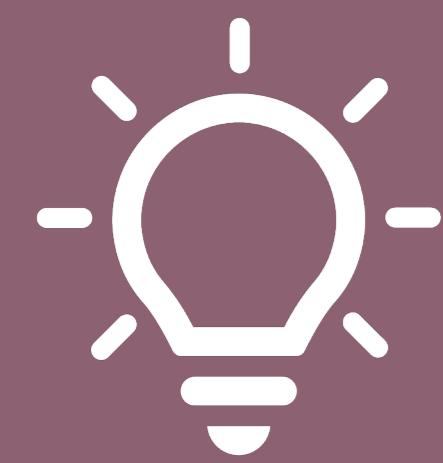
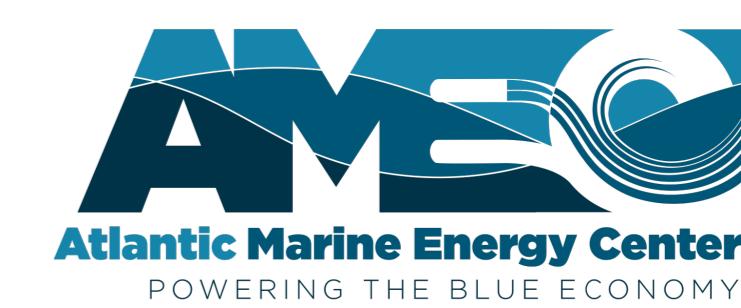


Questioning as Engagement: Strategies for Building Stakeholder Engagement

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UMERC attendees have diverse questions for stakeholders, but they mostly seek information from coastal communities and potential end-users of marine energy to advance their work.



PROBLEM

Advancing marine energy depends on the exchange of information between the sector's developers and researchers and potential marine energy end users: coastal communities, maritime industries, and Blue Economy applications. For instance, a researcher needs data from end users to design and test devices while a fish farmer needs information about how marine energy devices can meet their power needs. However, there is a disconnect

between these groups. Developers and researchers report that they lack the capacity and means to connect and create exchanges with stakeholders outside of their sector. This disconnect suggests the need for a shift in the ways scientific and engineering experts communicate and interact with the public away from informational or educational models towards mutual learning and dialog-based models (Cook and Overpeck 2018, Houtman et al. 2021).



APPROACH

Bridging communication divides is part of the Atlantic Marine Energy Center Stakeholder Engagement team's work to build and strengthen networks among industry, academia, and end-users. Supporting researcher and developer exchanges with end users began by asking attendees at UMERC 2023:

“What questions for prospective marine energy users or stakeholders would advance your work if answered?”

Our framework of best practices for communicating technical information to non-technical audiences is based on a review of literature on scientists and engineers communicating with the public.



METHODS & ANALYSIS

We used the qualitative analysis technique of open or emergent coding to label or categorize the content and audience of each question submitted by conference attendees. Codes were iteratively combined and refined so that their definitions were not overlapping. All questions received content codes, but an audience code could not be determined for all questions.

Questions in the community audience code were grouped into overarching themes. We invited attendees to workshop questions with us. Each theme's questions were refined using best practices for inter-expertise communication into one question our team could use in future engagements with coastal communities.



BEST PRACTICES

Preparation	Specify request Understand the recipient Practice making the request
Approach	Seek to build trust Listen to understand Be aware of power differentials
Clarifying requests	Avoid jargon & be concise Use analogies, examples, & metaphors Incorporate visual aids
Implementation	Contextualize the request Paraphrase the discussion Follow through on any commitments



NEXT STEPS: ANSWERS

We are beginning to gather answers from coastal communities, the most frequently coding audience. *You can stay involved!*

Follow this QR code to see the workshopped questions for communities and tell us which ones you want to hear updates and answers to:



Follow this QR to share ideas or contacts for groups or individuals you think we should pose the questions to:

