



**Shelter Music Boston**  
A Program Evaluation Plan



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## I. Introduction

Founded in 2010 by a professional violinist, Shelter Music Boston (SMB) (also referred to as the "evaluand") provides classical music concerts to individuals in low-income housing sites, substance use disorder treatment programs, single adult and family shelters, and after-school children's programs in the Boston area. The program was inspired by classical music performances in soup kitchens throughout New York City and aimed to create a sustainable, non-profit model that would provide music as a social service comparable to how healthcare is provided in similar settings. There is evidence of various benefits that classical music can provide, especially for the elderly and those struggling with their mental health; mood boosts, relaxation, and a sense of calmness, to name a few. For example, The International Journal of Psychophysiology 2020 study found that relaxing music elicits a general decrease in brain tissue pulsatility, leading to a reduction in emotional reactivity (Siragusa & Brizard, 2020). The evaluand aims to provide these health benefits and a sense of dignity and humanity to every audience member of their concerts under the core belief that everyone deserves access to classical music.

Evaluators intend to build on the foundation already created by Shelter Music Boston, enhancing the already existing structure of the program with more intentional use of pre-existing resources, creative strategies to increase volunteer support, and data collection techniques aimed at engaging participants and producing valuable data for future program shifts. Additionally, evaluators will substantiate the known positive impacts of the classical music concerts while identifying growth areas that will ultimately allow the evaluand to improve participant experience and increase interest in funding.

## II. Intended Use and Users

### Primary Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders can be divided into four categories; the SMB staff, the concert participants, SMB volunteers and interns, and the program donors.

<b>Evaluand Staff</b>	<b>Concert Participants</b>	<b>Volunteers and Interns</b>	<b>Program Donors</b>
SMB Employees, SMB Board of Directors, Professional Musicians	Unhoused individuals at shelters, individuals recovering from substance use disorders, and children within the children's program	Volunteers and student interns providing support during concerts or other roles (social media managers, grant writers, etc), and shelter staff	Various people and organizations providing funding for SMB

Carrie Eldridge-Dickson is the Managing Director of Shelter Music Boston. Together with five other part-time employees, Carrie manages the professional musicians and concerts they provide to seven sites across Greater Boston. Other employee roles include Artistic Director, Director of Development, Development Associate, Operations Coordinator, and Children's Program Coordinator, which help sustain the program and its unique needs. Additionally, SMB is overseen by eleven board members who provide organizational governance and financial oversight. Two board members have experienced homelessness, providing a unique and necessary perspective the other board members cannot provide. The staff and board can use this evaluation to identify areas of strength within their program, to garner further support from funders, and to find areas for growth to improve the program as a whole and better the experience for the participants.

SMB also runs with the essential underpinning of volunteers and interns who supplement program logistics. Although other stakeholders will analyze this evaluation, the outcome will improve the experience of the interns and volunteers, creating more targeted areas for their services. Additionally, the participants of the concerts will benefit from the program evaluation, ultimately having an elevated experience and the ability to provide essential data and perspective.

### **Purposes of Evaluation**

The evaluand has identified the primary purposes of the evaluation as 1) To identify meaningful forms of data collection, especially for the children's program; 2) Determine the extent to which concert participants feel long-term impacts; 3) Identify creative strategies for gaining more support for effective data collection.

Entering its 13th year, Shelter Music Boston has experienced both success and a myriad of struggles. The logistics of providing monthly concerts to seven site partners, finding resources to fund their concerts and hiring staff, and ensuring they are collecting meaningful data on the impact of their concerts are just a few of the hurdles the evaluand faces. In addition, during the COVID-19 Pandemic SMB had to pivot to virtual concerts instead of in-person, questioning if the impact of the concerts on the participants would change. Accurate and meaningful data collection is essential to understanding the impact and success of the concerts, and while the evaluand's focus in this evaluation is the impact of the concerts on their children participants, other aspects of the program could benefit from elevated data collection tactics.

Gaining insight into concerts' long-term impacts on their audience members has proven difficult. While staff has seen firsthand the "in the moment" impacts the concerts have, such as joy and peace, they hope that concertgoers continue to feel positivity and enlightenment after the performance. Additionally, the evaluand would like to engage children in a way that will entice

them to participate in data collection more effectively. The current accuracy of data the program is getting from children does not allow them to make intentional changes to the children's concerts, nor does it effectively express the experiences children are having.

Overall, more robust and accurate data will allow the evaluand to improve their program and gain access to more grant money and support, which is essential to the program's growth. Due to a lack of funding, staffing, and the logistics of planning concerts with trained professionals who have other obligations, a more creative form of data retrieval and ways to support that data retrieval must be created for the adult and children's programs. Accurate data could ensure resources are being used intentionally and adequately and could unearth additional positive impacts the program is having on its participants. Lastly, the lack of staffing and support has proven difficult to meet the evaluand's long and short-term goals. There is room for innovative strategies that utilize SMB's current resources to gain more community interest and volunteer support.

### **III. Program Description**

#### **Contextual Factors and Social Problem**

The stigma associated with homelessness is an issue that plagues cities and towns across the US and beyond. As a result, people experiencing homelessness are ignored, isolated, exploited, and often become victims of violence. Because of this, the consequences of homelessness are exacerbated, making it much more challenging to secure employment and further stability and feel like a valued member of one's community. Unfortunately, law enforcement, the healthcare system, policymakers, and society at large can be found guilty of perpetuating these stigmas and, therefore, are the ones who need to work toward a solution to dismantle these stereotypes (Unity Parenting and Counseling, 2022).

Like many major US cities, Boston has a portion of its population experiencing housing uncertainty. Housing uncertainty can be intertwined with other social issues as well, including substance use, domestic violence and unemployment. Southampton Street Shelter, Bedford Veterans Quarter, and Homeowner's Rehab Inc. are a few examples of non-profit organizations in the greater Boston area that provide housing opportunities and other resources for individuals experiencing homelessness. As mentioned above, individuals experiencing homelessness have been historically marginalized and face discrimination and stigmatization because of their living situation.

Historically, classical music was written for wealthy patrons in society. The average citizen could not afford a ticket to a classical performance and wealthy families would routinely pay composers to write classical music for them (How did..., 2019). Because of its history, the idea that classical music is for the wealthy is still a stereotype today. The evaluand was founded

as a program to fight the negative perceptions of homelessness and classical music. Shelter Music Boston believes that the beauty and serenity of classical music should be accessible to everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status and living situation.

The program creates an environment where all people can feel a sense of dignity, humanity, and respect from their community by participating in monthly classical music concerts brought to shelters and other organizations within the greater Boston area. The program's vision statement reads, " We envision a world in which classical music is embraced as an integral component of professionally delivered social services in sheltering environments (Shelter Music Boston, 2023)."

### **Target Population**

Through their monthly classical music concerts performed by professional musicians, the evaluand serves a variety of demographics that face uncertain housing situations. The seven sites the program serves include two low-income housing sites for veterans and the elderly, a substance treatment program, two adult shelters, and two programs providing a range of services to families experiencing homelessness. By tailoring this program for communities experiencing homelessness and instability, the evaluand sends a message that despite someone's current situation, they still deserve the experience of hearing beautiful music, as it is part of the human experience. The organization also has separate programming and concerts for adults and children. In addition to concerts, the children's program includes activities that foster intellectual stimulation and emotional connection.

### **Stage of Development**

While the evaluand has been successfully providing services for 13 years, there is a need for an elevated form of data collection and analysis. Staff observations, participant feedback, and varying levels of survey completion have provided enough data to prove the positive impacts of concerts. Still, they lack the detail and quantitative qualities necessary for more in-depth analysis. This evaluation will allow for immediate changes to be made that will improve data collection and analysis measures.

### **Logic Model**

The logic model outlines the evaluand's current function and goals and demonstrates areas for further growth and support. Despite the evaluand's current observed success, more data, engagement, and staffing are needed to reach the evaluand's short and long-term goals. The specific focus areas and methods will be outlined in further evaluation sections.

## SHELTER MUSIC BOSTON: LOGIC MODEL

Shelter Music Boston is a nonprofit organization on a mission to present classical chamber music concerts, of the highest artistic standards, in homeless shelters and other sheltering environments. Our goal is to promote community, creative interaction, respect, and therapeutic benefit. We believe all people deserve access to the dignity, creativity, and passion of classical music whether or not they have a home.



### IV. Evaluation Focus & Design

Through collaboration with the evaluand, our evaluation was designed to answer the following questions:

1. *How can the evaluand utilize its current staff, volunteers, and interns to gather data from participants at the children's concerts more effectively?*
2. *To what extent does the current concert structure allow for meaningful data collection?*
3. *How can the evaluand prioritize volunteer and intern training without burdening the current staff?*
4. *How can the evaluand engage children participants to collect accurate and meaningful data?*
5. *What pre-existing resources can be used to increase SMB's volunteer and community base?*

6. *Are there any long-term impacts felt by participants as a result of SMB concerts?*

Since 2010, Shelter Music Boston has been surveying concert attendees immediately after each program to measure mood and behavioral change shifts. Historically, survey results indicate that attendees have a significant mood improvement immediately after the concert, demonstrating the short-term impacts of the program. Different surveys are distributed between the adult and children programs, and engaging children in survey completion has been proven difficult for SMB staff.

Our evaluation design, aimed at finding ways to answer the above questions thoughtfully, using a mixed methods approach. Through the use of staff, volunteer, and participant input, we hope to help SMB create an efficient concert structure that will enable them to not only provide an excellent service but also to gather meaningful data to improve the program services. Additionally, we aim to use pre-existing resources to develop a creative strategy to increase volunteer support and utilize internship opportunities. Surveys, observations, and internal reviews of existing structures are just a few of the strategies that will be implemented and outlined in the following section.

## **V. Data Collection Methods**

The mixed methods design of the evaluation will utilize both qualitative and quantitative data collection forms. Combining both methods allows for a fuller picture of the entire program and involves the experiences and goals of all stakeholders involved. Below is an evaluation design table outlining the methods used and how they work toward answering the evaluation questions.



## Evaluation Design Table

<b>Evaluation Question(s)</b> <i>What questions will be answered by the data you collect?</i>	<b>Evidence</b> <i>What will be measured to determine if change occurred?</i>	<b>Method(s) &amp; Measurement Tool(s)</b> <i>How will data be collected?</i>	<b>Sample</b> <i>Who will be the source of information and how will they be selected?</i>	<b>Time Frame</b> <i>When will data be collected?</i>
How can the evaluand utilize its current staff, volunteers, and interns to gather data from participants at the children's concerts effectively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess the current roles of all SMB staff, volunteers, and interns</li> <li>- Identify areas of need and where gaps exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-person interview, email surveys to SMB staff, shelter leadership, volunteers, and interns</li> <li>- Assessment of current contracts and job descriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New SMB staff member (if in job description) or consistent volunteer/intern</li> <li>- Primarily this is up to SMB staff on who has the capacity to take this on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before hiring of next round of interns and the implementation of volunteer search</li> </ul>
To what extent does the current concert structure allow for meaningful data collection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess current concert structure for each location</li> <li>- Assess current data collection methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observations of concerts, identifying the length of time for each activity at each location</li> <li>- Staff and volunteer input; feedback on what is and is not working in terms of structure through an anonymous survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stratified sampling from each concert location; 1-2 staff members from each shelter based on willingness to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observations during monthly concerts</li> <li>- Surveys through email</li> <li>- Done before a decision is made on restructuring of concerts and data collection type</li> </ul>
How can the evaluand prioritize volunteer and intern training without burdening the current staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify what type of training is necessary to collect data</li> <li>- Assess the number of volunteers needed to collect data effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback from current staff on their workload; in-person/zoom interviews</li> <li>- Research on training best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Randomized sample of staff based on availability at the time of the interview/ meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback collected ideally during a staff meeting on zoom or in person</li> </ul>
How can the evaluand engage children participants to collect accurate and meaningful data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess current failures of the children's survey</li> <li>- Utilize proven engagement strategies for youth participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of current children's data</li> <li>- Observations are done by staff before, middle, and during the children concerts.</li> <li>- Surveys can be given to after school providers to get their opinion on how the concerts are impacting the children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entire children's concert group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During each monthly concert</li> </ul>
What pre-existing resources can be used to increase SMB's volunteer base?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify target number of volunteers needed</li> <li>- Assess the increase in volunteer interest after method is implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Utilize social media intern to engage intentional volunteer resources (Berklee College of Music, pre-existing volunteer groups)</li> <li>- Create engaging social media campaign to entice members of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media intern (already hired by SMB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the entire length of internship</li> </ul>
Are there any long-term impacts felt by participants after concerts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess any long-term impact of concerts on participants</li> <li>- Length of positive feelings/ likelihood to seek additional services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow-up phone interviews and email surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chosen concert participants who opt-in to being contacted after the concert (dependent on access to phone, email, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Immediately after the concert as well as one month and six months following the concert</li> </ul>

## Data Collection from Staff

As a key stakeholder, the SMB staff (staff includes interns and volunteers) are an essential part of this evaluation and the success of the program as a whole. Input from SMB staff will allow for a more intentional and full evaluation. Looking at the evaluation design table, several methods are used to obtain staff input.

- ***Interviews:*** Interviews allow staff to provide in-depth descriptions of their experiences and feedback. To determine whether or not the current staff can take on new tasks, such as training volunteers, a baseline of their current workload must be established.
- ***Anonymous Surveys:*** The anonymity of a survey allows staff to be honest and provide unfiltered feedback. It is also a simple and less time-consuming way to collect data. Emailed anonymous surveys can be easily distributed through google forms and can collect data on the staff's understanding of how the current concert structure is working. (See Appendix 4)
- ***Assessment of Current Structures:*** An internal review of current concert structures, job descriptions, and internship/volunteer recruitment and duties will also give insight into the staff's workload and where improvements can be made to increase support. Utilizing pre-existing resources, the evaluand should identify where more support is needed and target specific groups for volunteer and intern support. The use of the evaluand's social media intern is an opportunity to creatively engage the community and target specific groups who may be interested in providing resources, volunteers, etc. (See Appendix 2)

## Data Collection for Participants

The participants of the concerts must be at the forefront of all considerations for program shifts and improvements. Current data suggests that concerts positively impact participants' moods. Still, more concrete data is necessary to determine in what ways their moods improve and what aspects of the current concert structure are most impactful. The following data collection methods are suggested for analyzing impacts on participants and how to improve the participant experience.

### ***Observation:***

While asking children their experiences directly seems to make sense, ultimately it can create problems with data collection, especially for vulnerable children. Thus, utilizing interns to do observations on the children's affect before, during, and after the concert seems to create strong data to support how the music is impacting them, and can allow for the children to attend the concerts undisturbed.

The observations can have a set of open ended questions that will measure the engagement of the children and their mood. Additionally, observations from after school providers can be facilitated to see if there are changes from the children post concerts (Dansereau, 2020).

- ***Longitudinal Study:*** Being that most concert attendees are transient, repeat audience measures have not been measured before at SMB. This doesn't change the fact that there is a need to gather more data to identify long-term impacts, if possible. A longitudinal study will allow the evaluand to determine if the concert has any positive impacts on participants a week, two weeks, a month, or even six months afterward. After school providers can be asked to observe the same children after x amount of concerts to notice any change in mood and behavior overtime.

## **VI. Analysis and Interpretation Plan**

### **Measures and Indicators**

In order for the evaluation to be successful, SMB will need to build stronger criteria of the data they have collected for it to be measurable. Based on their feedback, the children's program data collection needs to be strengthened. Questions to consider are: What is needed to measure the impact of the children's program? What type of data does SMB need to focus on, such as qualitative/quantitative feedback? What are proven ways in which you can collect data from children? And who should be involved, and what type of training is necessary to facilitate this.

### **Criteria for Success**

The evaluand will need to determine what qualitative/quantitative measures are deemed successful for the program. Examples being, if an observer reports children are attentive during the concerts, to what degree of attentiveness do they feel is successful? From the observations from the after school program, what kind of criteria does SMB find useful for change over time? What kinds of key words, or related key words in the open-ended observations would suffice a successful program?

### **Limitations**

Considering the concerts are once a month per location, and participants have uncertain housing situations, longitudinal studies within the unhoused population are difficult. Therefore, without the proper funding, staff, and cultural norms of this community, there are limitations to this form of data collection.

## VII. Use, Dissemination, and Sharing Plan

Audiences	How to Share Results
Current SMB Staff	The evaluators will share the plan and presentation with the main contact, Carrie Eldridge-Dickson, a current SMB staff member. She will then meet with the rest of the staff to share the results.
Current and potential donors of SMB	Present donors with survey results SMB already has in regards to short-term impact on adult participants. Present donors with new data on the children's program. Convey program impact further with an in-person/virtual presentation and Q&A segment to donors. Create a take home or digital brochure that includes data on SMB impact to the community (See Appendix 3)
Boston Community	Social media intern will take aspects of the evaluation to present on social media platforms to garner support and awareness of SMB services (See Appendix 2)

Carrie and SMB staff will determine which data collection methods and recommendations are feasible for their organization. With budget season approaching, there might be an opportunity for extra funding towards more interns and surveying materials. Social media is a great marketing tool to increase donors' interest and increase volunteer participation. The evaluators can check up on social media platforms to ensure action has occurred. Since the focus was utilizing the resources and tools SMB already have, a follow-up meeting with Carrie is essential to find out if any decisions and actions were taken.

### Recommendations

Our group recommends SMB would be best off by utilizing their social media intern (already hired) to help increase volunteer participation. With their new hire, SMB staff can also work on hiring more student interns, targeting students enrolled in education/child development programs. The idea would be the extra volunteers and interns would assist with data collection SMB is looking to obtain. The demands of the data collection they are looking to gather exceed the amount of help they currently have. Specifically, the new volunteers and interns would help with observations of the children's groups, in hopes to better the program. The group suggests

hiring interns and volunteers who have an area of study related to music, child development, family sciences, and/or psychology. We believe this will enhance the quality of the observation, require less training, and decrease the workload for current SMB staff. If SMB staff decide they want to learn the long-term impact of the concerts, we recommend consulting out for a longitudinal study.

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## Appendix 1

### Observation Questions for Children Guide

Observations are to be made before, during, and after the concerts. Observations can help answer the following questions:

- How many children were present at the concert?
- What are the general ages of the children?
- What is the children's affect before the concert?
- What are the behaviors of the children? Examples include laying down, playing with each other, not paying attention, etc.
- What is the children's affect during the concert?
- What is the children's affect after the concert?
- Are there any other observations made regarding the mood and behavior of children that are worth mentioning?

### Best Practices

Best practices are something to be aware of when working with or around children. Since SMB serves vulnerable children, we feel sharing some best practices might be helpful for anyone who may be around the childre. Here are some general recommendations:

- \* Be mindful of facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures around children.
- \*If a child is having an experience that's demonstrating anxiety or frustration, be aware of this and allow for them to have a safe space to be.
- \* If a child is having an experience that seems negative, notice the behavior, is: to notice the behavior, stop for a moment, reflect on possible links or meanings, then when the time is right verbalize it to someone who is close to the child.

Source: [Working effectively with vulnerable children \(headteacher-update.com\)](http://headteacher-update.com)



Appendix 2

Sample Social Media Post

1/10

2/10

3/10

4/10

5/10

6/10

[HTTPS://WWW.SHELTERMUSICBOSTON.ORG/](https://www.sheltermusicboston.org/)

**WHY YOU SHOULD VOLUNTEER WITH SMB**

@sheltermusicboston

**MUSIC CAN HEAL AND INSPIRE**

Shelter Music Boston presents classical chamber music concerts, of the highest artistic standards, in homeless shelters and other sheltering environments.

Our goal is to promote community, creative interaction, respect, and therapeutic benefit.

**DO YOU WANT TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR GOALS? LET'S SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO...**

Spread the word about SMB and re-share this post


Volunteer your time and help us run our concerts and focus groups.

**MUSIC CAN UNITE**

## Appendix 2 (cont.)

7/10

WE ENVISION A WORLD IN WHICH CLASSICAL MUSIC IS EMBRACED AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONALLY DELIVERED SOCIAL SERVICES IN SHELTERING ENVIRONMENTS.



8/10

### WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

- Volunteers with teaching experience
- Volunteers with music experience
- Interns who could benefit from working in a non-profit environment
- PHD students interested in researching the impacts of classical music on unhoused populations
- Anyone who wants to spread joy!

## Appendix 3



**Appendix 4**

## Example Anonymous Survey Questions - Likert Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. After the concert, the children have a calmer demeanor					
2. I feel overwhelmed with my responsibilities at SMB					
3. The shelter staff speak positively on the concerts provided					