

Session #6: Evaluating Food Systems Change through Stories: A Hands-on Workshop

Moderator: Rachel Kelly

Speakers: Lily Shapiro and Lesli Hoey, PhD

1. Introductions of speakers
2. Workshop about teaching Most Significant Change method, a commonly used method and one specifically used to evaluate the work around Michigan Good Food Charter
3. Overview:
 - a. Serves as a non-traditional evaluation method that can help predetermine successful indicators for projects, including Michigan Good Food Charter
 - b. Most Significant Change method is a dialogic, story based technique
 - c. Center for Regional Food Systems was already collecting stories so this method felt like a natural fit for evaluating food systems initiatives
 - d. Tangible outcomes seen through story telling, this method provides a more systematic way to look at the “data”
 - e. Best used when the outcomes to evaluations strongly vary and there are many people;
 - f. Process for collecting stories
 - i. Field staff collects stories from community participants→identify most significant story→ send most significant story to management team
 - g. Questions to ask:
 - i. “Over the last month, what do you think was the most significant change in...[domain]”?
 - ii. “Why” is the change significant?; encourages 2nd order learning (re-examining org goals)
 - h. Other decisions about stories
 - i. **Scale and unit providing stories:** individuals, organizations, policies, partnerships, communities
 - ii. **Causes of change:** your organization or general changes
 - iii. **Length:** short (½ page) or long (2 pages or more)
 - iv. **Frequency of collection:** weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly
 - v. **Storytellers:** program participants, other stakeholders, field staff, managers
 - vi. **Story collecting strategies:** unsolicited, self-written by participants, interviews/group discussions with participants (focus groups)
 - i. Story Selecting Process

- i. Everyone reads/hears story
 - ii. Group discusses stories
 - iii. Group decides which is most significant
 - iv. The reason for the group's choices
- j. Analysis Options:
 - i. Thematic coding
 - ii. Logic model coding
 - iii. Positive vs negative/lessons
 - iv. Who is (and is not) telling stories, number of stories submitted, changes over time
- k. Common Questions:
 - i. What do you mean 'significant'?
 - 1. Open to interpretation; see different priorities and values in the community
 - ii. Why one story?
 - 1. More stories stimulate debate, think about the meaning of stories
 - iii. Isn't much of this subjective?
 - 1. Point is to make org or stkholders values transparent. This is why reasons for selection stories are documented
 - iv. Isn't the sampling selective and the approach biased towards success?
 - 1. Yes, but not trying to understand "average condition"
 - 2. Use outcomes to start surveys to id other trends
- 4. Hands-on Exercise of Eval. Method
 - a. Three minute essay: your story + why + lesson (3 minutes)
 - b. Break into groups
 - c. Individuals share stories + why + lesson (3 min each)
 - d. Group discussion to select + why + lesson (7 min)
 - e. Report out-- spokesperson different from the original storyteller (3 min per table, depends on time)