

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY24 Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ONMS-2024-XXXXXXXXXX

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

Dates:

- Pre-applications are due at 11:59 pm Eastern Time on October 31, 2023. Pre-applications must be received via email to fosterscholars@noaa.gov. Pre-applications received after the due date will be disqualified. If submitted by mail, paper pre-applications must be postmarked no later than October 31, 2023 and sent to the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Pre-applications received after the due date will be disqualified.
- Full applications are due at 11:59 pm Eastern Time on January 17, 2024. Full applications must be received by Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>) on the due date listed above. Paper applications must be postmarked no later than January 17, 2024 and sent to the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Full applications received after the due date will be disqualified.

An informational webinar about the FY 2024 NOAA Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program funding announcement will be held on November 16, 2022 at 2:00 PM Pacific Time. To register for this webinar please visit the Foster Scholarship website (<https://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>) or go to: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8702290812837474316>.

Please Note: We encourage all Grants.gov applicants to begin the application process several days before the January 17, 2024 deadline. All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov can be extremely heavy, resulting in further delays. Paper applications are only allowable for the following reasons: 1) Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion; 2) if the applicant does not have access to the internet; or 3) if the person providing the letter of recommendation does not wish for the applicant to see the contents of the letter. Otherwise, all applications must be submitted via Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for

master's and doctoral degrees in oceanography, marine biology, maritime archaeology—these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines—and particularly encourages women and members of minority groups to apply.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is dedicated to ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of every action and every decision. We know that having varied perspectives helps generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of a changing world. To be effective stewards we must ensure our programs reflect the communities in which we live, work, and play. The longevity and success of our system depends on creating a culture that is welcoming and inclusive of all.

Individuals who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or citizens of U.S. territories, and are applying to or have been accepted to a graduate program at a U.S. accredited institution, may apply. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled in a graduate program at the time of application, but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to be awarded this scholarship. Scholarship selections are based on academic excellence, letters of recommendations, research proposals, relevant experience, and financial need. Applicants must have a cumulative 3.30 grade point average (GPA) to be eligible to apply and maintain a minimum cumulative and term GPA of 3.30 for every term and for the duration of their award.

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships may provide, subject to appropriations, yearly support of approximately \$47,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$35,000 in addition to an education allowance of \$12,000) and up to \$10,000 of support for a 4-6 week program collaboration at a NOAA facility. Applicants can only obtain funding for the number of years they have remaining in their graduate studies when they apply for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program. For example, if you have already completed two (2) years of your PhD studies, and you become a Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship recipient and indicate it will take you two additional years to complete your degree, you will only be able to obtain funds for the remaining two (2) years of your graduate studies. Note that scholars may request a one-time no cost extension for up to one (1) year that must be requested at least 60 days before the end of the award and will need to provide a justification and a current budget.

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients will be required to participate in a mandatory ONMS Orientation and Science Communication Training to meet with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries staff at a date and location to be determined in the summer of 2024. If scholarships have not been awarded before this training, recipients may be required to incur pre-award costs that will be reimbursed after award funds have been issued.

As a recipient of the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, you become a recognized member of the NOAA community. NOAA provides significant financial resources to help you pursue your independent graduate degree, as well as the staff expertise to assist you with your

research along the way. Therefore, Dr. Nancy Foster Scholars must conduct some specific outreach efforts. To help increase diversity of future applicants, Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients must give at least one (1) presentation about the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program to a diverse audience, such as undergraduate students at a minority serving institution, historically black colleges and universities, student organizations promoting diversity at their campus, or other appropriate venue(s). All Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients are required to develop an outreach product (e.g., video, infographic, lesson plan, or other educational product) within the scholarship time period. The outreach product may be about their research or some other relevant topic. Discussions with the Foster Scholar team can be helpful when determining the product and the topic.

Completion of one (1) program collaboration is required for every doctoral scholarship award. Scholars may opt out of a program collaboration if there are unforeseen circumstances that prevent them from completing this requirement, but this discussion must happen with the Program Collaboration Coordinator and the Federal Program Officer before a decision is made. For master's degree level scholars, completion of a program collaboration is strongly recommended but is not required. The program collaboration is designed to allow scholars to participate in research or other activities for four (4) to six (6) weeks at a field office of the National Marine Sanctuary System, or other NOAA program offices. Federal support for the program collaboration may be used toward allowable costs such as: travel to and from the NOAA facility, housing, per diem, laboratory costs, research vessel support, and consumables while conducting research at the NOAA facility. Funds cannot be used toward research costs. Scholars are required to provide their own health insurance coverage during the program collaboration. More details on allowable costs can be found in 2 CFR part 200, Subpart E – Cost Principles. If scholars choose to participate in a program collaboration during a specific year, they must notify the Program Officer by December of the academic year in which they intend to participate in the collaboration. Approval from the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is required prior to embarking on the program collaboration.

In order to have a competitive full application for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, it is recommended that you review the following bullets to assess whether or not you should apply for this scholarship. For a complete list of review criteria, please see Section V.A.

- 1) Your research proposal aligns closely with NOAA's mission, with particular emphasis on meeting the science priorities of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. This is 30 points of your application score;
- 2) Your financial need statement documents a strong financial need due to challenges, hardships, or other information through a compelling personal narrative. This is 25 points of your application score;
- 3) You have exceptional letters of recommendation. This is 10 points of your application score;

4) Historically, proposals that do not support the science or education priorities of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System do not rank as high;

5) If you are in the last year of your Masters or Ph.D. program, it is not advised to apply for this scholarship.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

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, maritime archaeology—these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and 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. Gender and minority status are not considered when selecting award recipients. However, special outreach efforts are employed to solicit applications from women and members of minority groups. Scholarships are distributed by disciplines, institutions, and geography, and by degree sought, with selections within distributions based on financial need, the potential for success in a graduate level studies program (academic achievement), and the potential for achieving research and career goals. 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.

B. Program Priorities

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; these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines—and particularly encourages women and members of minority groups to apply. The program seeks to increase the number of women and minorities in these scientific disciplines, particularly as they relate to the mission of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries conducts, sponsors, and facilitates research to better understand ecosystems and cultural resources in national marine sanctuaries, their changing condition, and the significance of threats. The National Marine Sanctuary System uses conservation science to support policy decisions, develop effective response capabilities, evaluate management practices, and support broader, NOAA-wide responsibilities for marine conservation and management. Science priorities are identified

within national marine sanctuary management plans and are necessary to protect and conserve sanctuary resources, manage risks, reduce threats and respond to unexpected events. Strong partnerships, expert scientific content and judgment, and peer review enhances the accuracy and credibility of monitoring and research. In addition, science, education, outreach, and policy development work together to raise awareness and prompt effective action that will address ocean problems. More information on the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries can be found at <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>.

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.

General science priorities for the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries are stated below. Applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to national marine sanctuary site research coordinator for more information on site-specific science needs as they relate to the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program focus on oceanography, marine biology, maritime archaeology (contact information is available at https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment/research_coordinators.html). For guidance on project proposals that address the entirety of the National Marine Sanctuary System, please contact Steve Gittings (steve.gittings@noaa.gov).

1. Climate change research and monitoring as it relates to sanctuary resources (e.g., ocean acidification, temperature change, sea level change, species range shifts and phenology, changes in physical processes, impacts on cultural resources, climate vulnerability assessments, and multi-stressor interactions, including non-climate stressors);
2. Assessments of human use in national marine sanctuaries (e.g., development of new technologies to quantify and characterize human use, user preferences, and economic impacts to local and regional economies);
3. Maritime heritage resource studies (e.g., documentation and assessment of maritime heritage resources, maritime cultural landscape assessments, assessments of impacts of climate change on archaeological and cultural resources);
4. Studies focused on evaluating the condition of and impacts to living resources and ecosystems from local and regional pressures (e.g., extraction, sanctuary soundscapes and effects of ocean noise, invasive species, water quality and contamination, restoration

technology and effectiveness, deep-sea habitat characterization and monitoring, connectivity);

5. Studies focused on increasing or evaluating education programs that impact K-12 students such ocean and climate literacy education, professional development for K-12 teachers, resource protection through education, distance learning, and increasing the diversity of students in K-12 settings to pursue careers in NOAA sciences;

6. Research focused on better understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge, and how these knowledge systems can be more effectively integrated into development of inclusive and collaborative management and stewardship of marine protected areas.

C. Program Authority

16 USC 1445c-1 and 16 USC 1445c.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to appropriations, approximately \$500,000 may be available for awards under this program during fiscal year (FY) 2024. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program anticipates that each year approximately 2- 5 scholarships will be awarded. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides yearly support of approximately \$47,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of about \$35,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of about \$12,000) and \$10,000 support for a 4-6 week program collaboration at a field office of the National Marine Sanctuary System or other NOAA facility.

Based on the availability of funding, the completion of one (1) program collaboration is required for every doctoral scholarship award. For master's degree level scholars, completion of a program collaboration is recommended, but is not required. Scholars may opt out of a program collaboration if there are unforeseen circumstances that prevent them from completing this requirement. But this discussion must happen with the Program Collaboration Coordinator and the Federal Program Officer before a decision is made.

A mandatory ONMS Orientation and Science Communication Training will be held annually for incoming and current scholars. Scholars must participate in this orientation and training to ensure a basic knowledge of the scholarship program. If scholars cannot participate, the program manager has the discretion to revoke the scholarship. Travel support (logistics and funding, not to exceed \$3,000 per year) will be provided to Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients, also known as Foster Scholars, who will also meet with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries leadership and staff. An amount of about \$120,000 may be provided to master's degree level students (up to two (2) years of support, one (1) program

collaboration opportunity and travel support for the ONMS Orientation and Science Communication Training meeting) and about \$240,000 may be provided to doctoral level students (up to four (4) years of support, two (2) program collaboration opportunities and travel support for the ONMS Orientation and Science Communication Training meeting). The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship funds cannot be used toward research costs.

B. Project/Award Period

The award periods are up to two (2) years for a student in a master's level program and up to four (4) years for a doctoral level candidate, to be funded one year at a time. The anticipated start date is July 1, 2024. If an applicant is selected for initial funding, NOAA still reserves the right to revoke funding at any point. Receipt of any prospective funding beyond the first year is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and continued relevance to program objectives and will be at the sole discretion of the Department of Commerce. Scholars may request a one-time no cost extension for up to one (1) year.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be a cooperative agreement to the individual applicant. The substantial involvement anticipated under this award includes a program collaboration, a component where the scholar is required to spend approximately 4-6 weeks at a NOAA facility to contribute to their education and training. The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' staff intends to work with each scholar to facilitate placement at a NOAA facility and to help the scholar refine the scope of their program collaboration, if necessary.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Only individuals who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or citizens of the U.S. territories, and are applying to or have been accepted to a U.S. accredited graduate institution to pursue a master's or doctoral level degree in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology--these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines—and particularly encourages women and members of minority groups to apply. In addition, to be eligible to apply, applicants must have a cumulative 3.30 GPA. Scholars must maintain a minimum cumulative and term GPA of 3.30 for every term and for the duration of their award. If an applicant does not maintain this GPA, they will be placed on probation after the first term. If the GPA is not brought up for that year, the recipient's scholarship will be terminated. In addition, satisfactory progress must be made toward the completion of a thesis or dissertation. If it is determined that the scholar will not complete their thesis or dissertation prior to the end of the award, funding may be withdrawn.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is dedicated to ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of every action and every decision. We know that having varied

perspectives helps generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of a changing world. To be effective stewards we must ensure our programs reflect the communities in which we live, work, and play. The longevity and success of our system depends on creating a culture that is welcoming and inclusive of all.

Individuals who already receive NOAA or federal funding from grants or scholarships for graduate school are not eligible to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship. If a student is willing to give up the other federal funding, then they are eligible to receive the award.

Universities or other organizations may not apply on behalf of an individual. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled in a graduate program at the time of application but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to be awarded this scholarship. Eligibility must be maintained for each succeeding year of support, and annual reporting requirements, to be specified at a later date, will apply. Individuals who are in their last year of graduate school are unlikely to receive this award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no matching requirements for this award.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Only those who receive authorization from NOAA to submit a full application are eligible to apply.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, applicants should register as soon as they decide they intend to apply, even if they are not yet ready to submit their applications.

Adobe Acrobat is continuously making updates to their software. We recommend that applicants check the compatibility of Adobe products with the application's required forms well in advance.

Additional guidance on the application package, instructions, submission procedures, and an application checklist can be located on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website: <https://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>. Further information about the scholarship and the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries research priorities can be found at the following websites

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>, respectively.

Information in hard copy may be requested from:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Attn: Seaberry Nachbar
99 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

Information contact: Send requests for information to the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at the address shown above or via email to fosterscholars@noaa.gov. Please allow adequate time for inquiry responses, do not expect an immediate response to email or written correspondence to the address above.

B. Content and Form of Application

There are two required elements of this application, the pre-application and the full application. Each element has different format and content requirements, so please review carefully.

Each applicant must submit a pre-application for review through email to fosterscholars@noaa.gov 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.

1. Pre-Application Required Elements

Each pre-application package must include the items listed below unless otherwise indicated. The pre-application can be created in a document but should be submitted as a single Adobe pdf document in the correct order listed below and emailed to the FosterScholar@noaa.gov email address. Failure to submit any items as described in this section is likely to result in disqualification. Please do not include a cover page for your pre-application.

- a. General Information Sheet: Provide the information outlined below, but do not exceed one (1) typewritten single-spaced pages, font size 12 in Times New Roman, with a 1" margin.
 - i. Personal Data: Provide your full name (including all aliases and maiden/married names); country of citizenship; current address and/or permanent address; current phone number; and email address.
 - ii. Degree Sought: State your proposed field of study oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology—these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines—and the degree being sought (e.g. M.S., M.A.,

Ph.D.), including the month and year the degree is expected. If already enrolled in a graduate program, state the name and location of your institution and your academic department for your graduate study.

- iii. Education: List the academic degrees received, or you expect to receive by the start of your proposed graduate degree for this program, including the institution, date of receipt, and your cumulative GPA. If enrolled in an institution, include your current GPA. If enrolled in graduate school, provide your graduate advisor's name, telephone number, and email address. If your GPA includes coursework from a U.S. university or an international institution that does not align with the typical 4.0 GPA system for grades, please have a school representative, advisor, or independent reviewer submit a letter that states you meet the 3.30 GPA requirement and provides an accurate conversion. Provide your original GPA and your converted GPA in this section.
- b. Summary of your proposed research project and what NOAA national marine sanctuary science need(s) and/or resource protection issue(s) your research will be addressing. (maximum 300 word limit). If the summary of the proposed research project is more than the required 300 word limit it may result in the disqualification of your pre-application. Please include the following elements:
 - i. Title of your research proposal
 - ii. Summary of your research that provides enough information to determine whether it is of high priority to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and should include the topic of your research.
 - iii. Location of your research including which national marine sanctuary you will be working within and if you have made contact with the sanctuary site to determine feasibility and need for the sanctuary site.
 - iv. Whether your research is funded or not funded and if the research has been developed and not just an idea.
- c. Statement of Financial Need: The Statement of Financial Need requires the following documentation:
 - i. Department of Education's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) determination: Your EFC documentation must not exceed one (1) page. To evaluate financial need, NOAA will use the Department of Education's EFC determination. To receive an EFC determination, applicants must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Department of Education. See <https://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. In response to the FAFSA, the Department of Education will provide the applicant with a Student Aid Report (SAR), which will contain the EFC determination. It may take up to two (2) weeks to receive these results, so please make sure to budget enough time. The previous year's SAR is acceptable for this requirement if no major financial changes have occurred. A copy of the first page of the SAR, which includes the EFC and the applicant's name or last four digits of the applicant's social security number, must be submitted. The documentation of EFC must be from the Department of Education and not exceed one (1) page.
 - ii. Yearly Tuition Documentation: Yearly tuition documentation may be more than one (1) page, especially if you are applying to multiple colleges and/or universities. Applicants

must also provide documentation of estimated yearly tuition for each school they are applying to. The tuition estimate must clearly state the name of the school and applicants must also provide documentation of where this estimate comes from, either as a screenshot of a tuition estimate from the university's website, or a letter or other documentation from the school, on official letterhead, showing tuition costs. Tuition is not inclusive of room, board, and other miscellaneous fees. Only the forms of documentation outlined above will be accepted. This can be more than one page in length if needed.

- iii. Financial Need Information Questions (answers to these questions must be provided on one (1) page). Questions do not need to be repeated on the single page to allow you more space to write your answer. Simply mark down the number for each answer:
1. How likely are you to get a paid teaching or research assistantship in your program for the upcoming school year? Choose from the following choices: a) highly likely, b) somewhat likely, c) unlikely, or d) there is no opportunity for assistantship. Write 1-2 sentences explaining your answer.
 2. How likely are you to get a paid teaching or research assistantship in your program for the entirety of your degree? Choose from the following choices: a) highly likely, b) somewhat likely, c) unlikely, or d) there is no opportunity for assistantship. Write 1-2 sentences explaining your answer.
 3. Do you have other money supporting your degree (e.g., grants or scholarships)? Please answer yes or no, and if needed provide 1-2 sentences explaining your answer.
 4. What is the amount of tuition needed for each school you are applying to or currently attend? List school(s) and the amount needed for tuition. Remember tuition does not include room and board or other associated fees.
 5. Are you a first-generation college graduate? A first-generation college graduate is defined as a student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor's degree. This means that you are the first in your family to attend a four-year college/university to attain a bachelor's degree. Please answer yes or no, and if needed provide 1-2 sentences explaining your answer.
 6. Are there circumstances that will waive your tuition such as a teaching assistantship, research assistantship, or other instances? Please answer yes or no, and if needed provide 1-2 sentences explaining your answer.
 7. Is your financial need based on personal hardships? Please answer yes or no, and if needed provide 1-2 sentences explaining your answer. Note that you will have an opportunity to share more about your financial need and personal hardships in your Statement of Need essay.
 8. Provide your Estimated Financial Need for each school to which you are applying, which can be determined by performing the following calculation: $(\text{Estimated Tuition per academic year}) - (\text{Expected Family Contribution [this is a monetary value]}) = \text{Estimated Financial Need (EFN)}$. If your tuition is waived by your school, use zero (0) for the Estimated Tuition per Academic Year. Do not use room and board as part of your estimated tuition expenses. Please write out

the calculation for your EFN. If your EFN is not calculated correctly or your calculation is not included, your application may result in disqualification. For example:

Estimated Tuition (not to include room and board) = \$12,000/year
(documentation of this estimate is required)

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) = \$8,000 (determined by Student Aid Report)

$\$12,000 - \$8,000 = \$4,000$ (So \$4,000 is your EFN or Estimated Financial Need)

- iv. Statement of Financial Need: In a one (1) page, single-spaced essay, provide a personal narrative of your financial need, personal hardship(s), and, if necessary, include further clarification for the answers to the Financial Need Information Questions section. This is your personal story and your opportunity to give insight into your financial status, including any challenges, hardships, or information that may not be evident in the statements above. In your essay describing your financial need, discuss how you plan to use these scholarship funds for your graduate level education and what the impact will be if you do not receive this scholarship. Funds for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship cannot be used to fund research. Statements longer than one (1) page, font size 12 Times New Roman will not be accepted and will likely result in disqualification.

Failure to submit all of the components of the Statement of Financial Need will likely result in disqualification.

NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can be easily rectified or cured.

2. Full Application Required Elements

Each full application package must include the items listed below unless otherwise indicated. Failure to submit any items as described in this section is likely to result in disqualification. Full application packages are available through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Please do not include a cover page for your full application.

Each full application package must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information. Failure to submit any items as described in this section is likely to result in disqualification.

Please provide a title of the item (for example, General Information Sheet, Statement of Intent, etc.) on each page in a Header Section except when a previously formatted PDF is added, such as

transcripts or a PDF copy of a letter of recommendation.

1. Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance, is located on the Grants.gov portal and must be completed with information pertinent to the applicant. Specific guidance on how to complete the SF-424 form for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program can be found at https://fosterscholars.noaa.gov/media/docs/sf-424_guidance.pdf. Item number 21 on the SF 424 cannot be used as a replacement for the declaration statement required in Item 10 below. The SF-424 must be uploaded to Grants.gov separately from the items outlined below. If submitting a paper application, the application packet must also include a completed SF 424 and the SF-424 must be signed and dated with pen and ink.

Numbers 2-10: The following items of the full application listed below shall be uploaded into Grants.gov in the single Adobe PDF file, in the order outlined below. Failure to provide the single Adobe PDF file with all of the components in the order listed below is likely to result in disqualification. If submitting a paper application, the full application must be in the order outlined below or the application is likely to result in disqualification. If sealed letters of recommendation are included in a full paper application these envelopes can be added to the mailing envelope and not included in the rest of the correctly organized application package and should be referenced in the table of contents as attachments at the end. Submitting a full paper application is only acceptable for the following reasons:

1) Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion; 2) if the applicant does not have access to the internet; or 3) if the person providing the letter of recommendation does not wish for the applicant to see the contents of the letter.

2. Table of Contents: On a single page, please list the items and page numbers of the following required information. Page numbers are not required for pre-existing PDF documents, such as transcripts or PDF letters of recommendation, but should still contribute to the page count. If the sealed letters are in envelopes, the table of contents should reference them as attachments.

3. General Information Sheet: Provide the information outlined below, but do not exceed two (2) typewritten single-spaced pages, font size 12 in Times New Roman, with a 1" margin. General Information Sheets that are longer than two (2) pages in length and/or do not follow the formatting requirements listed above are likely to result in disqualification.

a. Personal Data: Provide your full name (including all aliases and maiden/married names); country of citizenship; current address and/or permanent address; current phone number; and email address.

b. Optional Personal Data: The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is committed to broadening the participation of groups currently underrepresented in science. In order to accurately gauge whether the scholarship program is achieving this important goal, we ask

that applicants indicate gender, race, and ethnicity. Please note that this information is voluntary. Your application will not be disqualified if you do not provide this optional personal data.

c. Degree Sought: State your proposed field of study oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology—these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines—and the degree being sought (e.g. M.S., M.A., Ph.D.), including the month and year the degree is expected. If already enrolled in a graduate program, state the name and location of your institution and your academic department for your graduate study.

d. Education: List the academic degrees received, or you expect to receive by the start of your proposed graduate degree for this program, including the institution, date of receipt, and your cumulative GPA. If enrolled in an institution, include your current GPA. If enrolled in graduate school, provide your graduate advisor's name, telephone number, and email address. If your GPA includes coursework from a U.S. university or an international institution that does not align with the typical 4.0 GPA system for grades, please have a school representative, advisor, or independent reviewer submit a letter that states you meet the 3.30 GPA requirement and provides an accurate conversion. Provide your original GPA and your converted GPA in this section.

e. Academic Honors: List any academic honors received.

f. Relevant Experience: List experience related to your field of study. You may include research and teaching assistantships and any other paid or unpaid work.

g. Knowledge of Scholarship: In a few words, please describe how you initially heard about the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program (e.g. word of mouth, current scholar, school/institution, specific professor/mentor, online database, etc.).

4. Statement of Intent: Provide the following components outlined below in two (2) separate sections. The Statement of Intent must be typewritten, single-spaced, font size 12 Times New Roman, with a 1" margin and must not exceed one (1) page in length including sections (a) and (b). Both sections (a) and (b) will be weighted equally; therefore, your descriptions must provide enough detail to review accordingly. Statements longer than one (1) page and/or that do not follow the formatting requirements listed above is likely to result in disqualification.

This statement should not be a research proposal or scientific abstract. This statement will be used to evaluate you as an individual, not necessarily as a scientist, it evaluates your motivation for applying for this scholarship, and evaluates your communication skills and ability to educate the public about your research. This statement must tell us something about why you are interested in this scholarship opportunity and demonstrate your organizational and written communication skills.

a. Academic, Research, Career Goals and Aspirations: A self-description of your academic, research, career goals, and how your proposed course of study or research will help you achieve these goals. This is your opportunity to present yourself, your aspirations and your career goals. Include any background information that is pertinent, such as work and academic experience, and extra-curricular activities that are relevant to your educational goals, and provide insight into why you choose to pursue these goals.

b. Communicating the Importance of your Research: As a Dr. Nancy Foster Scholar, you are asked to become a “National Marine Sanctuary Ambassador,” which emphasizes the opportunity to conduct science communication through education and outreach to the public (i.e. your college or university, community groups/organizations, or schools) about current research issues in the National Marine Sanctuary System. In this section, please provide a description of how you envision sharing your research and your results to the broader community and how the benefits of your research will impact society. Outline your ideas for a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding your research as it relates specifically to the National Marine Sanctuary System, as well as the global ocean. This must include anticipated locations and audiences for education and outreach events, potential partners in the community, and any potential outputs or outcomes from your activities. If you are a recipient of this scholarship, you will be required to show proof of completion of the project outlined in this section before the conclusion of your scholarship period.

To strengthen this section of your application, please provide one outreach letter from a community organization or group with which you would partner or collaborate to communicate your research. No more than one outreach letter will be considered. Please make sure it is on official letterhead, signed, and inserted after the statement of intent. The letter must outline your strategy for the outreach and education work you plan to undertake with this partner, their role in the collaboration, and the potential for success. Inclusion of this letter will be taken into consideration during the review process. Your full application will not be disqualified if you do not include this letter. However, an outreach letter is factored in when applicants are scored and is worth 5 points in the evaluation rubric. Failure to submit a Statement of Intent as indicated above is likely to result in disqualification.

5. Transcripts: Applicants must submit transcripts for all complete years of academic training (both undergraduate and graduate), including courses in which you are currently enrolled. Headers are not required for transcripts. Transcripts from an institution or university that are only for one (1) semester are not required (excluding work in progress), but may be included in the single Adobe PDF document if needed to support evidence of research experience. Applicants must currently have a cumulative 3.30 GPA to be eligible to apply. If applicants have completed at least a year towards their current graduate degree, the cumulative GPA considered will be from that program. If students have not completed at least a year, the cumulative GPA considered will be from their most recent degree you received. Students whose school does not follow a typical 4.0 GPA scale must submit a letter from a school representative, advisor, or independent reviewer that states you meet the 3.30 GPA requirement and provides an accurate conversion. Unofficial transcripts, which clearly state the name of the student and

institution, submitted by the applicant are acceptable and must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information. All unofficial transcripts must list the student's name and the name of the institution.

Failure to submit transcripts, as outlined above, is likely to result in disqualification. Official transcripts will be required prior to making an award.

6. Enrollment Verification or List of Graduate Schools Applied: For current graduate students, transcripts showing courses in which you are currently enrolled can be used as enrollment verification. Enrollment verification must include the name of school and applicant. If an applicant is not currently enrolled but is applying to graduate schools, they must submit a "List of Graduate Schools Applied to" including the month and year graduate studies will begin, and any acceptance letters received at the time of application, with their application. Individuals selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship award must provide proof of acceptance into a graduate program at a U.S. accredited institution at the time of notification or the individual will be ineligible to receive the award.

Failure to include the Enrollment Verification or "List of Graduate Schools Applied to" as applicable, as indicated above, is likely to result in disqualification. Applicants selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship will be required to submit a certification of enrollment at the start of each academic term.

7. Research Proposal: The Research Proposal must be typewritten, single-spaced, font size 12 Times New Roman with a 1" margin and must not exceed three (3) pages, including figures and other visuals, but excluding references. Do not include a cover page for your research proposal.

In the proposal, explain how your research supports NOAA's mission, particularly that of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the science or education needs of one or more national marine sanctuaries. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for master's and doctoral degrees in oceanography, marine biology, maritime archaeology—these may include but are not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, cultural anthropology, and resource management disciplines.

Historically, proposals that do not support the science or education needs of the National Marine Sanctuary System do not rank as highly as those that do. Though not required, you are encouraged to contact the sanctuary site to discuss your research and its relevance to the site's priorities. If this contact has been made, state who was contacted and the result of that conversation. Information for the research coordinators at each site can be found at the following website: https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment/research_coordinators.html).

Information about NOAA is available at <https://www.noaa.gov>. Information about the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is at <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>, and its Science Needs Assessment is at <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>.

Please make sure your research and education goals, hypotheses, and project plans are clearly defined and communicated, and can be completed within the period of the scholarship. Make sure you clearly demonstrate your technical knowledge of the research area and the potential application of your findings. Your proposal will be evaluated on the alignment with NOAA and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries priorities, feasibility of the project, innovation and design, and technical understanding and clarity of the proposal.

8. Two Letters of Recommendation: Each full application must include only two (2) letters of recommendation with handwritten signatures on the actual letter from individuals who have knowledge of your academic record, research effort, and work and/or life experience. It is recommended that each letter is no more than two (2) pages long. Letters of recommendation do not need to include headers. One of these letters must be from someone in your current academic career. If you are currently not enrolled, consider submitting one (1) letter from a professor who can provide knowledge of your academic career. Relevant paid work, such as internships and volunteer efforts, are applicable. Letters of recommendation must include: 1) Statements of the applicant's ability to succeed in the program proposal; 2) Familiarity with the applicant's work; 3) Statement that the individual writing the letter has a clear understanding of the goals and aspirations of the applicant on a personal and professional level; and 4) Clear support for the applicant.

If an applicant plans to have a NOAA employee submit a letter of reference as one of the letters of recommendation required in this section, please note that the letter is limited to factual information and the NOAA employee's knowledge of the applicant's ability or character based on the employee's government interactions with the applicant. The letter may not endorse one applicant over other applicants. Subject to restrictions and management approval, a NOAA employee may submit a letter of reference to NOAA for the agency's use in evaluating the application. The supervisor must make a decision regarding whether it is in the agency's interest to write such a letter. If the supervisor approves the letter, it must be written on agency letterhead and the employee must use his or her NOAA title. The employee may not send the letter in his or her personal capacity. NOAA employees can sign the letter digitally, but it is advised to not have these letters signed with their CAC card to prevent PDF issues.

The two (2) letters of recommendation must be included in the single Adobe PDF document. Each letter must have a handwritten signature on the official letterhead of the person recommending the candidate. Page numbers are not required for pre-existing PDF documents, but should still contribute to the page count. If the person providing the letter of recommendation does not wish for the applicant to see the contents of the letter, the applicant must submit a paper copy of their full application, include their letters of recommendation in sealed envelopes, and reference the letters of recommendation as attachments in the table of contents. Note that if you are submitting a paper application, the SF-424 form must be signed and dated with pen and ink. Failure to provide two (2) signed letters of recommendation on official letterhead, as outlined above, will likely result in disqualification. If more than two (2) letters of recommendation are provided, it will likely result in disqualification.

9. Declaration: Applicants must certify that all statements and information in their application are true and correct by either 1) copying the following statement on a separate sheet of paper or 2)

downloading the declaration statement from https://nmsfosterscholars.blob.core.windows.net/fosterscholarsprod/media/docs/declaration_statement.pdf, then providing a handwritten signature on the same paper, and including it in the single Adobe PDF document:

I, the undersigned, declare, under penalty of perjury, that:

I understand and agree to the limitations of the allowable costs for the scholarship funds as defined in this Notice of Funding Opportunity and that I am aware of the data sharing stipulation policy applicable to all NOAA federal funding opportunities. This statement serves as my "Data/Information Sharing Plan" insofar as it expressly states that no funds associated with this award will be used for the collection or creation of any environmental information or data. If I engage in fraudulent conduct or fail to comply with any term or condition of the scholarship my funding may be withdrawn, or I may be required to repay the amount of funding already received. I understand that if determined by the selecting official that satisfactory progress towards a thesis or dissertation is not completed within the timeframe of the award, I may be required to pay the full amount of the scholarship provided.

All statements and information in my application are true and correct at the time of this application.

Executed on [insert date]:

Print or type name:

Signature: [insert handwritten signature]

Failure to include the exact statement above, signed in pen by the applicant, will likely result in disqualification.

Answers to frequently asked questions on the application process are available at:
<https://fosterscholars.noaa.gov/faqs.html>.

Questions from the NOAA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire are not required to be answered because the scholarship has been determined to be exempt from NEPA review. Funds provided under this program cannot be used toward research costs. Each application package must include the items listed in the Application and Submission Information section. Failure to submit all items, excluding the SF-424, which can be uploaded individually, in the single Adobe PDF document as described in the Application and Submission Information section and in the above outlined order or if any item is omitted will disqualify the application from consideration. Individual documents uploaded to Grants.gov will not be accepted and the applicant is likely to result in disqualification.

If the applicant has difficulty obtaining any of the above components of the application in electronic copy form, the applicant may submit a single paper application. If submitting a paper application, the application packet must also include a completed SF-424 and the SF 424 must be signed and dated with pen and ink. The paper application must be postmarked by the due date as outlined in the NOFO.

NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can be easily rectified or cured.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 16 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://sam.gov/content/home>. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is expected 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 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. The Federal awarding agency 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 the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency 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.

Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25 and 2 CFR Part 170. See Section IV.F.3. of this Announcement below for more information.

D. Submission Dates and Times

- Pre-applications are due at 11:59 pm Eastern Time on October 31, 2023. Pre-applications must be received via email to fosterscholars@noaa.gov. Pre-applications received after the due date will be disqualified.
- Full applications are due at 11:59 pm Eastern Time on January 17, 2024. Full applications must be received by Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>) on the due date listed above. Paper applications must be postmarked no later than January 17, 2024 and sent to the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Full applications received after the due date will be disqualified.

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries mailing address is located in Section IV.G. “Other Submission Requirements,” below. Pre and full applications received after the due date will not be reviewed or considered and will likely result in disqualification. Applicants may submit pre-applications via email and full application via Grants.gov or paper applications. Date and time of receipt of each application sent via Grants.gov is electronically recorded. For paper applications, each envelope

is time and date stamped when received and needs to be postmarked by the due date mentioned above. In order for pre and full applications to be considered "Complete" all items are required in subsection IV.B. If you choose to mail in a pre or full paper application, we suggest using a service that can guarantee confirmation of delivery.

Please Note: For detailed information about registering as an individual and applying in the Grants.gov system, please review the following document:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>. All applicants, both those using electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant submission timelines for delivery of the application. It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. You will receive an official notice from Grants.gov if you have uploaded your application correctly. It is not the responsibility of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to verify receipt of any application.

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries will not accept full applications that are submitted late due to an applicant's error during the time of submission to Grants.gov. The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries may allow more time for application submission due to a "systems issue" with Grants.gov that takes place at the time of application submission and is beyond the control of the applicant. In these limited circumstances where there is a systems issue, the applicant must contact the help desk for the relevant system (e.g. Grants.gov) and obtain a help desk ticket number. The applicant must contact the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries immediately upon discovering the issues and must still submit the required application documents in order for their application to be considered for review. Required information for the application, such as financial documentation, may require extra time to obtain, so please plan accordingly.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

F. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above to help ensure your application is received on time. Applications should be submitted via Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access to complete the application through Grants.gov or prefers to submit a paper application, paper applications may be submitted in one envelope to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Attn: Seaberry Nachbar

99 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

Please Note: For full paper applications, failure to submit all application items in one (1) envelope and in the correct order, including a completed SF-424 will likely result in disqualification. If submitting a paper application, the application packet must also include a completed SF-424 and the SF-424 must be signed and dated with pen and ink.

V. Application Review Information

A. Pre-Application Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Applicability to Office of National Marine Sanctuary Priorities and feasibility to sanctuary site (25 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Alignment with NOAA and National Marine Sanctuaries Priorities – 10 points
- b. Applicability of research – 7 points
- c. Feasibility of research at sanctuary site - 8 points

2. Financial Need (25 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Estimated Financial Need – 5 points
- b. Financial Need Information Questions – 7 points
- c. Statement of Financial Need – 8 points
- d. Clarity of Financial Need Statement – 5 points

A. Full Application Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Academic Record and Statement of Career Goals of the Students (25 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Statement of Intent – 10 points
- b. Sanctuary Ambassador – 10 points
- c. Outreach Letter – 5 points

2. Quality of Project and Applicability to Program Priorities (30 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Alignment with NOAA and National Marine Sanctuaries Priorities – 15 points

- b. Innovation and Design – 5 points
- c. Feasibility – 5 points
- d. Technical Understanding and Clarity of Proposal – 5 points

3. Recommendations and or Endorsements of Students (20 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Familiarity of Applicant – 10 points
- b. Strength of Support – 10 points

4. Additional Relevant Experience (25 points). For this program, this includes:

- a. Experience – 10 points
- b. Communication Skills – 15 points

B. Review and Selection Process

Once NOAA receives an application, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with the minimum requirements, including completeness of the application, inclusion of all elements required in each of the NOFO sections and eligibility. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can be easily rectified or cured.

Master's and doctoral applications will be evaluated based on the same criteria; however, masters and doctoral scores will be ranked and considered separately. If an existing Dr. Nancy Foster Scholar who has been selected to receive funding for a Master's level degree from a previous year of funding chooses to bypass the Master's degree and continue directly to a Ph.D. degree, the scholar may be given priority in the final selection process and selected over existing applicants.

Pre-Applications

All pre-applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements will be evaluated and scored by a group of NOAA reviewers, who are federal or non-federal experts. The reviews will be conducted in a group panel. No consensus advice will be provided. Each reviewer will independently score the pre-application based on the review criteria outlined in Section V.A. A rank order of all pre-applications will be established by averaging the individual review ratings for each pre-application. The Program Office staff will look for a natural break in scores of the rank-ordered pre-applications to determine the top number of pre-applications closest to 40 that will be authorized to submit full applications. Applicants will be notified of the status of their pre-application via an email to the authorized representative on or about November 30, 2023. Full applications from applicants who were not asked to submit them will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

Full Applications

All full applications that pass the administrative review will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.B. by a review

panel. The panel will be composed of three (3) or more individuals, having expertise in NOAA related science and knowledge of the program priorities of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The reviewers will rate the full applications using the evaluation criteria and weighting provided above. The panel will then meet to discuss the full applications. The review panel will not come to a consensus regarding full applications' scores. The individual panelist scores will be averaged for each application and placed in a ranking order of all applications. The Program Officer will transmit the review information to the Selection Official and may make a recommendation to the Selection Official about applying the selection factors below. We strive to have varied research projects across selection factors, such as academic disciplines, type of institution, geographic area, national marine sanctuary priorities, degree in scientific area, and type of degree sought. The Selection Official will recommend in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the selection factors below.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendation. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of Funds

- a. Across academic disciplines
- b. By types of institution
- c. Geographic area
- d. New universities that the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has not partnered with in the past through the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

2. Availability of funds

3. Specific to the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' science

priorities 4. Meets the goals of NOAA education and pathways to future NOAA

workforce 5. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

ADD IN PRE APPLICATIONS DATES

Subject to the availability of funds, review of full applications and subsequent notification to applicants will be completed by May 22, 2024. Funds are expected to be awarded by July 1, 2024, which is the start date that must be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) for successful applications.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive an electronic notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. An email notification will be issued to each successful applicant with instructions on how to access the Grants.gov system and view the terms of the award. The annual reporting requirements are also included in the award package.

The names, academic institutions, degrees being sought, research plans, photographs and biographical information of the scholarship award recipients will be posted on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website: <https://www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov> after selections have been confirmed and accepted. The information posted on the website may also be published in marketing materials developed to advertise the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program and further the mission of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding (declined) by May 22, 2024.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. 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 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2014/12/30/2014-30297/departementofcommerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperativeagreements>

2. 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 apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

3. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/home/Login/LoginController.jspf> and is also available at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>, as well as https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf

4. LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of

Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

5. DATA SHARING PLAN. This announcement is seeking proposals that do not generate environmental data; therefore, no data management plan is required as part of the application.

6. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) - 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.

In addition, 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. 7. NEPA - It has been determined that the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program awards are categorically excluded from the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act.

8. PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT – This notification involves collection-of information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Form 424 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control number 4040-0004. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

9. NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

POLICY – If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities and/or vessels are involved in any awards funded under this announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at:

https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2020/Mar/202-1106_SASH.pdf. (NOTE: Please copy and paste this link to access)

C. Reporting

Scholarship recipients are required to provide annual reports documenting the scholar's activities, accomplishments, academic progress, research progress, and education and outreach progress. The report must include copies of receipts indicating disbursement of the education allowance and copies of receipts for allowable expenses under the program collaboration. The report must include a certification from the scholar's academic advisor indicating that the student's work is on track and a copy of the official transcript indicating the scholar has a minimum term and cumulative GPA of 3.30. These reports must be submitted through the Grants.gov system. At the conclusion of the program collaboration, recipients are required to submit a trip report documenting their accomplishments and including a summary testimonial of their experience. In addition, recipients will be required to participate in an evaluation survey. To help increase diversity of future applicants, Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients must give at least one (1) presentation about the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program to a diverse audience, such as undergraduate students at a minority serving institution, historically black colleges and universities, or other appropriate venue(s). Documentation of this outreach presentation must be included in the final scholarship report.

All Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients are required to put together an outreach product (e.g., video, infographic, lesson plan, or other educational product) within the scholarship time period. The outreach product may be about their research or some other relevant topic. Discussions with the Foster Scholar team can be helpful when determining the product and the topic.

At the conclusion of the award, recipients are required to submit a final report encompassing their accomplishments during the award period and their post scholarship plans, especially regarding NOAA interactions and the "National Marine Sanctuary Ambassador" requirement. The final report must include a copy of the final transcript indicating a degree earned, if applicable.

All scholars are required to submit a copy of their master's thesis or doctoral dissertation upon completion of their degree.

Scholars are allowed one (1) one-year no-cost extension that they must request at least 60 days before the end of the award and will need to provide a justification and a current budget. This semi-detailed justification can include the following:

- 1) Completion rate of sampling/data collection, data analysis, and or writing;
- 2) Plan or timeline for finishing an uncompleted item;
- 3) Identify additional costs, if any, and funding sources;
- 4) Statement supporting the additional time requested will be sufficient to complete the

remaining tasks, especially writing of dissertation and why.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.FSRS.gov> on all sub awards over \$30,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

Send requests for information to fosterscholars@noaa.gov or mail requests to: Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Attn: Seaberry Nachbar
99 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

VIII. Other Information

A. The Stipend and Education Allowance

The annual stipend (which consists of the full scholarship award) will be paid directly to the scholar. Tuition (including fall, winter, spring and summer) and academic fees may be negotiated between the academic institution and the scholar prior to the receipt of funds. This negotiation is intended to leverage scholarship funds and enhance opportunities for scholarship recipients. In those instances, in which tuition and academic fees are not totally waived by the academic institution, the education allowance in an amount equal to the tuition and fee not waived (approximately \$12,000) will be paid directly to the scholar for remittance to the academic institution. If tuition and fees are reduced or waived by the academic institution, then that portion of the education allowance not needed (i.e., approximately \$12,000 in the case of a total waiver) will be retained by NOAA for future scholarships. No money will be paid directly to the student from the education allowance for purposes other than the payment of tuition, fees, and education costs including but not limited to books required for courses. Health insurance is an allowable education cost if it is directly billed on the tuition statement. You may work and receive loans if you receive this scholarship.

B. General Scholarship Information

Specific instructions regarding the disbursement, management, and reporting requirements for all stipend and tuition allowance payments will be provided to the scholarship recipients upon selection for the award. The awarding of funds beyond the first year will be based on availability of funds, continued eligibility of the student, semi-annual certification by the academic institution that adequate academic progress is being made, and in compliance with applicable reporting requirements. At its discretion, each academic institution may supplement a scholar's stipend from institutional funds in accordance with the supplementation policy of the institution.

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 up to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organization

Applicants are required to apply online through www.grants.gov. Use of Grants.gov requires an advanced registration process that may take a few days or several weeks. In addition, applicants must complete and maintain two additional registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov (www.SAM.gov) and eRA Commons (www.era.nih.gov). All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all