Scientists receive extensive training throughout their careers in communicating their results to other scientists. However, there is very little formal training to teach scientists to convey their research to the general public. This can create misunderstandings and frustration both within and outside the scientific community. To address this need, in May 2011, C-MORE graduate student Shellie Bench (UC Santa Cruz), with support from the University of Hawaii education office, and funding from the EDventures program, organized a one-day workshop titled “Science and the Media: Opportunities and challenges in a rapidly changing world”. The workshop focused on facilitating communication between scientists and journalists and helping C-MORE scientists improve how they communicate their science to non-scientific audiences, including effective use of new types of media. Held at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI), the workshop was led by Liz Neeley, from “Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea” (COMPASS), and included three local journalists; Adam Rogers (Wired Magazine), Lauren Sommers (KQED Radio), and Robert Irion (UCSC Science Writing program). In addition to an informational lecture session, the workshop included interactive sessions where participating scientists were given tools to work on effectively presenting their scientific work to the journalists. A large portion of the day was spent on fun and effective mock-interview scenarios where each scientist had an opportunity to directly interact with the journalists, followed by valuable group feedback on their interaction.

Nearly 20 scientists participated in the workshop including students, post-doctoral scholars, researchers, and technicians from four C-MORE institutions (UC Santa Cruz, University of Hawaii, Oregon State University, and Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute). Analysis of post-workshop surveys – conducted by an organization not affiliated with C-MORE- indicated that the workshop was very successful. The event was highly rated, and all participants stating that they would recommend similar events to colleagues in the future. In the surveys, the scientists universally praised the work and participation of Liz Neeley and the three journalists, and all participants felt the workshop was a valuable use of their time and effort, as well as C-MORE and EDventures funding.