

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

OAR National Sea Grant College Program (SG)

Funding Opportunity Title

FY2024 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-24162

Assistance Listing Number(s)

Dates

Deadline(s): Eligible interested students must submit application materials by 5:00 PM, local time on Thursday, January 25, 2024, to eligible Sea Grant programs. Interested 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 interested students must submit their applications to the Sea Grant program to which they were referred to by the NMFS-SG Fellowship Program Manager listed in Section VII.

Letters of Intent (LOIs) should be submitted from eligible Sea Grant programs via email to the NSGO Fellowship Program Managers (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) by 5:00 pm Eastern Time on Thursday, February 8, 2024.

Selected applications from the eligible Sea Grant program are to be received and validated in Grants.gov by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (EDT) on Thursday, February 22, 2024. (Note that National Sea Grant Office staff will only be available to answer questions until 5:00 p.m. EDT). The application submitted to the eligible Sea Grant program by the interested student must be submitted to Grants.gov unchanged.

Period of Performance: Projects should have a start date no earlier than August 1, 2024 and an end date of no later than July 31, 2027.

Funding Opportunity Description

The National Sea Grant College Program was enacted by the 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 2024 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics. When an interested student is applying, be sure to specify your project's focus area in your title page: either Population and Ecosystem Dynamics (PED), or Marine Resource Economics (MRE). See Section IV.B, Content and Form of Application, for more information.

Population and Ecosystem Dynamics: Sea Grant anticipates funding at least four new Ph.D. fellowships in 2024 to students who are interested in careers related to marine ecosystem and population dynamics. The emphasis will be on the research and development of quantitative methods for assessing the status of marine ecosystems; managed fish, invertebrates, and other targeted species; and marine mammals, seabirds, and other protected species.

Marine Resource Economics: Sea Grant anticipates funding at least one new Ph.D. fellowship in 2024 to students who are interested in careers related to the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources.

Fellows will work on thesis questions of public interest and relevance to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the guidance of NMFS mentors at participating NMFS Science Centers or Offices. The NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics meets NOAA's healthy oceans goal of "marine fisheries, habitats, biodiversity sustained with healthy and productive ecosystems."

Application packages may propose up to \$62,500 in federal funding plus at least 20% matching (\$12,500) funding per year. These awards will be jointly funded by NMFS and Sea Grant. These fellowships can provide support for up to three years.

Interested students are strongly encouraged to reach out to the Sea Grant program in their state/territory at least one month prior to the state application deadline to receive application support and provide notification of intent to apply.

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-24162.

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).

The National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) support Ph.D. graduate fellowships in two specific areas (1) population and ecosystem dynamics (PED) and (2) marine resource economics (MRE). The intent of this opportunity is to award a limited number of fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to population and ecosystem dynamics and marine resource economics with a mission to achieve sustainable living marine resource management, and account for changing conditions using an ecosystem-based fishery management approach.

Student projects will focus on at least one of the following: 1) the population dynamics of living marine resources including protected species and species for which we seek sustainable fisheries; 2) stock assessment methodologies; 3) marine ecosystem modeling; 4) integrated ecosystem assessments; 5) ecosystem-based management of marine ecosystems; 6) economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources; and 7) quantitative survey analytical methodologies. These projects need to have a strong quantitative and applied resource management emphasis.

The fellowship can provide support for up to three years for qualified graduate students working towards a Ph.D. in quantitative programs including ecology, ecosystem ecology, population dynamics or related fields of study such as wildlife biology, fishery biology, marine biology, quantitative ecology, applied mathematics, applied statistics, simulation modeling, marine resource economics, natural resource economics, or environmental economics.

If selected, each fellow will be required to work closely with an expert (mentor) from NMFS who may provide data for a fellow's thesis, serve on the fellow's committee, and/or host an annual summer internship at the participating NMFS facility. Mentors will be from participating NMFS Science Centers or offices.

B. Program Priorities

Sea Grant is seeking applications for its fellowship programs to fulfill its broad educational responsibilities, enhance workforce development, and to strengthen the collaboration between Sea Grant and the NMFS. Selected fellows will work on thesis questions of public interest and relevance to NMFS and work with NMFS mentors at participating NMFS Science Centers or offices. The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's overarching priorities, specifically by providing the science needed to sustainably manage and further account for changing ocean conditions into an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and to model and forecast those effects on fish stocks, their habitat and seafood productivity.

The goals of the program are to 1) encourage qualified students to pursue careers in population and ecosystem dynamics related to living marine resources; 2) encourage qualified students to pursue careers in marine resource economics; 3) increase available expertise related to quantitative ecology for systems of living marine resources; 4) increase available expertise related to the economic analysis of living marine resource conservation and management decisions; 5) foster closer relationships between academic scientists and NMFS; 6) provide real-world experience to graduate students and accelerate their career development; and 7) support graduate students from diverse backgrounds with an interest in population dynamics or marine resource economics.

For those interested students with population and ecosystem dynamics topics: The fellowship covers both population and ecosystem dynamics to ensure support for fellows who conduct research in support of living marine resource assessments as well as conduct broadly-scoped ecosystem assessments, implement ecosystem-based management, and evaluate system-level considerations of living marine resources. As both ecosystem and population dynamics rely heavily on quantitative marine ecology methods and skills, this announcement reflects that underlying commonality.

Similarly for those students interested in marine resource economics topics: The fellowship supports fellows who conduct research evaluating the benefits and costs of alternative management actions for commercial fisheries by analyzing critical fishery management issues, helping to ensure the sustainability and maximization of societal benefits from marine resources. As marine resource economics relies heavily on quantitative economics methods and skills, this announcement reflects that underlying commonality.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to the availability of funding, the fellowship program expects to award at least four new Ph.D. fellowships to students who are interested in careers related to population and ecosystem dynamics of living marine resources and/or marine ecosystem dynamics, and at least one new Ph.D. fellowship to students who are interested in careers related to marine resource economics.

The award for each fellowship will be a multi-year cooperative agreement in an amount not to exceed \$62,500 in federal funds per year for up to three years. Matching funds of 20% of the total federal request are required, as described in Section III.B.

Continued support after the first year will be contingent upon the availability of federal funds and satisfactory performance by the grantee.

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, it does so at its 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 a project fails to receive full funding.

B. Project/Award Period

The anticipated start date is August 1, 2024, with projects to be completed by July 31, 2027.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument is a cooperative agreement to an eligible institution. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the federal government during performance of the proposed work is anticipated. The nature of the substantial involvement includes NMFS mentoring and hosting successful fellows. This involvement may include serving for 10-20 days aboard a research or commercial vessel during a scientific survey or experimental activity. Additionally, the fellow may work on their thesis research or related activity at a participating NMFS facility. The fellow's work will be overseen by a NMFS mentor who will provide advice and guidance.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to submit to this opportunity:

Full applications submitted to Grants.gov must come from an eligible Sea Grant program. Prospective fellows enrolled towards a degree in a graduate program in a state or territory served by a Sea Grant program must submit to that program. Applications that are not approved and submitted by the student's state Sea Grant program will not be considered for review. Interested students in states or territories without a Sea Grant program must submit their applications to the Sea Grant program to which they were referred to by the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship Program Manager listed in section VII.

Those eligible to submit to a Sea Grant Program:

- 1) Prospective fellows must be United States citizens.
- 2) At the time of application, prospective fellows must be admitted to a Ph.D. degree program at a U.S. accredited university in the U.S. in population dynamics, ecosystem dynamics, resource or environmental economics, or a related field such as wildlife biology, fishery biology, natural resource management, marine biology, quantitative ecology, applied mathematics, applied statistics, or simulation modeling at an institution of higher education in the United States or its territories.
- 3) Alternatively, a prospective fellow may submit a signed letter from the institution indicating provisional acceptance to a Ph.D. degree program conditional on obtaining financial support such as this fellowship.

The National Sea Grant College Program champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by 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 Sea Grant program applications to reflect diverse participation with regards to age, race, 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.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

Non-federal matching funds equal to at least 20 percent (20%) of the federal funding request must be provided unless a waiver justified by statute is granted, such as the waiver for insular areas granted by the Department of Commerce pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a. The cumulative match at the end of each year of the grant must not fall below 20 percent of the cumulative federal request up to that point. For example, if \$62,500 in federal funds is requested (the maximum allowable annual request), matching funds must be at least \$12,500. In other words, applicants may not 'under' match in year one and 'over' match in year two. In-kind contributions directly supporting this application may count towards this matching requirement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from www.grants.gov under opportunity NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-24162. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Interested students 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 these required proposal elements (and where to locate them). Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required 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 should redact all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to 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.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This proposal package will be using a different set of forms than Sea Grant programs have completed in the past. Instead of the “SF424 NOAA Standard Non-Construction Application Package” of forms, this application will include the “SF424 NOAA Research & Related (R&R) Forms Package.” **While many of the forms may be familiar, please pay special attention to the headings and instructions in this section.**

Required Elements:

Applications must include the following elements. 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.

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 email by the NSGO Fellowship Program Managers (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) by 5:00 pm Eastern Time on Thursday, February 8, 2024.

Letter of Intent Requirements

Letters of Intent (LOIs) will allow the NSGO to gauge interest and topics that may be submitted. To be eligible for awards, LOIs must be received via email by the Program Managers (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on Thursday, February 8, 2024.

Letters of Intent should provide the following information:

1. Sea Grant Applicant Information (spreadsheet/table)
2. table of all applications received by the state program including, Student Name, Student’s Academic Institution, Degree the student is seeking.
3. Summary of the State Review Process (one page max)
4. 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 Friday, February 9, 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 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

This attachment should be the completed **Project Abstract Summary Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0019)** that is available as part of the application package. 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 nine sub-elements.

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

Project Narrative Elements:

- Title page
 - The name and contact information of the prospective fellow, and should specify your project's focus area (either PED or MRE).
 - The title of the proposal, depending on the student's research /concentration, the proposal title should read either "Last name_PED" or "Last name_MRE" as a prefix.
 - A brief project abstract
- Project proposal (Project proposal must not exceed five pages)
 - The project proposal is intended to describe the proposed dissertation or the general intended area of study. It must be written by the prospective fellow and include the following:
 - The number of years for which fellowship support is being sought;
 - a brief summary of the work to be completed;
 - a rationale for the proposed activity;
 - scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested;
 - appropriate details on methodology, and relevance of results
 - Candidate should demonstrate how their project will focus on at least one of the following: 1) the population dynamics of living marine resources; 2) stock assessment and survey methodologies; 3) marine ecosystem modeling; 4) integrated ecosystem assessments; 5) ecosystem-based management of marine ecosystems; and 6) economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources. Interdisciplinary topics are encouraged.
 - The proposal itself must not exceed five pages single spaced. If a proposal is longer than five pages, only the first five will be shared with reviewers. References and figures should be included as an appendix and do not count towards the five page limit.
- Education and career goal statement from the student (Education and career goal statement must not exceed two pages)
 - The statement should discuss the student's interest in: the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources, and/or quantitative marine ecology, with a focus on one or more of the following:
 - Development and implementation of methods for assessing marine ecosystems and/or stock status of living marine resources;
 - ecosystem-based management;
 - population dynamics of managed aquatic animals;
 - quantitative survey methodologies;
 - commitment to apply scientific expertise to serve society equitably (consider academics, volunteer activities, professional activities or personal experiences).
 - The statement must not exceed two pages single spaced. If a career goal statement is longer than two pages, only the first two pages will be shared with reviewers.
- Curriculum vitae (CV)
 - The student, the faculty advisor, and the NMFS mentor must each submit a CV which is not to exceed 2 pages. The CVs 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. If a CV is longer than two pages, only the first two pages will be shared with reviewers.
- Summary of academic training in quantitative methods
 - The student should provide a one-page single spaced maximum summary describing your academic training in quantitative methods; a listing of your top five classes in quantitative methods already taken; and classes you intend to take over the spring 2024 semester. Class listings should include course name (though course number e.g., MA 551 can be excluded) and a short description of content covered in course.
- Clear copies of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts
 - These copies may be either official or unofficial transcripts. For students who have been accepted but not yet enrolled in a current Ph.D. program, the program's acceptance letter is adequate to fill the requirement of Ph.D. transcripts.

- Letters of recommendation
 - A minimum of two signed letters of recommendation from:
 - The student's faculty advisor. The letters should discuss the following attributes of the student: quantitative skills, self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, academic and performance and/or potential.
 - The student's NMFS mentor. In addition to noting the NMFS staff member's commitment to serve as a mentor, letters from NMFS mentors should briefly address the relevance of the research to NMFS, as well as a statement of broader impacts of the proposal.
 - If multiple advisors or mentors are contributing, each one should provide a separate letter.
 - 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)

- Applicants must ensure that the questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information.
 - A separate questionnaire must be completed for each relevant action/project in the proposal.
 - The questionnaire can be found [here](#).
 - Guidance on how to complete the questionnaire, including how to describe work that will not involve any environmental impact, can be found [here](#). [Examples of](#) questionnaires can be found [here](#).

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.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

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

Applications must be submitted to Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Thursday, February 22, 2024.

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 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

The Sea Grant Act at 33 USC 1124(d)(2) states:

“No payment under any grant or contract under this section may be applied to:

- (A) the purchase or rental of any land; or
- (B) the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel; except that payment under any such grant or contract may be applied to the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings which are in direct support of any Sea Grant Program or project and may, if approved by the Secretary, be applied to the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of non-self-propelled habitats, buoys, platforms, and other similar devices or structures, or to the rental of any research vessel which is used in direct support of activities under any Sea Grant Program or project.”

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.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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

(1) Quality of project and applicability to program priorities.	Maximum Points: 30
<p>For the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship, the project summary should provide evidence of important and innovative research and relate that research to relevant agency priorities (30 points). The point scale is as follows: The project summary is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined below (0-10 points); the project summary adequately addresses expectations outlined below (11-20 points); the project summary exceeds expectations outlined below (21-30 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project description provides a clear rationale for why the work is important and innovative research; • There is a clear scientific or technical objective and/or hypotheses being tested; • The discussed methodology and relevance of results are appropriate for the proposed research and time frame; • The project is relevant to NOAA priorities (Section I.B.) 	
(2) Relevant experience related to diversity of education; extra-curricular activities; honors and awards; and interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills.	Maximum Points: 20
<p>For the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship the curriculum vitae, career goal statement, and summary of academic training in quantitative methods should demonstrate the experiences of the student as they relate to marine or aquatic related fields. The point scale is as follows: the relevant experience is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined below (0-6 points); the relevant experience adequately addresses expectations outlined below (7-13 points); the relevant experience exceeds expectations outlined below (14-20 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student demonstrates interpersonal, written, or oral communication skills; • The student clearly discusses an interest in the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources or quantitative marine ecology; • The experiences of the student provide them with the foundation for success in the academic space; • The student has shown interest in working with diverse stakeholders; • The student's experience demonstrates a commitment to apply scientific expertise to serve society equitably; • The student has shown interest in working with diverse collaborators, community members and/or interested partners. 	
(3) Academic record as it relates to quantitative coursework and related fields.	Maximum Points: 20
<p>For the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship the academic record is evaluated using student transcripts (undergraduate and graduate), the summary of academic training in quantitative methods, and the curriculum vitae (CV) (20 Points). The point scale is as follows: The academic record is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined below (0-6 points); the academic record adequately addresses expectations outlined below (7-13 points); the academic record exceeds expectations outlined below (14-20 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The education and experience in the student's area of expertise are appropriate to the career stage; • The transcript and academic training demonstrate quantitative coursework; • The student displays strength in academic performance and competitive course grades; 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of publications and/or presentations (academic or non-academic) are appropriate to the career stage, field, and institutional settings of the student. 	
(4) Recommendations and/or endorsements of the student.	Maximum Points: 20
<p>For the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics, the expertise of the academic advisor and proposed NMFS mentor will be taken into account (20 points total). If more than one letter for either category is submitted, the letters will be scored together.</p> <p><u>Academic Advisor Letter(s)</u> (10 Points): The point scale is as follows: the advisor letter is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined below (0-3 points); the advisor letter adequately addresses expectations outlined below (4-6 points); the advisor letter exceeds expectations outlined below (7-10 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter writer(s) demonstrate knowledge of the student and their academic abilities and/or potential; The letter writer(s) speak to the leadership potential, confidence, maturity, and self-direction of the student; The letter writer(s) provide evidence of the student's involvement in teamwork and collaborative leadership skills; The expertise of the academic advisor(s) will support the student and project (reviewers may use CV to review). <p><u>NMFS Mentor Letter(s)</u> (10 Points): The point scale is as follows: the NMFS mentor letter is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined below (0-3 points); the NMFS mentor letter adequately addresses expectations outlined below (4-6 points); the NMFS mentor letter exceeds expectations outlined below (7-10 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter writer(s) demonstrate knowledge of the student and their academic abilities and/or potential; The letter writer(s) adequately address the relevance of the research to NMFS; The letter writer(s) adequately address the broader impacts of the proposal; The expertise of the NMFS mentor will support the student and project. 	
(5) Overall application cohesion.	Maximum Points: 10
<p>For the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship program, consider all aspects of the application materials (CV, summary of academic training in quantitative methods, project summary, education and career goal statement from the student, letters of recommendation). The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined below (0-3 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined below (4-6 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined below (7-10 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application materials complement each other; The student brings an innovative and diverse perspective to the program; The application materials provide a clear picture of what the student would gain from receiving the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship. 	

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications that are missing required elements listed in Section IV. B. above, or applications coming from ineligible applicants may be rejected without further review.

State Level/Individual Sea Grant Program Review:

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

National Level Review:

Applications that are missing required elements listed in Section IV. B. above, or applications coming from ineligible applicants may be rejected without further review. Applications that pass the administrative review will be reviewed by at least three independent reviewers drawn from experts in a range of disciplines that are relevant to the applications. Each proposal will receive at least three written reviews from the reviewers assessing its merits with regard to the evaluation criteria.

After the written review phase, two separate panels will be conducted; one for the population and ecosystem dynamics applications and one for the marine resource economics applications. The panelists will represent a range of technical expertise in disciplines that are relevant to the applications. All panelists will evaluate each application and provide a score based on the evaluation criteria. These scores will be averaged to produce a final rank order. 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 in Section V.C. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

NOTE: Blinded reviewer comments will be provided to the students, including discussion of the LORs.

The program manager, NEPA staff lead, or grants specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the merit or administrative correctness of the application and may delay approval of the application, or impose conditions on the award preventing funding or execution of certain activities, until all questions are satisfactorily answered.

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:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. geographically
 - b. by type of institution
 - c. across academic disciplines
3. Program-specific objectives as listed in Section I.A.
4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Investigators may be asked to answer questions; and/or modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets (including overall funding level) to address the issues raised by the reviewers, the competition manager, the Selecting Official, or the Grants Officer before an award is made. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, funds are expected to be awarded by approximately August 1, 2024. This is the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form SF424 R&R).

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 90 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 90 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 oblige 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>

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

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.

DATA SHARING PLAN. 1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards. 2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. 3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. 4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

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.

VII. Agency Contacts

The National Sea Grant Office mailing address is:

NOAA Sea Grant
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Tel: (240) 507-4825

E-mail: 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.**

Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form

Once applications have been recommended for funding, applicants must submit a Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form (for each project within the application) through the [90-2 Webform portal](#). This is due within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified via email that their application has been recommended for award. A detailed step-by-step guide for completing the web-based 90-2 Form is available on [Inside Sea Grant](#). Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the [National Sea Grant College Program public website](#).

National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER)

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.

Section 508 Compliance

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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. 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 Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 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.

