

NOAA COASTAL MANAGEMENT & DIGITAL COAST FELLOWSHIPS

Tips for Applicants

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPLICATION

Consider Timing

The program expects that you will have completed your degree before the start of the fellowship in August. If there is a chance you will not graduate before the fellowship begins, you may want to delay your application.

Understand the Process

The Coastal Management & Digital Coast Fellowship application process takes approximately eight months to complete, with reviews at both the state and national level.

November - December 2022 - NOAA's Office for Coastal Management selects the host office projects, and releases the fellowship announcement. Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) opens the fellowship application.

January 27, 2023 - Applications are due to VASG, submitted through Virginia's eSeaGrant application portal.

January/February 2023 - VASG interviews candidates that submit a completed application by the deadline. Based on the interview and application package, VASG will select up to five* candidates to move forward to the national competition.

February 2023 - VASG will assemble the final applications and submit them to the national competition. The VASG director also writes an accompanying endorsement letter.

March 2023 - The Office for Coastal Management runs the national review process; they typically receive ~50 applications from around the US. A review panel comprised of people familiar with the fellowship (typically former and current fellows, mentors, Office for Coastal Management personnel, Knauss Marine Policy Fellows/Alumni, and Sea Grant staff) will review and discuss all applications against the selection criteria and select 24 finalists, who will be notified in mid-March.

April 17 - 21, 2023 - Virtual matching workshop presentations.

April 24 - 28, 2023 - Finalists are *required* to participate in a matching workshop in Charleston, South Carolina. The weeklong series of interviews, with potential host offices, ends with the host office representatives selecting a fellow to work in their program.

August 2023 - Selected fellows begin their two-year fellowship.

Speak with Former Fellows

Candidates are encouraged to speak to current and former fellows to better understand the fellowship and make sure it is a good fit for your professional development and career goals, and interests. Speaking to fellows also helps in developing your goal statement.

* The joint 2023 NOAA Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellowship announcement allows state Sea Grant programs to nominate a fifth candidate from a minority serving institution.

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Review the Selection Criteria

The national reviewers will be asked to read many applications, and they will evaluate each against these criteria.

Make it easy for them to find the information they need! The selection criteria are:

- Content of the applicant's professional goal statement, with emphasis on what the applicant expects from and can contribute to the fellowship experience, how the fellowship can help them reach their professional goals, and obstacles the applicant has overcome to reach this point in their academic career;
- Academic performance and diversity of educational background, professional experience, including internships and volunteer experience, extracurricular activities, awards, and honors;
- Endorsement of the applicant's Sea Grant director; and
- Support from two recommendation letter writers, including one from the applicant's principal professor/advisor.

In addition, the state Sea Grant Director is asked to consider the candidate's interest in coastal management, especially at the state and local level, and interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills.

GOAL STATEMENT

Why the Coastal Management Fellowship?

Your statement should clearly articulate the answers to the following questions: What can you bring or contribute to the fellowship? What do you hope to learn/gain from the fellowship? What experiences do you expect out of the fellowship? What are your professional development and career goals, and how will this fellowship help you achieve those goals, which may be difficult without this opportunity? The statement should also clearly articulate why you are interested in coastal management at the state/local level, as well as highlight your coastal-related experience. *You are discouraged to state that you are hoping to be accepted as a fellow in order to get a job in the future. Rather, focus on how you will grow professionally from the fellowship experience.*

Tell Stories

Reviewers are looking for specific examples and details that explain who you are, why you are unique, and what you hope to learn from the fellowship. Don't be too general or vague. Tell detailed stories that validate skills, highlight examples of personal resilience and grit when faced with past challenges, and illuminate your capacity and interest in making connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues. A new aspect to this application element is the inclusion of any obstacles that you have overcome to reach this point in your academic career. Stories that highlight what inspires and motivates you *today*, including what drives you to learn about and work in the science-policy domain, are preferable to stories that broadly explain your original motivation to work on coastal and marine issues.

Don't Be Repetitive

500 words is not a lot of space to tell your story. Avoid wasting precious space by repeating what is in your CV.

Keep Your Interests General

The fellowship is an educational opportunity; therefore, while it is appropriate to indicate general areas of interest, it is not appropriate to be too specific in the types of work or host office(s) you hope to be placed in. You should highlight relevant skills and interests that make you qualified for a range of projects without calling out a

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specific state/project of interest. Reviewers want to see that you are open minded and interested in the learning opportunities presented by the fellowship and have the skills relevant to multiple hosts, not that you are seeking a specific job/host agency.

Follow Format Guidance

Keep your statement under 500 words.

Make It Easy for Reviewers

We encourage you to use 12 pt. font and to put your name and "Goal Statement" somewhere on the document. Also consider how formatting (e.g., headers, white space, bold/italics) can help guide reviewers and make your statement easier to read. Be engaging; remember that reviewers are reading many statements. *They will all start to sound alike, so think of ways to stand out. Also, remember to proofread carefully; your statement is the primary way that reviewers judge your written communication skills.*

RESUME/CV

Demonstrate Diversity of Experiences

The fellowship is looking for students with diverse interests and experiences. The Resume/CV should highlight broad experience in academics, extracurricular activities, honors and awards (see selection criteria), as well as real-world experience. Internships, relevant volunteer work, and class projects are all things that candidates can include to demonstrate broad experience. Address as many of these criteria as possible.

Relevant Skills

In addition to the above criteria, it is important to recognize that the fellowship program focuses on coastal management, where fellows are often working closely with stakeholders and partners. Highlighting professional and academic experiences and relevant skills you have gained working on coastal-related projects including (but not limited to): facilitation skills, experience working with communities and stakeholders, application of tools and data, social science experience/exposure, and strong interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills may be useful to include on your Resume/CV. Consider ways that you can highlight these types of skills and experiences.

Use Lots of Headers

Unlike a typical Resume/CV, you are showing breadth of expertise and interests, as opposed to depth in a particular area. Aim for many headers with a little information under each. If you have a lot of experience, highlight only the most recent or relevant. *Strongly consider using words from the selection criteria (i.e., extra-curricular activities, honors and awards) as headers.* List publications and presentations because these demonstrate written and oral communication skills.

Think Outside the Box

You may end up putting things in this Resume/CV that you would not typically highlight in a job application. Think about volunteer and outreach activities, work experience (not necessarily in your field), professional service, and similar activities that may help to demonstrate diversity of experiences. You may even refer to your undergraduate years if your graduate/professional experience is limited.

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Make It Easy for Reviewers

We encourage you to use reasonable margins, and consider how formatting (e.g., headers, white space, bold/italics) can help guide reviewers.

Follow Format Guidance

Keep your Resume/CV under two pages using 12 pt. font.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Get a Diverse Second Letter

Your first letter must come from your major professor or the faculty member who knows you best. For your second letter, consider someone who might know you from a different perspective (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone you have worked with on an outreach or policy project). It is *most important* to select someone who will write a strong letter for you, but an “outside” perspective helps to demonstrate your breadth and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences than your major professor/advisor.

Coach Your Letter Writers

Tell your letter writers what the NOAA Coastal Management & Digital Coast Fellowship is about, what the selection criteria are, and what you want them to highlight in their letters. Remember that this is not for a research job, so make sure they are highlighting the right skills and strengths—things like real-world experience, leadership, independence, academic experience, problem-solving, work ethic, ability to learn new things, interpersonal skills, communication skills, facilitation skills, team work, interest in state/local level coastal management, etc.

Send Reminders

Please remind your letter writers to submit their letters to VASG on time. If they are late, we may not be able to accept them and you will be at a disadvantage.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Transcripts

Unofficial transcripts are acceptable, but please make sure they clearly indicate the basic information about you, the university, and the degree completed/sought. Not all unofficial transcripts contain this information. If you plan to submit official transcripts they do not need to be sent from the universities in a sealed envelope or via secure email. If you have copies of your official transcript, you may submit those.

Ensure **high-quality** scanned copies of your transcripts. Reviewers may print these scanned copies, so ensure they are readable even when printed.

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