

Youth Transition Funders Group

Foster Care Work Group

March 15, 2004

Dear Fellow Funder:

We are delighted to enclose for your consideration, “*Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*”, which makes the case for focusing on the economic success of youth leaving foster care, presents a strategic approach to improving the economic well-being and financial success of these young people, and offers a co-investment work plan for foundations.

Young adults leaving foster care can achieve economic success. Like all young people, however, they need help. In recent years, several foundations have taken the lead in launching innovative initiatives to help prepare foster youth and those leaving foster care for adult responsibilities and living on their own. Building on this work, The Foster Care Work Group, a collaboration of eight foundations within the Youth Transition Funders Group, has outlined a framework for investments that will help these youth acquire the knowledge, skills, habits and opportunities that will lead to economic success. This is an agenda that can and should involve government at all levels, foundations, community organizations, and individuals to build a comprehensive system of support for our young people.

We recognize there are a number of worthwhile ways for an individual foundation to invest in support foster youth. Our work group has identified education and economic well-being as powerful issues to start with in challenging ourselves and our colleagues to make the greatest difference. We seek to collaborate in leveraging our knowledge and investments in a coherent set of strategies that can be piloted and evaluated. In that spirit, we are sending you *Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in Successful Futures for Foster Youth*” for several important reasons:

- We are interested in your feedback on the co-investment approach.
- We request that you share it with other philanthropic partners in your community and other leaders who you believe will find it useful.
- We encourage your use and support of the strategies in whole or in part, and we believe it will be a valuable resource to inform your grantmaking.
- We are eager to find ways to work with you on these strategies.
- We believe this plan can be an important tool for convening organizations in your community.

In the co-investment work plan, the Foster Care Work Group presents an exciting and optimistic theory of change: that preparing foster youth and young adults aging out

For more information

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of care to achieve economic success will help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and independent living. We propose to support this transition through five related strategies:

- Advocate and support educational achievement.
- Facilitate workforce development opportunities.
- Provide financial literacy education.
- Encourage savings and asset accumulation.
- Create entrepreneurship opportunities.

To advance these strategies, the Foster Care Work Group invites you to join us in a series of complementary investments that include:

- **Community demonstration initiatives** in three communities to test and refine promising community-based programs and services.
- **Research and evaluation** to answer basic questions about the status of foster youth and young adults leaving foster care; the availability, quality and impact of innovative approaches to address their economic well-being; the costs, benefits and financing of relevant programs and initiatives; and the implications of addressing economic well-being for the education and child welfare systems.
- **Technical assistance** to states, communities and community organizations to help them design and implement promising models and mobilize resources to sustain them.
- **Communications, outreach and advocacy** to raise awareness of the plight of young adults leaving foster care, share information about the feasibility and efficacy of supports and services to help address their economic well-being, mobilize support for policies, programs and systems reforms, and encourage broad community engagement in helping former foster youth on the road to economic success.

This set of strategies is a blueprint that requires testing and evaluation, and will no doubt be refined over time. Hence, the members of the Foster Care Work Group have committed to providing resources in the coming years, and we would welcome you with pleasure as an additional partner to make this agenda a truly national one. Please contact Lorne Needle, consultant to the Youth Transition Funders Group, with your questions, ideas and interests in partnership. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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