



***Ocean Sciences
Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Handbook
(OCE-PRF)***

Broadening Participation and International

Updated 2015

***National Science Foundation (NSF)
Division of Ocean Sciences (OCE)¹***

¹ This document summarizes award terms and conditions and provides information for use during fellowship tenure.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. HOST ORGANIZATION(S)	3
3. SPONSORING SCIENTIST(S)	3
4. ACCEPTANCE OF FELLOWSHIP AWARD	4
5. FELLOWSHIP TENURE	4
6. FELLOWSHIP STIPEND	5
7. FELLOWSHIP ALLOWANCE	5
8. PAYMENTS	6
9. CHANGES IN FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES	7
10. CHANGE OF ADDRESS	7
11. PROJECT REPORTS.....	7
12. TRAVEL	8
13. ADDITIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROVISIONS.....	8
14. FORMS.....	12

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Science Foundation Ocean Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (OCE-PRF) is awarded in recognition of accomplishments to date, and with the expectation that the fellowship experience will strategically prepare early career researchers for positions of scientific leadership.

Upon your acceptance of the fellowship, NSF will issue a fellowship award letter. You are responsible for fulfilling the academic and fiscal obligations of your fellowship award. Failure to observe all award terms and conditions constitutes grounds for its revocation by NSF.

2. HOST ORGANIZATION(S)

A fellow must affiliate with an appropriate organization(s) during the entire fellowship tenure as described in the OCE-PRF Program Solicitation ([NSF 14-607](#)), Ocean Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowships (OCE-PRF) Broadening Participation and International

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503668&org=OCE,

and is responsible for making all arrangements for such affiliation with the host organization(s). A clear relationship should be established with the chosen organization(s) before beginning tenure, thus assuring both the fellow and the NSF that it will be possible to carry out the proposed activities. If there will be more than one host organization, either concurrently or sequentially, a primary host organization must be designated.

If it becomes necessary or desirable to seek affiliation with an organization(s) other than, or in addition to, those listed in the proposal, the fellow must send an e-mail requesting approval of the change to the cognizant NSF program officer, stating the reasons for the proposed change and explaining the appropriateness of the new organization for the proposed research and broadening participation plans. A fellow may not start at the new organization until the NSF program officer approves all changes, including the new sponsoring scientist. Fellows who have support from the NSF EPSCoR program may not move to a non-EPSCoR state.

3. SPONSORING SCIENTIST(S)

Each fellow must arrange for a staff member at the host organization(s) to serve as sponsoring scientist. Usually the sponsoring scientist is a faculty member or staff scientist with whom the fellow will be working closely during the fellowship program. It is expected that the sponsoring scientist will assist in the planning and initiation of the fellow's research program and broadening participation goals, as well as provide mentoring and guidance as described in his/her letter submitted as part of the fellow's proposal. The sponsoring scientist will be the organizational representative responsible for the fellow's activities during tenure. If there will be more than one sponsoring scientist, a lead sponsor must be designated.

Any questions relating to the fellow's status at the host organization(s) which the sponsoring scientist cannot answer should be referred for resolution to other appropriate officials within the host organization(s), such as a department chair, dean of the graduate school, or a designated organizational representative.

As with the host organization, a change in sponsoring scientist requires an e-mail request to and approval from the cognizant NSF program officer.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF FELLOWSHIP AWARD

NSF will contact selected candidates to discuss details of the fellowship, and will provide a **Fellowship Acceptance Form** which must be signed and returned to the cognizant NSF program officer.

The fellowship tenure must begin on the first of the month between June 1 and December 1 in the year following the submission target date. Any candidate who is unable to begin tenure within this time period is expected to decline the fellowship. Such a declination will not prejudice future proposals.

Upon receipt of your signed **Fellowship Acceptance Form**, together with any required supporting documentation, NSF will issue an award letter specifying the amount of support, start date, duration, and conditions of the fellowship award.

For individuals who did not have their Ph.D. when they submitted their OCE-PRF proposal, no fellowship funds will be released until they provide certification from the university evidencing completion of all Ph.D. requirements. This documentation should be emailed to the cognizant NSF program officer.

5. FELLOWSHIP TENURE

The fellowship provides up to a maximum of 24 full-time-equivalent months of support. In general, fellows are expected to work full time on their fellowship activities, so the NSF award is typically made for 2 years. If, for reasons related to career-life balance (e.g., family responsibilities, medical conditions, disability, etc.), the fellow wants to conduct fellowship activities on anything other than a full-time continuous basis, please consult with the cognizant NSF program officer.

The following forms are required for financial accounting purposes and must be submitted at appropriate times to the cognizant NSF program officer. If a fellow interrupts tenure both forms are required for each portion of tenure.

- A. **Fellowship Starting Certificate**, NSF Form 349 (06/2009): This form provides the “official” tenure start date and anticipated tenure duration, authorizing NSF to begin stipend payments in compliance with governmental accounting regulations. It must be signed by the fellow and the fellow’s sponsoring scientist or other appropriate official at the host organization. The form cannot be dated before the fellowship tenure actually begins, so the fellow must submit the certificate immediately after beginning the fellowship to minimize delay in receiving his/her first stipend payment.

At the top of the form, for Program Office insert “OCE”, for Room Number insert “725”, for Program Contact insert the OCE PRF contact identified on the [OCE PRF website](#).

For stipend accounting purposes, fellowship tenure must start on the first day of the month (e.g., September 1), so enter the first-day-of-the-month date in the “Tenure Start Date” section of the form. For “Anticipated Tenure Duration,” enter the date that yields the agreed upon number of months (up to 24) of full-time-equivalent support.

- B. **Fellowship Termination Certificate and Grant Fiscal Report**, NSF Form 453 (6/2009): This form provides the official termination date when the fellowship activities are completed at the host institution, and is necessary to comply with governmental accounting regulations. It must be signed by the fellow and the fellow's sponsoring scientist or other appropriate official at the host organization, and should be submitted immediately upon completion of fellowship tenure, or portion of tenure. In the event the certificate is not submitted, the fellow may be requested to return all funds received during tenure back to NSF.

A request for an interruption in fellowship tenure may be made by e-mail to the cognizant program officer. In general, approval will not be given for periods of less than three full-time months. (See section 8 on Payments.)

If additional time beyond the established expiration date of the award is needed to complete the original scope of the proposed work, a no-cost extension request may be submitted via FastLane for approval by the cognizant NSF program officer. As described in the NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter I.D.3.c., the request must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the expiration date of the grant. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of unobligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. The plan must adhere to the previously approved objectives of the project. Note that additional funding will not be considered as part of an extension request. (For clarification, the "Grantee-Approved Extension" described in the NSF Award and Administration Guide is not an option for fellowships.)

The fellowship is subject to termination if the fellow discontinues his/her research and broadening participation activities for any reason prior to the end of tenure. Also, if a fellow does not conform to the administrative requirements of the host organization, NSF reserves the right to withhold all payments, pending a full explanation.

6. FELLOWSHIP STIPEND

The annual stipend for fellows is \$62,000, representing 12 full-time-equivalent months of support. Stipend support is provided for a maximum of 24 full-time-equivalent months. With the expectation that fellows work full time on their fellowship activities, stipends are typically paid in monthly installments.

During the period of the fellowship award, no additional appointment or fellowship may be held without prior notification to and approval from the cognizant NSF program officer.

7. FELLOWSHIP ALLOWANCE

The annual fellowship allowance of \$25,000 is expendable at the discretion of the fellow. The fellow should keep records of all expenditures as appropriate for tax purposes and in case of an audit. The fellowship allowance is intended to cover costs such as:

- Expenses directly related to the conduct of the proposed research and broadening participation goals, including but not limited to materials and supplies, equipment, computing resources, access to databases, domestic and international travel, publication charges, and subscription fees;

- Expenses in support of the fellow, such as office space, general purpose supplies and use of equipment, facilities and other institutional resources; and
- Expenses in support of fringe benefits, which may include but are not limited to individual or family health insurance provided through a group or individual plan, dental and/or vision insurance, disability insurance, retirement savings, dependent care, and moving expenses.

NSF considers it appropriate for the fellow's host organization, at the organization's discretion, to make facilities and benefits available. If costs are assessed to the fellow, funds from the fellowship allowance may be used for this purpose. In such cases, the fellow would pay the benefits to the host organization. NSF cannot pay the organization directly, and is not responsible for any charges incurred by or on behalf of the fellow.

Track 2: International fellowships receive an additional \$10,000 in allowance annually to cover increased travel costs and living expenses due to the international collaboration. The allowance may also cover dependent travel and living costs. The fellow should also keep records of these expenditures as appropriate for tax purposes and in case of an audit

If a fellowship is terminated early, the fellow must return unused fellowship allowance funds to NSF. Generally, the fellow would return a prorated portion of the allowance. As an example, if the fellowship were terminated after 6 months, \$12,500 of the \$25,000 annual allowance would be returned. However, exceptions for such things as equipment purchases may be considered, and should be discussed with the cognizant NSF program officer.

8. PAYMENTS

- A. Stipend:** The stipend is paid directly to the fellow as an electronic funds transfer into a personal account at a financial institution. The fellow must submit a properly completed Fellowship Starting Certificate (see Section 5 on Fellowship Tenure) and a FastStart Direct Deposit Form, NSF Form 1379 (06/2009), to allow electronic payments into their account at a financial institution located in the United States. At the top of the form, check "Fellow" and insert the OCE PRF contact identified on the [OCE PRF website](#). The signed form must be submitted by fax (703-292-9006) or mail:

National Science Foundation
DFM Accounts Payable Section
4201 Wilson Blvd., Stafford II, Rm. 605
Arlington, Virginia 22230

While the first stipend payment will be issued as soon as possible after the Starting Certificate and Direct Deposit Form are received by NSF, processing can take 5-7 weeks. Fellows are encouraged to ensure in advance that their financial institution is set up to receive electronic payments and, to the extent possible, to use the same account for the entire fellowship period.

If the personal contact or bank information provided on the FastStart Direct Deposit Form changes during the fellowship tenure, the fellow must submit a new form. Additionally, if any changes or interruptions in stipend payment are approved by NSF (see Section 5 on Fellowship Tenure), the fellow must submit a Fellowship Action Form, NSF Form 383 (06/2009), to effect the change. As needed, this form should be submitted to the cognizant NSF program officer.

- B. Fellowship Allowance:** NSF will arrange for electronic transfer of the first annual fellowship allowance of \$25,000 and \$10,000 international allowance, if applicable, as soon as possible after receiving the Fellowship Starting Certificate and Direct Deposit Form. The fellow will receive an additional \$25,000 annual allowance and \$10,000 international allowance, if applicable, at the beginning of the second year of the fellowship, subject to submission and approval of the required annual progress report (see below).
- C. Delayed or Lost Payment:** If an anticipated payment is not received, the fellow should notify the cognizant NSF program officer. If the payment in question has posted for payment but was not received, the fellow should check with his/her financial institution to see if the payment can be traced. If the payment is still missing after a week, email the cognizant NSF program officer to request that the payment be stopped and that a replacement be processed. An official of the bank should also write NSF stating that the bank did not receive the stipend payment. NSF will forward appropriate fiscal information to the Treasury Department. Replacement payments usually require at least two months for processing. If the stipend is paid in the meantime, the Foundation should be notified immediately.

9. CHANGES IN FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

Major changes in the scope of research or broadening participation activities, sponsoring scientist(s), host organization(s), time commitments, or tenure from what was described in the proposal must be approved by the cognizant NSF program officer. Request for approval should be sent by e-mail to the program officer and clearly describe the reasons for proposed changes, and expected impacts in terms of the fellow's research, broadening participation activities, and professional development.

10. CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A change in postal and/or email address should be reported promptly via email to the cognizant NSF program officer. Fellows should also update contact information in FastLane, both as the Principal Investigator (PI) and Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) on the fellowship award. Award amendments will be sent to the AOR email address on file in FastLane.

11. PROJECT REPORTS

NSF would be pleased to receive an account of the fellow's progress at any time, especially if there are significant research developments, publications, or other noteworthy activities. This should be communicated directly to the cognizant NSF program officer. In addition, fellows are required to submit annual, final and project outcomes reports.

- A. Annual Project Reports.** The annual project report must be submitted electronically via the Project Report System in [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov). Annual reports should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the end of each 12-month award period. It should be noted that the final annual report serves as the project's final report and must be submitted in accordance with section B below. Continued funding for the fellowship will be contingent on the approval of annual project reports, and it is the fellow's responsibility to ensure that annual reports are submitted in a timely fashion so that stipend payments are not interrupted.

- B. Final Project Report.** For the final year of the fellowship award, a final project report must be submitted electronically via the Project Report System in [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) within 90 days following expiration of the award. Final reports for all awards should include a statement describing how the data policy requirements have been met.
- C. Project Outcomes Report for the General Public.** Within 90 days following the expiration of the award, a project outcomes report for the general public must be submitted via [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov). This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted in the Research Spending and Results section of the [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) website **exactly as it is submitted** and will be accompanied by the following disclaimer:

“This Project Outcomes Report for the General Public is displayed verbatim as submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI) for this award. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this Report are those of the PI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation; NSF has not approved or endorsed its content.”

Fellows are to ensure that the report does not contain any confidential, proprietary business information; unpublished conclusions or data that might compromise the ability to publish results in the research literature; or invention disclosures that might adversely affect the patent rights or those of the organization, in a subject invention under the award. Reports are not to contain any private personally identifiable information such as home contact information, individual demographic data or individually identifiable information collected from human research participants.

12. TRAVEL

All travel to be paid from Federal funds must conform to U.S. Government travel regulations – no exceptions. Due to the complexity of the travel Requirements, fellows are encouraged to consult with their host organization’s Sponsored Projects Office – or equivalent – regarding any travel issues.

Use of U.S.-Flag Air Carriers. As detailed in the NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI.F.1.c., and in accordance with the Fly America Act (49 USC 40118), any air transportation to, from, between, or within a country other than the U.S. of persons or property, the expense of which will be assisted by NSF funding, must be performed by or under a code-sharing arrangement with a U.S.-flag air carrier if service provided by such a carrier is “available.” Tickets (or documentation for electronic tickets) must identify the U.S. flag air carrier’s designator code and flight number.

13. ADDITIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROVISIONS

- A. Rights to Inventions or Writings.** NSF normally allows grantees to retain principal legal rights to intellectual property developed under NSF grants to provide incentives for development and dissemination of inventions, software and publications that can enhance their usefulness, accessibility and upkeep. Detailed information on intellectual property rights can be found in the

NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI.D. Fellows hosted at or collaborating with foreign institutions should be aware that specific provisions regarding allocations of intellectual property rights apply to particular countries. As necessary, fellows should formalize intellectual property agreements before commencing their work.

- B. Dissemination and Sharing of Research Results.** As noted in the NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI.D.4, fellows are expected to promptly prepare and submit for publication, with authorship that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved, all significant findings from work conducted under his/her fellowship grant. Fellows are also expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of his/her fellowship work. Privileged or confidential information should be released only in a form that protects the privacy of individuals and subjects involved.

Adjustments and, where essential, exceptions may be allowed to safeguard the rights of individuals and subjects, the validity of results, or the integrity of collections or to accommodate legitimate interests of NSF-supported fellows.

Fellows are expected to adhere to the Data Management Plan submitted with their proposals, and with the [Division of Ocean Sciences Data and Sample Policy \(NSF 11-060\)](#).

- C. Acknowledgement and Disclaimers.** Guidelines related to acknowledgement and disclaimers can be found in the NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI.E.4. Fellows are responsible for assuring that an acknowledgment of NSF support is made in any publication (including Web pages) of any material based on or developed under the fellowship, in the following terms:

"This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. (NSF grant number)."

NSF support must also be orally acknowledged during all news media interviews, including popular media such as radio, television and news magazines.

Fellows are responsible for assuring that every publication of material (including Web pages) based on or developed under this award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following disclaimer:

"Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation."

Fellows are responsible for assuring that the cognizant NSF program officer is provided access to, either electronically or in paper form, a copy of every publication of material based on or developed under this award, clearly labeled with the award number and other appropriate identifying information, promptly after publication.

- D. Liability.** NSF cannot assume any liability for accidents, illnesses or claims arising out of any work supported by the fellowship, or for unauthorized use of patented or copyrighted materials. The

fellow is advised to take such steps as may be deemed necessary to insure or protect themselves and their property.

E. Government Permits and Activities Abroad.

- 1) For awards that include activities requiring permits from appropriate Federal, state, or local government authorities, the fellow should obtain any required permits prior to undertaking the proposed activities.
- 2) The fellow must comply with the laws and regulations of any foreign country in which research is to be conducted. Areas of potential concern include: (a) requirements for advance approval to conduct research or surveys; (b) special arrangements for the participation of foreign scientists and engineers; and (c) special visas for persons engaged in research or studies. NSF does not assume responsibility for the fellow's compliance with the laws and regulations of the country in which the work is to be conducted.
- 3) The Fellow also should assure that activities carried on outside the U.S. are coordinated with appropriate U.S. and foreign government authorities, and necessary licenses, permits or approvals are obtained prior to undertaking the proposed activities.

F. Special Considerations. A number of situations encountered in the conduct of research require special information, supporting documentation, and formal approvals. Among these are the following, some mandated by Federal law:

- 1) Research which has an actual and/or potential impact on the environment;
- 2) Research at a registered historic or cultural property;
- 3) Research involving the use of in vitro generated recombinant DNA molecules;
- 4) Research involving the use of human subjects, hazardous materials, warm-blooded animals, or endangered species; and
- 5) Research involving collections in foreign countries.

Fellows must provide information on the status of any special permissions, clearances or provision related to the above items before beginning tenure. Specific guidance may be obtained from the host organization's Research Administration Office or the NSF Award & Administration Guide.

G. Referrals to the NSF Office of the Inspector General. Please refer to the NSF Office of Inspector General (oig@nsf.gov; 1-800-428-2189) any allegations or suspicions of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism), or unnecessary government expenditures involving NSF funds.

H. Income Taxes. No income tax will be withheld from the fellowship stipend or allowance. Provision therefore must be made by the fellow for payment of any tax, domestic or foreign, when due.

Fellows may find it helpful to consult the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Tax Topic 421: Scholarship and Fellowship Grants and Publication 970: Tax Benefits for Education. These are available at <http://www.irs.gov>. Specific questions regarding the taxation of Fellowship funding and personal tax liability should be referred to the IRS. As such, NSF will not respond to questions regarding tax issues.

Fellows are not in any sense employees of the National Science Foundation. Therefore, no funds will be deducted from the stipends; no Social Security taxes will be paid by the Foundation; no W-2 or 1099 forms will be issued; and provision must be made by the fellow for the filing of any necessary estimate of taxes due and for payment of all income taxes which may become due. A statement of funds received will be issued by the NSF Division of Financial Management upon written request from the fellow.

NSF is unable to supply information concerning the income tax or other tax provisions of any foreign country. Inquiries should be directed to the authorities in the appropriate countries.

- I. **Vacations/Leave.** NSF fellowships do not provide set vacation periods, as such, during the fellowship award period. Fellows are expected to maintain a full-time commitment to their fellowship activities throughout tenure.

Within the fellowship period, one month per year of fellowship duration may be used for paid leave, including parental or family leave. The paid leave cannot be used to increase the level of NSF support beyond the duration of the fellowship. NSF enables career-life balance through a variety of mechanisms. Support to address dependent care issues may be available for awardees. For more information, please see <http://www.nsf.gov/career-life-balance/>.

- J. **Military Status.** Brief interruption of a fellowship for duly authorized military service or training is permitted. In the case of an extended interruption, provision can be made for reservation of a fellowship (or the balance of it), and reinstatement of the unused portion at a later date. In such cases, fellows should notify the cognizant NSF program officer immediately by e-mail of their plans, and request further instructions.

- K. **Medical Insurance.** No medical or hospitalization program for use in the event of illness or accident involving a fellow (or dependents) is provided by NSF. Health insurance, medical expenses, and hospital fees may be paid from the fellowship allowance.

In the absence of health insurance coverage offered by the host organization, fellows are encouraged to continue any coverage they may have or make arrangements to join a program which gives a reasonable amount of protection.

- L. **Future Employment.** Acceptance of the fellowship and the award does not obligate a fellow, the National Science Foundation, or the United States Government with regard to future employment or future service of any kind.
- L. **Veterans' Benefits.** As a result of the enactment of P.L. 91-219, effective March 26, 1970, educational benefits payments from the Veterans Administration may be received concurrently with and supplementary to fellowship payments from the National Science Foundation.

14. FORMS

The following forms are referred to in this Handbook:

- [Fellowship Starting Certificate, NSF Form 349 \(06/2009\)](#)
- [FastStart Direct Deposit Form, NSF Form 1379 \(06/2009\)](#)
- [Fellowship Action Form, NSF Form 383 \(06/2009\)](#)
- [Fellowship Termination Certificate and Grant Fiscal Report, NSF Form 453 \(06/2009\)](#)