



Induction pack for committee members

Introduction

Dear colleague,

I am delighted you have agreed to become a member of one of Wellcome's advisory committees. The work of our committees is essential to Wellcome's work. We are fortunate to be able to call on internationally recognised experts like you, who are willing to help us select the most promising people and ideas to improve health and change lives for the better. On behalf of everyone at Wellcome, thank you for joining us.

As an independent charitable foundation, we are willing to take risks. Therefore, in your role as a committee member, I'd like to encourage you to be bold: be open to proposals that have the potential to be transformative, and help us identify people at all career stages who have the drive, originality and vision to join the 21st century's research leaders, entrepreneurs and public engagement experts. Together, we can support and encourage the best in the world.

Wellcome is open to ideas about how to develop and improve – and we value your knowledge, expertise and experience. We look forward to hearing your ideas and advice, and in developing what I hope will become a mutually rewarding working relationship.

This guide introduces you to how our advisory committees work, what you can expect from us, and what we expect in return from our committee members. I hope you find it helpful.

Thank you once again for becoming part of the Wellcome family.

Best wishes



Jeremy Farrar
Director, Wellcome



Dr Ravindra Gupta, Wellcome Senior Fellow in Clinical Science, testing antiretroviral drug resistance in HIV.
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How Wellcome works

What we do and who we fund

Wellcome exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. We're a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. We support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate.

The research, public engagement and policy work we support addresses fundamental health challenges, and encompasses discovery science, medical innovation, and the humanities and social sciences. Our funding supports over 14,000 people in more than 70 countries.

We support work across the following areas, through our response-mode funding schemes and direct activities:

- biomedical science
- population health
- product development and applied research
- humanities and social science
- public engagement and arts projects.

Most of our awards are to support individual researchers or teams, but we also make some awards to support centres and research resources.

How we support research

As well as funding research, we work to foster a healthy and progressive research environment.

- We recognise that the outputs of research are many and varied; they include research articles reporting new knowledge, but we also value other outputs such as data, reagents, software, intellectual property and policy changes.
- We have signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#), which aims to improve the way research is evaluated. We focus on the content and quality of publications, rather than their number, venue of publication or impact factor.
- [We support researchers in their professional development.](#)
- We promote the sharing of data, software and materials, as well as open access to research publications.
- We promote diversity and inclusion.
- We support public engagement and develop its practice, finding the best ways of bringing science and health research closer to society.

In return, we expect our funded researchers to:

- maintain the highest standards of research excellence and integrity
- willingly share data and research tools
- participate fully in finding, training and mentoring the next generation of research leaders, educators and entrepreneurs
- support the translation of their work to improve health or wellbeing, where appropriate.

We fund the direct costs of research, but not [overheads](#). We can fund overheads where the organisation depends on contributions towards overheads for it to be operationally and financially viable or if it helps our charitable mission.

How we make funding decisions

Our procedures vary from scheme to scheme, but we are always guided by a commitment to clarity and openness. You may notice that our forms are shorter than those of other funders; we have tried to strip out everything we feel is unnecessary for you to assess applications.

We rely on the expertise and impartiality of you and your fellow committee members to advise us, so that we can make the best possible funding decisions.

Stages of the process typically include:

Initial review

Wellcome staff check whether each application is eligible and fits with the relevant remit. For some of our more high-demand schemes, we ask for a preliminary application, and choose the most competitive to submit a full application.

Shortlisting

Many committees then shortlist full applications. Generally, our committees of external advisers do the shortlisting, but on occasion Wellcome staff will do it.

Committee assessment

Applications clearing all these hurdles are assessed by committees of external advisers. For many schemes, this will involve a committee interview at our office. Your committee then produces a ranked list of applications recommended for funding.

Final funding decision

Final decisions are made by the director of the relevant funding division at Wellcome: Science, Innovations, or Culture & Society. They take into account your advice, budget considerations, and current Wellcome priorities. These decisions are overseen by our Executive Leadership Team, and ultimate responsibility lies with our Board of Governors.



Dr Ivo Elliott and Dr Tri Wangrangsimakul are doing a study on scrub typhus. Their field research in the rural areas outside Chiang Rai, Thailand, involves laying traps for rats and bandicoots.
© David Maurice Smith

Your role on a Wellcome committee

You and your fellow committee members have been selected not just for your specialism in certain disciplines, but also because we feel you have the judgement, experience and skill to contribute outside your area. Some committees do focus on particular research areas, but others are generalist.

As a committee member, you will review and discuss applications and you may interview candidates.

For some applications where you have relevant expertise, we will ask you to act as a Lead Reviewer. This means that you will give these applications particular attention before the committee meeting and help to lead the discussion and questioning of candidates.

But we will also expect you to review applications outside your immediate field.

All Wellcome decisions – and all committee recommendations – should be free from any undue influence. Everyone involved in the award process, whether Wellcome staff or external experts, should act with integrity and impartiality, and be open, fair and unbiased.

When you first become a Wellcome committee member, we may invite you to come to an induction. This is an important part of the briefing process.

Roles and responsibilities

All committee meetings are supported by staff from our Grants team and from our three funding divisions (Science, Innovations, and Culture & Society).

Chair

- Reads all applications in detail
- Guides discussion and questioning
- Ensures clear outcomes from the meeting
- Ensures high-quality discussion and appropriate behaviour
- With the Committee Secretary, keeps the meeting to time

Committee Member

- Participates in discussion and interviews for all applications (unless conflict of interest)
- Scores all applications (unless conflict of interest)

Lead Reviewer

- For designated applications, provides detailed critique and leads interview questions

Co-opted Committee Member

- Attends for all or part of a meeting as appropriate
- Participates in review of all relevant applications

Committee Secretary (member of Wellcome staff)

- Liaises with Chair and members; provides papers and communicates dates; is point of contact for queries and problems
- Briefs new members on expectations, roles and responsibilities
- Manages conflicts of interest and associated restrictions
- Reviews applications and briefs Chair about important issues
- Manages the agenda and, with the Chair, keeps the meeting to time
- Records and disseminates decisions
- Does not contribute to scoring

Wellcome Funding Division Lead

- Provides context on applications and schemes, advises on Wellcome policies and positions
- Ensures consistency of practice between committees
- Advises Wellcome directors on final funding decisions
- Does not contribute to scoring

Wellcome Governor

- Observes meetings to ensure quality and consistency of committee practice
- Provides guidance or clarification on Wellcome policy, positions or strategy
- Does not contribute to scoring

Wellcome Grants Adviser

- Collates and manages scores
- Records discussions and decisions
- Provides background information on applications, if required
- Looks after interview candidates
- Manages feedback to applicants
- Does not contribute to scoring

Observers

- May include Wellcome staff, potential committee members, and representatives of partner organisations
- Do not contribute to discussions or scoring

Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest are a normal part of being a committee member, and it is important for you to tell us if you think you may have a conflict that might influence your assessment, or might be seen to do so. Before we send you the full application details, we will send a summary list of applications to check. We will identify obvious conflicts, for example if you work in the same department as an applicant, but if you have any other connection with an applicant please tell the Committee Secretary as soon as possible. If you only realise later that you have a conflict, please say so straight away – better late than never.

If you have a conflict of interest with an application, we may manage it by recusing or excluding you from:

- the decision on whether to recommend that application
- the discussion as well as the decision
- the entire meeting.

We may not use you as a Lead Reviewer, even if you have the expertise. And if you are the committee Chair, we may replace you as Chair for that meeting.

To find out more, please see our [Conflicts of Interest policy](#).

Wellcome's policies and position statements

It may be helpful in your role if you have some familiarity with the Wellcome policy and position statements below. Compliance with our policies is managed by Wellcome staff, and we can advise you if you have any questions.

- [Guidelines on good research practice](#)
- [Research misconduct](#)
- [Managing risks of research misuse](#)
- [Policy on the use of personal information in research](#)
- [Policy on bullying and harassment](#)
- [Policy on clinical trials](#)
- [Policy on research involving human participants](#)
- [Research involving people in low- and middle-income countries](#)
- [Policy position on health-related findings in research](#)

- [Use of stem cells in research](#)
- [Policy on intellectual property](#)
- [Policy on consent and revenue and equity sharing](#)
- [Policy on conflicts of interest relating to Wellcome-funded researchers and commercial organisations](#)
- [Policy on data, software and materials management and sharing](#)
- [Open access policy](#)
- [Policy on the use of animals in research](#)
- [Researchers funded by the tobacco industry](#)
- [Confidentiality of the application review process](#)
- [Funding for overheads](#)
- [How international sanctions can affect grants](#)
- [Supporting career development of researchers](#)
- [Statement on genome data release](#)
- [Guidelines on good environmental practice adopted by Wellcome](#)

Confidentiality

All committee papers and discussions are strictly confidential, and everyone at the meeting is bound by the same confidentiality rules:

- Keep the identity of applicants and referees confidential at all times.
- Keep papers secure: do not discuss them with anyone outside the committee or let anyone else see them.
- Do not post comments on social media about grants or any aspect of the grants process.
- Do not share any information about the committee's composition except for what is listed on the Wellcome website. Wellcome staff will give applicants further details if appropriate.
- Until Wellcome has made the final funding decision, do not privately discuss applications with other committee members separately from the committee meeting.
- Do not share any information about committee discussions or decisions with anybody – including applicants who have been given a final decision. Wellcome staff will give applicants feedback. If you receive any such requests, tell the Committee Secretary.

- If an applicant or potential applicant asks you for advice, do not give them any privileged information that isn't publicly available on our website – including advice based on your knowledge of how our committees and interview procedures work.

Diversity, inclusion and avoiding bias

To attract the best ideas and the best candidates, Wellcome is committed to being inclusive and encouraging a diverse range of people to apply.

We all have biases of one sort or another, and these may affect our decisions subtly and unconsciously. To ensure that committee decision-making is as fair as possible, please think about your own potential biases and try to ensure that these do not lead to unfair outcomes. Wellcome staff can advise you if you think there is an issue of bias.

Preparing for meetings

Before a meeting, your Committee Secretary will send you a list of the applications to be considered, along with details of the relevant funding schemes, a reminder of our conflicts of interest policy and code of conduct, and any other instructions. We'll give you access to our online grants management system so that you can read the applications. You will not have access to any applications for which you are recused.

For all applications where you have no conflict, we'll ask you to provide scores (see below) and/or comments by a given deadline. This will inform the committee's deliberations and can also form part of the anonymous feedback to the candidate.

We generally assign each application to two or three Lead Reviewers. As a Lead Reviewer, you will give a more in-depth critique in advance, and you will lead the meeting's discussion and questioning of candidates. We'll tell you which applications we would like you to be a Lead Reviewer for. Please read these applications with particular care.

Please read all the applications in as much detail as you can. As a minimum, we ask that you are familiar enough with all applications to be able to contribute to discussion.

Assessing applications

Before each meeting, your Committee Secretary will give you full guidelines for how to assess the applications. Broadly speaking, we expect you to look at how the application meets the scheme criteria, the importance and likelihood of success of the proposed work, the track record of the applicant(s), and the suitability of the proposed workplace. We also want you to advise us whether the resources requested – for staff, equipment, materials, travel etc – are justified, and in particular whether any plans for clinical trials or use of animals are fully justified.

In general, Wellcome committees assess applications using numerical scores – from 1 (unsupportable) to 5 (outstanding) – either alone or supplemented by red/amber/green traffic-light scores. Your Committee Secretary will give you details of which system to use. This scoring will not determine which applications receive funding, but Wellcome directors will find the scores valuable in informing their final decisions.

If you're assessing interdisciplinary research proposals, take them as a whole. The quality of the individual aspects matters, but their potential to combine to create a novel and exciting whole is more important.

Wellcome is a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#), so please bear the DORA guidelines in mind when assessing applicants' CVs. In particular:

- Focus on the content and quality of publications, rather than their number, the venue of publication, or the impact factors of the journals in which they were published.
- Take into account the diverse range of possible research outputs. Outputs vary between disciplines, and may include data, reagents, software, intellectual property and policy changes, in addition to research articles.
- Be sensitive to legitimate delays in research publication, and personal factors (parental or other types of leave, part-time working and disability) that may have affected the applicant's record of outputs.

Before the meeting

Almost all committee meetings are held at our offices: the Gibbs Building, 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK. The building is wheelchair-accessible, with eight lifts and accessible toilets on every floor.

We will contact you about six weeks before a meeting to discuss arrangements for your visit, which we try to make as straightforward as possible.

At the meeting

All committee meetings start with a briefing session – our opportunity to tell you about Wellcome priorities and funding schemes, to get your feedback, and to gather any other information that you may feel we should know about or have missed. We welcome robust opinions!

Different committees operate differently. Your Committee Secretary will email you in advance to tell you about the running order and your role. At the end, after you have considered all the applications, the committee will produce a ranked list, which Wellcome will use as guidance for shortlisting or final decisions.

The Chair will ensure that Lead Reviewers provide their expert assessments, as well as opening up the discussion to include all members.

In general:

- Be clear whether and when you must leave the room if you have a conflict of interest – check with the Committee Secretary.
- Don't do work, on devices or papers, that is unrelated to committee business. There will be breaks in the meeting for you to check emails, take phone calls, send messages etc.
- Do not leave early, unless you have agreed this in advance with the Committee Secretary.
- If you are concerned that certain behaviour may have led to an unfair outcome, or may have discomforted or upset a candidate (or anyone else), talk to the Committee Secretary or the Chair.
- If you have any concerns about research misconduct, do not bring these up during the meeting; discuss them privately with the Committee Secretary.

During discussions:

- Engage in discussion of all applications, whether or not they're in your field. Make any comments you think are important but nobody else has yet made, raise any concerns, and ask any questions.
- Feel free to challenge the consensus, if there's an application that only you are enthusiastic about or disappointed by – but be prepared to justify your view. Don't defer to confidently expressed opinions if you have grounds for disagreeing.
- If your assessment of an application is influenced by any personal knowledge of the applicant (over and above what's in the application or is publicly available), please declare this at the time.
- When doing your final scoring (see page 10), remember to take into account the comments of your fellow committee members.

Professor Muzlifah Haniffa: "Wellcome funds a diverse range of projects and people. Panels are considerate of the challenges facing women, researchers working part-time and in challenging environments in the UK and abroad."
@ Jooney Woodward



Coming to committee meetings

During interviews:

We want candidates to feel welcome when they come for interview, and to leave feeling that they have been given the best possible opportunity to make their case. Please do what you can to put each candidate at ease:

- Give them your full attention rather than focusing on your laptop or papers.
- Ask questions that encourage them to make their case as strongly as they can.
- When you have more challenging questions, be respectful and collegial – not confrontational – in the way you ask them.
- Be succinct and focused, and avoid multi-part questions, which are more difficult for the candidate to remember.
- Be sensitive to any cultural or language issues.

After the meeting

If the Committee Secretary asks you for final written reviews, complete these and send them by the deadline given (normally shortly after the meeting).

Delete any confidential files on your devices and destroy any papers.

Send us any claims for travel and other expenses within two weeks of the meeting, and we will refund your costs.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the meeting, or the behaviour of committee members, talk to the Committee Secretary or the Chair.

Our funding directors will make final decisions and we will let you know as soon as we can.

Tell us what you think

We want to improve the way we work, and we want your experience as a committee member to be rewarding. So your comments, suggestions and criticisms matter to us. Please share any concerns or feedback you have with our staff at meetings, or email us at any time.