



The Cleveland Foundation

CHALLENGE

Create a new, comprehensive youth development initiative that greatly increases the Foundation's impact, then evaluate the success of that initiative in order to determine next steps.

APPROACH

Design new program, including its Theory of Change
Provide implementation guidance and on-the-ground support
Dive deep into results and lessons learned to inform decisions about the initiative's future.

OUTCOME

Armed with a solid program infrastructure, promising results, and a deep and thorough analysis of what worked well and where improvements are needed, The Cleveland Foundation can now expand confidently into a third phase of its initiative.

Create a New Grant Program and Prove it Worthy of Future Investment

DREAM BIG

To help improve youth development opportunities and outcomes in the Cleveland area, The Cleveland Foundation called on Putnam Consulting Group to help create one of its most comprehensive grant programs ever. Dubbed "MyCom" (My Commitment, My Community), the initiative brought together hundreds of public and private community stakeholders, including youth, to examine collected data about local needs, target specific areas for improvement and begin to show results.

ENGAGE EVERYONE

Working closely with Cleveland Foundation staff and board, Putnam created a theory of change, guided and supported the implementation for the program, and evaluated the results. Putnam supplied both brains and muscle, identifying stakeholders, organizing site visits to other cities to learn about their efforts, creating roles and providing support for MyCom partner agencies, supporting and facilitating meetings, and identifying and engaging national experts.

"We've received only positive feedback from our partners about Putnam's consulting services. They've helped me stay organized and ahead of the curve, while planning, implementing and measuring one of the most comprehensive initiatives that our foundation has ever launched."

- LISA BOTTOMS, PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION

"Putnam is a great to work with because they listen to us and to our partner organizations, as well as bring their own skills and resources to the table," says Lisa Bottoms, Program Director. "They have the ability not only to create an overall plan of action, but to pay attention to all the details and keep us on schedule."

INFORM INVESTMENT

As expected, the work was complex, expansive and sometimes hard to pin down. But after five years, it was time to decide

whether to continue funding this approach or pursue other avenues. The Cleveland Foundation once again called on Putnam. A team of five highly qualified consultants reviewed key documentation and data collected from the initiative, led four focus groups, and conducted a dozen in-person, in-depth interviews and nearly 40 telephone interviews. Through a series of carefully designed questions and comprehensive analysis, the Putnam team determined important accomplishments from the MyCom initiative, identified areas that needed more attention, and made a series of recommendations about ways to increase the initiative's impact for the communities it serves.

"The context of data is really important. Putnam understands that and is able to dive deeper and get to underlying meanings and factors that impact our work and the impact of our work on others," says Bottoms. "They came up with five areas we needed to work on, as opposed to 32. That made knowing what to do next and what direction to go really easy."