



Weston Family Foundation

MADE IN CANADA: The Weston Family Foundation's Homegrown Innovation Challenge offers \$33 million in funding, and positions Canada as a leader in the future of food

Toronto, September 6, 2022 - When it comes to food, we like to think of Canada as a land of plenty, but our growing season is short, so despite abundant fresh water and vast expanses of arable land, as much as 80 per cent of our fresh produce is imported. Our national food supply is susceptible to major systems disruptions, and in a climate-changing world, this is a critical moment for global food vulnerability. Canada is poised to take a leadership role in the future of food: with sustainability and resiliency top-of-mind, how can we feed *all* Canadians?

The Homegrown Innovation Challenge, funded and delivered by the Weston Family Foundation, is working to answer this question by planting the seeds of possibility. The applicants will address the interconnected challenges related to growing berries out-of-season, and catalyze a range of solutions relevant to a broad array of fruit and vegetable crops in Canada and around the world. The Challenge will build partnerships between growers, farmers, engineers, scientists, and technologists (to name a few). The overall goal is to leverage our nation's diverse talent-pool, and vast resources into scalable solutions, and transform the way we produce food.

The Challenge was launched in February 2022 with the Spark phase. The Weston Family Foundation is pleased to announce that in August 2022 fifteen teams were each granted \$50,000 of seed funding to support the development of their concept, build their team, and finesse their application for the next phase, called the Shepherd Phase. Details on the funded projects can be found: <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/spark-award-projects/>

"The judging panel is thrilled with the creativity and ingenuity of our Spark Awardees. Some early solutions include an underground berry farm, a year-round greenhouse with 3D berry production, and a multi-tiered sustainable system that will optimize crop health and production density for small-scale farmers in Northern climates. The sheer diversity of the projects submitted speaks to the incredibly broad scope of possibility and potential. We cannot wait to see the innovative projects yet to come!" —Emma Adamo, chair, Weston Family Foundation.

The Weston Family Foundation is committed to supporting the success of the Challenge applicants. The diverse panel of international external judges will be adjudicating proposals, but more importantly they are available as resources for the teams. As mentors, they will provide technical feedback and product development guidance at every step of the way. “It is a privilege to lead this panel and to learn from, and collaborate with, Canada’s top talent across industries,” says Dominic Barton, chair of the Homegrown Challenge external judging panel and former chair for the Canadian Minister of Finance’s Advisory Council on Economic Growth. “Together we are forging new pathways and advancing our national skillset to accelerate critical systems for food production, thereby realizing the great promise of the Canadian agfood sector.” This Challenge seeks to address issues articulated in the Council’s report on economic growth, commonly referred to as, the Barton Report.

As the Homegrown Innovation Challenge moves into the Shepherd phase, we are actively soliciting more individuals and teams to sign on—there are few boundaries to the potential innovations welcomed to the table (**deadline for applications December 20, 2022**). In this phase, ten teams will be awarded \$1 million each to develop proof-of-concept over an 18-month period, leading to more funding in the Scaling phase, commencing January 2025. “We value all kinds of collaboration and our applicants do not require previous experience in agriculture,” says Ms. Adamo. “But after the December 20 deadline, the door closes to new applicants. Revolutionary ideas need funding to be realized, and we don’t want anyone to miss this significant opportunity.”

ABOUT THE HOMEGROWN INNOVATION CHALLENGE:

- Applications for the Shepherd phase of the Challenge are being accepted from **October 1 to December 20, 2022**. In March 2023, ten teams will each receive up to \$1 million to develop proof-of-concept for their ideas in the Shepherd phase.
- The Weston Family Foundation and our partners are well-connected and can offer support in finding team members and creating strategic partnerships. Potential applicants are urged to contact us at challenge@westonfoundation.ca.
- Visit www.homegrownchallenge.ca and follow us on Twitter: [@HomegrownIC](https://twitter.com/HomegrownIC)
- Learn more about the Spark awardees: <https://homegrownchallenge.ca/spark-award-projects/>

ABOUT THE WESTON FAMILY FOUNDATION:

At the Weston Family Foundation (formerly The W. Garfield Weston Foundation), more than 60 years of philanthropy has taught us that there's a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. That's why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on our unique landscapes. We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy,

working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impacts. We aspire to do more than provide funding; we want to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.

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