

# WEGE PRIZE 2024

## DESIGN BRIEF

**Wege Prize**, organized by Kendall College of Art and Design's Wege Center for Sustainable Design with support from the Wege Foundation, is an annual competition that ignites game-changing solutions for the future by inspiring college/university students around the world to collaborate across institutional, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries to redesign the way economies work. Participants contend for **\$65,000 (USD)** in total cash prizes, all while helping to **show the world what the future of problem solving looks like.**

## WANT TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE?

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. LET'S COLLABORATE TO CREATE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

**THE FACTS ARE CLEAR.** We desperately need to transform our throwaway linear economic system into one that is regenerative and restorative by design. Realizing a **circular economy** is a powerful way to address climate change, resource scarcity, and biodiversity loss while also meeting critical social needs.

**SO, HOW DO WE DO THAT?** With innovative solutions that are driven by design and built on three core principles, all underpinned by a shift to renewables:

### 1 ELIMINATE WASTE AND POLLUTION

We need to consider waste and pollution as design flaws rather than inevitable by-products of the things we make.

### 2 KEEP PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS IN USE

We need to design products to be reused, repaired, re-manufactured, or, better yet: kept in circulation and out of the landfill.

### 3 REGENERATE OUR NATURAL SYSTEMS

We need closed loop systems that actively enhance water and nutrient cycling and help the entire ecosystem renew and recover.

## THE CHALLENGE

### THE CHALLENGE FOR WEGE PRIZE PARTICIPANTS IS TO:

- Build a strong and diverse transdisciplinary team of five
- Identify a complex, "wicked" problem to address
- Develop a compelling solution to the problem that is built on the three core principles of the circular economy

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Products
- Services
- Business models

Over the course of **nine months** and **four distinct phases**, teams will grow their ideas from an informal proposal into a robust and feasible solution informed by research, market analysis, and real-world prototyping and testing. Each step of the way, they will be guided by direct feedback from a panel of expert judges who will help them strengthen their ideas and push the limits of possibility.

### WEGE PRIZE IS LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS THAT ARE:

- **Circular** - helping accelerate the transition to a circular economy and a shift towards renewables
- **Innovative** - providing unique value and exploring untapped potential
- **Viable** - demonstrating marketability, profitability, and financial sustainability
- **Scaleable** - effectively contribute to expanding the circular economy at a global level
- **Systemic** - accounting for the way in which parts of a system both influence each other and work as a whole

### WEGE PRIZE IS NOT LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS THAT ARE:

- **Recycling/upcycling-focused** - these approaches accept waste as inevitable—truly circular solutions design out waste entirely
- **Reliant on assumed behavioral change** - if behavioral change is needed for your solution to work, how will you help drive it?
- **Exclusively app-based** - while an app can be one component of a circular solution, it cannot be the only component

**WHAT IS A WICKED PROBLEM?** A wicked problem doesn't imply a sense of 'evil', but rather denotes a problem that is considerably resistant to resolution. Efforts to grapple with one aspect of a wicked problem often reveal or create other obstacles that must be considered and overcome.

# THE PROCESS

## PHASE 1 – TEAM APPLICATION AND RESEARCH PLAN *DUE OCT. 8, 2023*

Your first challenge is to **investigate, incubate, and communicate**. Introduce your team, identify the problem you will work to address together, and develop a research plan that will ultimately grow into your full solution. **You do not need to identify and defend a specific solution at this point.** Keep your writing concise and focused on the big picture, and don't worry about being bold with your intentions—we expect your idea to change and grow significantly over the course of the competition!

### YOUR RESEARCH PLAN SHOULD ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

- What steps have you taken to understand the framework of the circular economy?
- What wicked problem are you interested in addressing?
- What context is critical to understanding the wicked problem you are interested in addressing? *[specify 3 web links that provide this context]*
- What human, technological, and ecological factors impact the wicked problem you are interested in addressing?
- How could addressing this wicked problem support the development of a circular economy?
- How could addressing this wicked problem support the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals *(choose 1-3 specific goals to focus on)*
- How do you plan to involve mentors and/or subject matter experts in your design process as you develop your solution?
- What are your next steps?

### FEEDBACK LOOP:

*Teams cleared to move on to Phase 2 will receive feedback from the preliminary judges by Oct. 29, 2023.*

## PHASE 2 – PROJECT SUMMARY 1ST DRAFT\* *DUE DEC. 18, 2023*

Your next challenge is to consider the judges' feedback as you work to develop your research plan into a concrete circular solution. You'll communicate your solution through an informative and visually compelling document composed of the following elements:

### PART ONE – SOLUTION SUMMARY

*Provide a clear and concise (2-3 sentence) summary of the solution your team is proposing.*

### PART TWO – CONTEXT

*Provide information and insight to help the judges understand the conditions—economic, geographic, social, technological, etc.—surrounding the wicked problem you're proposing to solve.*

### PART THREE – SOLUTION OVERVIEW

*Describe in specific detail how the solution you are proposing will work, explain how it aligns with the principles of the circular economy, and illustrate the feasibility of your business model.*

### PART FOUR – IMPACT ASSESSMENT

*Explain how your solution differs from existing solutions and describe its potential for social, economic, environmental, and other benefits/impacts.*

### PART FIVE – PROTOTYPING

*Detail any steps you've taken to begin prototyping your solution and testing it in a real-world context.*

### PART SIX – BARRIER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*Acknowledge the challenges preventing your solution from succeeding and outline a plan to address them.*

**\*Your Project Summary 1st Draft should be a PDF document composed of no fewer and no more than 6 pages, sized 8.5" x 11" (25.9cm x 27.94cm). For complete details, visit [wegeprize.org/projectssummary](https://wegeprize.org/projectssummary).**

### FEEDBACK LOOP:

*All teams that submit for Phase 2 will receive feedback from the core judges by January. 10, 2024*

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## PHASE 3 – PROJECT SUMMARY 2ND DRAFT\* *DUE FEB. 25, 2024*

Your next challenge is twofold: you must first consider the judges' feedback as you revise your Project Summary 1st Draft to reflect how your solution has developed from what you submitted in Phase 2. You must then expand the Solution Overview portion of your document by creating the additional elements below, supporting your conclusions with as much hard data as possible.

### **DETAILED MATERIAL ANALYSIS *NEW!***

*Detail the resources/materials—technological, biological, and/or capital—incorporated into your solution, provide justification for their use, and illustrate their alignment with the circular economy.*

### **DETAILED ECONOMIC ANALYSIS *NEW!***

*Detail the business model that will ensure your solution's economic viability, identify the strengths and weaknesses of your business model, and identify risks you may face and how you plan to address them.*

### **PROJECT SUMMARY 2ND DRAFTS SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AS FOLLOWS:**

- **PART ONE – *REVISED*** Solution Summary
- **PART TWO – *REVISED*** Context
- **PART THREE – *REVISED*** Solution Overview
- **PART FOUR – *NEW!*** Detailed Material Analysis
- **PART FIVE – *NEW!*** Detailed Economic Analysis
- **PART SIX – *REVISED*** Impact Assessment
- **PART SEVEN – *REVISED*** Prototyping
- **PART EIGHT – *REVISED*** Barrier Acknowledgment

*\*Your Project Summary 2nd Draft should be a PDF document composed of no less than and no more than 8 pages, sized 8.5" x 11" (25.9cm x 27.94cm). For complete details,, visit [wegeprize.org/projectsummary](https://wegeprize.org/projectsummary).*

### ***FEEDBACK LOOP:***

*All teams that submit for Phase 3 will receive feedback from the core judges by March 17, 2024.*

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## PHASE 4 – FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY/FINAL PRESENTATION MATERIALS *DUE MAY 12, 2024*

### **FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY\***

For your Final Project Summary, consider the judges feedback as you **update the aspects of your document that have been developed further or need to be revised based on feedback given on your Phase 3 submission.**

*\*Your Final Project Summary must follow the same organization and design guidelines as the 2nd Draft.*

### **FINAL PRESENTATION MATERIALS**

Finalist teams will select **one member** to present and defend the team's solution in its entirety in front of the judges and a global online audience at the 2024 Wege Prize Awards event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA on May 17, 2024.\*\* Each team's presenter will be allotted ten minutes to present, followed by a ten-minute Q+A session with the judges. Finalist teams will present their solution in its entirety by translating their Final Project Summary into a slideshow presentation.

*\*\*Wege Prize will provide each finalist team with up to \$3,000 USD in travel expense reimbursement*

### **FINAL PROJECT SUMMARIES AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS WILL BE JUDGED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

#### **A. DEPTH OF RESEARCH**

- Have you clearly identified the problem you're trying to solve?
- To what depth have you studied and analyzed the problem?
- Have you researched existing solutions?
- Have you consulted experts to refine your solution?
- Have you considered how your solution fits into or transforms existing systems?

#### **B. PRESENTATION**

- Is your presentation organized, and does it deliver a clear message?
- Have you gotten creative and thought "outside the box" when developing your presentation?
- Can you provide immediate and thoughtful answers to the judges' questions?

## C. INNOVATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Does the solution help accelerate us into a circular economy?
- Is your solution technologically, economically, and financially feasible?
- Is your solution socially and culturally appropriate?
- Is there proven customer need for your solution?
- Is there sufficient motivation for people to use your solution?
- What system conditions need to exist to make your solution possible?
- If your solution builds on an existing project or research you're already involved in, to what extent have you built upon it?
- Have you prototyped your solution?

## D. COLLABORATION

- Have you built a strong and balanced transdisciplinary team?
- Have you engaged all of your teammates in the development of your solution?
- Beyond dividing up different tasks, have you worked across disciplinary boundaries and brought your different perspectives together?
- Have you effectively engaged mentors and/or subject matter experts in your design process?

# THE TIMELINE

	Judges' Feedback due on Accepted Phase 1 Submissions <b>OCTOBER 29</b>	Judges' Feedback due on Phase 2 Submissions <b>JANUARY 10</b>	Judges' Feedback due on Phase 3 Submissions <b>MARCH 17</b>	<b>FINAL PRESENTATION AND AWARDS EVENT MAY 17</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>			
<b>AUGUST 7</b> Team Application Period Opens	<b>OCTOBER 8</b> <b>PHASE 1 DEADLINE</b> Team Application	<b>DECEMBER 18</b> <b>PHASE 2 DEADLINE</b> Project Summary First Draft	<b>FEBRUARY 25</b> <b>PHASE 3 DEADLINE: SEMIFINALISTS</b> Project Summary Second Draft	<b>MAY 12</b> <b>PHASE 4 DEADLINE: FINALISTS</b> Final Project Summary and Presentation Materials

# FAQS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE?

For complete individual and team participation requirements, visit [wegeprize.org/rules](https://wegeprize.org/rules)

## HOW CAN TEAMS APPLY?

For complete application details, visit [wegeprize.org/apply](https://wegeprize.org/apply)

## WHAT HAVE PREVIOUS WINNERS' PROJECTS LOOKED LIKE?

To see examples of previous winners' projects and presentations, visit [wegeprize.org/previous-winners](https://wegeprize.org/previous-winners)

## WHAT DOES A STRONG RESEARCH PLAN LOOK LIKE?

For examples of previously submitted research plans, visit [wegeprize.org/apply](https://wegeprize.org/apply)

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT SUMMARY?

For details on what should be included in your Project Summary and how it should be designed, visit [wegeprize.org/projectsummary](https://wegeprize.org/projectsummary)

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE RESOURCES ABOUT THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

For educational resources on the circular economy and more, visit [wegeprize.org/resources](https://wegeprize.org/resources)



Kendall College of Art and Design  
of Ferris State University



Wege Prize is organized by Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University's Wege Center for Sustainable Design with the support of The Wege Foundation.