

2026



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL

ZONTA WOMEN IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

DESCRIPTION

The Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award celebrates excellence and recognizes outstanding achievements by women between 18-35 years of age who are driving innovation and creating an impact in the business world. This prestigious award honors exceptional leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, ethical conduct and significant contributions while addressing global or local issues affecting women and girls or climate justice.



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

Timetable

Clubs determine their own timelines for receipt of applications

Club recipient is selected and application is sent to governor..... 15 September 2026 or
deadline determined by the district

District applicant selected and application received by Zonta International Headquarters..... 15 October 2027

Official announcement of international recipients..... December 2027

Who is Eligible?

Women, aged 18-35 at the time of application, who demonstrate evidence of the following, are eligible to apply.

- Exceptional leadership in a business-related field of study or industry.
- Entrepreneurial spirit.
- Ethical conduct.
- Significant contributions to addressing global or local issues affecting women and girls or climate justice.

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 scholarship recipients are not eligible to apply. Applicants for the 2026 Zonta Women in STEM Award may not also apply for the 2026 Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award.

How Do I Apply?

Applicants must locate a Zonta club near them by using the Club Locator at zonta.org/locateclub to receive the deadline and an address to submit application to, or for assistance, email your name and contact information to Zonta International Headquarters at programs@zonta.org. 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. Do not use AI to write the essay

Application Requirements

- Completion of the official application, including essay, (may be downloaded from the Zonta International website, www.zonta.org).
- Verification of current enrollment by school/institute official (if applicable), **or**
- Letter from employer confirming employment (if applicable). The letter from employer must be on letterhead with signature from the employer stating the applicants date of hire and job title.
- Two recommendations from adults, not related to the applicant, such as teachers, school officials, employee supervisors or business leaders, 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. If you downloaded the application from the Zonta International website, you must contact a Zonta club for deadline information. 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.

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 Business Leadership Award Jury will select 10 international Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award recipients from the district applicants received at Zonta International Headquarters.

How May I Use the Award Funds?

1. There are no restrictions on the use of funds.
2. 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.

3. Recipients are not permitted to defer the Zonta Women in Business Leadership Award.
4. Recipients may accept additional grants and awards from other sources.

Tax considerations

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.