

Arctic Report Card seeks new home after NOAA pulls support

By **Lindsay McKenzie**

The scientists behind the Arctic Report Card (ARC) are seeking a new sponsor after NOAA announced it would no longer contribute toward the report's production, publication, and promotion. The annual climate assessment provides an overview of the Arctic environment by covering topics such as temperature trends, weather patterns, and the state of major glaciers.

Work on this year's report is well underway. Twila Moon, a lead ARC editor and deputy lead scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado Boulder, says that all 2026 topics were finalized in early summer, and authors are already working on their contributions. The report remains slated to be presented at a press conference during the American Geophysical Union (AGU) annual meeting in December.

"We are moving quickly to determine alternative pathways to publish the report and ensure that the information and insights make it to decision-makers, educators, community leaders, and the public," Moon says.

The agency informed ARC editors of its withdrawal at a regularly scheduled meeting in August and announced in a public statement that "coordination of the 2026 Arctic Report Card will not be facilitated through NOAA." It said that the data it has historically contributed to the report will continue to be collected and will remain publicly available. NOAA did not explain the rationale behind its decision.

Moon says the agency did not give her or her colleagues advance warning of the decision but that cuts to other federal climate science activities had made such a move conceivable. NOAA declined to issue a press release for last year's report, Moon says, but the report was published as usual, and a press conference at the AGU meeting went ahead as scheduled. Last year was the 20th anniversary of the ARC.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) issued a statement saying she understands the 2026 report may continue under another sponsor but called NOAA's withdrawal part of "a troubling federal trend" of undercutting Arctic research. "We need to invest more in the region, not less," she said. House Science Committee ranking member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) condemned the NOAA decision and urged continued support for the assessment.

Moon says the report's editors remain committed to preserving the ARC this year and beyond, though finding a long-term home will be a larger challenge. "We are motivated to continue the ARC as a timely, trusted resource on Arctic observations," she says. "Continuing the ARC past 2026 is a larger puzzle than tackling 2026, but I hope we find a path-way forward to do that."

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Fewer NSF graduate fellowships expected next year

By **Clare Zhang**

NSF plans to cut back next year on the number of graduate research fellowships it awards, despite recent White House praise for the program. In a 25 August solicitation, the agency announced that in fiscal year 2027, it expects to award 1500 such fellowships, which provide three years of support for outstanding STEM graduate students. The agency awarded an all-time high of nearly 2600 fellowships in FY 2026.

The solicitation is the latest development in the confusing saga of the Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) in the second Trump administration. The record number of awardees in FY 2026 came after a sharp drop from FY 2024 to FY 2025. The White House, meanwhile, has asked for deep funding cuts to the program in its 2026 and 2027 budget requests but in a separate document proposed expanding it. The Office of Science and Technology Policy's July report on the future of the US research enterprise praises the GRFP as an example of betting "on people, not just projects." It also says, however, that "more work remains to improve the selection mechanism and further empower students to choose their universities and principal investigators."

The timing of the NSF solicitation leaves applicants with fewer than 60 days to submit their proposals—30 days short of NSF's self-imposed minimum. The solicitation also states that research on STEM education and learning or research that falls under the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate is excluded from fellowship eligibility. This is the second consecutive year that the agency has added eligibility restrictions to the program.

An NSF spokesperson says that the 1500 estimated awards are consistent with the president's budget request for FY 2027 and that the final number of awards will be subject to congressional appropriations.

"I think 1500 awards would be terrible," says Susan Brennan, a former GRFP program officer. "But I think, basically, they have to go by the president's budget at this stage. So, I think the best thing the community can and should do is to advocate to have 2500 awards at least."

In his proposed FY 2026 budget, President Trump requested enough money for only around 800 GRFP awards. But before NSF made its solicitation, the Senate Appropriations Committee released a bill calling for funding to support 2000 fellowships. NSF ended up exceeding even the Senate committee's target.

Seeing the estimate of 1500 fellowships for FY 2027 might discourage prospective applicants even if the actual number of awards ends up being higher, says Gisèle Muller-Parker, a former GRFP director. "That's going to depress the diversity of applicants and the fields that they come from."

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