FAQs for Developing an Engagement Plan for a WHOI Sea Grant Research Project

WHOI Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal and marine resources by developing and sharing science-based knowledge. Our research and outreach activities help us to connect with communities across Massachusetts to build a sustainable economy and environment. The engagement plan is a required part of the proposal and should explain how the research could be used, shared, or inform others.

What are the key elements of an engagement plan?
Engagement plans should provide detailed strategies for working with and communicating the results of your research to relevant interested parties. A well-crafted engagement plan will ensure that your research results have a clear path for relevant communities in Massachusetts to use or contribute directly to your research project.

Who should you engage with?
Potential participants and end users may include K–12 students, parents and teachers, coastal managers, members of coastal industries, business owners, homeowners, community organizations, or members of the public, among others.

Are there resources available for helping me develop my engagement plan?
We strongly encourage all PIs to reach out to WHOI Sea Grant extension, education and communications staff as you are developing your proposal. WHOI Sea Grant extension, education, and communications staff:

- are connected with coastal communities here in Massachusetts, and can provide insight and guidance into the specific needs of those communities.
- have expertise that is wide-ranging, and includes specialties in education, fisheries, aquaculture, coastal processes, floodplain management, water quality, fish passage, and coastal biogeochemistry, among other areas.
- are often involved in ongoing engagement work that may provide an appropriate venue for you to share the results of your research.
- can help you identify and connect with appropriate partners to share the results of your research.

Contact information for WHOI Sea Grant staff can be found at
https://seagrant.whoi.edu/about/people/

What should I be considering in developing my engagement plan?
As you are developing your proposal, consider the following questions:

- What new knowledge or tool will result from your project?
- Why is this knowledge or tool needed?
- Who could use it (aside from other scientists) and what would they use it for (e.g. decision making, improving practices, increasing profitability, reducing risk, etc.)?
- What evidence indicates that the knowledge or tool is needed or desired by intended users?
- What efforts would be needed for intended users to apply it?
- If users were able to apply the new knowledge or tool that resulted from your work, could it improve social, economic or environmental conditions?
- How could interested parties contribute directly to the research?

What are good examples of engagement activities?
Examples of engagement activities may include:

- partnering with a state agency or industry that will be an end user of the research.
- presenting the findings of your research to relevant industry or management organizations or communities that supported or would benefit from learning about your research.
- contributing to and/or leading teacher professional development workshops highlighting the findings of your work.
- developing an engaging written or digital product that helps translate your findings for interested parties and communities.
- developing decision-support tools to help the management community use the findings of your research.
- developing MA-standards-based K-12 curricula around the findings of your work
- including high school students in the research process, including those from schools or communities with limited access to research experiences.
- engaging community members in the research aspects of your project.
- designing an interactive exhibit based on your work for use at a science or visitor's center.