

2026

ZONTA WOMEN IN STEM AWARD



DESCRIPTION

The Zonta Women in STEM Award uplifts innovation and celebrates the remarkable accomplishments of women between 18-35 years of age in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and acknowledges their groundbreaking research, pioneering discoveries, and/or exemplary contributions to advancing knowledge and innovation in a STEM field. By recognizing and supporting these exceptional women, Zonta aims to inspire future generations and foster inclusivity and diversity in the world of STEM.



The program operates at the Zonta club, district and international levels. The Zonta Club of Oak Brook offers 1 award of US\$1,500. Zonta International offers 16 international awards of US\$10,000 each and a complimentary one-year supporting membership in Zonta International for the next financial year.

Timetable

The Zonta Club of Oak Brook application deadline.....08 November 2025

District applicant selected and application received by Zonta International Headquarters..... 15 January 2026
or deadline determined by district.

Official announcement of international recipients..... March 2026

General Information

According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2023), women comprise only 29.2% of the STEM workforce in 146 nations evaluated. Despite a 1.58% increase in female STEM workers between 2015 and 2023, a troubling gender imbalance remains. Women face challenges when pursuing STEM leadership roles. For instance, women represent 29.9% of senior workers but only 12.4% in C-suite roles. Organizations, governments, educational institutions, and the larger scientific and technological community must work together to remove barriers that prevent women from advancing in STEM careers. Cited by [Global STEM Workforce - Society of Women Engineers \(swe.org\)](https://www.swe.org/global-stem-workforce)

The goal of the Zonta Women in STEM Award is to uplift and recognize the incredible work being done by women in STEM fields and inspire other women to pursue education, careers and leadership roles in STEM fields.

Who is Eligible?

Women, aged 18-35 at the time of application, who demonstrate groundbreaking research, pioneering discoveries, and/or exemplary contributions to advancing knowledge and innovation in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) field of study or industry, are eligible to apply. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Designated Degree Program List can be used to determine if your field of study is eligible: ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/stem-list.pdf.

Note that applicants from geographic areas within a Zonta district where no clubs are located may apply via a Zonta e-Club or directly to the district to be eligible for the international awards.

Club members and individuals with direct membership with Zonta International and employees of Zonta International and Zonta Foundation for Women are not eligible to apply for the Awards. Committee or jury members or any member involved in the selection process should follow the [Zonta International Conflict of Interest Policy](#) in the selection of awardees.

Z club and Golden Z club members are eligible to apply. Previous international fellowship and scholarship recipients are not eligible to apply. Applicants for the 2025 Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award may not also apply for the 2026 Zonta Women in STEM Award.

How Do I Apply?

The Zonta Club of Oak Brook application may be downloaded from the club's website. Note that applications must be submitted to a Zonta club or district in the language(s) accepted by the club or district by the deadline printed on the application. Only typed applications will be accepted and considered.

Application Requirements

- ❑ Completion of the official application, including essay.
- ❑ Verification of current enrollment by school/institute official (if applicable), **or**
- ❑ Letter from employer verifying employment (if applicable). The letter from employer must be on letterhead with signature from the employer stating the applicant's date of hire and job title.
- ❑ Two recommendations from adults, not related to the applicant, such as teachers, school officials, or employee supervisors, which must be sent directly to the Zonta club **or** district and not through the applicant.

Supporting documentation not requested as part of the application will not be considered. All applications and supporting information become the property of Zonta International. Zonta International has final authority over any aspect of the Awards.

Application Process

The application process must start with a Zonta club. All application materials must be received at a Zonta club by the deadline given by the individual club. The Zonta Club of Oak Brook application may be downloaded from: <http://zontadistrict6/oakbrook/>. Zonta International Headquarters does not hold a list of all clubs' deadlines. The club evaluating committee will consider applications and select the club awardee. Zonta clubs each select one application to send to their respective Zonta governor.

In addition to selecting the Zonta Club of Oak Brook's award recipient, the club will also send the winning application to the Zonta governor representative.

A district evaluating committee reviews the applications and selects one applicant per district to submit to Zonta International Headquarters. Districts with at least 1,200 members as of 31 May 2024 may submit two applications. The International Zonta Women in STEM Award Jury will select 16 international Zonta Women in STEM Award recipients from the district applicants received at Zonta International Headquarters.

How May I Use the Award Funds?

1. **The Zonta Club of Oak Brook award (US\$1,500) may only be used for tuition, fees and materials (books, supplies and equipment for required courses) at a secondary school, college, or university.**
2. There are no restrictions on the use of the Zonta International award funds.
3. Please note: If the applicant is studying at a secondary school, university or college, Zonta International is offering a "scholarship" type of payment to be used for tuition and/or living expenses. Please see below under Tax Considerations.
4. Recipients are not permitted to defer the Zonta Women in STEM Award.
5. Recipients may accept additional grants and awards from other sources.

Tax considerations for the Zonta International Award

The following considerations will help define which type of payment will fit the applicant's purposes best.

- ❑ "Award": with no restrictions for use. As an award, it is taxable income under U.S. tax regulations. To comply with the law, all awardees will receive tax forms. Also, according to U.S. tax regulations, 30% of the award must be withheld from awards made to non-U.S. residents. If Zonta International is notified that there is a U.S. tax treaty with the resident's country, the withholding will be appropriately adjusted.
- ❑ "Scholarship": to be used for tuition, fees and materials (books, supplies and equipment) required for courses at a secondary school, college or university only. As a scholarship to be used for tuition, fees and materials, the income is tax free.
- ❑ "Scholarship": to be used for living expenses while attending a secondary school, college or university. Although tuition and related expenses are tax free, income used for living expenses is considered taxable income. Tax forms will be provided to all awardees, as required. Withholdings range from \$ 0 (tax treaty), 14% (appropriate student VISA) to 30% for non-U.S. residents.
- ❑ Supplemental awards and scholarships that are paid directly paid by a club or district will follow the tax regulations of their taxing authority.

2026



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL

ZONTA WOMEN IN STEM AWARD

APPLICATION FORM

SEND APPLICATION AND DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS TO:

Application Deadline:

(Deadline set by club
applicant is applying to.)

Zonta Club/e-Club of:

District/Area:

To find a club click:

[Club Locator](#)

Attention:

Address:

City/State:

Province/Country:

Telephone:

Email address:

Name:

Last (Family)

First

Middle

Current mailing address:

City: State: Postal Code: Country:

Email address: Telephone:

LinkedIn address:

Permanent mailing address:

City: State: Postal Code: Country:

Secondary email address: Telephone:

Birth date: Birthplace: Country of citizenship:
(date/month/year) (city and country)

Name of college/university/institute currently attending (if applicable):

Current year of study (if applicable): Expected graduation date (if applicable provide month/year):

Department/field of study (if applicable):

Degree sought (if applicable):

Name and Address of Employer (if applicable):

Academic background:

Applicants are required to send transcripts of grades or equivalent records from all universities, colleges or institutes attended. An explanation of the grading system must be included for each transcript. Please add your degree obtained or current degree sought, if applicable, and expected graduation date (month/year). Do not upload unofficial transcripts as they will not be accepted.

In the tables below, please list the institutions you have attended:

University/college/institute/online	(Year) to (Year)	Major Field	Date Degree Received/ Anticipated

Employment history in STEM field (if applicable):

(If you started your own company, please include that information here.)

From (month/year)	To (month/year)	Name of Employer	Address	Type of work or position held

Scholarships, fellowships, honors received:

	Date

Volunteer and/or other activities

(Please describe your volunteer, non-scholastic activities, memberships and cultural interests):

Recommendations

Please use the following fields to name and send a recommendation letter request to a faculty member in the major field of study (if applicable) and/or to a supervisor, employer, volunteer supervisor, or academic advisor. These recommendations are confidential, and you will not be able to view the completed responses. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure these recommendations have been turned in by the Zonta club's deadline.

Please list below those referees who will submit recommendations:

Name	Position	Title	College/university/institute/ employer
1.			
2.			

Professional information and goals

(Please type essay.)

In 500 words or less, please describe your groundbreaking research, pioneering discoveries, and/or exemplary contributions to advancing knowledge and innovation in a STEM field, and how the Zonta Women in STEM Award will assist you in reaching your goals. (Essays cannot exceed 500 words to be considered.) Please provide the word count at the end of your answer.

Declaration by Applicant

I certify that all the information contained in my application form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I did not receive assistance in completing the essay portions of this application other than for translation into English for advancing to district and international levels. I understand that, at the option of the Zonta club sponsoring my application or the Zonta district or Zonta International, I may be interviewed as a candidate for the Zonta Women in STEM Award. I consent to the electronic or hard copy publication of material in my application by Zonta International.

- ☐ I confirm that I have not applied to more than one Zonta district.
- ☐ I confirm that I am not a club member or individual with direct membership with Zonta International or employee of Zonta International and Zonta Foundation for Women.
- ☐ I confirm that I have not applied for the 2025 Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award.
- ☐ I confirm that I am not a previous international fellowship or scholarship recipient.

Signature (required) _____

Date _____

(Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Data Protection

Zonta International and Zonta Foundation for Women take the security of your data seriously. We will never sell, trade or rent your personal information provided in this application to third parties. By submitting this application, you agree to the use of your data in accordance with the *Privacy Policy and Publicity Authorization Form* contained in the application documents (see page 8 of the application).

(Please check the appropriate items.)

How did you learn of the Zonta Women in STEM Award?

Social media: ▪ LinkedIn ▪ Facebook ▪ Instagram	☐ ☐ ☐
Department/teacher	☐
Directory of grants at university financial aid office	☐
Directory of grants not at university (e.g., public libraries)	☐
Website (name):	
Previous recipient (name):	
Zonta club name:	

Checklist to be completed by applicant:

Official detailed transcripts (if applicable)	☐
Translated transcripts in English from all universities/colleges/institutions attended (if applicable)	☐
Recommendations (2)	☐
Essay (not exceeding 500 words)	☐
Verification of Current Enrollment Form (if applicable)	☐
Letter from employer verifying employment (if applicable)	☐
Signatures	☐



Recommendation for the Zonta Women in STEM Award

Please return this form by: _____

Applicant's signature is required (Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Applicant: _____
Last (Family) Name First Middle

Recommendation from: _____
Name Position/Title

College/university/institute/employer

The applicant above has applied for a Zonta Women in STEM Award. Zonta International greatly values and appreciates your opinion. Please discuss the applicant's accomplishments; current academic program and/or work experience; intellectual independence; capacity for analytical thinking; ability to organize and express ideas clearly; creativity; motivation; and potential for advancing knowledge and innovation in a STEM field. You may write your recommendation letter on letterhead of your choice, but you must sign and submit the letter with this form.

How well do you know the applicant? _____

Please rate the applicant with respect to your experience with other students/employees in this field/position:

☐
Exceptional
Top 5%

☐
Very Good
Next 10%

☐
Good
Next 15%

☐
Average
Next 30%

☐
Below Average
Last 40%

☐
Insufficient opportunity to
observe

Referee's signature is required (Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Date

Return form to Zonta Club of:		Mailing Address:	
City:		State/Province:	
Postal Code:		Country:	
Fax:		Email Address:	



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Recommendation for the Zonta Women in STEM Award

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Applicant's signature is required (Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Applicant: _____
Last (Family) Name First Middle

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How well do you know the applicant? _____

Please rate the applicant with respect to your experience with other students/employees in this field/position:

☐
Exceptional
Top 5%

☐
Very Good
Next 10%

☐
Good
Next 15%

☐
Average
Next 30%

☐
Below Average
Last 40%

☐
Insufficient opportunity to
observe

Referee's signature is required (Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Date

Return form to Zonta Club of:		Mailing Address:	
City:		State/Province:	
Postal Code:		Country:	
Fax:		Email Address:	



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL

Verification of Current Enrollment Form for Zonta Women in STEM Award

I certify that _____ is currently enrolled in
(name of student)

_____ in _____
(year of degree program) (name of course/degree being studied)

at _____
(name of college/university/institute)

(address college/university/institute)

(signature of college/university/institute official)

(official stamp of the college/university/institute)



Zonta Women in STEM Award Program Privacy Policy and Publicity Authorization

Zonta International and the Zonta Foundation for Women are committed to honoring the privacy and wishes of all our Zonta Women in STEM Award recipients at all times. In order to do this, please read the following information carefully and indicate your agreement as appropriate.

1. Most data collected by Zonta International and the Zonta Foundation for Women is used only to help Zonta better serve its scholarship recipients. It is our general policy to collect and store only personal information that our recipients knowingly provide. Zonta does not sell, trade, or rent your personally identifying information to third parties. Except as described in paragraph two, we take reasonable measures not to disclose personally identifying information about you.

☐ I have read the above paragraph and agree to the Terms and Conditions therein.

2. From time to time, Zonta International and the Zonta Foundation for Women conducts various marketing activities to promote the Zonta Women in STEM Award. In addition, to ensure Zonta's ability to fund the awards, the Zonta Foundation for Women may from time to time provide information to donors about recipients of their donations. Zonta retains the right to use your name, photograph and biographical information to promote the Zonta Women in STEM Award in various promotional materials, including the website.

☐ I have read the above paragraph and agree to the Terms and Conditions therein.

Please print your name

Signature is required (Insert image of your signature or print, sign and scan this page.)

Date