

Campus as a Living Lab

Information Guide





What is Campus as a Living Lab at Western?

Western University's Campus as a Living Lab (CLL) program enables the use of Western's outdoor spaces, built environment, and operations as a real-world testing ground for applied research, teaching, and innovation. CLL connects academic inquiry with Facilities Management (FM) through Western Sustainability to initiate projects that support sustainability.

CLL aligns with priorities outlined in *Towards Western at 150* and Western's Climate and Sustainability Strategy.

CLL projects have contributed to climate change adaptation, ecosystem health, land stewardship, sustainable campus operations, and more.

Learn about CLL projects [here](#).

Who can participate?

CLL is open to:

- Faculty members
- Postdoctoral scholars
- Graduate students (with a faculty supervisor)
- Interdisciplinary and cross-faculty teams

CLL also supports **experiential learning**, including course-based projects and supervised student research.

In some cases, staff may initiate a CLL project. Please email sustainability@uwo.ca to share living lab ideas and explore the fit with the program.



What Makes a Strong CLL Project?

CLL is a dynamic program with many different project types. Strong CLL projects tend to share the following characteristics:

- Feasible scope that fits within operational and academic timelines
- Early engagement with FM, through Western Sustainability
- Clearly defined ask for support (data, space, installations, etc.)
- Risk-aware design
- Relevance to Western's campus and strategic priorities

Successful projects are collaborative by design and treat the campus as a shared, living system rather than a controlled laboratory, recognizing the realities of ongoing operations and campus life.



Budget: What should the academic team plan for?

CLL projects are not centrally funded. The academic team should plan to cover all costs related to their project.

Some common costs include:

- Equipment, sensors, and materials
- Installation, commissioning, and decommissioning costs
- Required inspections
- Graduate student or research assistant support
- Data collection, storage, and analysis
- Restoration of space or infrastructure post-project

In some cases, in-kind support may be possible. These arrangements must be discussed early and confirmed through the CLL project agreement to ensure clarity and avoid unintended operational impacts.



Examples of FM and Western Sustainability Support

FM and Western Sustainability may support CLL projects in several ways, subject to capacity, operational constraints, and approval. This list is not exhaustive, but demonstrates some common types of supports:

- In-kind support for planting initiatives such as removal of turf grass
- Access to buildings, systems, or outdoor spaces
- Operational data (e.g., energy, water, asset performance)
- Support for pilot installations or temporary deployments
- Communications about the project

FM involvement does not imply full resourcing or implementation. Support levels are assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on scope, risk, timing, and alignment with capacity.



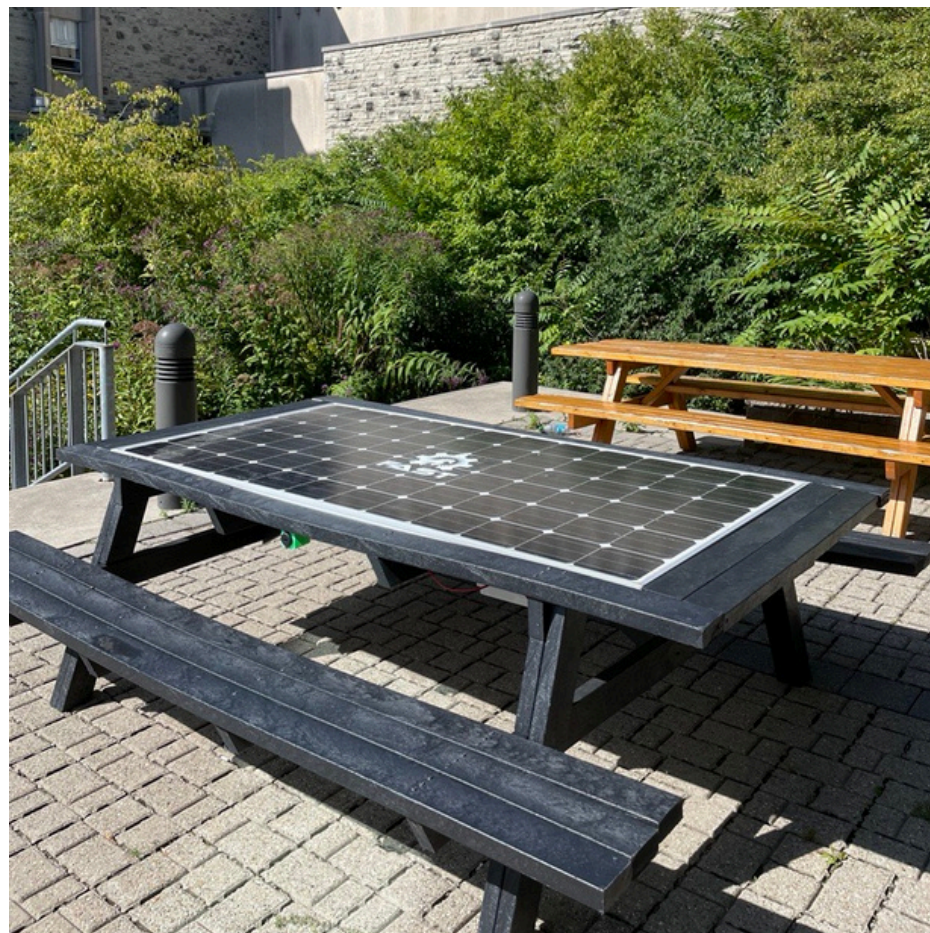


Timeline Expectations

CLL projects operate within live campus systems, which affects timing and sequencing. CLL projects are reviewed and accepted on a rolling basis. The program doesn't have application deadlines or set timelines. The timelines outlined below are rough estimates of what to expect when beginning a new project:

- **Scoping and partner engagement:** approximately 1–3 months
- **Approvals and pre-project coordination:** approximately 2–6 months
- **Active project:** Variable depending on project. Often aligned with academic terms, construction windows, or operational schedules
- **Data collection:** May require full seasonal cycles or academic years
- **Project completion:** Academic team completes a brief report to share learnings and feedback on program

Academic teams should expect CLL projects to take longer than traditional lab-based research, particularly when projects involve more complexity.



CLL Process Flow Chart

Connect with Western Sustainability to discuss idea and fit with CLL



Draft Project Agreement for early scoping



Partner engagement



Approvals and coordination



Project activated



Data collection & evaluation



Close-out, knowledge sharing & scale

Getting Started

Begin by outlining your CLL concept and identifying its relevance to Western's campus or strategic priorities. Early consultation with the CLL program is strongly recommended.

When reaching out, the academic team should be prepared to:

- Clearly define the proposed project scope and objectives
- Identify anticipated timelines and key project phases
- Specify what support is being requested (e.g., access to space, systems, data, etc.)
- Work with the CLL team on flagging potential risks and special approvals

Early clarity helps campus partners assess feasibility and identify opportunities for collaboration. However, many details can be collaboratively determined through early scoping discussions, so there is no need to feel like the academic team has to have everything prepared before reaching out.

Email sustainability@uwo.ca to share your CLL idea and start collaborating!

Key Takeaway

CLL at Western is a partnership model. The most successful projects are well-scoped, collaboratively designed, operationally feasible, and academically robust. They advance research excellence while contributing meaningfully to Western's campus, sustainability commitments, and student learning.



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