

Workshop 016: Significant Change Assessments

**1 Activity – International Community Media Expo Engaging Participants**

- Open the DMU Commons Wiki International Community Media Expo page.
- [https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International\\_Community\\_Media\\_Expo](https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International_Community_Media_Expo)
- Open Talk on the DMU Commons <https://talk.our.dmu.ac.uk>
- Use the topic 'Community Media Expo' to share ideas about collaborative activities for the expo.
- Use the Community Media Expo category if you want to start other threads that are related.
- Review the information listed and identified on the wiki about International Community Media Projects.
- [https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International\\_Community\\_Media\\_Projects](https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International_Community_Media_Projects)

**2 Discussion – International Community Media Expo Development Evaluation**

- ✓ Use the whiteboard to create a mind map of the status of your planning for the International Community Media Expo – i.e. SPICED:
  - ✓ **Setting (Where? in what context?)**
  - ✓ **Population or Perspective (For whom?)**
  - ✓ **Intervention (What?)**
  - ✓ **Comparison (What else?)**
  - ✓ **Evaluation (How well? What result?)**
- Take extensive notes during this discussion – this is a point at which decisions are taken.
- Can you confirm a venue has been booked?
- Can you confirm an outline schedule for the day?
- Can you confirm who will be involved in undertaking activities during the day?
- Can you confirm who will be invited to participate in these sessions?
- Can you confirm that an outline of the event has been written up on <https://civic.our.dmu.ac.uk/projects/international-community-media-expo-2018/>
- Do you have sufficient information to maintain regular contact with the people that you want to invite to participate and contribute?
- Have you decided what form the activities you will be holding during the day will take?
- Have you identified how you will communicate with participants, supporters and visitors in the run-up to the day?
- Have you established any key issues that you feel are relevant to the participants and which will benefit from being discussed?
- What do you need to do, and how do you intend to communicate with potential participants that will encourage people to want to attend the events as collaborators?
- What do you need to do that will encourage your potential participants to communicate about the event with their networks and supporters?

**3 Activity – International Community Media Expo Activity Planning**

- Open the DMU Commons Wiki page for the Expo.
- [https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International\\_Community\\_Media\\_Expo](https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/International_Community_Media_Expo)
- The information that you have agreed on above needs to be structured as separate organisational sections and activities on the wiki page.
- Divide the wiki page into sections, identify who will take responsibility for which activity.
- What is the likely timescale that these activities will need to be undertaken?
- Identify the themes and issues that you want the communication about the expo to include.
- How can you write this information so that a potential volunteer or guest speaker can read the wiki page and make sense of what is being planned and what they can expect from the forms of communication you are using?
- Log in and open the Expo 2018 page on <https://civic.our.dmu.ac.uk>
- <https://civic.our.dmu.ac.uk/projects/international-community-media-expo-2018/>

- What public information can you add to this page that you can use to advise volunteers, guests, supporters, participants, and so on, about the forms of communication that you will be using?

#### 4 Activity – CiviCRM Database Input

- Log-in to <https://civic.our.dmu.ac.uk>
- Locate CiviCRM on the dashboard.
- Locate the 'Configuration Checklist'
- Use the Configuration Checklist to ensure that the information contained in CiviCRM is up relevant and up to date.
- If there are any sections that you are unable to complete, note them and tag John and Rob in a post on DMU Talk using the Expo category (<https://talk.our.dmu.ac.uk>).
- Is each section of CiviCRM set up so that you can add data to the system in coming sessions?
- Who are you going to invite to the Expo?
- What contact details are you going to need?
- How will you communicate with people that you invite?

#### 5 Research Activity – Evaluating Communication for Development Projects

- Visit [http://www.betterevaluation.org/toolkits/equal\\_access\\_participatory\\_monitoring](http://www.betterevaluation.org/toolkits/equal_access_participatory_monitoring)
- Open the link for **The Most Significant Change technique - A manual for M&E staff and others at Equal Access** (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013).
- [http://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA\\_PM%26E\\_toolkit\\_MSC\\_manual\\_for\\_publication.pdf](http://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA_PM%26E_toolkit_MSC_manual_for_publication.pdf)

“The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a tool for collecting, discussing and selecting stories about the significant changes that people experience as a result of your programs. It involves people at different levels of an organisation discussing the stories and then selecting the stories they consider most significant. This process aims to promote ongoing dialogue and learning about programs and how they can be improved to better meet their aims. It also helps program staff and stakeholders to explore the unexpected or negative changes that may have happened as a result of the program”

##### 5.1 Most Significant Change - Steps

“MSC is a participatory approach to M&E that involves assessing the changes and impacts that have happened as a result of a program from the perspective of program participants. The process is participatory because program participants and stakeholders are involved in deciding what sort of change should be recorded and in analysing the data (stories) that are collected. The MSC process can happen throughout the program cycle and provides monitoring information that can help staff to improve the program. It also contributes to evaluation by providing information about the impacts and outcomes of a program that can be used to assess how well the program as a whole is working.”

“MSC involves participants sharing personal stories of change that are collected and interpreted at regular intervals of time. The stories are then analysed and filtered through various levels of an organisation until the stories that represent the most significant or important changes are selected. These stories are the ones that best represent the type of outcomes that your organisation and others are looking for. Outcomes of the story selection process and criteria for selecting stories are recorded and fed back to participants before to the next round of story collection begins. MSC aims to encourage continuous dialogue up and down the various levels of an organisation, from field level to senior staff and then back again. When this process works well, it can be a powerful tool for ongoing evaluation and learning”.

#### 6 Ten Steps to Implementing MSC

- Step 1: Raising interest
- Step 2: Deciding on domains of change
- Step 3: Deciding on the reporting period
- Step 4: Collecting social change stories
- Step 5: Selecting the most significant stories
- Step 6: Feeding back results to key people
- Step 7: Verification of stories
- Step 8: Quantification of stories

Step 9: Secondary analysis and monitoring  
Step 10: Evaluating and revising the system

### **6.1 Step 1: Raising Interest**

- Before you begin raising interest you need to be very clear about the purpose of MSC, what role it will play in your M&E activities, and how you will combine MSC with other activities.
- Hold a meeting with relevant staff to explain the technique and show some MSC reports and stories gathered by other programs – you could use some of the examples in this manual. Explain that once the initial planning has been completed and people have been trained, MSC is quite simple and straightforward to implement.
- Identify the people who are most excited about the methodology and are willing to help you raise interest in using MSC in your organisation.
- Start by implementing a small, simple MSC pilot to find out what works and what does not work well in your organisation. Try to begin by involving the people who are most enthusiastic and interested about the potential of MSC.

### **6.2 Step 2: Deciding on Domains of Change**

“Domains are broad and often relatively fuzzy categories of possible areas of change, such as ‘change in the quality of people’s lives’ or ‘changes in people’s participation’. They are used in an evaluation to help:

- Define the areas of change that are important to program stakeholders.
- Track whether progress is being made towards the stated objectives of programs or organisations.
- Provide some guidance to those collecting stories about what kind of change they are searching for.
- Group a large number of stories into more manageable lots that can then be analysed.

Domains of change (DoCs) are not indicators, which should be defined so that everyone interprets them in the same way. In contrast, DoCs are deliberately fuzzy to allow people to have different interpretations of what constitutes the change that they think is important. To be most useful in fulfilling donor requirements for impact assessment and program monitoring, the DoCs you develop will need to relate to the broad social change objectives for your radio programs.”

### **6.3 Step 3: Deciding on the Reporting Period**

- This step involves deciding how often the process of monitoring the changes that are taking place should happen.
- MSC has mostly been used as a form of monitoring.
- The frequency of monitoring varies across programs and organisations and the same applies to this use of MSC.
- The frequency of story collection can vary from fortnightly to yearly.
- The most common frequency has been three-monthly, coinciding with the prevalence of quarterly reporting in many organisations.
- The advantage of higher frequency reporting is that all of the participants in the MSC process are likely to learn more quickly about how to best use the process.

However, frequent reporting soon leads to the exhaustion of known cases of longer-term significant change and a focus on the shorter-term significant changes that can be identified. Members of your organisations will have to make their own decision about the most appropriate reporting period, balancing the costs and benefits involved, and taking into account the reporting gaps that any existing M&E systems may be ignoring. Davies and Dart (2005) found that organisations tend to start MSC with more regular reporting and then decrease the frequency as the process continues.

### **6.4 Step 4: Collecting Social Change Stories**

Stories about significant change are collected from those who are directly involved in a program, such as participants and field staff. They are collected using an open question, such as: ‘During the past six months, what do you think was the most significant change in the quality of people’s lives as a result of taking part in this project?’.

MSC stories can be captured in a variety of ways, including by interviewing participants, by sharing stories during group discussions, by fieldworkers writing down stories that they have heard, and by participants writing down their own stories. As far as possible the story should be written as a simple first-person narrative that describes the sequence of events. An important part of MSC is to ask storytellers to explain the significance of the story from their point of view.

#### **6.5 Step 5: Selecting the Most Significant Stories**

- Once the stories are collected, they are then analysed and filtered through the levels of authority in an organisation or program.
- Groups of selected people at each level review the series of stories that have been sent to them by those at the level below and then select the single most significant account of change within each domain of change (however, sometimes more than one story is selected).
- The criteria used to select the stories are also written down and sent to all relevant stakeholders.
- This process helps to reduce the large number of locally important stories down to a small number of more widely valued stories.
- The process of discussing the stories can help to uncover the values of an organisation and open them up to discussion and change.

#### **6.6 Step 6: Feeding Back Results to Key People**

- After MSC has been used for a period of time (say a year), a document is produced that includes all the stories selected at the highest level over that period of time in each domain of change.
- The reasons for selecting the stories are attached to each story.
- Donors can then be asked to assess the stories in this document and to select those that best represent the kind of outcomes they want to fund.
- They also document the reasons for their choice.
- This information is fed back to program managers and those who provided the stories, using various methods such as verbal feedback, newsletters or formal reports.
- Knowing that a particular type of change is valued can lead to further searches for similar changes in that area (for example, 'participation of women in community dialogue').

#### **6.7 Step 7: Verification of Stories**

- It can be useful to check that a reported change reflects what actually happened.
- This is because some people may exaggerate the significance of events or not give a very accurate account of what happened.
- Also, some reported changes may be even more important than is initially evident from the way the change was documented.
- Knowing that there are procedures for verifying stories can also help to improve the quality of the stories. However, this process must be handled very carefully.

#### **6.8 Step 8: Quantification of Stories**

Various methods can be used to collect and analyse quantitative (numerical) information about MSC stories, such as the number of people involved, how many activities took place, and the number of times a particular change is recorded.

#### **6.9 Step 9: Secondary Analysis and Monitoring**

Secondary analysis involves analysing the themes across a complete set of MSC stories, while meta-monitoring focuses more on the attributes of the stories themselves (such as who participated, who selected the stories, what happened to the stories, and how the different changes were reported). This is not a critical step but can strengthen the MSC process. This step is usually done by members of an M&E team.

#### **6.10 Step 10: Evaluating and Revising the System**

This step involves reviewing the design of the MSC system and then making any changes to the system that will make it work better, based on what has been learned as a result of using the MSC technique. Most organisations change the implementation of MSC in some way. This is a good sign as it indicates that learning is taking place.

## 7 Collecting MSC stories

You will need to consider which groups are the most appropriate to focus on in collecting MSC stories about changes associated with your radio programs or associated listener club activities. For example, they could be collected from:

- Community members who have been regular listeners to the programs during the previous six months or longer.
- They should be individuals or small groups who are in the target groups for the programs you are researching.
- Community members who were previously regular listeners to your programs, but have stopped being regular listeners within the past year.
- Parents of young people who are regular listeners to your youth-oriented radio programs, and are able to talk about the impacts of listening to the programs on their children.
- Listener club facilitators, community reporters, hub staff, community workers, or others who have first-hand knowledge about the impacts of your programs on listener club members, and other relevant community groups.
- Members of civil society organisations who you are working in partnership with and are members of the above groups.
- The aim should be to collect stories from as wide a range of people as you can in terms of gender, age, ethnic group, education and other relevant differences.
- Most of the stories should be collected from people who are currently regular listeners to the programs.

**Important note:** If a story collector has collected an interesting story from someone but the story is lacking in detail or depth, they should be asked to go back to that person to record a more detailed story.

During the phase before the initial story selection process has begun, story collectors should be encouraged to collect as many stories as possible from individual in-depth interviews and small group discussions. This will provide good practice in story collection and help you to assess what improvements may be needed to the process. The number of stories that you are aiming to collect over a particular period of time should be decided on when you are developing your M&E plans and realistic targets set and agreed to.

## 8 Ways of Collecting Stories

There are several ways in which MSC stories can be collected. They include:

- Individual interviews with listeners and others
- During group discussions with listeners.
- Instead of conducting individual interviews, a group of listeners can be asked to share their significant change stories.
- It has been found that participants will often respond to a story with one of their own.
- This can be a very useful and enjoyable way to collect stories.
- These stories will probably be shorter and less detailed than those captured by individual interview.
- However, story collectors should make sure that all the important details have been captured so that the stories can be understood by those selecting them later on.
- People such as community reporters, M&E staff, outreach staff, and content production staff writing down unsolicited stories that they have heard during field work in a community.
- Listeners, listener club facilitators, hub staff, or community reporters writing down their own stories and then bringing them along to meetings to share with others.
- Listener letters may also provide some interesting stories of change.

### 9 Activity – Blogging & Wiki Reflection Coursework C

- Visit the assessment criteria for Coursework C: [https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/TECH3501\\_Community\\_Media\\_Leadership#Component\\_C\\_-\\_Running\\_International\\_Community\\_Media\\_Day\\_.2830.25.29](https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/TECH3501_Community_Media_Leadership#Component_C_-_Running_International_Community_Media_Day_.2830.25.29)
- How will you write-up your planning activities in your blogs, so that they illustrate and demonstrate the thinking, researching and planning that you are undertaking?
- What process of evaluation do you need to undertake to understand how the planning and organising for the International Community Media Expo is proceeding?

- How will you undertake these evaluation tasks?
- How will you share your thoughts and insight about the principles you have established for the development of the expo?
- How will you keep a check of your progress?
- Are there any resources or support that you need to help along the way?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about this project and how it is being developed?
- What do you think will be a useful measure of success?

## **10 References**

Lennie, J., & Tacchi, J. (2013). *Evaluating Communication for Development*. London: Routledge.