REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

English Annotation of Student Voice Recordings from Uttarakhand (115 hrs)

Closing Date for Submission
<November 26, 2026>

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.

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

A significant number of students in Indian public schools (Grades 1-5) lack foundational reading skills, impacting their academic progression across all subjects. This challenge is compounded by the absence of scalable, data-driven tools for assessing reading in diverse languages and for identifying specific proficiency levels to enable targeted interventions.

In response, Wadhwani AI has developed an AI-powered tool that **automates the assessment of foundational reading skills**. The tool leverages highly contextualized and fine-tuned Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) models to analyze word and paragraph reading, generating key performance metrics and identifying specific reading miscues. Our

solution also applies an intelligent layer to cohort students into reading levels, providing teachers with actionable insights for planning targeted classroom interventions.

To date, Wadhwani AI has assessed **over 9.8 million students in Gujarat & Rajasthan.** We are now adapting the tool for Uttarakhand, and to build a highly contextualised ASR model for the state, we require human-generated transcripts of students' voice recordings collected from the government schools across Uttarakhand.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To create timestamped human transcriptions of student voice recordings from Grades 1-8, covering reading letters, words and paragraphs in English, collected from select schools in Uttarakhand. For Grades 1-8, each individual word or letter heard in the recording must be timestamped and transcribed verbatim, exactly as heard by the human annotator (with no corrections for grammar, spelling, or pronunciation), in accordance with the data annotation protocol(s) that is shared by Wadhwani AI.

- Audio Files: Recordings of students reading English letters, words and paragraphs.
- **Blind Annotation:** Reference text will not be provided to annotators. Annotators must transcribe only what they hear in the audio.

IV. SCOPE OF WORK

Summary of Activities

S.No	Activity Description	Timeline
1	Co-Working & Onboarding Phase	January 2027
2	Data Annotation of 115 hrs: Create timestamped human transcriptions of the collected data following Wadhwani AI's finalized data annotation protocol.	February 2027 - May 2027

1. Co-Working & Onboarding Phase

The selected partner shall participate in a structured co-working and onboarding phase during the first week following contract finalisation. Participation in this phase is mandatory and is a prerequisite for commencing full-scale annotation.

The objective of this phase is to establish end-to-end operational alignment between Wadhwani AI and the partner prior to full-scale annotation, including a demonstration of the annotation tool by the partner, an overview of the English annotation protocol **link**, and alignment on quality assurance and review processes.

Full-scale annotation may commence only after formal readiness sign-off by Wadhwani AI. Failure to satisfactorily complete this phase may result in delays to full-scale annotation or reconsideration of the engagement.

2. Data Annotation for ASR

Create timestamped human transcriptions of the student voice recordings, following Wadhwani AI's finalized data annotation protocol, including verbatim transcription, word-level and sub-lexical timestamping, and application of defined labels.

A. Scope and Volume

Total Number of Hours to be annotated: **~115 hrs (English Letter, Word & Paragraph reading)**

Data Annotation Volume:

Item Type	English
Paragraph reading	100 hours
Word	5 hours
Letter	10 hours
Total	**115 hours**

Wadhwani AI will share audio datasets with the partner in batches, comprising 15 hours of paragraph reading recordings alongside word and letter reading recordings. Every batch must follow the standards, workflow, quality checks and delivery requirements set out below, together with the detailed data annotation protocols that Wadhwani AI will share.

B. Annotation Standards

Transcription and timestamping

- **Verbatim transcription:** Each individual student recording must be transcribed exactly as heard (verbatim). Annotators must NOT correct grammar, fix pronunciation, fill in intended words, or infer meaning. Transcriptions must follow the verbatim annotation protocol that will be shared with the agency, preserving disfluencies, false starts, self-corrections, non-standard or dialectal pronunciations, and code-mixing without normalisation. The partner's Super QC sign-off must certify compliance against this protocol specifically, rather than a generic accuracy baseline.

- **Timestamping:** The transcription must include precise timestamps (e.g., H:MM:SS.mmm) for each individual character and/or word. Where words are broken down sub-lexically, timestamps must be provided for the sub-lexical portions. (Word or Character Boundary is characterised by more than a 2-3 Second Pause)

- **Labels:** In addition to the speech transcript, wherever applicable, labels must be added to denote the presence of Unintelligible Speech, Fillers and Pauses, Background Noise, Adult voice, etc. The definitive labels for English annotations will be provided by Wadhwani AI in the detailed data annotation protocols.

  Note: The annotation protocol is subject to change

- **Blind annotation:** Reference text will not be provided to annotators.

Annotators, Adjudicators and Super QC Reviewers

- **Annotators:** Annotators must be native or fluent English speakers with the ability to accurately recognise different Uttarakhand-influenced English accents.

- **Adjudicators:** Adjudicators must be native or fluent English speakers with the ability to accurately recognise different Uttarakhand-influenced English accents and sufficient past experience in transcribing audio.

- **Super QC Reviewers:** Super QC Reviewers must be regional-language experts who are proficient in English and, more importantly, well-versed in the language and accents of Uttarakhand.

C. Annotation Workflow

Wadhwani AI will share anonymised audio with the partner in batches. Every batch must be annotated using the following workflow. The outputs of each step are mandatory deliverables and must accompany every batch handover.

- **Step 1: Batch Handover**
  Wadhwani AI determines the composition and sequence of batches. All audio must be annotated to the same standard, and the partner must not assume any difference in purpose or importance between batches.

- **Step 2: Dual-Pass Blind Annotation**
  Every audio must be annotated independently by two different annotators from the partner's team, following the standards in B above. Annotation is blind: neither annotator sees the other's annotations at any point during the annotation process. Both passes are mandatory for 100% of audios. Wadhwani AI prefers fully human annotation. If AI/ASR-assisted tooling is used to produce a draft, it must be disclosed (see E below), and both human passes and the human review in Step 3 remain mandatory for 100% of audios.

- **Step 3: Review & Adjudication**
  An adjudicator from the partner's team, who is not either of the two annotators, must review 100% of audios and produce the final transcript and labels for each one. The adjudicator listens to the audio and uses both independent annotations as reference, producing the final transcript and labels that most accurately reflect the audio, following the standards in B above. For each batch, the partner must submit the final reviewed transcript together with the batch report described in D below.

- **Step 4: Partner Super QC**
  After the partner completes review and adjudication (Step 3), Wadhwani AI will randomly select 30% of the audios in each batch for Super QC and share the list with the partner, without disclosing the basis of selection. Super QC is carried out by the partner, not by Wadhwani AI, and is performed by a designated Super QC Reviewer from the partner's QC team. The Super QC Reviewer listens to every selected audio, checks the final transcript, timestamps and labels against the verbatim annotation protocol. If mistakes are found, the batch must go back through the annotation and adjudication

rounds (Steps 2 and 3) for correction, and the corrected audios must be re-checked by the Super QC Reviewer. Only a batch that passes Super QC may be handed over to Wadhwani AI.

- **Step 5: Wadhwani AI QC**
  Wadhwani AI will independently audit delivered batches by sampling 5-10% of the audios in each batch. The audio selected for audit and the sampling approach will not be shared, so quality must be consistent across all audio. This check applies to every batch delivered, not confined to onboarding or the pilot phase.

- **Step 6: Acceptance Criteria**
  A batch will be rejected if: (a) transcription errors at word level exceed 1% of the transcribed words; or (b) labelling errors exceed 5% of the total identified labels (MB, Adult and Noise, as defined in the annotation protocol). These thresholds apply at the batch level. Wadhwani AI will assess each batch using an acceptance sampling plan: a statistically significant sample (sample size determined using the standard formula for estimating proportions) will be inspected, and Wadhwani AI reserves the right to reject the entire batch for rework if the sample exceeds these thresholds.

- **Step 7: Rework & Final Handover**
  Rejected batches must be reworked and resubmitted at the partner's expense. A maximum of 3 re-annotation attempts will be permitted per batch, after which Wadhwani AI may terminate the SOW for that specific batch. All mistakes identified during the audit must be corrected before final handover of the JSON files.

D. Quality Review and Reporting

- **Internal Training:** An internal system of training of annotators, adjudicators and Super QC Reviewers must be in place to ensure all resources understand the annotation protocol well.

- The Partner should follow all annotation workflow steps described above.

- **Wadhwani AI review:** Wadhwani AI's review of each batch covers transcriptions as well as labels, and three rounds of quality-check feedback may be given on each batch.

- **Batch report:** For every batch delivered, the partner must submit a batch report containing: Annotator ID(s) adjudicator ID and Super QC Reviewer ID; inter-annotator agreement metrics (Krippendorff's alpha and word-for-word accuracy); precision and recall of the annotators against the adjudicated transcript, for words and labels; and,

where AI/ASR-assisted tooling was used, a structured difference between the AI-generated draft and the post-review (human-reviewed) version. Batches delivered without this report will be considered incomplete and returned without Wadhwani QC review.

E. Data, System and AI Governance

Data handling

- **Data sharing:** Wadhwani AI will share anonymised data, stripped of PII, uploaded in an AWS or GCP bucket with the selected partner, from the data collected.

- **Agency Restrictions:** The partner is strictly prohibited from downloading, storing, or retaining audio Data on local systems. All annotation activities must be conducted exclusively via secure APIs connected directly to the Wadhwani AI-provided cloud environment, with no local data storage or retention permitted. The partner must also have processes in place to prevent the download of data by individual annotators.

- **Usage Restrictions:** The partner shall not use the audios or derived outputs to train, fine-tune, or improve proprietary models. If any AI Models are used for transcription, they must be restricted exclusively to this project. The partner is required to sign an undertaking guaranteeing that this voice data will not be used for any proprietary purposes outside of this contractual agreement.

- **AI & Model Usage:** All transcription, Quality Control (QC), and AI models used by the partner must run locally within the partner's secure environment. Transmission, sharing, or processing of data through any third-party services or external APIs is strictly prohibited. The partner must ensure that no AI model, including any third-party or pre-trained model, retains, learns from, or uses the data for training, fine-tuning, or retraining in any form, and must confirm this in writing as part of the AI tooling disclosure.

- **Compliance & Data Sovereignty:** All data must remain within the territorial jurisdiction of India at all times in strict compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. The partner acknowledges that data contains PII and proprietary information, prohibiting its use for internal AI operations beyond this scope.

- **Audit access:** Wadhwani AI retains full rights to audit raw audio-to-transcript mappings, tool-exposure logs, and annotator-level metadata for any delivered batch, on demand, throughout the contract term and for 6 months post-contract completion.

- **Tool for annotation:** The partner is responsible for providing or procuring a suitable annotation tool and for giving Wadhwani AI a walkthrough of it (see the tool demonstration requirement). The selected tool must fully support all required transcription and labelling functionalities outlined above, including accurate timestamping, word-level segmentation, and label application in accordance with the defined annotation protocol. The tool should allow for three roles: Annotator, Adjudicator and Super QC Reviewer, and should allow for two blind annotations.

AI tooling and disclosure

- **Mandatory disclosure:** Vendors must explicitly declare, prior to contract award, whether any AI/ASR pre-annotation, LLM-assisted drafting/transcription, or auto-suggestion tools will be used at any point in the annotation workflow, and clearly detail where human review occurs relative to AI output (e.g., blind human transcription vs. human review of AI draft). Non-disclosure of AI-assisted methods discovered post-award constitutes a material breach of contract.

- **Tool details:** If AI-assisted, the vendor must specify the model/tool name and version, whether it is open-source, licensed, or proprietary, and confirm it is deployed locally within the partner's secure environment in compliance with the AI & Model Usage clause above.

- **Exclusive use:** The vendor must confirm the model is used exclusively for this project and has not been fine-tuned or trained on any data outside this project's scope, per the Usage Restrictions clause.

F. Delivery Schedule and Payment

- **Onboarding:** The partner must complete the Co-Working & Onboarding Phase described above before full-scale annotation begins.

- **Pilot batch and timeline:** Within 7 days of contract commencement, the partner must submit a pilot batch of at least 5–7 hours of annotated audio, ahead of full-scale delivery. Wadhwani AI will use this batch for early QC to identify any process, quality, or calibration issues before volume is scaled; continuation to full batch delivery is contingent on the pilot meeting the quality expectations set out in the QC protocol. The partner is expected to complete the full transcription activity by the end of May 2027, as per the Scope of Work timeline.

- **Progress reviews:** The partner will be required to participate in weekly progress reviews to ensure timely completion and adherence to quality standards.

- **Payment:** Payment eligibility will be linked to the successful submission of the milestones as per scope of work. The partner may raise a single invoice after delivery.

G. Formatting & Delivery

Delivering transcriptions in a JSON format as specified by Wadhwani AI

```JSON
"{
  “id”: <int>,
  “file_name”: “<string>“,                // audio file name
  “annotator_name”: “<string>“,           // name of adjudicator
  “annotation_version”: “<string>“,       // “Reviewed” (default) or “Reworked”
  “annotations”: [                        // adjudicated final transcript
    {
      “start”: “H:MM:SS.mmm”,             // start timestamp
      “end”: “H:MM:SS.mmm”,               // end timestamp
      “Transcription”: [
        “<Noise><string></Noise>”         // word transcription with labels
      ]
    }
    // ... repeated per word, covering the full audio duration
  ],
  “telemetry”: {
  // Include below Parameter Only If AI model is used to generate transcript
    “ai_pre_annotation”: {
      “model_name”: “<string>“,
      “model_version”: “<string>“,
      “raw_transcript”: [
        {
          “start”: “H:MM:SS.mmm”,
          “end”: “H:MM:SS.mmm”,
          “Transcription”: [
            “<string>”
          ]
        }
        // ... repeated per word, covering the full audio duration
      ]
    },
    “dual_pass_annotation”: {
      “pass_1”: {
        “annotator_name”: “<string>“,
        “annotation”: [
          {
```

```
            "start": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
            "end": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
            "Transcription": [
              "<string>"
            ]
          }
          // ... repeated per word, covering the full audio duration
        ]
      },
      "pass_2": {
        "annotator_name": "<string>",
        "annotation": [
          {
            "start": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
            "end": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
            "Transcription": [
              "<Noise><string></Noise>"
            ]
          }
          // ... repeated per word, covering the full audio duration
        ]
      },
      "inter_annotator_agreement": {
        "krippendorff_alpha": <float>,
        "word_accuracy": <float>
      }
    },
    "review": {
      "annotator_name": "<string>",
      "annotation": [
        {
          "start": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
          "end": "H:MM:SS.mmm",
          "Transcription": [
            "<string>"
          ]
        }
        // ... repeated per word, covering the full audio duration
      ]
    }
  },
  "super_qc": {
    "audited": <boolean>,
    "auditor_id": "<string>",
    "status": "Accepted"
  }
}
```

Note: Transcriptions should **strictly** adhere to the terminology provided in this JSON format. Entries will be rejected if not compliant. Any non-compliance and multiple change requests will lead to batch rejection.

V. TIMELINE AND ROUNDS

S.No	Activity	Date
1	Release of the Request for Proposal (RFP)	14th November 2026
2	Q&A and Clarifications	25th November 2026
3	Last date for submission of the complete proposal	26th November 2026
4	Meeting with Shortlisted Agencies	27th November 2026

VI. REQUIRED DELIVERABLES

The selected partner will be responsible for delivering the following within the agreed project timelines and quality standards:

- **JSON files of transcriptions of English recordings**
- **Each recording to have a separate JSON file, format as specified by Wadhwani AI**
- **A batch report for every batch delivered (see D. Quality Review and Reporting)**

VII. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Your proposal must include:

1. **Technical Proposal**
    - Understanding of scope and deliverables
    - Process and tools proposed to be used for the task
    - Team composition and qualifications
    - Quality assurance mechanisms

- Data Policy
- AI/ASR tooling disclosure (see E. Data, System and AI Governance)
- Tool demonstration (shortlisted agencies only): shortlisted partners must meet with the project team, demonstrate their annotation interface, and successfully complete live sample annotations to verify workflow compatibility and speed, prior to formal readiness sign-off.
- Annotation of the Sample Audios (**Time limited URLs**)
  Sample 1 - Link
  Sample 2 - Link
  Sample 3 - Link
  Sample 4 - Link

2. **Financial Proposal**
   - Detailed cost breakdown
   - Schedule of Payments Linked to Milestones Achieved
   - Applicable taxes and contingencies

3. **Organizational Profile**
   - Relevant project experience
   - Sample of similar work

Criteria for Application

Applicants must meet the following criteria.

- **Mandatory:** Demonstrated team capacity to provide transcriptions in English, demonstrable quality check process

- **Preferred:** Prior experience in transcribing English student speech

Submission Details

- All proposals to this RFP must be received no later than **November 26th, 2026.** The proposal should be submitted only through e-mail in PDF format addressed to The Procurement Team at the below-given e-mail id: rfp.lehs@wadhwaniai.org. The email's subject line must contain the reference number and title of the RFP: English Annotation of Student Voice Recordings from Uttarakhand (115 hrs) **(Name of the partner)**.

- Any proposals received by Wadhwani AI after the deadline for submission of proposals prescribed in the timeline of this document are liable to be rejected.

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Criteria	Weightage
Understanding the scope	5%
Technical soundness of the approach and methodology (including internal quality control processes and robustness of annotation tool) - to be assessed during one-on-one meetings	25%
Quality of samples submitted as per annotation protocol shared	25%
Work Plan and Staffing to deliver in required timelines	15%
Past experience of the organisation in transcribing in the English language, including phonetic miscues.	20%
Credentials of the proposed team	10%
Technical Total	**100%**

Only participants in the RFP qualifying on the technical evaluation will be eligible for the financial evaluation. Financial proposals will be evaluated on criteria including total cost, cost breakdown, cost reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, payment terms, and financial stability of the participating organization. Also, the participants should show a demonstrated compliance with the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, ensuring responsible collection, storage, and use of the students' personal data.

IX. MANDATORY ENCLOSURE

Please submit the following as enclosures or attachments with your quotation. Bidders must provide all the information requested above in Section VII (Proposal Submission Guidelines). 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).
- AI Tool disclosure details

Note: Only shortlisted partners will be contacted for presentations 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 chosen partner.