Session Descriptions (as of September 4, 2025)

2025 Joint Extension & Communicators Meeting

PLENARY I –

Difficult Conversations

Presenters: UNH PowerPlay

Session Description:

PowerPlay & Dr. Karen Collins facilitate an interactive workshop that allows participants to practice engaging in difficult discussions where a group must face challenging decision making. Participants will have the opportunity to utilize professional actors to explore methods and strategies to better address these issues, with the scenario replayed as directed by the audience. The session allows participants to dig into relatable issues and, through our applied theatre model, work through them to a more satisfactory outcome.

PLENARY II –

Strategic Storytelling: Using Theatre Techniques for Impact

Presenters: Genevieve Aichele and CJ Lewis, NH Theatre Project

Session Goal:

Help participants connect authentically with audiences through storytelling, improvisation, and theatrical tools to enhance science communication.

What Participants Will Gain:

Practical storytelling techniques. Strategies to transform scientific information into engaging narratives. Experience with improvisation and audience engagement.

Planned Activities:

We'll begin with a brief presentation on storytelling principles. We'll then have interactive exercises using improvisational and theatrical tools to help participants shape and refine stories about their work.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Bring an idea for a work-related story you'd like to tell more effectively.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS I – Presentation and Discussion

1. Short Video Use and Production

Presenter: Brian Yurasits, NH Sea Grant

Session Goal:

Provide social media managers and content creators with tools and strategies of video design, production, and marketing to help them efficiently produce short videos that maximize views and engagement across platforms.

What Participants Will Gain:

Technical skills in short-form video production. Insights into social media strategy and platform-specific tactics. Best practices for video content creation. Communication skills for digital storytelling.

Planned Activities:

We'll begin by reviewing two short videos that are successful at engaging audiences. Then discuss what participants think makes a short video successful. We'll have presentations on (1) Why short videos are strategic for reaching broader audiences. (2) Tools and techniques to streamline video creation (including what software to use). (3) Platform-specific video production tips. (4) Repurposing other content (e.g., podcasts or blog posts) into videos. (5) We'll end with everyone working in an open discussion format to develop a plan to produce a short video relevant to/for their role at Sea Grant.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Bring an idea for a 1-minute video that you'd like to create for your current role or program.

2. Measuring More Than Reach: Evaluating a Sea Grant Impact Film

Presenter: Eleanor M. Jaffee, Insights Evaluation LLC

Session Goal:

Demonstrate how to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of communications products using a real-world Sea Grant example: "Women on the Water" a film produced by NHSG.

What Participants Will Gain:

An understanding of how to design evaluations for communications products. Insight into logic model creation and application. Tools to assess reach, impact, and effectiveness.

Planned Activities:

The session begins with a presentation on the evaluation design process and lessons learned for NHSG's "Women on the Water" film. A Q&A session follows. Then, participants will engage in a logic-model activity to apply what they've learned to their own communications or outreach projects.

How Participants Can Prepare:

No preparation is necessary, but bring any ideas, questions, or projects you'd like to think through.

3. Strategic Storytelling Master Class: Bringing the Story to Public Speaking

Presenters: Genevieve Aichele and CJ Lewis, NH Theatre Project

Session Goal:

Develop and practice public speaking skills that draw from effective storytelling craft to strengthen impact.

What Participants Will Gain:

Confidence and comfort with public speaking. Enhanced personal public speaking style and communication skills. Practice speaking publicly in an encouraging environment. Strategic presentation skills to enhance impact.

Planned Activities:

Participants will learn and practice technical presenting skills with guidance in an encouraging setting. Session will include presenting a memorized 3-minute speech or story on a topic of one's choice, preferably connected to Sea Grant work.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Come prepared with a 3-minute story or presentation related to your work that you'd like to be able to share more effectively for greater impact.

4. Incorporating Theories of Change into Product and Program Planning

Session description coming soon!

CONCURRENT SESSIONS II – Peer to peer

5. Joint Extension–Communications Project Showcase

Facilitators: Darren Okimoto and Cindy Knapman, HI Sea Grant

Session Goal:

Highlight the power of collaboration by showcasing joint communications and extension projects across the Sea Grant network.

What Participants Will Gain:

Awareness of successful cross-functional projects. Inspiration and models for collaborative programming. Insight into how different teams contribute unique skills to shared goals

Planned Activities:

A panel of invited presenters will share examples of joint projects, followed by open discussion. Audience questions and comments are encouraged to spark dialogue and ideas.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Bring curiosity, your experiences, and your questions.

6. Attracting New Audiences

Facilitators: Brian Yurasits and Alyson Eberhardt, NH Sea Grant

Session Goal:

Share communications and engagement strategies that can help Sea Grant professionals reach new audience segments, open audience engagement, and strengthen program impact. Learn and share ideas on how to reach and engage program participants that have not typically participated with Sea Grant programs in the past.

What Participants Will Gain:

Perspectives and insights on engaging new program participants. Principles and practices for meeting people where they are and creating meaningful engagement. Tools and techniques that can contribute to broader, more impactful reach and meaningful engagement.

Planned Activities:

We'll explore some reasons that people are unaware of or not engaging with our programs, and discuss what it takes to reach new audiences, why it's important, how it changes things, and how to implement those changes strategically with available tools, techniques, and mindsets. We'll discuss examples and experiences and take-home ideas for how to start doing things differently.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Bring examples of communications materials or engagement approaches that you have used in the past, reflections on what has worked and what has not, perspectives on the approaches, strategies, tools, and methods that are used in our work and who they work for. Be open to considering how the process and the impact could be different.

7. Uh-oh: Things That Didn't Go as Planned

Facilitator: Jen McCann, RI Sea Grant

Session Goal:

Use real-world setbacks as learning opportunities to build resilience, innovation, and stronger collaborations in Sea Grant work.

What Participants Will Gain:

Strategies for navigating and learning from failure. Confidence in approaching uncertainty and setbacks. A supportive space for shared storytelling and peer learning

Planned Activities:

We'll begin with short, real-life "uh-oh" stories followed by practical lessons learned. Participants will then break into small groups to reflect and share their own experiences. The session will blend honest conversation, humor, and problem-solving.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Come with a short story of a time something didn't go as planned, and bring an open, curious mindset.

8. A.I. in Sea Grant Work: Applications, Ethics, and Adaptation

Facilitators: Chris Petrone, DE Sea Grant and Marie Thoms, MN Sea Grant

Session Goal:

Advance awareness and understanding of how artificial intelligence can be responsibly integrated into Sea Grant extension and communication work

What Participants Will Gain:

Awareness of current A.I. (artificial intelligence) applications within Sea Grant for routine work and special initiatives. Insight into ethical considerations and best practices. Confidence to use A.I. for Sea Grant work. Connections with peers through the Sea Grant A.I. Community of Practice

Planned Activities:

The session begins with a 20-minute overview covering A.I. uses, challenges, and ethical issues in Sea Grant. We'll follow with an interactive discussion where participants share experiences and define goals for the Sea Grant A.I. Community of Practice.

How Participants Can Prepare:

Come with a working knowledge of A.I. and how it might apply to your work. Be ready to share your own experiences or questions.

DOCUMENTARY FILM AND DISCUSSION – Women on the Water

Presenters: Gabriela Bradt, NH Sea Grant and Tim Briggs, Tim Briggs Photography

Film Description:

Women are breaking down barriers and forging their own paths to success in fishing and aquaculture. NH Sea Grant's first feature-length documentary film, *Women on the Water*, tells the stories of six women in New Hampshire who have overcome personal and societal challenges to establish themselves in lobstering, oyster farming, tuna fishing, and seafood distribution on their own terms. Discover what independence, determination, and grit look like for women making a name for themselves on the water in the Granite State. (Film length is 45 minutes.)

Film accolades:

- New Hampshire Film Festival (Oct 2024) – official selection
- Big Blue Film Festival (Jan 2025) – official selection and People's Choice Award
- Newburyport Documentary Film Festival (Sept 2025) – official selection
- TV and streaming partnership with NH PBS (July 2025 – July 2027)
- TV and streaming partnership with VT PBS (Oct 2025 – Oct 2027)