

Non-Profit Research Institution Uses Actionable Insights to Evaluate and Improve STEM/Health Internship Program

About the Institution and Its Internship Program

Actionable Insights' client was a non-profit biomedical research organization whose mission is to use visionary science and technology to overcome major unsolved diseases.

In 2014, the institution established an annual summer internship program for community college students. The program, Promoting Underrepresented Minorities Advancing in the Sciences (PUMAS), supports increasing diversity in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and health-related fields of research and employment.

The Challenge

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) five-year grant that funded PUMAS required annual program evaluation. However, as a newly-developed program, PUMAS had neither a logic model to represent the program's theory of change nor an evaluation plan to deliver ongoing measurement and insights for program improvement. Additionally, PUMAS team members did not have the capacity and expertise to evaluate the program themselves.



The Solution

The founding partners of Actionable Insights were retained by the PUMAS team to assist it with evaluation. The partners developed a clear yet detailed logic model and an efficient, workable evaluation plan in collaboration with the PUMAS team.

Together, they then developed accessible pre-/post- instruments to measure participants' increases in their skills, knowledge/understanding, interest, and scientific networks over the course of the PUMAS summer program. The partners also created tools to assess PUMAS alumni progress annually, including the expanding STEM/health experience of alumni, the shifts in their educational and career paths, and the continued growth of their scientific networks.

Benefits and Results

- Clear logic model and evaluation plan that the PUMAS team can share with their non-profit research institution's stakeholders and with NIH funders.
- Thorough, well-presented reports to support NIH annual evaluation requirements.
- Actionable suggestions for improvement of PUMAS based on data-driven insights into the program, such as:
 - ✓ Improving recruitment by focusing on students who have not yet transferred to a four-year institution and those who already aspire to a research degree.
 - ✓ Helping mentors to gauge incoming interns' scientific abilities and communication strengths and needs by requiring applicants to submit a science-related writing sample.
 - ✓ Providing tips for PIs and mentors in how to guide the program's alumni in following their research career aspirations.

“Your evaluations really made me think about the PUMAS program through a different lens, and now I have a bunch of ideas on ways we can make it even better. So happy we are getting your evaluation services... very helpful!”

Shannon Noonan
Education & Community Partnership Manager

About Actionable Insights, LLC

Actionable Insights helps organizations discover and act on data-driven insights to achieve better outcomes. Co-founders Melanie Espino and Jen van Stelle, Ph.D. lend their expertise to clients in the areas of health, early childhood development, youth development, STEM education, aging, and community collaboration efforts.

Organizations come to Actionable Insights for help in:

- Measuring their impact
- Discovering key insights in their data
- Better telling the story of their work
- Planning and executing effective, data-driven action

Send an email to inquiries@actionableLLC.com or call **408-384-4956** to find out how Actionable Insights can help you.