

Memo from:
Funder interest group executive

Memo date:
12 December 2025

On 21 September, the Funder interest group (FIG) executive announced five year-1 foundational investments, one of which is an open-source ‘open (evidence synthesis) data system’ with a number of proposed capabilities. Since then the Wellcome Trust has convened, on our behalf, a series of three touchpoints with a broad range of ‘interest holders’ in the open data system.

We are very happy to see the proposed next steps and, as suggested in one next step, we wanted to remind the community about how previous competitive calls and peer-review processes, and one procurement process for a minimum viable product (MVP), had identified a group that is well advanced in creating an open-source data system.

The Wellcome Trust asked James Thomas, who plays a leadership role in each of the groups that were awarded funding, to present at the first two touchpoints; these groups include DESTINY funded by Wellcome, METIUS funded by ESRC, and an MVP for the education sector funded by the Jacobs Foundation and partners. James is also involved in the technology supporting evidence-synthesis groups that were awarded funding by NIHR, which means that four of the five FIG executive members have been through rigorous processes to identify this team.

The Wellcome Trust was approached by one group indicating that they had built a system that was already more advanced, however, the group has not shared a link to documentation or source code that would allow us to confirm it is ‘open source’ and hence to open it up to community review alongside the open data system being built by James Thomas and colleagues.

We have therefore concluded that we will support Global South co-leadership to deliver on the ‘remaining’ open data system capabilities (with funding from the Wellcome Trust) and honour the rigour of the past selection processes and support co-leadership by the team led by James Thomas.

We believe that there are still many exciting conversations ahead for all interest holders to contribute to, benefit from and complement ESIC’s open data system, including in the community consultations about the open data system that we hope will happen in the second half of March and in the many bilateral engagements that will happen then and through April.