



2023 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship Student Guide

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1. How to use this Guide

This guide is meant to be a resource for students interested in the 2023 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship program. There are aspects of this guide that are REQUIRED of the student for the successful submission of a NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship application, while other sections are tips and best practices. The document breaks down each section of the application process and provides answers to frequently asked questions, a breakdown of what is expected in the section, and how the section will be reviewed and a few tips. Students should review these materials as well as reach out to the state Sea Grant program through which they are applying to learn more about the process.

Each section contains the following elements, as appropriate:

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** Questions and Answers of questions that the NSGO receives from prospective students.
- **Notes:** Information and specific details about the section of the application. These notes should be followed strictly.
- **Tips:** Recommendations for strengthening the section of the application.
- **Criteria:** The details of how the reviewers will evaluate the section

Acronyms

NSGO--National Sea Grant Office

2. Eligibility

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. 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 Fellowship Program Manager (contact us at oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov). Applications that are not approved and submitted by the student's state Sea Grant program will not be considered for review.

Those eligible to submit to a Sea Grant Program:

- Prospective fellows must be United States citizens.
- At the time of application, prospective fellows must be admitted to a Ph.D. degree program at an accredited university in the United States or its territories 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.
- 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 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 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.

3. Important Dates

Important Dates	
Month	Activity
January (2023)	Applications due to the State Programs January 25, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. local time
February	State Sea Grant programs review packages
	Letters of Intent due to National Sea Grant February 8, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. ET
	Selected applications from Sea Grant Programs are received and validated in Grants.gov February 24, 2023 by 11:59 p.m. ET
April/May	National review panel and finalists selection
June	Applicants notified of application status
August	Anticipated start date is: August 1, 2023
July (2026)	Projects are to be completed by: July 31, 2026

4. Award Information

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

Application packages may propose up to \$58,333 in federal funding plus at least 20% matching funding per year. These awards will be jointly funded by NMFS and Sea Grant. These fellowships can provide support for up to three years.

5. Where to Apply

The student should apply through the [state Sea Grant program](#) where they are currently enrolled in school. If the student is enrolled in a university that is not represented by a Sea Grant program they should contact the National Sea Grant Office (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) to be assigned a program.

FAQs on Where to Apply

QUESTION: I am a resident of a different state than the state that my school is located in, should I apply to the program where I am a resident?

ANSWER: No, the student should apply through the state in which their university is located.

QUESTION: My research focuses on a different state/region than my university is based, should I apply to the state where my research is focused?

ANSWER: No, the student should apply through the State Sea Grant Program your university is located.

QUESTION: What if my state has more than one Sea Grant program, which program should I apply to?

ANSWER: Either program. We encourage you to reach out to the one you are already familiar with to apply. If you are not familiar with either program, reach out to them both and decide which is a better fit for you.

6. Application Materials

I. Project Narrative:

Project Narrative	
TO BE SUBMITTED BY THE STUDENT	
(1) Title Page	(6) Education and Career Goal Statement
(2) Project Proposal	(7) Letters of Recommendation
(3) Curriculum Vitae (CV)	(8) Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire
(4) Transcripts	(9) Data Management Plan
(5) Academic Training in Quantitative Methods	

1. Title Page

- **Notes:**

- Page Limit: One page maximum
- Important Details:
 - It should include the name and contact information of the prospective fellow, the title of the proposal, a brief project abstract, and should specify your project's focus area (either Population and Ecosystem Dynamics (PED), or Marine Resource Economics (MRE)).
 - Depending on the student's research concentration, the proposal title should read either "Last name_PED" or "Last name_MRE" as a prefix.

2. Project Proposal

- **Notes:**

- Page Limit: Five Pages (References and figures do not count towards the five page limit)

- Important Details: 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 projects 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.

- Additional Note: If a proposal is longer than five pages, only the first five will be shared with reviewers.

3. Education and Career Goal Statement

- **Notes:**

- Page Limit: Two pages (single spaced)
- Important Details: The statement should discuss the student's interest in the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources, or quantitative marine ecology, with a focus on one or more of the following:
 - modeling and managing systems of living marine resources;
 - development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing marine ecosystems;
 - ecosystem-based management;
 - marine population dynamics;
 - the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing stock status of living marine resources.
- Additional Note: If a career goal statement is longer than two pages, only the first two pages will be shared with reviewers.

4. Curriculum vitae (CV)

- **Notes:**

- Page Limit: Two pages maximum
- Important Details: 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.

- **Tips:**
 - Look for keywords in the fellowship description and review criteria). Use these words in your CV and tailor it to highlight those specific attributes the reviewers will be looking for.
 - Use active language!
 - Make it as easy as possible for the reader. Make it readable to all when considering language and word choice, keep it simple and clear (i.e., only use subheadings if needed, pull out extraneous words that don't add any value to what you are trying to say.

5. Academic Training in Quantitative Methods

- **Notes:**
 - Page Limit: One Page (single spaced)
 - Important Details: Provide a one-page maximum, single-spaced, 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 2023 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.

6. Transcripts

- **Notes:**
 - Important Details: Submit 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.

7. Letters of Recommendation

- **Notes:**
 - Page Limit: Two pages (single spaced)
 - Important Details: A minimum of two signed letters of recommendation from:
 - The student's faculty advisor. The letters should discuss the following attributes of the student: self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, 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.

- Additional Note: If multiple advisors or mentors are contributing, each one should provide a separate letter.
- **Tips:**
 - Schedule an appointment or meeting with your letter writers well in advance. Discuss the program to which you are applying, the selection criteria, and highlight your most relevant professional experiences. Make this process as easy for the writers as possible!

8. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire

- **Notes:**
 - The Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire, guidance on how to complete the questionnaire, as well as examples of completed questionnaires, can be found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>.
 - Sea Grant programs must ensure that the questionnaires are completed in full and include 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. If detailed information is not provided, NOAA via the federal program officer, may request additional information or place a specific award condition on the fellowship award prohibiting specific activities, if permits or other environmental compliance documentation is not currently available.

9. Data Management Plan

- **Notes:**
 - If your research will not generate any environmental data, an acceptable data sharing plan is the sentence, "This project will not generate any environmental data." For more information, see Section VI.B.(9). For reference: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf

II. Budget Narrative:

Each individual project included within the application should include the following budget documents (Sea Grant 90-4 form and budget justification narratives) in the following order and format. Additional budget narrative guidance provided by NOAA Grants Management Division can be found here:

https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf.

a) Sea Grant 90-4 Form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362):

- A required form used to provide budget breakdowns and budget justifications by year and object class for the project in this application. Please download the most up-to-date Excel version of the 90-4 form when preparing an application. The Excel version should be used in the creation of the 90-4 and should then be turned into a PDF to include with the budget narrative package. All required forms are available at <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>.
- Guidance on filling out the form is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance Document (<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Guidance/SeaGrantGeneralApplicationGuide.pdf>).

b) Budget Justification:

- A budget justification is required for each year of the project in the application that explains budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. This document should be attached as a PDF with the Sea Grant 90-4 Form, as appropriate.
- The budget should include funds for travel to the annual Fellows Symposium and may include funds for stipend, tuition, fees, equipment, supplies, discretionary travel, and other reasonable and appropriate project costs (see Section II, "Award Information"). Sub-contracts, if any, should have a separate budget page.

III. Overall Application:

In addition to the forms required above, the following standard federal forms and assurances are required for the overall application and can be found on the Sea Grant website (<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/insideseagrants/Implementation>).

a) SF-424 Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0004)

This form, titled “Application for Federal Assistance,” must identify the entire funding period (August 1, 2023-July 31, 2026), as well as the federal funding amount being requested and the 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.

b) SF-424A Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0006)

This form, titled “Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs,” must describe the proposed yearly funding in federal and non-federal dollars for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class with separate columns for each year of federal dollars and each year of match dollars. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).

c) Additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B

Section B of the SF-424A form described above only includes space to report the applicant’s yearly federal dollars and non-federal dollars over two years. If the application includes more than two years of federal and non-federal dollars, please complete the additional SF-424A, extra Section B to report the yearly non-federal matching fund budget of the grant. Guidance on filling out the form is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance Document (<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Guidance/SeaGrantGeneralApplicationGuide.pdf>). This form is an outlier and will be added to the “Budget Narrative Attachment” section on Grants.gov, as described in Section IV. C. 2.

d) 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.

e) 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.

f) SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) [optional form, include if applicable]

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.

7. Review Criteria

(1) Quality of Project and applicability to program priorities	
Section Description	Quality of project and applicability to program priorities. 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.
Points	30 Points
Point Scale	- 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).
Review Criteria	- 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 agency (NOAA) priorities.
Notes	If the proposal is longer than five pages, only the first five will be shared with reviewers.

(2) Relevant Experience Related to Diversity of Education	
Section Description	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 Fellowship Program. Future year activities: The student should include a listing of classes and/or plans for spring 2023, summer 2023, and fall 2023. The curriculum vitae, career goal statement, and summary of academic training in quantitative methods will also be considered in the section.
Points	20 Points
Point Scale	- 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).
Review Criteria	-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.
Recommended Length	One Page single spaced (MAX).
Pro Tip	Utilize formatting (bold, italics, indentations) to help provide a clear and concise CV.

(3) Academic Record	
Section Description	Academic record as it relates to quantitative coursework and related fields. 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).
Points	20 Points
Point Scale	- 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).
Review Criteria	-The education and experience in the student’s area of expertise are appropriate to the career stage; -The transcripts and academic training demonstrate quantitative coursework; -The student displays strength in academic performance and competitive course grades; -Records of publications and/or presentations (academic or non-academic) are appropriate to the career stage, field, and institutional settings
Notes	Transcripts can either be official or unofficial. 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.

(4a) Academic Advisor Letter	
Section Description	The student's faculty advisor. The letters should discuss the following attributes of the student: self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, academic and performance and/or potential.
Points	10 Points
Point Scale	- The advisor letter of recommendation does not adequately address the expectations outlined below (0-3 points); - The advisor letter of recommendation adequately addresses expectations outlined below (4-6 points); - The advisor letter of recommendation exceeds expectations outlined below (7-10 points).

Review Criteria	<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 major professor(s) will support the student and project (reviewers may use CV to review).
Recommended Length	Two Pages single spaced (per letter) (MAX).
Pro Tip	Schedule an appointment or meeting with your letter writers well in advance. Discuss the program to which you are applying, the selection criteria, and highlight your most relevant professional experiences. Make this process as easy for the writers as possible!

(4b) NMFS Mentor Letter

Section Description	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.
Points	10 Points
Point Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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).
Review Criteria	<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.
Recommended Length	Two Pages single spaced (MAX).

(5) Overall Application Cohesion

Section Description	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).
Points	10 Points

Point Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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).
Review Criteria	<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.
Pro Tip	Make sure the pieces of your application do not just repeat one another, but complement and expand on one another as well!

8. Additional Resources

- **Tip:**
 - **Have MULTIPLE people proofread.** Grammatical errors will distract from what you're saying. Ensure everyone can understand your writing regardless of background or position, i.e., your professor vs a graduate student in another field vs your sister.

Helpful Links:

- Review the Student Applicant Guide to Sea Grant Fellowships
https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/0/Documents/Handouts/Student%20Applicant%20Guide%20to%20Sea%20Grant%20Fellowships_508.pdf
- Understanding the difference between a resume and a CV:
<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/cv/>
- Words to include/exclude in a resume/CV: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/words-to-avoid-and-include-on-a-resume>
- Tips to provide to your Letter of Recommendation writer: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/letter-of-recommendation-writing-tips>
- Active Language for a CV:
[Here is a list of strong action words.](#)