

Strategic Plan

2026–2028

April 2026

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Executive summary

eLife's strategy over the next three years focuses on transforming how science is communicated and assessed, supported by sustained investment in open source technology. We will expand the publish-review-curate model, demonstrating a scalable and compelling alternative to existing journals. We will develop and maintain open source tools and services that enable the broader community to build on our work.

By partnering with funders, institutions, publishers, and other partners working in open science, we aim to accelerate reform in research assessment and influence global standards around peer review and recognition of scientific research. eLife will strengthen its financial sustainability and organisational capacity, ensuring our ability to deliver at scale effectively and support innovation across the research system.

Context

Launched in 2012, eLife operates in an environment that is increasingly supportive of reform in research communication, but one that is still shaped by entrenched academic incentives. Technological change is accelerating, with AI increasingly integrated across research and publishing workflows.

Open-access mandates and growing dissatisfaction with conventional publishing models are creating new opportunities for innovation. Progress is constrained by the use of journal names and metrics in research assessment, the growing monopoly of commercial publishers, and the challenge of developing sustainable business models for new approaches to publishing.

Much of the core technological infrastructure underpinning scholarly publishing is controlled by a small number of large companies that often prioritise scale and platform control over open, modular systems, reinforcing the status quo rather than improving it.

eLife has recently secured significant funding from Wellcome and others to develop open source technology for the wider open science community¹ (see [funding announcement](#)). Over the past three years, eLife has advanced the [eLife model](#), a form of the publish-review-curate (PRC) model, in which every article we review is published as a Reviewed Preprint (see our [three-year update](#)). These developments provide the foundation for the following strategic priorities:

- Delivering clear value for eLife authors.
- Developing open source tools, infrastructure, and services that enable a more open, efficient and resilient research communication ecosystem.
- Strengthening the organisation's financial sustainability.

¹ We define open science as the practice of making scientific knowledge freely available, accessible, and reusable for everyone (<https://www.unesco.org/en/open-science>). This includes open access to research outputs, along with the data, software, and materials that underpin them; and it includes the development of open, community-governed infrastructure.

Vision, mission and values

Vision

A world in which research is assessed openly and fairly on its own merits, and not by the name of the journal in which it appears. We are working towards a future in which transparent, article-level assessments form the primary basis for assessing scientific quality and significance. In this system, peer review and research assessment become more transparent, accountable, and effective, with researchers, institutions, and funders increasingly prioritising public reviews and open assessment.

Mission

(Updated from April 2026)

eLife is a non-profit organisation advancing open science by transforming how research is communicated, reviewed, and assessed. By developing open tools and collaborating with research communities, institutions, and funders, we are building a fairer, more effective global research ecosystem.

Over the next **three years**, we will:

- **Showcase eLife's PRC model**, demonstrating how preprints and transparent peer review and assessment improves research communication.
- **Develop tools and services** that help the research community share, assess and build on scientific knowledge. Through our Pathways initiative, we will build interoperable open source infrastructure that enables others to adopt and extend these approaches.
- **Collaborate with funders, institutions and other organisations** to expand the adoption of transparent review and assessment models and to promote more meaningful approaches to research assessment.

Values

Our actions will be guided by the following core values:

- **Collaboration:** We work with research communities, funders, institutions, publishers, and technology partners to develop shared solutions and improve the culture around research communication.
- **Integrity:** Our policies, processes, and systems uphold rigour, fairness, and responsible research practices.
- **Openness:** We provide open access to research, produce public peer reviews and assessments, and develop open source tools and services that others can build upon and reuse.
- **Responsibility:** We support an inclusive and diverse research ecosystem, considering environmental impact and long-term sustainability within our decision-making.

Strategic priorities

1. Publishing

Vision

eLife's publishing strategy is built on a simple principle: research should be reviewed and assessed on its own merits, in a transparent way, rather than by the prestige of a journal's name. By 2029, submissions are growing and scientists choose eLife to help to advance their careers.

eLife publishes high-quality research and magazine content while continuing to drive innovation in scientific publishing. At the same time, our publishing model is sustainable and expanding, with partners who share our principles, while reliance on author-facing publication fees reduces over time.

Why change is necessary

Research communication is changing, with growing support for open science and more transparent forms of peer review. However, research assessment still relies heavily on journal names and rankings, limiting the adoption of article-level approaches that are better for science.

For eLife's model to influence the wider system, it needs to operate at a larger scale and be financially sustainable over the long term. Growing submissions, increasing the number of published articles, and strengthening our financial sustainability will allow eLife to demonstrate that transparent, article-level assessment is a viable and attractive alternative for researchers, institutions and funders.

Headline goals

- **Grow submissions and author engagement**, establishing eLife as a leading venue for transparent, high-quality peer review and article level assessment.
- **Expand adoption of the PRC model** by, where possible, partnering with societies, publishers and research organisations to help launch new PRC journals or initiatives.
- Assess the **resilience and scalability of our publishing infrastructure** to ensure it is robust and supports growth.
- Develop **sustainable business models** that reduce reliance on author-facing publication fees over time, supported by institutions, funders and consortia.

Key partners

Researchers, authors, reviewers and editors; funders, universities and library consortia; technology partners; and mission-aligned organisations working to improve research communication.

Key indicators

Growth in submissions and published Reviewed Preprints; wider adoption of the PRC model across organisations; and diversified revenue streams that strengthen long-term sustainability.

2. Technology

Vision

By 2029, eLife's technology is a strategic asset and a driver of change in research communication. At the heart of our technology strategy is Pathways, our initiative to build interoperable open infrastructure and collaborations within the open science ecosystem. The tools and systems we build are designed to be used by others, generating revenue through services, deepening partnerships, and helping to enable the broader shift towards open science that is central to our mission.

We are deliberate about how we use our time. We make clear, data-driven choices about where to invest based on strategic impact and return on investment, and we are realistic about what we can build and maintain. Good user experience is key to uptake and is an important feature of our products.

Why change is necessary

Much of the core technological infrastructure underpinning scholarly publishing is controlled by a small number of large companies buying and running proprietary systems that reinforce the status quo rather than improving it. Open source tools underpin vital infrastructure but are often dismissed as transient side projects. eLife Pathways, a new venture with significant investment from philanthropic funders, changes this perception. The opportunities provided by these grants enable us, with input from the community, to influence the open science infrastructure landscape, driving, supporting and coordinating true open source innovation at a scale we have never been able to before.

Headline goals:

- **Build and service interoperable open infrastructure** for the open science ecosystem.
- **Co-develop transformative technology** with significant community impact.
- **Collaborate with partners** across the open science ecosystem.
- **Generate revenue from services** to move towards self-sustainability for Pathways.

Key partners

Other builders in the open science ecosystem, like-minded organisations involved in research communication, and funders.

Key indicators

Growth in new Pathways partners; increased number of community projects and tools delivered; more active partners on Sciety; and specific revenue targets from services and new grants.

3. External impact

Vision

By 2029, eLife is widely recognised for three connected roles: as a publisher, a technology partner building open tools for open science, and an advocate for a better way of assessing science. Our publishing model demonstrates how research can be assessed transparently, our tools and partnerships enable others to adopt similar approaches, and our advocacy helps drive change in how research is assessed across the research system.

Our success will be measured by our influence on the system, including through the growing adoption of the PRC model and the gradual replacement of journal-based metrics with transparent, article-level assessments. We lead change by demonstrating credible alternatives that others can adopt.

Why change is necessary

Research assessment continues to rely heavily on journal prestige and metrics, such as the impact factor, that were not designed to assess individual research outputs. Changing these practices requires more than new publishing models: it requires collaboration, advocacy, and sustained engagement across the research community.

By working with institutions, funders, publishers, and researchers, eLife aims to accelerate the transition to assessment systems that better serve science.

Headline goals

- **Accelerate understanding and adoption of PRC** as a more effective model for communicating and assessing research.
- Engage funders, institutions, and publishers to **promote transparent, article-level assessments** that recognise research on its own merits.
- Ensure **eLife's role as a publisher and provider of open source tools and services is clearly understood** across different communities.
- Enable more groups and organisations to **easily interact, collaborate, and build PRC integrations** within the open science ecosystem.

Key partners

Our work depends on collaboration across the research ecosystem, including our Early-Career Advisory Group, eLife Ambassadors, research funders, universities, scholarly societies, publishers, global research institutions, technology partners, and organisations committed to improving how research is assessed.

Key indicators

Growth in PRC adoption across publishers; uptake of article-level assessment by funders and institutions; use and integration of open source tools across the research ecosystem; participation in advocacy and policy initiatives for responsible research assessment.

4. Internal capability and culture

Vision

In 2029, eLife is powered by a diverse, skilled, mission-driven workforce. We are friendly, open, collaborative, and grounded in trust. Our staff take ownership, embrace uncertainty, and understand how their work connects to the bigger picture. They are supported by clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.

We operate with clarity, focus, and discipline, guided by explicit priorities and effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts.

Underpinning this is a financially resilient organisation with a diversified revenue base, sufficient surplus to reinvest in our people and work, and a culture of transparency that ensures everyone understands the context for decisions.

Why change is necessary

After a period of internal change, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainties, the organisation needs to strengthen its financial resilience and diversify revenue streams. Generative and agentic AI present a range of opportunities to improve our processes, but there are risks that must be managed responsibly. Delivering on our mission requires a well-aligned, collaborative organisation, where our teams work effectively together and feel connected to the impact of their work.

Headline goals

- Develop **additional sources of revenue**.
- Develop **responsible and value-driven use of AI**.
- Ensure a **cohesive, well-informed organisation** with a strong shared identity.

Key partners

eLife staff, eLife management.

Key indicators

Staff engagement and satisfaction; clarity of roles and priorities; adoption of responsible AI practices; diversification of revenue.

Delivery and governance

Our strategy will be delivered through clear governance, effective leadership and transparent reporting. eLife's Senior Management Team will drive implementation, with progress monitored by the Board of Directors to ensure alignment with our mission and long-term goals. Implementation will be phased over the next three years:

Year 1

Build a **community of partners** as part of Pathways to shape open source tools and services that enable a broader shift towards open science.

Promote the PRC Model and article-level assessments to demonstrate the benefits to scientists and their careers.

Year 2

Expand adoption of open source tools and systems across the research community.

Partner with others to **develop new publishing venues and business models** that support open, transparent research.

Year 3

Strengthen funding and revenue streams for transformative technology and open infrastructure.

Continue to innovate and **expand the adoption of the PRC model** and article-level assessments.

We will monitor progress internally to ensure that our strategy remains ambitious and achievable, and we will report publicly through our annual report to ensure accountability to the communities we serve.

Conclusion

Over the next three years, eLife will lead the transformation of how science is communicated and assessed. Through our publishing model, open source technology and services, and strong partnerships, we are building a research ecosystem that is open and serves science more effectively. By expanding our reach in terms of publishing and technology, and staying true to our values of openness, integrity, and collaboration, we are empowering research communities and accelerating discoveries that benefit everyone.

