



CHECKLIST FOR FUNDERS

Investing in Youth Transitioning From Foster Care





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INVESTING IN YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE

The number of young people who age out foster care without a permanent family continues to grow each year. In the past decade, more than 230,000 young people have aged out of foster care, left largely on their own. Research clearly shows the challenging outcomes for the majority of these young people. Youth who age out of care are less likely to graduate from high school or attend or graduate from college. These young people are more likely to experience homelessness, less likely to be employed, and are at greater risk of arrest and incarceration. New research on the brain development of young adolescents confirms conventional wisdom that expectations of “self-sufficiency” at the age of 18 are simply unrealistic. All young people need supportive families, community relationships, workforce opportunities, and education, health and housing supports as they transition to adulthood.

Philanthropic investments in supports for youth transitioning from foster care can make a significant difference in the lives of these young people. This population is a manageable size—where moderate investments can yield significant change. Many public systems are becoming increasingly aware of the needs of older youth in foster care and are looking for private sector partners to help craft solutions. And the policy landscape—notably the passage of the Fostering Connections Act in 2008—continues to present new opportunities to improve outcomes for transitioning youth.

This checklist is intended to support the decision making process of new as well as veteran funders who are seeking to invest in supports and services for youth transitioning from foster care. This checklist goes beyond traditional questions of due diligence to focus on ways to leverage the learning of previous investors, to identify potential partnerships, and to take into account current policy issues and opportunities.

This checklist was developed by the Foster Care Work Group (FCWG), an affinity group of funders and alumni of foster care who work together to coordinate and leverage investments in older youth transitioning from foster care. FCWG is one of three workgroups of the Youth Transition Funder’s Group (YTFG), a national network of foundations dedicated to ensuring all young people are connected by age 25 to supports and institutions that enable them to succeed in adulthood.

This checklist provides a series of questions for funders to consider as they design investments to support youth transitioning out of foster care. New funders can use the checklist as a guide for designing an investment for the first time. Veteran funders can use this tool to double-check they have completed key steps that maximize opportunities for leverage as well as take into account changes in the policy landscape.

The checklist includes eight sets of tasks to complete during an investment design process. Note that the list is comprehensive and that not all tasks may be applicable to each funder. The checklist includes space to jot down questions to ask (or consider later) and as well as sample questions to help spur thinking. Finally, the checklist highlights suggested resources that can assist funders in completing each task during this process.

Funder's Checklist for Investing in Youth Transitioning From Foster Care

Step	Check When Complete	Questions to Ask	Resources to Help/People to Talk To
I. Scan the Landscape			
Collect data on trends and needs from:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State and/or local child welfare leaders and stakeholders 		<i>What's the status of older youth in foster care? What are critical needs for this population? What are the largest gaps in services?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kids Count Center for the Study of Social Policy's Policy for Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other funders 		<i>Where are gaps in the systems serving older youth where private investments might help?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YTFG and FCWG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers of transitional services 		<i>What are keys to effective service delivery? What barriers are impeding success?</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people currently in care; alumni of foster care 		<i>What support was most useful to you? What support didn't you receive that would have made a real difference?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster Club Foster Care Alumni of America
Review current research base on what works, including what evidence-based practices exist.		<i>What programs and practices for older youth in foster care have evidence of success?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapin Hall Child Trends' What Works Center for the Study of Social Policy's Policy for Results Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Blueprints for Violence Prevention Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs' Find Youth Info.Gov
Talk to and review what other funders are supporting in your state and/or region, including YTFG and FCWG members.		<i>What other private investments have been made in this population? With what success? With what lessons learned? What investments are currently being made in this population?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YTFG and FCWG
Consider gaps in direct service, capacity, research, and advocacy.		<i>Overall, what key gaps exist investments in older youth in foster care?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide to Mapping Community Assets for Transitioning Youth Assessing Community Resources to Support Transitioning Youth

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2. Prioritize Scope and Focus			
Define the results you want to achieve from your investment.		<i>What does success look like and how will I measure progress?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Successful Futures of Foster Youth
Consider what type of investment(s) you want to make: policy/advocacy/communications; research/evaluation; technical assistance; direct services; demonstration to test new ideas.		<i>Based on the needs and gaps you identified, what type(s) of investment are of highest priority?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Successful Futures of Foster Youth
Consider the potential synergy between related investments (within your foundation and with outside partners).		<i>With whom can I coordinate my investment to leverage additional resources?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Center for Effective Philanthropy ■ Council of Foundations ■ Grant Craft
Consider what role your foundation will play with public funders.		<i>How can I best coordinate my investment with public investments?</i>	
Consider how you will support, require, and/or incentivize leveraging other investments (partnerships, matching requirements, etc).		<i>What requirements or incentives for leverage will I include in my grant?</i>	
3. Consider Resources for Design			
Review the investment strategies from the FCWG's <i>Connected by 25</i> .		<i>What strategies hold promise for achieving the outcomes I identified?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Successful Futures of Foster Youth
Review planning and implementation lessons from the <i>Lessons Learned from the Foster Care Work Group</i> .		<i>What can I learn about implementation, governance, and leverage from other investments?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring Youth Transitioning from Foster Care are Connected by 25: Lessons Learned from the Foster Care Work Group
Consider resources to support the sustainability of your grantees.		<i>What requirements and/or support will I include related to the sustainability of my investment?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investing in the Sustainability of Youth Programs: An Assessment Tool for Funders ■ Sustainability Information Resource Center
Talk to other funders, including YTFG and FCWG members		<i>What have others learned that can inform my investment?</i>	

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4. Consider Alignment with Existing and New Policy and Practice			
Consider how this investment supports implementation of the Fostering Connections Act provisions:		<i>How can my investment support effective implementation of new policy requirements and options?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fostering Connections Resource Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Educational continuity 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sibling placement 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transition planning 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Option to extend IV-E eligibility 			
Does this investment support improved permanency practice?		<i>How can my investment support public and private agencies improve practice to ensure older youth have life-long connections with caring adults?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections ■ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative
5. Consider New Research			
Does this investment take into account the needs of particular subgroups, such as pregnant and parenting teens, those with juvenile justice involvement, etc)?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth
Does this investment take into account recent data on trends in foster care exits?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A 5-Year Projection in the Number of Children Turning Age 18 while in Foster Care
How does this investment seek to reduce disparities in the child welfare system, including the overrepresentation of children of color?		<i>How can my investment address ethnic and racial disparities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alliance for Race Equity
6. Consider How Best to Engage Older Youth and Alumni			
Will you directly fund efforts to engage older youth and alumni?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foster Club ■ Foster Care Alumni of America
Will you require grantee to support engagement activities?			

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7. Consider Support to Track Results			
Have you required a clearly-articulated logic model?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Successful Futures of Foster Youth
Have you required an evaluation plan?			
Does the design include an evidence-based practice? What support can you provide to move the grantee to a higher level of evidence that supports their work?			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child Trends' What Works Database ■ Center for the Study of Social Policy's Policy for Results ■ Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Blueprints for Violence Prevention ■ Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs' Find Youth Info.Gov
8. Find Allies			
Have you reached out to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FCWG/YTFG/Other funders 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Businesses 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State/local stakeholders 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policy makers 			

SELECTED RESOURCES

Effective Grantmaking

Center for Effective Philanthropy:
www.effectivephilanthropy.org

Council of Foundations: www.cof.org

Grant Craft: www.grantcraft.org

Research and Evaluation

Chapin Hall's Child Welfare and Foster Care System Research: www.chapinhall.org/research/areas/Child-Welfare-and-Foster-Care-Systems

Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth. Mark E. Courtney, et al. Chapin Hall, 2010. Available at: www.chapinhall.org/research/report/midwest-evaluation-adult-functioning-former-foster-youth

A 5-Year Projection in the Number of Children Turning Age 18 while in Foster Care by Fred Wulczyn and Linda Collins. Chapin Hall, 2010. Available at: www.chapinhall.org/research/report/5-year-projection-number-children-turning-age-18-while-foster-care

Center for the Study of Social Policy's Policy for Results: www.policyforresults.org

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Blueprints for Violence Prevention: www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html

Federal Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs' Find Youth Info.Gov: www.findyouthinfo.gov

Design Tools

Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Successful Futures of Foster Youth. The Foster Care Work Group. The Finance Project, 2004. Available at: www.financeproject.org/publications/fostercarefinal.pdf

Ensuring Youth Transitioning from Foster Care are Connected by 25: Lessons Learned from the Foster Care Work Group. Margaret Flynn-Khan. The Finance Project, 2010. Available at: www.financeproject.org/publications/EnsuringYouthTransitioningCby25.pdf

Guide to Mapping Community Assets for Transitioning Youth. Katherine Gaughen. The Finance Project, 2010. Available at: www.financeproject.org/publications/MappingCommunityAssets.pdf

Assessing Community Resources to Support Transitioning Youth. Katherine Gaaughen. The Finance Project, 2010. Available at: www.financeproject.org/publications/MappingCommunityAssets.pdf

Investing in the Sustainability of Youth Programs: An Assessment Tool for Funders. Barbara Hanson Langford. The Finance Project, 2007. Available at: www.financeproject.org/Publications/Funders_Tool_PM.pdf

The Finance Project's Sustainability Information Resource Center: www.financeproject.org

Alliance for Race Equity: www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/alliance-for-race-equity

Policy and Practice

Fostering Connections Resource Center.
www.fosteringconnections.org

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections: www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/youth-permanency.html

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative:
www.jimcaseyyouth.org

Alumni Organizations and Resources

Foster Care Alumni of America.
www.fostercarealumni.org

Foster Club: www.fosterclub.com

YTFG and Related Donor Guides

Youth Transition Funders Group and Foster Care Work Group: www.ytfg.org

Multiple Pathways to Graduation Donor Guide:
www.ytfg.org/documents/YTFG-MultiplePathwaysToGraduationDonorGuide.pdf

Juvenile Justice Workgroup Donor Guide:
www.ytfg.org/documents/JEHT_SecondEdition.pdf

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About The Youth Transitions Funders Group

The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) was formed in 2001 by funders dedicated to improving the lives of our nation's most vulnerable young people. Foundations involved in the YTFG are committed to achieving a common mission—ensuring that this nation's young people are successfully connected by age 25 to institutions and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. The YTFG has adopted the theme, "Connected by 25," to describe this mission. A young person who is Connected by 25 has attained five critical outcomes:

- Educational achievement in preparation for career and community participation, including a high school diploma, postsecondary degree and/or vocational certificate training
- Gainful employment and/or access to career training to achieve life-long economic success
- Connections to a positive support system—namely, guidance from family members and caring adults, as well as access to health, counseling and mental health services
- The ability to be a responsible and nurturing parent
- The capacity to participate in the civic life of one's community

To achieve this mission, YTFG members are committed to working together, thereby enhancing the likelihood that investments from individual foundations will make a real difference in promoting young people's attainment of these outcomes.

About the Foster Care Work Group

The Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) is one of three work groups of YTFG. The mission of the FCWG is to ensure that all youth have lifelong family, personal, and community connections and the opportunities and tools to achieve economic success and well-being. FCWG members work to coordinate and leverage investments that: help to build the capacity of communities to effectively support young people transitioning from foster care; strengthen federal and state policies for youth leaving care; and raise public awareness of the needs of youth currently in or transitioning from foster care.

About The Finance Project

The Finance Project (TFP) is a specialized non-profit research, technical assistance and training firm for public and private sector leaders nationwide. TFP helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships that benefit children, families, and communities. TFP supports policymakers, program developers, and community leaders by providing: creative new ideas for policies, programs, and system reforms; comprehensive tools for identifying, refining and expanding the use of promising practices; and effective policy and program tools to help clients identify needs and achieve goals. For more information, visit www.financeproject.org.

