



"THE FOOL TELLS ME **HIS** REASONS.  
THE WISE MAN PERSUADES ME WITH  
**MY OWN.**"

*Aristotle*

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**University of Rhode Island**

**February 21, 2019**

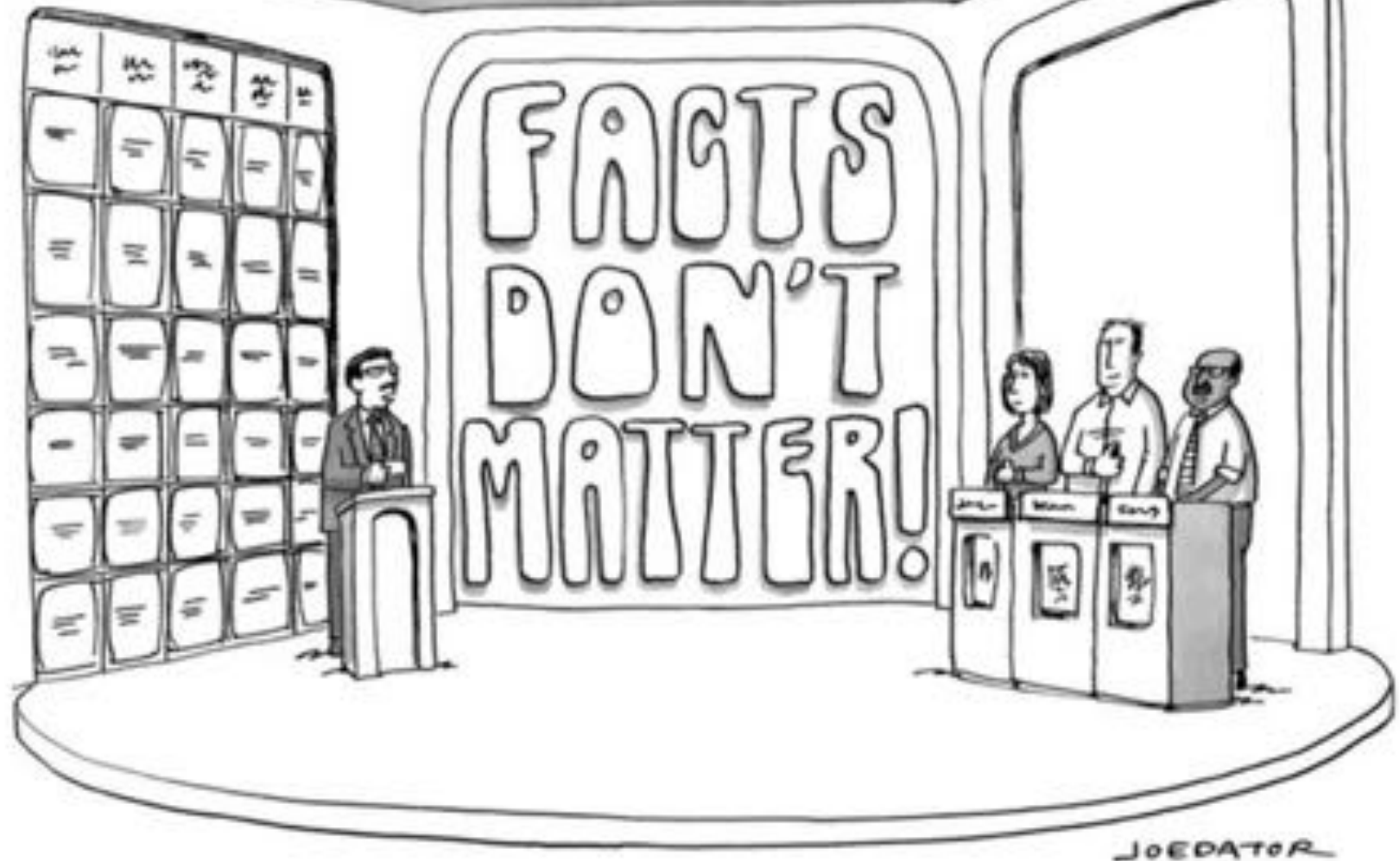
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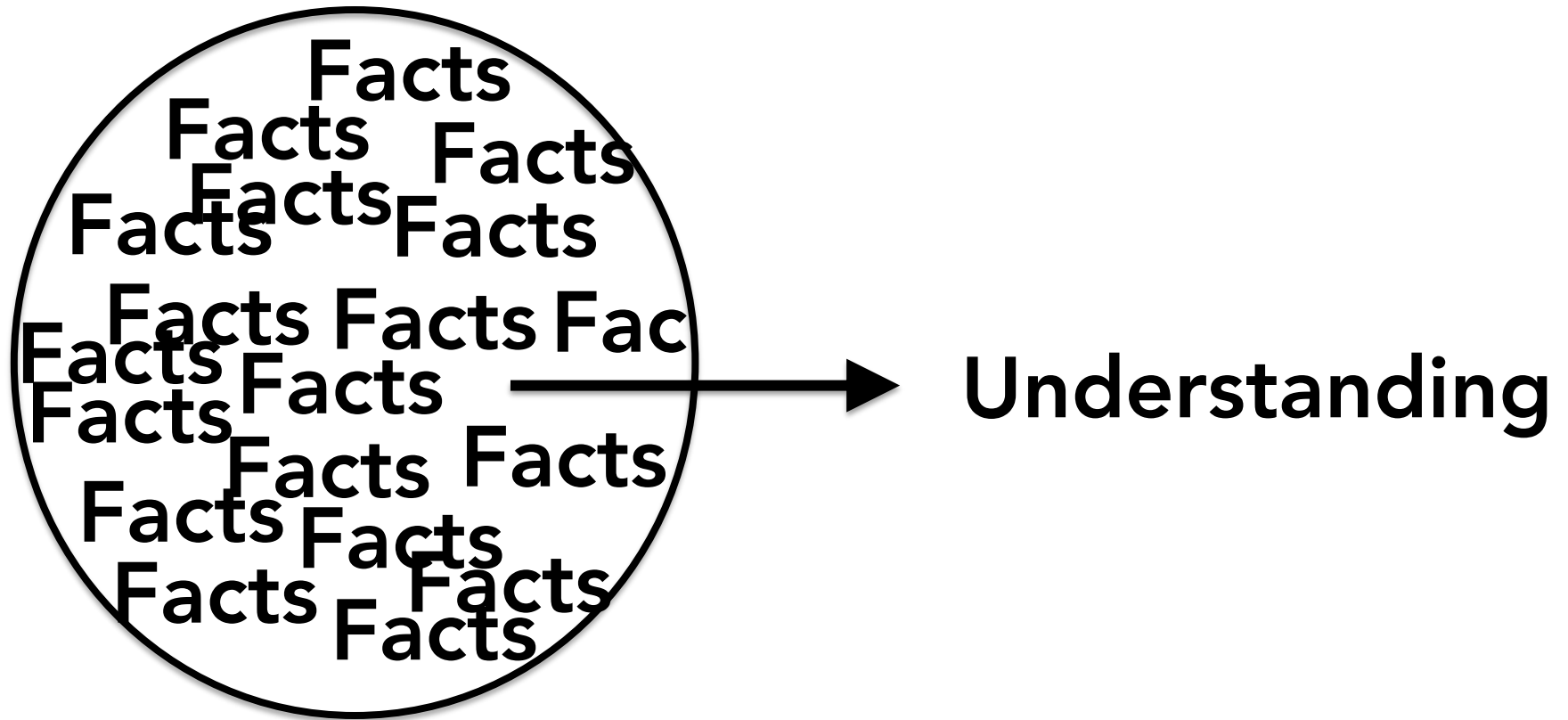


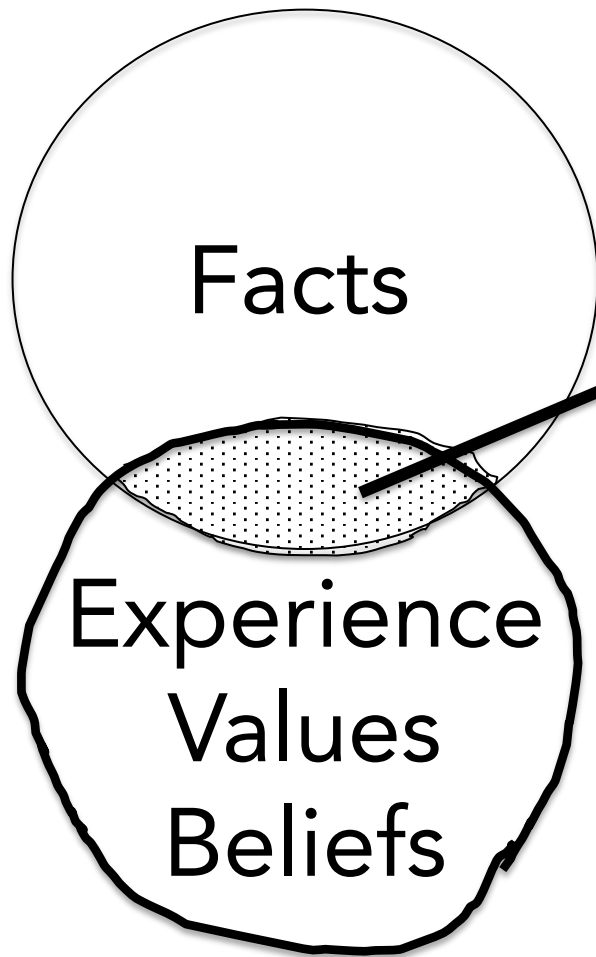
***Bringing science to the  
conversation since 1998***

Photos by Gretchen Ertl and Zak Kerrigan for Metcalfe Institute



*"I'm sorry, Jeannie, your answer was correct, but Kevin shouted his incorrect answer over yours, so he gets the points."*





**Relevance**  
↓  
**Engagement**  
(↓)  
**Behavior  
Change**

Ecosystem Services  
Glacial Isostatic Adjustment  
Flood Control  
Soil Fertility





Proximity?  
\$\$?  
Action?



Images: Jessica Scott, Grand Rapids Press; EPA, Francis Malasig

# **What Is “Effective” Science Communication?**

Strategy!

1. Know Your Audience and Situation
2. Know Your Goals
3. Emphasize Clarity and Relevance
4. Foster Dialogue
5. Iterate and Adapt



# 1. Know your audience



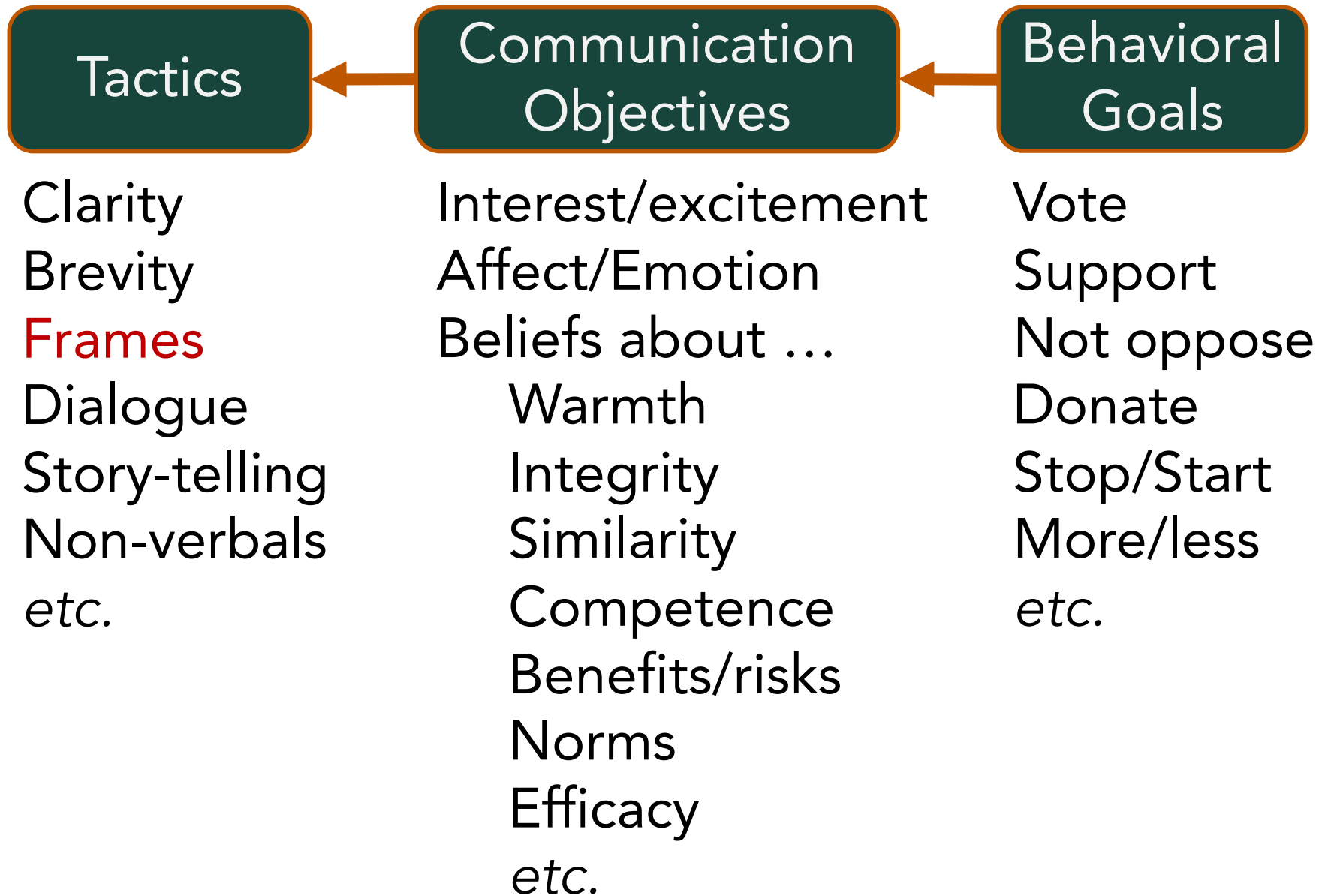
Images, L-R: C-Span; Jonathan Monfiletto

## 2. Identify your communication goals

- To persuade?
- To build support?
- To spur action?



Images: Flickr  
go\_greener\_oz; Native New  
England Landscapes, Inc.





# For effective messaging, think about....

- Audience
- Public opinion
- Connection and Authenticity
- Metaphors/  
Analogies
- Images
- Framing



Image: Pixabay

# Perception changes with frames

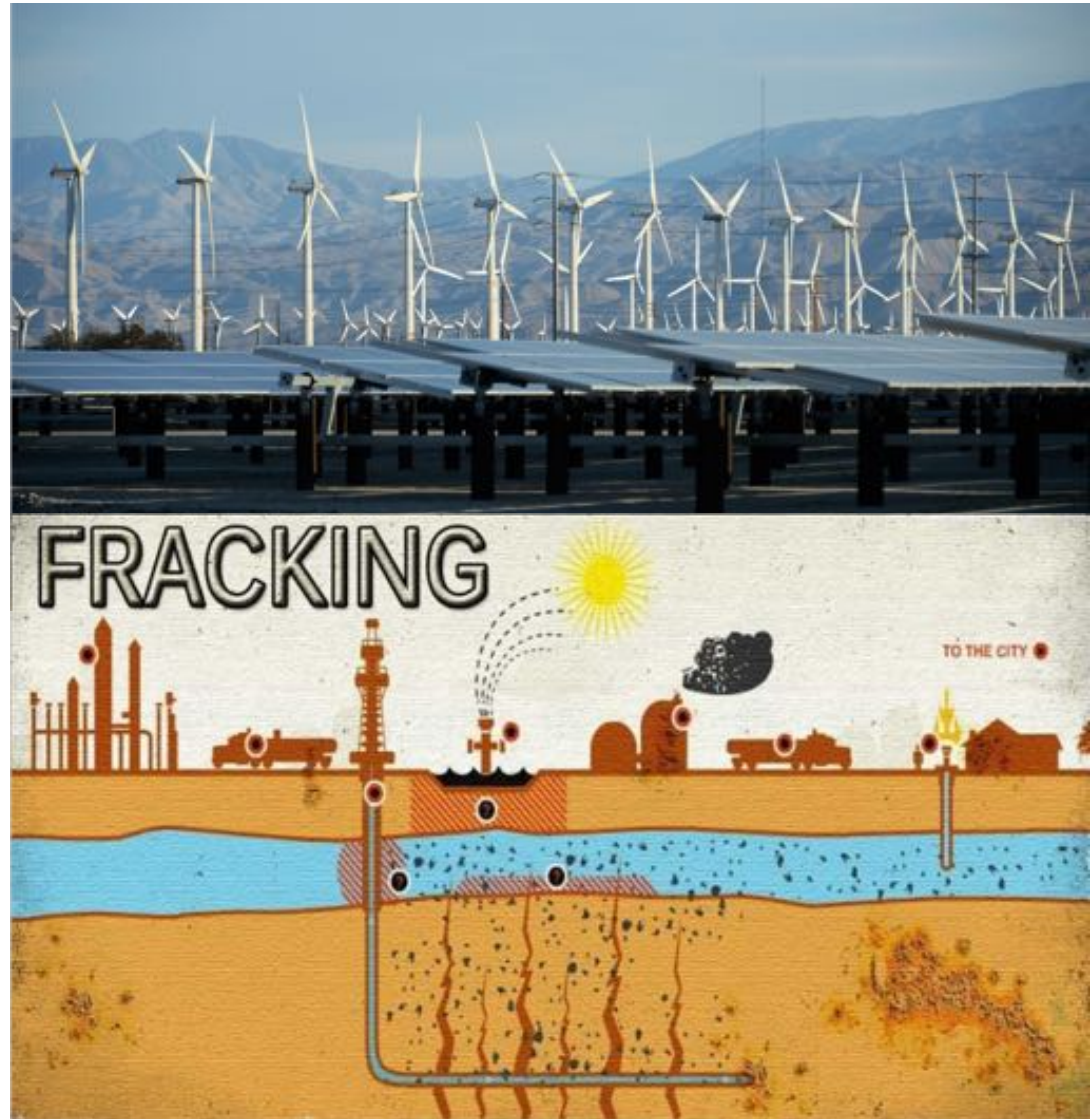
- Which facts to include or emphasize
- Who serves as the “expert”
- What is the “issue”

These choices create a frame that supports the story and signals what the audience should find important.



# Types of frames

- Gain/loss (Risk)
- Emphasis
- Uncertainty
- Morality
- ???



Images: breakingenergy.com; Composite by G-marius based on a darthpedrius's image

# Framing Compost



Images: pixabay



### 3. Emphasize clarity

- Avoid jargon
- No laundry lists
- Metaphors
- Analogies
- Compelling visuals



## 4. Foster dialogue



Listen!

Be responsive

Build trust

Be aware of  
mental models

**Cat**





# Visuals can correct mental models



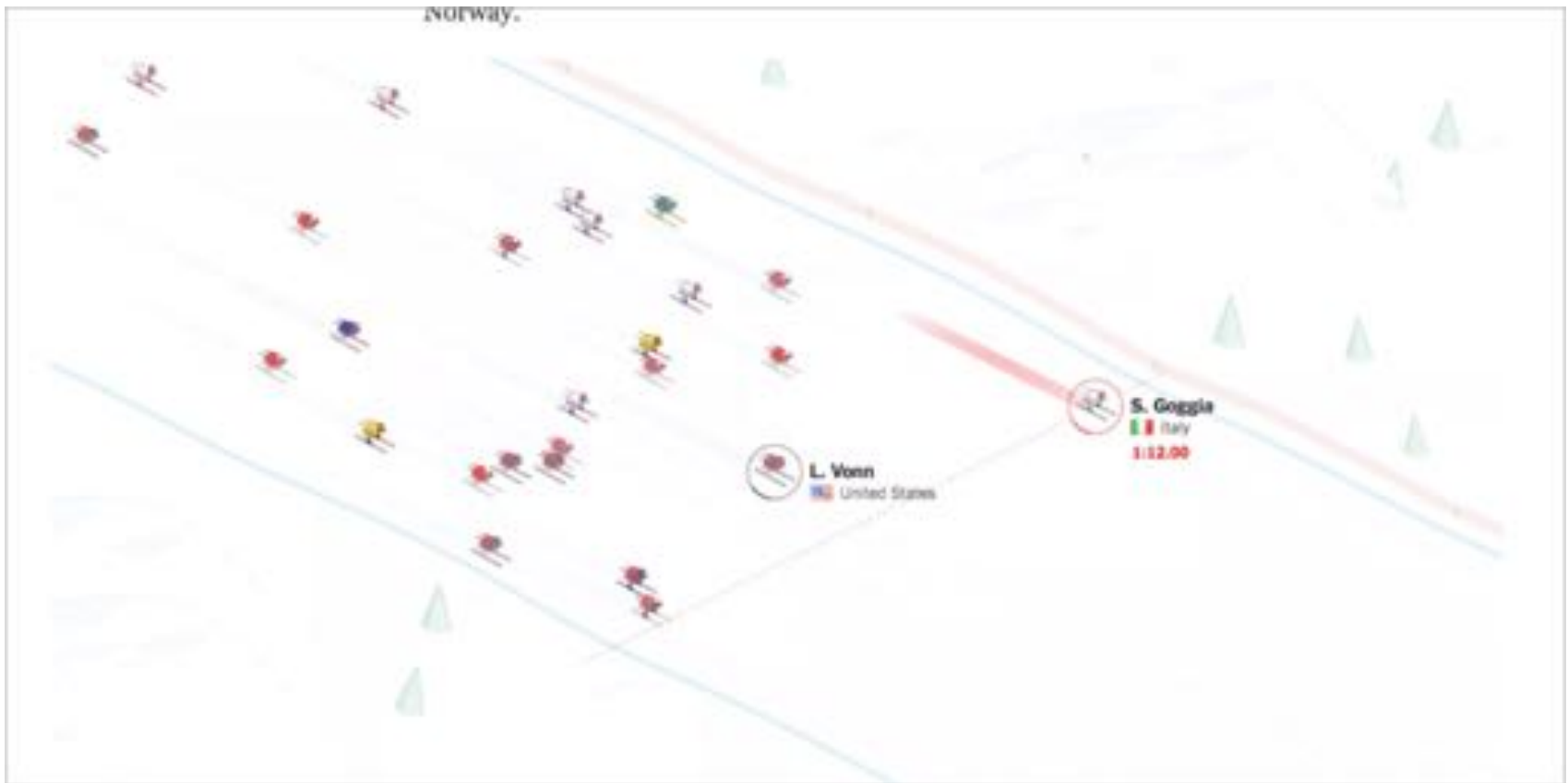
Photos: Natalie Behring/Greenpeace; Flickr, 10 10





평창 2018

# See the Jumps and Turns That Kept Lindsey Vonn From Downhill Gold

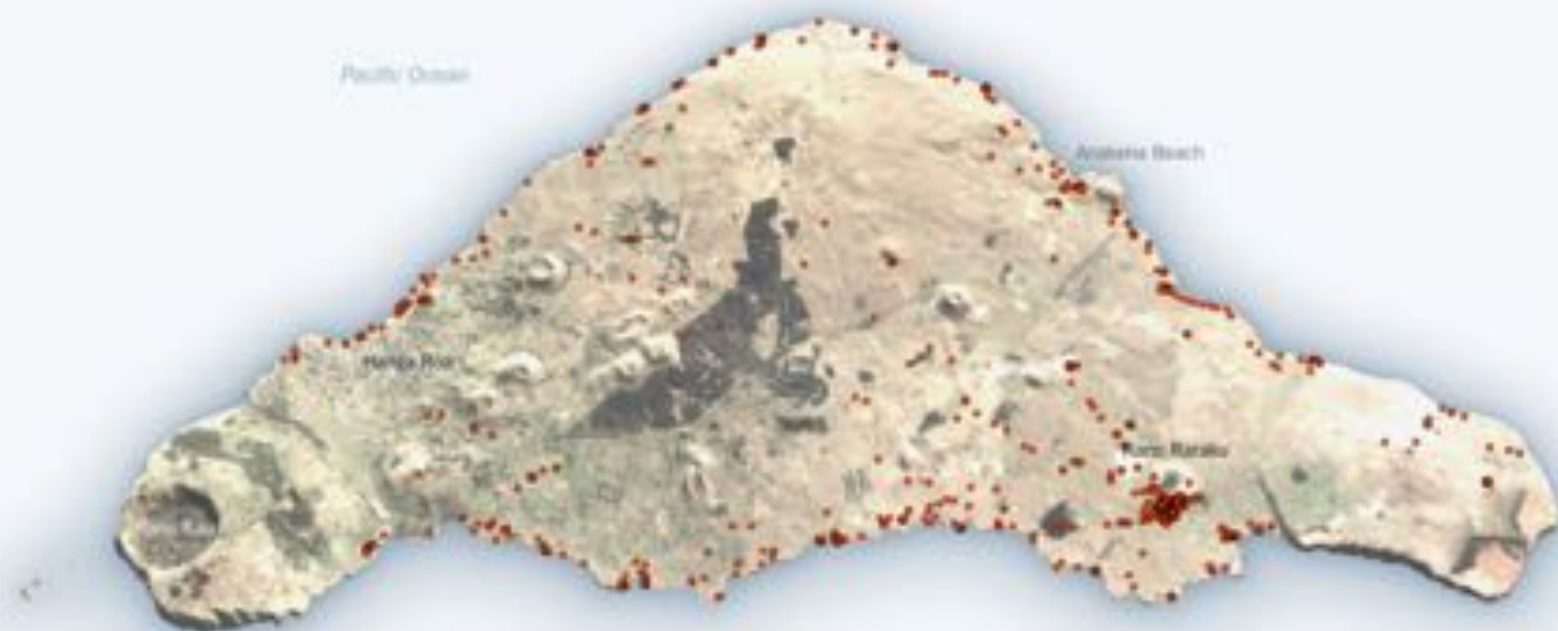


<https://nyti.ms/2Cbdc0C>



<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/14/climate/easter-island-erosion.html>





Ringed it are scores of  
moai statues and their  
platforms, called ahu.

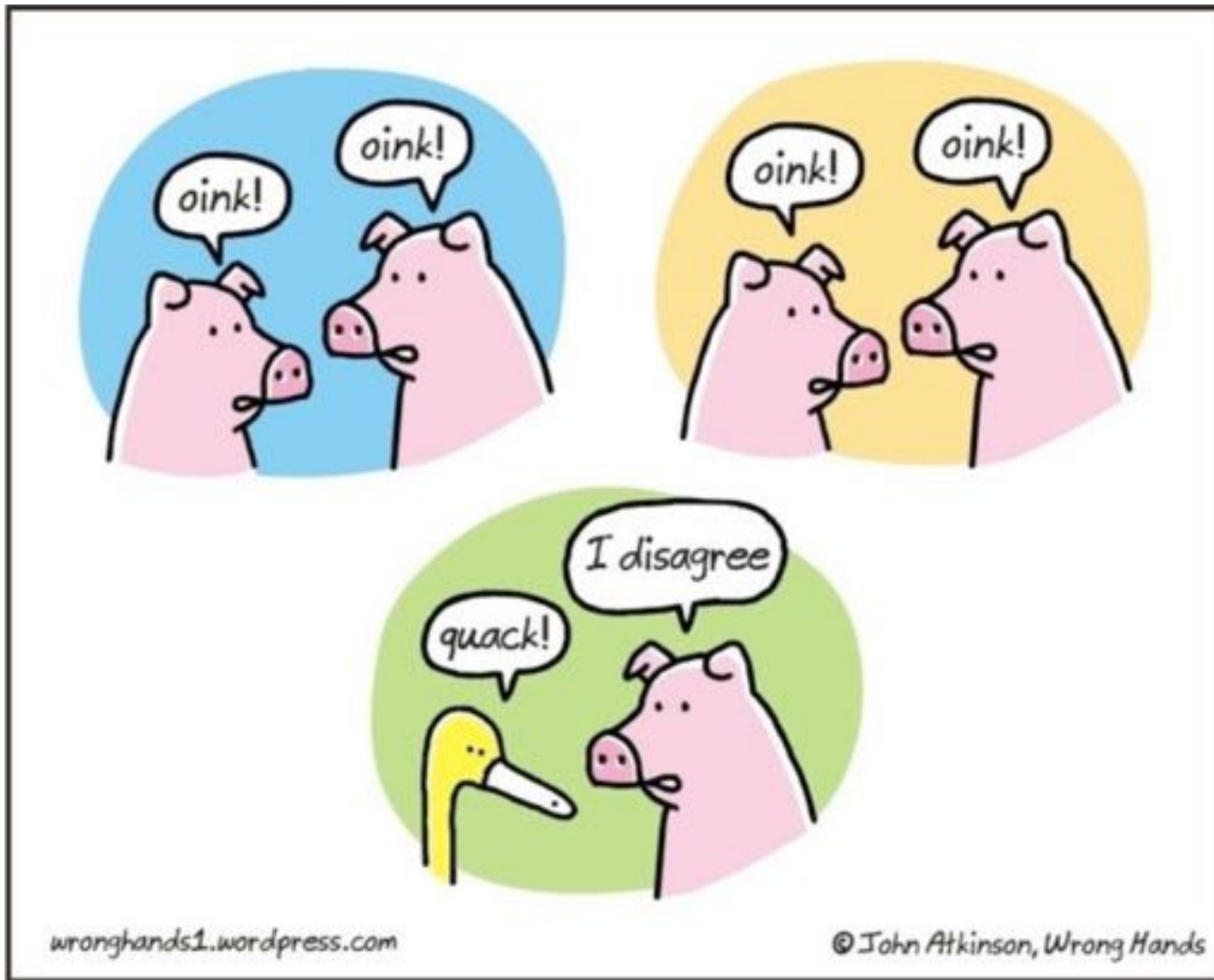
■ Dots show locations of ahu and moai.

# Do Your Homework

- Research public opinion
- Consider audience values
- Consider audience relevance
- Identify your situation
- Identify compelling frames
- Use metaphors & analogies
- Use compelling visuals
- Build connections

# In a nutshell...

- What?** – Issue/Problem
- Who?** – Audience
- Why?** – Purpose
- Where?** – Setting/Situation
- How?** – Framing, Relevance, Dialogue



Credit: John Atkinson

# **Tools You Can Use!**

**Practice framing and clarity by  
using a Message Box.**





Photos (clockwise): USDA on Flickr; Clayton800 on Pixabay; Lawrence Jackson; Gretchen Ertl



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

- What are you seeing in your research that makes you want to communicate?
- How does it affect people and the environment?

**Problems?**

**Issue**

- If you were looking for information online, what would be the 2-3 word search term you'd use?
- What signal does your word choice send (i.e. 'climate change' v.s. 'global warming')?

**Benefits?**

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

**So What?**

- What does your audience value?
- How does it impact them, or something they care about it?
- What is important about what you're sharing (scale, effects)?

**Solutions?**

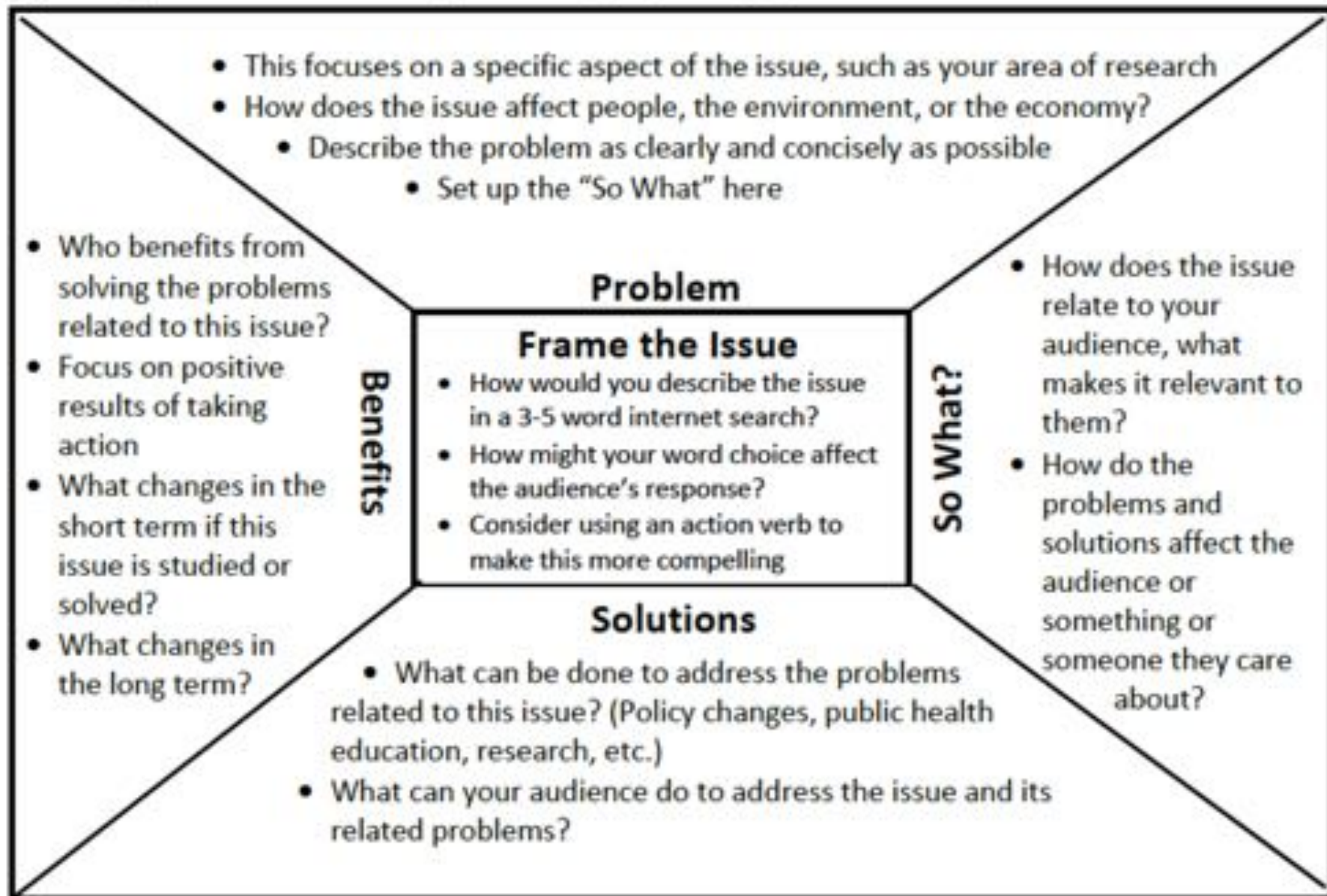
- What changes can be made to the way things currently stand?
- Who can make those changes?
- What would it take to solve the Problems identified?



**Audience:** Who are you trying to engage? What do you know about their interests, values, biases? Why do they need this information?



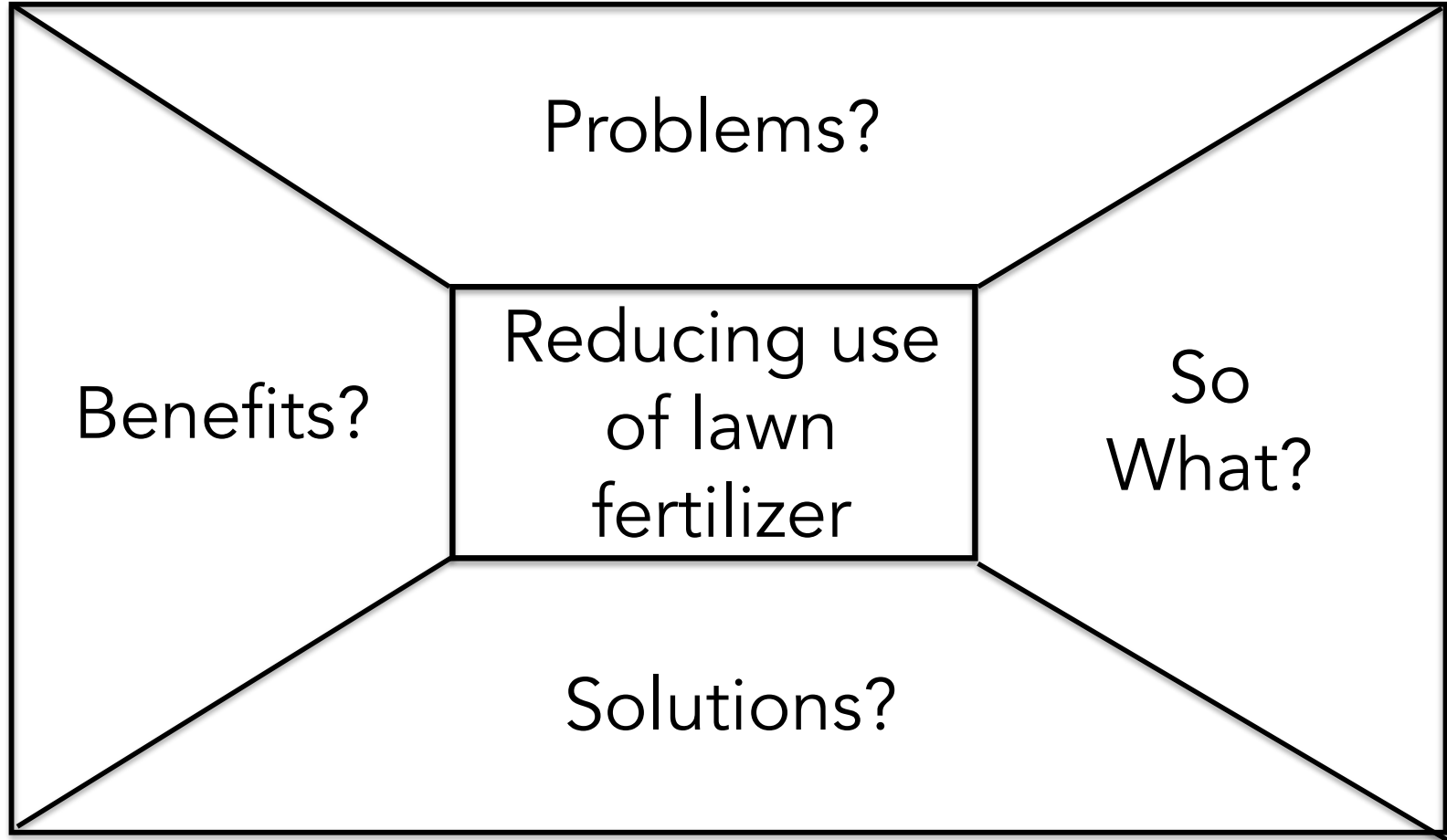
**Setting/ Situation:** What is the physical setting for your engagement? What are the constraints of the situation?



## Example Message Box

Audience: Home owner

Setting: Master Gardener booth at local festival



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Setting: Master Gardener booth at local festival

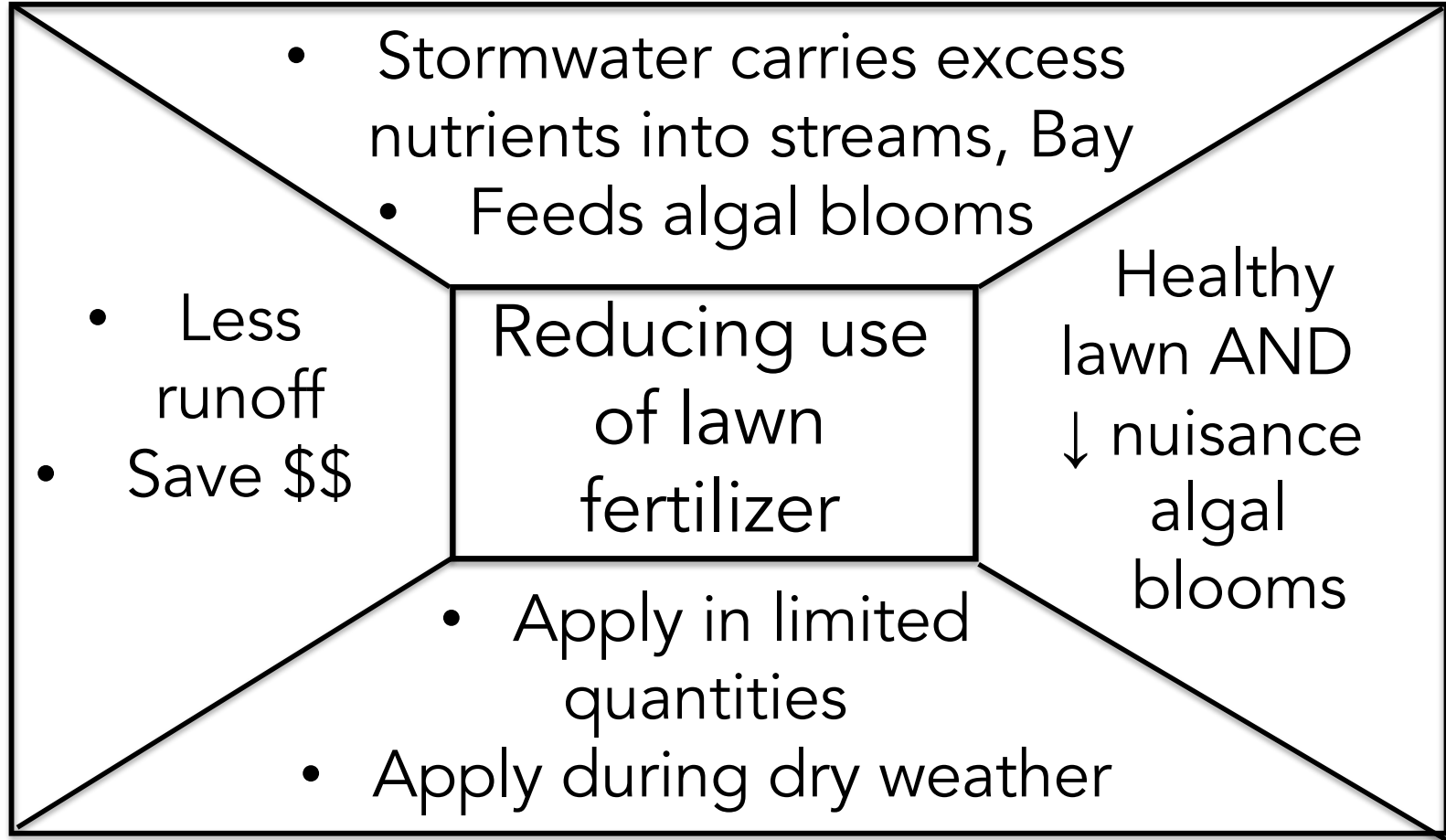




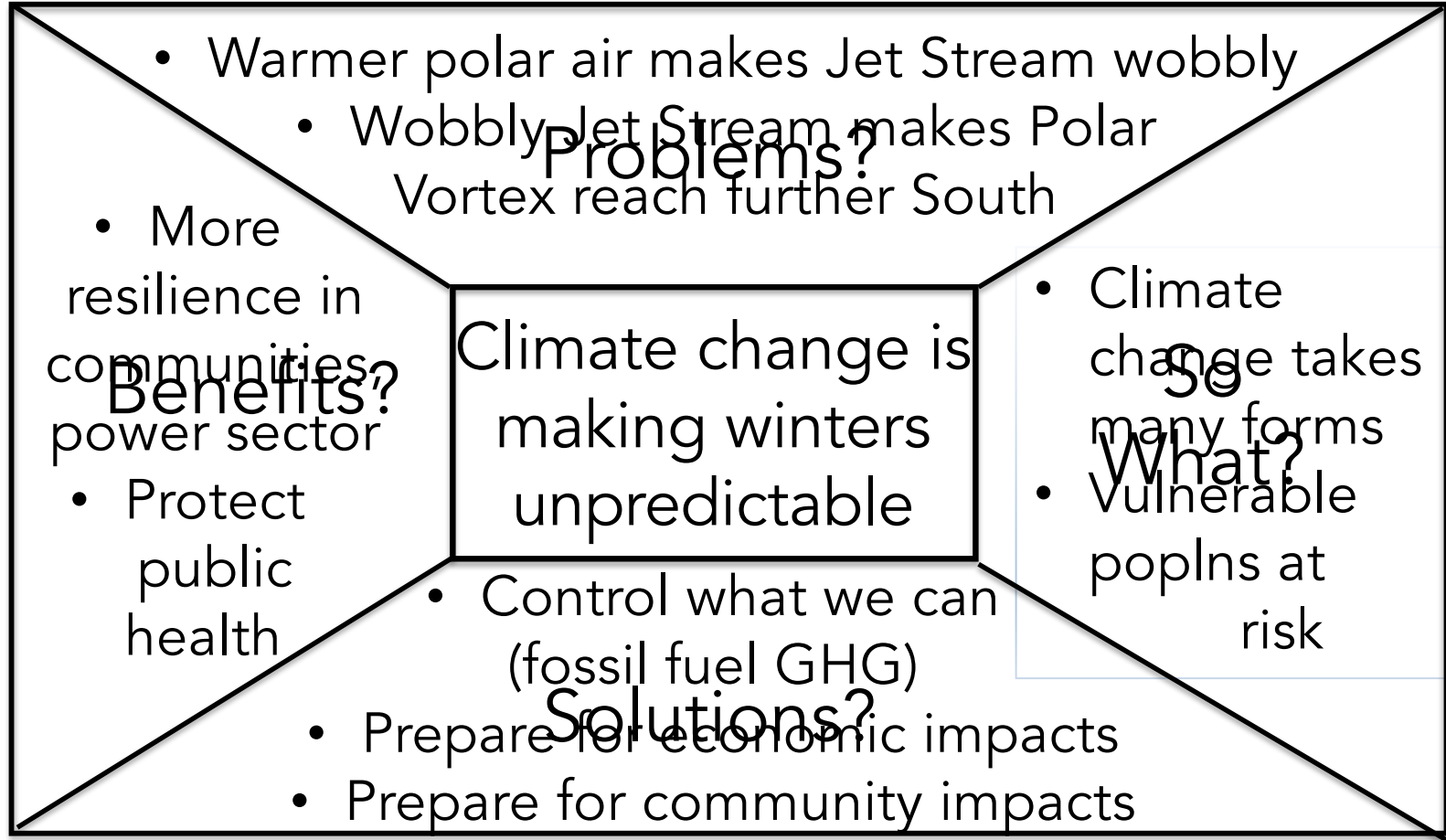


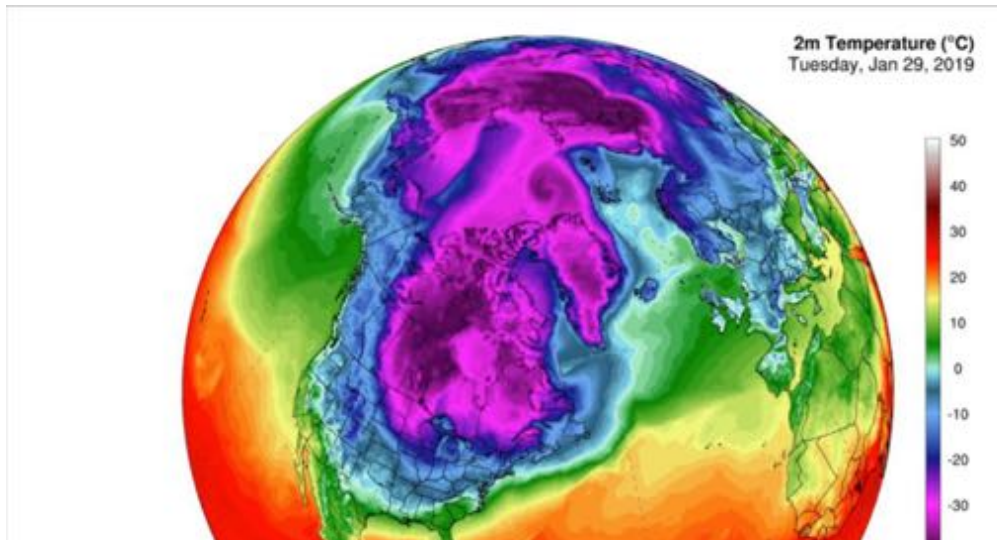
Image: Hydroviv, Prairie Rivers Network

# Example Message Box

Audience: Reporter

Setting: New England regional newspaper





Images: Stephen Maturan/AFP; UCS; Scott Olson/Getty Images



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