

# Open Research Pilot project: the funder view

*This is the sixth and final piece in our series of blogs to mark the end of the Open Research Pilot Project – a two-year initiative through which four University of Cambridge research groups worked with University Research Support and the Wellcome Trust's Open Research Team to assess what would be needed to make all their research outputs openly available. In this blog, David Carr, Programme Manager for Open Research at Wellcome, provides his perspectives on the project.*

## START OF THE PROJECT

As a global research foundation dedicated to improving health for everyone through enabling great ideas to thrive, the [Wellcome Trust](#) has been a long-standing and passionate champion of open access to research publications and research data sharing. We are committed to ensuring that the outputs of the research we support can be accessed and used by bright minds around the world to help accelerate research and its application to improve health.

When we were approached by the team at Cambridge in 2016 with the idea for the Open Research Pilot, we were in the process of establishing a new dedicated Open Research team at Wellcome to help spearhead our work to advance openness. We were in the process of developing a [new policy on managing and sharing data, software and materials](#) (which was subsequently published in July 2017). We had also just launched [Wellcome Open Research](#) with F1000 as a new platform to enable our funded researchers to rapidly publish any research finding they wished to make available using a fully open and transparent review process.

We were quick to accept their proposal and join forces. The Pilot offered a chance to explore the opportunities and challenges facing our funded researchers in adopting open approaches, and the resources and support they require to do this. It also offered the potential to explore whether the Wellcome Open Research platform could help researchers in making their outputs available.

## PROJECT IN PROGRESS

Our main input during the Pilot was through periodic update meetings with the research groups and Cambridge team to review progress and discuss emerging themes and issues. I found these discussions enormously valuable.

There is simply no substitute to hearing about and discussing the practical challenges and barriers to open science first hand from our researchers. As the previous posts have described, these highlighted important issues around data size and complexity; incentives and recognition; skills and training; and the funding and sustainability of data resources. These conversations were very timely for us and have helped to inform the development of several aspects of our Open Research activity at Wellcome.

The Pilot also helped to build on our relationship with the research support team at Cambridge and provided valuable insights on the issues facing universities in supporting researchers to manage and share their research outputs. The expertise and dedication of the team to supporting the researchers with whom they work was hugely impressive, and they must take considerable credit for proactively initiating and taking forward this project. It is great to see that Cambridge has now formalized its support for open research at an institutional level through its recently-published [position statement](#), and I hope it continues to adopt a leadership role in this space.

While I think the Pilot was hugely worthwhile, inevitably there were challenges and lessons to learn. Personnel changes in the team at Cambridge inevitably caused some minor disruptions, and it is fair to say that from Wellcome's perspective other priorities sometimes meant our contribution and focus on the Pilot was sometimes less than it could have been. On reflection, there were probably opportunities to better align and link the Pilot with other activities at Wellcome that were missed.

We were a little disappointed that the Groups involved didn't utilize our new publishing platform, although delighted that the first Wellcome Open Research data note resulting from the Pilot has now arrived (as highlighted in the [first blog](#) in this series). We hope that other Wellcome funded research groups at Cambridge will consider trying out Wellcome Open Research, and see if it adds value for them in rapidly and openly sharing their research findings.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Wellcome is committed to supporting our researchers in adopting open research approaches in ways that maximise the value of research outputs and enrich the research enterprise.

Through our Open Research programme, we are taking forward a range of activities to support this goal, including:

- providing the [Research Enrichment – Open Research](#) funding scheme to enable existing Wellcome grantholders to apply for additional funds to enhance the impact of their funded research through opening up their research outputs;
- running the [Open Research Fund](#) – an annual competition to support cutting-edge, innovative approaches to open research around the world;
- enhancing our support for researchers to manage and share data, including through an ongoing [pilot with Springer-Nature](#) to make its Research Data Support service available to our funded researchers;
- taking a lead as a funder in incentivizing open research and working with others to accelerate implementation of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#);
- developing our guidance on developing and funding output management plans as part of grant applications, and introducing new approaches;
- continuing to develop the Wellcome Open Research platform as a venue for Wellcome researchers to share their research findings.

In addition, of course, we are also focusing on accelerating the global transition towards full and immediate open access to research publications with our partners in [cOAlition S](#).

We are committed to continuing to work with our funded researchers and institutions to advance open research. We got a lot out of our participation in this Pilot, and look forward to continuing to work closely with our colleagues at Cambridge and across the institutions we support.

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