

EXPLORING THE NORTH SHORE BLUE ECONOMY

An Essex County Think Lab, part of ECCF's Empowering Economic Opportunity initiative

Strategy Session Report

Wednesday, October 2, 2019

Endicott College, Gloucester, MA

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*The World Bank defines
Blue Economy as "the
sustainable use of ocean
resources for economic
growth, improved livelihoods
and jobs, and ocean
ecosystem health."*
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University of
Massachusetts
Amherst



Essex County
Community Foundation

The North Shore Blue Economy initiative is led by the UMass Amherst Gloucester Marine Station in research partnership with the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth, and with the collaboration and funding support of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, City of Gloucester, Gloucester Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, and the Essex County Community Foundation.

Other supporters include the North Shore Technology Council and North Shore InnoVentures. We look forward to broadening this partnership throughout the North Shore as the initiative advances.

Think Lab Overview

EDUCATE. IDEATE. INCUBATE.

On October 2, UMass Gloucester Marine Station partnered with Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) to convene more than 75 community leaders to learn about the North Shore Blue Economy (NSBE) initiative, a new project focused on sustaining and growing the North Shore's Blue Economy.

As part of the NSBE's strategy to build enthusiasm and engage community leaders, participants were invited to lend their local expertise in exploring the strengths and challenges currently impacting the sector. Their feedback will be used to help inform the vision and strategy for next steps of the initiative.



WHAT IS A THINK LAB?

A facet of ECCF's Empowering Economic Opportunity (EEO) initiative to increase economic opportunity for Essex County residents living below the living wage, Think Labs harness local expertise around special areas of focus to inspire creative thinking that can impact the economic landscape. [Learn more at eccf.org/EEO.](https://eccf.org/EEO)

Attendee Snapshot

More than 75 cross-sector leaders spanning the North Shore participated, providing a diverse set of perspectives.

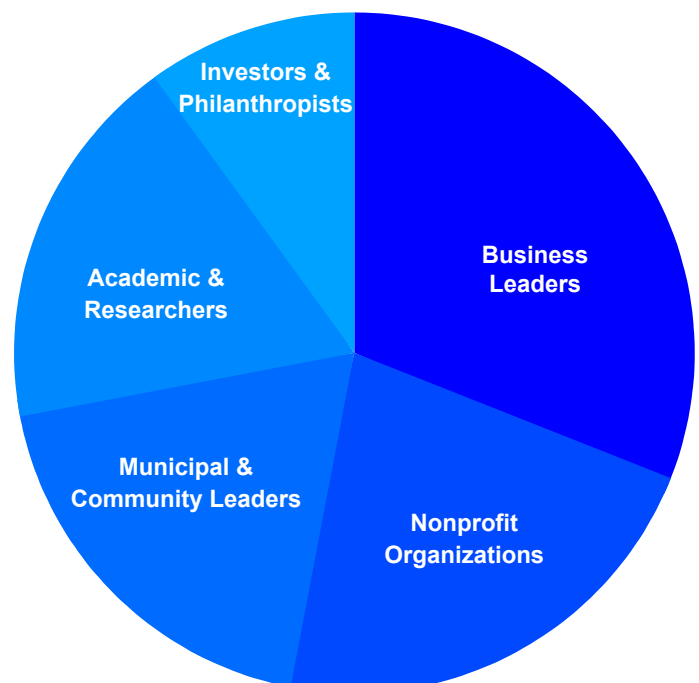
Business leaders: 31%

Nonprofit organizations: 22%

Municipal and Community leaders: 19%

Academic and Researchers: 18%

Investors and Philanthropists: 10%



**This invitation only event welcomed attendees from across regional Blue Economy sectors and North Shore geographies. Invitees were selected based on their personal expertise for this particular session/topic to gain a diverse set of perspectives. Future sessions and topics will target other appropriate sectors as necessary.*

Presentation Summary

“Exploring the North Shore Blue Economy” participants were welcomed by Stratton Lloyd, ECCF’s COO and vice president for community leadership. Lloyd spoke of the Foundation’s Systems Philanthropy approach to social change of which collaboration, cross-sector partnerships and regional convenings like Think Labs are major components. He emphasized the importance of these meetings as opportunities to harness local knowledge, open dialogue around complex issues, build relationships and inspire creative thinking that can impact the future economic landscape.

GOALS FOR THE DAY:

Share the NSBE concept and early data framework with Think Lab participants

Learn from one another

Gather the group’s feedback on the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the North Shore Blue Economy to inform analysis and next steps

Dr. Katie Kahl, assistant extension professor of sustainable fisheries and coastal resilience at the UMass Amherst Gloucester Marine Station, is leading the North Shore Blue Economy (NSBE) initiative. She provided research and data defining the project including Phase 1 learning and outputs, and next steps for Phase II. Dr. Kahl also provided broad definitions of the Blue Economy including key themes and learnings that could be leveraged from state, national and global examples of similar initiatives to support the upcoming strategy session.



Dr. Katie Kahl and Dr. Michael Goodman

Keynote speaker Mike Kennealy, Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, addressed the group, providing statewide context for the importance of the Blue Economy, citing the state’s \$41 million investment in 87 projects to improve infrastructure in coastal communities (including several strategic investment on the North Shore). He added that while the state’s Blue Economy is strong - with a total economic impact of more than \$17 billion - it has lacked a comprehensive regional strategy and applauded the morning’s event as an important step in working together to support the sector.

Dr. Michael Goodman, executive director of the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth presented his research highlighting how much North Shore coastal communities rely on a healthy ocean for economic security. Goodman was clear that the Blue Economy is a central and integral part of the Massachusetts economy – yet it is a sector under pressure. He concluded that threats to the Blue Economy like climate change, ocean pollution, depleting fish stocks and others also present opportunities to innovate and grow.

More from the Think Lab:

- Read ECCF’s press release: Essex County Think Lab Focuses on North Shore Blue Economy [HERE](#).
- View Dr. Michael Goodman’s full presentation [HERE](#).

Think Lab Activity Summary and Key Themes

In small groups, participants were led through a series of design thinking activities to brainstorm and discuss the North Shore's strengths, challenges, and their visions for the future of the regional Blue Economy. Attendees were encouraged to think boldly and to use their personal experience as a unique lens throughout the strategy session.

Activity 1: Building on our Strengths

Individuals were asked to spend several minutes writing down the strengths we have as a community in relation to the North Shore Blue Economy. Ideas were shared and grouped into major themes, summarized below:

STRENGTH

ACCESS

Examples of individual responses related to **access** as a strength of the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Proximity to ports and top research facilities
- Proximity to Boston, Cambridge and the region's top universities and diverse educational opportunities
- Proximity to a diverse coastal ecosystem
- Access to regional and national transportation

STRENGTH

INNOVATION

Examples of individual responses related to **innovation** as a strength of the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Emerging blue and sustainable technologies including off-shore wind
- Regional coastal resilience efforts and research
- Innovative work culture and mindset
- Proximity to related current growth industries including life sciences, robotics and clean tech

STRENGTH

CULTURE & HERITAGE

Examples of individual responses related to **culture/heritage** as a strength of the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Strong maritime and fishing history
- Diversity in perspectives from different communities
- Pride of Place
- Healthy tourism industry

STRENGTH

WORKFORCE

Examples of individual responses related to **workforce** as a strength of the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Talented workforce with local experience
- High education levels and access to research
- Historical track record of innovation
- Diversity of workforce including age, skill level, race and interest



Activity 2: Awareness of our Challenges

Individuals were asked to spend several minutes writing down the challenges we have as a community in relation to the North Shore Blue Economy. Ideas were shared and grouped into major themes, summarized below:

CHALLENGE

CULTURE

Examples of individual responses mentioning **culture** as a challenge facing the North Shore Blue Economy:

- North Shore communities can be provincial (34 cities and towns)
- Collaboration and strategic vision is lacking
- Competing priorities and visions

CHALLENGE

ATTRACTING TALENT

Examples of individual responses related to **attracting and retaining talent** as a challenge facing the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Current North Shore career opportunities offer low wages
- Limited cultural and social opportunities for young professionals
- More innovative/exciting career opportunities in Boston
- High cost of living vs. low sector wages

CHALLENGE

ANTIQUATED POLICIES

Examples of individual responses related to **antiquated policies** as a challenge facing the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Government policies regulating the Blue Economy are out of date
- Regional permits, requirements and fishing moratoriums challenge innovation
- Federal/State/local land use regulations are complex and impact waterfront investment

CHALLENGE

INFRASTRUCTURE

Examples of individual responses related to **infrastructure** as a challenge facing the North Shore Blue Economy:

- Aging infrastructure and decaying port facilities
- Transportation regionally is limited / commute inequality
- Inadequate broadband quality regionally

What Could Be?

Building off the strengths and challenges recognized earlier in the session, teams participated in an ideation process to discover bolder, bigger ideas of possibility. Common in design thinking, this activity was meant to build enthusiasm and engagement by allowing participants to reflect on the potential and possibility of *what could be*. While the NSBE initiative is not committed to enacting each vision, they are an important part of the engagement strategy and identify the potential for the Blue Economy in our region.

Through hundreds of bold ideas collected from participants, several common themes emerged:

- Blue technology
- Coastal resilience
- Climate change solutions
- Improved legislation
- Integrated workforce development
- Local capital investment in the area

Exemplars of the **BOLD VISIONS** participants found particularly interesting:



Next Steps

Part of the NSBE's comprehensive engagement strategy, Think Lab participants provided valuable input to better understand the strengths, opportunities and challenges facing the North Shore Blue Economy. The initiative will continue these efforts through targeted focus groups and meetings over the next several months.

This report is a high level overview of the Think Lab session including key themes that emerged from the group activities. Report data and takeaways from key discussions will be used to help inform the NSBE initiative Phase I analysis, outputs and vision for next steps in our region.

NSBE will release a comprehensive report, including the full economic analysis by Dr. Michael Goodman, and the data culled from the Think Lab and other engagement events this winter. The Phase II launch of the NSBE Initiative is expected in the spring of 2020.

Stay Connected:


- **SIGN UP** for ECCF's Impact Essex County information and newsletter
- **VISIT** for more information about the UMass Amherst Gloucester Marine Station
- **READ** UMass Dartmouth's Public Policy Center report: Navigating the Global Economy: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Massachusetts Maritime Economy
- **READ** White Paper, Catching the Next Wave: Building the Blue Economy Through Innovation and Collaboration





Essex County Community Foundation

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