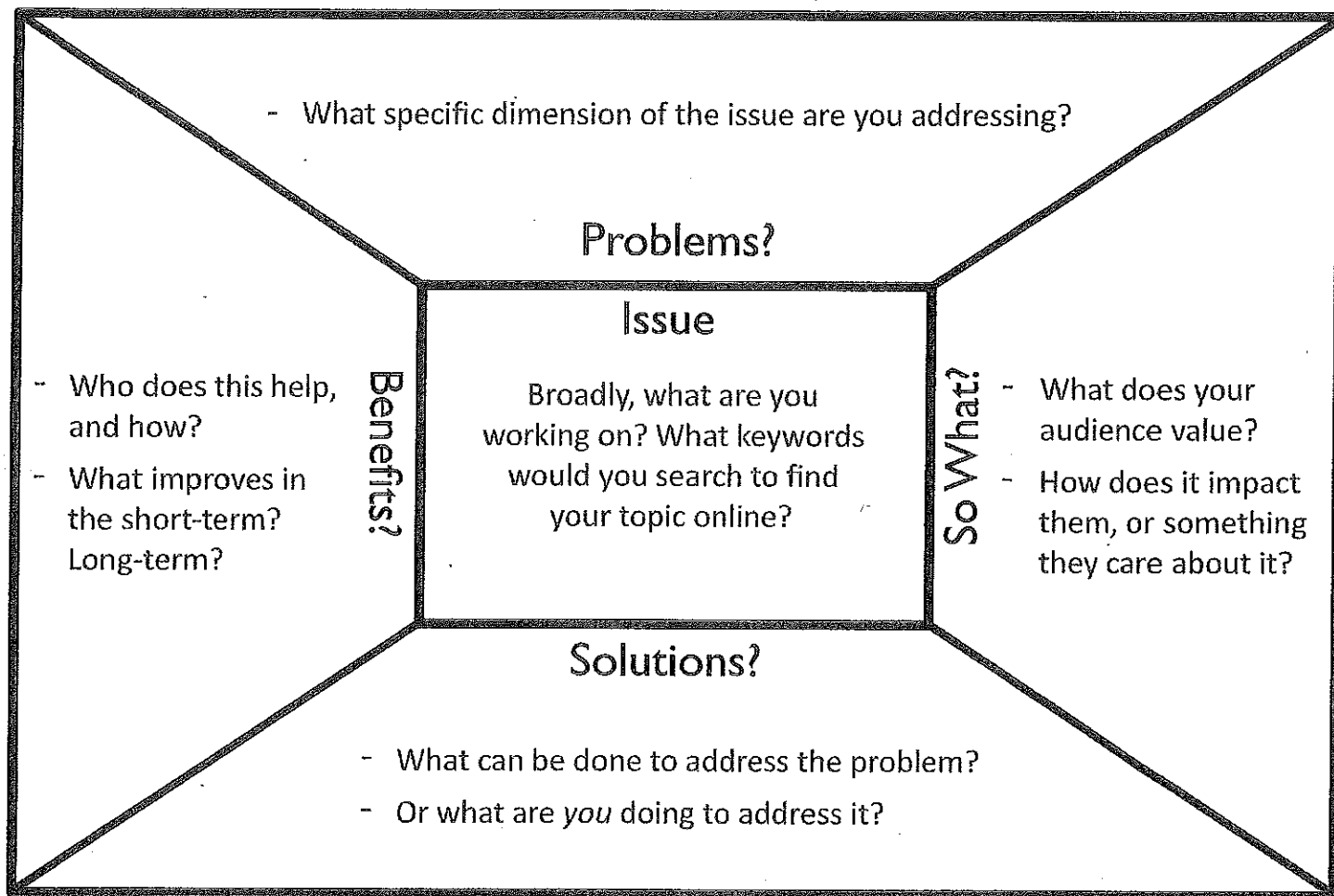The graphic below highlights some of questions that may help prime your thinking as you begin to draft your own Message Boxes and use them. There isn't a right or a wrong way to use Message Box, though some approaches will work better for certain audiences. The important thing is to get started!
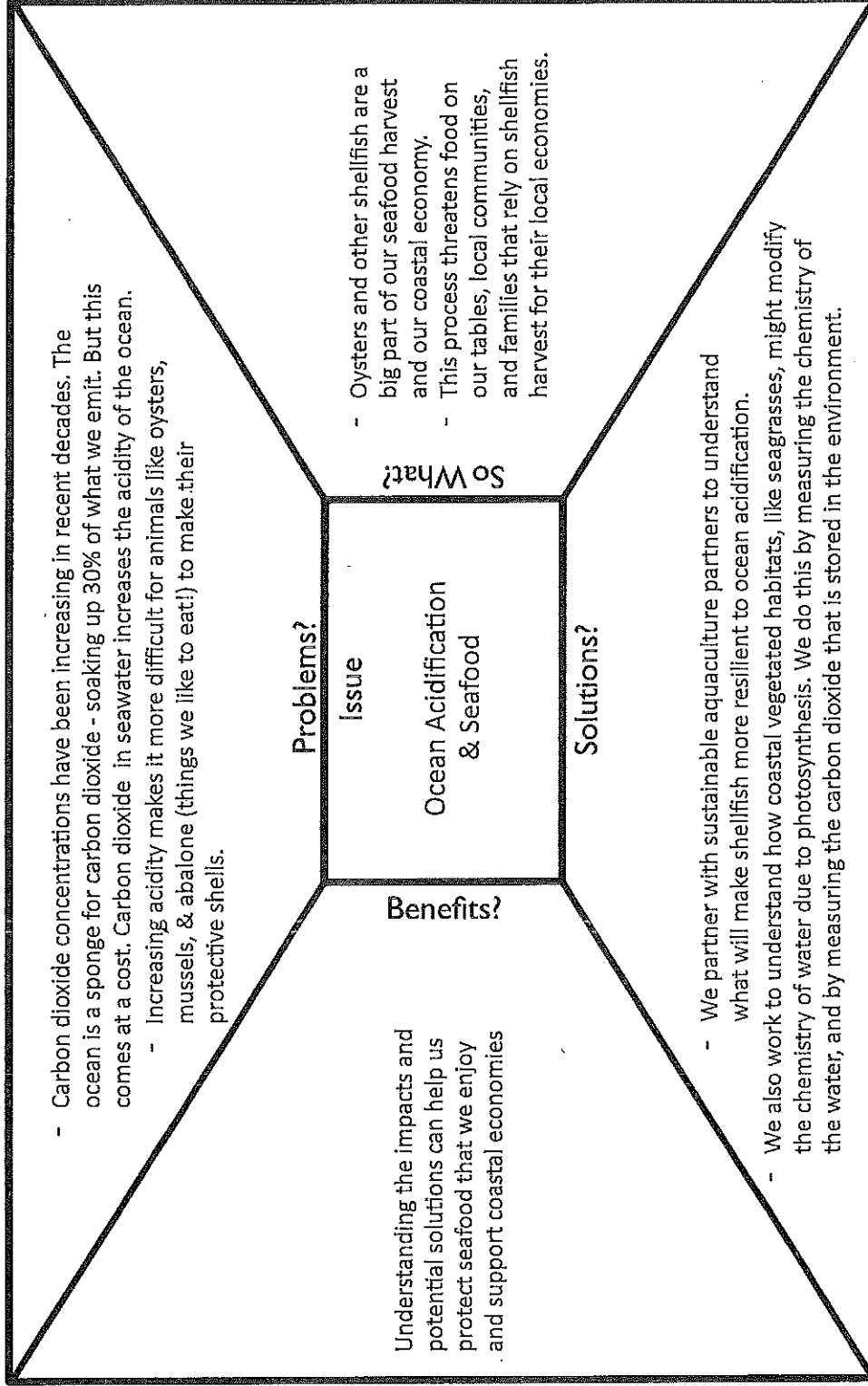
You may also find yourself being asked some of these questions when you are sharing your science, so they can also be a helpful way to prepare for those conversations.

Audience: Who is impacted by this? Who can change this? Who cares about this?

- What specific dimension of the issue are you addressing?

Problems?

Issue

Benefits?
- Who does this help, and how?
- What improves in the short-term? Long-term?

Broadly, what are you working on? What keywords would you search to find your topic online?

So What?
- What does your audience value?
- How does it impact them, or something they care about it?

Solutions?

- What can be done to address the problem?
- Or what are *you* doing to address it?

COMPASS most often works with environmental scientists interested in becoming more engaged in the public discourse. But we have helped scientists in a variety of disciplines, communicating with many audiences and working toward different types of goals, to distill and frame their messages with the Message Box.

The examples on the following pages provide a glimpse of that diversity of thought and approach. Note how each Message Box identifies its audience up front, and provides a framework for sorting and distilling complex issues down to their essence, answering some of the questions outlined above.

Audience: Radio Program

Issue

Ocean Acidification & Seafood

Problems?

- Carbon dioxide concentrations have been increasing in recent decades. The ocean is a sponge for carbon dioxide - soaking up 30% of what we emit. But this comes at a cost. Carbon dioxide in seawater increases the acidity of the ocean.
  - Increasing acidity makes it more difficult for animals like oysters, mussels, & abalone (things we like to eat!) to make their protective shells.

So What?

- Oysters and other shellfish are a big part of our seafood harvest and our coastal economy.
- This process threatens food on our tables, local communities, and families that rely on shellfish harvest for their local economies.

Solutions?

- We partner with sustainable aquaculture partners to understand what will make shellfish more resilient to ocean acidification.
- We also work to understand how coastal vegetated habitats, like seagrasses, might modify the chemistry of water due to photosynthesis. We do this by measuring the chemistry of the water, and by measuring the carbon dioxide that is stored in the environment.

Benefits?

Understanding the impacts and potential solutions can help us protect seafood that we enjoy and support coastal economies

Tessa Hill is an Associate Professor in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Bodega Marine Laboratory, and Associate Director of Academic Programs at the Coastal and Marine Sciences Institute at the University of California at Davis. She worked on her Message Box at a COMPASS training in preparation for an interview on NPR's Science Friday later that week (you can listen to it here[3]). The box above is her fourth iteration, illustrating how many people find it valuable to work and rework their messages to make them clear and memorable. Listen for the points that she outlined in her Message Box, and note how she doesn't read from her Box, but uses her messages in her conversation with radio host Ira Flatow. She also uses metaphors to help the audience understand her points, and does a demonstration!

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[3]www.sciencefriday.com/segments/for-oysters-challenges-and-hope-in-the-changing-ocean/

SMART goals help improve achievement and success. A SMART goal clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed.

A SMART goal is:

Specific (and strategic): Linked to position summary, departmental goals/mission, and/or overall School of Medicine goals and strategic plans. Answers the question—Who? and What?

Measurable: The success toward meeting the goal can be measured. Answers the question—How?

Attainable: Goals are realistic and can be achieved in a specific amount of time and are reasonable.

Relevant (results oriented): The goals are aligned with current tasks and projects and focus in one defined area; include the expected result.

Time framed: Goals have a clearly defined time-frame including a target or deadline date.

Examples:

Not a SMART goal:
- Employee will improve their writing skills.

Does not identify a measurement or time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.

SMART goal:
- The Department has identified a goal to improve communications with administrative staff by implementing an internal departmental newsletter. Elaine will complete a business writing course by January 2010 and will publish the first monthly newsletter by March 2010. Elaine will gather input and/or articles from others in the department and draft the newsletter for supervisor review, and when approved by supervisor, distribute the newsletter to staff by the 15th of each month.

SMART Goal Planning Form

Specific – WHO? WHAT?

Measurement/Assessment -- HOW?

Attainable/Achieve – REASONABLE?

Relevant – EXPECTED RESULT?

By

Timed -- WHEN?