



## **Empowering African Environmental Science: The Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer (JWO) Research Grant Seeks Another Trailblazing Recipient**

Historically, Africa has been underrepresented in global research and development endeavours, with limited resources allocated to research initiatives compared to other regions. However, there is growing recognition of the immense potential for innovation and scientific advancement within Africa's diverse landscapes and communities. Subsequently, this is why research grants such as the Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer Research Grant, now in its sixth year, are impactful.

The Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer Research Grant (JWO Grant) was established in 2019 to honour the legacy of the late Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer, a distinguished pioneer in African education and environmental science. The JWO Research Grant has been instrumental in advancing vital research initiatives across the continent. As it approaches almost a decade of existence, the JWO Grant aims to attract a greater number of early-career scientists to apply in 2024, offering them the opportunity to potentially receive a transformative award.

Over the past five years, early-career scholars and scientists specialising in various environmental disciplines such as biodiversity, microplastics, and disease vectors have eagerly sought this grant to explore innovative research topics aimed at addressing the unique challenges confronting Africa's natural environment. Dr. Duncan MacFadyen, the Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation Head, praises the JWO Research Grant for showcasing cutting-edge, innovative scientific research ideas and providing a platform to foster and support Africa's brightest minds. The grant also contributes African voices to global conversations on the environment and sustainability.

This cutting-edge research not only sheds light on pressing environmental issues but also actively contributes African perspectives to international discussions on sustainability. Last year, Dr. Lovanomenjanahary Marline, a renowned bryologist from Madagascar, exemplified the grant's impact by securing \$150,000 for her groundbreaking research. Dr. Marline's study on bryophytes and lichen explores their potential in monitoring critical environmental and human health risks such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and air pollution. With the support of the JWO Research Grant, Dr. Marline is collaborating with researchers and students from across Africa to further her research.

The positive influence of the JWO Research Grant has been far-reaching since its inception, with published scientist Dr. Haley Clements being the inaugural recipient in 2019. Her winning project, "Quantifying the Biodiversity Planetary Boundary for Africa," focused on addressing the pressing need to navigate growth sustainably, avoid exceeding biodiversity loss limits, and highlight the societal benefits of investing in nature. Dr.



Clements is currently an interdisciplinary conservation scientist at the University of Stellenbosch.

Dr. Bernard Coetzee, Dr Gideon Idowu and Dr. Elizabeth le Roux were honoured as recipients of the JWO Research Grant in 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. Dr. Le Roux's research is focused on aligning ecological processes with local livelihoods amidst the growing isolation of African protected areas. With the support of the grant, Dr. Le Roux successfully measured the connectedness achieved by various rangeland management techniques.

Dr. Gideon Idowu from Nigeria, winner of the grant in 2021, emphasizes the importance of studying chemical pollutants and microplastics in Africa's freshwater systems. His innovative study extends beyond the well-explored ocean context, examining the short- and long-term effects on human health.

Dr. Bernard Coetzee's research aims to understand the impact of artificial light consumption on Africa and its potential role in spreading vector-borne illnesses such as dengue fever, the Zika virus, and malaria. The JWO Research Grant helped him facilitate investigations into this crucial yet understudied subject, potentially saving numerous lives.

The JWO Grant has evolved into a significant source of support for researchers and individuals committed to fostering a better, more economically and environmentally sustainable Africa. This program not only drives positive change but also empowers early-career scientists to address the pressing climate crises of our time. In its sixth year, JWO is calling upon early-career African scientists to apply and put forward their ground-breaking research for a chance to make a lasting impact.

### **Grant Eligibility**

1. The lead applicant should be an early-career African scientist with strong links to a credible African institution and proposing to conduct research on the continent.
2. The 2024 JWO Research Grant encourages transdisciplinary research applications that demonstrate a strong link to biodiversity and conservation.
3. The applicant must hold a degree (PhD) and should have no more than seven years of work and/or research experience post-degree (excluding career breaks, including family-related breaks).
4. The institution must have a proven ability to manage funding and subscribes to good financial grant practices.
5. The institutional affiliation may be academic, research, government, NGO, or for-profit organization.

### **Grant Award**



The 2024 JWO grant of \$150,000 (USD) will be awarded to one successful applicant. The grant will support a research program of up to three years. There will be an annual call for new applications (previously funded research will not be eligible), and the grant recipient will be announced at the Oppenheimer Research Conference on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2024.

To apply for the grant, please follow this link - <https://jworesearchgrant.org/grant-application/>  
Applications are open from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2024 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2024.

### **About Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation**

The Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation team continue to build a first-class research entity which partners with national and international researchers to conduct cutting-edge research focused on the natural sciences ensuring practical and impactful outcomes. They are committed to further developing, expanding, and promoting the growth of sustainable conservation programs and networks throughout the African continent.

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