

NatureNet – Frequently Asked Questions

UNIVERSITY RELATED

Is the list of University Partners fixed each year?

Once the call for applications has been opened, the list of University Partners for the full fellowship model is fixed. Universities interested in becoming a NatureNet University Partner for the following year should contact Kassie Morton, Kassie.morton@tnc.org.

Must the Fellow be hosted by one of the listed University Partners?

Post-docs from any university are welcome to apply for the research grant-only fellowship, but applicants to the full fellowship model must be hosted by an established University Partner. This does not mean that the fellow is limited to projects or TNC chapters that occur in the host universities' state or region. Applicants should discuss with both University and TNC mentors to negotiate such logistics including where the applicant should be "housed," number of in-person or onsite meetings, the field/data collection season, etc., to best complete the research.

How is the fellow funded?

- Endowment through joint TNC-University fundraising (structure TBD); OR
- TNC and the University will collaborate in sponsorship as flexible partners. The estimated full cost of the partnership for the university is \$129,000 over two years for salary and program related costs with most flexible partners making a 4 year commitment.

Is there a formal job description for this fellowship?

You can refer to the position outline on the NatureNet website which is broad in order to meet the wide-ranging preferences of each of our university partners' and related donors' interests. You can also refer to the [fellowship expectations document](#) created for orientation purposes.

Do you have an internal list of required qualifications? Do you require a PhD in certain fields? Are they required to have X amount of publications?

There is not a specific requirement around the field that the PhD was acquired as the program aims to expand the breadth of knowledge and application to achieve faster/larger impact. As the website notes, the fields most applicable to the call will likely be around climatology, physics, economics, business, chemistry, engineering, technology and communications, but we're open to all ideas. There is not a publication requirement, but the more productive the applicant has been, the better they'll rank.

Who extends the offer letter?

For fellows that are cost-shared between TNC and the University, the fellow is appointed/hired by the University so draft the offer letter for review and signature by NNSF Program Director. Details of the offer letter vary according to university requirement. All employment laws in effect for the University/state and post-docs apply. Some universities supplement stipends to account for variation in cost-of-living around the world and some place restrictions on what research monies can be used for (i.e. computers). For the research grant model, the University continues to manage employment and the NatureNet Fellowship offer letter is extended by TNC.

What is the process and timeline for onboarding a fellow after an offer letter is signed?

Timeline of the process (for fellows starting in 2018):

- March-early April: Offer Letters sent
- No later than October, ideally September 1: Fellow starts
- Orientation training last week in October
- Science Solution Spaces (timing TBD)
- July 1: Annual reports by Fellows and Mentors due
- August: Year 2 Distribution Check

How and when is grant money dispersed to the university?

Once the grant agreement is fully executed, payments from TNC are distributed via check inside USA and wire transfer abroad.

What does the university need to do in order for year-two funds to be released?

Once the University Mentor and Fellow annual reports are received (along with the TNC Mentor report) and approved by Program Director, the university must submit an invoice to TNC for year-two funds to be dispersed.

Can grant agreement renewals (in the case of year 2 contracts) be treated as modifications, listing only changes to the terms, instead of having to review the grant again in its entirety?

For the 2017 cohort and prior, unfortunately, no, but we can highlight all changes for easier review. All 2018 cohort agreements will cover the full two-year fellowship, with funding distribution dependent on satisfactory performance in year-one.

Is there flexibility for adjustment within budget categories?

Yes. We permit 10% flexibility to over/underspend a specific line item as long as the total grant amount (University fixed costs and TNC funds transferred to the university) are not exceeded. Anything over 10% will require prior-approval and an amendment to the original grant agreement. Additionally, this flexibility is limited when considering mentor or indirect expenses in that mentor funds or indirect expenses may be reallocated for additional research, meetings, travel, but not the other way around.

APPLICANT RELATED

How do I decide on a project, university, and mentors?

Step 1: Identify the project or projects you are interested in pursuing from the NatureNet [website](#).

Step 2: Review the Conservancy's [Shared Conservation Agenda](#) to better understand research priorities for the organization. Consider how you would approach answering the question or investigating the proposed project and develop a few research questions you would be interested in investigating within the context of the project. Those considering projects in urban environments should also review the [Field Guide to Conservation in Cities in North America](#) to insure research ideas align with the Conservancy's standards regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Step 2: Approach the TNC mentor(s) associated with the project. Be specific regarding your interest in the project, the skills you bring to this research topic, and the university partners and mentors you are considering. Be sure to include the research questions you developed (from step 2) in your correspondence.

Step 3: Incorporate the TNC mentor's input into your research approach and contact the University mentors for their input and feedback.

Step 4: Based on your conversations, select the project and the TNC and University mentors with whom you would like to collaborate.

Step 5: Write a proposal with your mentors and put together a formal application following the posted [guidelines](#). Be sure to include in your application letters of support from your University and TNC mentors!

Is their flexibility in the October start date?

No. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the NatureNet Fellowship opportunity with their graduate committees to determine if the timing of completing their degree can be expedited.

Are the only projects allowed, those listed?

Yes. Projects have been reviewed and approved by TNC and University mentors and align with program goals. Projects outside of those listed will not be considered.

How does the application process work?

Applicants must have completed their doctorate within five years of the application close date. Please contact the NatureNet Program Director if there are extenuating circumstances that have caused significant educational or employment disruption resulting in an applicant holding their doctorate for more than five years. Applicants should have their degrees in hand by September 1. When applying for the full fellowship, you will indicate a home institution from the list of available partners that year and a university mentor. For both the full fellowship and the research grant you will select a project and mentor from within TNC. For the research grant model ONLY, the host university and mentor need not be from the posted list. IN all cases, university and TNC mentors should be contacted and provide letters of support for your project/application. Projects at this time are themed around investigating the mitigation or adaptation to climate change.

Do you have to attend one of the listed universities to be eligible to apply?

For the full fellowship model, you do not need to currently attend one of the listed universities, but you do need to select one to engage with as the universities directly employ the NatureNet fellows. For the research grant model, you must currently hold a postdoctoral position with a research institution, it need not be an institution on the partner list for that year. For both models, we encourage you to have in depth discussions with your potential mentors (university and TNC) about your project proposal ideas in advance so they can provide guidance around how to craft the proposal to best meet both university and TNC goals for the program. Starting in 2018, Fellows will need to provide letters of support from their TNC and University mentors.

For Current Fellows

When will my annual progress reports be due?

6 weeks prior to contract expiration. Failure of Fellows and Mentors to submit annual reports in a timely manner may result in delays in disbursing funding.

In my progress report, do I include publications in the past year related only to my NatureNet fellowship? Or all publications?

You can provide both, but indicate which are NatureNet related.

During my NatureNet fellowship, can I use TNC letterhead when applying to additional positions?

No. TNC letterhead is for use of TNC employees and though you are co-sponsor/funded through TNC you are employed by [X] University. A letter of reference from your TNC mentor will hold a great deal more weight in the matter of selling your conservation credentials along with a carefully crafted cover letter.

Can I use research funds to pay TNC staff to complete research related work on my project?

No, due to conflict of interest. Consider if the work that needs to be done can be a collaborative effort or contact the Program Director for help brainstorming alternative solutions.

I would like to take on an additional project/collaboration outside of my NatureNet work

See "[Non-NatureNet Additional Work Assessment](#)" document

My TNC Mentor is leaving, do I need to get a new one?

Yes. The Fellow or the Program Director should reach out to departing mentor and determine what role they will play (if any) in the fellow's project moving forward. At this time the departing mentor should also be asked if they can recommend anyone at TNC who would be a good fit as a mentor moving forward (ideally someone who has been involved with the project).

I don't have a credit card, how do I book travel for meetings?

Please provide Program Director or University Partnership Coordinator with the following information and they will book on your behalf. Please forward any receipts/booking confirmations to the PD and UPC so that they may file expenses.

- Given Name (First, Last, and for airline travel Middle as indicated on travel documents)
- Birthdate (Month, Day, Year)
- Known traveler redress number (airfare only)
- Cell Phone or other phone number to contact
- Current Mailing Address
- Email (to send confirmation of bookings, boarding documents, etc.)
- Seat preference (airfare only)
- Preferred travel dates/arrival and departure dates (Month, Day, Year) OR the link to your preferred flights/train OR the airline/train and flight information including arrival and departure dates and arrival (e.g. Monday, May 14, 2018 Southwest Airlines Flight# 3267 Departing ALB to BWI 9:20am Arriving BWI 10:40am, Southwest Airlines Flight #2946 Departing BWI to MDW)

11:30am Arriving MDW 1:15pm; Sunday, May 20, 2018 Southwest Airlines Flight 2201 Departing MDW to ALB 10:50 am Arriving ALB 11:50am)General Program Related

"Independent" NatureNet Fellows- see "[Independent NatureNet Fellow assessment](#)"

If there are unused TNC funds at the end of Year 1, can they be rolled over into Year 2?

Only funds associated with the research and travel budget may be rolled over from Year 1 into Year 2. Fellows should make requests to roll over funds as soon as they know they will have a surplus and no later than 3 months before the end of their first year. Fellows should provide a 1-paragraph summary of the work completed, a budget justification, a detailed budget of ALL expenses to date, AND a detailed budget for the funds to be rolled-over when making their request.

(For Fellows in Year 2 only) If the fellow will be making last minute purchases and/or the University needs time to process last minute grant expenditures for the final grant report, can the grant be extended?

Extension requests should come through the university on behalf of the Fellow and have university approval before being submitted to the Program Director. Requests should clearly indicate why an extension is needed and should be largely to cover administrative activities on behalf of the University. Grants may be extended by no more than one month past the final grant report due date and requests must be made no later than one month prior to close of the grant.

As a TNC mentor, where should I charge my time spent on NatureNet including travel time and attendance at the annual orientation meeting?

TNC mentors should charge their time to their default or "home" project code.