

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year 2016 National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2016-2004335

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.417, Sea Grant Support

Dates: Applicants must submit application materials by 5:00 p.m. local time on February 13, 2015 to eligible Sea Grant Programs. Contact the Sea Grant Program in your State (see IV.A. of the Federal Funding Opportunity for program contact information) for application information.

Selected applications from the sponsoring Sea Grant Program must be received and validated by Grants.gov by the deadline of 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 31, 2015.

Funding Opportunity Description: This notice announces that applications may be submitted for the 2016 National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship (Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program). Sea Grant anticipates funding not less than 30 selected applicants, of which those assigned to the Legislative branch may be limited to 10. Each award will be funded at a total of \$56,500 in federal funding.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

In 1979, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Sea Grant College Program, in fulfilling its broad educational responsibilities and legislative mandate of the Sea Grant Act to provide an educational experience in the policies and processes of the Legislative and Executive Branches of the Federal Government for students enrolled in graduate or professional programs that have an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources, initiated the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program. The Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program supports NOAA's Mission "To understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources." The Fellowship also contributes to all four NOAA goals: climate adaptation and mitigation, weather-ready nation, healthy oceans, and resilient coastal communities and economies.

B. Program Priorities

N/A

C. Program Authority

33 USC 1123(c) 4(F) and 33 USC 1127 (b)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Depending on FY2016 Congressional appropriations, the quality of applications, and potential host office participation, Sea Grant anticipates funding not less than 30 selected applicants, of which those assigned to the Legislative branch may be limited to 10. Each award will be funded at a total of \$56,500 in federal funding.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards are anticipated to start on February 1, 2016 and run for one year (12 months) and cannot be renewed or deferred. Pre-award spending will be approved 150 days prior to the start date of the award.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be in the form of a cooperative agreement to each individual Sea Grant Program or Project that will support a selected Fellow. The Sea Grant Program receives and administers the overall cooperative agreement on behalf of each fellow selected from their program. The award will be a cooperative agreement because of substantial involvement by the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager in mentoring and hosting successful applicants.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

An eligible applicant is any student, regardless of citizenship, who, on February 13, 2015, is enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program, who has an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources. The graduate degree needs to be awarded through a United States accredited institution of higher education in the United States or U.S. Territories.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This is a onetime fellowship opportunity. Applicants that have participated in the fellowship in past years will not be eligible to submit an application.

The one-year fellowship will take place in the National Capital region, so applicants must be able to reside in the Washington, DC area. Non-US citizens are responsible for obtaining the appropriate visa to allow them to work in the Washington, DC area during the fellowship period.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program in a state or territory served by a Sea Grant program must request application materials and logistical instructions from that program. The list of Sea Grant programs and contact information may be found at: <http://seagrant.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre/Leadership/SeaGrantDirectors.aspx>

Applicants enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program in a state or territory not served by a Sea Grant program must contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII to obtain application materials, logistical instructions, and a written referral to a Sea Grant program. This referral must be included in the application package.

Application information for Sea Grant programs may be found at Grants.gov, at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>, searching for Funding Opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2016-2004335 or may also be obtained by contacting the Agency contact listed in Section VII.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Elements" below. Failure to follow these requirements will result in applications being rejected without review.

Required Elements - An application package must include:

(1) Two signed letters of recommendation, including one from the student's major professor; if no major professor exists, a faculty person academically knowing the applicant best may be substituted.

All applicants will be evaluated solely on their application package according to the criteria listed in Section V. Therefore, letters of endorsement from members of Congress, friends, or relatives will not be accepted.

(2) A personal education and career goal statement emphasizing the applicant's abilities and the applicant's expectations from the fellowship experience in the way of career development (1000 words or less). Placement preference in the legislative or executive branches of the government may be stated; this preference will be honored to the extent possible.

(3) Personal and academic curriculum vitae (not to exceed two pages).

(4) Clear, scanned copy of all official undergraduate and graduate student transcripts.

(5) Listing of classes and/or plans for spring 2015, summer 2015 and fall 2015 (not to exceed one page).

(6) For applicants in a state or territory not served by an eligible Sea Grant program, but applying through an eligible Sea Grant program, a written statement from the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager referring the applicant to the most appropriate eligible Sea Grant program must be included as part of that applicant's application package to the Sea Grant program.

(7) Applicants for the 2016 Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship fulfill the data sharing information plan requirement of section VIII by including the following statement in their application: "Data Sharing Plan: This project will not generate any environmental data."

Applicants are not required to provide a NOAA NEPA Questionnaire with their applications.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Eligible applicants must submit application materials by 5:00 p.m. local time February 13, 2015 to a state Sea Grant program. Applicants enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program in a state or territory served by a Sea Grant Program must submit to that program. Other applicants must submit their applications to the Sea Grant program to which they were referred to by the contact listed in section VII.

Selected applications from the sponsoring Sea Grant program are to be received and validated by Grants.gov by the deadline of 5:00 p.m. EDT on March 31, 2015. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission time line. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. For eligible Sea Grant program applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will only be accepted if a Sea Grant program can justify in writing that internet access is not available to them at the time of submission. Hard copy applications need to be received at the National Sea Grant Office no later than the deadline of 5:00 p.m. EDT on March 31, 2015. Hard copy applications received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received to establish timeliness.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

The Sea Grant program receives and administers the overall cooperative agreement of \$56,500 per student on behalf of each fellow selected from their program. Of this amount, the eligible Sea Grant program provides \$45,000 to each Fellow for stipend and living expenses (per diem). Of the total cooperative agreement amount, the Sea Grant program provides \$9,000 to cover mandatory health insurance for the fellow and moving expenses. Any remaining funds of the \$9,000 shall be used for the fellow during the fellowship year, first to satisfy academic degree-related activities, and second for fellowship-related activities. Finally, up to \$2,500 from the total \$56,500 can be used to cover placement week costs. Indirect costs are not allowable from the federal funds either for the fellowships or for any costs associated with the fellowships, including the \$2,500 budgeted for placement week (see 15 CFR 917.11(e), "Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships").

F. Other Submission Requirements

Prior contact/arrangements made with possible host offices before the start of the placement week will be cause for immediate disqualification from the process.

Application information may be obtained directly from Grants.gov. It may also be obtained from the eligible Sea Grant program directors. The addresses of the Sea Grant program directors may be found on Sea Grant's website (<http://seagrant.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre/Leadership/SeaGrantDirectors.aspx>).

Applications must come from Sea Grant programs and must be submitted through www.Grants.gov.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

At the state or territory level review, the evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

(1) Recommendations and/or endorsements of student (15 percent total): Endorsement/content of the letter from the applicant's major professor, and the second letter of recommendation.

(2) Academic record and statement of career goals and objectives of student (45 percent total): Quality of the applicant's personal education and career goal statement (30 percent); Strength of academic performance (15 percent).

(3) Additional relevant experience (40 percent total) related to: diversity of education, extra-curricular activities, honors and awards, and interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills. For the Knauss Sea Grant Fellowship Program, relevant experience would be in marine or aquatic-related fields.

At the national review, evaluation criteria are identical to that at the state or territory level, except that in criteria (1), the letter of endorsement from the sponsoring Sea Grant program director will also be considered.

B. Review and Selection Process

At the state or territory level, a panel composed of three members, all from the eligible Sea Grant program, will individually discuss each application based on the evaluation criteria listed in section V.A. Following this discussion, an individual score will be provided by each panel member. Once all applications have been discussed and scored, an average score will be computed for each application. The top scoring applicants will then be submitted by the eligible Sea Grant program to the National Sea Grant College Program for the national review along with a signed letter of endorsement from the Sea Grant program director. Each eligible Sea Grant program may select and forward to the National Sea Grant College Program no more than six (6) applications based on the evaluation criteria. In addition, up to six (6) additional applications may be submitted from graduate students enrolled in universities within the District of Columbia by the eligible Sea Grant program handling those applications.

For the national review, a review panel will be assembled to select the fellowship finalists. The panel will include representation from the Sea Grant Association, the National Sea Grant Advisory Board, and the current class of Fellows. Each panel member is assigned applications to review before the panel meeting. During the panel meeting, panel members will discuss each application based on the evaluation criteria listed in section V.A., as well as the signed letter of endorsement from the sponsoring Sea Grant program director. Following

this discussion, scores for each evaluation criteria will be provided by panel members. Awards will be made in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank based upon one or more of the selection factors described in the next section. The selected applicants will then be placed into either the legislative or executive group by the selecting official based upon the applicant's stated preference, the application materials submitted, and the individual comments of the panel members.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will award in order of average score unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the following selection factors:

1. Availability of funds
2. Balance/Distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By types of institutions
 - c. Across academic disciplines
3. Program-specific objectives
4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The competitive selection process and subsequent notification to the eligible Sea Grant Programs will be completed by June 5, 2015. Funds are expected to be awarded by approximately February 1, 2016, the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) for successful applications.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The National Sea Grant Office will notify, via e-mail, successful and unsuccessful applicants by informing the eligible Sea Grant program through which the application was submitted. This email will contain a written summary of the review panel comments. The eligible Sea Grant program will, in turn, formally notify each successful and unsuccessful applicant and forward the summary comments provided by the National Sea Grant Office. The applications that are not ultimately selected for funding will be destroyed one year after submission date.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ectr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpi=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl and http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html>

The National Environmental Policy Act: As defined in Sections 5.05 and Administrative or Programmatic Functions of NAO 216-6, 6.03.c.3, this is a fellowship project for which there are no cumulative effects. Thus, it has been categorically excluded from the need to prepare an Environmental Assessment.

Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

Unpaid or Delinquent Tax Liability: In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

C. Reporting

Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Office and performance reports (summary of accomplishments and activities) are to be submitted to the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager. Financial reports are semi-annual and performance reports are annual. Reports may be required to be submitted either electronically or in hard copy. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

Contact the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager by Phone: (301) 734-1057 or E-mail: OAR.SG.Fellows@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Although Fellowship Proposals to this Funding Opportunity will not be generating environmental data, NOAA rules require the following information about Data Sharing Plans to be included in all Funding Opportunity announcements:

Data Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as an appendix. A typical plan may

include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under:
http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf

Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements (OMB Uniform Guidance) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A 122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A 110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.