



Putnam Consulting Group

Confident Giving • Dramatic Return

The Ohio State Bar Foundation

CHALLENGE

Determine whether a multi-year, multi-million dollar grant program is worth additional support.

APPROACH

Engage in an intensive evaluation process that gets beyond the numbers and into the on-the-ground perspectives that illustrate program impact.

OUTCOME

The Ohio State Bar Foundation learned much more about the Law & Leadership Institute it funded - including areas for improvement - and made a decision to continue funding with great confidence.

Use Evaluation Results to Make Confident Investments

STOP AND THINK

Although the Ohio State Bar Foundation (OSBF) had been around for nearly half a century, it took a bold step forward in 2008 with its first-ever multi-year, multi-million dollar grant to support the Law & Leadership Institute (LLI). LLI is a initiative in collaboration with the legal community that introduces rising 9th grade students from underserved communities to the wide array of legal careers and works with them over four years to prepare to obtain a law degree. Students attend classes during the five-week LLI Summer Institute and on Saturdays during the school year at law schools in eight Ohio cities.

LLI is a big program, involving multiple stakeholders at law schools, metropolitan bar associations and individual law firms. With so many stakeholders, so much money and so much time invested in LLI, OSBF needed to know whether the programs outcomes would merit further investment after the initial four-year commitment was finished. To find out, they called on Putnam Consulting Group to provide an evaluation and recommendations.

"We selected Putnam because of their experience in the field of evaluation, and because they had experience working with all types of foundations," says Alison

"In my view, this evaluation was the most significant endeavor our organization has had in its lifetime. It helped our board see the importance of looking beyond just awarding money."

- ALISON BELFRAGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE OHIO STATE BAR FOUNDATION

Belfrage, Executive Director. "Kris and her team asked probing questions, things that made us think more deeply about what we were trying to accomplish.

DIG DEEP WITH PROBING QUESTIONS

Putnam reviewed the full suite of reports and other materials produced by LLI during the grant period, and conducted in-depth interviews with nearly 40 stakeholders to determine the full level of the program's effectiveness and where improvements might be made. The interviews were a critical part of the evaluation, providing keen insights and opportunities that a cursory review of numbers could never supply. In addition, Putnam collected additional data through an online survey

of 44 law firms that hosted LLI students for internships.

"In asking Putnam to interview these key leaders, we were placing our reputation on the line, and they represented OSBF extremely well," says Belfrage.

MOVE AHEAD WITH SURETY

Putnam's national perspective proved valuable to OSBF's board, says Belfrage. "We needed that - to think more broadly about our context. That helped us think through aspects of the last four years that had worked well, and helped us understand what other organizations in this area were doing that we might want to consider."

After Putnam presented its findings to the trustees, the board had the information it needed to confidently extend funding for LLI into the future, and a deeper understanding of the impact of their grant. They also shared evaluation findings with LLI, which has begun implementing several of the recommendations made.

"In my view, this evaluation was the most significant endeavor our organization has had in its lifetime," says Belfrage. "It helped our board see the importance of looking beyond just awarding money. I'm looking forward to doing more evaluations as we mature."