


Amplifying Community Engagement for the Urban Marine Program at Washington Sea Grant

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August 2020



Background: Urban Marine Program at Washington Sea Grant

Equitable access to resources and decision-making is a challenge for the health and well-being of many marginalized communities. Many Washington communities have experienced disparities in access to marine ecosystems, foods, resources and opportunities. Washington Sea Grant (WSG) seeks to develop an Urban Marine Program (UMP) in collaboration with urban populations and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities to support more equitable access to marine foods and resources.

This exploratory program will utilize methods of environmental intersectionality, systems thinking, relationship-building and place-based community engagement to ensure that we are reaching beyond the audiences we historically serve. WSG will use this toolkit as a guideline for doing equitable engagement and community development. The purpose is to support the UMP to equitably engage, empower, uplift knowledge systems, increase accessibility, and to listen, learn, support and collaborate. To develop the toolkit, we conducted literature reviews and key informant interviews to obtain information about people's connection to water and what they hope to see emerge from the UMP. We also facilitated workshops to start a dialogue on the intersectionality of water and its application to our everyday lives.

The goal of the UMP is to advance collaboration amongst stakeholders and to hear community needs and concerns. This will be done through diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) evaluators, who will monitor engagement, and community liaisons, who will act as advocates for their own communities.

We have integrated the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals to provide an intersectional framework for the UMP. We can create target indicators for each goal that align with the work we seek to achieve. The Community Engagement for the Urban Marine Program Toolkit is a comprehensive guide capable of advancing the culture of WSG programs to be equitable and sustainable within BIPOC communities.

Key Terms and Acronyms

WSG — Washington Sea Grant

UMP — Urban Marine Program

Intersectionality — A term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw that refers to interconnections amongst social categories and identity such as gender, race, class, etc. and how they intersect.

DEI — Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which is a framework for promoting equitable decision-making and interacting with communities.

- Diversity — Presence and celebration of identities that include race, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, etc. This extends to populations that have been and remain underrepresented.
- Equity — Promoting fairness and recognizing the needs of a population by the distribution of resources, systems and services.
- Inclusion — The outcome of ensuring that diverse populations are welcomed and can participate in the decision-making process.

BIPOC — Black, Indigenous and people of color

SDGs — United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 goals that are intersectional and equitable in nature to promote and advance sustainability among communities on a global scale.

Storytelling — The social and cultural act of sharing stories through a variety of narratives.

TLK — Traditional and Local Knowledge are knowledge systems that exist within Indigenous and local communities worldwide. These ways of knowing transcend academia and Westernized practices and exist to empower and uplift narratives.

Purpose of Toolkit



ENGAGE



EMPOWER



UPLIFT
KNOWLEDGE
SYSTEMS



INCREASE
ACCESSIBILITY



LISTEN, LEARN,
SUPPORT AND
COLLABORATE

The purpose of this toolkit is to engage and empower Western Washington community members in marine conservation, programming and engagement with WSG. Equitable conservation work requires engaging with communities in decision-making processes. This looks like reaching outward and looking inward to build resilience and relationships from the lens of DEI. Recognizing traditional and local knowledge (TLK) is also key to equitable community engagement because the communities served by WSG have a plethora of cultural and generational knowledge that transcends Western science and understanding. By recognizing TLK, knowledge holders may gain power and agency, while having their diverse identities welcomed and appreciated.

To achieve WSG's mission and vision, it is integral to increase accessibility to Washington's shorelines and marine ecosystems for those who may not be, or haven't historically been, able to experience it. To do this, we must cultivate community partnerships with BIPOC communities, including but not limited to, schools, community leaders and community centers to hear their needs and concerns, and how they want to be a part of WSG. This may require meeting people where they are physically located. Emails and calls are not always substantial enough, nor are they accessible to everyone. Meeting communities where they are looks like meeting with community leaders in an accessible location and learning from and with them how we can provide appropriate programming.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has highlighted the need to think about programming more holistically, particularly from the perspective of accessibility. This can happen in the form of programming with accessible technology and by referencing the strategies within the WSG DEI Roadmap.



Goals for Implementing the Urban Marine Program



Cultivate strong relationships with BIPOC communities.



Increase accessibility of marine resources to communities.



Use a DEI framework for all outreach initiatives.



Recognize and utilize methods of intersectional environmentalism.



Create opportunities for volunteering and community science.



Provide funding for community action grants (CAGs).



Key Players and Partners



Washington
Sea Grant



Residents and
Community
Leaders



Community
Liaison



Subject
Matter
Experts



DEI Evaluators

Washington Sea Grant

Washington Sea Grant staff will act as facilitators and collaborators using their power, privilege, identity and agency to promote equitable access to marine livelihoods now and in the future. WSG seeks to do this through its partnerships and resources.

Residents and Community Leaders

Residents and community leaders will provide perspective that transcends language, generation and culture. They will represent cultural significance and perspective.

Community Liaison

The community liaisons are some of the most important partners because they are leaders in their communities that can advocate for specific needs. They will be instrumental in determining what resources are needed for their community and how we can best support them.

Subject Matter Experts

It is imperative to have subject matter experts to collaborate with the UMP to ensure that we are cognizant of the communities we seek to work with. Subject matter experts can exist within the organization of WSG such as social scientists, ecologists and other specialists. They may also include TLK holders to ensure that our conservation efforts are equitable and go beyond the scope of academia and Westernized science.

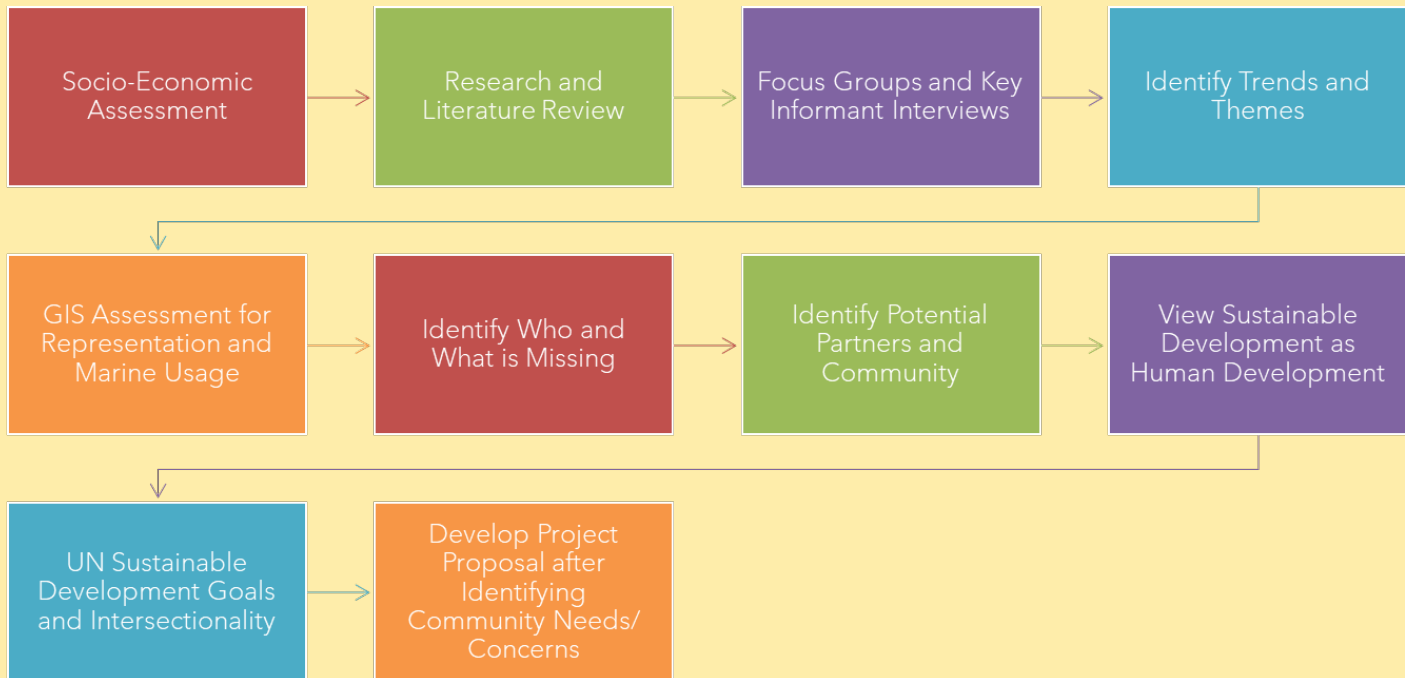
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Evaluators

DEI evaluators ensure that we are working within the framework of DEI and evaluate if and how we are meeting the equity goals of the UMP.

Advisory Committee

The UMP Advisory Committee will include partners from each of the above groups. They will develop objectives that ensure we are working equitably, monitor engagement, and re-envision metrics.

Methods



In the summer of 2020 we conducted research on the subject matter in the form of literature reviews, informational interviews and workshops that promote educational outreach. These are the themes and trends we found in the literature review.



Framework for Community Relationships



Power Through vs.
Power Over



Community
Participatory Action
Research



Purpose and Intent



Place-Based Systems



Storytelling

Power Through vs. Power Over

Power in community work should not come from an “advisor” perspective, rather it should exist as a collaborative unit. Questions to address when developing community relationships should include “How do we make sense of this?” or “What is your vision?” Community liaisons should also exist within each initiative to ensure that we cultivate community-oriented solutions.

Community Participatory Action Research

It is imperative that interpersonal and conceptual research is done prior to building relationships with potential partners so that an organization is clear about their intentions and what collaboration could look like. This research can include building an understanding of socioeconomics within a community and conducting literature reviews and key informant interviews. Community participatory action research can then take place to develop collective understanding, goals and proposals. These steps may help to avoid making assumptions about community needs and putting the burden on communities to fulfill your own programmatic objective.

Purpose and Intent

Every initiative within WSG and the UMP has a purpose and an intent. We must recognize what they are and whether our intent will benefit communities. There should also be measures to assess whether the community needs or values our work. If not, then WSG should provide connections if we are not the best partner.

Place-Based Systems

Recognizing place is vital to environmentalism in a DEI framework because it recognizes who is in each space and what their geographic location communicates about their access to shorelines, education and marine foods. It tells us the socio-economic demographics of a region and how they play a role in the environment. Place-based systems also teach us about community resilience and adaptation to social and environmental stressors. The UMP can recognize place-based systems by reaching out to community leaders to find the partnerships they seek to develop. Using geographic information systems (GIS) can be useful for assessing marine uses, what communities are represented, who is missing, and what is being captured.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a fundamental part of community work because it values identity, experience and perspective. Storytelling can become a part of the UMP by listening to communities, highlighting their work and empowering them. Community-oriented stories make people feel as if they are a part of something bigger than themselves. By putting community first and hearing their narratives, we further progress towards an equitable future.

Key Informant Interviews

Conducting key informant interviews can be a critical step toward creating a program. Key informant interviewees may include members within your organization, current partners who may provide further topical information, and public-facing leaders or experts who you may wish to include in your advisory committee. This can also help to build an understanding of people's roles, identity and positionality to see how they can best fit as collaborators. We conducted informational interviews with staff from WSG and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program.

Here are some example questions that were used:

- Who do you work for, what is your job title and what is your current role?
- How do you connect to water?
- How do you assess and communicate your intentions for community work, and whether and how the community values your work?
- **How can we support equitable access to oceans and marine conservation?**
- **From your and/or your organization's perspective, what would you like to see emerge from the UMP?**



Informational Interview with Nancy Woo from
Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program

Emerging Concepts and Best Practices



Guiding Questions for Emerging Concepts and Best Practices

*Defined through the lens of the UMP

Place-Based Systems — Systems that acknowledge the importance of location

- How does geographic location determine access?
- How can it be used to build community resilience?

Storytelling — Cultivating community-oriented narratives

- What can be done to highlight these stories?
- Are we using our resources to uplift the stories of community members?

Intersectionality — Interconnections of identity, environment and experience

- How do we recognize interconnected systems of identity to understand a community?

Education — Acquiring knowledge

- How can we use nontraditional methods of learning to engage the community?
- Are we being inclusive of learning of multiple knowledge systems?

Trust — When relationships are formed and valued

- How do we earn trust when it comes to collaboration?
- Is there accountability?

Healing — Community resilience and how communities heal from environmental stressors and hardships

- Are there resources for communities to reconcile, heal from and solve challenges?
- Does the work that we do provide a greater sense of agency?

Belonging — Cultivating safe spaces and making people feel welcome

- How do we make people feel welcome and a part of something?

Holding Space — Meeting people where they are at and allowing them to express attitudes, opinions, beliefs and concerns

- Is there perspective in our efforts?

Empathy — Understanding that comes through experience

- Do the people leading our initiatives reflect the identities of the community?
- Are we actively working towards understanding and solidarity?

Living and Non-Human Beings — Recognizing how these are interconnected

- How do these elements present themselves in the environment and how can we give recognition to both?

Reciprocity — A mutual relationship of giving back when something is given or taken

- Is the process transactional?
- Do all involved parties benefit in an equitable manner?

Utilizing SDGs for Intersectionality within the UMP

The United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals that are intersectional and equitable in nature that were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 to end poverty, promote peace and protect the planet by the year 2030.

Each of the SDGs comes with a target indicator for reaching the goal. It stems from the urgency of intersectionality, systems thinking, root causes, and the connections between challenges. Achieving the SDGs requires the partnerships between people of diverse identities, governments, the education sector, organizations, and the private sector to better a planet for present and future generations.

It would be ideal to the development of the UMP if the SDGs act as a focal point for advocacy, projects and relationships due to their holistic nature. Furthermore, the sustainable development we want to achieve must be viewed as synchronistic with human development to ensure that we are aligning with DEI framework and empowering communities.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

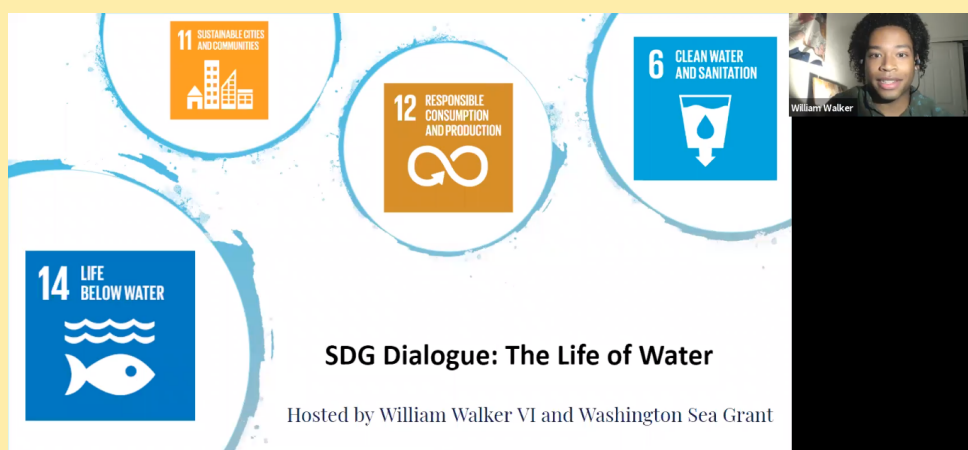


Workshops and SDG Dialogue

Hosting workshops are an effective way to engage community members with WSG, learn what their concerns are, and how different topic areas intersect with their identity. Furthermore, it creates the opportunity to start a dialogue, informally ask questions, challenge ideas and praise perspective, and ultimately cultivates community-oriented solutions. In the age of Covid-19, such workshops can take place on a virtual platform such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facebook Live, etc. The information can be advertised through WSG media platforms and shared amongst community leaders and members.

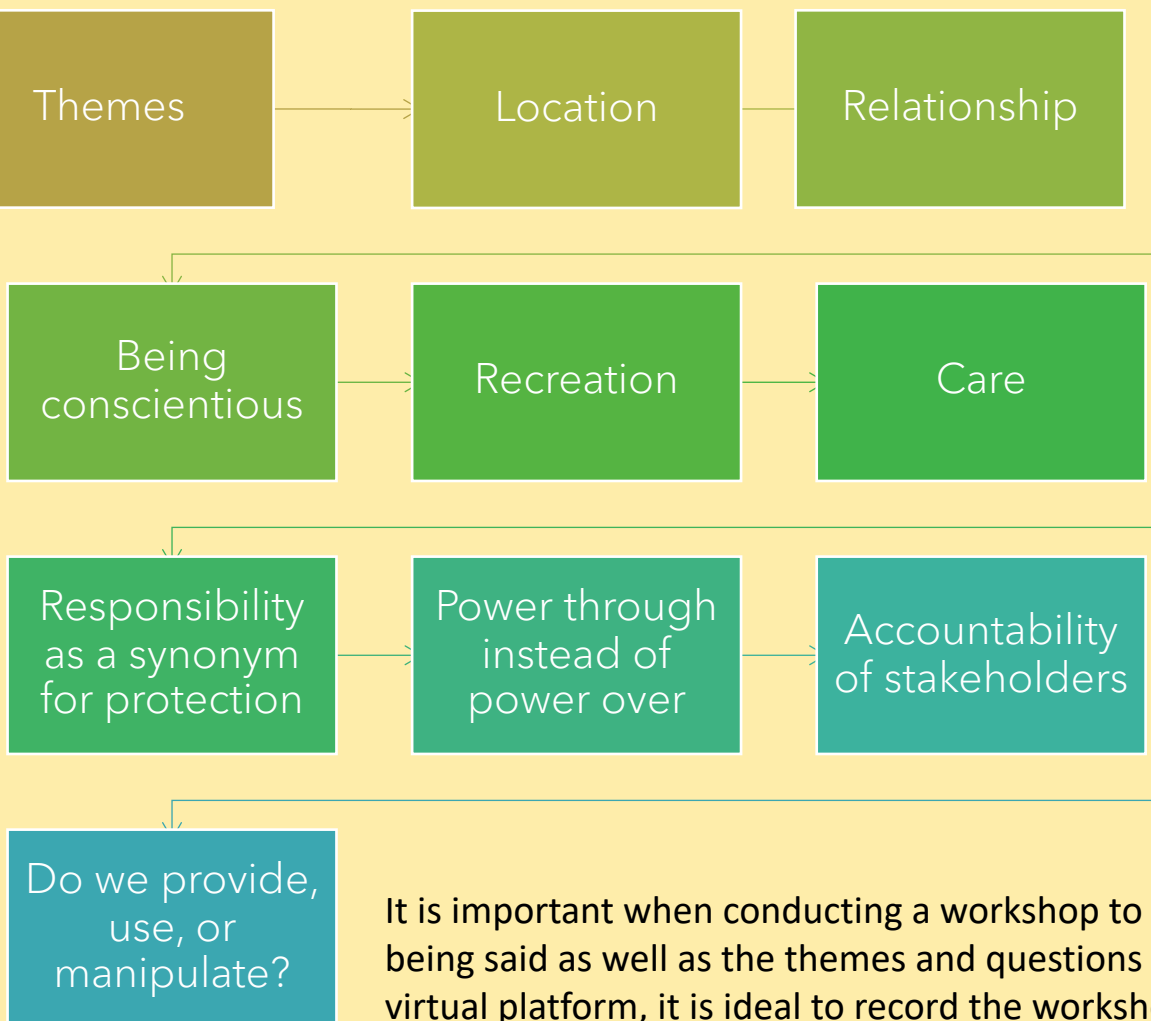
We hosted an SDG dialogue workshop with WSG staff and Doris Duke Conservation Scholars on *The Life of Water*. The goal was to cultivate community solutions and create an informal discussion on how we connect to water and its intersectionality. The workshop started with a Ted Talk by Kelsey Leonard that spoke about granting legal personhood to water, practicing reciprocity, and recognizing the livelihood that water provides. Starting the dialogue with a form of media can provide a precursor to rich conversation and gets the audience thinking.

After the video, we split everyone up into breakout rooms on Zoom to have them answer a set of questions relating to their relationship with water, and how to transcend the way it is viewed to become more equitable.



SDG Dialogue: The Life of Water hosted by William Walker VI and Washington Sea Grant

Workshops and SDG Dialogue Cont.



It is important when conducting a workshop to take notes of what is being said as well as the themes and questions asked. If it exists on a virtual platform, it is ideal to record the workshop with the consent of all participants, making it simple to go back to for reference.

SDG dialogues are a great way to involve community because they can help to center people around particular goals. By bringing it to the forefront of people's mind, you can influence them to further develop dialogues on DEI and sustainability. This method has been used to inform conservation-based work, acquire funding for community initiatives, and inspire an audience.

Workshops can also take place with partner organizations such as NOAA or used to engage students in projects or answer questions about our roles.

Additional Resources

Community Engagement Guides

Equitable Adaptation Legal and Policy Toolkit

<https://www.georgetownclimate.org/adaptation/toolkits/equitable-adaptation-toolkit/introduction.html?full>

Organizations

Intersectional Environmentalist

<https://www.intersectionalenvironmentalist.com/>

Changemaker Central @ASU

<https://changemaker.asu.edu/>

UN Sustainable Development Goals and Target Indicators

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Ted Talks

Kimberlé Crenshaw: The Urgency of Intersectionality

https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en

Kelsey Leonard: Why Lakes and Rivers Should Have the Same Rights as Humans

https://www.ted.com/talks/kelsey_leonard_why_lakes_and_rivers_should_have_the_same_rights_as_humans?language=en

Articles and Posts

William Walker VI: Why Sustainable Development Must Change the Way They View Collaboration

<https://www.constellationsustainability.org/post/why-sustainable-development-must-change-the-way-they-view-collaboration>

William Walker VI: Amplifying Black Lives Matter For a Sustainable Future

<https://schoolofsustainability.asu.edu/news/archive/amplifying-black-lives-matter-for-a-sustainable-future/>

Leah Thomas: Intersectional Environmentalism: Why Environmental Justice Is Essential For A Sustainable Future

<https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/environmental-justice>

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

<https://www.ayanaelizabeth.com/>

Warm regards podcast- Change in our oceans is a social problem too ft. Melissa Watkinson

<https://soundcloud.com/warmregardspodcast/change-in-our-oceans-is-a-social-problem-too>

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Washington Sea Grant and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program at the University of Washington for their support, input and feedback. The appreciation is also extended to WSG social scientist Melissa K. Watkinson and Keystone fellow Adrienne Hampton in advising my internship experience.

Citations

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About the Author

William Walker VI is a student at Arizona State University studying Sustainability and Urban Planning. He is passionate about initiative-based work, intersectional environmentalism, and institutional change. To ensure equitable livelihoods that promote identity and sustainability, he has created a toolkit to help Washington Sea Grant and other organizations do community work. He can be contacted at williamwalkervi@gmail.com.