Data Collection Memo

Prepared by ACET, Inc.
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Introduction
The Anderson Center desires to evaluate its programming for three reasons: 1) to understand its impact on the people and community it aims to serve; 2) to assess progress on its new strategic plan; and 3) to make data-informed decisions regarding its programming to better meet its mission. Specifically, the Anderson Center is interested in assessing its public events and outreach goals (see 1C in strategic plan). It seeks to know to what extent it is successful in contributing to a resilient and vibrant Red Wing—and surrounding communities—by offering relevant and accessible arts experiences. The Anderson Center engaged ACET, Inc. to help strategically plan evaluation efforts that will allow the Anderson Center to understand and communicate its impact *across* programs and events.

Evaluation Questions and Indicators
We started by drafting evaluation questions and indicators. -Evaluation questions help guide exploration; they will help the Anderson Center staff and board understand what they want to know. Indicators will tell staff and board *how* to answer the evaluation questions. Evaluation questions and indicators inform who the Anderson Center gathers information from and in what ways. If the Anderson Center is able to assess indicators and answer the evaluation questions, staff and board will be able to understand impact. ACET drafted evaluation questions and indicators informed by the strategic plan. Staff provided feedback, then ACET facilitated a feedback session with the board's program committee. The Anderson Center board approved the evaluation questions and indicators at their June meeting. Here we list the evaluation questions; the questions and indicators are also included in the Evaluation Framework.

Overarching evaluation question: How does the Anderson Center's outreach programming contribute to a resilient and vibrant Red Wing and surrounding communities?
- Evaluation question 1: How does the Anderson Center support a range of participants in relevant and approachable arts experiences?
- Evaluation question 2: What are the Anderson Center's contributions to the development of on-site partners[1]?
- Evaluation question 3: How does Anderson Center help support deeper understanding and integration of the arts in Red Wing and surrounding communities?

Current Data Collection, Analysis, and Sharing Out Practices
The Anderson Center already collects, analyzes, and shares information about its public events and outreach efforts. We set out to understand to what extent does this data help the Anderson Center answer its evaluation questions. We also wanted to assess the evaluation capacity of the Anderson Center staff, board, and volunteers. To do so, we completed a phone conversation with Stephanie Rogers, the Anderson Center's executive and artistic director. She offered information on what data the Anderson Center currently collects, how, and from whom; the Anderson Center's approach to

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[1] By on-site partners, we specifically mean artists who maintain studio space at the Anderson Center and instructors at the Universal Music Center

analyze the data; and how the Anderson Center shares analysis and with whom. ACET then reviewed the Anderson Center's existing data collection tools and examples of analysis and reporting efforts. We include key findings about current data collection, analysis, and sharing below.

Data collection
- The Anderson Center collects the majority of information about its outreach efforts using surveys; staff survey program/event participants and studio artists. Staff also collect data through ticket sales (zip codes), using a clicker (attendance counts), and by taking notes during the Question and Answer sessions of events. Although not necessarily outreach-related, the Anderson Center has recently started tracking the number of volunteers and the amount of hours that they volunteer; staff track this information in a spreadsheet.
- Through the surveys, the Anderson Center collects mostly descriptive quantitative data (e.g., demographic data, number of arts event attended, satisfaction about offerings) and some qualitative data (e.g., three words to describe program/events)
- The Anderson Center does not practice consistent data collection across programs or events. For example, staff do not administer event surveys at all events, nor take notes during all Question and Answer sessions.
- For its surveys, the Anderson Center offers incentives (e.g., opportunity to win free books) or mandates participation (e.g., the recent studio artists' survey was tied to lease renewal); although the Anderson Center required studio artists to complete the survey, not all did
- With its current data collection, the Anderson Center is able to assess a few indicators but not as robustly as desired. For example, respondents to the event survey provide their ethnicity, zip code, and age. However, because the Anderson Center doesn't administer the event survey consistently, the existing demographic data collected through surveys isn't reflective of participants across all programs/events. As another example, studio artists provide some information to assess indicators for Evaluation Question 2; by tweaking survey questions and answer options the Anderson Center could more fully understand how it contributes to the development of studio artists. Anderson Center does not currently collect data to answer evaluation question 3.

Data analysis:
- Stephanie Rogers completes the majority of analysis
- The Anderson Center does not currently analyze all the data it collects. For example, staff do not analyze zip code data from ticket sales, and staff do not have a systemic practice of analyzing Question and Answer conversations.
- The Anderson Center does the most analysis with data collected via event surveys. Staff enter information from paper surveys into an Excel spreadsheet and analyze demographic data using Excel functions. Staff use attendance numbers from the clicker to understand the percentage of participants who completed surveys.
- The Anderson Center hired a local English teacher to analyze qualitative data from the 2019 Children's' Book Festival surveys. She completed a word cloud and a short summary with themes that she identified.

- The Anderson Center shares analysis with select funders. For example, when the Minnesota State Arts Board funds an event/program, staff share written analysis of event survey data.
- The Anderson Center has also shared survey analysis with local funders to communicate positive themes in the hope of getting future support
- In its annual report, the Anderson Center provides narrative descriptions of highlights from the year; the annual reports have not included analysis from data collection tools. The main audience for the annual report is funders.
- The Anderson Center doesn't have a practice of sharing analysis with the board or with staff

Opportunities for Improvement

The Anderson Center is in a promising position to build from its current data collection, analysis, and reporting practices. Given staff's capacity, we provide preliminary ideas for how to effectively and effectively gather data that helps answer evaluation questions, as well as analyze and share the data.

Collect data
- **Aim to collect data at all outreach programs/events.** This will allow the Anderson Center to understand participants' experiences at individual events/programs and to analyze data *across* event/program offerings. The Anderson Center can use its existing event survey for this data collection.
- **Tweak event survey questions and answer options to better align with indicators.** Anderson Center could edit and add quantitative questions to align with all the indicators in Evaluation Question 2.
- **Consider implementing more creative data collection methods during programs/events.** One creative question that the Anderson Center has found helpful on the event survey is "What three words would you use to describe your experience tonight?" Staff could devise other creative ways to assess specific indicators. For example, if an event occurs within the Anderson Center, staff could cover a portion of the lobby wall with paper and write a prompt that aligns with one of more indicators; participants could write responses on large post-it notes and place them on the paper. Prompts could include, "What did you learn tonight?," "Tell us about a conversation you had tonight," and "What role do you think art plays in society?" Staff would then document answers through photos and/or inputting them into a spreadsheet to analyze.
- **Consider collecting small amounts of data more regularly from on-site partners.** For more formal programming, such as professional development offerings, the Anderson Center could consider drafting a short pre/post survey to understand if artists gain knowledge related to marketing, grants available to artists, and business planning and

practices. For more informal events, such as happy hours, the Anderson Center could encourage creative ways to provide data.

- **Track programming offered to on-site partners.** Data could include a description of an event (e.g., happy hour, business planning training), the date it happened, and how many people attended. The Anderson Center could track this information in a spreadsheet. Although this won't answer the Evaluation Question 2 fully, it will be a start to document the support Anderson Center provides.

- **Track additional information in volunteer spreadsheet:** To assess the indicator, "Participants get involved with the Anderson Center by volunteering or becoming members," the Anderson Center could add a column to the spreadsheet that documents the first time a new volunteer attended an Anderson Center event. Additionally, as the Anderson Center tracks members, it could also ask the question of a new member's first experience at the Anderson Center or a most memorable experience. The goal of collecting this information is to understand what portion of participants become members and/or volunteers.

- **Consider instituting formal protocol for collecting and storing data.** The protocol could include when to collect data and how (e.g., put blank surveys on all chairs for all events/programs where people sit to experience the event/program) and when to transfer data into an electronic document (e.g., input event survey data into a spreadsheet within two weeks of the event). The protocol can also include who is responsible for collecting and inputting data. The Anderson Center could create a spreadsheet template that allows staff to input event survey data.

- **Create a tool to collect and help analyze qualitative information.** The Anderson Center staff have documented Question and Answer conversations at events. To ensure more uniform data collection and help with analysis, the Anderson Center could create a tool that helps notetakers document and make sense of conversation content. Data collected through this tool could help assess the indicator: "Participants learn something new or engage in meaningful conversations." The tool could collect both narrative data and track the number of people who engage by asking questions.

- **Keep a journal of one-on-one meetings with local community leaders.** Stephanie is currently meeting with Red Wing community leaders (e.g., business owners, executive directors of nonprofit organizations) to share ideas of how to navigate COVID19 disruptions. These conversations could illuminate how community leaders understand the value of art and culture and how community leaders integrate artists, art, and creativity into community dialogue and problem solving (see Evaluation Question 3 indicators, as well as possibly the indicator "Anderson Center collaborates with other organizations in the region" under Evaluation Question 1). The Anderson Center also might want to specifically meet regularly with city staff who lead the way in implementing the Red Wing 2040 Community Plan. The plan dedicates one chapter to arts and culture; in conversations with city staff, the Anderson Center can explore ways to help achieve goals, strategies, and actions outlined in this chapter. Keeping notes from these meetings could help answer Evaluation Question 3:

How does Anderson Center help support deeper understanding and integration of the arts by and in Red Wing and surrounding communities?

Analyze data

- **Build capacity of staff and independent contractors to analyze quantitative and qualitative data.** This will ease the burden on Stephanie and give ownership to staff. Stephanie could video record herself when she inputs and analyzes survey data; staff can then refer to this video when time comes to input and analyze data. The Anderson Center could also engage an outside consultant to conduct a training about quantitative and qualitative analysis. This training could cover how to effectively input quantitative data, use Excel functions to analyze data, and display data in a clear way. In the training, staff and independent contractors could also learn how to analyze qualitative data in a consistent manner.
- **Analyze all outreach-related data that the Anderson Center collects.** The evaluation framework will help the Anderson Center intentionally collect useful data. All data that the Anderson Center collects about outreach should be in the service of answering the three evaluation questions. Information that program/event participants and on-site partners give to the Anderson Center is a gift. To respect this gift, as well to respect the time staff take in collecting and storing data, the Anderson Center should only collect data that it plans to analyze.

Share data

- **Share analysis with staff after events/programs.** This will allow staff to celebrate successes and discuss possible changes that the data suggests.
- **Consider reporting out analysis at one or two board meetings annually.** The program committee could provide guidance on what analysis to share and how. Regularly reporting analysis will allow the Board to practice digesting and discussing data and analysis.
- **Add select analysis to annual report.** The Anderson Center staff could work with its board to decide what select data analysis to include in its annual report to bolster the narrative content already present in the annual reports.