phase - Expert Advisory Committee

October 2024

Foundation phase - Start

October 2025

Scale-up phase - Application deadline

January 2026

Scale-up phase - Interviews


April 2026

Scale-up phase - Start

Contact us


If you have a question about eligibility, what we offer or completing the application form, contact our funding information advisers:

 [Send us a message](#)

 [\(0\)20 7611 5757](tel:02076115757)



Search 

 DiscoveryResearch@wellcome.org

We do not answer questions on the scope or competitiveness of proposals.

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