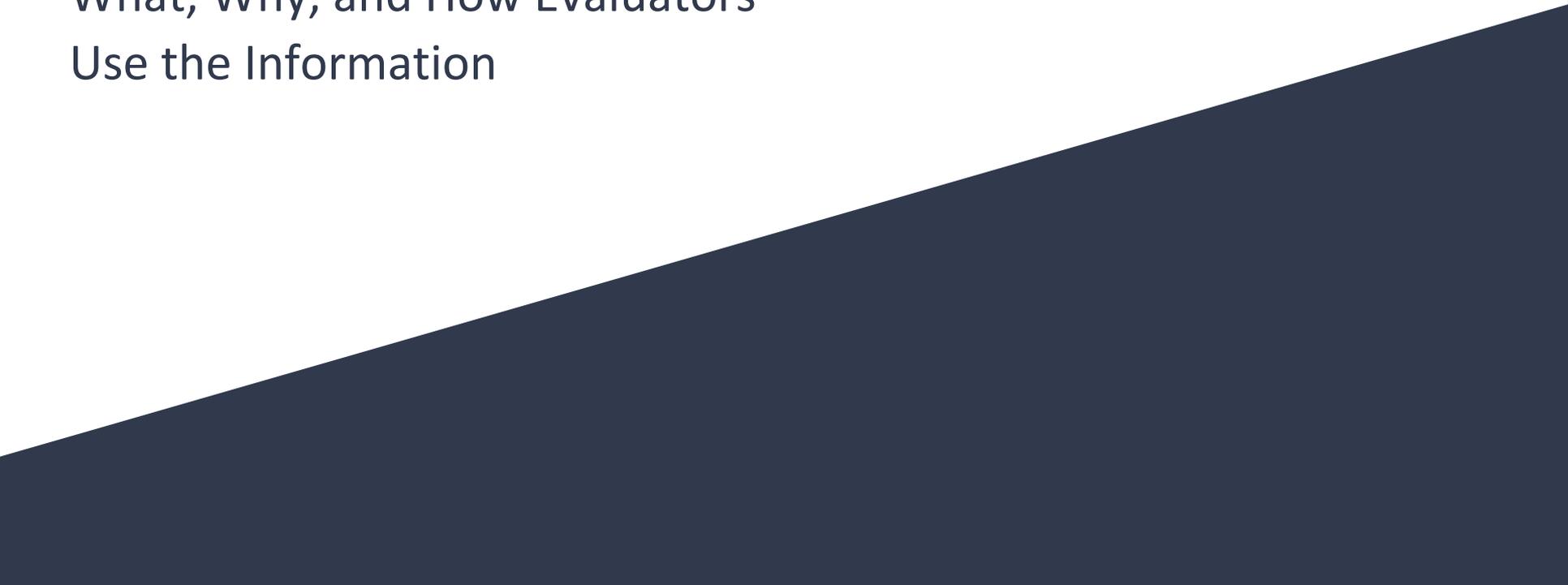


# Demographics:

What, Why, and How Evaluators  
Use the Information



# Facilitating the Important Conversation: Why are we collecting this demographic information?

Emily Kalnicky, PhD

Minnesota Zoo





- 1.3 million visitors/year
- 400,000 program participants
- Located in Apple Valley, MN
- Minnesota State Agency

# Surveys with demographic questions



- Intercept Surveys
- Event Surveys
- Education Program Surveys
- Member Surveys
- Social Media Surveys

# Evolution over time...baby steps: Gender



## Past:

*Which of the following are in your group today?*

- a. Adult men
- b. Adult women

## Present:

*Which of the following are in your group today?*

- a. Adult men
- b. Adult women
- c. Adult non-binary / third gender
- d. Adult prefer to self-describe:

# Evolution over time...baby steps: Location



## Past:

*Which of the following best describes you?*

- a. Minneapolis resident
- b. Saint Paul resident
- c. MSP Metro Area resident
- d. Elsewhere inside of Minnesota
- e. US resident outside of Minnesota
- f. International visitor

## Present:

*Which of the following best describes where you live?*

- a. Minneapolis
- b. Saint Paul
- c. MSP Metro Area
- d. Elsewhere inside of Minnesota
- e. Another state, outside of Minnesota
- f. Outside of the United States

# Evolution over time...baby steps: Age

## Past:

*Please select the range below that includes your age:*

- a. Under 18
- b. 18 to 24
- c. 25 to 29
- d. 30 to 39
- e. 40 to 49
- f. 50 to 59
- g. 60 to 69
- h. 70 or older

## Present:

*Please select the range below that includes your age:*

- a. Under 18
- b. 18 to 24
- c. 25 to 29
- d. 30 to 39
- e. 40 to 49
- f. 50 to 59
- g. 60 to 69
- h. 70+

# Evolution over time...baby steps: Race/Ethnicity



## Past:

*Please select your race/ethnicity  
(please select all that apply):*

- a. **Other** (specify):

## Present:

*Please select your race/ethnicity  
(please select all that apply):*

- a. Prefer to self-describe:

# Some questions to ask stakeholders



- How have we currently been asking demographic questions?
- Do we force people to answer or are they able to skip?
- What are we doing with the information we collect?
- Are there external interests (e.g. funder/donor) in the information?
- How are other similar (local) agencies asking these demographic questions?
- Are we willing to change what we do and to be transparent about *why*? (including scaffolding for survey administrators)
- Do we, as an organization (or expert consultant to an organization), understand the connection between how we ask the demographics and our inclusion (or broader diversity, equity, & access) efforts?

# What Are We Asking and How Do We Ask For It?

Katharine Wood

Minnesota Historical Society



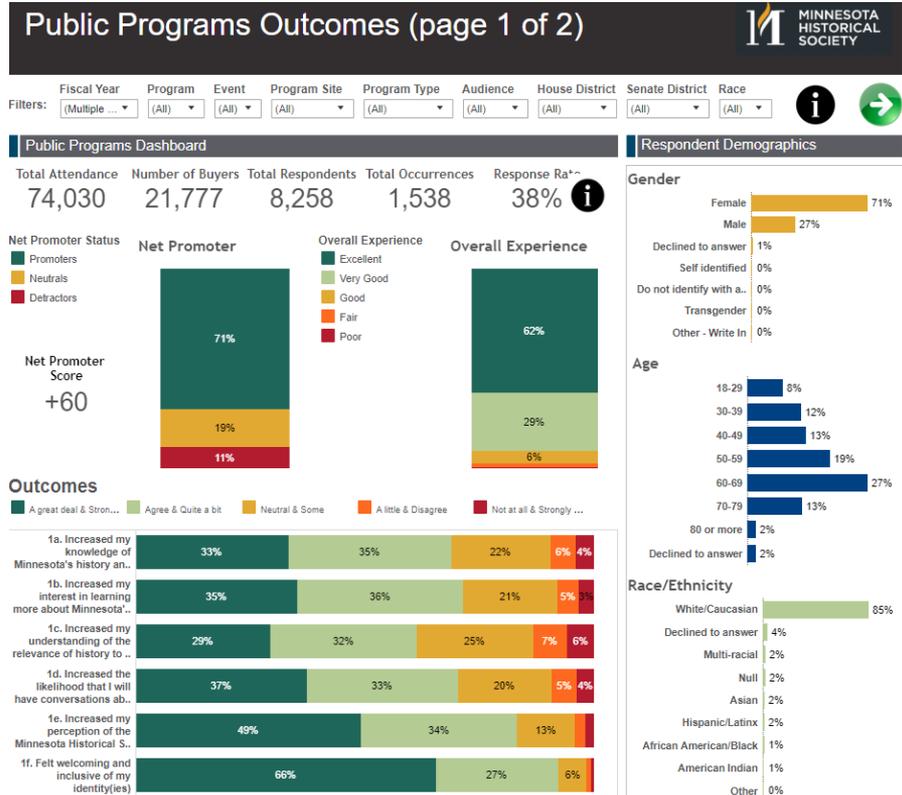
# About MNHS

- 26 historic sites and museums across Minnesota with annual attendance over 1 million
- Regular evaluation started in 2012
- Survey templates first developed in 2014



# About Demographics at MNHS

- Asked on surveys
- Aggregated into Tableau dashboards



# Types of Demographics Collected

- External: General public (gender, race, income, age, member, visitation, zip), high school and college students (education level)
- External: Teachers (school type, zip, grades, visitation)
- Internal: Staff (length of time worked at MNHS, which dept/site/area, part time or full time)



# Example Findings

- Some of our attendees were not who we were targeting (family days, millennial programs)
- Some of our attendees are our target audience (African American-focused programs)
- The public events we survey have gotten older and whiter over the past 3 years



# Changes in How We Ask Demographics

- Dropped gender and income as standard
- Changed wording to continue to be more inclusive



# Changes Over Time: Gender

## Past:

*How do you identify your gender?*

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- I do not identify with any of these options
- Decline to answer

## Present:

*What is your gender?*

- Female
- Male
- Self-identify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Decline to answer

# Changes Over Time: Race/Ethnicity

## Past:

*How do you identify your race/ethnicity?*

*Check all that apply.*

- African American/ Black
- African Native
- American Indian
- Asian American/Pacific Islander
  - Hispanic or Latino
- White/Caucasian
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Decline to answer

## Present:

*Which one or more of the following describes you?*

*Please check all that apply.*

- American Indian
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White or Caucasian
- Self-identify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Decline to answer

# Other Ways to Ask For Demographics

- All questions as write-ins: Inclusive? Impractical?
- Custom options specific to the community you're working in
- Set answer options that mirror aggregate datasets (Census, ACS)



# Other Considerations

- Make sure demographic questions are optional
- Have a decline to answer option
- How you administer your survey: online/in-person
- Ask demographics at the end of the survey when possible



**Minneapolis Institute of Art**

# Exploring Identity in Exhibitions and Visitorship

Alice Anderson, Manager of Audience Research

**Mia**

### Goals:

1. Mia better understands motivations and interests of our local community through research and analysis. Local community has increased awareness and a more positive perception of Mia.
2. Museum program (collections, gallery rotations, exhibitions, interpretation) more closely aligns with identified communities.
3. Staff and Board promote values of cultural fluency and inclusion.



Christi Belcourt, (Metis), born 1966, *The Wisdom of the Universe (detail)*, 2014, acrylic on canvas. Art Gallery Ontario, Toronto. © Christi Belcourt

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## Engaging Communities

**Vision:** Civic Engagement through Art. Mia is considered a vital and valuable community resource. Mia is a hub for community collaboration.



**Curiosity:** What do we want to find out?

**Collaboration:** Always working together with other staff, our visitors and partners

**Rigor:** Data ethics and privacy are priorities guided by strong analysis practices

**Equity:** Focus on the experience of historically marginalized populations with museums and dismantling white supremacy in museum systems

**Humility:** Approach our work with an openness and learning mindset, comfortable with ambiguity.

---

**Mia General Museum Visitor Survey: Purpose**

**Very simply:**

- Who is coming to the museum as a general visitor?
- What is their experience?

**But also, we know:**

- Context is important!
- Disparities are real!
- Data can be used to advocate for new/different things

---

## Visitor Survey Questions

### **We ask...**

- Gender
- Age
- Household Income
- Zipcode
- Whittier or Phillips resident
- Level of educational attainment
- Race
- Household Income
- Primary Language
- Disability status
- Artist/Museum Professional/Student

### **We DON'T ask right now...**

- Profession
- LGBTQ Status
- Family configuration

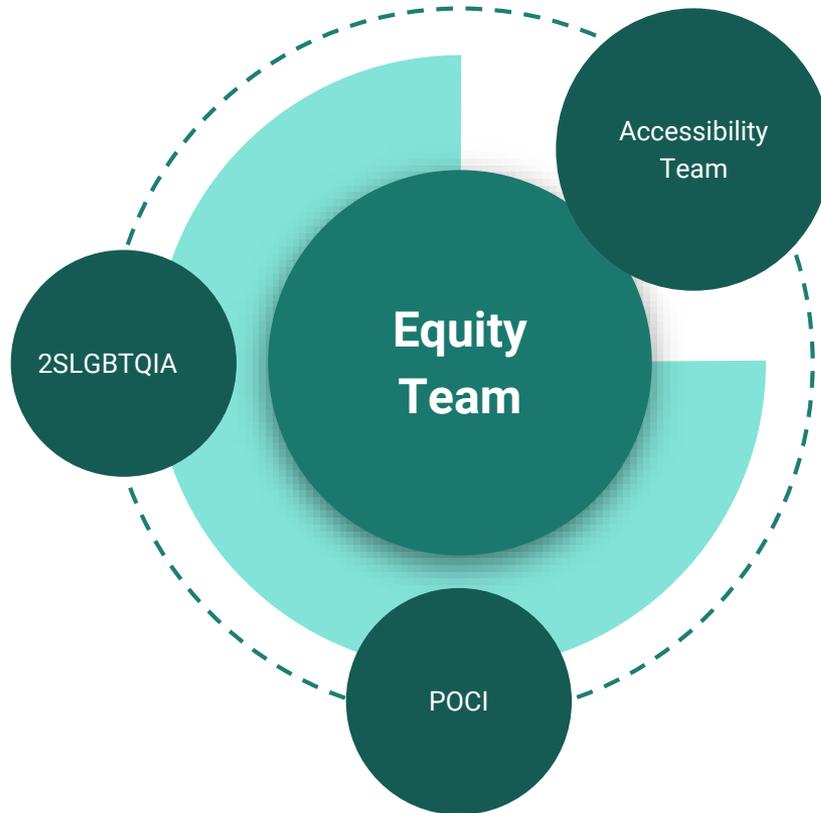
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## Considerations

- **Volume of data = need something semi-standardized**
  - Open-ended everything = coding nightmare
- **Local/regional/national comparisons**
  - Are our visitors representative of our local/regional/national community?
- **New questions/investigations need to be informed by well-articulated assumptions, theories or changes in our practice.**
  - How do we think visitorship would change if we did XYZ differently?
- **Phrasing questions so they can be inclusive and educative**

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## Identity-based workgroups at Mia



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**Example: Race and Ethnicity**

*How do you identify? Select all that apply; include more information if you wish.*

- American Indian/Alaska Native* \_\_\_\_\_
- Asian/Pacific Islander* \_\_\_\_\_
- Black/African American/African* \_\_\_\_\_
- Middle Eastern/North African* \_\_\_\_\_
- Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish Origin* \_\_\_\_\_
- White* \_\_\_\_\_
- Not listed here or prefer to self-describe* \_\_\_\_\_

---

## Ideas for the future

Ask about race and ethnicity/cultural identity as two separate questions.

- *Please indicate which cultural or ethnic groups are a part of your identity, or fill in the blank if appropriate.*

Phrase the question to center the person, not the label.

- *How do you identify your race? Select all that apply.*
- *Person of European descent / Indigenous person*

Break it down:

- *Racially I am perceived as...*
- *Ethnically, I consider myself...*
- *Culturally, I am (or I align with) ...*

---

**Example: Sexual Orientation**

**Current Question:** Optional for staff, not asked of visitors

Do you consider yourself a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community? (2SLGBTQIA+ stands for two- spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual.)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer
- Prefer to self-describe

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## Last thought

“There is no universally correct way to measure ethnic diversity or many other visitor characteristics in which personal identity is involved. Such characteristics are subjective and often multifaceted. Furthermore, we need to be careful about imposing our external views of identity on visitor characteristics, because there can be important distinctions that may not be apparent, unless we continue to listen to visitors’ characterizations of themselves and refine our work accordingly.”

*Brian Werner, Jeff Hayward & Christine Larouche, Measuring and Understanding Diversity Is Not So Simple: How Characteristics of Personal Identity Can Improve Museum Audience Studies, Visitor Studies, 2014.*

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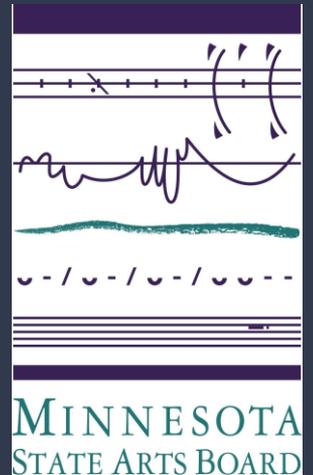
**Question to Ponder**

If you could ask visitors anything about themselves - something that you think has a big impact on their experience at the museum - what would you ask about? How would you ask it?

# Using Demographic Data to Help Ensure Arts Participation for All

Rena Youngs

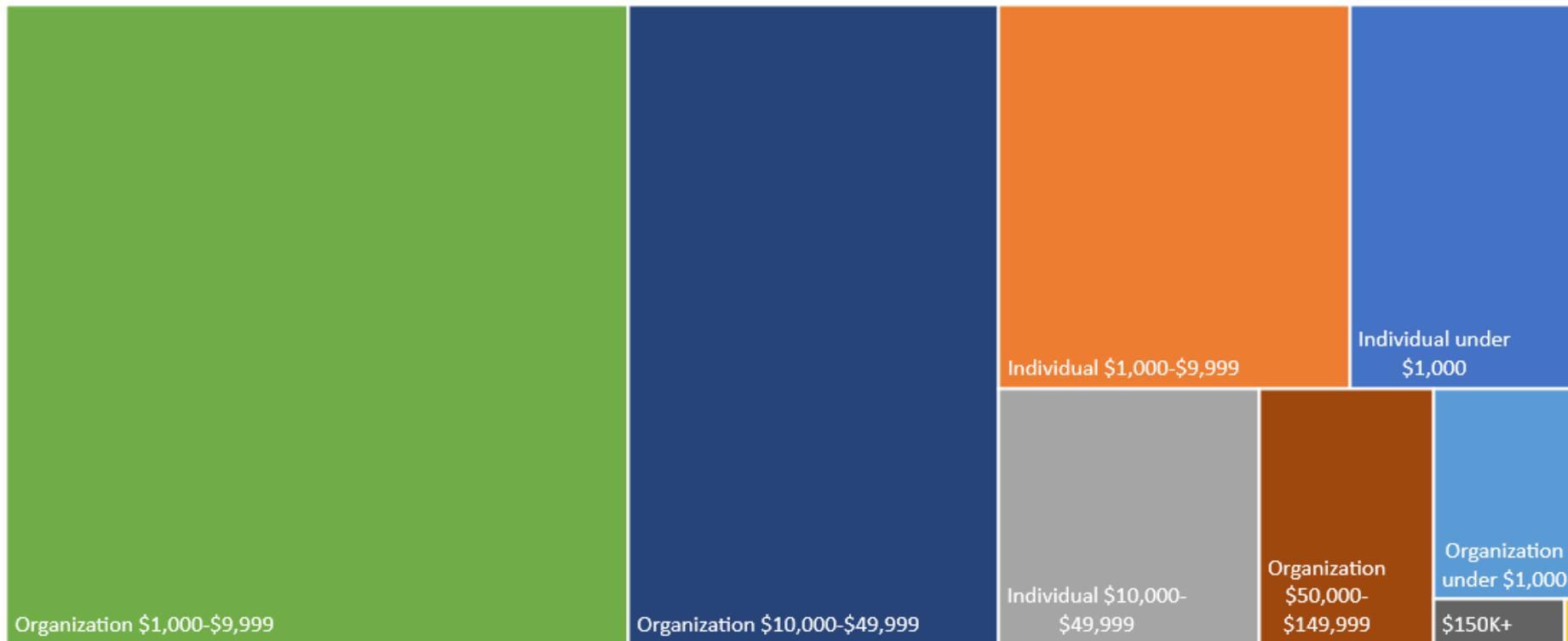
Minnesota State Arts Board





Who participates? Who benefits? – A new approach to answer new questions

# Context: Public arts funding in Minnesota



# Context: Public arts funding in Minnesota



# Competing goals for “populations benefiting” data



# Competing goals for “populations benefiting” data



# Competing goals for “populations benefiting” data



# Competing goals for “populations benefiting” data



# One solution to (some) conflicting goals:

## Population benefiting: 25% threshold

### Racial / Ethnic Population Benefiting

Select all categories that, by your best estimate, made up 25 percent or more of the population that should refer to populations reached directly, rather than through broadcasts or online programming.

American Indian /  
Alaska Native

Asian

Black / African  
American

Hispanic /  
Latino

Native Hawaiian /  
Other Pacific Islander

White

Middle Eastern /  
North African

No single racial / ethnic  
group > 25 percent of population

## Population benefiting: open percentages

### Race / Ethnicity of Population Benefiting

Enter the *percentages* of each population directly benefiting from grant activities during the reporting period, rather than through broadcasts or online programming.

American Indian / Alaska Native\* 5

Asian\* 11

Black / African American\* 10

Hispanic / Latino\* 10

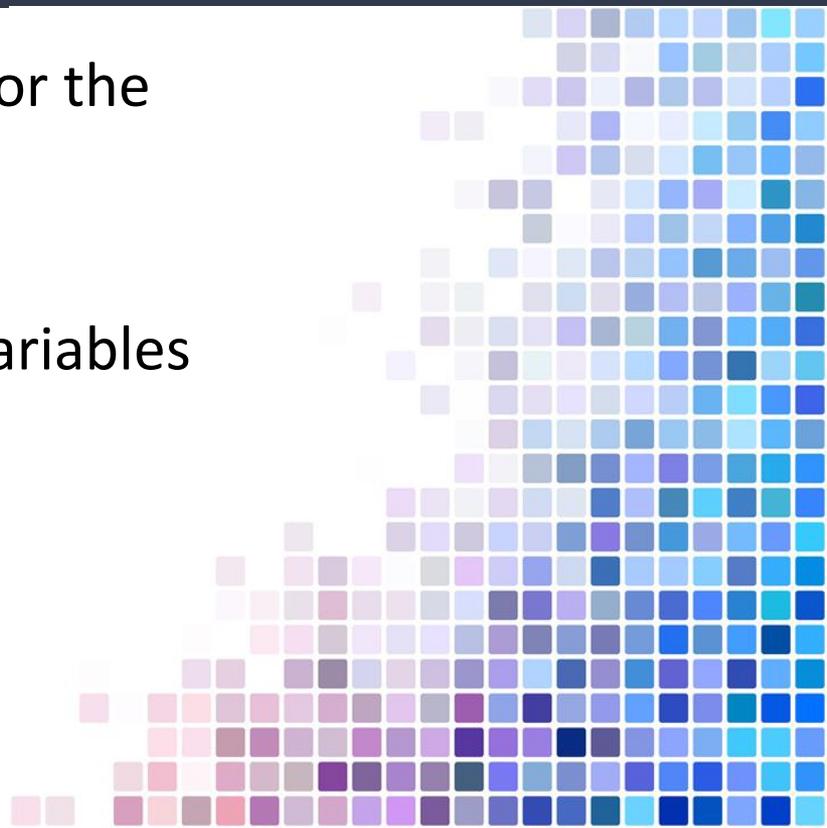
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific  
Islander\* 5

White\* 52

Middle Eastern / North African\* 10

# How this works in practice:

- Collect data with greater granularity for the Minnesota-only system and analysis
- Recode for the authorizer into their variables of nationwide interest



# Some limitations:

- No capture of intersecting identities
- This approach captures a percentage within broad categories
- Could we go further? – even do away with categories? - likely not:
  - Grantee reporting is an intermediary step
  - High volume of recoding
  - Complex individual identities would still flatten into categories



- 
- Supporting accurate primary data collection
  - Variation in data collection strategies
  - Potential agency needs for greater disaggregation
  - Potential hesitations around reporting

Other unresolved issues

# Discussion

- What resonates with your work?
- What questions do you have?
- How do we continue to advance the field when it comes to demographic information gathering?
- How do our own identities and values (personal or professional) shape how we do this work? What are our blind spots?
- How do demographic data decisions get made? By whom? Why?

Emily Kalnicky, PhD  
emily.kalnicky@state.mn.us

Katharine Wood  
katharine.wood@mnhs.org

Renae Youngs  
renae.youngs@arts.state.mn.us

Alice Anderson  
aanderson@artsmia.org

Questions?  
Want to continue the  
conversation?