



## TOOL | Most Significant Change

A rigorous commitment to identifying and tracking our progress against an agreed upon set of shared measures is one of the defining features that distinguishes Collective Impact from other forms of collaboration. Beyond agreement on some small number population-level indicators that your Collective Impact effort intends to impact, the condition of shared measurement also implies that the Collective Impact Initiative has established systems for gathering and analyzing data regularly.

### Tool Description

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory evaluation. It is participatory because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analyzing the data. It is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the program cycle and provides information to help people manage the program. It contributes to evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the Initiative as a whole.

Essentially, the process involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The designated staff and stakeholders are initially involved by 'searching' for project impact. Once changes have been captured, various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussion about the value of these reported changes. When the technique is implemented successfully, whole teams of people begin to focus their attention on program impact.

### Resources

The Most Significant Change Technique – A Guide to its Use by Rick Davies and Jess Dart:

<http://mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

Most Significant Change – A web-based resource:

<http://www.kstoolkit.org/Most+Significant+Change>

Canadian Evaluation Society – Most Significant Change Web Resource:

<http://evaluationcanada.ca/>

## 10 Steps for MSC Implementation

Source: <http://mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

Steps	Questions
1. Raise interest amongst key stakeholders and get their commitment to participate	
2. Define the domains of change	What has broadly changed in people's lives?
3. Determine the reporting period – over the past year, six months, three months etc.	
4. Collect the significant change stories from participants	During the last six months, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for participants in this program?
5. Select the most significant stories. Every time stories are selected, record criteria used to select them.	From among the stories selected, what do you think was the most significant change of all?
6. Feedback the results of the selection process. Include stakeholders to review the process, stories selected and assess the domains of stories	From among the stories selected what do you think was the most significant change of all?
7. Verify the stories	Who told the story? Who captured the results? When and where did the story take place?
8. Quantify the results	
9. Conduct a secondary or meta-monitoring analysis	
10. Revise the system based upon lessons learned	

## When and When Not to use MSC

### When Not to Use It:

- Organizations want to only capture the expected change
- Organizations which only want the good news stories for public relations
- Where the program evaluation is already completed
- When the organization only wants to understand the average experience of participants
- When an organization needs to produce a report for accountability purposes
- When a more inexpensive evaluation is adequate for reporting purposes

### When to Use It:

- In programs that are complex and produce diverse and emergent outcomes
- In large organizations with numerous layers
- Initiatives that are focused on social change
- Initiatives and organizations that are participatory in nature
- Initiatives which have repeated contact with stakeholders over time
- Initiatives which are struggling with conventional monitoring systems
- Initiatives which have highly customized interventions for a small number of beneficiaries