

Wellcome Discovery Awards

This scheme provides funding for established researchers and teams from any discipline who want to pursue bold and creative research ideas to deliver significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing.



On this page



Scheme at a glance

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

Level of funding: You should ask for the resources you need for your research programme – see the 'What we offer' section on this page. You will need to justify this in your application. The average size of a Discovery Award is £3.5 million, although we have supported awards from £700,000 to £8 million. Applications above £5 million will be subject to additional due diligence.

Duration of funding: Awards can be up to 8 years, but may be less for some disciplines, and may be longer if held on a part-time basis. The average duration of a Discovery Award is 7 years, although we have supported awards from 3 to 8 years.

Deadline for new applications

Application deadline: 16 April 2024, 17:00 BST

Eligibility and suitability

Who can apply, who can't apply, what's expected of your host organisation [×](#)

You can apply for a Wellcome Discovery Award if you are a researcher who wants to pursue bold and creative research ideas. You must aim to make a major contribution to your research field by:

- generating significant shifts in understanding

and/or

- developing methodologies, conceptual frameworks, tools or techniques that could benefit health-related research.

You will be expected to actively promote a diverse, inclusive and supportive research environment within your team and across your organisation.

Your research can be in any discipline – including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), experimental medicine, humanities and social science, clinical/allied health sciences, and public health – as long as it has the potential to improve human life, health and wellbeing, and aligns with our funding remit.

The research can be in a single discipline or multidisciplinary.

An award can be held by an established researcher or a team of researchers led by an established researcher.

Lead applicant

Whether you are applying as the sole applicant or the lead applicant for a team, you must have:

If you are the lead applicant for a team, you must also be able to demonstrate you can drive and lead a substantial collaborative research programme.

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

You must be based at an eligible host 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 a:

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

At the point of application, you should have a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract, or the guarantee of one. The contract should not be conditional on receiving this award.

Your salary must be paid by your host 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 and 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.

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:

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

It can also be a commercial organisation.

Coapplicants can request their salary if they have a permanent, open ended or long-term rolling contract and have to get their salary from external grant funding, or they are employed by a charity, social enterprise or commercial organisation. The amount they request must be proportionate to the time they will spend on the grant.

Coapplicants without a permanent, open ended or long-term rolling contract can only request salary 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.
- 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

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 the added value of the team approach must be clear.

Team size will depend on the proposed research. It will usually range from two to eight applicants, including the lead applicant.

We encourage lead applicants to put together diverse teams.

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.

If you have retired, please contact us before applying.

Resubmissions

If you are unsuccessful with an application to this scheme, you can submit one more full application for the same project. Significant changes are needed for the second application. You do not need to contact us first.

Other Wellcome awards

- An **early-career researcher** can hold one Early-Career Award and be a coapplicant on one other Wellcome award.
- A **mid-career researcher** can hold one Career Development Award and be a coapplicant on up to two other Wellcome awards. In their application for the second award the co-applicant must explain:

- An **established researcher** can be a lead applicant on two Discovery Awards, one as sole applicant and one as lead applicant for a team, or both as a lead applicant for a team. They can also be a coapplicant on up to two other Wellcome awards. Current holders of Investigator Awards and Senior Research Fellowships cannot be a sole applicant for a Discovery Award. They may be the lead applicant for a team on a Discovery Award and a coapplicant on up to two other Discovery Awards or Collaborative Awards.

Researchers cannot be a coapplicant on more than two Discovery Awards.

Assessment criteria

We will review your research proposal, skills and experience, and research environment.

Your research proposal

To be competitive, your research proposal will be:

- **Bold.** It aims to deliver a significant shift in understanding and/or it provides a significant advance over existing methodologies, conceptual frameworks, tools or techniques. It has the potential to stimulate new and innovative research.
- **Creative.** Your proposed approach is novel – it develops and tests new concepts, methods or technologies, or combines existing ideas and approaches in a new way.
- **High quality.** It is well-designed, clear, supported by evidence and the proposed outcomes/outputs are feasible.

Your skills and experience (applicants and coapplicants)

We will review:

- your research outputs and contributions to the research community

-
- how the programme will be managed and led
 - your rationale for a team approach, team composition (including your approach to diversity, inclusion and career stage) and the contribution of each team member.

Your research environment

We will review:

- how you will contribute to the strategic aims of your organisation
- how your research environment(s) will help you develop your research capabilities, and leadership and management skills
- your experience of, and plans for, contributing to a positive and inclusive research culture.

Who can't apply

You are not eligible to apply as a lead applicant on a Discovery Award if you are the lead applicant on two other Discovery Award applications and you are waiting for a decision.

You cannot apply if you intend to carry out activities that involve the transfer of grant funds into mainland China.

What's expected of your host organisation

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

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.

- 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, 10 days a year (pro rata if part-time) to undertake training and continuing professional development (CPD) in line with the Concordat. This should include the responsible conduct of research, research leadership, people management, diversity and inclusion, and the promotion of a healthy research culture.
- Provide a system of onboarding, embedding and planning for you when you join the organisation and/or start the award.

If your host organisation is a core-funded research organisation, a Discovery Award should not replace or lead to a reduction in existing or planned core support.

What we offer

Funding level, duration of award, research expenses, what we don't offer [×](#)

A Wellcome Discovery Award provides funding for research expenses.

The award usually lasts for 8 years, but may be less for some disciplines, such as humanities and social science.

The award may be held on a part-time basis. We will extend the duration of the award to reflect this.

You should ask for a level and duration of funding that's appropriate for your proposed research. You will need to justify these costs in your grant application.

The award includes:

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	+

What we don't offer

The award does not include salary costs for the lead applicant.

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

Make sure you read everything on this page.

You may also want to watch a recording of a webinar that took place on Monday 12 April 2021.

Get some tips to help you write your grant application.

You do not need to contact us before you write and submit your application.

2. Submit your application to your host organisation for approval

Complete your application form on Wellcome Funding.

View the [Sample full application form for Wellcome Discovery Awards \[PDF 1.43MB\]](#).

Submit it to the 'authorised organisational approver' at your host 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.

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. Watch a recording of a webinar demonstrating the new Wellcome Funding Platform from Thursday, 4 May 2023.

4. Shortlisting

We will check your eligibility for the scheme and that your application demonstrates how you will meet the aims of the scheme. If your application is ineligible or does not demonstrate how you will meet the aims of the scheme, we will withdraw your application and contact you to explain why.

One of the following Discovery Advisory Groups will then review your application, depending on your area of research:

- Molecular Mechanisms
- Pathogen Biology and Disease Transmission
- Cell Biology, Development and Physiology

-
- Genetics and Genomics
 - Medical Humanities
 - Social Sciences
 - Data Sciences, Tools and Technology.

If shortlisted, we will invite you for interview.

5. Written expert review

We'll seek external written expert review on shortlisted applications. Only the proposed research will be reviewed.

Reviewers will be chosen based on their expertise within the relevant research field and not on their level of seniority.

Unattributed comments will be sent to you before your interview.

6. Interviews

A committee will interview shortlisted candidates at the Wellcome offices in London. Accessibility requirements will be accommodated. Those who cannot attend in person can participate remotely.

We will provide information on the structure of the interview, layout of the room, and interview committee membership.

Shortly before the day of the interview, you will need to provide us with your presentation slides. You will be asked to give a presentation at the start of your interview.

The focus of the interview will be on questions and answers. The committee will assess across a set of criteria rather than one specific aspect of the proposal.

7. Funding decision

Final funding decisions 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.



Search 

Disabled applicants

If you are disabled or have a long-term health condition, we can support you with the application process.

Start your application

Log in to our online grants system (Wellcome Funding). You can save your application and return to it any time.

Watch our webinar for established researchers and collaborative teams to hear more about our goals for Discovery Research at Wellcome.

Key dates

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

July 2023 round

CLOSED TO NEW APPLICATIONS

06 June 2023

Applications open

25 July 2023, 17:00 BST

Application deadline

October 2023

Shortlisting



Search 

November 2023 round

CLOSED TO NEW APPLICATIONS

16 August 2023

Applications open

21 November 2023, 17:00 GMT

Application deadline

February 2024

Shortlisting

7-9 May 2024

Interviews

April 2024 round

OPEN TO NEW APPLICATIONS

22 November 2023

Applications open

16 April 2024, 17:00 BST

Application deadline

June 2024

Shortlisting



Search 

July 2024 round

OPENING SOON

17 April 2024

Applications open

30 July 2024, 17:00 BST

Application deadline

October 2024

Shortlisting


21-23 January 2025

Interviews

Contact us

If you have a question about eligibility, what we offer or our funding remit, contact our funding information advisers:

 [Send us a message](#)

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

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

Grant funding



Search 

Funded people and projects

What we do

Mental health

Infectious disease

Climate and health

Discovery research

All our work

Who we are

Jobs

Our strategy

Teams

Our history

How we are funded

Contact us

News and reports

All news

Media office

Reports

Podcast

Newsletters



[Back to top](#)

[Wellcome Funding](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Modern slavery statement](#) | [Privacy and terms](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Contact Us](#)





Search 🔍
