

# **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Full Text of Announcement .....	2
I. Funding Opportunity Description .....	2
II. Award Information .....	2
III. Eligibility Information .....	3
IV. Application and Submission Information .....	4
V. Application Review Information .....	10
VI. Award Administration Information.....	13
VII. Agency Contacts .....	16
VIII. Other Information .....	16

## Executive Summary

### Federal Agency Name

OAR National Sea Grant College Program (SG)

### Funding Opportunity Title

Fiscal Year 2025 National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

### Announcement Type

Competitive

### Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-OAR-SG-2025-23655

### Assistance Listing Number(s)

### Dates

Eligible students must submit application materials by 5:00 p.m. local time on February 15, 2024 to eligible Sea Grant programs. Students 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 students must submit their applications to the Sea Grant program to which they were referred to by the Knauss Fellowship Program Manager as listed in Section VII. Letters of intent outlining the selection process must be emailed to [oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) prior to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 14, 2024. Selected student applications from the eligible Sea Grant program are to be received and validated by grants.gov by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 28, 2024. (Note that National Sea Grant Office staff will only be available to answer questions until 5:00 p.m. EDT.) Other than attaching the signed letter of recommendation from the eligible Sea Grant director, the application submitted to the eligible Sea Grant program by the applicant must be submitted to Grants.gov unchanged beyond redacting Personally Identifiable Information (PII) as described in IV.B.

### Funding Opportunity Description

The National Sea Grant College Program was enacted by U.S. Congress in 1966 (amended in 2020, Public Law 116-221) to support leveraged federal and state partnerships that harness the intellectual capacity of the nation's universities and research institutions to solve problems and generate opportunities in coastal communities.

This notice announces that applications may be submitted for the 2025 National Sea Grant College Program Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship (Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program). The National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) anticipates funding not less than 35 applicants, of which approximately 17 will be assigned to the Legislative branch. Application packages will each propose a total of \$93,900 in funding. Detailed breakout of this funding is described in Section II.A and Section III.F of this announcement.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to the Sea Grant program in their state/territory at least one to two months prior to the state application deadline to receive application support and provide notification of intent to apply. Following student application submission, the student should allow sufficient time to schedule an interview with the eligible Sea Grant program at the program's request.

This document describes requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-SG-2025-23655.

## **Full Text of Announcement**

### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

#### **A. Program Objective**

NOAA provides funding to Sea Grant institutions to increase the understanding, assessment, development, management, utilization, and conservation of the Nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources by providing assistance to promote a strong educational base, responsive research and training activities, broad and prompt dissemination of knowledge and techniques, and multidisciplinary approaches to environmental problems, in accordance with 33 USC 1121(b).

#### **B. Program Priorities**

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 (Sea Grant) 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 of "Science, service and stewardship."

The National Sea Grant College Program values diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in both our organization and the communities we serve. Through the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship we strive to provide an educational and employment opportunity for current and recent graduate students interested in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and the national policy decisions affecting those resources, regardless of race, color, religion, place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disability or veteran status.

#### **C. Program Authority**

Statutory authority for this program is provided under the National Sea Grant College and Program Act of 1966, as amended (33 USC 1121 et seq.).

### **II. Award Information**

#### **A. Funding Availability**

Subject to the availability of funding, this announcement describes how eligible applicants should apply for the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program. Sea Grant anticipates funding not less than 35 applicants, of which those assigned to the legislative branch will be approximately 17. Application packages will each propose a total of \$93,900 in funding. This includes base funding for each award at \$76,400, of which \$71,400 is to be used by the eligible Sea Grant program to cover the fellow's salary/stipend and personnel expenses for the twelve months of the fellowship and \$5,000 can be used to cover allowable expenses. Allowable expenses could include, but are not limited to, relocation prior to and following the fellowship, academic tuition, journal publication fees, academic- and fellowship-related travel, conferences fees, online trainings, and workshops. Applications should also include travel costs totaling \$17,500, of which \$15,000 will be budgeted for optional host office related travel and training and \$2,500 will be budgeted for optional placement week expenses, which would be provided at the discretion of the National Sea Grant Office.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards, or that any application will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if this program fails to receive full funding.

#### **B. Project/Award Period**

The anticipated start date is February 1, 2025 for the 12-month fellowship. Projects should have an end date of February 28, 2026. These awards cannot be renewed or deferred. Pre-award spending may be authorized 130 days prior to the start date of the award.

### **C. Type of Funding Instrument**

The funding instrument is a cooperative agreement to an eligible institution, which will receive and administer the overall cooperative agreement on behalf of each fellow selected. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the federal government during the performance of the proposed work is anticipated. The nature of the substantial involvement includes mentoring and hosting of applicants by Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager(s) and host offices.

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible to submit to this opportunity:

Any student, regardless of citizenship, is eligible to submit to this opportunity if:

- (1) The student is enrolled towards a degree in a graduate program at any point between the onset of the 2023 Fall Term (quarter, trimester, semester, etc.) and February 15, 2024;
- (2) The graduate degree will be awarded through an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or U.S. Territories, and;
- (3) The student has an interest in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources.

Application submission is through an application to the Sea Grant program in the state in which the student is earning their degree. If there is no Sea Grant program, a Sea Grant program will be assigned (see Section IV.D.)

The National Sea Grant College Program champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by working to create a marine science workforce that reflects the communities we serve. We are recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. We encourage student applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this opportunity.

### **B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement**

No cost share is required.

### **C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility**

- The one year fellowship will take place in the National Capital Region. Applicants must be prepared to relocate to the Washington, D.C. area. Non-U.S. citizens are responsible for obtaining the appropriate visa to allow them to work in the Washington, D.C. area during the fellowship period.
- Foreign nationals and dual citizens 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. While more offices are able to host dual citizens, there may be restrictions. This may reduce the number of placement opportunities available to foreign nationals. Note: Foreign nationals are eligible for both the Executive and Legislative cohort.
- Applicants must be able to pass a federal background security check.
- Prior contact/arrangements made with possible host offices before the start of the placement week will be cause for immediate disqualification from the process.

- Applicants that have been accepted as national finalists and/or become fellows are not eligible to apply again without the written permission of the NSGO Fellowships Manager, which will only be granted in response to exceptional life events. A national finalist is defined as an applicant who goes through the review process and is selected at the national level for the fellowship program. If alternates are selected, they are eligible for re-application if they withdraw prior to accepting a finalist position or are not offered a finalist position and would otherwise still be eligible to apply. Applicants are considered finalists until they are paired with a host office during the placement process.

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### **A. Address to Request Application Package**

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) under opportunity NOAA-OAR-SG-2025-23655. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Applicants enrolled towards a degree in a graduate or professional program in a state or territory not served by a Sea Grant program must first contact the Agency Contact listed in Section VII to obtain a written referral to an eligible Sea Grant program. This referral must be included in the application package.

### **B. Content and Form of Application**

This section provides an overview of the Required Proposal Elements (and where to locate them). Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Proposal Elements" below. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

The submitting Sea Grant program or applicant should redact all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to [grants.gov](http://grants.gov). PII that should be redacted from the application includes but is not limited to social security number, date of birth, student identification number (from transcripts) or other information which if lost, compromised, or disclosed without authorization, could result in harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual.

All applications should be submitted in the following order: CV, Application Questions, Future Year Plans, Director Letter, Academic Letter, Other Letter, Transcripts.

### **Letters of Intent Required Elements**

Letters of Intent (LOIs) will be requested in advance of final proposal submission to allow the NSGO to gauge the number of expected applications to be submitted by the Sea Grant programs. LOIs should be received via digital submissions to the NSGO Fellowship Program Managers ([oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov)) by 5:00 pm Eastern Time on March 14, 2024.

Letters of Intent should provide the following information:

#### **1. Sea Grant Applicant Information (spreadsheet/table)**

A list of all applications received by the state program including,

- i. Student Name,
- ii. Student's Academic Institution,
- iii. Degree the student is seeking,
- iiii. Indication if the applicant is recommend for national review,

#### **2. Summary of the State Review Process (one page max)**

- i. A brief discussion of the review process including information regarding the directors interview and the panel selection process.
- ii. A brief discussion of the recruitment process focusing on how programs engaged diverse schools and audiences.

Programs will receive email confirmation of LOI receipt by COB March 15, 2024.

## **Full Proposal Required Elements**

(please also see VIII. Other Information for additional post-application required elements for submission):

### **1. Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)**

This form must be completed and include a profile for the Principal Investigator and any co-PI(s). CVs and Current and Pending Support for each person's profile will also be attached to this form. The first listed PD/PI on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g., agency login" field of the SF424 form. Failure to register in eRA Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

Additional personnel included on the form do not need to include this information, however eRA will create a warning recommending those personnel also have valid eRA Commons IDs. Again - it is not required that those additional personnel include valid eRA Commons IDs regardless of the warnings created by the eRA system.

### **2. Research and Related Budget Form**

The Research and Related Budget is a single form that will need to be completed covering the entire award by budget period following the instructions from Grants.gov. At the end of the Research and Related Budget form, "Section L" provides space for one attachment titled, "Budget Justification." The budget narrative for the project must be attached there. The budget narrative should explain the budget items by object class category (both federal and non-federal/match) in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found at: [NOAA Grants Management Division's Budget Narrative Guidance](#)

### **3. Research & Related Other Project Information Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)**

This form must be completed for the application, and should also be used to attach the Project Abstract Summary Form, the Project Narrative, Bibliography & References Cited (if applicable), and any other relevant forms or information as applicable. See form-specific instructions available on Grants.gov for additional instructions as needed.

#### ***a. Project Summary/Abstract Attachment***

Using 4,000 characters or less, the Project Abstract should provide an overview of the application. Ensure the Project Abstract succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. It should be a self-contained description of the application and should contain a general statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and understandable to a technically literate lay reader. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary/confidential information. This project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available on public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov.

#### **Project Abstract Elements:**

- Use the following format:
  - Purpose:
  - Activities to be performed:
  - Expected Outcomes:
  - Intended Beneficiaries:
  - Subrecipient Activities:
- Keep it short. In most cases, each element above should be a couple of sentences to a paragraph in length.

- DO NOT repeat the Proposal Title. The Proposal Title is always presented with the Project Description, so including it in the abstract is not necessary.
- Include a high quality description that includes specificity regarding the purpose of the project. Characteristics of strong abstracts include a plain language description of the purpose for the project (which may include specific performance goals, indicators, milestones, or expected outcomes of the project), activities to be performed, deliverables and expected outcomes, intended beneficiary or recipient.
- Keep it simple. Do not use abbreviations, acronyms, technical terminology, or agency-specific terms. The intended audience is Congress and the general public, not specific interested parties and/or federal employees. The education level of the reader should be assumed to be the fifth grade of elementary school. Even those who are highly educated will appreciate a simply written document when they have hundreds of projects to review in one sitting.

## ***b. Project Narrative Attachment***

The project proposal narrative must contain the following sub-elements.

The following sub-elements are to be submitted by the student to the eligible Sea Grant program:

**(1) Curriculum vitae (not to exceed two pages).** The student should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.). If included, programs should redact excess materials prior to submission to Grants.gov.

**(2) Personal education and career development response.** The student should emphasize their abilities and expectations of the fellowship experience in terms of their career development. Each section and subsequent subsection should be answered separately using the section headers below. The entire personal education and career development section should not exceed 1,530 words total. Suggested word counts will be included with each subsection below. Section headers will not count as part of the overall word count. The student should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.). If included, programs should redact prior to submission.

***Section One: Icebreaker. The suggested word count is 25 words for this section.***

(Prompt A) (Suggest 20 words) The student should use one sentence to describe themselves.

(Prompt B) (5 words MAX--this is the only question with a strict word count): The student should list five adjectives that someone with a close personal connection (coworker, supervisor, etc.) would use to describe them.

***Section Two: Career Path and Objectives. The suggested word count is 750 words for this section.***

(Prompt A) (Suggest 250 words) The student should discuss any experience(s) (research or otherwise) that supports or relates to the mission of the National Sea Grant College Program or the state Sea Grant program (the student does not have to have had a direct connection to Sea Grant). The student should emphasize (if relevant) any experience with extending and distilling science for non-scientific audiences.

(Prompt B) (Suggest 250 words) The student should discuss their interest in the Knauss Fellowship with a specific focus on how the Knauss Fellowship supports the student's career pathway. The student should focus on how the Knauss Program would further support their development as a professional.

(Prompt C) (Suggest 250 words) The student should discuss the transferable skills (skills that can be applied across a variety of disciplines) that they would bring to the Knauss Fellowship. In this response, students should highlight experiences from their personal, professional and academic background.

***Section Three: Career Path Experience. The suggested word count is 750 words for this section.***

(Prompt A) (Suggested 250 words) During the Fellowship, finalists will serve in a range of capacities, including developing and delivering public programs or services, informing policy-making, and providing evidence-based advice to leaders. The student should discuss how they have and/or will embrace the concept of public service.

(Prompt B) (Suggested 250 words) The student should discuss a situation in which they have worked with a person or group with different perspectives, life experiences, beliefs, etc. from their own to achieve a common goal. The student is encouraged to use examples.

(Prompt C) (Suggested 250 Words) The student should discuss a situation in which they overcame a challenge (e.g. within a community or institution, personally, professionally, etc.) specifically as it relates to how they took a leadership role. The student should also consider including a reflection on what they learned from this experience.

**(3) Relevant Coursework and Future Year Plans** (not to exceed one page single spaced): The student should discuss any relevant coursework and their future year activities.

Relevant Coursework: The student may discuss any completed or in progress classes that they deem relevant to their success in the Knauss Fellowship Program.

Future year activities: The student should include a listing of classes and/or plans for spring 2024, summer 2024, and fall 2024.

**(4) Two letters of recommendation** from individuals who have worked with the student, including at least one from a faculty member associated with the student's current enrollment who has knowledge of the student's academic and research (when applicable) performance. Each letter should not exceed two pages single spaced and should clearly indicate the letter writer's name and position. These letters should:

(a) discuss the following attributes of the student: self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, willingness to learn a new skill or topic, academic performance and potential; and

(b) speak to anything else the review panel should know about the strengths that the student will bring to the fellowship.

The letters should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.). If included, programs should redact prior to submission. Any letters beyond the two letters of recommendation and the eligible Sea Grant director's letter will be disregarded by the selection panel. Letters of endorsement from members of Congress, friends, or relatives will not be accepted. NOTE: Blinded reviewer comments will be provided to the students, including discussion of the LORs.

**(5) Clear digital or scanned copies of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts** (unofficial are acceptable).

**(6)** If applicable, 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.

The following sub-element is to be submitted by the program:

**(1) A signed letter of recommendation from the state Sea Grant director**, which is built from an interview with the applicant. The letter should not exceed two pages single spaced. As part of that interview and subsequent letter, the director shall:

(a) demonstrate why the student aligns with the goals of the Knauss program;

(b) highlight the skills the student emphasizes in the interview; and

(c) explain any gaps in the CV or personal education and career development response or anything that the student feels they were unable to include in the application that they feel is important for the review panel to know.

If a conflict of interest exists, please contact the agency contact (Section VII). NOTE: Blinded reviewer comments will be provided to the students, including discussion of the LORs.

***c. Bibliography & References Cited Attachment (if applicable)***

If applicable, provide a bibliography of any references cited in the Project Narrative. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Include only bibliographic citations. Applicants should be especially careful to follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the application.

***d. Other Attachments***

**Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire** (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)

This announcement is not seeking proposals that will have an environmental impact. Therefore, an Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire is not required as part of the proposal.

#### **4. Additional Application Package Forms**

In addition to the forms required above, standard federal forms and assurances are required and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov. These include:

***a. SF-424 R&R Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)***

This form, titled “Application for Federal Assistance,” must identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and any non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution’s accurate EIN and DUNS and point of contact, and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee. Total federal and non-federal amounts listed in the SF-424 R&R, the Cumulative Budget of the Research and Related Budget form, and budget narrative must be the same.

***b. SF-424B Assurances (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0007)***

The form, titled “Assurances – Non-Construction Programs,” must be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

***c. CD-511 (Grants.gov, US DOC)***

The form, titled “Certification Regarding Lobbying,” must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.

***d. SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) - optional form, include if appropriate***

This form, titled “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” is an optional form and should be included if appropriate. If included, it must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.

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

#### **C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

#### **D. Submission Dates and Times**

Eligible applicants must submit application materials by 5:00 p.m. local time on February 15, 2024 to the appropriate Sea Grant program. Students 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 students must submit their applications to the Sea Grant program to which they were referred to by the Knauss Fellowship Program Manager as listed in Section VII.

Selected applications from the eligible Sea Grant program are to be received and validated by grants.gov by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 28, 2024. (Note that National Sea Grant Office staff will only be available to answer questions until 5:00 p.m. EDT.) Other than attaching the signed letter of recommendation from the eligible Sea Grant Director or appropriate redactions the sub-elements submitted to the eligible Sea Grant program by the applicant must be submitted to grants.gov unchanged.

**Please note: validation or rejection of an application by Grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission.** Eligible Sea Grant programs should consider this process in developing their submission timeline. 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.

#### **E. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications under the National Sea Grant College Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

#### **F. Funding Restrictions**

Indirect costs are not allowable for either the Fellowship or for any costs associated with the Fellowship (15 CFR 917.11(e), "Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships").

The eligible Sea Grant program receives and administers the overall cooperative agreement. Application packages will each propose a total of \$93,900 in funding. This includes base funding for each award at \$76,400, of which \$71,400 is to be used by the eligible Sea Grant program to cover the fellow's salary/stipend for the twelve months of the fellowship and \$5,000 can be used to cover allowable expenses. Allowable expenses could include, but are not limited to, relocation prior to the fellowship, academic tuition, journal publication fees, academic- and fellowship-related travel, conferences fees, online trainings, and workshops. Applications should also include travel costs totaling \$17,500, of which \$15,000 will be budgeted for optional host office related travel and training and \$2,500 will be budgeted for optional placement week expenses, which would be provided at the discretion of the National Sea Grant Office.

Other restrictions: Fellowship funds may not be used to travel to State Department Orange or Red Listed countries without prior approval of the National Sea Grant Office.

#### **G. Other Submission Requirements**

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

The first PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g. agency login" Applicant Identifier field on the SF424 form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

\*\*The Knauss Fellowship is a learning opportunity. All applicants will be provided with BLINDED review comments. This will include reviews on the Letters of Recommendation. Applicants will not receive a copy of the letters.\*\*

This section outlines the evaluation criteria and scoring mechanism that reviewers will be asked to follow when reviewing applications. The total application will be reviewed out of 110 Points. The value of each section and subsequent subsection is outlined below. Additionally a point scale is provided for each section.

At the national review, evaluation criteria are identical to that at the eligible Sea Grant program level, except that in criteria (4), the letter of endorsement from the eligible Sea Grant program director will also be considered.

<b>1. Curriculum Vitae (10 Points).</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>Scoring guidance for reviewers: <i>The CV does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the CV addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the CV meets the criterion in an average or expected way (5); the CV meets the criterion in an exceptional way (10).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student has employment, volunteer, or extracurricular activities in academic, applied, research, administration, outreach, or policy positions;</li> <li>• The education and experience (personal and professional) in the student’s area of expertise are appropriate to the career stage;</li> <li>• The student demonstrates academic, professional or personal experiences that are relevant and applicable to serving the American people;</li> <li>• The student’s experiences show prior leadership roles relevant to their career stage (e.g., student government, faculty committees, advisory committees, professional societies, community initiatives, etc.).</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Personal education and career development response (65 Points).</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 65</b>
<p><u>Section One: Icebreaker</u> (5 Points). Scoring guidance for reviewers: <i>The answer does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the answer addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the answer meets the criterion in an average or expected way (3); the answer meets the criterion in an exceptional way (5).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student demonstrates creative thinking and a willingness to think outside the box.</li> </ul> <p><u>Section Two: Career Path and Objectives</u> (Each prompt is valued at 10 points; total is 30 points). Scoring guidance for reviewers: <i>The answer does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the answer addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the answer meets the criterion in an average or expected way (5); the answer meets the criterion in an exceptional way (10).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The student clearly links experiences to the ocean, coasts, or Great Lakes (national, state, or local);</li> <li>○ the student demonstrates their ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts;</li> <li>○ the student demonstrates creative thinking, analytical skill, and/or indicates their capacity and willingness to make connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- Prompt B:
  - The student demonstrates an understanding of the Knauss Fellowship program;
  - the career path and objectives demonstrates the student’s diverse personal and professional background;
  - the student clearly articulates their career or professional goals;
  - the student is specific, direct, and concise while discussing what they would bring to and gain from the Knauss Fellowship.
- Prompt C:
  - The skill set demonstrated will provide a foundation for success in the Knauss fellowship;
  - the student is specific, direct, and concise while discussing the skills they have cultivated throughout their career.

Section Three: Career Path Experience (Each prompt is valued at 10 points; total is 30 points) Scoring guidance for reviewers: *The answer does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the answer addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the answer meets the criterion in an average or expected way (5); the answer meets the criterion in an exceptional way (10).*

- Prompt A:
  - The student demonstrates an interest in contributing to public programs or service;
  - the student demonstrates experiences in public service, including, but not limited to volunteering, leadership, extension or education experiences. These do not have to be directly related to the mission of NOAA.
- Prompt B:
  - The student demonstrates creativity and willingness to navigate a challenging situation;
  - the student demonstrates leadership and problem solving initiative
  - the student has shown interest in working with a variety of collaborators, community members and/or interested partners.
- Prompt C:
  - The student demonstrates creativity and willingness to navigate a challenging situation;
  - The student demonstrates leadership and problem solving initiative.

<b>3. Relevant Coursework and Future year plans (10 Points).</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
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Scoring guidance for reviewers: *The relevant coursework and future year plans does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the relevant coursework and future year plans addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the relevant coursework and future year plans meets the criterion in an average or expected way (5); the relevant coursework and future year plans meets the criterion in an exceptional way (10).*

- The student has activities in academic, applied, research, administration, outreach, or policy;
- The future education and experience (personal or professional) support the student’s goals or provide further experiences applicable to the Knauss Program.

<b>4. Recommendations and/or endorsements of the student (15 points total).</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 15</b>
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For the Knauss Fellowship program the endorsements and content of the letter from the student's Sea Grant director, academic reference, and the second letter of recommendation are reviewed as follows:

- Letters of recommendation (5 Points designated for each letter of recommendation). Scoring guidance for reviewers: *The letter of recommendation does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the letter of recommendation addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the answer meets the criterion in an average or expected way (3); the letter of recommendation meets the criterion in an exceptional way (5).*
  - The letter writers demonstrate knowledge of the student and their abilities;
  - The letter writers speak to the leadership potential, confidence, maturity, and self-direction of the student;
  - The letter writers provide evidence of the student’s willingness and flexibility to tackle issues beyond their area of expertise and an openness and capacity to expand experiences;

- The letter writers provide evidence of the student’s ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts.
- Director’s Letter (5 Points). Scoring guidance for reviewers: *The letter of recommendation does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the letter of recommendation addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the answer meets the criterion in an average or expected way (3); the letter of recommendation meets the criterion in an exceptional way (5).*
  - The director’s letter demonstrates how the student fits with the Knauss Program, including any discussion of why the student belongs in the Knauss Program;
  - Highlights the skills (academic, professional or personal) that the student would bring to the Knauss program;
  - Elaborates on information not specifically addressed by the student in their application package.

<b>5. Overall application cohesion (10 points total).</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
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For the Knauss Fellowship program consider all aspects of the application materials (CV, Personal education and career development responses, Relevant Coursework and Future Year Plans, Letters of Recommendation, Director's Letter). Scoring guidance for reviewers: *The application does not adequately address the expectations outlined (0); the application addresses the criterion in a poor or confusing way (1); the application meets the criterion in an average or expected way (5); the application meets the criterion in an exceptional way (10).*

- The application materials complement each other;
- The student brings a diverse perspective to the program;
- The application materials provide a clear picture of what the student would gain from receiving the Knauss Fellowship;
- The application materials provide a clear picture of what the student would bring to the Knauss Fellowship.

## **B. Review and Selection Process**

### **State level/individual Sea Grant program review:**

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

After submission to the eligible Sea Grant program, and if the application meets the minimum requirements (sub-elements 1-6, Section IV.B.1.a), the application will be reviewed at the eligible Sea Grant program level. A panel composed of a minimum of three members will individually discuss each application based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A.

Based on the panel discussion, each eligible Sea Grant program may select and forward to the National Sea Grant Office up to six applications from that program’s state/territory based on the evaluation criteria. In addition, up to six additional applications from each non-Sea Grant state/territory may be submitted by the eligible Sea Grant program handling those applications.

### **National Level Review:**

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

For applications that meet minimum requirements, the application will be individually ranked based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. by individual reviewers.

The selecting official shall award in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided below. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for award to the grants officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

## **C. Selection Factors**

The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

- Balance/distribution of funds:

- across academic disciplines
- by type of institution
- geographically
- Availability of funding.
- Program-specific objectives.
- Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought.

## **D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

Subject to the availability of funds, the eligible Sea Grant programs will be notified of the competitive selection results by the end of June 2024 and awards are expected to start February 01, 2025.

After final selection and announcement of Knauss Finalists, the Selecting Official will place applicants into either the legislative or executive cohort. Selection of executive and legislative cohorts will be informed by finalists' stated preference (solicited after the announcement of the finalist class), recommendations from the eligible Sea Grant program director and independent reviewers, as well as the selection factors.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notices**

**PRE-AWARD COSTS.** Per 2 CFR 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 130 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 130 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

**GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE.** Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

**LIMITATION OF LIABILITY.** Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT**

**REQUIREMENTS.** Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

**RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at <https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.**

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>.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in eRA at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

**BUREAU TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.** Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

**MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS.** The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

**NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.** NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

**SCIENCE INTEGRITY.** 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

**REVIEW OF RISK.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the 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 about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

**REVIEWS AND EVALUATION.** The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with §200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

### **C. Reporting**

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted annually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

Fellows must submit via email a mid-year and a final performance report (summary of accomplishments and activities) to their Sea Grant program. Fellows must submit their mid-year report to their home Sea Grant program via email no later than six months from the start of the fellowship. Fellows must submit their final report to their home Sea Grant program via email within two weeks of the final day of the fellowship.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Contact the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program Manager, National Sea Grant College Program; Tel: (240) 507-3712; E-mail: [oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov)

## VIII. Other Information

**Optional Demographics Form** (OMB Control No. 0648-0568)

Students have the option to provide demographic information via this OMB approved [FORM](#). The information and associated background information of graduate students, as well as recent graduates, which may be used for the purpose of tracking scholarship recipients' academic progress, making annual financial awards, and tracking graduate studies and career progress. Demographic information will be used to measure the success of stated Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) goals only. **This information will not be forwarded to reviewers or used in scoring applications.**

Recipients are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER) project database to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics.

Once the applicants have been selected, programs will need to provide the information requested in the Sea Grant 90-2 into the PIER project database. Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the National Sea Grant College Program public website (<http://seagrant.noaa.gov>).

The grant application and final report of all funded grants are public documents, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the application will aid identification of what may be specifically exempt.