

Sea Grant Great Lakes Social Science Network

The Basics

Discussions and activities introduce principles for selecting an appropriate data collection method and strategies for identifying significant stakeholder characteristics. This session provides skill development in using social science methods to strengthen coastal resource management.



Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant launched the Great Lakes Social Science Network in 2011 to help researchers and educators use social science methods to bolster conservation and management efforts.

The network hosts participant-driven, activity-based training sessions to introduce basic social science theories and build skills around specific data collection and communication tools. Topics are chosen by the more than 30 members. Sessions, held both virtually and in-person, are discussion-based and provide an opportunity to practice learned skills and tools.

Initial training sessions, developed in conjunction with NOAA Coastal Services Center, resulted in positive participant feedback and an upcoming all-day training workshop at the 2012 Sea Grant Great Lakes Network meeting.



“The training was very straightforward...found it easy to follow along and participate.”

“Handouts were helpful and informative..”

Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM)

This session introduces tools used in CBSM to foster changes in human behavior and discusses how to integrate them into coastal management projects. Examples of CBSM application to change human behaviors are discussed, and activities provide an opportunity to practice applying tools to conservation issues.



Focus on Focus Groups

This session provides an opportunity to practice new tools for planning and administering focus groups effectively. Activities are supported by discussions on when focus groups are most useful for investigating beliefs and attitudes of coastal management issues.

“I liked that the entire group brainstormed on the topic.”

Writing Effective Survey Questions

Discussions in this session focus on 25 guidelines for creating a survey with clear and balanced questions that get to the heart of what a researcher needs to know. Activities provide an opportunity to see the guidelines in action through sample surveys and discuss common errors that can weaken survey data.

