



A GUIDE TO

Engaging Alumni of Foster Care in Funder Collaboratives





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ENGAGING ALUMNI OF FOSTER CARE IN FUNDER COLLABORATIVES

Business leaders have long known that understanding the concerns and satisfaction of their clients is paramount to success. Yet too few child welfare leaders, including private foundations, approach reform without considering the valuable experience and perspective of current and former foster youth. The powerful voice of youth and young adults who have experienced foster care has resulted in significant improvements in policies and practices in child welfare systems across the country, including the passage of the federal Fostering Connections Act. Few efforts to reform child welfare policies and programs are as effective as those that draw from the knowledge and perspective of young people who are alumni of foster care.

Recent research indicates that engaging youth and young adults in decision-making structures yields significant benefits and positive outcomes. Youth and young adults participating in youth-adult partnerships have consistently shown to gain a sense of empowerment, confidence, and connectedness as well as gain important skills and develop new relationships.¹ Older adults participating in these types of partnerships accrue benefits as well. Adults are exposed to new ideas, perspectives, and approaches and partnerships with youth serve to enhance their commitment to the organization. The decision making process itself is also strengthened. Young people change the content and the quality of discourse and decision making procedures. The mutual contributions of youth and adults can result in a synergy that propels a group to make better, more creative and informed decisions with a higher level of productivity.²

With a strong commitment to youth and alumni engagement, the Foster Care Work Group (FCWG)—an affinity group of foundations investing in supports and services for youth transitioning from foster care—sought to create an effective partnership with alumni of foster care who brought specialized expertise and experience. This guide was developed based on reflections on the FCWG’s experience in creating a robust funder-alumni partnership over the past seven years. It is important to note that work to enhance and improve the FCWG’s funder-alumni partnership is not complete. However, its history, evolution, and lessons learned provide a rich case study that can inform other efforts to create effective partnerships between funders and young adults who have experienced foster care. The FCWG’s experience is also instructive for funders seeking to engage young adults who have been clients of other youth-serving systems that they are seeking to invest in and improve—such as in the fields of juvenile justice, education, and workforce development.

**“Few things are as powerful
as the voices of young people
who have experienced foster
care in shaping our work.”**

—Gary Stangler,
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

¹ S. Zeldin, C. O’Connor, and L. Camino, “Youth as Evaluators: What’s an Adult to Do?” *PrACTice Matters* (January 2006). Available at www.actforyouth.net/documents/Jan06.pdf.

² S. Zeldin, A.K. McDaniel, D. Topitzes, and M. Calvert, *Youth in Decision Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations* (Chevy Chase, Md.: Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development and National 4-H Council, 2000). Available at www.cpn.org/topics/cyd/pdfs/Youth_in_Decision_Making.pdf.

The guide begins with a brief look back at the history and evolution of the FCWG and its partnership with alumni members. The guide then presents several critical steps to consider in crafting and sustaining effective funder-alumni partnerships and offers tools and guidance from FCWG members. The guide also includes profiles of several alumni members with whom the FCWG credits much of its success.

History and Evolution of the FCWG

Funder collaboratives have gained increasing interest in recent years. As foundation leaders seek to identify new and creative approaches to extend the reach of their investments, particularly in challenging financial times, funder collaboratives offer a useful mechanism to amplify and enhance a single foundation's ability to make a difference in addressing complex issues and challenges.

The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) is a funder collaborative created to improve the lives of the nation's most vulnerable young people. Members of YTFG are committed to achieving a common mission—ensuring young people are successfully connected by age 25 to institutions and support systems that will

enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. YTFG accomplishes its work through the efforts of three work groups focused on young people who have dropped out or have been pushed out of schools, those in the juvenile justice system, and those in and transitioning from foster care. FCWG brings together foundation leaders with a shared interest in preparing youth in foster care for their transition out of the child welfare system and affording them pathways to lifelong economic well-being.

“We’ve been able to create a strong culture of partnership within the FCWG, where both funders and alumni contribute to as well as benefit from our collective work.”

—Brian Lyght,
Annie E. Casey Foundation

When the FCWG was first formed in 2002, the focus of the group's attention was on the creation of an ambitious investment agenda. From the beginning, members placed a high priority on alumni engagement and invited three alumni members to serve on the FCWG. The original three alumni members were talented, articulate, confident leaders who contributed in significant ways to the development of *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*. At the time, the FCWG was relatively small and members had longstanding relationships with one another. Formal processes seemed unnecessary. Not unexpectedly, two of the three alumni members left the FCWG to pursue educational and professional opportunities.

This gap in alumni membership occurred as the FCWG was moving from work on a conceptual co-investment agenda to a national demonstration initiative to test out the ideas of *Connected by 25*. One of the original members served in a leadership position at California Youth Connection and was replaced by her capable successor. To fill additional positions, the existing alumni members urged the FCWG to develop a more intentional effort to recruit and support its alumni members. The result was a more formalized set of roles, expectations, and structures. As new alumni members joined, they too served to influence and improve the processes and practices of the partnership. The steps that follow represent the evolution of the FCWG's partnership between funders and alumni members, what the FCWG learned along the way, and the tools the group developed in the process.

CRITICAL STEPS IN FORMING AND SUPPORTING A FUNDER-ALUMNI PARTNERSHIP

Foundation leaders and funder affinity groups seeking to create funder-alumni partnerships should consider the following key steps in partnership development.

I. Getting Started

Initial planning steps for partnership development are critical to clarify interests and expectations, to take stock of the skill set of current members for supporting this type of partnership, as well as to consider the type of support for new members to put in place.

- A first step in planning for the creation of a funder-alumni partnership is to **clarify the group's expectations** for alumni members. What is the group seeking to get out of a partnership? Why does the group want alumni members to participate? Reasons might include improved decision-making, a commitment to alumni engagement principles, to ensure the integrity of the group, and/or to grow new leaders in the field.
- **Assess interests and skills of members in working partnership with alumni.** Consider an assessment of the level of commitment of current members to creating a partnership as well as the skills they possess to work in partnership effectively. The Funder-Alumni Partnership Self-Assessment, included as Appendix A, can help you conduct a brief self-assessment that can ensure a strong level of commitment by members to this partnership as well as areas of skill development to support.
- **Consider how many alumni members to join the group.** It's difficult to impossible to adequately represent a diverse population of young people when there are only one or two alumni members in the group. Consider a minimum of three alumni members to join the collaborative. The FCWG started with three members, then expanded to seven. Roughly one-third of the total membership is alumni members. Remember that not everyone will be able to make every meeting.
- **Consider what support to invest in.** Partnerships require resources to ensure the collaboration can be sustained. Needed resources include staff (or a dedicated liaison) to provide ongoing support as well as travel expenses. Also consider offering a stipend for participation, particularly for members who must take off of work or school to attend meetings. The FCWG covers all travel expenses for two in-person meetings each year as well as provides a \$100 stipend for attendance at in-person meetings.

“From the beginning, we made a strong commitment to having alumni of foster care at the table as true partners. Our work would not have been as rich or as effective without the contributions of our alumni members.”

—Jane Soltis,
Eckerd Family Foundation

Spotlight On: Mary Lee

Mary Lee joined the FCWG in 2006 as the Youth Transition Funder's Group's Fellow on Disconnected Youth and Social Policy and has been an active and valued member since. Mary is a graduate of the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law and is currently the Business Development Specialist for Transitional Living at Youth Villages, a non-profit organization that helps at-risk children and families. Her position focuses on the enhancement and expansion of the organization's transitional living program. She received a bachelor's degree in Social Work and a minor in Leadership from Austin Peay State University.

Mary came into foster care around the age of 12 and was in the system for almost five years before being adopted by her case manager one week before her 18th birthday. Since the age of 15, Mary has been actively involved in improving the foster care system. She has served on numerous youth advisory councils on the local, state and national level, and was previously the president of the National Foster Youth Advisory Council. Mary has worked with national foundations and organizations, such as the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Dave Thomas Foundation, National Council on Adoption, and Northern Council on Adoptable Children. She was chosen to be a Foster Youth Intern (FYI) by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and was honored as the 2000 Adoptive Person of the Year and a Tennessee Hero, receiving a Proclamation from the Tennessee House of Representatives.

Mary joined the FCWG to use her experience in foster care to help improve the system for youth for youth that would follow her. She also wanted to ensure that the collective voice of foster youth was at the table and being heard.

While Mary's passion is improving the foster care system in general, her deepest passion is permanency. She believes that every person, regardless of their age, deserves a loving family (whether it be a formal or informal family). Mary notes "being a part of the FCWG has allowed me to share my own story of finding permanency and to ensure that permanency is one of the goals (in addition to education, employment, housing, financial stability, and basic independent living skills) we strive to obtain for all foster youth."

- **Consider language.** Be thoughtful about what language makes sense and is respectful and comfortable. The FCWG began seeking to engage "youth" as part of its membership. That term evolved into "young people" or "young adults" as the group reflected on the actual age and professional background of these members. The group collaboratively decided to use the term "alumni members" to reference those with specialized experience with the foster care system in the group.
- **Scheduling.** Consider how the group can accommodate the work schedule of alumni members. Remember that most alumni members are beginning their professional careers and may not have flexibility to take several work days off. Also consider that the alumni may not be compensated by their employers for participation in the collaborative. Consider scheduling meetings and calls at times that work for alumni members, including weekends and evenings.

2. Recruitment Process

Once the group has considered its expectations for alumni members, the resources needed to support this collaboration, and assessed the skills of the group in working in such a partnership, the next step is to create a process to identify and recruit new members.

- **Consider skills and experiences needed.** To help ensure a good fit, be clear on the skills the group is seeking and the level of experience desired. This may include unique professional experience—such as work in an advocacy organization; specific affiliations—such as former fellows of related organizations; or connections to other alumni in the field—such as leaders of national and/or local alumni organizations. The FCWG sought alumni members who were articulate and thoughtful, who had experience participating in boards and/or community partnerships, and who felt confident in expressing themselves in a group.
- In order to ensure you are recruiting individuals that will be a good fit for the group, **consider expectations for meeting participation and meeting timing and location.** The FCWG seeks “regular” and “active” participation from alumni members, but recognizes that all members—funders and alumni—have busy lives and multiple commitments. Also consider group norms for when meetings occur—notably during the business day versus evenings or weekends. The FCWG has been challenged with meeting times, as the majority of our funders prefer meeting during the traditional work day. Alumni members who are most active work in professional positions in the child welfare field where their participation is part of their job. Participation of members who work in unrelated fields find this schedule more challenging.
- **Create a formal job description.** A formal job description helps to clearly communicate expectations. At the urging of one alumni member, the FCWG created a recruitment announcement for new members. (See Appendix B.) Make sure to include information on the value and benefits to alumni for participation, such as networking opportunities.
- **Consider what recruitment process makes sense.** The group can choose for a variety of recruitment strategies, including:
 - Application process—where individuals are invited to apply,
 - Recommendations and referrals—where current members refer and recommend potential applications, and
 - Alumni-led nominations—where current alumni members seek out and nominate new applicants.

The FCWG choose a nomination process by which funders identified and put forth applicants for the group’s review based on their current investments in sites and organizations and their networks in the field. Given its national demonstration was underway, it also made sense for each Connected by 25 site to nominate an alumni member to be a part of the group. This was a relatively informal process that yielded many highly qualified members.

“Our alumni members inspire us to think harder and push us to demand more.”

—Tina Gridiron Smith,
Lumina Foundation for Education

3. Orientation

Once the group has selected its new alumni members, a critical next step is to effectively prepare them to assume their new roles. Plan an orientation session that covers critical information on how the group works.

- **Share background information on the collaborative’s mission, history, and current members.**
Provide critical historical documents, such as fact sheets, annual reports, and/or major publications. Provide a listing of all group members, preferably with short biographies and pictures, as well as brief background information on the foundations they represent. Also share current strategic plans, workplans and bylaws.
- **Share information on the group’s norms and processes,** including how the group makes decisions. Information might include how formal or informal the group is in its discussions, how much or how little members like to process information, and how they like to work together.

Spotlight On: Tiffany Johnson

Tiffany Johnson joined the FCWG in 2005 and has served as an important catalyst for improving how the group recruits and supports alumni members. Tiffany is a former member and current Director of Outreach and Operations for the California Youth Connection (CYC). CYC is a statewide nonprofit organization that is guided, focused and driven by current and former foster youth. CYC promotes the participation of foster youth in policy development and legislative change to improve the foster care system, and strives to improve social work practice and child welfare policy.

Tiffany is a former foster youth who has experienced group home care, kinship care, and sibling placement. Since the age of seventeen, she has been an active participant in helping educate the community and legislature about the foster care system. One of these efforts included meeting with former First Lady Hillary Clinton to discuss the needs of emancipating foster youth. Previously, Tiffany coordinated the mental health project that focused on improving mental health services for foster youth by including youth and their expertise in the decision-making process. Tiffany has also worked for the San Francisco Independent Living Skills Program and is a former Board member for the First Place Fund for Youth. Tiffany graduated from Cal State University, Hayward, with a Masters of Public Administration with a focus on organizational change. In 2008, Tiffany was awarded the James Irvine Foundation’s Leadership Award.

Tiffany joined the FCWG because she believes in their mission. She wanted to inspire funders who have the ability to fund programs that impact foster care. As a member of the FCWG, she has provided valuable insight to the groups’ discussions. Tiffany remarks that she’s benefited from the “opportunity to learn about best practices from other influential programs from across the country” as well as “have access to a network of knowledgeable and dedicated advocates.”

- **Orient new members about the structure of meetings**, and share sample agendas. Highlight regular agenda items as well as typical opportunities for input and to ask questions.
- **Clarify administrative processes** for making travel arrangements, receiving reimbursement for expenses, and submitting requests for stipends. Include points of contact and required forms.
- **Consider using a current alumni member to lead or co-lead the orientation process.** A current alumni member is likely the most effective person to orient new members to the group and can share a unique perspective about how best to get to know the group and useful documents to review. Based on the recommendation of an alumni member, the FCWG created a more formal orientation process as the number of alumni members grew. The agenda from the FCWG's most recent orientation session, which was co-lead by an alumni member and FCWG staff, is included as Appendix C.

“Having alumni members as partners in the FCWG changes our conversations, sharpens our priorities, and fundamentally improves our work.”

*Sue Hoag Badeau,
Casey Family Programs*

Spotlight On: H.J. David Ambroz

David Ambroz is one of the original FCWG alumni members, joining the group in 2003, and helped to shape the initial investment agenda the group developed. David has remained a consistent presence, pushing the group to consider new directions. David is currently the Executive Director of the Los Angeles City College Foundation raising funds for the disadvantaged to attend college. David is a graduate of Vassar College and the UCLA School of Law.

David and his siblings were in and out of foster care for their entire lives, living in many foster homes in three states and countless cities. Emancipating from foster care at seventeen, David has remained intimately involved with foster care reform efforts. Among other positions, David notably serves as a Gubernatorial appointee to the California Child Welfare Council and as an ABA Commissioner. David is also a regular contributor to the Huffington Post.

David joined the FCWG “to bring not just a wrinkle-free face to the table, but experience.” He reflects that “no amount of degrees or work experience can provide the education that time spent in the foster care system does.” David’s experience, combined with his formal education, empowered him to advocate for the reforms he believed were important to other young people.

David remarks that the FCWG is “an amazing group of people personally, and professionally, the best and brightest in the field. I have learned so much about how reform meanders in the real world, and how we can leverage our individual work to make it meander faster and in our chosen direction.” David brings a good dose of humor as well as practical advice to the group. As a veteran member, David notes that “at times foundations like to have meetings about meetings to discuss future meetings. I hope I have added to the sense of urgency, and at times grounded the discussions.”

4. Ongoing Support

The orientation process provided critical background information to prepare new members to effectively contribute to a funder collaborative. Also consider a variety of approaches to provide ongoing support to alumni members to ensure the group can take full advantage of their expertise and that the alumni members are receiving the full benefit from their participation. Ongoing support might include the following.

- **Pre-Calls and/or Pre-Meetings.** Consider taking 20 to 30 minutes before each call and/or meeting to walk through the meeting agenda, review materials that will be discussed, highlight opportunities for input, and answer any questions.

- **Make a group commitment to avoid jargon and acronyms.** Funders who have been active in a particular field over a period of time develop a unique language that is often riddled with industry jargon and acronyms of organizations and policies. Commit to using a common language in the group that all members speak and understand. Taking a few seconds to state the full name instead of an acronym and use more meaningful language ensures everyone can fully participate in the conversation.

“Working with foster care alumnae as partners in this complex work has deepened my understanding of the foster care experience, and has broadened my perspectives about possible solutions.”

—Sarah Greenblatt,
Jim Casey Youth
Opportunities Initiatives

- **Post-Call and/or Post-Meeting Debrief.** At the end the call or meeting, also consider providing a space to debrief key discussions, review decisions, and provide opportunities for members to ask follow-up questions. After the first four to six months, new FCWG alumni members became much more familiar with the group and its structure and both the pre- and post-meeting debriefs became less needed.
- **Peer-to-peer support.** Using veteran alumni members to provide peer-to-peer support is also a useful approach to ensure every member can fully contribute. This type of support can also be useful in helping in creating a stronger network of the alumni members outside of the funder collaborative as well.
- **Mentoring or co-mentoring.** Assign a one-to-one mentor relationship with a current non-alumni member. This mentor should serve as the go-to person for an ongoing dialogue on the alumni’s experience with the collaborative.
- **Facilitation techniques to support full group participation.** All members of the collaborative—funders and alumni alike—vary in terms of their preferences for learning and sharing. Consider a variety of facilitation techniques to maximize full group participation. Breaking into pairs and/or small groups provides an alternative to large group conversations. Structured “go-arounds” creates space for everyone to speak.

5. Reflect, Learn, and Adapt

The key to continued success of effective funder-alumni partnerships is to regularly and intentionally reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, encourage all members to learn and improve, and adapt and improve practices and approaches to strengthen and sustain the partnership.

- **Consider meeting agenda structure to maximize engagement of all members.** Critically review how the group structures its agenda and prioritizes conversation. This review is particularly important when adding alumni members to existing funder groups. In the case of the FCWG, its agenda typically began with “funder updates” which focused on new grantmaking initiatives, new opportunities for partnerships, and announcements of new publications. Nowhere on the agenda was there a similar item to request updates from alumni members. The FCWG restructured that agenda item to focus on “funder and alumni updates” that provides a focus on leveraging the information and connections of alumni members as well.

Spotlight On: Lyssa Trujillo

Lyssa Trujillo joined the FCWG in 2006 as a representative from the California Connected by 25 Initiative, one of the sites of the FCWG’s national demonstration, and continues to bring a valuable on-the-ground perspective to the group. Lyssa graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a degree in Psychology. While attending college, she worked as a research assistant for a Santa Cruz research company that focused on local social justice issues. Since 2008, she has worked as the California Connected by 25 Initiative’s Youth and Alumni Engagement Technical Assistant, providing support and consultation to initiative leaders across the state in empowering youth and alumni.

Halfway through Lyssa’s senior year in high school, she and her younger brother and sister were placed into foster care. She successfully advocated to be placed in the same foster home as her siblings. After graduating high school, she and her sister went to live with an aunt and uncle in kinship care, while her brother stayed in San Diego. Lyssa was an effective self-advocate, and worked hard to take advantage of supports that would benefit her, including submitting a successful application for the YES Scholarship.

Through her role at the California Connected by 25 Initiative, Lyssa works to ensure all young people have a voice in how the foster care system operates and are empowered to make decisions about their future. Lyssa was chosen to participate in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Foster Youth Internship program as continues to volunteer to speak at a variety of events and conferences.

Lyssa brings critical ground-level experience on youth engagement to the FCWG. Lyssa notes that her involvement in the FCWG has “helped me to see the history behind the initiative, to gain an understanding of what direction reforms are headed nationally, and help provide input at a grander scale.” Lyssa also states that an added benefit of participation in the group is the “opportunity for networking, not only with other professionals nationally, but also with other alumni.”

- **Maintain a culture of reflection and improvement.** Create intentional and formal practices for review and reflection. These practices might include dedicated time during a meeting to raise areas that need improvement and to discuss suggested approaches. Also consider written evaluations or requests for feedback. Make reflection a regular practice of the partnership.
- **Tailor strategies based on stage of partnership.** Some approaches might make great sense in the early stages of a partnership. But as the partnership grows and evolves over time, approaches will likely need to evolve as well. For example, the FCWG was restructuring its subcommittees at the same time that several new alumni members joined the group. The alumni members recommended creating a dedicated standing alumni subcommittee to create space and focus on alumni and youth engagement issues. While alumni members serve on all other subcommittees, this structure made sense at this stage of the FCWG's partnership when many new alumni members had joined.

Conclusion

Funder collaboratives can be an incredibly useful and effective way to share information, improve grantmaking, and coordinate and leverage investments. Research and experience have shown the enormous benefits of ensuring that alumni of foster care are full partners in decision-making processes. Funder-alumni partnerships hold great promise for improving how funders invest in supports and services for youth transitioning from foster care. As the FCWG's experience has shown, funder-alumni partnerships produce mutual benefits for funders and alumni alike, as well as strengthen the collective activities of the group as a whole.

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SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS

BoardSource: dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening their boards of directors.

www.boardsource.org

California Youth Connection: is guided, focused and driven by current and former foster youth and promotes the participation of foster youth in policy development and legislative change to improve the foster care system, and strives to improve social work practice and child welfare policy.

www.calyouthconn.org

Foster Club: FosterClub is the national network for young people in foster care, a peer support network that opens the way for young people to transform their own lives.

www.fosterclub.com

Foster Care Alumni Association: connects the estimated 12 million adults that share the foster care experience to create a powerful, collective voice to improve foster care.

www.fostercarealumni.org

Innovation Center: Seeks to promote youth, adults, organizations, and communities to engage together in creating a just and equitable society. Offers consulting, training and tools to help organizations of all sizes integrate youth adult partnership into their work.

www.theinnovationcenter.org

Youth Leadership Institute: works to advance the nationwide movement supporting youth engagement through training, advocating for policy and systems change, and organizing on a community level.

www.yli.org

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Funder-Alumni Partnership Self-Assessment

This tool is intended to assist foundation leaders in funder collaboratives to take stock of their skills and knowledge in working effectively in a funder-alumni partnership. For each statement, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being you are at an early stage of skill development or have little knowledge and 5 being have proficient skills or possess expert knowledge. The tool also includes space to jot down notes and follow-up actions.

| | Rate from 1 to 5 <i>(1=early stage of skill/ knowledge; 5=proficient skills/expert knowledge)</i> | Comments and Follow-Up Actions |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| I am familiar with research about youth/ young-adult partnerships. | | |
| I am familiar with resources and tools to support alumni engagement. | | |
| I affirm and support people's ideas and feelings. | | |
| I treat all members of the group with respect. | | |
| I provide opportunities for all group members to reflect and learn. | | |
| I listen carefully to all members of the group. | | |
| I seek to learn from all members of the group. | | |
| I advocate for improvements in the engagement of youth and alumni in organizations and communities in which I invest. | | |
| I work effectively in partnership with alumni and/or young adults. | | |

* Adapted from *A Youth-Adult Partnership Self-Assessment Tool in Youth-Adult Partnerships—A Training Manual* developed by The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, National Network for Youth and the Youth Leadership Institute.

Appendix B: Sample Job Announcement

Information for Alumni Members of the Foster Care Work Group

ABOUT THE FOSTER CARE WORK GROUP (FCWG)

The Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) is one of three work groups of the Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG), a collaboration of foundation leaders dedicated to improving the lives of our nation's most vulnerable young people. Foundation leaders participating in the YTFG are committed to achieving a common vision—ensuring that vulnerable youth are connected by age 25 to institutions and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. The YTFG accomplishes its work through the efforts of three work groups focused on: young people who have dropped out or have been pushed out of schools, those in the juvenile justice system, and those in and emerging from foster care.

The FCWG brings together foundation leaders with a shared interest in preparing youth in foster care for their transition out of the child welfare system and providing them pathways to lifelong economic well-being. FCWG members meet twice a year and communicate regularly regarding how they can 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 foster care; and
- raise public awareness of the needs of youth leaving foster care and effective ways to support them in becoming successful adults.

Together, members of the FCWG are building a national movement of funders, community leaders, young people, policymakers, practitioners and researchers with a shared focus on supporting successful futures for youth transitioning from foster care.

ALUMNI MEMBERS

FCWG members are committed to ensuring that the perspectives of youth and alumni are included in all of the work that the group does. Since its beginning, the FCWG has included alumni as full members in the group. The FCWG is currently seeking additional members who are alumni of the foster care system. Potential candidates should have:

- previous experience working in youth-adult partnerships,
- experience in actively participating in meetings, and
- confidence in expressing their views.

As members of the FCWG, you will have the opportunity to raise issues, network with, and influence the discussion of national funders who invest in efforts to support youth transitioning from foster care. You will also have opportunities to network with other alumni leaders across the country and strengthen your skills to effectively work in a collaborative group. Alumni members are expected to participate in **two face-to-face meetings** of the full FCWG each year as well as in **monthly conference calls**. The FCWG covers all travel costs for alumni and youth members (lodging, meals, transportation) as well as provides a \$100 meeting stipend for your participation.

Appendix C: Sample Agenda for Orientation Session

- Welcome and Introductions
- History of the FCWG
- Review Key Background Documents
 - FCWG Fact Sheet
 - Connected by 25 Investment Plan
 - Current Workplan
- Who Are Current FCWG Members (bios attached)
 - Alumni
 - Funders and Foundations
- Types of Group Meetings
 - In-person meetings
 - Conference calls
 - Subcommittee meetings
- How the Group Works
 - Discussion style
 - How the group makes decisions
- Logistics
 - Making travel arrangements
 - Travel policies and reimbursement forms
 - Stipends

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.

