

WAFAR Global Challenge Award

Application Guidelines: Fall 2026 Competition

Overview

WAFAR invites Western researchers to apply for the Global Challenge Award, a limited-term opportunity designed to catalyze an interdisciplinary, international research collaboration that tackles a major challenge facing humanity. Up to \$85,000 over 6 months is awarded to the most meritorious applications following peer review led by the Vice-President (Research) and Provost & Vice-President (Academic). Teams must use the work and outcomes from their project as a foundation for pursuing larger-scale external funding. Proposals should show how the funds will enable the team, including an international scholar, to dedicate focused, in-person effort toward:

- **Societal impact:** advance a timely, major challenge facing humanity to inform and influence society, governments, and/or the broader public and private sectors
- **International Reach:** grow international collaborations to enable scholarly advances that would not be possible with Western expertise alone.
- **Lasting Collaboration:** build interdisciplinary relationships that lead to a large-scale external funding proposal beyond WAFAR's funding period.
- **Institutional impact:** elevate Western's international reputation and global impact with new ideas and alignment to Western's strategic plan *Towards 150* and Western Research's strategic plan *Mobilize for Impact*.
- **Public impact:** share outcomes in accessible language and formats, engaging the wider community beyond academia.

Important Dates

Milestone	Date
Competition Opens	October 28, 2026
Application Deadline	December 15, 2026
Results Communicated	January 2027
Project Start Date (applicant's choice)	February 1, May 1, or September 1, 2027
Award Amount:	Up to \$85,000
Funding Period:	6 months

In-kind Support

In addition to cash support, every funded project has direct access to WAFAR's research specialist throughout the life of the project, for help with:

- Strengthening the research plan and helping shape the project's dissemination and impact
- Connecting teams to expertise, networks, and opportunities across Western and beyond
- Team building and project implementation
- Positioning the team for large-scale external funding opportunities
- Promoting and communicating project outcomes to public and academic audiences
- Project management and administrative support for events, space, reporting, and other project requirements.

The WAFAR environment offers office space, open concept pod workstations, meeting room access, collision space and large meeting spaces in the Western Interdisciplinary Research Building.

Eligibility & Program Requirements

- **Lead Applicant:** The principal investigator (PI) must be a Western faculty member eligible to hold a Western Research account. They will be responsible for the administrative aspects (i.e. correspondence, finances, ethics). Lead applicants can apply for only one award in each competition and hold only one award at WAFAR at any given time. They may be listed as co-applicant on other applications.
- **Interdisciplinary Team:** The team must be composed of *at least* 2 Western researchers from more than one distinct discipline, 1 international scholar, and 1 trainee (undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral). Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization and the involvement of early career investigators. All listed applicants must have contributed to the conception/design of the proposed project and agreed to share responsibility and be accountable for the proposed work. Trainees must obtain permission from their supervisor(s) to be part of the team.
- **In-person Collaboration:** The international scholar(s) must join the team in-person at Western for at least one week (5 business days) in total during the project. This may be a single stay, a major workshop or convening, or several shorter visits.
- **Collaborative Relationship:** The team must demonstrate an existing collaboration that allows immediate implementation (i.e. co-authored work, joint grants or applications, documented or ongoing scholarly exchange).
- **External Funding Application:** Teams must submit at least one application for external funding based on the project within one year of the end of the Global Challenge Award funding period.

- **Ethics Approvals:** Projects involving human participants, animal subjects, or biohazardous materials require approval from their relevant Western review committee before the funding start date. If awarded, funds will be encumbered until approvals are confirmed.
- **Accounts & Expenses:** Awards are set up as Western Research accounts, accessible from the project's selected start date. Applicants are expected to expend funds as proposed within the 6-month project period. Eligible expenses: **International scholar support** (up to \$35,000 per scholar): travel and accommodation at reasonable cost, consistent with Western's travel policies, plus an honorarium of up to \$2,500 per week of in-person time at Western. **Research allowances for Western faculty** (up to \$10,000 each, for up to two faculty): discretionary funds for the faculty member's project-related research, such as data collection, research materials, lab supplies and research assistance. **Trainee support** (up to \$15,000): stipends or salary for the trainee(s) named on the team. **Operations** (up to \$15,000), shared costs of the team's collaborative operations including services, knowledge mobilization and exchange costs- events, publications, communications, conference fees, etc. Each expense should be listed under one category only. Costs that benefit the whole team, including sharing results, belong under Operations; costs for an individual faculty member's research belong under their Research Allowance. Ineligible expenses: indirect costs, general computing equipment/software. Specialized equipment (including software) essential to carry out the proposed project may be requested. **Category amounts are maximums, not allocations;** total requests may not exceed \$85,000 (see Section D).
- **Reporting:** Progress updates will be sought by the WAFAR research specialist periodically to ensure that milestones are being met and that needed supports are in place. A final report, tailored to each team, will be due within 3 months of the funding period's end. WAFAR will also follow up with Lead Applicants one year after the funding period ends to confirm submission of the external funding application.
- **Funding Acknowledgement:** All outputs must include acknowledgment of support – "This work was supported/funded by the Western Academy for Advanced Research (WAFAR) at Western University".

Application Process

Applications must be completed and submitted through the online [application portal](#). Proposal sections include:

Section A — Proposal and Team Overview

Completed directly in the [online portal](#).

- Project Title (75 characters including spaces)
- Amount Requested (up to \$85,000)
- Preferred Project Start Date: February 1, May 1, or September 1, 2027

- Lead Applicant (PI): Name, Home Faculty, Email, ORCID ID
- Team Details: for each team member: Name, Role (Western researcher / International Scholar(s) / Trainee), Home Institution, and ORCID ID. The international scholar's university (or other) affiliation and the trainee's academic career stage must be identified.

*The following sections (B–E) are to be completed and **combined into a single PDF file**, uploaded through the [online portal](#) after completing Section A.*

Please give your document a simple name, i.e. "Last Name_WAFAR Global Challenge 2026"

Section B — Summary, Milestones & Objectives

PDF, 12-point font, single spaced, 1-inch margins.

- Lay Proposal Summary: in plain language (i.e. as used for news stories), describe the major challenge your project addresses and the activities this funding will support (maximum 1,500 characters including spaces).
- Milestones & Objectives: key milestones across the project's funding period, including the (approximate) dates of the international scholar's in-person time at Western and the project's start and completion dates.

Section C — Project Description

PDF, 12-point font, single spaced, 1-inch margins. Maximum 4 pages.

- Background & Challenge: the major challenge facing humanity to be addressed, who or what is affected, and why it matters now.
- The Collaboration: describe the existing partnership between the Western researchers and the international scholar(s); how it began, what you have done together, and why this team is positioned to make progress.
- Activities & In-Person Plan: what the team will do together, particularly while the international scholar(s) are in-person at Western, and the role each trainee will play.
- Why This, Why Now: what this funding and in-person collaboration will make possible that would not otherwise be possible.
- Team & Interdisciplinarity: the disciplines represented, the role of each team member, and how the team's international and training dimensions strengthen the project.
- Dissemination & Impact Plan: how outcomes will be shared.
- Leveraging External Support: outline how the project's outcomes will position the team to pursue larger-scale external funding (i.e. Tri-council, foundation, or international sources). Identify the external funding program(s) you plan to apply to and your anticipated submission date.

- **Strategic Alignment:** a brief statement on how the project aligns with *Towards 150* and *Mobilize for Impact*.

Section D — Budget & Justification

PDF, 12-point font, single spaced, 1-inch margins. Maximum 2 pages.

Funds may be requested across the eligible expense categories below in any combination that serves the project. Category amounts are maximums, not allocations; the total may not exceed \$85,000. Budgets are assessed on how well they fit the proposed activities. Requesting the maximum is not an advantage, and awards may be funded below the amount requested.

Budget Item	Maximum	Amount
International scholar support: travel and accommodation, plus an honorarium of up to \$2,500 per week at Western	Up to \$35,000 per scholar:	
Research allowances for Western Faculty (Up to 2): discretionary research costs, e.g., data collection, materials, lab supplies, research assistance	Up to \$20,000 (\$10,000 each)	
Trainee support: stipends or salary for the team's named trainee(s)	Up to \$15,000	
Operations: shared team activities, i.e. services, workshops, publications, communications	Up to \$15,000	
TOTAL (maximum \$85,000)	\$85,000	

- Provide a brief description and justification for all major expenditures, including fees or honoraria, trainee support, and any equipment or services requested. Explain how each amount is proportionate to the proposed activities.
- Teams that need to be larger may cost-share with other grants or funding sources to support additional members.

Illustrative budgets

The examples below show how the same \$85,000 cap can be used in different ways. They are illustrations only, not templates; build your budget to reflect what your project needs.

- **Event-led (about \$40,000):** two international scholars for a one-week workshop (\$2,500 honorarium + \$2,500 accommodation + \$2,500 airfare, each) (\$15,000), trainee support (\$10,000) and operations for a single major workshop (\$15,000)
- **Residency-led (about \$65,000):** one international scholar in residence for 3 weeks (\$7,500 honorarium + \$5,000 accommodation + \$2,500 airfare) (\$15,000), research allowances for two Western faculty (\$20,000), trainee support (\$15,000), and operations (\$15,000).
- **Two scholars (about \$55,000):** two international scholars, each at Western for 2 weeks (\$5,000 honorarium + \$5000 accommodation + \$2,500 airfare, each) (\$25,000), trainee support (\$15,000), and operations (\$15,000), with no research allowances for Western faculty.

Section E — Required & Optional Appendices

PDF.

- Evidence of Pre-Existing Partnership (required): i.e. joint publications, prior collaborative grants or applications, or a brief letter confirming the ongoing relationship between the Western Researchers and the international scholar(s).
- Short CVs or biosketches for core team members (required).
- Letters of support (optional).
- References or bibliography (optional).

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assess each application against the following criteria:

Criterion	Assessment Considerations
Societal Impact	- Does the project address a timely major challenge facing humanity on a national or global scale? - Is there a clear targeted step forward to inform and influence society, governments, and the public and private sectors?
Team & Interdisciplinarity	Is the team comprehensive and well positioned to grow international and interdisciplinary collaborations that enable scholarly advances that would not be possible with Western expertise alone?
Realistic workplan	- Are the proposed activities (including the international scholar's in-person time at Western) clearly planned, feasible within 6 months, and is assessment of success built in to ensure progress toward milestones? - Does the plan describe a thoughtful and thorough approach to engaging with the full spectrum of scholarship?
Public impact	Is there a credible, concrete plan to intentionally contribute to knowledge mobilization and exchange by engaging the wider community (academic and beyond) in the work and sharing outcomes in accessible language and formats, reaching beyond academic audiences.
Budget fit	Is the budget proportionate to the proposed activities and well justified? (Requesting the maximum is not an advantage.)
Potential for future funding	Does the plan clearly explain how it will leverage this investment into large-scale external funding that would support ongoing collaboration and progress related to the challenge topic?
Institutional alignment and reputation	Does the proposal define its alignment to Western's strategic plan <i>Towards 150</i> and Western Research's strategic plan <i>Mobilize for Impact</i>, and how it will elevate Western's international reputation and global impact?

Questions

Questions about the purpose of this funding opportunity, eligibility, the application process, or WAFAR in general are welcome any time before the deadline; please contact WAFAR's research specialist, Lee-Ann Briere, at lbriere2@uwo.ca.

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Appendix A — Proposal & Team Overview Worksheet

The Proposal & Team Overview section must be completed in the [online application portal](#).

This worksheet is provided to help you gather the information needed to complete the online form. Refer to the Application Guidelines for details about Sections B–E, which are completed separately and uploaded as a single PDF through the online form.

Questions can be directed to WAFAR's Research Specialist (Lee-Ann Briere, email: lbriere2@uwo.ca).

Project Title

75 characters including spaces

Lay Proposal Summary

In terms that can be understood by a lay person (i.e. plain language used for news stories), summarize your proposal. Maximum 1,500 characters including spaces.

Preferred Project Start Date

☐ February 1, 2027 ☐ May 1, 2027 ☐ September 1, 2027

Amount Requested

Up to \$85,000

Lead Applicant (PI)

Must be a Western faculty member eligible to hold a Western Research account.

Last Name		First Name	
Home Faculty		Email	

ORCID #			
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Team Members

Include all Western researchers, the International scholar, and all trainees. At least one team member must be internationally based (International scholar), and at least one must be a trainee. Add rows as needed.

First Name	Last Name	Home Institution	Role	International?	ORCID # (optional)
			☐ Western researcher ☐ International scholar ☐ Trainee	☐ Yes ☐ No	
			☐ Western researcher ☐ International scholar ☐ Trainee	☐ Yes ☐ No	
			☐ Western researcher ☐ International scholar ☐ Trainee	☐ Yes ☐ No	
			☐ Western researcher ☐ International scholar ☐ Trainee	☐ Yes ☐ No	
			☐ Western researcher ☐ International scholar ☐ Trainee	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Add rows as needed.

Proposed Budget

See Section D of the Application Guidelines for budget justification requirements.

Budget Item	Maximum	Amount Requested
International scholar allowance	Up to \$35,000 per scholar (for travel, housing, and/or honoraria, in any combination)	
Research allowances for Western Faculty (Up to 2)	Up to \$20,000 (\$10,000 each)	
Trainee support	Up to \$15,000	
Operations (services; knowledge mobilization and exchange)	Up to \$15,000	
TOTAL	\$85,000	