

Innovation Challenge Backed by \$33M in research funds!

The Weston Foundation is putting up **\$33 million in research funds over 6 years** to attract diverse (including multi-disciplinary) teams to apply for this 6-year national-level innovation challenge. Although the Challenge Statement for the Homegrown innovation Challenge is focused on 'producing berries out of season in Canada', **this Challenge is not only for plant scientists and researchers in Agriculture!**

The funder recognizes that identifying a method to successfully grow berries year-round in Canada requires solutions from researchers focused on energy generation and storage, sensors, lighting, materials, temperature control, etc.

Therefore, the path to producing berries out of season will be left entirely for you and your team to define with refreshingly **few restrictions on use of funds**. The winning team has the potential to secure up to \$8M by the end of the challenge **with no limit to the number of teams applying** at a single university, and multi-university teams also permitted.

Novel high risk, high reward solutions are encouraged!

For example, one of the early Spark grant awardees is attempting to grow berries in underground mines. Could your work help a team grow berries underwater, or vertically, or significantly faster or with less water? You are encouraged to apply if your research has novel, boundary-pushing applications!

Several critical gaps in imminent applications have been identified by the funder that Dalhousie researchers are well positioned to address:

- They are seeking more applications from **Atlantic Canada**
- They are seeking more applications that address **the importance of energy production and storage**
- They are seeking more applications that incorporate **novel growing locations that will mitigate seasonal fluctuations**

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Could your research could support one or more of Dalhousie's applications?

Interested researchers will be **well supported in advancing their applications** (or their team's) through the below support channels:

- Direct 1:1 consultation and advice from the funder, (including access to judges on the Judging Panel), and a webinar (a dedicated Weston Family Foundation representative)
- Help identifying and attracting key industry partners (Dalhousie's Office of Commercialization and Industry Engagement)
- Help identifying suitable co-PIs (if needed) (Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture)
- Help drafting and reviewing your application (Dalhousie's Office of Advancement)

The challenge will close to new applicants on **December 20th, 2022**, when applications for the "Shepherd" phase are due, with 10 successful applicants receiving up to \$1M each over 18 months. The subsequent round will involve four of those ten teams receiving up to \$5M each over 3 years, culminating in one or two of those four teams awarded two \$1M prizes.

Be sure to start early!

For more information, contact Holly O'Leary
in the Office of Advancement.
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