

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program
OMB Control No. 0648-0432

SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A

Abstract

This is a request for revision and extension of a current information collection. A minor programmatic change is being requested to add a pre-application requirement to eliminate the overall burden on applicants. Each applicant must submit a pre-application for review through email to NOAA to prevent the expenditure of effort on full applications that are not likely to be successful. All applicants will receive a response to their pre-application via email from NOAA indicating whether or not they are authorized to submit a full application. Only those who receive authorization from NOAA are eligible to submit a full application, which will reduce significantly the overall number of full applications.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for master's and doctoral degrees in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology—this can include but is not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, resource management disciplines—and particularly encourages women and members of minority groups to apply. The scholarship supports independent graduate level research through financial support of graduate degrees in such fields.

NOAA recognizes the student's need to ensure that scholarly research, which is often hypothesis based, addresses critical gaps in knowledge about ecological processes, physiological mechanisms, evolutionary underpinnings, human behaviors, preferences and values, and related areas. The nature of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' research, as well as interactions with sanctuary staff and partners with similar goals, can help students fulfill their degree requirements through work benefiting not only national marine sanctuaries, but marine conservation more broadly and ecosystem science as a whole. In addition to natural resource studies, scholars may investigate socioeconomic, maritime archaeological and maritime heritage resource studies in national marine sanctuaries.

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is authorized at 16 U.S.C. 1445c-1 and 16 U.S.C. 1445c to recognize outstanding achievement in master's and doctoral degrees in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program was introduced in Congress and signed into law on November 13, 2000. The program is administered through the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and is funded annually with 1% of the amount appropriated each fiscal year to carry out the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program anticipates that each year approximately 2-4 scholarships will be awarded. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides yearly support of up to \$47,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$35,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000) and up to \$10,000 support for a 4-6-week program collaboration at a field office of the National Marine Sanctuary System or other NOAA facility.

In order to determine eligibility and justification for these competitive awards, an application must be solicited from each voluntary applicant who is applying for the award.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is seeking applications for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program from individuals, particularly women and minorities, who, due to financial constraints, may otherwise not be able to pursue an advanced degree in oceanography, marine biology, maritime archaeology, and all other science, engineering, social science, and resource management disciplines involving ocean and coastal areas.

Each application package must include Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance, General Information Sheet, Statement of Intent, Transcripts, Enrollment Verification or List of Graduate Schools Applied, Research Proposal, Two Letters of Recommendation, Statement of Financial Need, and Declaration.

Pre-application and applications are solicited through a competitive funding announcement or a Notice of Funding Opportunity. All applications are to be submitted through Grants.gov electronically or by mail with a hard copy. The collected information is used to determine the eligibility of the applicant and their ranking and score during the review period.

Once an applicant is selected and funded, the grantee is asked to complete a voluntary exit evaluation, once, and a voluntary alumni evaluation, which is requested every two years after graduation.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

Application packages are available through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) and must be submitted through Grants.gov. Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. All applications are then transferred over to the eRA Commons system which stores the applications in a secured system.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2

There are no other Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Programs. Applications submitted are solely for the

purpose of this program. In addition, the exit survey and alumni survey do not duplicate any other reporting requirements for the scholars.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The collection of this information does not impact small businesses.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is authorized by law. Scholarships are determined solely on the information provided by the applicant. Without the collection of this information, the Program would not be able to determine eligibility of the individual or determine which applicant to select in the competitive process.

Once the award is received, the scholar is asked to provide voluntary information upon graduation to assist the Program Managers in assessing the impact of the program on career goals and research interests. The information collected in the exit survey and the alumni survey help us to determine the success of the program.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

This collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

A notice was published in the Federal Register on September 19, 2023. One comment was received from B. Ker.

Comment: this is a spending program that does not in fact provide employees for this agency at all. it is simply a spending program that the taxpayers of this country can ill afford at this time of bidens inflation that is causing poor people and minorities who never went to an undergrad school, must less a grad school to have to pay high taxes so that some connected kid can get their college paid for. no. i dont think this is fair to do this to the poor people of this country., their taes are so high they cant live anymore under biden inflation

let those lucky kids who already got money for undergrad bachelors pay for their own graduate schooling., i dont think this is fair at all to the taxpayers of this country. if the employees of noaa want to donate to pay for these scholarships out of their salary, that is fine with me. but i dont think hey should be putting a tax ont he poor people of this country to pay high taxes for graduate school. let the grads work to pay ffor their schooling. it teaches them a lesson.

a masters takes two years. they can work and study at same time and pay for it themselves. dont fund

this anymore. it is a tax on poor people. and it hurts them. we are spending too much on masters and grad degrees. if you want one, pay for it yourself you are the benefitter of that nobody else. nobody at that level does much for the poor people of this country. do the kids of the people who work at NOAA get most of these monies. that should be looked into to see if this is an insider program. this comment is for the public record. please receipt. let's get an honest govt please. b ker

Response: This comment addresses the scholarship program and not the information collection. No action is taken in response to this comment.

Additionally, NOS reached out to Dr. Foster Scholarship Program alumni to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. No responses were received.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

The Nancy Foster Scholarship program does not provide any payments or gifts to respondents. Completion of the application is completely voluntary.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

Personal Identifiable Information is collected, but only name, address, email address and phone number. These documents are collected through the NOAA Grants Online system, a secure system developed by NOAA to track and manage awards. Federal Program Officers are collecting this information.

This information is collected, maintained, and disseminated under SORN OPM GOVT-1, General Personnel Records. Grants Online is an application located within the boundary of NOAA1101 and a current PIA is on record with Department of Commerce.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

There are no questions asked that have a sensitive nature, including sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, or other private matters. Race/ethnicity and gender are asked, because the scholarship was intentionally established to support minorities and women, but is optional to respond to these questions.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents/year (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Pre-Application	Individual	190	1	190	3	570	20.00	11,400
Application	Individual	50	1	50	5	250	20.00	5,000
Letters of Recommendation	Atmospheric, Earth, Marine, and Space Sciences Professors	100	1	100	0.75	75	51.70	3,877.50
Biographical Sketch and Photograph - Awardees	Individual	5	1	5	1	5	20.00	100
Program Participants' Annual Progress Reports	Individual	5	1	5	4	20	20.00	400
Program Participants' two year follow up survey	Individual	10	1	10	10 min	1.66	20.00	33.33
Totals				360		922		\$3,910.83

The student rate is based upon a stipend. The rate for the Post-Secondary teachers was calculated using BLS's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* 25-1051. The annual salary was divided by 2080 hours to obtain an hourly rate. *

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection. Applications are submitted electronically.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Oversight	ZP-4	171,635	20%		34,327
Web Developer	ZP-4	171,635	1%		1,715
Federal Reviewer	ZP-4	171,635	14%		24,029
Contractor Cost					
Intern		20/hour x 40	N/A	N/A	800
Travel					
Other Costs:					
TOTAL					60,871

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

A minor programmatic change is being requested to add a pre-application requirement to eliminate the overall burden on applicants. . The overall burden on applicants will be reduced because the pre-application will determine if applicants will submit a full application, which will reduce significantly the overall number of applications.

Information Collection	Respondents		Responses		Burden Hours		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
Pre-Application	190	0	190	0	570	0	New requirement
Application	50	200	50	200	250	1600	Only those applicants who are likely to succeed will need to submit a full package.
Letters of Recommendation	100	400	100	400	75	300	Decrease in the # of respondents and burden is a result of decrease in full application packages.
Biographical Sketch and Photograph - Awardees	5	6	5	6	5	6	
Program Participants' Annual Progress Reports	5	6	5	6	20	24	
Program Participants' two year follow up survey	10	6	10	9	2	2	
Total for Collection	360	618	360	621	922	1932	
Difference	-258		-261		-1010		

Information Collection	Labor Costs		Miscellaneous Costs		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	
Pre-Application	11,400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	New requirement
Application	5,000	\$ 16,000.00	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00	All submissions are now electronic.
Letters of Recommendation	3877.5	\$ 14,811.00	\$ -	\$ -	Student stipend cost increased since previous renewal.
Biographical Sketch and Photograph - Awardees	100	\$ 60.00	\$ -	\$ -	Overall labor costs decreased as a result of the new pre-application process.
Program Participants' Annual Progress Reports	400	\$ 240.00	\$ -	\$ -	
Program Participants' two year follow up survey	33.33	\$ 20.00	\$ -	\$ -	

Total for Collection	\$ 3,910.83	\$ 31,131.00	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00	
Difference	\$ (27,220.17)		\$ (4,000.00)		

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

The information collected will not be published.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#).