

NOFO Updates From Prior Year NOFO, References and Recommendations

A few high-level changes to the 2027 NOFO are highlighted below for ease of reference. We encourage you to review the NOFO in detail and reach out with any questions.

Important Due Dates

- Students must submit applications to SG programs by 5:00 pm local time on **June 3, 2026**.
- A letter of intent, including the new Attestation of State Level Review, from Sea Grant programs must be submitted to the Program Managers (oar.sg.fellows@noaa.gov) by 5:00 pm ET on **July 8, 2026**. Confirmation of receipt will be shared by COB **July 10, 2026**.
- Full proposals for each nominated student must be submitted to the 2027 Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship NOFO via Grants.gov (**NOAA-OAR-SG-2027-32433**) by 11:59 ET on **July 22, 2026**.

Full Proposal Requirements: Submission

To streamline the review of Knauss applications, the submission process has been updated.

- **Project Narrative (IV. b)** will consist of ONLY the director's letter.
- **Other Attachments (IV. d)** attach the student materials (including the director's letter) as one attachment in the following order: CV, Application Questions, Future Year Plans, Director's Letter, Academic Letter and Other Letter. The attachment name should match that of the application and use the format: "**(XXSG)_2027 Knauss_(Student's Last Name)**". Other than necessary redactions, the materials shall be attached without changes.

Key NOFO Updates

- Student Eligibility: Foreign Nationals will no longer be eligible for the Knauss program.
 - (1) The student is a U.S. Citizen (born or naturalized), a U.S. Lawful Permanent Resident (Green Card holder), or a dual national with at least one citizenship as the U.S.
- Fellowship Dates
 - The anticipated start date for the 12-month fellowship is between February 1 and June 1, 2027. The project is to be completed by June 30, 2028. These awards cannot be renewed or deferred. Pre-award spending may be authorized 120 days prior to the start date of the award. **Programs should put a June 1, 2027 start date on all applications.**

- Project Narrative/Evaluation Criteria
 - Student Question Section
 - Elimination of “Section One: Icebreaker”
 - Section 2 (formerly section 3), Prompt B:
 - Question: 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.
 - Evaluation Criteria:
 - The student demonstrates creativity and willingness to navigate a challenging situation;
 - the student demonstrates leadership and problem-solving initiative
 - the student has shown interest in working with collaborators, community members and/or interested partners.
 - Overall Application Cohesion:
 - Evaluation Criteria
 - The application materials complement each other;
 - the application materials provide a clear picture of what the student would gain from receiving the Knauss Fellowship;
 - the application materials provide a clear picture of what the student would bring to the Knauss Fellowship.
 - Director Letter: The NOFO clarifies the role of the director letter to include a criteria regarding the student’s interpersonal skills in response to program interview questions. The specifics of the question(s) are left to the discretion of the director.
 - A signed letter of recommendation from the state Sea Grant director, **which is built from an interview with the student**. The letter should not exceed two pages, single-spaced. As part of that interview and subsequent letter, the director shall:
 - (a) demonstrate why the student aligns with the goals of the Knauss program;
 - (b) highlight the skills the student emphasized in the interview;
 - **(c) highlight the student’s response to program interview questions regarding interpersonal skills and ability to manage expectations in challenging situations;** and
 - (d) explain any gaps in the CV or personal education and career development response, or anything that the student was unable to include in the application that they feel is important for the review panel to know.

- Evaluation Criteria - this director letter section will now be reviewed out of 10 points
 - The director's letter demonstrates how the student fits with the Knauss Program, including any discussion of why the student belongs in the Knauss Program;
 - highlights the skills (academic, professional or personal) that the student would bring to the Knauss program;
 - **highlights the ability of the student to manage interpersonal situations and respond to adversity;**
 - elaborates on information not specifically addressed by the student in their application package.
- Selection Factors: A selection factor has been included for the Selecting Official to consider. The selecting official may now consider the "Student applicant score as submitted as part of the LOI" in the process of selection.
- State Level Review: The NOFO provides clarity for the state level review process.
 - After submission to the eligible Sea Grant program, and if the application meets the minimum requirements, the student application will be reviewed at the eligible Sea Grant program level. **Each student application must receive a minimum of three separate written reviews based on the evaluation criteria listed above. Programs have the option to hold a review panel. If a program opts to hold a panel, the panelists may be the same as the written reviewers.**

Budget Breakdown

Each application package will propose a total of \$94,700 in funding. Those funds include base funding for each award at \$79,700, of which \$74,700 is to be used by the eligible Sea Grant program to cover the fellow's salary/stipend and personnel expenses for the twelve months of the fellowship, and \$5,000 can be used to cover allowable expenses. Allowable expenses could include, but are not limited to, academic tuition, journal publication fees, academic- and fellowship-related travel, conference fees, in-person and online training, and workshops that support the successful completion of the fellowship and the fellow's future career development. Additionally, relocation costs are allowable under 2 CFR 200.464 and university policy. Applications should also include travel costs totaling \$17,500, of which \$15,000 will be budgeted for optional host office-related travel and training.

Program Budget Breakdown		
Fellow Salary	\$74,700	To be administered via grant to the host Sea Grant program; will cover fellow salary and individual professional development
Fellow Professional Development	\$5,000	
Base Total	\$79,700	Minimum total for fellows
Optional Office-Related Travel	\$15,000	Optional host office-related travel funds; to be accepted as a one-time release at the onset of the award
Programmatic Request	\$94,700	Please request a total of \$94,700 to accommodate space for up to \$15,000 in travel funds