

Weston Family Foundation: Homegrown Innovation Challenge

Updated Information

Update, December 6, 2022

- New internal deadline: now **Fri Dec 16, 2022 at 4:30 pm** instead of Tues Dec 13
- New external deadline: now **Thurs Jan 5, 2023 at 12 pm** instead of Tues Dec 20

Update, October 18, 2022

- New deadlines for the Shepherd Phase.
- Added application instructions which now include information about a webinar on Oct. 24.
- Funding availability outlines Shepherd Phase funding available.

Sponsor

Weston Family Foundation

Program

Learn more about the criteria and process for applications at [Homegrown Innovation Challenge](#) [1].

Description

The Weston Family Foundation has announced the launch of its \$33-million Homegrown Innovation Challenge to spark creative solutions and encourage new ideas to boost the sustainable production of fruits and vegetables in Canada.

The Challenge centres around a competition to generate solutions that will enable domestic food producers to grow berries out of season, sustainably, competitively, and at scale. Funding will be awarded in stages over six years to eligible teams developing tools and technologies that solve the interconnected challenges of growing produce out of season in Canada.

Like many countries, Canada is heavily reliant on imported fresh fruits and vegetables; bringing in nearly 80% of fresh produce, predominantly from climate-vulnerable areas. This situation creates the potential for food shortages due to food-systems disruptions such as border closings, droughts, flooding, or future pandemics.

This reality presents a unique opportunity to spread awareness of a critical issue and create a

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homegrown solution to a global problem. Thanks to its socio-economic profile and extreme seasons — made even more extreme through the effects of climate change — Canada is an ideal testbed for innovative agricultural ideas.

Ideas, however, require funding and support to develop into functioning, scalable systems, and that is where the Homegrown Innovation Challenge comes in.

Challenge prizes are a tried-and-tested method for incentivizing innovation, with clear goals, objective criteria, and a laser-like focus on solutions and outcomes. Developed by the Weston Family Foundation and Nesta Challenges, a world leader in challenge prizes, the Homegrown Innovation Challenge calls for entrepreneurs and innovators, food producers and farmers, researchers and scientists to tackle this challenge.

The ultimate winner of the Challenge could be awarded as much as \$8 million, with substantial funding also available to eligible teams that progress through different stages as they develop, scale, and ready their innovations for market.

Eligibility

Review the [eligibility criteria](#) [2] for the Homegrown Innovation Challenge.

Funding Availability

The Homegrown Innovation Challenge will distribute up to \$33 million in funding over six years. Overall, there is up to \$8 million in funding available to a successful team seeking to develop and scale your innovation. You can read more about the funding breakdown available in the [How the Challenge Works section](#) [3] of the website.

Shepherd Phase

The top 10 innovation teams selected by an [independent judging panel](#) [4] will be awarded up to \$1 million each across an 18 month period to develop and demonstrate a small-scale proof of concept of their system, generating evidence and learning to be assessed for progression to the Scaling Phase. Solutions should be reaching [Technology Readiness Level 5](#) [5] or higher by the end of the Shepherd Phase (when being submitted to the Scaling Phase).

Please note that you do not need to be a Spark Awardee to apply for the Shepherd Phase.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs up to 10% of grant amount are allowed.

Special Notes

Please note that research activities carried out in the context of COVID-19 need to adhere to

the University of Guelph COVID-19 research principles, policies, guidelines and processes as they may be updated from time to time and communicated on the [Office of Research web-page](#) [6].

Deadlines

If College-level review is required, your College will communicate its earlier internal deadlines.

Type	Date	Notes
Internal Deadline	Friday, December 16, 2022 - 4:30pm	Please submit your Shepherd Phase application, along with an OR-5 Form to research.services@uoguelph.ca [7].
External Deadline	Thursday, January 5, 2023 - 12:00pm	Shepherd Phase applications are due by 12 pm ET on December 20, 2022.

How to Apply

Application

There are two ways to apply for the Homegrown Innovation Challenge:

1. You can apply for a Spark Phase, which will provide you with a grant of up to \$50,000 while you develop your plan and application for the Shepherd Phase. The Spark Awards are not mandatory and must be applied for by 12 pm ET on May 3, 2022. (CLOSED)
2. You can apply directly to the [Shepherd Phase](#) [8] of the Challenge by completing the online application form by 12 pm ET on December 20, 2022 (see internal deadline above).

The submission portal for Shepherd Phase applications to the Homegrown Innovation Challenge is open. You can access the [SmartSimple portal](#) [9] to start an application. Please note that this is the only method by which English-language application can be submitted and the portal will only be open until December 20, 2022.

Webinar

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On October 24th at 1pm Weston will hold their fourth webinar on the Weston Family Foundation's Homegrown Innovation Challenge. This will be the last webinar for prospective applicants that Weston will conduct. Please fill out the [registration form](#) [10] for the webinar.

In this live webinar, which will be conducted in both English and French, Weston will discuss various aspects of the Homegrown Innovation Challenge, including structure, eligibility and objectives. Particular attention will be paid to the Shepherd Phase of the HGC, for which applications are due by December 20, 2022. They will also devote sufficient time to a Q&A session, where prospective applicants will have an opportunity to ask questions live and hear responses directly from the Weston Family Foundation team, including Dr. Lukasz Aleksandrowicz, Program Manager, and Jeffrey Coull, Head, Strategic Initiatives and Projects. There are a limited number of spots on the webinar platform, so if you are interested in participating, please register as soon as possible.

For Questions, please contact

Homegrown Innovation Challenge

Please email challenge@westonfoundation.ca [11] to book your 15-minute slot with a Homegrown Innovation Challenge team member if you want to seek their advice.

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Links

[1] <http://www.homegrownchallenge.ca>.

[2] <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/eligibility-criteria/>

[3] <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/challenge-overview/>

[4] <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/judging-panel/>

[5] <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/080.nsf/eng/00002.html>

[6] <https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/>

[7] <mailto:research.services@uoguelph.ca>

[8] <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/how-to-apply/>

[9] https://westonfdn.smartsimple.ca/s_Login.jsp

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[10] https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/MsE8D3LwfUCOEnYz_O7H-g,juB1inmfv0qLqvaOwlZWJw,oMecG8BQyEGz1hD9j9eOpw,0bx27DtUFE-PG3elqVDu8A,1zvOAu-KbUu_H8QS30ihmQ,ojmEh6SaWUOKqL5m_9FrLQ?mode=read&tenantId=0f3cc132-f072-407d-8e12-7633fcec7fa

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