Objective

Since 2007, the Weston Family Awards in Northern Research have provided unparalleled support to early career scientists pursuing research in northern Canada. These annual awards are some of the most prestigious in the country for students pursuing a master's degree, a doctoral degree, or postdoctoral fellowship. Over 430 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows have been selected to receive an award since the program's inception, forming a community of Weston Family Northern Scientists who are at the forefront of northern scholarship and who are helping shape a better future for Canada and the world.

Weston Family Awards in Northern Research winners undertake projects across a broad spectrum of fields and disciplines in the natural sciences, including studies of northern ecosystems, biodiversity, flora and fauna, meteorology, oceanography, glaciology, geography, and environmental studies. Successful applicants should be able to demonstrate how their research contributes to protecting and restoring biodiversity in northern Canada, regardless of discipline, and should also be able to clearly articulate the need for their research and the impact it will have on northern communities.

Number, Value, and Duration of Scholarships

In the 2027 program year, the Weston Family Foundation will aim to support up to **fifteen (15) awards for students at the master's level**. Each award is valued at **$20,000 over one (1) year**.

The tenure period for awards at the master's level begins **June 1, 2027**, and ends **May 31, 2028**.

Eligibility

Applicants to the **master's level** of the awards program must:

- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada as of the application deadline;
- Be enrolled full-time in a master's program (leading to a thesis) in the natural sciences pursuing northern research at an accredited Canadian university as of the application deadline;
- Have received approval for their research proposal, including any required ethical reviews and/or research licenses, by the time they start their award.

Please note that if you previously won a master's level award, you cannot reapply to the master's level competition (i.e., you can only receive a master's award once).

Field of Study/Program Requirements

Research projects from all natural science subject areas that contribute to improving our understanding of northern ecosystems and/or to supporting northern biodiversity conservation will be considered.

Projects **must include a field research component conducted by the applicant** in northern Canada within the term of the award.

Conditions and Restrictions

- Applicants must be enrolled full-time in a master's program in the natural sciences at an accredited Canadian university. Successful applicants must continue to be enrolled full-time at the university listed on their application throughout the tenure of their award. Proof of registration will be required in order for the award to be distributed. Any changes to research projects or project supervisors must be pre-approved by the Weston Family Foundation in order to continue receiving the award.
- Successful applicants who wish to transfer ("fast-track") to a doctoral program before the end of the tenure of their award can continue to receive their master's level award, provided their research project and supervisor remain the same. They must provide written confirmation of this to the Weston Family Foundation.
- Applicants' research and fieldwork must relate to and take place in northern Canada, as defined by Brandt (2009). A map that defines these northern regions is available here: Weston Family Awards in Northern Research.
- Award payment will be issued in instalments and is to be used as a stipend.
- Successful applicants can hold other awards concurrently.
- Successful applicants may defer their award for a period up to 1 year, but only for reasons of parental-, illness, or health-related family responsibilities. Applicants may not defer their award in order to accept or hold employment, or to pursue studies other than those for which they received funding.

Selection Process

All applications are checked for basic eligibility before they are sent to an external Selection Committee for review. The Selection Committee reviews and ranks all eligible applications and then recommends award winners from the top applications to the Weston Family Foundation. Award winners will be notified of the results of the review process in early May 2027.

For the master's level awards, the Selection Committee assesses applicants based on:

Academic excellence:

- Evidence of exceptional academic achievement, a strong trajectory in their field of study, and potential to rank among the top students in the country.

Research proposal

- Proposal is based in the natural sciences and shows how the research was co-designed or co-developed with northern and/or Indigenous communities.
- Proposal clearly defines the research goals and methods.
- Proposal is based on research that is timely, novel, and has the potential to make important advances in the field of study.
- Proposal clearly shows how the research will improve understanding of northern ecosystems and biodiversity conservation.
- Proposal identifies the applicant's role within the research project as well as the significance of their contribution.

Potential impact

- Applicant shows the significance and potential impact of their research on the protection and restoration of biodiversity, not only within their field of study but also to Canada more broadly.
- Applicant shows some potential applications of their work beyond academia.
- Applicant demonstrates evidence of willingness to communicate the results of their research within the scientific community, in northern communities, and at national meetings.

How to Apply

Applicants can prepare and submit an application through the online portal below.

Weston Family Foundation Application Portal

Applicants must create an account on the online portal. The account will allow them to upload and save information as well as track the progress of their application. **Please note that the online portal can only accept applications in English.**

Applicants should be aware that there are three parts to the application for the master's level awards, as indicated below. **All three parts must be received before Thursday, January 14, 2027 at 2:00 p.m. ET.** It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the application and all supporting documents outlined below are submitted by this deadline. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

Applicants should also be aware that applications will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary committee and as such, it is to their advantage to keep technical terminology to a minimum.

Applicants will be notified by email once their application has been received.

The three parts to the application are:

1. **Application Form**
   Applicants must complete an application form. Please read the application guidelines and instructions carefully before completing the form.

2. **Referee Reports**
   Applicants must submit two (2) Referee Reports as part of their application:
   - The first report must be completed by their thesis supervisor.
   - The second report must be completed by an academic reference.

   Referee Report templates are available for download from the online portal. Applicants must have each report completed and uploaded into the online portal before the application deadline. It is the Applicant's responsibility to ensure that each referee is advised well ahead of time that they will need to complete a report and that they have ample time to do so before the application deadline.

3. **Transcripts**
   Applicants are required to submit both their undergraduate transcripts as well as any applicable graduate level transcripts (including both past programs and programs currently in-progress). Please note that it can take several weeks for transcripts to be ordered and processed. It is highly recommended that transcripts be ordered well in advance to ensure they arrive on time and can be scanned/uploaded through the online portal before the application deadline.

Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be required to submit by mid May 2027:

- a photo of themselves, preferably in their research environment
- a short bio (see samples online: 2026 WFANR Award Winners)
- a signed award contract acknowledging their acceptance of the terms and conditions/restrictions of the award

Successful applicants will also be required to create an account with a third-party payment processor and upload the following information in order to receive their award instalments:

- social insurance number (SIN)
- banking information

Successful applicants must submit progress reports (which include written and video components) as well as confirmation of registration forms before each instalment of their award can be processed (reporting guidelines and forms will be available for download in the online portal). It is the responsibility of award winners to keep the Weston Family Foundation informed of any changes to their contact information by updating their online record.

Successful applicants should also note that their names, biographical information, and photographs may be used in promotional initiatives for the Weston Family Foundation.

Payment

- Award payment will only be issued once the successful applicant has completed the award acceptance process and the Weston Family Foundation has received all necessary documentation to authorize payment.

- Award payment will be issued by a third-party processor on behalf of the Weston Family Foundation. **It is the responsibility of the successful applicant to submit their financial information to this third party in order to receive payments.**

- Award payment will consist of instalments paid to the successful applicant by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT). **Please note that EFT payments can only be made to a Canadian bank account AND the bank account must be in the award recipient's name**. The breakdown of the instalments is as follows:
    - First instalment: $10,000
    - Second instalment: $10,000

About the Weston Family Foundation

At the Weston Family 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 in 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 to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.

Since the Foundation's beginning, each generation of our family has taken an active role in our grant-making to spark new ideas, shepherd promising initiatives, and scale ambitious projects. With every advance, we move forward together.

Contact Us

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