Fall 2007 EPA Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Fellowships for Graduate Environmental Study

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Synopsis of Program
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as part of its Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) program, is offering Graduate Fellowships for master’s and doctoral level students in environmental fields of study. The deadline for receipt of pre applications is November 28, 2006. Subject to availability of funding, the Agency plans to award approximately 15 new fellowships by July 20, 2007. Master’s level students may receive support for a maximum of two years. Doctoral students may be supported for a maximum of three years, usable over a period of four years. The fellowship program provides up to $37,000 per year of support per fellowship.

Award Information:
Anticipated Type of Award: Fellowship
Estimated Number of Awards: Approximately 15 awards
Anticipated Funding Amount: Approximately $1.4 million for all awards
Potential Funding per Fellowship: $37,000 per year per fellowship. Master’s level students may receive support for a maximum of two years. Doctoral students may be supported for a maximum of three years, usable over a period of four years. Cost sharing is not required.

Eligibility Information:
Applicants must attend a fully accredited U.S. college or university (located in the U.S. or its territories). Applicants must also be citizens of the United States or its territories or possessions, or be lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. Resident aliens must include their green card number in their pre application (you must have your green card at the time of application to be eligible for this Fellowship opportunity). EPA may verify this number with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service of the Department of Homeland Security. Applicants must be attending a U.S. institution that receives less than $35 million in Federal Research and Development expenditures. For purposes of this solicitation, EPA will use the data found in column two of the National Science Foundation's report "Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions: Fiscal Year 2003," Table 15. These data can be accessed at http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06309/pdf/tab15.pdf (PDF, 26pp., 100KB, about PDF).

Pre-Application Materials:
You may submit either a paper pre-application or an electronic pre-application but not both for this announcement. The necessary forms for submitting a GRO paper pre-application can be found on the NCER web site, http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms/. To apply electronically, you must use the pre-application package available at Grants.gov (see "Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications"). See Section IV for further information on application submission procedures.

Contact Person(s):
Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA/NCER resources listed below. To obtain information most quickly, consult the "Guidance & FAQs". If your question is not covered, then call the toll-free telephone number or send a query through the web-based query form. You will receive a personal response through a return telephone call or email. Information regarding this RFA obtained from sources other than those indicated below may not be accurate.

Guidance & FAQs: http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance/faqs.html
Contact Person: Stephanie Willett (2007FellowshipsRFP@epa.gov); phone: 202-343-9656, Toll
I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Introduction
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Center for Environmental Research (NCER), invites pre applications for the Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Fellowships for graduate environmental study for master’s and doctoral level students. The deadline for receipt of pre applications is November 28, 2006. Subject to availability of funding, the Agency plans to award approximately 15 new fellowships by July 20, 2007. Master's level students may receive support for a maximum of two years. Doctoral students may be supported for a maximum of three years, usable over a period of four years. The fellowship program provides up to $37,000 per year of support per fellowship. This amount covers a monthly stipend of $1,667 for up to 12 months totaling $20,000 for the year, $5,000 for authorized expenses, and up to $12,000 for tuition and fees. The actual amount awarded per year will vary depending on the amount of tuition and fees and the number of months the stipend is required. These fellowships are intended to help defray costs associated with advanced, environmentally oriented study leading to a master's or doctoral degree.

B. Background
The GRO Graduate Fellowship program is part of the national effort to help strengthen the environmental research capacity of institutions of higher education that receive limited funding to build such capacity, including in particular institutions with substantial minority enrollment. This goal is consistent with the mission of EPA, which is to provide leadership in the nation's environmental science, research, education, assessment, restoration, and preservation efforts. The GRO fellowship program has benefited both the public and private sectors by consistently providing the nation with well trained environmental specialists to meet environmental challenges in our society. GRO-supported fellows have provided new environmental research in physical, biological, health sciences, and social sciences and engineering.

The specific Strategic Goal, Objective and Sub-objective from EPA's Strategic Plan that relates to this solicitation is: Goal 4: Healthy Communities and Ecosystems, Objective 4.5: Enhance Science and Research, Sub-objective 4.5.2: Conduct Relevant Research. The EPA Strategic Plan can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ocfo/plan/plan.htm

C. Authority and Regulations

D. Specific Areas of Interest
This RFA solicits pre-applications from students performing research in a variety of environmentally-related research areas (see Section IV.B, Item 1 for specific areas of interest). By providing financial support across disciplines, EPA expects to continue to assist in increasing the nation’s capacity to produce leading edge research, and advancing the nation's research enterprise. The GRO fellowship program has benefited both the public and private sectors by consistently providing the nation with well trained environmental specialists to meet environmental challenges in our society. GRO-supported fellows have provided new environmental research in physical, biological, health sciences, and social sciences and engineering.
E. References


F. Special Requirements

Agency policy prevents EPA technical staff and managers from providing individual applicants information that may create an unfair competitive advantage. Consequently, EPA employees will not review, comment, advise, provide technical assistance to applicants preparing pre-applications in response to EPA RFAs, endorse a pre-application or discuss in any manner how the Agency will apply the published evaluation criteria for this competition.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

It is anticipated that a total of approximately $1.5 million will be awarded under this RFA, depending on the availability of funds and the quality of pre-applications received. The EPA anticipates funding approximately 15 fellowships under this RFA. The maximum projected award per fellowship is $37,000 per year total costs, for up to 3 years. Master's level students may receive support for a maximum of three years, usable over a period of four years. The EPA reserves the right to reject all pre-applications and make no awards, or make fewer awards than anticipated, under this RFA. The EPA reserves the right, consistent with Agency policy and without further competition, to make additional awards under this RFA if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 4 months after the original selection decisions.

The fellowship provides up to $37,000 per year of support per fellowship. A maximum of $74,000 will be provided for master’s fellows (two years) and up to $111,000 (three years) for doctoral fellows. The $37,000 annual support covers stipend, tuition, and expenses as follows:

Stipends: For the 2007 2008 academic year, stipends will be $20,000 for 12 month tenure, prorated at a maximum of $1,667 per month for shorter periods. Funds for unused months are forfeited. Stipends are paid directly to the fellow. At its discretion, the institution may supplement a fellow's stipend from institutional funds in accordance with the supplementation policy of the institution.

Tuition and Academic Fees: Up to $12,000 per year will be paid directly to the institution. For the purposes of this fellowship, health insurance is an expense, not an academic fee.

Expense Allowance: Up to $5,000 will be provided to pay for items and activities for the direct benefit of the student's education and research, such as health insurance, books, supplies, computers, data analysis, publication costs, equipment, travel to technical and scientific meetings, and domestic and international travel required to conduct the proposed research. Specific instructions regarding the disbursement and management of the expense allowance will be provided during the award process.
**EPA Fellowship Conference:** Fellows are expected to attend the EPA Graduate Fellows Conference as long as they are in the program. Resources to support this travel are to be taken from the expense allowance. Fellowship recipients will be expected to attend the fall 2008 Fellows Conference.

**International Activities:** The Fellow’s proposed research may be conducted outside the United States. However, EPA allows only $5,000 for all expenses, including travel. See “Expense Allowance” for details. If it becomes necessary to travel outside the United States or its territories, you must notify your Project Officer in advance. Your Project Officer will obtain the necessary EPA and State Department approvals before the fellowship funds can be used to conduct these activities. Fellows who travel overseas will be required to comply with all provisions of the Fly America Act.

**Diversity:** EPA recognizes the need for scientists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Broadening opportunities for and enabling participation of all individuals, including women, men, minorities and persons with disabilities, are essential to the health and vitality of science. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to apply.

### III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

**A. Eligible Applicants**

Applicants must attend a fully accredited U.S. college or university located in the U.S. or its territories. Individuals must be citizens of the United States or its territories or possessions, or be lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. Resident aliens must include their green card number in their pre application. You must have your green card at the time of application to be eligible for this Fellowship opportunity. EPA may verify this number with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service of the Department of Homeland Security.

Applicants must be attending a U.S. institution that receives less than $35 million in Federal Research and Development expenditures. For purposes of this solicitation, EPA will use the data found in column two of the National Science Foundations report Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions: Fiscal Year 2003, Table 15. These data can be accessed at [http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06309/pdf/tab15.pdf](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06309/pdf/tab15.pdf) (PDF, 26pp., 100KB, about PDF). Table 15 is a broad representation of institutions, and includes schools that receive $35 million or more in Federal research assistance.

Students attending eligible institutions with substantial minority enrollment are particularly encouraged to apply. Some of the schools on Table 15 are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education lists as Accredited Post-secondary Minority Institutions consistent with Executive Orders 13125 (Increasing Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders), 13230 (Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans), 13256 (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and 13270 (Tribal Colleges and Universities), which encourage building the capacity of minority-serving institutions to provide high quality education and other measures to improve minority education. Note however, that not all of these schools receive less than $35 million annually in Federal Research and Development expenditures. For specific information regarding Federal funding to minority-serving institutions, see The Extent of Federal S&E Funding to Minority-Serving Institutions, at [http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/infbrief/nsf04325/](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/infbrief/nsf04325/).

Students do not need to be enrolled in or formally accepted in a full time graduate program at the time they apply for a fellowship, but proof of enrollment or acceptance must be produced prior to the award of the fellowship. Students must attend a fully accredited U.S. college or university located in the U.S. or its territories. Students must be pursuing a master's or doctoral degree in an environmental field of specialization.
Students who are in a graduate program at the time of application and meet either of the following two criteria as of November 28, 2006 ARE NOT eligible: 1) have completed more than one year in your current master's program; or 2) have completed more than four years in your current doctoral program. However, students enrolled in a master's program who intend to pursue a doctoral degree beginning in the fall of 2007 may apply for a doctoral fellowship.

Acceptance of this fellowship does not necessarily preclude acceptance of another scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or grant aid. However, this fellowship does preclude receiving other federal fellowships.

Employees of the U.S. government may apply, but must be able to prove separation from Federal service before accepting this fellowship.

B. Cost-Sharing
Cost sharing is not required.

C. Threshold Criteria
In addition, to be eligible for funding consideration, a project’s focus must consist of activities within the statutory terms of EPA’s financial assistance authorities; specifically, the statute(s) listed above. Generally, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air pollution, water pollution, solid/hazardous waste pollution; toxic substances control; or pesticide control. These activities should relate to the gathering or transferring of information or advancing the state of knowledge. Proposals should emphasize this “learning” concept, as opposed to “fixing” an environmental problem via a well-established method. Proposals relating to other topics which are sometimes included within the term “environment” such as recreation, conservation, restoration, protection of wildlife habitats, etc., must describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Note: The applicant’s planned course of study must focus on one or more of the areas of environmental significance identified in Section IV.B. Item 1.

D. Other
Pre-applications must substantially comply with the pre-application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or they will be rejected. In addition, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to parts of the pre-application, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Pre-applications must be received by the EPA or grants.gov on or before the solicitation closing date and time published in Section IV of this announcement, or they will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Also, pre-applications that fail to demonstrate a public purpose of support or stimulation (e.g. by proposing research which primarily benefits a Federal program or provides a service for a Federal Agency) will not be funded.

In addition, to be eligible for funding consideration, a project’s focus must consist of activities within the statutory terms of EPA’s financial assistance authorities; specifically the statutes(s) listed above. Generally, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution, water pollution, solid/hazardous waste pollution, toxic substances control, or pesticide control. These activities should relate to the gathering or transferring of information or advancing the state of knowledge. Proposals should emphasize the “learning” concept, as opposed to “fixing” an environmental problem via a well established method. Proposals relating to other topics which are sometimes included in the term “environment” such as recreation, conservation, restoration, protection of wildlife habitats, etc., must describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.
Pre-applications deemed ineligible for funding consideration will be notified within fifteen calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

**Students who have completed more than one year in their current master's program or more than four years in their current Ph.D. program at the time of the pre-application are not eligible for the STAR Fellowship Program.**

**IV. PRE-APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

You may submit either a paper pre-application or an electronic pre-application but not both for this announcement. If not otherwise marked, instructions apply to both types of submissions as follows.

**A. Internet Address to Request Pre-Application Package**

For paper pre-applications, fellowship forms can be found on the NCER web site: [http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms/](http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms/). Instructions for completing these forms follow.

For electronic pre-applications, use the pre-application package available at Grants.gov (see "Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications"). Instructions for completing these forms follow.

For both paper and electronic pre-applications, an email will be sent by NCER to the applicant to acknowledge receipt of the pre-application and transmit other important information. The email will be sent from receipt.application@epa.gov; email to this address will not be accepted. If you do not receive an email acknowledgment within 30 days of the submission closing date, immediately call 1-800-490-9194 (the EPA/NCER toll-free telephone number). Failure to do so may result in your pre-application not being reviewed. Please note: Due to the high volume of pre-applications, voice and e-mail requests to verify pre-application receipt will not responded to unless they are placed after January 3, 2007. See "Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications" for additional information regarding acknowledgment of receipt of electronically submitted pre-applications. Please note: Due to often lengthy delays in delivery, it is especially important that you monitor NCER's confirmation of receipt of your pre-application when using US Postal Service mail.

**B. Content and Form of Pre-Application Submission**

The pre-application is made by submitting the materials described below. It is essential that the pre-application contain all information requested and be submitted in the formats described. It is also essential that all contact information be that of the applicant unless specifically requested otherwise.

**Item 1. Standard Form 424 and 424i**

The applicant must complete Standard Form 424 (for electronic submissions) or 424i (for written submissions). This form will be the first page of the pre-application. For paper submissions, use the 424i form identified for Fellowships available at: [http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms/](http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms/). For help finding the appropriate Congressional District, see [http://www.house.gov/](http://www.house.gov/). If you cannot locate a Congressional District (e.g., Puerto Rico), please enter "00". For Start Date and End Date, enter a Start Date of 09/01/2007 and an End Date up to 2 years later for master's degree support or up to 3 years later for Ph.D. degree support. If necessary, these dates can be modified if you receive a fellowship.

For electronic submissions, use the Standard Form 424 in the electronic pre-application package. See "Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications"
### Funding Opportunity Numbers

Select a single Funding opportunity number for your pre-application. Failure to select a proper funding opportunity number could result in an inappropriate reviewer assignment. If your pre-application seems to fit under more than one funding opportunity number, choose the most appropriate one. Each pre-application can be submitted to one, and only one, funding opportunity number. For electronic submissions, you must use the appropriate electronic pre-application package (see "Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications") for the chosen funding opportunity number. **Note: Your planned course of study MUST focus on one or more of the following areas of environmental significance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Opportunity Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-A6</td>
<td>Environmental Engineering (limited to pollution prevention; includes sustainability)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-A7</td>
<td>Environmental Engineering (limited to treatment and remediation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-B6</td>
<td>Atmospheric Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-B7</td>
<td>Environmental Chemistry and Environmental Materials Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-B8</td>
<td>Hydrogeology</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-C6</td>
<td>Economics (includes market incentives and health and ecosystem valuation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-C7</td>
<td>Geography (limited to using GIS tools to map landscape patterns adjacent to watersheds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-C8</td>
<td>Environmental Decision making research (limited to projects in community-based participatory research, intervention strategies, environmental behavior modification, environmental education, and environmental justice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-C9</td>
<td>Urban/Regional Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-D6</td>
<td>Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, Developmental Biology, and Genetics (includes genomics, proteomics, and bioinformatics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-D7</td>
<td>Microbiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-D8</td>
<td>Public Health Sciences (includes environmental epidemiology, exposure assessment, biostatistics, and health risk assessment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-D9</td>
<td>Toxicology (includes pharmacokinetics and toxicodynamic modeling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-D0</td>
<td>Health Physics (limited to research involving radiation interaction, detection, and dosimetry; radiation protection standards and regulations; biological effects, risk assessment, and ALARA (As Low As Reasonably Achievable radiation exposure) concepts; facility design and nuclear safety; radiological emergency management; environmental monitoring and assessment; and nuclear waste management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-E6*</td>
<td>Aquatic Systems Ecology - freshwater systems only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-GRO-E7</td>
<td>Oceanography and Coastal Processes (limited to pollutant research such as Harmful Algal Blooms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA-F2007-</td>
<td>Terrestrial Systems Ecology-[limited to soils (unsaturated zone) that can serve</td>
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</table>
GRO-F6* as a medium for contaminant transport or plants that would transport contaminants from the unsaturated zone into the atmosphere

EPA-F2007-GRO-F7* Terrestrial Systems Ecology – [includes animals (the animal research should not be the primary focus of the project, the work must relate specific pollutant(s) to effects on animal(s) and or habitat]

*These categories are designed for pre-applications pertaining to the interrelationship of organisms and their environments where there is not a more specific Funding Opportunity Number available. Projects must describe the relationship of these topic areas to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Item 2. Key Contacts

The applicant must complete the "Key Contacts" form as the second page of the pre-application. Please make certain that all contact information is accurate.

Key Contacts Form Instructions

Authorized Representative: Enter the applicant's current address information.

Payee: Enter the applicant's permanent address information. This is the address NCER will use for any U.S.P.S. correspondence.

Administrative Contact: Enter the business information for the applicant's advisor. Leave blank if the applicant has not identified an advisor.

Project Manager: Leave blank or, if the applicant has a second advisor, please enter the second advisor's information here.

Item 3. Citizenship Status, Degree Sought, Educational Level (1 page)

The third page of the pre-application must contain the following information. Please begin each item on a separate line using the appropriate numbered heading.

i. Your name: Last name, first name, middle initial/name.

ii. Citizenship Status: State whether you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. If you are a U.S. citizen, give the city and state of your birth. If you are a resident alien, provide your green card number.

iii. College/University, School or Department: Name and location of the college/university, school or department from which your degree will be obtained. NOTE: If you are undecided about the school you will attend, leave blank. If you are considering multiple institutions, list your top two choices.

iv. Certification of Institute GRO Eligibility: You must certify that your school or intended school is GRO eligible. These data can be accessed at http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06309/pdf/tab15.pdf (PDF, 26pp., 100KB, about PDF). The full NSF report is available at http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06309/. Multiply the figure in the second column by 1000. Then complete the following statement: According to the National Science Foundation's report "Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions: Fiscal Year 2003", Table 15, column two, received less than $ million in Federal Research and Development expenditures in fiscal year 2003. Since this is less than $35 Million, my university is GRO eligible. EPA will verify student eligibility before awards are made. Only students who attend GRO eligible institutions will be awarded these fellowships.
v. Provide a descriptive title for your environmental research project. The title must be brief yet represent the major thrust of the project. Because the title will be used by those not familiar with the project, strike a balance between highly technical words and phrases and more commonly understood terminology. Do not use general phrases such as “research on”. If the specific topic has had not been selected, enter your research area of interest.

vi. Degree Sought: State if you are seeking funding to support either a master's or doctoral degree, e.g., M.S., M.A., Ph.D., M.P.H. List the environmental discipline in which the degree will be earned. Include the month and year you expect the degree to be awarded.

vii. Educational Level (at the time of pre-application): Enter one of the following choices.
   a. Entering Master's Student (EM) if you are applying for, or enrolled in, a master's program and have completed less than one year* toward this degree.
   b. Entering Doctoral Student (ED) if you are applying for, or are enrolled in, a doctoral program, have completed less than one year toward this degree, and have no other graduate or professional degree (e.g., MS, MA, MPH).
   c. Doctoral Student (DS) if you are applying for, or enrolled in, a doctoral program, have completed less than one year toward this degree, but have completed another graduate or professional degree (e.g., MS, MA, MPH).
   d. Continuing Doctoral Student (CD) if you are enrolled in a doctoral program and have completed more than one year, but less than four years*, toward this degree.

* Students who have completed more than one year in their current master's program or more than four years in their current Ph.D. program at the time of the pre-application are not eligible for the GRO fellowship program.

Item 4. Statement of Objectives and Narrative Statement

These items must be single spaced and completed using a 12 point or equivalent typeface on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper with one inch margins all around. Page limitations for individual components are specified below. You may use figures and tables, but do not deviate from the format requirements and page limits.

Statement of Objectives (1 Page)

Explain your academic and environmental career goals and how your proposed course of study or research will help you achieve these goals. Include any background information you believe is pertinent and provides insight into why you have chosen the goals you are pursuing. You will be evaluated on your dedication to your studies in an environmentally oriented career. This statement will also provide insight into your organizational, analytical, and written communication skills.

Narrative Statement [Six (6) pages for Continuing Doctoral (CD) students, plus additional pages as needed for cited references. Five (5) pages plus additional pages as needed for cited references for entering masters (EM), entering doctoral (ED), and doctoral (DS) students.]

The narrative statement should reflect your educational level. All students must include a description of the scientific and, if appropriate, societal importance of their chosen environmental field of study. A detailed environmental research plan including a discussion on methodology is required for continuing doctoral students and is desirable, to the extent possible, for all other educational levels. At a minimum, include answers to the questions below for the appropriate educational level. Citation/reference pages are in addition to the page limit for the narrative statement.
Entering Master’s Student: What are the degree requirements for your program? What is your planned course of study during the period of the fellowship? Do you know if you will be undertaking a thesis/special project? If so, describe it. If you do not know, what environmental project would you like to propose? Why is it important? How is it relevant to the protection of human health and the environment? Also see Section V of this RFA.

Entering Doctoral Student: What are the degree requirements for your program? What is your planned course of study during the period of the fellowship? If you could select your dissertation topic this year, what would it be? Why is it important? How is it relevant to the protection of human health and the environment? Which environmental area would be best served by your selected topic? Also see Section V of this RFA.

Doctoral Student: What are the degree requirements for your program? What is your planned course of study during the period of the fellowship? If you could select your dissertation topic this year, what would it be? Why is it important? How is it relevant to the protection of human health and the environment? Which environmental area would be best served by your selected topic? What are some of the most influential publications currently available in this area? Also see Section V of this RFA.

Continuing Doctoral Student: What is your dissertation topic? How is it relevant to the protection of human health and the environment? Describe your dissertation research project by addressing the following points (also see section V of this RFA):

1. Goal of research: What environmental problem are you focusing on? What is your hypothesis(es)?
2. Rationale: What is the environmental need for this research? What significant research has been published on this topic? How do the results of that research relate to your project?
3. Approach: How will you test your hypothesis(es)?
4. Expected results: What environmental benefits are expected to result from this work?
5. Cited literature: Provide a list of cited literature.

Item 5. Education and Experience, Publications, and Transcript Information

Education and Experience (1 Page)

List the academic degrees you have received or expect to receive in the near future, including the date, discipline, and the institution. You should also list relevant experience, including paid employment, military service, internships, residencies, special studies, volunteer work, etc. Give dates and a short description of your duties in each position, listing most recent first. Give names and addresses of employers. List only relevant experience.

Publications (1 Page)

If you have published in the technical/scientific literature, provide a bibliography here. If you have not yet published, write "NA". Also include information on presentations you have given at professional meetings.

Course Work Information (use as many pages as are necessary)

Provide, in tabular form, the following information about your course work (this information should be obtained from your transcripts): the institutions at which the credits were earned, dates, names and catalog numbers of courses taken, credit hours, grades received, and cumulative GPA for all
courses taken at each degree level. Be sure to list any degree(s) received. If possible, course titles should not exceed the space available. Abbreviations are allowed. Note if courses were audited or not completed. If any institution you attended had a grading system different from the traditional "A, B, C" system, explain the system in a succinct footnote. Include data from your entire college career. Do not include your transcripts at this time. Top ranked applicants will be required to submit official copies of transcripts for validation prior to award of the fellowship.

**Item 6. Voluntary Information (1 page)**

Voluntary Information: For EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) programmatic assessment purposes only, include your gender and race, ethnicity, or national origin (e.g., Black or African-American, White, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander), and whether you are a person with a disability. This information is requested pursuant to Executive Orders 13125, as amended, (Increasing Opportunity and Improving Quality of Life of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders), 13230 (President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans), 13256 (President’s Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and 13270 (Tribal Colleges and Universities), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended, 29 U.S.C. 794; and in compliance with the Office of Management and Budget’s 1997 Revision to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. Providing this information is voluntary and has no impact on the Agency’s evaluation of your application. If provided, this information will be kept completely separate from your pre-application. It will be used only in aggregate statistical form (without individual identification) to assess the effectiveness of ORD’s diversity efforts. Maintenance of the information, and access to individual information, will be governed by the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. §552a, and the information will be handled in accordance with EPA Privacy Act System EPA-36.

**Item 7. Letters of Recommendation**

Each applicant MUST arrange for three (3) current letters of recommendation on official letterhead from individuals who have knowledge of your academic record. Letters of recommendation are critical components of the pre application. These letters may be submitted either in paper copy or electronically (via e-mail) per the instructions below. **All letters of recommendation must be received by EPA no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date, November 28, 2006.** If you have a sponsor or advisor in the program, one of these letters of recommendation should come from that individual. Select your references carefully and urge them to write letters specifically about you. Do not write the letters yourself. Letters of recommendation that appear to be mass produced are generally not ranked highly by the reviewers. At a minimum, the letters of recommendation should address your academic performance and potential, enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and motivation in your chosen field. It is always useful if the writer also conveys a sense of who you are as an individual.

Paper-copy submitted letters of recommendation must have the name of the applicant and the appropriate funding opportunity number clearly marked on both the letter and on the outside of the envelope prior to sending it to EPA (see “Other Submission Requirements” below for the mailing address).

Electronically submitted letters of recommendation must have the name of the applicant and the appropriate funding opportunity number in the “subject” line as well as in the letter of recommendation itself. In addition, the letter must be submitted as a PDF attachment with a filename containing the last 7 digits of the Funding Opportunity Number and the applicant’s last name. Email letters to 2007NCERFellowLetters@epa.gov. **This email address is for letter of recommendation submission only; emails sent to this address will not receive a response. Any pre-applications emailed to this address will be rejected.**
NCER cannot guarantee that letters of recommendation not containing the applicant’s name and funding opportunity number will be matched with the appropriate pre-application.

C. Submission Dates and Times
For paper copy submissions, the original and two (2) copies of the pre-application (3 in all) must be received by EPA no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date, November 28, 2006. Electronic pre-applications must be transferred to Grants.gov no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date. Letters of recommendation (see IV.B. Item 7. above) must also be received by EPA no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date, November 28, 2006.

It should be noted that this schedule may be changed without prior notification because of factors that were not anticipated at the time of announcement. In the case of a change in the required pre-application closing date, a new date will be posted on the NCER web site (http://www.epa.gov/ncer/) and a modification posted on www.grants.gov. Pre-applications received after the closing date will be returned to the sender without further consideration.

Solicitation Closing Date: November 28, 2006, 4:00 pm Eastern Time
Earliest Anticipated Start Date: September 1, 2007

D. Funding Restrictions
The funding mechanism for all awards issued under GRO solicitations will consist of assistance agreements from the EPA. All award decisions are subject to the availability of funds. In accordance with the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, 31 U.S.C. 6301 et seq., the primary purpose of a grant is to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal statute, rather than acquisition for the direct benefit or use of the Agency. In issuing a fellowship agreement, the EPA anticipates that there will be no substantial EPA involvement in the design, implementation, or conduct of the research. However, the EPA will monitor research progress through annual reports provided by Fellows and other contacts with the Fellows.

E. Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements
You may submit either a paper pre-application or an electronic pre-application but not both for this announcement.

Submission Instructions for Paper Pre-Applications

Three (3) copies of the pre-application must be submitted: 1) an original, signed copy that includes the Voluntary Information described in Section IV.B., Item 6. above (this is the only copy that needs to include the Voluntary Information); 2) a single sided copy on plain white paper without the voluntary information for scanning (please label this copy as “FOR SCANNING AND REVIEW USE”); and 3) another photocopy of version 2 for administrative purposes. Do not permanently bind or staple any of these copies; please use either binder or paper clips to secure them.

Because of security concerns, paper pre-applications cannot be personally delivered. They must be sent through regular mail, express mail, or a major courier.

The following address must be used for regular mail:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Peer Review Division (8725F)
Funding Opportunity Number: (applicant: place the appropriate funding opportunity number here)
Pre applications MUST be received by EPA no later than 4:00 p.m., EST, on November 28, 2006. NOTE: Letters of Recommendation MUST also be received by EPA no later than 4:00 pm EST, on November 28, 2006 (see IV.B., item 7, above for further instructions). Allow sufficient time to assure delivery by 4:00 pm EST on November 28, 2006. Because of security concerns, pre-applications cannot be personally delivered. They must be sent through regular mail, express mail, or a major courier. Due to uncertainties associated with timely delivery of regular mail, it is especially important to provide an e mail address to which an acknowledgment of receipt notification can be sent (See IV.A. above).

**Submission Instructions for Electronic Pre-Applications**

Please read this entire section before attempting an electronic submission through Grants.gov.

START EARLY! Do not delay submission of your pre-application past 10:00am on the deadline day. Due to the potentially high volume of applications submitted as the deadline time approaches, it is possible that the Grants.gov electronic submission and telephone assistance systems may become overwhelmed.

Grants.gov requires an individual registration to submit a pre-application for this solicitation; however, registration is not required to view the pre-application package. To register, go to [http://www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/), click on "Get Registered", click on "Individual Registration". Allow at least one day for the registration to be activated.

The electronic pre-application package available through the [http://www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/) web site must be used for electronic submissions. In order to view the pre-application package, download the PureEdge viewer (hyperlink available under "Apply for Grants" then "Step 1"). Note: This is a computer program; many institutions will not allow it to be downloaded into the institutional system. The pre-application package may be quickly accessed from [https://apply.grants.gov/forms_apps_idx.html](https://apply.grants.gov/forms_apps_idx.html) using the appropriate Funding Opportunity Number. Please register for announcement change notification emails. The Grants.gov training demonstration, "How to Complete a Grant Application Package", is available at: [http://www.grants.gov/images/Application_Package.swf](http://www.grants.gov/images/Application_Package.swf). The Grants.gov "Applicant's User Guide" is available at [http://www.grants.gov/help/user_guides.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/help/user_guides.jsp).

Note: Grants.gov is not compatible with all internet browsers. To avoid fatal submission problems, please check the compatibility of the computer system you intend to use prior to attempting to submit an electronic pre-application. The Grants.gov system requirements are: Windows 98, ME, NT 4.0, 2000, XP; 500 MHz processor; 128 MB of RAM; 40 MB disk space; Web browser: Internet Explorer 5.01 or higher, Netscape Communicator 4.5 - 4.8, Netscape 6.1, 6.2 or 7.
The complete pre-application must be transferred to Grants.gov no later than 4:00 pm Eastern Time on November 28, 2006. NOTE: Letters of Recommendation MUST be received by EPA no later than 4:00 p.m., EST, on November 28, 2006 (see section IV.B. Item 7 above for further information). Allow sufficient time to assure delivery by November 28, 2006. An e mail will be sent by NCER to the applicant to acknowledge receipt of the pre-application and to transmit other important information. The email will be sent from receipt.application@epa.gov; email to this address will not be accepted. If an email acknowledgment from NCER (not support@grants.gov) has not been received within 30 days of the submission closing date, immediately contact the technical contact using either the toll-free telephone number or web-based query form listed in Agency Contacts. Failure to do so may result in your pre-application not being reviewed. Please note: Due to the high volume of pre-applications, voice and e-mail requests to verify pre-application receipt will not be responded to unless they are placed after January 3, 2007.

Pre-Application Package Preparation. The pre-application package consists of 1 though 5 below.

1. On the initial electronic Grant Application Package page, complete the "Application Filing Name" field by entering the Applicant's name, starting with the last name. Note: Applicants do not need to complete the "Competition ID" field.
2. Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424): This is item 1 in section IV. B above. Do not follow the instructions provided with the form. Instead, follow the instructions below for items that may cause difficulty. Only the yellow highlighted fields need to be completed.
   8.a. The applicant is the student submitting the pre-application.
   8.b. Enter your the applicant's social security number.
   8.f. The contact person is the applicant (see 8.a.).
   9. enter "P: individual"
   15. Provide a descriptive title for your environmental research project. The title must be brief yet represent the major thrust of the project. Because the title will be used by those not familiar with the project, strike a balance between highly technical words and phrases and more commonly understood terminology. Do not use general phrases such as "research on". If the specific topic has not been selected, enter your research area of interest.
   16.a. For help finding the appropriate Congressional District, see http://www.house.gov/. If you cannot locate a Congressional District (e.g., Puerto Rico), please enter "00".
   16.b. Enter "00".
   17.a. Enter a Start Date of 9/01/2007.
   17.b. Enter an End Date, enter a Start Date of 09/01/2008 and an End Date up to 2 years later for master's degree support or up to 3 years later for Ph.D. degree support. If necessary, these dates can be modified if you receive a fellowship.
   18.a. Enter the amount of funding you are requesting ($74,000 for Master’s degree, $111,000 for Ph.D.)
   18.b.-f. Enter "0"
   19. Enter "c" Program is not covered.
   The Authorized Representative is the applicant (see 8.a.). You may enter "student" as the title. "Close Form" will save and close the form.
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700 54: Complete the form as described in Section IV.B. Item 2, above.
4. Project Narrative Attachment Form (click on "Add Mandatory Project Narrative"): Attach a single electronic file labeled "MandatoryApplicationInfo" that contains the items described in Section IV.B., items 3, 4, and 5, above. This file must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF. Please review the PDF file for conversion errors prior to including it in the electronic
pre-application package; requests to rectify conversion errors will not be accepted if made after the solicitation closing date and time.

5. Voluntary Information (Click on “Add Optional Project Narrative File”): Attach a single electronic file labeled “Confidential” that contains information described in Section IV.B. Item 6. above. Submit this file in Adobe Acrobat PDF. This file must also be submitted in the Adobe Acrobat PDF format.

Letters of Recommendation cannot be submitted electronically through Grants.gov; see Section IV.B. Item 7. above for instructions. Letters of Recommendation MUST be received by EPA no later than 4:00 p.m., EST, on November 28, 2006.

Once the pre-application package has been completed, the "Submit" button should be enabled (you may need to "Check Package for Errors" as well as save the file before this occurs). If the "Submit" button is not active, please contact Grants.gov for assistance (Telephone: 1 800 518 4726). Applicants should save the completed pre-application package with two different file names to avoid having to re key the forms should submission problems be experienced.

Close all other software before attempting to submit the electronic pre-application package. Click the "submit" button of the pre-application pack age. Your internet browser will launch and a sign in page will appear. Enter the username and password chosen for your individual registration. Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to begin the electronic submission process by 10am on November 28, 2006 to allow sufficient time for trouble shooting the process.

A successful transfer will end with an on screen acknowledgement. "Print Screen" this acknowledgement for documentation purposes. If you experience submission problems, reboot the computer -- turning the power off may be necessary -- and re attempt the submission. If submission problems continue, contact Grants.gov for assistance (Telephone: 1 800 518 4726).

Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, follow the guidance below. NCER may decide to review the application if it is clearly demonstrated that the transfer to Grants.gov was begun in a timely fashion and that the transmission difficulties were due solely as a result of problems associated with the transfer to Grants.gov. The decision regarding acceptance of the application for review will be made by NCER management and provided to the applicant within ten working days of the request. All e-mails, as described below, are to be sent to Bronda Harrison (Harrison.Bronda@EPA.gov) with the FON in the subject line.

1. Late transfer due to electronic submission problems: Should electronic submission problems result in the application being transferred to Grants.gov after 4:00 pm but before 5:00pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date, send an e-mail documenting the problem and include the Grants.gov “case number”.

2. Unsuccessful transfer of application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished due to electronic submission issues, send an e-mail before 5:00pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date. Document the problem, include the Grants.gov “case number,” and attach the entire application.

3. Grants.gov rejection of application: If a notification is received from Grants.gov stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late
submittal, immediately send an email which includes any materials provided by Grants.gov with the entire application attached.

V. PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Peer Review:
All eligible fellowship pre-applications are reviewed by an appropriate external technical peer review panel comprised of individual experts using the criteria below. This review is designed to evaluate each student on his or her potential for success in an environmental graduate study program based on the information provided in the pre-application. Each peer review panel includes non-EPA scientists, engineers, social scientists, and/or economists who are accomplished in their respective disciplines and proficient in the technical subjects they are reviewing. Reviewers are asked to individually assign a score of excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor to each pre-application. EPA translates the average of these individual scores into the final panel review score.

Criteria 1-4 are listed in descending order of importance

1. **Narrative Statement**
   a. **Entering Master’s Student:** Comment on the strength of the applicant’s planned course of study and probability of success of the proposed project.
   b. **Entering Doctoral Student:** Comment on the strength of the applicant’s planned course of study and probability of success of the proposed project.
   c. **Doctoral Student:** Comment on how the applicants proposed doctoral program builds on his/her previous education or research projects. Why and how will the proposed research project advance the applicant’s academic or career goals?
   d. **Continuing Doctoral Student:** Comment on the applicant’s research project as to its technical and social application, potential for success, and the benefits expected.

2. **Goals and Objectives**
   a. Comment on the seriousness of the applicant’s dedication to the stated career goals and objectives.
   b. Comment on the applicant’s organizational, analytical, and written skills.

3. **Reference Letters**

4. **Course work information**

B. Programmatic Review

Pre-applications receiving scores of excellent or very good as a result of the peer review process will then undergo an internal programmatic review, conducted by technical experts from the EPA, including individuals from the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and program and regional offices involved with the science or engineering proposed. All other pre-applications are automatically declined.

The GRO graduate fellowship solicitation typically results in more applicants receiving an excellent or very good rating from the external peer review process than there are funds. Therefore, those pre-applications which receive an excellent or very good from the peer review are further subjected to the internal review process. The purpose of the programmatic review is to assure an integrated, balanced research portfolio for the Agency and help determine which pre-applications to recommend for award. EPA scientists/engineers conducting the programmatic review assess the excellent and very good pre-applications against the following criteria, all of which are of equal weight:

1. The relevance of the proposed science to EPA research priorities.
2. Does the proposed research area and study have the potential to either: 1) strengthen the scientific basis for environmental management decisions and practices; 2) produce data, methods, practices, etc., to help the scientific or regulated community to better understand and/or manage complex environmental problems; or 3) provide a focus for future research and technology development in science, engineering, or modeling approaches for assessing and managing environmental risks?

3. Is the research area being proposed supported by EPA or some other source (i.e. will funding this student/project result in a duplication of government effort)?

C. Funding Decisions
Final funding decisions are made by the NCER Director based on the results of the peer review and internal programmatic review. In addition, in making the final funding decisions, the NCER Director may also consider the Congressionally-mandated Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCOR) (see http://www.epa.gov/ncer/other/), the availability of funds, program goals, such as distribution of awards across disciplines, institutions and geography; and degree level being sought. Applicants selected for funding will be required to provide additional information listed below under “Award Notices.” The application will then be forwarded to EPA’s Grants Administration Division for award in accordance with the EPA’s procedures.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. Award Notices
Either a summary statement or multiple individual reviews provided by the external merit review panel will be provided to each applicant with an award or declination letter. If selected to receive a fellowship, you will be contacted no later than May 31, 2007 and should subsequently receive your official notification of award by July 20, 2007, for the fall term. Please note that this schedule may be changed without notification due to factors that were not anticipated at the time of announcement.

You are advised to retain this announcement for future reference.

The official notification of an award will be made by the EPA's Grants Administration Division. Selected applicants will be required to provide the following information to complete the application process:

1. EPA Form 5770 2, "Fellowship Application*" This form is available on the NCER web page (www.epa.gov/ncer/fellow/).
2. Additional information and documentation about your educational status and the costs
3. Sealed official transcripts from all graduate institutions
4. Fellowship Recipient Abstract, not to exceed one page, which should include: Project Title, Name of Fellow, Institution, EPA Project Officer, Project Period, Research Category, Description of Research Project including Objective, Approach, Results or Expected Results, Keywords
5. A project synopsis, not to exceed 595 characters. for our EPA database.

B. Disputes
Disputes related to this assistance agreement competition will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures set forth in 70 FR 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/resolution.htm. Questions regarding disputes may be referred to the Eligibility Contact see http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance/faqs.html.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements
Terms and conditions associated with this award can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance.
i. Meetings: Fellows are expected to attend the EPA Graduate Fellows Conference as long as they are in the program. Resources to support this travel are to be taken from the expense allowance. If selected, fellowship recipients will be expected to attend the fall 2008 Fellows Conference.

ii. Reporting: Fellowship recipients must provide annual progress reports in order to retain their funding, and must provide a final report upon termination of the award. Fellows are strongly encouraged to maintain contact with the Agency for at least five years after graduation.

iii. Acknowledgement of EPA Support: EPA's full or partial support must be acknowledged in journal articles, oral or poster presentations, news releases, interviews with reporters and other communications. Any documents developed under the agreement for distribution to the public or inclusion in a scientific, technical, or other journal shall include the following statement:

This publication [article] was developed under a GRO (STAR) Research Assistance Agreement No. __________ awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It has not been formally reviewed by the EPA. The views expressed in this document are solely those of [name of recipient] and the EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this publication.

A graphic that can be converted to a slide or used in other ways, such as on a poster, is located at http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance/star_images.html. EPA expects recipients to use this graphic in oral and poster presentations.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA/NCER resources listed below. To obtain information most quickly, consult the “Guidance & FAQs”. If your question is not covered, then call the toll-free telephone number or send a query through the web-based query form. You will receive a personal response through a return telephone call or email. Information regarding this RFA obtained from sources other than those indicated may not be accurate.

Guidance & FAQs: http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance/faqs.html
Contact Person: Stephanie Willett (2007FellowshipsRFP@epa.gov); phone: 202-343-9656, Toll Free Number: 1-800-490-9194
Web-based query form: http://es.epa.gov/cgi-bin/ncerqamail.pl
Electronic Submissions Contact: Bronda Harrison (harrison.bronda@epa.gov); phone: 202-343-9777