

Request for proposals

Covid-19 vaccine development and deployment - how can we manage expectations and ensure responsible, balanced decision making?

The issue

Vaccine development is in the spotlight in a way it never has been before, is has never been more discussed or more important than right now. This presents both opportunities and challenges. We want to help policy makers and the media understand the complex issues connected to vaccine development, enable them to make better decisions on this topic and stop fuelling misconceptions connected to this debate.

Initial research carried out for Wellcome has highlighted

- Expectations around a Covid-19 vaccine are being set high: in particular the speed it can be developed and its potential impact in ending the pandemic. Focus is being placed on front-runner candidates e.g Oxford vaccine. This is being driven by both the media and political conversation.
- There is significant interest from media in vaccine related stories and scientific perspectives and engaged set of parliamentarians sharing informed content. However, those covering / commenting do not have expertise or specialist understanding of vaccine development.
- Policy makers are usually generalists (e.g. treasury officials, special advisors) who are now having to take decisions on vaccines. We know from previous work that these audiences are time-poor and are finding available information confusing (e.g. how does everything link together) so we want to provide balanced and credible information that is less technical than scientific papers.
- Policy makers also (outside immunisation policy) do not realise the complexities involved in making a vaccine. Research showed misconceptions of vaccines such as they were all sitting in a freezer waiting for a pandemic. The poll of policy makers interested in vaccines is much wider than before and is making this worse.

Through our work on vaccines we are aware of broader issues that are likely to exacerbate these findings:

- Any Covid-19 vaccines that is developed may offer less protection the other vaccines people are familiar with and may only be effective or suitable for certain population groups.
- The general failure rate of vaccines gives us relative certainty that some leading candidates will not succeed. In addition, the normal timescales for vaccine development (around 10 years) meant that while suggested 2020 delivery timescales are feasible, they are a 'moonshot'.
- Given the scale of need for a Covid-19 vaccine and manufacturing capacity challenges there will almost certainly be scarcity of vaccines when they become available.
- The processes for achieving safety for vaccines though highly robust are opaque outside of the technical vaccine field. In addition, the need for rapid licensure of Covid-19 vaccines poses new challenges. (This has emerged in recent weeks as an issue in media coverage)
- It is possible that a vaccine may never be found despite the money and time poured into the effort, as has been the case to date for HIV.
- The vaccine development process has become highly politicised and many governments around the world are rushing development and approval for potential political gains such as Russia, China and US

- Ensuring equitable access to tools will be difficult. In previous pandemics rich countries have tended to hoard vaccines/treatments. As Covid-19 is widespread, it is crucial that vulnerable populations are vaccinated around the world to get control of the pandemic.

A poor understanding of any of these concepts or unrealistic expectation in a vaccine threatens the trust the public and politicians have in vaccines and research more widely. This could risk reducing investment in Covid-19 vaccine research now and in vaccine development in the future.

What do we want?

To protect trust in vaccines and vaccine development and ensure policy and decision makers in key markets make well informed decisions, based on evidence regarding vaccine funding, development and distribution.

How we will do this:

- By managing expectations of vaccines and the vaccine development process
- By catalysing responsible coverage and conversations on the issues that may face a Covid-19 vaccine in development and deployment.
- By ensuring policy makers have the information they need in accessible and engaging formats

Whilst we do not anticipate being able to eliminate coverage and political message that raises or mismanages expectations around a Covid-19 vaccine, however, we would like to bring better balance and mitigate the risks of this.

We want to create content that enables us to:

- Deliver engaging, accessible messaging and information on vaccine development acknowledging that this is a technically complex and relatively 'dry' area.
- Build understanding with key audiences on the complexities of vaccine development, manage their expectations of the process, and through this ensure that they act as a cushion of informed voices.
- Proactively engage key media and journalists before issues emerge to ensure balanced and responsible reporting.
- Put us on the front foot in relation to Covid-19 vaccine progress, so issues that are likely to affect the vaccine aren't blown out of proportion or inflamed.
- Show Wellcome's expertise and influence in this space – use this as an opportunity to build brand attribution with key audiences.

We want this work to help us retain policy maker's trust, continue funding research and development and committing to equitable access which they are more likely to do if they think they have public support. We worry the risk with the vaccines failing is that public sentiment turns against vaccines and the governments pull out when we need their support more than ever.

Wellcome has strong networks that connect us to leading scientific experts, vaccine developers and policy makers that we can harness and utilise. We are one of the few actors in the vaccine space that does not have a stake in particular vaccines or populations who stand to benefit, nor are we constrained by being directly responsible for international efforts to deliver the vaccine. This means we are well placed to be able to explore some of the more difficult issues.

Who do we want to reach?

- Policy wranglers - people involved in the any vaccine or Covid-19 policy process within government (politicians, policy makers, civil servants, Special Advisors).
- Policy campaigners - policy related roles at health issue specific campaigning organisations. Also within broader charities, foundations and multilaterals, attached to issue specific teams or project.
- Journalists – anyone covering vaccines which extends far beyond traditional health reporters currently.

The brief

We would like an agency to work with us to design both a pipeline of content and a strategy for delivering this across platforms (Wellcome based and/or through other means), as well as develop the content itself. The approach should be adaptable so that content can be promoted to political audiences by Wellcome's internal policy team, or depending on agency capabilities public affairs approaches can be included as an additional component.

We want our chosen partner to think about content in terms of usefulness – we want to create useful content for policy audiences. We will want you to create content which will sit on the Wellcome website but could also be shared on social.

We would like the proposal to cover a period of 6 months but with the potential for extension subject to review. New content should be delivered each month to ensure the website stays relevant to changing situations and external landscape.

- Content could include written explainers, commissioned articles, curated conversations between experts that are broadcast, audio or video-based content, data visualisations. We are open to and interested in creative approaches to this brief if they are focused/proven methods for engaging our key audiences.
- The primary method of delivery will be Wellcome's website, newsletters and social channels, so all content should be developed to be delivered through there. However, also understanding the limits of Wellcome's reach we are keen to hear ideas for syndication or other methods to reach beyond our immediate sphere of influence.
- Our preference is that the approach creates regular means of engagement with key audiences to build a conversation / engagement.

We would anticipate working with the successful agency to develop thematic areas to focus on based on this brief. These might include vaccine safety, efficacy, global allocation of a vaccine, what happens when vaccines are found not to work, the science behind vaccines, lesser known Covid-19 vaccine candidates and what they might offer. The topics for inclusion may also be subject to change based on the changing media and political landscape.

Whilst Wellcome is located in the UK and Germany, we would like this project to be global in focus.

How will we measure success?

- Traffic driven to content pieces on Wellcome site and wider Covid-19 hub pages
- Downloads of content
- Interaction with key audiences on social media – sharing of our content, use of our language and framing

- More balanced coverage in relation to vaccine topics – particularly expectation management

What has worked in the past

[Vaccine explainer](#) – graphic reposted by Bloomberg, high engagement on social, high number of visits to Wellcome website

[Antibiotic market content](#) – retweeted by key audience (AMR responsible civil servants), high engagement on social

[Brexit briefing](#) – feedback from policy makers, liked the fact the recommendations were clear and at the top and that the supportive evidence was all there

[WHO Covid-19 response timeline](#) graphics - clear, compelling

[Gates Foundation Goalkeepers report](#) – beautifully designed, capturing the human story, easy to follow

Who are Wellcome

Wellcome are one of the largest charitable foundations in the world with a focus on improving health for all through bold science. We have been campaigning on [epidemic preparedness](#) and the [importance of vaccines](#) for many years but have taken a leading role in pressing for the investment and research needed from the global community [in response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#). We are one of the founders of CEPI, the leading partner of the therapeutics pillar of the [ACT accelerator](#) and are [committed to equitable access for all vaccines, tests and treatments for COVID-19](#).

Additional requirements

All content produced will need to be in keeping with Wellcome’s brand guidelines for all our Covid-19 content. We will carry out a brand briefing following the appointment of an agency and will provide a brand briefing pack showing the brand in use. It will also need copy to be written in our tone of voice and all in keeping with AA web accessibility standards. We will also organise taking you through the function and limitations of our website as most of the content will be living on there. Sign off by Wellcome will need to be baked into delivery process to ensure brand alignment.

Wellcome will be announcing a new strategy in October 2020, all messaging will need to be compatible with the new strategy when it is announced. We will provide a briefing on the new strategy following the appointment of an agency partner for this project. This may also require creative and messaging tweaking over the course of the project in line with our new strategy.

Timeline

RFP sent out	Tuesday 22 nd September
Indication of interest	Friday 9 th October
Submissions required	Wednesday 14 th October
Pitches (tbc if required)	Friday 16 th October
Partner appointed	Monday 19 th October
Development of content	October 2020
First delivery	November 2020

Given the pressing nature of the topic covered we would like to get started on this content as soon as possible and would like our partner to deliver pieces of content throughout Autumn and Winter 2020. We foresee the requirements of this content partnership evolving in response to the external media and public landscape and we may therefore require adding additional topics for inclusion.

Budget

Please put together a detailed budget for the first six months of strategy development and content production. Please include the team who would be working on this and suggested timelines.

This budget will not need to include digital marketing, please propose a suggested additional digital marketing budget that will be paid for and carried out by Wellcome's in house digital marketing team.

Contact

If you have any questions regarding this brief, please send them to Lydia Rollinson (l.rollinson@Wellcome.org). Any questions from all potential partners will be answered together via email w/c 5th October.