

# Executive Summary

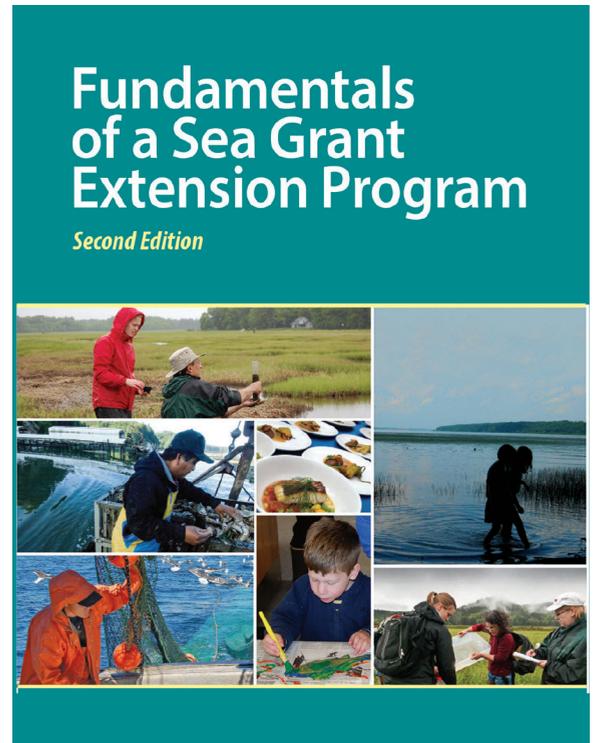


Intended for new Sea Grant Extension (SGE) professionals, this second edition of *Fundamentals of a Sea Grant Extension Program* offers a philosophical and historical context for the National Sea Grant College Program's structure, as well as extension, education, and research core concepts. In addition to reflecting changes over the past dozen years in all areas of program organization and development, the revised handbook addresses new technologies for program delivery to and communication with stakeholders and provides guidance regarding the necessity for SGE professionals to maintain the highest standards of objectivity and to avoid advocacy likely to adversely affect their professional delivery of services. The diverse examples of extension programming provided by the author team and the many photographs of Sea Grant Extension in action demonstrate the breadth, depth and impact of the National Sea Grant Extension Program. The handbook emphasizes the trusted relationships SGE professionals build nationally and locally with the research community and stakeholders, and the long-term partnerships, collaborations and networks that emerge from those relationships.

## Sea Grant Extension: History and Mission

Begun by an act of Congress in 1966, the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) has been a program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US Department of Commerce since the early 1970s. The NSGCP is comprised of 33 university-based programs. Each one is organized differently with variations on the university-based theme. An array of agencies, associations, panels, partnerships, assemblies, boards and committees have helped make Sea Grant the local, regional and national program it is today.

The mission of Sea Grant is to develop the most up-to-date and comprehensive scientific information that can then be extended to decision-makers for their use in our coastal areas. Sea Grant Extension professionals are on the front lines of the NSGCP. They stand at the intersection of research, government and the public, translating science for communities and elected officials and working with stakeholders to create programs and policies that benefit coastal ecosystems and the human systems that depend on them.



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## Features of the Revised Handbook

*The Fundamentals of a Sea Grant Extension Program (Fundamentals)* takes the reader through the process of developing an extension program—through the planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation processes that lead to excellence. Partnerships, collaborations and networks are highlighted through the numerous examples of activities occurring within the NSGCP. Extension professionals just starting out may think they are responsible for every task, so prioritizing and time management are also emphasized. Research is a key component of extension programming and so the *Fundamentals* also explores the relationship between extension and research—whether its evaluating data, integrating programming with research projects or identifying the best data sources.

In addition to examining the traditional role of SGE professionals, the revised handbook emphasizes the major changes in that role, especially new technology for communicating with stakeholders and the necessity for SGE professionals to maintain the highest standards of ethics and objectivity.

New technologies have completely changed the field of public outreach. An SGE professional can now reach many more stakeholders and provide ways for stakeholders to communicate their views, whether via news releases and newsletters, or email and text alerts, blogs, social websites, e-newsletters, mobile websites,

and smartphone apps. With these tools, the SGE professional can fully involve representatives from the community in the planning process, help frame issues that focus on the particular needs and interests of the community, and determine the appropriate kind of program structure that best suits it. The more a SGE program can feel like an event of the community and not an event for the community, the better it will be. By understanding their communities and local needs, SGE professionals can tailor communication with their stakeholders.

As coastal issues become politically charged issues, it becomes imperative that Sea Grant professionals maintain their objectivity and neutrality. By helping the public understand what scientific data and information mean to their coastal areas. Sea Grant professionals establish a strong bond of trust between themselves and stakeholders. Neutrality prevents Sea Grant from becoming a partisan in public policy discussions over how to use the information from its affiliated academic institutions. No matter what their personal feelings, as a best practice, SGE professionals should avoid becoming involved in political advocacy.

In an increasingly complex world that relies on increasingly complex technologies, Sea Grant continues to meet the needs of coastal communities while maintaining the public trust. This is a great compliment to all Sea Grant professionals and the structures they have built since Sea Grant's founding nearly 50 years ago.

## To Learn More

*Fundamentals* is available for download at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/ny3slcw>  
For additional information, please contact your Sea Grant's Extension leader.

## Acknowledgments

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