Most Significant Change

FRDC

Purpose	The purpose of Most Significant Change (MSC) is to collect stories about the impact of community engagement activities
When?	• When organisations or associations want to evaluate the impact (including unexpected outcomes) of their community engagement activities
Resources	• 2 - 3 days to collect stories and prepare the narratives for the workshop (30 minutes to an hour per interview) • 2-hour workshop attended by all members of your organisation included in the evaluation (this can be added to the reflections workshop) • 2 hours after the workshop to record the workshop output
Rating	🐟🐟🐟

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It is participatory because the stakeholders being interviewed are involved in analysis of the data as well as deciding which changes are considered 'most significant'. It can be used to help understand the impact of community engagement and communicate these impacts in the form of authentic and powerful stories.

MSC stories are usually told by an individual, often someone working to bring about change. They can be directly written down by a storyteller, but it can be a good technique to do this in pairs, or in a circle, each discussing the observed changes over a period of time and selecting the one you want to dive deeply into. MSC technique encourages you to select one specific change and dive into it more deeply.

Bare bones of MSC in evaluating community engagement

Below is a brief summary of the MSC process. Before you attempt to use the method, please familiarise yourself with the full guide provided at: https://www.clearhorizon.com.au/f.ashx/dd-2005-msc_user_guide.pdf

You should use MSC when evaluating the overall community engagement activities of your organisation or for a particularly significant community engagement event. Using MSC requires you to:

- **Define the purpose of using MSC in your context** – for example, to capture the changes as a result of community engagement activities

- **Collect stories of change** – MSC stories should be collected through interviews with staff from your organisation and people who you have directly engaged with including members of the general public, key partners and influencers. You can collect these in a more ongoing way as part of your operations or hold a 'sprint' where you collect a series of MSC stories over a short period of time. An example interview guide is included in the following section to support your MSC data collection.

- **Review and select stories** – at a workshop, ask people attending to choose the most significant change stories and explain their choices. Then as a group narrow your selection down to 2-3 MSC stories and document your reasons for selecting them. When deciding who to invite to your workshop, you might consider who the primary evaluation audience is for your M&E (ie: your staff, funders, delivery partners) and get a spread of these groups.

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- **Feedback and communicate the results** – the MSC stories selected should be communicated as part of your evaluation results.

Why selection process is key to MSC

- It ensures people really read the stories

- It's a technique to get people to enter into a deeper level of dialogue

- Though people might not necessarily like to prioritise one story over another, it's not about the choice -- it's about the dialogue, and about surfacing values that are important to your community engagement.

How to select

The selection process invariably begins with reading some or all of the stories either out loud or individually. You should preference reading the stories aloud, as it brings the stories to life, but the effectiveness and practicality of this may depend on the context. If the stories have already been sorted into different categories, then all the stories from one category are considered together. Various facilitated and un-facilitated processes can be used to help groups choose the most significant story. A similar question to the collection process is used by those who read the stories: "From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant change of all?" AND "Why do you think this is significant?"

Guidelines for collecting MSC stories

Ethics

Attention must be paid to the ethics of collecting stories from individuals. When an interview is conducted or a story is written down, the person sharing their experience must understand how the story will be used and note whether they are happy for their 'story' to be used in that way. If you are collecting the story from another person you should assure them that the information they give is confidential: that is, their 'name' won't be attached to the information and made public unless they give permission for their name and identifying comments to be included. Whatever is collected in an interview process is confidential. Unless you have permission from the interviewee, you must not discuss what you heard with any other informants or outsiders.

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Example interview guide

Background

My name is _____; I am from _____ and I am working for _____. I am hoping to talk with you about your experiences with our community engagement and about any changes that may have resulted from your involvement in it. We are interested in your views, both positive and negative. If you agree, I will ask you 3 or 4 questions and record your answers. I will go over what I have written at the end to make sure you are happy with it.

We hope to use the stories and information collected from your interviews for a number of purposes including:

- to help us understand what you think is good and not so good about the industry

- to make improvements to our industry and our community engagement

- to tell people what has been achieved.

Questions

In this section of the interview, we are going to focus on how the Australian seafood industry is perceived by the Australian community, and how these perceptions have changed over time.

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your perception of the Australian seafood industry

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. Please list any changes to the perception of Australian fisheries that you feel have resulted from engagement with the industry - they can be big or small, about you or about others.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. We have been talking about a number of changes (refer to list above), from your point of view, which do you think is the *MOST* important change. Please try to describe this change in the form of a story *(if you are using a tape recorder turn it on here).*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What was the perception held at the beginning, before the change occurred? What was the cause of this?

_____

_____

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_____

5. What happened to change these perceptions? Can you tell the story of how it unfolded and how this perception changed?

_____

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_____

6.   What happened next? What is your current perception of the Australian seafood industry?

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_____

_____

7.   Why did you choose this change in particular? E.g. **Why was it significant for you**?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Confidentiality

We might like to share you story for learning and reporting. Do you (the storyteller):

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- want to have your name on the story (tick one)   Yes ☐ No ☐

- consent to us using your story for publication (tick one)   Yes ☐ No ☐