

**FALLING  
WALLS  
FOUNDATION**

# **HOW TO HOST A FALLING WALLS LAB**

**SEASON 2026  
1 FEBRUARY-15 SEPTEMBER**

# INNOVATIVE IDEAS – EMERGING TALENTS



## FALLING WALLS LAB

**2750+**  
APPLICATIONS

**104**  
COUNTRIES

**82**  
INTERNATIONAL  
LABS

**100**  
INTERNATIONAL LAB WINNERS  
AT THE GLOBAL FINALE

Falling Walls Lab is an international, interdisciplinary pitch competition in which students and early-career researchers present their breakthrough ideas in a three-minute on-stage pitch.

In 2025, 82 Falling Walls Lab organisers across 60 countries hosted local competitions. The 100 winners advanced to the *Global Finale* at the *Falling Walls Science Summit*.

In close collaboration with our partners, we offer an extended programme in Berlin designed to support the professional development of the finalists.

The 2025 this programme included a reception at the Italian Embassy, skills workshops, and visits to research institutes in and around Berlin as part of the *Research Insight Day*, organised by our partner the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).



SARTORIUS



SPRINGER NATURE



# FALLING WALLS

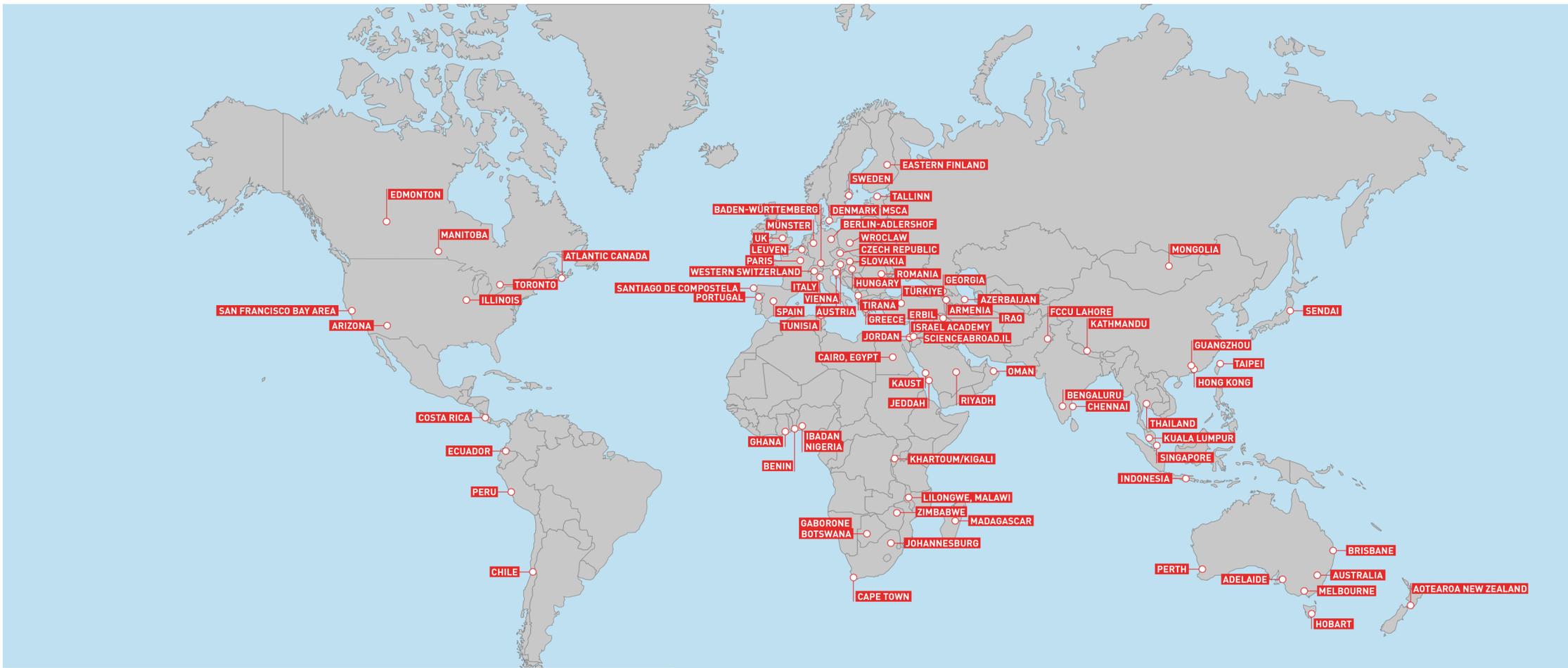
WHICH ARE THE NEXT WALLS TO FALL?

“My Falling Walls Lab experience was truly inspiring. It allowed me to connect with brilliant innovators from across the globe, sharpen my pitching skills, and gain new perspectives on solving urgent problems. The energy, creativity, and support throughout the journey made it unforgettable.”

*Lucretia Adikponi, Falling Walls Lab Benin*

“My mission has always been to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups on the global stage, to make the invisible visible. And knowing that my message was heard... I truly feel like I have won.”

*Fadhilah Trya Wulandari, Falling Walls Lab Indonesia*



**REGIONAL POINT OF CONTACT**

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# 6 STEPS IS ALL IT TAKES

STEP 1 / STEP 2 / STEP 3 / STEP 4 / STEP 5 / STEP 6

## PREPARATIONS

### CONFIRM YOUR FALLING WALLS LAB

- Please sign the Terms & Conditions (T&Cs), which will be provided by your regional Point of Contact (PoC)
- Please note: Funding must be secured before signing the T&Cs. For funding options, check [PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING](#)

### SUBMIT EVENT DETAILS TO YOUR POINT OF CONTACT

- **The following information is needed:**  
Lab Name (City, Country), Event Date, Event Location, Application Deadline, Event Format (in-person or hybrid), Organising Institution, Partner Institutions and/ or Companies (if applicable), Contact Email for Applicant Enquiries
- Please note: The event details must be submitted before your Lab's application page can be created and published on the [Falling Walls Lab website](#)

### COST CONSIDERATIONS

Please account for the following costs:

- Event hosting
- Marketing material & promoting
- Travel costs and accommodation for your Lab winner to attend the Global Finale in Berlin (three nights of hotel accommodation; approx. EUR 375)

### PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

If you require financial support, the organisations listed below have previously supported Falling Walls Labs and may be considered as potential partners:

- [EURAXESS](#) (worldwide, contacts for each region)
- [Federal Foreign Office of Germany](#)
- [Friedrich Ebert Foundation](#)
- [Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom](#)
- [German Academic Exchange Service \(DAAD\)](#)
- [German Centres for Research and Innovation \(DWIH\)](#)
- [German Chamber of Commerce Abroad \(AHK\)](#)
- [GIZ](#)
- [Goethe-Institut](#)
- [Hans Seidel Foundation](#)
- [Heinrich Böll Foundation](#)
- [Konrad Adenauer Foundation](#)
- [Rosa Luxemburg Foundation](#)
- [Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#)

# MARKETING ACTIVITIES

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**EFFECTIVE MARKETING** is essential to the success of your Falling Walls Lab. Broadly promoting the Call for Applications and the Lab event itself will help attract a strong and diverse pool of applicants.

## PRODUCE MARKETING MATERIALS

- **Your PoC will provide digital graphic files, including:**
  - Marketing poster
  - Custom Lab logo
  - Screen banner
  - Participation & winner certificates (provided before the event)
- **Please submit the logos of your institution and partners. Additional materials may be provided upon request, subject to capacity.**
- **Additional guidance on communications can be found in the [Lab Organiser Download Section](#).**
- **Please note: All materials are provided digitally. Any printing or producing of physical marketing materials, including event branding is the Lab organiser's responsibility.**

## PROMOTE YOUR LAB

- **Begin promotion 6–8 weeks before the application deadline.**
- **Increase activity in the final two weeks.**

## RECOMENDED MARKETING ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

- **Social Media:** Promote your Lab regularly across your own channels. Please ensure to tag the official Falling Walls accounts and use #FallingWallsLab #FallingWalls to maximise reach:
  - LinkedIn: [@Falling Walls Lab](#), [@Falling Walls Foundation](#)
  - Facebook: [@Falling Walls](#)
  - Instagram: [@Falling Walls](#)
- **Email Campaigns:** Share the Call for Applications via relevant mailing lists and newsletters. Involve your institution's PR office if possible.
- **Institutional & Partner Websites:** Feature the Lab and the Call for Applications prominently on your website and those of your partners.
- **Printed Marketing Materials:** Use posters, screen banners or roll-ups on campus and relevant locations, where appropriate.
- **Direct Outreach:** Encourage faculty members, partners, and alumni to promote the Lab within their networks, including nearby academic institutions, student organisations, start-up networks, collaborative spaces (e.g. impact hubs, innovation labs).

# APPLICATION PROCESS

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## HOW TO SELECT SUITABLE CANDIDATES

- The application form can be opened on our website from 1 February 2026. Applications are submitted centrally via the Falling Walls Lab website. If your Lab will be hosted later in the season, you can open the Lab at a later date. The last possibility to host a Lab is 15 September 2026.
- Once your Lab is open for applications, you will receive regular updates on the number of applications to your Lab.
- Once the application deadline is reached, the Falling Walls Lab team will send you a final list of applicants. After that, it is the organiser's responsibility to check applicant's eligibility criteria and choose promising candidates to pitch at your local Lab (*more details can be found on the next pages*).
- After the selection is made, please inform all candidates of your decision. For presenters, please invite them to your Lab. There is no obligation to pay travel costs to pitch at the local Lab. If someone is pitching from another country, please inform the presenter beforehand that you will only be paying the costs from the country which is hosting the Lab to Berlin, not any other country.

### 1. REVIEW FINAL LIST OF APPLICATIONS & CHECK ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Falling Walls Lab team checks if an applicant has pitched in a Falling Walls Lab before and cross-checks the number of years since completion (if an applicant has already completed their studies). Falling Walls Lab team recommends that the Lab organiser double-checks these criteria with the CV provided for those selected to pitch at the local Lab.

### 2. REVIEW IDEAS

The Falling Walls Lab Team recommends to apply the Falling Walls Lab **EVALUATION CRITERIA** *Breakthrough and Innovation* (50%) as well as *Relevance and Impact* (40%)\* as a factor for selection - details provided on the next pages.

In your selection process, please ensure regional distribution, gender balance, and a diverse mix of fields. ⚠

\*At your Falling Walls Lab and at the Globale Finale, the Jury will also account 10% to Structure and Performance of the presenter.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

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## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must be 18 years or older when submitting an application. ⚠️

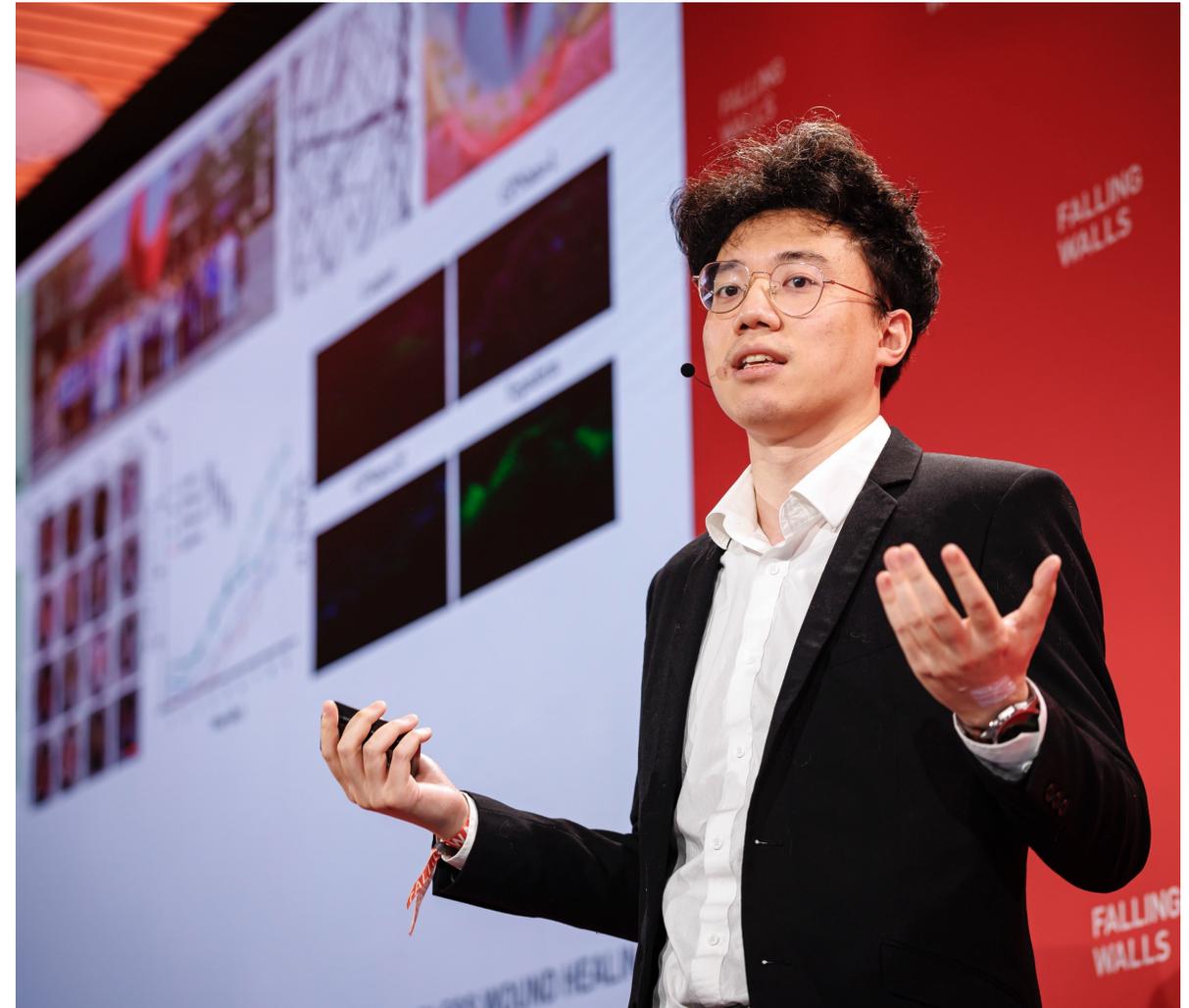
They must fulfil at least one of the following formal requirements:

- Currently enrolled at university as a student
- Awarded a Bachelor's degree no more than 10 years ago
- Awarded a Master's degree\* no more than 7 years ago
- Awarded a PhD\* no more than 5 years ago

## Please note:

- Applications must be submitted in English
- Presenting at a Falling Walls Lab is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Past participants are no longer eligible to apply for a Lab
- It is not allowed to limit the participation to applicants from a specific country/region, a single or the hosting university, a specific degree (e.g. PhD students only), or theme.

\*An MD (medical degree excl. a doctoral dissertation) is deemed equivalent to a Master's degree. A Dr. med. (medical degree incl. a doctoral dissertation) is deemed equivalent to a PhD.



# EVALUATION CRITERIA

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## RELEVANCE & IMPACT – 40%

### Guiding Question:

How important is the problem, and how meaningful is the potential impact of the proposed idea?

This criterion evaluates the importance of the challenge the project tackles and the value of its proposed contribution.

### Impact may be:

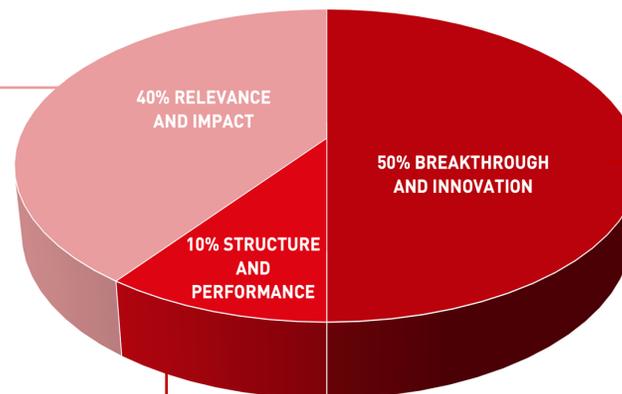
- Broad, through scalable or widely applicable solutions
- Targeted, through deep, meaningful improvements for a specific group, field, or region

### Projects may demonstrate:

- impact through immediate applicability, strong future potential, or transferable insights.
- Early-stage ideas are acceptable if their relevance and longer-term value are clearly articulated.

### Jurors should assess:

- Clarity and relevance of the problem statement
- Credibility of the proposed benefit
- Potential short- and/or long-term value



## STRUCTURE & PERFORMANCE – 10%

### Guiding question:

How clearly and convincingly is the idea communicated within the three-minute pitch?

This criterion evaluates the clarity, structure, and delivery of the presentation. Jurors should consider whether the core idea, its innovation, and its potential impact are clearly explained.

### Jurors should assess:

- Clear structure and logical flow of the pitch
- Accessible explanation of the idea
- Confidence, focus, and effective use of the limited time
- Presentation skills should support understanding but should not outweigh the quality of the idea itself.

## BREAKTHROUGH & INNOVATION - 50%

### Guiding Question:

How original, creative, and forward-thinking is the idea, and does it have the potential to open new pathways or shift thinking within its field?

This criterion assesses the novelty and innovative strength of the idea. A breakthrough does not need to be fully developed or validated at this stage.

What matters is the originality of the approach, its scientific or methodological grounding, and its potential to inspire further research, applications, or new ways of thinking.

### Jurors should consider:

- Originality of the idea or approach
- Creative use of methods, perspectives, or technologies
- Strength and plausibility of the concept
- Potential to stimulate further innovation or challenge existing approaches
- Ideas may be exploratory, speculative, or in early development, provided their innovative potential is clearly and plausibly communicated.

# EVENT PREPARATION

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## SECURE VENUE

- Presenters should ideally pitch in front of a live audience. Lab organisers typically use facilities at their own institution, public venues, or start-up and innovation centres.
- **Please note:** Entry fees may not be charged for Falling Walls Lab events.

## SELECT JURY

- The jury must consist of a minimum of five members.
- Please ensure diversity in:
  - Professional background (academia, business, media, public sector, non-profit and other relevant fields)
  - Gender balance.
- Once your jury is confirmed, please fill in the jury template and submit it to your Falling Walls Lab POC for approval.
- **Conflict of interest:** Jury members must abstain from voting if they share an affiliation with a presenter. Please consider. ⚠️

## PREPARE VOTING

- Prepare all voting materials in advance and test the functionality of the evaluation tool.
- Assign one team member to manage the collection and evaluation of the jury voting (sheets) during the event.

## ARRANGE CATERING & SIDE PROGRAMME (OPTIONAL)

- Many Labs offer catering and invite relevant stakeholders to attend the pitch competition.
- During jury deliberation, organisers often host a panel discussion or networking sessions.
- Labs may also be integrated into existing events (e.g. Innovation Days, Open Houses) to create synergies and increase visibility.

## PREPARE PRESENTERS

- Share the presenter briefing and PowerPoint template with all selected applicants. Presentations are limited to three content slides: 1. Title, 2. Problem, 3. Solution.
- For local Lab events, the template also includes an optional “Questions?” slide, which may be used if organisers decide to include a short Q&A after each pitch. If included, limit responding time to one minute per presenter. The format and timekeeping should be communicated clearly in advance.
- Presenters should address the following guiding questions in their pitch:
  - What makes your idea a genuine innovation, and how does it differ from or improve on current solutions?
  - Who benefits from your project, and how?

**ALL TEMPLATES REGARDING THIS SECTION ARE AVAILABLE IN THE [LAB ORGANISER DOWNLOAD SECTION](#).**

# EVENT HOSTING

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## SAMPLE EVENT DAY SCHEDULE

This example shows how a Falling Walls Lab event could be structured. It can be adapted to your local context while keeping key elements such as presentations, jury deliberation, and networking.

XX Month

**FALLING WALLS LAB XXX**

XXX

10.00 am	Prepare venue for event and conduct technical checks: sound, projectors, presentations, etc.
1.00 – 2.00 pm	Jury member briefing
1.30 – 2.15 pm	Arrival and registration of presenters and guests
2.15 – 2.45 pm	<b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS</b>
2.45 – 3.45 pm	<b>1<sup>ST</sup> BLOCK OF PITCHES</b>
3.45 – 4.15 pm	Networking break
4.15 – 5.15 pm	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> BLOCK OF PITCHES</b>
5.15 – 5.45 pm	Networking break and jury evaluation session
5.45 – 6.15 pm	<b>AWARDS CEREMONY AND GROUP PICTURE</b>
6.15 pm	Reception



Images from previous Falling Walls Lab seasons are available in the [online photo gallery](#).

# POST EVENT TASKS

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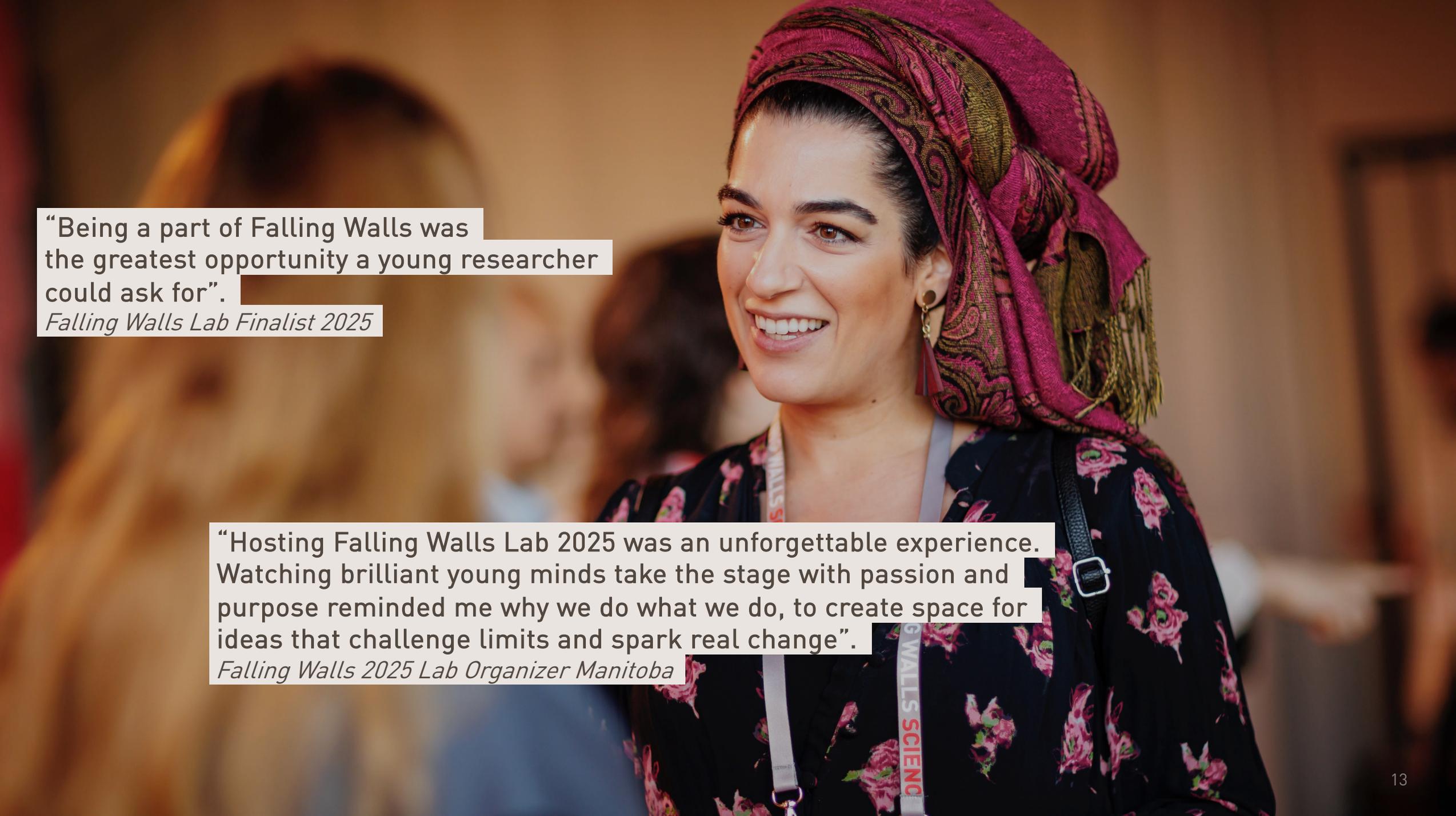
STEP 5

STEP 6

- **Share Winner Contact Details** with your Falling Walls Lab Point of Contact.
- **Start travel arrangements** for your winner. You will be guided through the process by [sarah.deventer@falling-walls.com](mailto:sarah.deventer@falling-walls.com)
- **Check travel documents:**
  - Confirm that the winner holds a valid passport.
  - **Please note:** If the winner is not an EU/EAA citizen, ensure they start the visa application process as soon as possible. ⚠️
- **Arrange and cover all travel expenses** for the winner to attend the Falling Walls Science Summit and the extended programme.
- **Event Documentation:**
  - Upload photos and videos from your Lab event [HERE](#)
  - Submit the final list of presenters. The template is available in the [Lab Organiser Download Section](#).
- **Complete the post-event report** provided by your PoC.
- **Plan ahead** and consider hosting your Lab again next year!



Images from Falling Walls Lab Global Finale 2025 are available in the [online photo gallery](#).



“Being a part of Falling Walls was the greatest opportunity a young researcher could ask for”.

*Falling Walls Lab Finalist 2025*

“Hosting Falling Walls Lab 2025 was an unforgettable experience. Watching brilliant young minds take the stage with passion and purpose reminded me why we do what we do, to create space for ideas that challenge limits and spark real change”.

*Falling Walls 2025 Lab Organizer Manitoba*



## PLEASE CONTACT

### POC Africa

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### Falling Walls Lab

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<https://falling-walls.com/lab>