

Attachment 1 - UPDATES

NOFO UPDATES, REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are a few high-level changes to the 2026 NOFO that are highlighted below for ease of reference. We encourage you to review the NOFO in detail and reach out with any questions.

IMPORTANT DUE DATES

- Students must submit applications to SG programs by 5:00 pm local time on February 19, 2025.
- A letter of intent, including the new Attestation of State Level Review, from SG programs must be submitted to the Program Managers (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) by 5:00 pm ET on April 2, 2025. Confirmation of receipt will be shared by COB April 4, 2025.
- Full proposals for each nominated student must be submitted to the 2026 Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship NOFO via Grants.gov ([NOAA-OAR-SG-2026-29505](#)) by 11:59 ET on April 16, 2025.

LETTER OF INTENT UPDATES

The Letter of Intent submission has been expanded to include an attestation of state level review, in addition to the description of the recruitment process.

1) **Attestation of State Level Review:** In accordance with the NOFO the Sea Grant program is requested to conduct a minimum requirements to ensure compliance with requirements of the application. A template excel spreadsheet has been attached to support this process. We request that you please use this template to ensure that all information is submitted. Below is a description of each requested category by column.

A) Student Submission Count (*This column tracks total student submissions*)

B) Programmatic Rank. (*Student rank following the state level review. If a student is not reviewed for any reason, please indicate the reason - (eg. did not meet minimum requirements, submitted late, etc.)*)

C) Student Recommendation Status (*Is the student submitted to the national competition, so NSGO can track applications received*)

D) Student Last Name

E) Student First Name

F) Student's permanent email address (*We encourage students to use an email address that will last beyond their time as a student*)

G) Student's University

H) Student's Academic Institution,

I) Degree the student is seeking

J) Confirmation of enrollment in accordance with eligibility (*encouraged to use transcripts - NOTE: The NOFO will not longer be requesting transcripts with the submission by the state program*)

K) List of current and pending support for the student, specifically for any fellowships or internships.

L) Demographics, if collected. (*NOTE for the 2026 Process, students can submit directly to the NSGO through this [GOOGLE FORM](#)*).

M) Confirmation of CV complying with NOFO guidelines (*Two page Maximum - if longer, please note and the NSGO will redact for the purposes of selection process*)

N) Confirmation of Application Questions complying with NOFO guidelines (*1,530 words - if longer, please note and the NSGO will redact for the purposes of selection process*)

O) Confirmation of two letters of recommendation complying with NOFO guidelines (*Two page Maximum (per letter) - One must be from a faculty member associated with the student's current enrollment; If letters are longer than two pages, please note and the NSGO will redact for the purposes of selection process*)

P) Director Letter (*Two page maximum*)

Q) If applicable, confirmation of an out of state letter for applicants in a state or territory not served by an eligible Sea Grant program, but applying through an eligible Sea Grant program.

2) Summary of the State Review Process (one page max): This has not changed.

KEY NOFO UPDATES

- Redaction and Application Order:
 - Redaction Expectations: *PII that must 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.*
 - Application Order: *All applications should be submitted in the following order: CV, Application Questions, Future Year Plans, Director Letter, Academic Letter and Other Letter.*
- Health Care Language: In the funding section of the NOFO, the following language has been added- *While health care is not required by the NOFO, selected fellows are expected to follow all federal laws for health insurance.*
- Materials Submission:
 - The NOFO no longer requires the state programs to include the transcripts or the out of state letters with the student package. It is incumbent on the program to ensure that the students they are nominating to the national competition match these requirements.
 - The NSGO requests that student materials be submitted in the following order: *CV, Application Questions, Future Year Plans, Director Letter, Academic Letter and Other Letter.*
- Demographics collection: A DOC-approved demographics survey has been added to the application. We encourage ALL applicants (regardless of selection for the national review) to complete the form.

When sharing about the demographics form, we recommend the following language: *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. **This information will not be used to determine program eligibility. Data will be confidential and not part of the review process.***

IMPORTANT APPLICATION PREPARATION TIPS

We highly recommend programs review the [Tips and Tricks for Successful eRA Submissions Document](#) before preparing applications.

Unique Application Titles Required:

eRA requires UNIQUE application names under 50 characters. We recommend using an application naming scheme that includes the year, the program and the student name (ex: 2026_XXSG_Kennedy). This will help the NSGO track application submissions through the eRA process.

Recommended Abstract for Knauss Application:

Purpose: The Knauss fellowship provides a one-year educational experience in an executive or legislative branch office which will: 1) Expand the student's experience with, and knowledge of, the policy-making process within federal agencies and Congressional committees dealing with marine and coastal issues; and 2) Allow the student to contribute knowledge gained in academic programs and provide informational feedback to programs, thus assisting in the student's long-term career and educational goals.

Activities to be performed: Provide practical, hands-on policy-making training on marine and Great Lakes resources to the graduate student with hosts in the legislative and executive Branches of government in the Washington, D.C. area.

Deliverables: Each fellow will be expected to provide a professional development plan and a six month and year end performance review.

Expected Outcome: The year spent as a Knauss fellow augments the student's education by providing practical training and understanding of how marine issues are handled at the federal level. This fellowship will benefit the student, as well as contribute to the pool of young and experienced graduates with knowledge and desire to pursue careers in marine and Great Lakes research, policy, and resource management.

Budget Breakdown:

The eligibility Sea Grant receives and administers the overall cooperative agreement. Application packages will each propose a total of \$95,600 in funding. This includes base funding for each award at \$78,100, of which \$73,100 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. 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.

| Program Budget Breakdown | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| BASE | Fellow Salary | \$73,100 | To be administered via grant to the host Sea Grant program; will cover fellow salary and individual professional development |
| | Fellow Professional Development | \$5,000 | |
| | Base Total | \$78,100 | Minimum total for fellows |
| Additional Funds | Optional Office Related Travel | \$15,000 | Optional host office related travel funds; to be accepted as a onetime release at the onset of the award |
| | Legislative Travel Funds | \$2,500 | Funds administered only to legislative fellows that may be used for placement week expenses and fellowship related travel |
| Programmatic Request | | \$95,600 | Please request a total of \$95,600 to accommodate space for up to \$15k in travel funds |