REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Multilingual Audio Annotation, Transcription and Translation Services across Indian Languages

I. INTRODUCTION

LEHS is a charitable organization in India whose purpose is to offer basic health and education for the poor. LEHS in furtherance of charitable objectives through its flagship programs Wadhwani AI which aims to build equitable and sustainable systems by making quality primary healthcare available and accessible to the underserved population and to bring the benefits of modern AI technology to underserved populations by building and deploying AI solutions for social impact across domains such as healthcare, agriculture, governance and education in India. LEHS aims to promote the integration of technologies, particularly in emerging domains like artificial intelligence and innovations into the Indian mainstream primary healthcare, education, and agriculture systems through a partnership with the State and National Government, apex institutions, international agencies, and private sector partners e.g. innovators, social enterprises and other ecosystem contributors in line with its stated objectives for the betterment of society particularly focusing on projects of national and social significance.

Wadhwani AI, a unit of LEHS, focuses on developing, deploying and evaluating artificial intelligence solutions to address critical social challenges in India, particularly in domains such as healthcare, agriculture, and education.
LEHS aims to promote the integration of technologies, particularly in emerging domains like artificial intelligence and innovations into the Indian mainstream primary healthcare, education, and agriculture systems through a partnership with the State and National Government, apex institutions, international agencies, and private sector partners e.g. innovators, social enterprises and other ecosystem contributors in line with its stated objectives for the betterment of society particularly focusing on projects of national and social significance. In line with its mission to support projects of national and social significance, LEHS also undertakes rigorous **monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)** activities to assess the impact, usability, and scalability of different programmatic interventions.

II. BACKGROUND

Wadhwani AI is building AI-enabled conversational assistant for healthcare use cases in India. The assistant needs to work in the languages that their users speak and write, including through voice-based interactions.

To build, improve and evaluate the assistant, Wadhwani AI requires language services across three workflows:

- **ASR annotation: annotation and transcription** of collected speech audio.
- **Query translation (Indian language to English):** translation of user query text, written in an Indian language, into English.

- **Output translation (English to Indian language):** translation of English text into Indian languages.

The initial requirement is for **Hindi, Marathi** and **Oriya (Odia)**. Wadhwani AI expects to add other major Indian languages over time, including the scheduled languages of India. Volumes are not yet fixed and will vary by language and over time. This RFP therefore seeks to identify a vendor on the basis of capability, quality, data security and rates, under a rate contract that allows new languages and volumes to be added later. The content is health-related, so accuracy and fidelity to the original meaning are essential.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The key objectives of this engagement are:

- **Annotation:** To annotate and transcribe audio data in Indian languages with high accuracy, ensuring linguistic correctness. All transcripts must be produced by human annotators, with independent human review and adjudication of discrepancies by a senior annotator.
- **Translation:** To translate text between Indian languages and English with high accuracy. Each translation must be followed by independent human review and correction by a second linguist, while preserving the original meaning of health-related content.

IV. SCOPE OF WORK

This engagement covers language services for data relating to the health domain in, for use by frontline health workers (FLWs) such as AWWs and ASHAs.

<u>The selected agency is expected to handle:</u>

- Regional dialects and colloquial expressions
- Code-switching and code-mixing
- Local pronunciation and variations
- Partial or incomplete sentences

<u>The selected agency is also expected to:</u>

- Provide qualified native-speake human annotators, transcribers, translators and reviewers for each language it commits to cover, demonstrated domain knowledge of healthcare and public health terminology. Annotate and transcribe audio data as per the annotation requirements and established annotation protocols (including standardized labeling guidelines, multi-pass quality verification, and defined dispute resolution/adjudication workflows).

- Maintain quality standards, incorporating feedback to correct outputs found not to meet required standards and reworking rejected batches at no additional cost
- Translate text from Indian languages to English, and from English to Indian languages, with independent review and correction.
- Carry out all annotation, transcription, translation and review in a purpose-built tool; spreadsheet-based work (for example, Excel) is not accepted. The tool should operate within the secure environment provided or approved by Wadhwani AI.
- Scale to additional Indian languages on request, under the terms of the rate contract.

A. LANGUAGE COVERAGE AND FLEXIBILITY

Initial languages

The initial languages are **Hindi, Marathi** and **Oriya (Odia)**. Wadhwani AI may place work orders in these languages from the start of the contract.

Additional languages

- Wadhwani AI may commission additional Indian languages (such as Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Urdu, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, Assamese) during the validity of the contract, including major Indic languages and the scheduled languages of India. This will be done through a written work order, **without restarting the procurement process**.
- Agencies must declare all Indian languages they can support (not only Marathi and Oriya), with the capacity per language, as described in the Proposal Submission Guidelines.
- Agencies must state, for each declared language, the lead time needed to begin work after a work order is issued considering an initial data annotation volume scope of 200 hours.
- The agency must provide rates for all languages within the agreed scope of work in the Rate Card at the outset. These rates shall apply to all work undertaken for the respective languages. Any language not covered in the initial Rate Card must be quoted separately in writing and approved by Wadhwani AI in writing before any work for that language begins.
- All translation work involves English on one side. Direct translation between two Indian languages is not in scope.

B. AUDIO DATA ANNOTATION (ASR)

The agency will annotate and transcribe audio samples that have already been collected by Wadhwani AI. Audio will be made available to the agency through the environment provided or

approved by Wadhwani AI, along with a mapping from unique identifier to audio file. Audio will be transcribed in the language spoken. Volumes will be communicated through work orders.

Annotation Requirements:

Each audio sample must be tagged/rated on the following dimensions:

Key Term Definitions:

- **Audio Annotation:** The process of evaluating and tagging audio files according to specified metadata criteria, including audio quality ratings, identifying audio issues, and flagging Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- **Transcription (Verbatim):** The word-for-word text rendering of spoken audio exactly as uttered, capturing all speech elements including repetitions, non-script speech, spoken numbers/units spelled out in full words, and acoustic occurrences via specific tags without grammatical correction or paraphrasing.
- **Independent Annotation:** The blind evaluation and transcription of the same audio file by two separate, qualified annotators working independently without access to each other's outputs.
- **Adjudication:** The systematic review by a senior/experienced annotator to compare multiple independent annotations, identify discrepancies, and make the final authoritative determination for the transcript and metadata labels.
- **Audio Quality Rating** - Rating audibility and noise level (e.g., Good, Moderate, Poor, Inaudible).
- **Audio Issues** - Tagging audio data with prevalent issues such as background noise (minor/major), muffled voice, clipping/distortion, overlapping speech, or volume drop (exact categories to be shared by Wadhwani AI team).
- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** - True/False indicating presence of names, phone numbers, location/address details, or specific IDs.
- Subsequently, the audio sample must be transcribed independently by 2 different annotators. Discrepancies must be marked and a resolution for the final transcription should be made by a senior/experienced annotator.
- The transcription should be verbatim, i.e. transcription should be accurate to what is being spoken.
- Numbers, currencies, and units should be spelled out exactly as spoken.
- Repetitions and non-script speech should be transcribed as well.
    - (Dummy Example) - "And then I went to the the the bed- the bedroom".

Use of provided tags when applicable while transcribing:

- <MB/> - A word or sequence of words that cannot be understood due to mumbling, inaudibility, etc.
- <NOISE/> - Any type of noise, such as the speaker coughing or clearing their throat, a car honking, the sound of something hitting the microphone, a phone buzzing, etc.
- <MPS></MPS> - Multiple speakers.
    - (Dummy Example) - "And then I <NOISE/> went on holiday to <MPS> Ibiza </MPS>."

The agency is expected to submit the following information, as a JSON file, corresponding to each audio sample:

- Audio ID
- Annotation A: Annotator ID, Audio Quality Rating, Audio Issues, PII, Transcript
- Annotation B: Annotator ID, Audio Quality Rating, Audio Issues, PII, Transcript
- Resolution annotation: Annotator ID, Audio Quality Rating, Audio Issues, PII, Transcript

Example JSON structure:

```
{
  "audio_id": "sample_audio_001.wav",
  "annotation_a": {
    "annotator_id": "ANN_01",
    "audio_quality_rating": "Good",
    "audio_issues": ["Background Noise (Minor)"],
    "pii": false,
    "transcript": "And then I <NOISE/> went to the hospital."
  },
  "annotation_b": {
    "annotator_id": "ANN_02",
    "audio_quality_rating": "Moderate",
    "audio_issues": ["Muffled Voice"],
    "pii": false,
    "transcript": "And then I went to the hospital."
  },
  "resolution_annotation": {
    "annotator_id": "SENIOR_01",
    "audio_quality_rating": "Good",
    "audio_issues": ["Background Noise (Minor)"],
    "pii": false,
    "transcript": "And then I <NOISE/> went to the hospital."
  }
}
```

The Wadhwani AI team will share a detailed annotation requirements document with the selected agency. The agency must have a dedicated annotation tool for carrying out the work; the use of Excel or other spreadsheet-based tools for annotation will not be permitted.

C. TRANSLATION

Translation workflows

- **Indian language to English:** translation of user query text into English.
- **English to Indian language:** translation of English text into the requested Indian language.

Translation and review process

- Each text item must be translated by a qualified human linguist (possessing native language proficiency, a degree or relevant educational background in linguistics, translation, or a related field, demonstrated healthcare domain expertise, and deep familiarity with regional dialects) and then independently reviewed and corrected by a second linguist, before delivery.
- Preserve the exact intended meaning of the source text. Do not add external explanations, do not summarize, and do not omit any information.This strict accuracy is especially critical for medical data: numbers, dosages (e.g. mg, ml), dates, and frequencies must be carried over exactly as written, with zero rounding or paraphrasing
- If the inputs contain grammatical errors, fragmented sentences, and typographical errors. Translators must translate the *intended* meaning rather than providing a literal translation of a typo.
- If a source sentence cuts off mid-thought, the translation must also be left incomplete to match the source.
- Maintain strict terminological consistency for all healthcare and medical terms. A specific health term or symptom in the source language must consistently map to the exact same standardized equivalent in the target language across all batches.
- A specific set of words must be transliterated, not translated, and tagged accordingly in the annotation.
- The reviewer must check the translation against the original text for accuracy, completeness and fidelity of meaning, and correct any errors.
- Items that are ambiguous, unclear or cannot be translated faithfully must be flagged rather than guessed.
- All translation and review must be done in the tool described in the Annotation and Translation Tool section, not in Excel or spreadsheets.

Data shared and output format

- For translation, Wadhwani AI will share only a unique ID and the text to be translated, through the environment provided or approved by Wadhwani AI.
- Outputs must carry, at minimum: unique ID, original text, final translated text, translator ID, reviewer ID, and any flags (PII present, ambiguous, unable to translate). The exact format will be shared at onboarding.

Use of machine translation and AI tools

- All annotation, transcription, translation review, and quality checks must be performed by human personnel. The use of AI or automated tools to carry out annotation, transcription, or review is not permitted.
- Agencies must clearly state in their proposal, for each language and translation direction, whether translation is performed entirely by humans or involves machine translation or other AI tools.

D. HEALTHCARE CONTEXT

The data relates to health. Annotators, translators and reviewers must handle health-related terminology correctly while **preserving the original meaning, without interpreting or altering the content**. In particular:

- Do not add, omit, summarise, explain, correct or reinterpret what was said or written, including content that appears medically incorrect.
- Preserve numbers, dosages, units, dates, and the names of medicines, vaccines, diseases and conditions exactly as they appear in meaning.
- Translate colloquial and local health terms by their meaning. Where a term cannot be rendered faithfully, flag it instead of guessing.
- Use health terminology consistently across a batch and across languages.
- Wadhwani AI may share a health-terminology glossary in future, and the agency must follow any glossary and guidelines provided.
- Domain knowledge of health or public health terminology is preferred. Agencies should describe how their annotators and translators are trained or selected for health content.

E. QUALITY REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE

- An internal system of quality checks must be in place for every deliverable, covering both the quality of transcription/translation and the quality of labels.

- Wadhwani AI will review delivered batches using an acceptance sampling plan, and may reject a batch that does not meet the required standards.
- The agency must incorporate feedback and correct outputs found not to meet the standards and rework on the rejected batches at no additional cost.
- Batch sizes and turnaround times will be set in each work order.

F. DATA SECURITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMPLIANCE

Data shared under this engagement must be protected as strictly confidential. The agency must comply with the following. These obligations apply from the sample task onwards and survive the end of the contract.

- **Data stays with Wadhwani AI:** All data must remain in the environment provided or approved by Wadhwani AI. Work is to be done through accounts created for named personnel. The agency must have processes in place to prevent downloading, copying or exporting of data by individual annotators or any other personnel.
- **Zero model training:** The agency must guarantee that the data, and anything derived from it, will not be used to train, fine-tune, evaluate or improve any machine learning or AI model, whether by the agency or by any third party.
- **Deletion on completion:** On completion of the project, the agency must delete all intermediate cached text, translation memories, working copies and target outputs, and must provide confirmation of deletion within 7 days.
- **No other use:** The data must not be used for any proprietary or commercial purpose outside the contract, and must not be sold, shared or disclosed to any third party. The agency must sign an undertaking to this effect.
- **Confidentiality:** The agency must sign a non-disclosure agreement before accessing any data, and ensure that all personnel with access are bound by equivalent obligations.
- **Access control:** Access must be limited to named personnel on a need-to-know basis, with access logs maintained and made available to Wadhwani AI on request.
- **Data residency:** All data must be stored and processed only within India.
- **No sub-contracting:** The agency must not sub-contract any part of the work, or share data with any sub-contractor.
- **Breach notification:** The agency must notify Wadhwani AI of any actual or suspected data breach or unauthorised access within 24 hours, to healthvaani.api@wadhwaniai.org, and cooperate fully in investigation and remediation.
- **Right to audit:** Wadhwani AI may audit the agency's processes, access logs and outputs, including for PII compliance and compliance with these clauses.
- **Legal and standards compliance:** The agency must comply with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and rules made under it, and other applicable law. Its

information security practices must align with ISO/IEC 27001. Agencies must state their certification status in the proposal.

- **Consequences:** Any violation may result in rejection of outputs, termination of the contract, and other remedies available under the contract and applicable law.

G. PII HANDLING

Wadhwani AI will make reasonable efforts to remove personally identifiable information (PII) from data before sharing it. However, the data may occasionally contain PII such as names, phone numbers, addresses or identification numbers. The following applies where PII is present.

PII in audio

- Annotators must be trained to identify PII and set the PII label to True.
- Audio segments containing PII must not be transcribed or otherwise propagated, and must be excluded from annotation and permanently deleted from the agency's systems (if downloaded) prior to submission, as per instructions from Wadhwani AI.

PII in text

- Where a text item contains PII, the item must be flagged as PII present. The PII must not be translated, copied into any other system, note or message, or reproduced in any output, other than as instructed by Wadhwani AI.
- The agency must report such items to Wadhwani AI through the agreed channel, and Wadhwani AI will decide how they are to be handled.

Compliance

- Annotation and translation activities must not introduce, retain or expose PII in transcripts, translations, metadata, labels or outputs.
- Wadhwani AI may audit samples for PII compliance. Violations may result in rejection of outputs, rework at the agency's cost, and applicable penalties.

V. TIMELINES AND DELIVERY

- **Contract validity:** The rate contract will be valid for **one (1) year** from the effective date.
- **Work orders:** Work will be commissioned through written work orders specifying language, task, volume, batch size and delivery timeline.

- **Throughput:** The agency must state, for each language, the maximum throughput it can commit to (audio hours per week and translated words per day), and its lead time for starting a new language.
- **Delivery:** Outputs will be delivered in batches through the environment provided or approved by Wadhwani AI.
- **Sample task:** Shortlisted agencies will be asked to complete a small sample task before award, as described in the Proposal Submission Guidelines.
- **Reviews:** The agency will participate in progress review meetings weekly to track delivery, address issues and ensure adherence to quality standards.

VI. REQUIRED DELIVERABLES

- Annotated and transcribed audio, with all required labels and transcripts, as per the annotation requirements.
- Translated and reviewed text in both directions, with the required identifiers and flags.
- Batch-wise delivery of outputs that are free of PII and meet the defined quality benchmarks.
- Certification of deletion of all data and derived material on completion, as per the Data Security requirements.

VII. CONTRACT MODEL: RATE CONTRACT

- Wadhwani AI intends to award a rate contract to **one vendor**, valid for one year.
- The contract fixes rates only. Wadhwani AI does not commit to any minimum or maximum volume, and no minimum commitment applies to either party.
- Work will be commissioned through work orders. Additional languages can be added through a work order without a new procurement process, as set out in Language Coverage and Flexibility.
- Rates quoted are fixed for the validity of the contract.

VIII. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should clearly outline methodology, team expertise, data security measures and rates for the services in scope: audio annotation, transcription, translation, and quality review and correction.

Who Can Apply

Any organization having prior expertise in the thematic area of the work. Your proposal must include:

- **Technical Proposal**
  - **Understanding of Scope:** Understanding of the project requirements, deliverables, languages and translation directions involved.
  - **Methodology and Approach:** Proposed methodology for annotation, transcription and translation; languages supported (including Marathi, Oriya and other Indian languages), capacity per language, lead time to commence work, and disclosure of any proposed use of machine translation or AI tools.
  - **Team Composition:** Team structure, qualifications, selection and training of annotators and translators, and relevant domain knowledge of health content.
  - **Quality Assurance:** Quality assurance mechanisms, including the two-annotator and translator-plus-reviewer processes, and approaches to preserving the original meaning and accuracy of health-related content.
  - **Data Security:** Data security and confidentiality measures, including prevention of unauthorised downloading, access controls, data deletion upon completion, PII handling, and ISO/IEC 27001 certification status.
  - **Maximum Achievable Throughput per Language:** Maximum achievable annotation, transcription and translation throughput for each language.
  - **Risk Management Plan:** Comprehensive risk assessment and mitigation framework addressing:
    - **Field-level Operational Delays:** Early engagement with state/district authorities, deployment of local field coordinators, and maintaining backup rosters for annotators and linguists.
    - **Audio Quality & Environmental Noise:** Standardized recording hardware/tools, noise-canceling peripherals, strict recording environment SOPs, and immediate field-level QA audits.
    - **PII & Data Security Compliance:** Mandatory PII screening, automated and manual redaction workflows, strict access control, ISO/IEC 27001 alignment, and automated data deletion protocols upon project completion.

- **Financial Proposal**
  - Rates as per the Rate Card format below
  - Payment terms (payment eligibility shall be linked to successful acceptance of each batch)

- **Organizational Profile**
  - Relevant project experience, including technical and operational expertise.
  - Staffing Plan.
  - Sample of similar work

Financial Proposal: Rate Card

Vendors must provide **separate rates** for each of the following services. Rates may differ by language, and must be quoted **per language** (and, for translation, per direction).

- **Audio annotation:** per audio minute.
- **Transcription:** per audio minute.
- **Translation:** per source word, i.e. per word of the original text being translated. This applies to both directions. The word count will be determined from the original text as exported or counted by Wadhwani AI's environment.
- **Quality review and correction:** quoted as a separate rate, in the same unit as the task it applies to (per audio minute for audio, per source word for translation).

Rates must be quoted in Indian Rupees (INR), excluding taxes, with applicable taxes shown separately. Rates must be all-inclusive.

Agencies should complete a row for **every** language they can support. Rows for languages beyond the two initial languages are the basis on which additional languages will be commissioned later without a new procurement process.

Table 1: Rate Card for Audio Services (INR, excluding taxes)

Language	Audio annotation (per audio minute)	Transcription (per audio minute)	Quality review and correction (per audio minute)
Marathi			
Oriya (Odia)			
Hindi			
Other language: _____			
Other language: _____			

Table 2: Rate Card for Translation Services (INR, excluding taxes)

Language	Indian language to English (per source word)	Quality review and correction: to English (per source word)	English to Indian language (per source word)	Quality review and correction: from English (per source word)
Marathi				
Oriya (Odia)				
Hindi				
Other language: _____				
Other language: _____				

Add rows as needed. Where rates are the same across languages, the agency should say so explicitly.

Sample Task

Shortlisted agencies will be asked to complete a small sample task in Marathi and Oriya covering audio annotation and translation in both directions. The sample task is intended to assess quality before awarding. All Data Security, Confidentiality and PII requirements apply to the sample task.

IX. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals will be evaluated by Wadhwani AI based on defined evaluation criteria and scoring weights across the following specific areas::

- **Understanding of scope & Methodology (15%)**,: Detailed technical approach for audio annotation, transcription, and translation workflows, including clear protocols for independent two-annotator adjudication and translator-plus-reviewer processes.
- **Language Coverage & Operational Readiness (15%):** Number of supported Indian languages, demonstrated native-speaker capacity, and turn-around lead time to onboard and begin work in new languages.

- **Healthcare Domain Expertise (15%):** Qualification and domain training of annotators/linguists, handling of medical terminology, and demonstrated strategy for preserving original meaning without distortion.
- **Quality Control & SLA Adherence (10%):** Robustness of internal QA checks, error resolution mechanisms, batch rework policy, and feasibility of proposed weekly throughput capacity.
- **Tooling & Platform Capabilities (10%):** Demonstration of dedicated annotation/translation tool capabilities, deployment flexibility within Wadhwani AI-approved environments, and UX features.
- **Data Privacy & Security Compliance (10%):** Compliance with ISO/IEC 27001, DPDP Act 2023, PII detection and redaction workflows, access control logs, and data deletion protocol.
- **Qualifications & Past Experience (10%):** Relevant experience in public health or language AI projects, organizational capabilities, and qualifications of key team members
- **Quality of the sample task output (15%):** Accuracy and fidelity of the Marathi and Oriya sample outputs for audio annotation and translation in both directions, adherence to annotation guidelines and tags, correct PII flagging, and correct handling of health terminology.

Top-ranked proposals will be invited to a short meeting, after which a final selection will be made. Rates will also be considered.

X. MANDATORY ENCLOSURE

Please submit the following as enclosures or attachments with your quotation. Bidders must provide all the information requested above in section VIII. Quotations that do not provide the required information and certificates, or do not follow the submission requirements, may not be reviewed.

- Company Profile, testimonials, work completion reports, purchase orders, and reference (NGOs).
- NGOs need to provide a valid CSR-1 issued in favor of the NGO by the MCA.
- GST registration certificate.
- PAN & TAN registration.
- Audited Financials for the last three years.
- Income Tax Return for the last three years.
- Cancelled cheque.
- Copy of registration documents/certificate and the most recent renewal as a legal entity.
- Preferably a Private Ltd company and has sound business records.
- Authorized signatory letter.
- Conflict of interest declaration.
- Contact person details.

- Memorandum of Association & Articles of Association (or Trust Deed / Bye-laws as applicable).
- List of Governing Body Members/Board Members of the organization.
- 12A and 80G Registration Certificates and Revalidation Document.
- PF, ESI, and Professional Tax Registration Certificates (if applicable).
- Finance Policy, HR Policy, Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy, Procurement Policy, and any other relevant internal policies.
- List of Pending Litigation/Cases against the Entity (if any).
- Latest TDS Return filed (Form 26Q and 24Q).
- GSTR filings for the last 3 returns (if applicable).
- Sample Audited Utilization Certificate (UC) submitted to any donor for CSR Funding.
- Audit Report in Form 10B/BB for the last 3 years.
- Foreign Contribution (FC) Audited Financials for the last 3 years (if applicable).
- FCRA Returns (FC-4) for the last 3 years (if applicable).

All responses to this RFP must be received no later than **[04/12/2026]**. The proposal should be submitted only through e-mail in PDF format addressed Procurement Team in the below-given e-mail id: rfp.lehs@wadhwaniai.org

For clarifications and queries, please direct all queries to rfp.lehs@wadhwaniai.org by [02/12/2026].

Note: Only shortlisted vendors will be contacted for presentations, sample tasks or negotiations. If you do not hear from us within two weeks of submission, consider your proposal not selected. LEHS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to negotiate terms and conditions with the selected vendor.