



# The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## CHALLENGE

Break away from the foundation's traditional National Program Office model to create a new, internally run initiative targeting black men and boys.

## APPROACH

- ▶ develop and manage a new RFP process that reaches into new nonprofit networks
- ▶ create a system of virtual site visits for 20 finalists
- ▶ share lessons learned from this new process

## OUTCOME

The foundation launched its new Forward Promise initiative by internally coordinating the review of 1,200 proposals, narrowing them down to 10 flagship grantees and moving on to Phase II.

## Manage a Record-Breaking New RFP Process

### DARE TO DIFFER

Although the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) frequently relies upon experts in various National Program Offices (NPOs) to manage its grantmaking initiative, its newest endeavor, Forward Promise, targeted at improving outcomes for young men and boys of color, required a different approach. "While our NPOs have been very successful, in this case, we wanted to learn about the field in a more intimate way," explains Maisha Simmons, Program Officer. "Once we decided to run Forward Promise internally, we knew we'd need a partner that had the organizational skills and efficiencies to provide the backbone support for our RFP process."

With an estimated 800+ proposal responses anticipated, this undertaking would be no small feat. Simmons and her colleagues called on Putnam Consulting Group to get the job done.

### MAKE IT MANAGEABLE

The Putnam team worked closely with RWJF's Application and Review department to manage the online application and review process. Putnam managed RWJF's

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- MAISHA SIMMONS, PROGRAM OFFICER,  
ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

Advisory Committee to review proposals and make funding decisions. From an initial 1,200 applicants (the largest number of proposals for a single program in RWJF's history), Putnam helped narrow the field to 20 finalists, then developed an innovative series of virtual site visits to connect Advisory Committee members to applicants' locations. From those visits, RWJF was able to choose 10 finalists, announced publicly in August 2013.

"Working with Putnam is extremely beneficial. Their attention to detail — specifically in analyzing and sharing information to support our decisionmaking — helped us to stay organized and on time, and really

made a process that was so overwhelmingly big seem well organized to all participants," says Simmons.

Putnam also provided a breadth of expertise that added value for RWJF. "Putnam brought a full complement of experts to help us with the review process," says Simmons. "It's like having a whole suite of external experts in a supportive role. You don't usually get that."

### BUILD ON SUCCESS

Now that the first round of grantees are beginning their work, Simmons and her team are working with Putnam to document the new RFP process and its lessons and successes to share with the rest of the RWJF staff. They've also working with Putnam to develop and organize a second round of grants, including creating and circulating a new Call for Proposals, coordinating an applicant conference call, developing a list of Frequently Asked Questions for applicants and responding to their questions about the proposal process. As a result, RWJF can focus on the big picture — and keep Forward Promise moving forward.



## Putnam Consulting Group

Confident Giving • Dramatic Return

Putnam Consulting Group is a national, award-winning, philanthropy consulting firm. Since 1999, we've been honored to deliver results for foundations of all sizes and types. From developing powerful initiatives, to evaluating impact, to sharing the story of your success, we provide experienced consultation and guidance, logistics support and communications savvy to any or all of your grantmaking team or foundation leadership.

### WHY PUTNAM?

Simply put, Putnam provides a full range of expertise and services to help philanthropic organizations achieve dramatic results with confidence and clarity. With our assistance, foundations and nonprofits visualize, design, implement, evaluate and share programs and ideas effectively and in ways that inspire.

Since our inception, we've worked with more than 50 foundations on more than 100 projects specifically designed to increase their impact and deliver dramatic results. Our clients include leading national foundations and smaller regional and local foundations that want to improve their practice and make a deeper difference in the communities they serve.

We don't just rely on ourselves. Instead, we spend time getting to know your organization, your values, your stakeholders and

your environment — in depth. And we seek the perspectives and opinions of and engage discussions among those who influence your success, from internal staff to external partners.

Our nimble, flexible approach means your project receives the constant attention and specialized expertise it deserves — every time.

*"You need consultants who are a quick study, who have broad experience, and who can work with a variety of people. Putnam has all these qualities. We will definitely work with them again in the future."*

— ANGELA GLOVER BLACKWELL,  
FOUNDER & CEO, POLICYLINK

### OUR LEADERSHIP



Kris Putnam-Walkerly is a recognized leader in philanthropic program design, implementation, evaluation and communication. She specializes in helping foundations embrace new and more effective

approaches to solving social problems. Her focus on actionable solutions and recommendations provide her clients with clear direction for maximum impact.

Kris is a master communicator, and has produced innumerable blogs, articles and essays that deliver meaningful, relevant

insights to the field. She has been quoted in the Washington Post, BusinessWeek and other media outlets. She helps her clients communicate their stories — through her vast network of contacts and Twitter followers — thereby enriching the collective wisdom in philanthropy.

Kris chairs the steering committee of the National Network of Consultants to Grantmakers, serves on the board of the Community Foundation of Lorain County and the advisory committee of the Foundation Center in Cleveland, and is a member of the Society for Advancement of Consulting.

### LET US HELP YOU

#### DEVELOP INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

- Design grantmaking strategies and new funding initiatives
- Conduct environmental scans
- Create theories of change
- Engage stakeholders
- Pinpoint funding gaps
- Identify funding partners
- Incorporate best practices

#### ALLOCATE FUNDS WISELY

- Develop and manage the RFP process
- Identify and support intermediary organizations
- Train internal program leaders
- Manage and implement grant programs

#### EVALUATE IMPACT

- Assess evaluation needs
- Determine evaluation readiness
- Incorporate qualitative and quantitative measurement
- Conduct evaluations
- Translate evaluation results into clear recommendations

#### COMMUNICATE RESULTS

- Craft compelling case studies
- Build toolkits to support your issue
- Share lessons learned
- Circulate articles for newsletters or national press
- Produce videos that tell your story
- Present at board meetings or national conferences
- Post on various social media outlets
- Record podcasts
- Post blogs to increase exposure