

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 2018 National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2018-2004993

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 21, 2017 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, 2017.

Funding Opportunity Description: This notice announces that applications may be submitted for the 2018 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 12. Each award will be funded at a total of \$61,500 in federal funding, with the option to add additional funds for fellowship related travel, relocation and other expenses.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Sea Grant Act includes a legislative mandate 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. In 1979, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Sea Grant College Program initiated the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program to help fulfill its broad educational responsibilities and meet this legislative mandate. The Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program meets NOAA's Mission goal of "Protect, Restore and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through Ecosystem-Based Management."

B. Program Priorities

N/A

C. Program Authority

33 USC 1123(c) 4(F) and 33 USC 1127 (b) and 15 CFR 917.11(e)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Depending on FY2018 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 12. Each award will be funded at a total of \$61,500 in federal funding, with the option by the host office to add additional funds without further competition for fellowship-related travel, relocation and other expenses.

Awards are for thirteen months (2/1/2018-2/28/2019) and cannot be renewed.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards are anticipated to start on February 1, 2018 and run for thirteen months and cannot be renewed or deferred. *The final month of the award is for fellows to use to move, and is not intended for fellows to carry out host office activities or any other fellowship-salaried activities.*

Pre-award spending may be authorized 120 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 21, 2017, is enrolled towards a degree in a graduate program, that 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

Foreign nationals please note: while this fellowship is open to all eligible students regardless of nationality, a significant number of participating Federal host offices are unable to accept foreign nationals as fellows in their offices.

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 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

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>).

Applicants enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program in a state or territory served by a Sea Grant program may request application materials and logistical instructions from that program. 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.

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 (in addition to the SF-424, SF-424A, and budget narrative) 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. Any letters beyond the two letters of recommendation and the state Sea Grant Director's letter will be disregarded by the selection panel.

(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 2017, summer 2017 and fall 2017 (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) This announcement is not seeking proposals that generate environmental data. Therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required as part of the Proposal.

Applicants are not required to provide answers to the NOAA NEPA Questionnaire in their applications.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

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 System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2013), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03add6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8

D. Submission Dates and Times

Eligible applicants must submit application materials by 5:00 p.m. local time February 21, 2017 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, 2017. Other

than the required SF-424 and SF-424A forms, the budget narrative, and the Director's letter, the application submitted to the Sea Grant program by the applicant must be submitted to grants.gov unchanged.

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, 2017. 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.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

The Sea Grant program receives and administers the overall cooperative agreement of \$61,500 and optional additional fellowship-related travel, relocation and other funds on behalf of each fellow selected from their program. Of this amount, the eligible Sea Grant program provides \$47,500 to each fellow for salary/stipend for the first twelve months of the fellowship. Other allowable expenses are: fringe benefits, travel expenses for placement week, health insurance, and academic- and fellowship-related travel expense. Any funds remaining after salary and fringe are accounted for must first be used to support travel of the fellow to placement week, and then to the other allowable expenses indicated above. Indirect costs are not allowable from the federal funds either for the fellowships or for any costs associated with the fellowships, including the costs budgeted for placement week (see 15 CFR 917.11(e), "Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships").

Successful applicants may be awarded additional funds for fellowship-related travel, relocation, and other expenses without further competition.

G. 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.

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 Sea Grant Knauss 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 current or former fellows, if available. 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 rank 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 2, 2017. Funds are expected to be awarded by approximately February 1, 2018, 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

Following review of the selection package by the Grants Office, 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.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

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: Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of continuing Congressional appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the programs listed in this notice. 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 or to obligate any available funds.

Unpaid or Delinquent Tax Liability: In accordance with Section 523 of Division B and Sections 744 and 745 of Division E of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. 113-235) or a future public law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) will be required to provide certain pre-award representations regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns. The form must be completed and submitted with grant applications for: (a) all for-profit and non-profit organization applicants (Part I, and if required, Part II); and (b) all non-Federal entity applicants anticipating receipt of \$5 million or more in the current Federal Fiscal Year appropriated funding (Part II only). The form can be found at

<http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/forms.html>.

Review of Risk: After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants office performs administration reviews. These may include financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

Freedom of Information Act: In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by 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, National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, R/SG, Room 11861, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Tel: (301) 734-1088 E-mail: OAR.SG.Fellows@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

This announcement is not seeking proposals that generate environmental data. Therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required as part of the Proposal.