**Evaluating the Impact of Decisions**

_Not everything that counts can be counted._

Every nonprofit organization faces difficult decisions and, regardless of their nature, it is vital to assess all possible outcomes to the fullest extent. An analytical and calculated approach to evaluating decision impact is vastly important, assuming that the organization has the staff to implement such an analysis. Since the majority of nonprofit organizations do not have the bandwidth, they are left to their own devices and methods based on their experiences. The American Music Therapy Association was having this exact issue when they approached us for volunteer analytics help evaluating a paramount decision.

Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions (instruments and music in general) to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship. Credentialed professionals who have completed an approved music therapy program provide therapeutical benefits for healthcare goals to individuals of all ages.

Our partner, American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), is an organization dedicated to the progressive development and public awareness of the therapeutic use of music in rehabilitation, special education, and community settings. They are committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, credentials, and research in support of the music therapy profession.

Professionalism is crucial for AMTA and the music therapy profession as a whole; they strive to uphold the highest level of excellence and credentialing for therapists and practitioners. To maintain this reputation of excellence, AMTA was interested in raising the bar for their minimum education level requirement to become a credentialed music therapist. They were seeking assistance in determining the impact of this decision to require a master’s level education: impact on current practitioners, students, up-and-coming practitioners, future of the profession, therapy patients, and any unintended consequences that this new requirement might yield. _How do you measure and determine the potential ramifications of this decision?_

Our volunteers worked with AMTA to implement the Multiple-Objective Decision Analysis method for measuring and defining the different outcomes of the decision at various sections. Utilizing this approach was most beneficial for providing a thorough analysis that outlines the ideal characteristics of a successful education program (at the master’s level) and its impact on music therapy professionals and clients. They built models with data based around characteristics of education programs, musical/clinical skills competencies, financial burden (to professionals and clients), etc., to help make their recommendations.

**Result of the Project**

After modeling various outcomes of the decision and completing the seven-steps of the Multiple-Objective Decision Analysis, it was determined that requiring the Master Level Entry (MLE) standard offered the most value to AMTA. It revealed that making this decision did not have any adverse impacts or unintended consequences on music therapy professionals, students, or patients – in fact, it would help continue the reputation of professionalism as desired by AMTA. Our volunteers helped them to fully evaluate all outcomes of a difficult decision that would impact the organization and profession as a whole allowing them to confidently change their minimum education requirement.