

Target Audience and Messaging Workshop – WP7

January 2019

Context:

EurOcean (WP7 co-leaders) led a workshop during the 2019 INTAROS General Assembly Meeting week, 7-11 January 2019, Bremen, Germany. The purpose of the workshop was to help INTAROS partners to think about the how they articulate research messages to different target audiences.

Objectives:

- To tailor messages to selected audiences
- To identify the points of interest or “So What?” factors for selected audiences
- To learn new methods for preparing for communication opportunities with stakeholders outside the research community.

Messaging for Different Audiences:

Not all stakeholders have the same perspectives. Each audience has its own set of values and responsibilities, and will look at the INTAROS project, its aims and outcomes, with a different filter. In this regard, it is important to remain mindful of the interests of each target audience and to be careful to address the topics and angles that are relevant to them.

Who are the Target Audiences of INTAROS?

In INTAROS we have already defined the stakeholders whom we wish to engage, and therefore, our target audiences. These were described in Deliverable 1.3 Engagement Strategy. These audiences were very comprehensive and include all of the key actors in the Arctic area:

- EU Agencies
- Decision and Policy makers
- Researchers and Research Organisations
- Maritime and Maritime Industry
- Local communities

As well as identifying our key stakeholders or Target Audiences, INTAROS had already identified methods through which these audiences could engage with the project. These include:

- Stakeholder workshops
- Web portal & social media
- Policy briefing papers & documents
- Conferences & events
- Training
- One-to-one meetings
- INTAROS Roadmap

- Cross-EU project activities
- INTAROS MoU

With so many different stakeholders involved and various methods of engagement being deployed, it is very important to consider that the message and the form of delivery of that message needs to be tailored to each of these groups and through each of these media.

No matter what format of engagement we use, we must always bear in mind the “So What?” factor. Why should the stakeholder care about what we are doing? How is it relevant to them? By taking time to consider the interests of each particular audience we can begin to start refining our messaging, and can start to address issues that are relevant to that target group, and have the capacity to engage the interest of that stakeholder or target audience. To better understand the “So What?” for each target audience we can refer to Figure 1, where some of these perspectives have been laid out.



Figure 1: The “So What?” Prism adapted from *Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter*, by Nancy Baron (Island Press, 2010).

Methods:

[Message Box Exercise:](#)

This workshop implemented methods developed by the US-based organisation [COMPASS](#), whose mission it is to help marine scientists to communicate in a better way. The Message Box is an organisational tool that helps the user to organise large amounts of information and hone in on the information that is of interest or relevance to any given target audience. The Message Box (Figure 2) is a diagram with five sections, each one designed to help sort and prioritize elements of a message. It is a preparatory tool to help the scientist to communicate more effectively through preparation and distillation of key messages. Further details of the template and how to fill it can be found on the [Compass website](#). The Message Box tool can be used to prepare for interviews, presentations, articles, papers, grant proposals or any other interactive channel through which a message needs to be

concisely communicated to a selected audience. The process helps scientists to depart from the scientific method of communicating and begin to look instead at the significance of the science or message to the stakeholder.

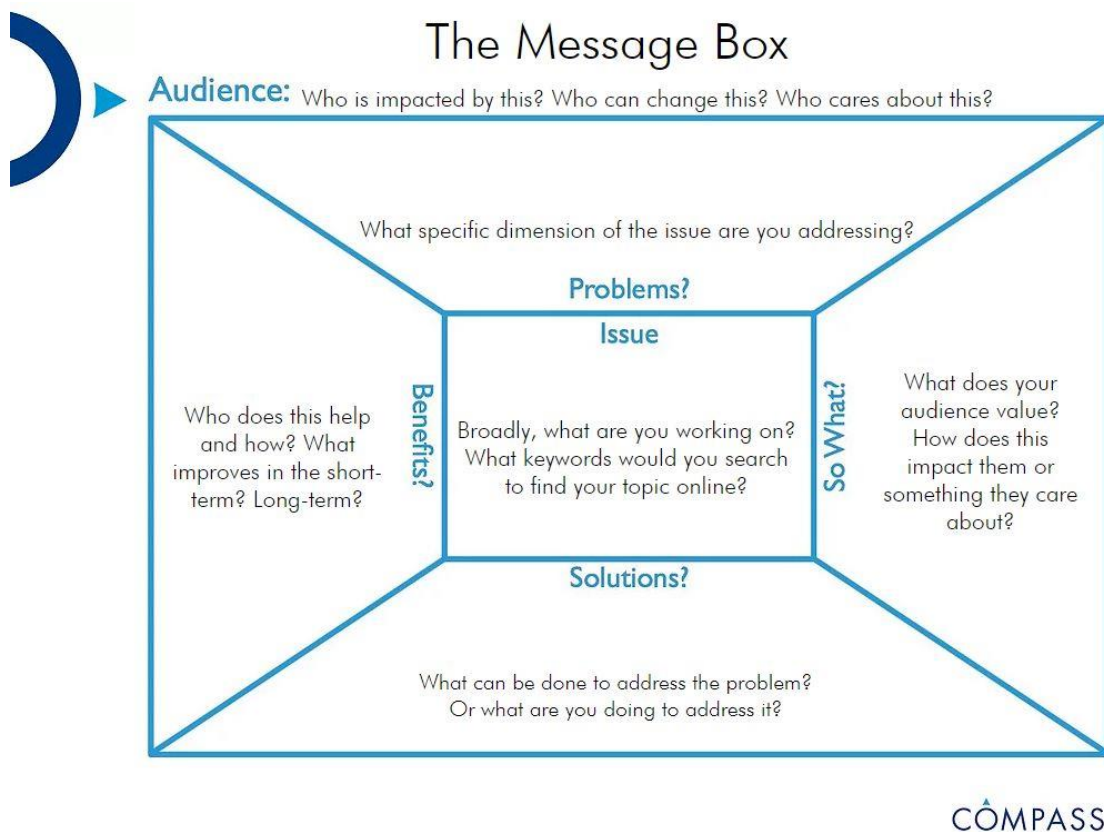


Figure 2: The Message Box template.

Execution of the Message Box method during the INTAROS Workshop:

The Message Box Method is typically used as a planning tool for specific encounters with a known audience. The participants of this workshop were largely from a research background, highly experienced in communicating science to a scientific audience. For this reason, during this workshop, the WP7 leaders pre-assigned target audiences to the participants in order to challenge them to think about how they address audiences with whom they are not so familiar. The audiences assigned comprised of Industry, Policy makers, and Civil Society. The participants were encouraged to more specifically identify their audience within these categories.

The workshop participants worked in groups of 4-5 people, each group with its own assigned target audience. There were six groups in total, two per target audience. Each group was given a Message Box worksheet and was asked to decide upon an element of their work that they wanted to communicate to their target audience. There were six groups in total, two groups per target audience.

Groups were given 15 minutes to lay out their Message Box plan, with support from the workshop conveners who circulated among the groups giving advice and inputs where necessary. After the first 15 minutes, 1-2 members of each group were selected to switch places with members of the other group dealing with the same target audience.

Groups were given a further 15 mins to transmit their ideas to the new group members and to receive feedback from the new members on the plan they had already made.

Finally, one member from each working group was invited to present the group's Message Box to the room, and receive feedback from all workshop participants as well as the conveners.

Review:

The process involved in outlining particular messages for particular audiences was the principle behind this workshop, rather than defining the specific messages themselves. This process was designed to give participants a tool that they could use in the future to prepare for opportunities to communicate with audiences with which they are not so familiar. Therefore, the analysis of this exercise was in terms of how well the process was understood and implemented rather than the specific messages and "So What?" statements defined by the groups.

Most groups managed to successfully distil their message and to start to look at INTAROS issues from a non-scientific point of view, or at least from the point of view of their target audiences. Interestingly, the groups who struggled most with the exercise were the groups who finally identified the "So What?" factor with the greatest success. The Message Box of each group is presented below.

Audience: Industry 1 (Figure 3)

The first group focussing on Industry addressed Industry in broad terms, but acknowledged that they were addressing Industry that was inside the Arctic, or Arctic-focussed, as well as Industry that was outside the Arctic, or non-Arctic-focussed, but which would be affected by influences from inside the Arctic area. During this exercise, the group settled on an issue that was of interest to the Fisheries sector, that is, the effect of climactic changes in the Arctic on fisheries resources in general.

Audience: Industry 2 (Figure 4)

The Industry 2 group targeted their message at the Petroleum industry. They focussed on the challenges climate change posed for the continuation of fossil fuel industries and how more research could support a shift towards greener fuels.

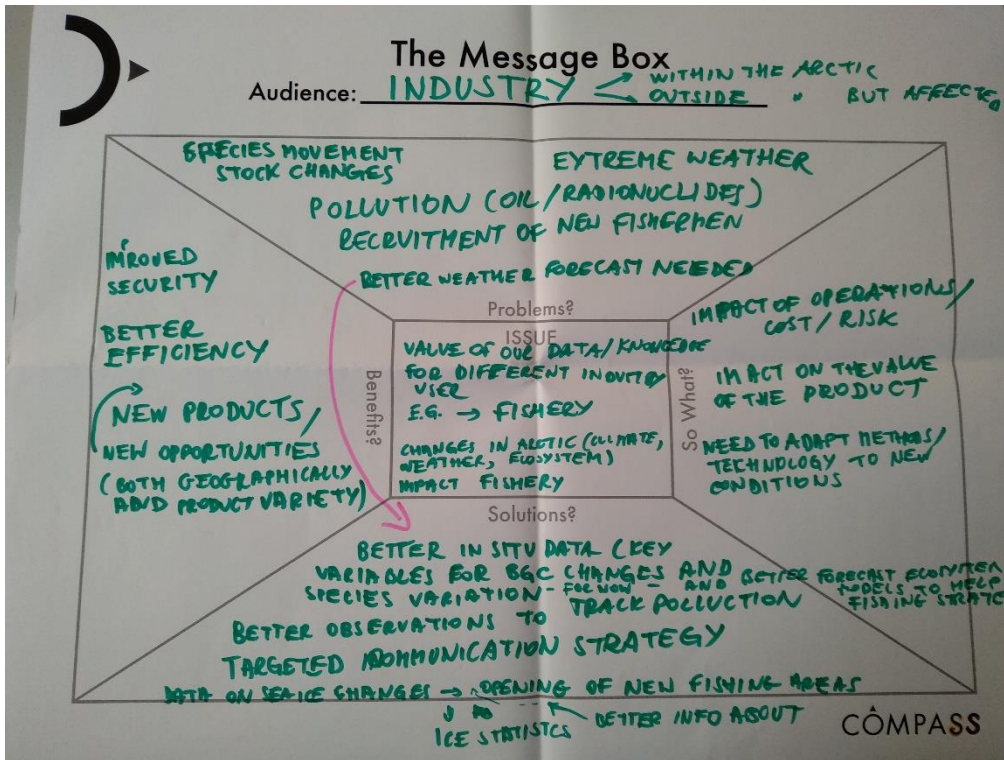


Figure 3: Message Box for Industry 1 - Fisheries.

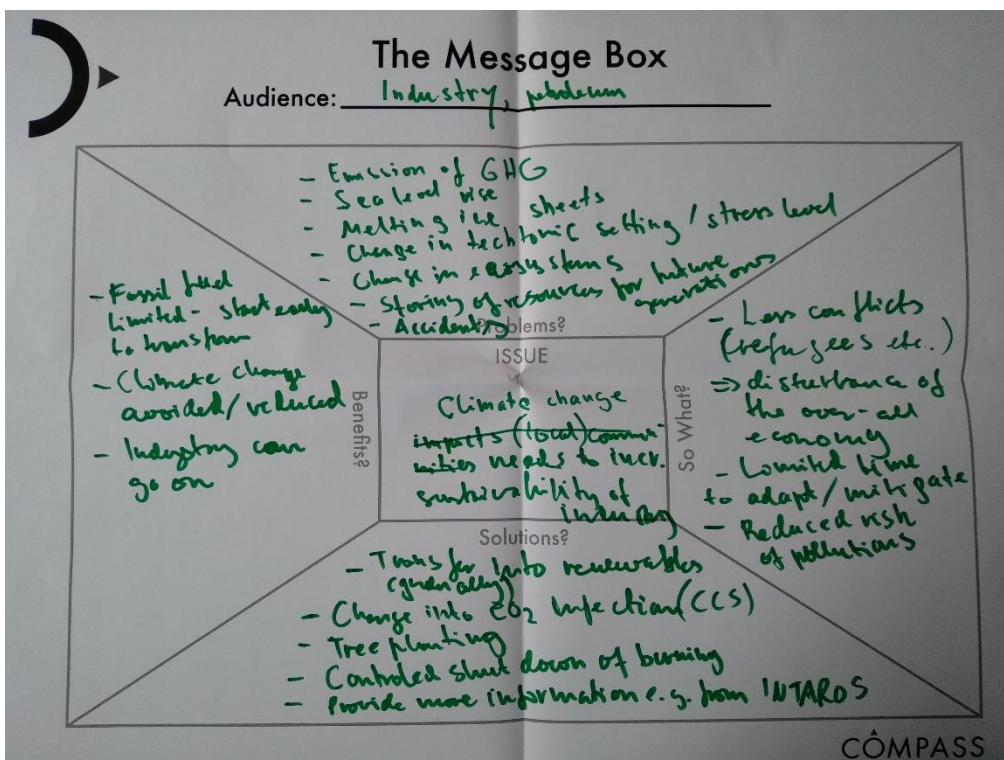


Figure 4: Industry 2 - Petroleum.

Audience: Civil Society 1 (Figure 5)

The first Civil Society group worked with a proposed audience that was broad and encompassed society as a whole, and chose an issue that they felt was of general interest, the issue of human health and subsistence. The issue here was the abundance of fish for the general health and wellbeing of society.

Audience: Civil Society 2 (Figure 6)

The second Civil Society group looked specifically at local communities and how climate change could impact them in their communities and neighbourhoods, particularly in terms of erosion, fluctuating seasonal sea ice extent, sea level rise, etc. Although the Message Box of this group had little content, the group really managed to capture the “So What?” of the local communities during their presentation to the room at the end of the session.

Audience: Policy Makers 1 (Figure 7)

The first Policy Makers group focussed on “Policy Makers at all levels”. This group focussed on the challenges posed by knowledge gaps in the Arctic observational area and how this limitation restricted informed decision making at all levels.

Audience: Policy Makers 2 (Figure 8)

The audience for this group was Policy Makers at national and international levels. The issue addressed was that of disappearing sea ice. They made the link between the issue at hand and the impacts it might have on various different industries in the area as well as impacts on communities, the environment and political relationships.



Workshop participants discuss the different elements of their Message.

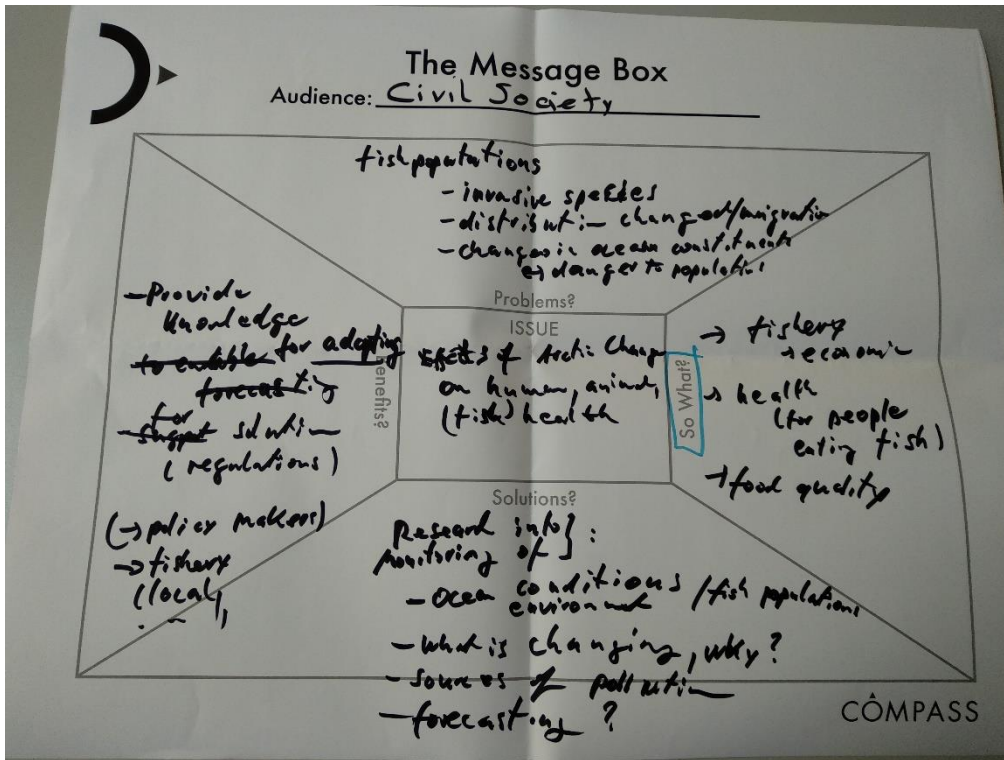


Figure 5: Civil Society 1 - Human health and subsistence.

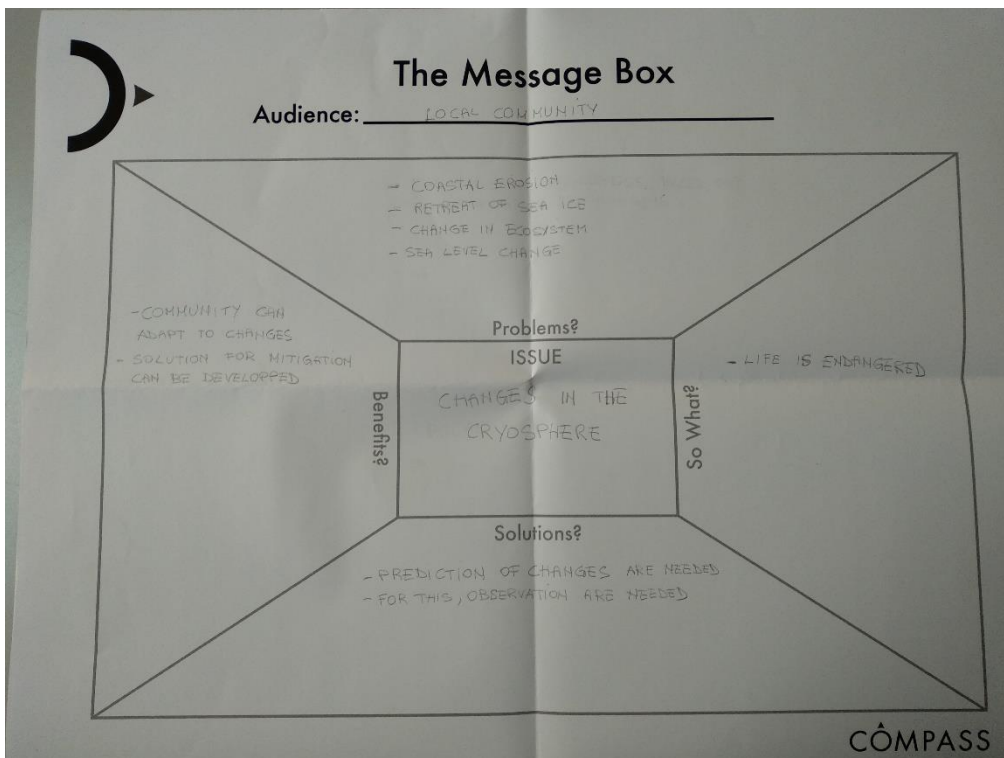


Figure 6: Civil Society 2 - Climate change.

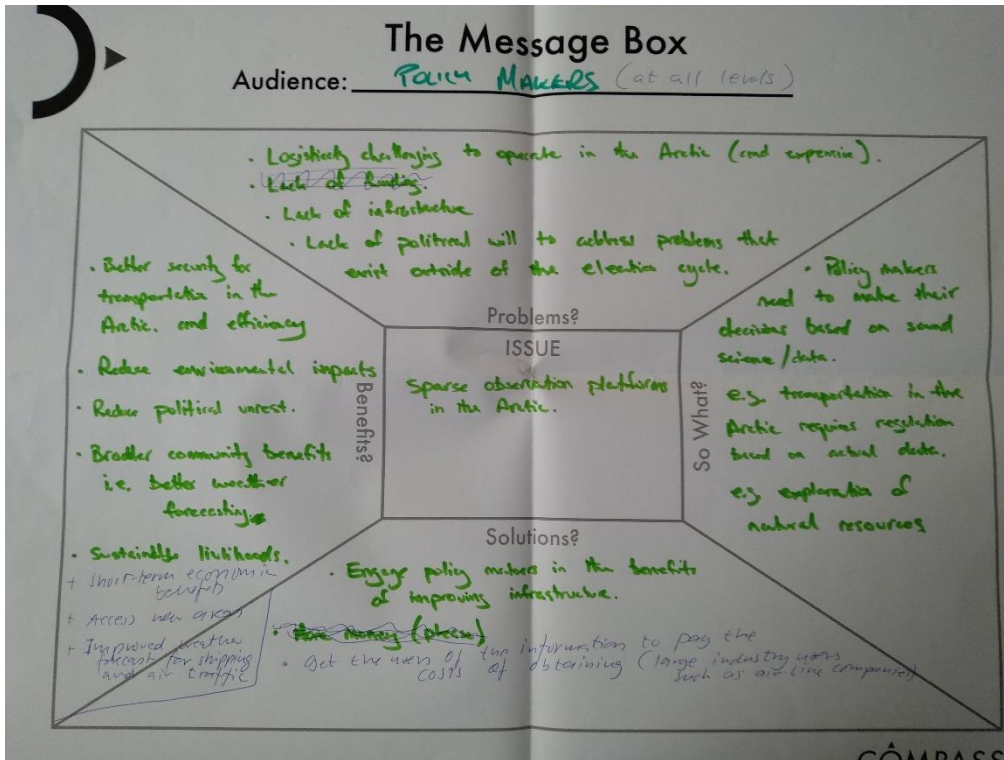


Figure 7: Policy Makers 1 - knowledge gaps in the Arctic.

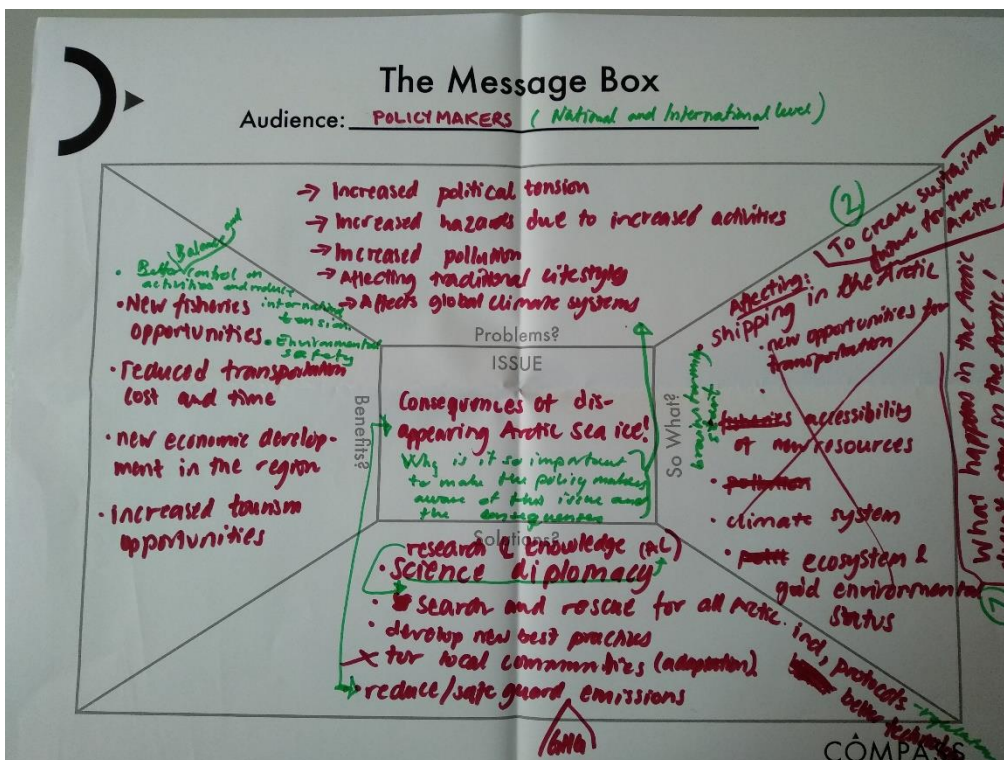


Figure 8: Policy Makers 2 - Disappearing sea ice.

All groups succeeded in identifying a message for the target audience selected. They also managed to complete all sections of the Message Box.

Some of the groups struggled to really identify the “So What?” for different stakeholders, but the discussion session at the end of the workshop helped the participants to discuss additional considerations that should be taken as well as different emphasis that could be made for the specific target audiences.

A common occurrence was that the groups captured potential “So What?” factors in the segment “Benefits” and the “So What?” and “Benefits” sections were often interchangeable. Since the Message Box exercise is a tool for organising thoughts and points around an issue, there is no problem in allocating these thoughts under a less-appropriate section.

In practice, more than one draft of the Message Box could be drawn up in preparation for communication with a target audience. Participants in this workshop were not given the opportunity to make a second draft following group feedback owing to time constraints, an opportunity that would have allowed them to better organise their thoughts and priorities in a real-life setting.

In summary, the tool was well received by the participants and the conversations that took place during the session were stimulating and thought-provoking. The feedback from the group at the end of the exercise was particularly useful in refining the messages and determining the “So What?” factors for each group. The participants of this workshop left the session with a tool that they could apply in future scenarios when faced with communicating science to a non-scientific audience.

