



NATIONAL SEA GRANT OFFICE

oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov

Meet the Knauss Fellowship Team



Agenda



OVERVIEW



ELIGIBILITY



APPLY

Overview

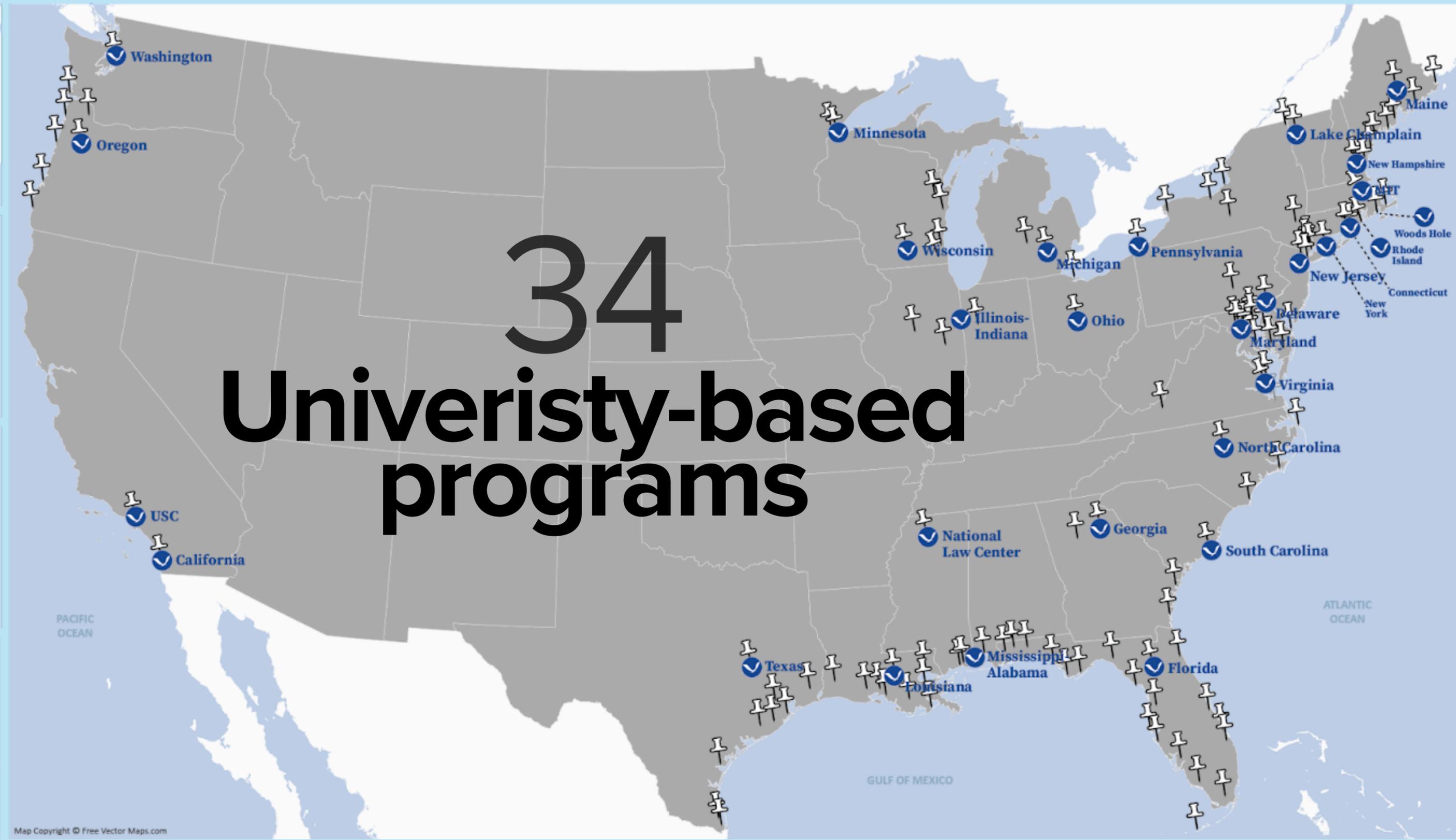
What is Sea Grant?

Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine and Great Lakes resources to create a sustainable economy and environment

National Sea Grant Office (NSGO)



34 University-based programs



Overview

Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship



1,760
Alumni



A unique educational and professional experience for graduate students interested in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources



Direct experience working in the executive and legislative branches on the latest issues in ocean and coastal management, atmospheric science, fisheries and more.

Overview

Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship

 EXECUTIVE BRANCH

- Possible Host Agencies: NOAA, USFWS, USEPA, Navy, USGS, DOI, USCG, NSF
- Many host offices have hosted fellows and both mentors and colleagues are often alumni
- May work on very specific topics as an expert or serve in a high level coordination role
- Work hours are more predictable and steady (typical 9-5)

Overview

Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- Possible placements encompass committees and personal offices in both parties and chambers
- Many host offices have hosted fellows in the past and have a deep investment in the Sea Grant program
- Will typically work on the hot topic in the office, which may change throughout the year, and may not always be related to ocean/Great Lakes
- Work hours more unpredictable and days more fast-paced

Eligibility Applicants

U.S. citizen (born or naturalized), U.S. lawful permanent resident (green card holder), or U.S. dual national

Enrolled towards a degree in a graduate program at any point between the onset of the 2025 Fall Term (quarter, trimester, semester, etc.) and June 3, 2026

Graduate degree will be awarded through an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or U.S. Territories

Has an interest in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources

Eligibility Other Criteria

The one-year fellowship will take place in the National Capital region. Applicants must be prepared to relocate to the Washington, D.C. area.

Dual Nationals

A significant number of participating federal host offices are unable to accept dual nationals as fellows. This may reduce the number of placement opportunities available to dual citizens.

Prior Contact

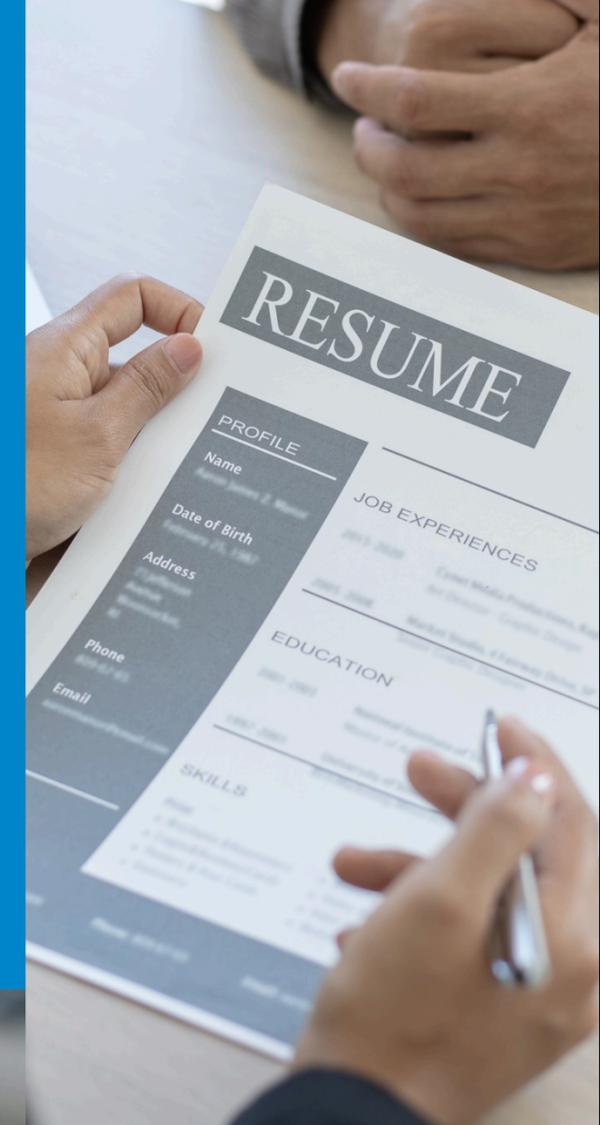
Any prior contact/arrangements made with potential host offices before the start of the placement week will result in immediate disqualification from the process.

Background Check

Applicants must be able to pass a federal background security check. Most positions require a public trust clearance; some require a secret clearance.

Reapplying

Applicants who have been accepted as national finalists and/or become fellows are not eligible to apply again without the written permission of the NSGO Fellowships Manager.



Apply How to Apply

Students should apply through the state Sea Grant program at the university in which they are currently enrolled.

If the student is enrolled at a university not represented by a Sea Grant program, they should contact the National Sea Grant Office (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) to be assigned to a program.



Apply Materials & Criteria

1

Director Letter

Submitted by state Sea Grant program

Two pages, maximum

10 POINTS



Description

Created based on the student's complete application package and a personal interview with the director

Covers the student's alignment with the Knauss program, highlights skills and responses to interview questions, and explains any gaps in their CV or application materials for the review panel



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: demonstrate the student's alignment with the Knauss Program, highlight their skills, show their ability to manage interpersonal situations and adversity, and elaborate on any information not addressed in the student's application package



Pro Tip

Be true to yourself in your interactions with the director and Sea Grant staff. Ensure that you answer questions honestly and fully in your interview.

Apply Materials & Criteria

2

Curriculum Vitae

Submitted by student

Two pages, maximum

10 POINTS



Notes

The student should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.).



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: demonstrate varied work, volunteer, or extracurricular experience in academic, research, outreach, or policy roles; education, prior leadership, and experiences must be relevant to the student's career stage and serving the American people



Pro Tip

Use good and consistent formatting (bold, italics, indentations) to help provide a clear and concise CV. Your materials should be non-partisan, including the language you use to present yourself. Highlight activities that are free from party affiliation, bias, or designation

Apply Materials & Criteria

3

Personal Education and Career Development

Submitted by student

1500 words, maximum

60 POINTS



Notes

The student's statement must emphasize their abilities and career development expectations from the fellowship. Responses should be answered separately under given section headers (which do not count toward the word count) and must not include personal contact information or external links, as these will be redacted by the program



Review Criteria

See each section for specific criteria.



Pro Tip

Ensure you fully address all questions, incorporating educational, professional, and personal life experiences beyond just academics. Your application should expand on, not simply repeat, the information found in your CV

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION ONE *a*

Career Path and Objectives

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

Discuss any experience(s) that support or relate to the mission of the National Sea Grant College Program or the state Sea Grant program (the student does not have to have had a direct connection to Sea Grant). The student should emphasize (if relevant) any experience with extending and distilling science for non-scientific audiences



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The student must link experience to the Sea Grant mission, demonstrate science communication for broad audiences, and show creative thinking, analytical skill, and a capacity to connect science with economic, social, and political issues



Pro Tip

Review the mission of both the National Sea Grant Program and the state through which you are applying

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION ONE

Career Path and Objectives

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

The student should discuss their interest in the Knauss Fellowship, with a specific focus on how it supports their career pathway. The student should focus on how the Knauss Program would further their professional development



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: Demonstrate an understanding of the Knauss Fellowship, articulate clear career goals, and show a broad personal/professional background. They must be specific and concise about what they would contribute to and gain from the program



Pro Tip

Be specific about why Knauss. If you are unsure, explore how Knauss will help define or guide your career

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION ONE

Career Path and Objectives

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

The student should discuss the transferable skills (those applicable across a variety of disciplines) they would bring to the Knauss Fellowship. In this response, students should highlight experiences from their personal, professional and academic background



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The student must be specific, direct, and concise when discussing their cultivated career skills, as the demonstrated skill set will lay a foundation for success in the Knauss Fellowship



Pro Tip

Tell us what you would bring to Knauss

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION TWO *a*

Career Path Experience

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

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



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: Students must demonstrate an interest in public programs or service, along with relevant experience like volunteering, leadership, extension, or education. These public service experiences are not required to be directly related to NOAA's mission



Pro Tip

Think about what the significance of public service means to you and what activities you have participated in that support that

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION TWO

Career Path Experience

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

The student should discuss a situation in which they have managed or supported a project or activity that included collaborators, community members and/or interested partners with the intent to achieve a common goal. The student is encouraged to use examples



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The student must show creativity, willingness to navigate challenges, leadership, problem-solving initiative, and interest in working with collaborators, community members, and partners



Pro Tip

Make sure to tell a story (no need for specific details like names or institutions)

Apply Materials & Criteria

3 SECTION TWO

Career Path Experience

Submitted by student

250 words, recommended

10 POINTS



Prompt

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



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The student must show creativity, a willingness to navigate challenging situations, and demonstrate leadership and problem-solving initiative



Pro Tip

Make sure to tell a story (no need for specific details like names or institutions)

Apply Materials & Criteria

4

Relevant Coursework and Future Year Plans

Submitted by student

One page, single-spaced, maximum

10 POINTS



Description

The student must discuss relevant coursework (completed or in-progress) and their activities for the upcoming year. This includes a list of classes and/or plans for spring, summer, and fall 2026, relevant to their Knauss Fellowship success



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The student should have activities across academic, applied, research, administration, outreach, or policy areas, with future education and professional experience supporting their career goals or being relevant to the Knauss Program



Pro Tip

Provide an explanation for why a class you have taken or an activity in your future applies to or supports the Knauss program

Apply Materials & Criteria

5

Letters of Recommendation

Submitted by student

Two pages, single-spaced,
maximum per letter

**5 POINTS EACH, 10 POINTS
TOTAL**



Description

Two letters are required, with at least one from a current faculty member, each limited to two pages. They must discuss the student's academic performance, potential, self-motivation, response to setbacks, teamwork, collaborative leadership, willingness to learn new skills, and other relevant strengths



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 5 (exceptional)

Criteria: Letter writers must confirm the student's abilities, leadership, maturity, and self-direction and provide evidence of the student's flexibility to tackle new topics and their skill in conveying scientific knowledge to non-scientific audiences



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

Apply Materials & Criteria

6

Overall Application Cohesion

10 POINTS



Description

For the Knauss Fellowship, consider all application materials: CV, Personal education and career development responses, Relevant Coursework and Future Year Plans, Letters of Recommendation, and the Director's Letter



Review Criteria

Scale: 0 (inadequate) to 10 (exceptional)

Criteria: The application materials must be cohesive, clearly demonstrating what the student would gain from the Knauss Fellowship and what unique contributions they would bring to the program



Pro Tip

Ensure that your application materials complement each other-do not just repeat the same information in every section

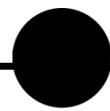
Apply Application Timeline

*dates are subject to change



March

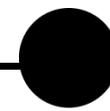
Opportunity goes live



June

Student Applications due to state programs by **June 3, 2026, 5:00 p.m. local time**

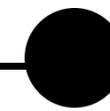
State Sea Grant programs review packages, check for minimum requirements, properly redact, interview applicants



July

Letters of Intent due to NSGO from state program by **July 8, 2026, 5:00 p.m. ET**

State Sea Grant programs nominate up to 6 applications each to the national competition by **July 22, 2026, 11:59 p.m. ET**

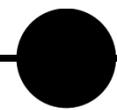


August

NSGO reviews packages, check for minimum requirements, review redaction

NSGO runs national review panel and selects finalists and alternates

Apply Application Timeline

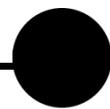


September

State programs are notified of selections by **September 9, 2026**

Finalists are notified of selections by **September 14, 2026**

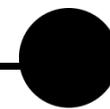
Finalists welcome workshop **September 24, 2026**



October

Finalist information / commitment due

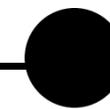
Finalists assigned to the legislative or executive placement process



February-April

Legislative Placement Week (subject to change)

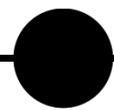
Executive Placement Week (subject to change)



March-May

Fellow onboarding (security, etc.)

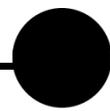
Apply Application Timeline



June

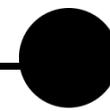
Fellowships start **June 1, 2027**

Fellowship orientation
June 1-5, 2027



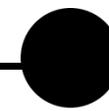
July

Professional development
plans due



October

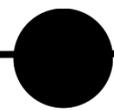
Fellow and host/NSGO
check-ins



December

Midyear Research
Performance Progress
Report (RPPR) due to
state Sea Grant

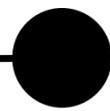
Apply Application Timeline



April

Successful completion of fellowship (to date) verified

Direct Hire Authority (DHA) eligibility (earliest date if applicable)



May

Graduation

Fellowship ends **May 31, 2028**

Apply Award Information

The fellowship is 12 months of active participation between March 2027 and February 2028

The grant period is 13 months to allow for flexibility for fellow relocation after the fellowship ends

The fellowship only covers relocation for fellows returning to locations outside the Washington, D.C. area

Pre-award spending is allowed to give fellows the opportunity to relocate to the Washington, D.C. area after Month, Day

Discuss specifics of each award with your state Sea Grant program

Each award may be different because each university is different, particularly in how they manage fringe benefits (health care, social security and taxes), travel policies and other university-related rules

Apply Budget

Salary

\$74,700

Fellow salary/stipend and may cover employee expenses/fringe (taxes, healthcare, social security, etc.)

Professional Development

\$5,000

Discretionary budget (moving, professional development, etc.)

Apply Final Tips

Connect with alumni who can answer your questions about the program

Have a coaching session or conversation about your application materials

Re-read the application requirements and your application materials

Share information about the opportunity with your letter writers; give them time to provide meaningful comments about you

Start early; collecting all the pieces can take time

Stay true to yourself; this is your application, let your character and goals be the focus

Your materials should be non-partisan, including the language you use to present yourself. Highlight activities that are free from party affiliation, bias, or designation

Have someone with fresh eyes **proofread your materials**



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING

Hear from Alumni



The Knauss fellowship provided me with the networks to leverage the career I have now at NOAA. I have no doubt that the foundations I laid during my fellowship directly helped me become the Federal employee I am today.

People who ultimately want a career in research often think they can't leave academia for fear of missing out on academic opportunities. If you're thinking about applying for Knauss but fear diverging from academia for a year, please know that this experience will only make you a better advocate for your science and shed light on how science is funded.

Erica Towle, Ph.D.

