Most Significant Change:
From Evaluation to Organisational Development
Jan – July 2027

Future Arts Centres

Using stories, evidence and shared learning to inform organisational change

Following our exploration of the application and use of Most Significant Change (MSC) within arts centres, Future Arts Centres is pleased to offer a practical programme exploring how MSC can support organisational learning and development.

Running from January to July 2027, the programme will help arts and community organisations develop the skills to use MSC as a qualitative evaluation methodology, while exploring how the stories, insights and learning it generates can inform organisational priorities, decision–making and future development.

Our approach to organisational development

Organisational development can encompass many aspects of an organisation's work, from leadership and workforce development to financial sustainability, governance and organisational culture.

This programme focuses on one particular aspect: how organisations can use evidence, reflection and learning to better understand their impact, challenge assumptions and inform the way they work.

Rather than starting solely with an organisation's existing vision, mission or strategic priorities, this approach creates opportunities to learn from the experiences and perspectives of the people and communities it serves.

Through MSC, organisations can develop a deeper understanding of what matters to their participants, what is changing as a result of their work, and how that learning might influence their future direction.

The programme combines practical training with opportunities for organisational reflection, peer learning and the application of MSC within participating organisations.

What is Most Significant Change?

Most Significant Change (MSC) is an applied qualitative evaluation methodology designed to understand impact in terms of social change. It originated in international development and has since been adopted in other sectors, including the cultural sector.

It is characterised by the development of stories with beneficiaries about the most significant change they have experienced as a result of taking part in a particular project or programme. Those stories are then discussed by groups of people involved

in delivering, overseeing or funding the work. The process creates a structured opportunity to learn directly from beneficiaries, explore what matters to them, and use that learning to shape future practice and priorities that matter to you.

You can read more about Future Arts Centres work to date with MSC here.

What are the benefits of MSC?

Our work with MSC has shown that the methodology can provide fresh approaches to evaluation, organisational learning and evidence-based advocacy by:

- Improving understanding of the impacts on users
- Finding meaningful and accessible ways to describe that impact
- Offering an alternative to approaches that can create survey fatigue or miss the essence of an activity or practice
- Creating structured opportunities for staff, leaders and stakeholders to reflect together and apply learning to future work

Who is the programme for?

The programme is for arts and community organisations that want to better capture and learn from the impact of their work, and use that learning to support organisational development and strategic planning. Any arts or community organisation in the UK can apply to join.

MSC works best when it is approached as an organisation-wide process rather than simply an evaluation technique. Participating organisations will therefore need to commit time and capacity between sessions to gather stories, support colleagues to take part, facilitate story discussions and bring the resulting learning into strategic conversations.

The programme is designed for a small team from each organisation, with different people taking part at different stages. A CEO or senior leader must be actively involved, alongside colleagues who will lead story-gathering and facilitate MSC discussions.

Is your organisation ready to take part?

Participating organisations should be ready to:

- Commit a CEO or senior leader to the opening and strategic planning sessions, and to champion the process internally
- Identify at least one person who will lead story-gathering and be able to train or support other staff and volunteers to collect stories
- Identify people who can facilitate MSC story discussions
- Make time between January and Sept to train staff, collect stories, hold facilitated discussions and reflect on what is being learned
- Use the learning generated through MSC to inform organisational priorities, planning and decision-making

Training programme

The programme will run from January to June 2027 and consists of four connected sessions, with practical activity taking place within participating organisations between sessions. The opening session establishes the whole-organisation approach and the final session brings the learning back to senior leadership and strategic planning.

Session 1: Introduction to MSC
For CEOs/senior leaders and organisational MSC leads

An introduction to MSC and opportunity to explore how evaluation, evidence and organisational learning contribute to organisational development.

Output: Agreed organisational ambitions and initial plans for using MSC.

Session 2: Story-Gathering and Training Others
For organisational MSC leads

A practical train-the-trainer workshop covering story collection, effective questioning, ethical considerations and how to train colleagues and volunteers.

Output: Participants will be equipped with resources and practical skills to begin MSC activity within their organisations.

Session 3: Facilitating Learning and Overcoming Challenges
For organisational MSC leads and facilitators

A focused session for the people who will facilitate the discussions at the heart of MSC. It will cover how to structure and lead the process, create the conditions for useful reflection, and draw out learning from the stories collected. This will be a shorter online session.

Output: Clear next steps for facilitating discussions and bringing learning into organisational conversations.

Session 4: Applying the Learning
For CEOs/senior leaders and organisational MSC leads

This session will bring together the learning generated through story-gathering and facilitated discussion, and focus on how it can inform organisational priorities, future plans, decision-making, evaluation and advocacy.

Output: An organisational action plan for continuing to use MSC and applying the learning.

Evaluation & Shared Learning

Participants will be invited to contribute to FAC's evaluation of the programme, including a short online survey and a one-to-one interview. We will also encourage

organisations to reflect on how MSC is influencing practice, learning and decision-making across the six months.

Programme Leaders

The programme will be led by Annabel Turpin and Mark Robinson.

Annabel, Co-Director of Future Arts Centres, has more than six years' experience of using MSC within arts centre settings and has shared her learning with organisations across the UK. Recent reports relating to MSC work include Rethinking Impact in Arts Centres and Creating the Conditions for Change.

Mark Robinson of Thinking Practice has worked with MSC over a number of years. He initially introduced MSC when evaluating Arts Council England and Baring Foundation's Celebrating Ageing programme, subsequently worked with FAC around its use within arts centres, and is a member of the Story-based Evaluation & Research Alliance (SERA).

Dates & Locations

Session 1 – Organisational Introduction to MSC: Monday 18 January 2027, 9am–11.30am (Online)

Session 2 – Story-gathering and Training Others: Thursday 25 February 2027, 11.30am–4pm (Manchester, venue TBC)

Session 3 – Facilitating Learning & Overcoming Challenges: Wednesday 26 May 2027, 10am–12pm (Online)

Session 4 – Strategic Planning and Applying the Learning: Thursday 23 September 2027, 11.30am–4pm (Manchester, venue TBC)

Cost

The cost for this programme is:

- £350 (no VAT) to FAC members
- £525 (no VAT) for non-members

Attendees must work for an arts or community organisation and a charity (or other not for profit structure).

Contribution towards travel costs

For Future Arts Centres members, please contact elena@futureartscentres.org.uk for details on our policy to support travel to FAC meetings for arts centres who have longer or more expensive journeys. Please note that only FAC members are eligible for this financial support.

Access

We aim to meet everyone's access requirements and can contribute to the costs of any access support to enable participation. Please use the Expression of Interest form (see the link below) to tell us about any access support you require.

How to Apply

If you would like to take part in the MSC training please sign up here – please note that places are limited to 16 and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.