



NOAA EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Announcement

12-22-25 through 2-23-26

The Educational Partnership Program (EPP) Graduate Fellowship Program (GFP) will select its fifth cohort of fellows in FY26 with a planned participation period of May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2027.

The program is designed to provide opportunities for graduate students supported at NOAA EPP Cooperative Science Centers. Fellows are required to participate in professional development training and experiential opportunities at a NOAA facility with guidance and oversight from a NOAA mentor in collaboration with an academic advisor. The GFP award period is 12 months. Each EPP CSC may submit up to 3 applications. **APPLICATIONS ARE DUE TO NOAA EPP BY 5:00 PM ET ON 2-23-2026.**

About the NOAA Graduate Fellowship Program

The NOAA Graduate Fellowship Program (GFP) leverages the investment made by the agency in the NOAA EPP Cooperative Science Centers (CSCs). GFP is intended to establish a pipeline of high performing and well-trained students who are currently a Cohort member of a CSC, and pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) or social science and policy disciplines directly aligned with the NOAA mission.

The EPP GFP supports NOAA succession planning efforts and contributes to increasing and diversifying NOAA and the Nation's STEM workforce. The program will support outstanding graduate students in NOAA mission-aligned fields who are pursuing masters and doctoral degrees at NOAA CSCs. Professional development training and coaching of selected fellows will also include EPP office identifying specific CSC Cohort Modules for GFP Class of 2026 (e.g., ethics, financial and project management, and leadership development tools for professional success).

GFP Fellows are required to engage in NOAA-mission aligned research and policy activities at the host NOAA facility that is integral to their thesis or dissertation. Fellows are required

to integrate human dimension aspects in the research fellowship project under the guidance of the NOAA mentor(s) at a NOAA facility. Fellows' graduate education will be enhanced by real world experiential training that contribute to enhancing their skills and readiness to enter the NOAA mission enterprise workforce.

NOAA also benefits from this fellowship program by ensuring that graduate education at EPP CSC institutions is responding to the current and emerging focus areas and future needs of the agency. GFP recipients are expected to contribute to research and innovations in STEM and policy fields, building upon the capacity developed at the CSCs and further strengthen the partnerships created with NOAA since 2001. The fellowship is competitive, and students will be guided collaboratively by their NOAA mentor and their respective academic advisor.

Fellows are awarded a financial package for one calendar year.

FY26 FELLOWSHIP FINANCIAL PACKAGE:

Doctoral Cohort CSC Graduate Student:

Stipend, tuition and fees - \$66K

Professional Development: Up to \$4.0K (EPP identifies and approves training and coaching)

Travel support: Up to \$15K (research travel and conferences presentations)

Housing subsidy (***based on relocation of 50 or more miles from current residence***)

Up to \$15K maximum. Breakdown as follows:

Up to \$3K for relocation; and,

Up to \$12K for housing. Document verifying relocation will be required.

Computer, peripherals and software - Up to \$5K maximum, based on need.

Package per Doctoral Fellow: Up to \$105,000.00

Master's Cohort CSC Graduate Student:

Stipend, tuition and fees - \$48K

Professional Development: Up to \$4.0K (EPP identifies and approves training and coaching)

Travel support: Up to \$15.0K (research travel and conferences presentations)

Housing subsidy (***based on relocation of 50 or more miles distance from current residence***)

Up to \$15K maximum. Breakdown as follows:

Up to \$3K for relocation; and,

Up to \$12K for housing. Documentation verifying relocation will be required.

Computer, peripherals and software – Up to \$5K maximum, based on need.

Package per Master's Fellow: Up to \$87,000.00.

ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants must currently be enrolled, and retain enrollment status, as a full-time student for the duration of the fellowship at one of NOAA's EPP Cooperative Science Centers in an accredited graduate degree program. In addition, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Minimum GPA 3.5 for the duration of GFP financial support;
- US Citizenship;
- Undergraduate degree in STEM or social sciences with a direct alignment to the NOAA mission;
- NOAA mission-aligned research to be conducted during the fellowship must be a component of, and contribute to, the graduate degree being pursued;
- Enrolled in a Master's or Doctoral program and matriculated in STEM, policy or natural resource management fields that is directly aligned with the NOAA mission; and,
- Completed a minimum of 1 academic term of graduate coursework.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Applications are accepted annually and submitted ONLY through the CSC Director. The CSC Director and leadership team determines which eligible applications are submitted directly to NOAA EPP for consideration.

- Applications must include a Research Project Plan with milestones for a one-year time period that include: objectives; anticipated outcomes; methodology; and roll-out plan (5 pages maximum).
- 3 letters of recommendation, one each from the Center Director, the CSC Distinguished Research Scientist and the student's academic advisor;

- A letter of support from the hosting NOAA mentor that also includes concurrence from the office director at the NOAA facility; and,
- The most recent **official** transcript.

Complete application must be submitted online to epp.gfp@noaa.gov by the Center Director. Each CSC may submit no more than 3 applications during the application open period.

Application Evaluation

- NOAA's EPP Team conducts an initial administrative review of all applications to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Only complete applications that meet all eligibility requirements, described under the Eligibility Requirements, will be considered for a merit review. Applications identified as incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility requirements will be deemed ineligible and not forwarded for further review.
- All complete and eligible fellowship applications undergo a review by a 3-member panel of scientific experts in the areas of study related to the EPP GFP application. Panel members rate applications based on the evaluation criteria described below.
 - Does the application address an emerging or priority area of the NOAA Line or Program Office? (20%)
 - Is the proposed plan and methodologies technically sound and likely to produce results that support NOAA, and the specific line office mission? (20%)
 - Is the timeframe adequate to meet the proposal objectives? (10%)
 - Is the collaboration outlined in the application adequate to achieve the desired results? (10%)
 - Does the proposed partnership with the NOAA facility lend itself to successful collaboration between the student, an identified NOAA mentor, the academic partner institution and NOAA? (10%)
 - Does the project plan and statement of career interest aligned with, and support the NOAA mission? (20%).
 - Do the recommendations and references strongly support the application? (10%).

A virtual interview is conducted by the EPP Program team that contributes to the final selection of NOAA EPP Graduate Fellows.

FINAL GFP SELECTIONS ARE MADE BY THE NOAA EPP MANAGERS.

GFP Requirements

Reporting: Progress reports are submitted to the GFP program office, the academic advisor, the NOAA mentor, and the CSC Director at the end of each academic term. Fellowship progress reports must include the signature of both the scholar's academic adviser and NOAA mentor.

At the end of the fellowship, final report must be submitted to the EPP office no later than 30 days after completion of the fellowship. The report must contain findings, outcomes and accomplishments.

Award recipients are required to present the results of the fellowship at a NOAA Science Seminar no later than one month after the completion of the fellowship.

Progress Meetings: Fellows are responsible for scheduling and leading progress meetings at three-month intervals with the EPP program managers, the NOAA mentor and the academic advisor. Meetings must be scheduled to allow for participation of EPP, the NOAA mentor and the academic advisor. Two weeks prior to the progress meeting, an agenda and a minimum two-page update with major accomplishments and any challenges encountered.

Transcripts: Three times per year the fellow is required to submit an official transcript to the NOAA EPP GFP program to verify the student is registered as a full-time student and is maintaining the required 3.5 GPA

Evaluations: Two evaluations will be conducted that contribute to the student's grade during the fellowship period.

- Students complete an evaluation on the fellowship at the end of the experience
- The NOAA mentor completes an evaluation of the fellow and provides the report to the academic advisor and NOAA EPP GFP program manager.
- NOAA mentors provide feedback to the program office on program administration at the end of the fellowship period.

Fellows' Responsibilities

Fellows are required to develop and maintain ongoing engagement with their CSC Director, academic adviser and NOAA mentor for the duration of the fellowship award while maintaining full time status as a student. Fellows are not allowed to hold full time outside employment while receiving GFP funds and must meet the following requirements:

- Present results of research to the NOAA community via NOAA Science Seminar Series or the NOAA Library Brown Bag;
- Attend and present research results at, a minimum, one national conference;
- Present research results at the NOAA facility where the scholar's experiential opportunity is conducted; and,
- Present research to faculty and peers at scholar's respective CSC

Appointments

GFP Fellows are appointed for a maximum of one calendar year. All appointments are terminated automatically at the end of the period for which they are effective.

To be eligible for appointment as a GFP fellow, the student must:

- be enrolled as a regular degree-seeking student at a NOAA EPP CSC and maintain full-time academic status registered for the hours required to qualify as a full-time student at their academic institution; and,
- have and maintain a 3.5 cumulative grade point average per term for all graduate study.

RESEARCH PROJECT PLAN

Project Plan - An identified research and training opportunity at NOAA Lab/Facility

Student applicants develop an initial project plan that is submitted with the application. The plan must be five a maximum of (5) pages, excluding references and timeline. Research project Plans must include the following:

Introduction

The introduction must include a well-defined problem, a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), and supporting objectives of the proposed project and specifically how the fellowship activities are directly aligned with and support the fellow's thesis or dissertation research.

Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed research.

Describe ongoing or recently completed activities related to the proposed research including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research. All works cited should be referenced.

Rationale and Significance

Concisely present the rationale for the proposed project and how it will contribute to your graduate research and the current knowledge in the field.

Clearly describe the specific relationship of the graduate training project objectives to the NOAA mission and to one or more NOAA strategic plan objectives. The Cooperative Science Center award objectives/thrust are(s) must be specifically identified.

Applications that do not address at least one NOAA mission area and strategic plan objective will not be considered.

Describe how the proposed GFP activities will support your educational goals and graduate study research.

Approach

EPP Graduate applicants are required to clearly describe the planned approaches to be used. Specifically, this section must include:

- A description of the research details proposed and the sequence in which the activities will be performed;
- Methods to be used in carrying out the research and feasibility of the methods;
- Social science component and contribution of the integration of research to the overall graduate research;
- Expected outcomes and outcome measures;
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
- How and by whom results or products will be used;
- Challenges that may be encountered;
- A timeline for attainment of objectives and for production of deliverables that includes annual milestones with specific, measurable outcomes;
- A description to evaluate progress toward achieving research objectives must include milestones, which signify the completion of a major deliverable, events, or accomplishment and serve to verify that the research is on schedule and on track for successful conclusion;
- A plan that includes descriptions of indicators that will be measured to evaluate whether the education/research training activities are successful in achieving the goals and contribute to the achievement of the stated GFP program goals and outcomes; and,
- A dissemination plan describing the methods to be used to communicate and share findings and research accomplishments.

Professional Development

Within two months of a fellowship appointment, the recipient is required to develop and submit a Professional Development Training Plan to the EPP office. The plan must be

reviewed and approved by the fellow's academic advisor and the NOAA mentor prior to submission to NOAA EPP GFP program office for acceptance.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *Where do I check to make sure NOAA has received my complete application package?*
The NOAA EPP Center Director is the first point of contact for all queries related to the status of an application.
- *What if I miss the application deadline date?*
The Office of Education (OED), Educational Partnership (EPP) will not review applications or supporting materials received after the deadline date. Applications and materials received after the due date will be deemed ineligible.
- *Will I be required to undergo a background check if awarded a fellowship?*
NOAA requires all students or guests who enter a NOAA facility or have access to government property and data to undergo a background check. Individuals who do not pass/clear the security background check will not be allowed access to NOAA facilities or equipment.
- *Who do I contact if I have questions about the application or GFP?*
The first point of contact for all questions related to the GFP program or application is your NOAA CSC Director. If students have additional questions about the application or need additional information, please contact the GFP team at epp.gfp@noaa.gov NOAA EPP will also host one listening session on January 16, 2026 at 12:30 pm (EST) where potential applicants may ask questions or seek further clarification.
- *Who is required to sign off on progress reports?*
The fellow's academic adviser, NOAA mentor(s) and the Center Director, are required to sign off on progress reports.
- *How do I access my travel award?*
Fellows are required to complete a Travel Request form and submit to EPP, within a minimum of three weeks prior to the proposed travel date. The travel request must be approved by the NOAA mentor and Academic Advisor prior to submission to EPP for review and approval.
- *Are fellows required to co-locate at a NOAA facility as part of this program and what is the minimum duration?*

Yes. All GFP fellows are required to spend one contiguous calendar year at a NOAA facility engaging in research under the guidance of a NOAA mentor and in collaboration with their academic advisor. It is recommended that applicants select a NOAA mentor at the facility where the necessary equipment and subject matter experts are located.

- *Will I be notified of selection decisions?*

NOAA EPP will notify the Center Director of selection decisions. The Center Director notifies EPP CSC supported students of their application status.