



2017-2022 Foster Youth Strategic Initiative Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his Last Will and Testament, Conrad Hilton requested that his legacy be dedicated “to relieve the suffering, the distressed and the destitute” and shelter children “with the umbrella of charity.” More than three decades later in March 2012, the Board approved Phase I of the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative to support one of the nation’s most challenged yet promising populations of young people: older youth in foster care, ages 16-24, referred to as “transition age youth” or TAY. In the first five years of the Strategic Initiative, the Foundation is implementing its vision to ensure that youth who are aging out of the child welfare system become self-sufficient and thriving adults.

The Foundation elected to focus its investments in Los Angeles County (LAC) and New York City (NYC), the two metropolitan regions with the nation’s largest populations of foster TAY. Together, these jurisdictions are home to one in ten of all foster TAY age 16+ in the U.S. (approximately 66,000) – more than 4,400 foster youth in LA and 2,600 in NYC. Due to the size and influence of these regions, the lessons the Foundation and its partners are learning are not only affecting local foster TAY outcomes, they are also informing national reform efforts through the dissemination of groundbreaking research, the passage of federal legislation, and the development and coordination of national TAY funding agendas.

Consistent with the Foundation’s overall philanthropic approach, the Strategic Initiative achieves its vision for change through three primary impact areas: systems and policy change; knowledge development and dissemination; and program support. The core focus of the Initiative is to achieve systemic change by developing and advocating for a comprehensive new framework to address the unique needs of TAY and create new education and career pathways to ensure their success. This new sector-wide shift is particularly critical because public child welfare and other TAY-service systems (education, juvenile justice, workforce development, public health agencies, etc.) have traditionally lacked the institutional will, specialized knowledge and collaboration required to meet the unique needs of adolescents and young adults in foster care. The Initiative focuses on education and career pathways because research and frontline experience suggest that expanding knowledge, skills and opportunities in these areas have the most significant impact on a young person’s ability to become self-sufficient.

To shift the direction of these large and complex systems, the Foundation and its partners are applying new advocacy and research strategies to help agency leaders, policy makers and other decision makers understand and prioritize this critical transition period for foster youth.

The Initiative is also committed to testing and replicating quality, evidence-informed programs to help transform individual foster TAY education and career outcomes.

To date, the Foundation has invested \$53.5 million in the Strategic Initiative’s first phase of work (2012-2017). With these investments, the Strategic Initiative has partnered with grantees, community partners and other funders to move public child welfare systems and policies away from a one-size-fits-all approach narrowly focused on foster TAY’s safety and basic needs to one that recognizes and reflects the unique potential of older youth to succeed in education, career and life. The Initiative has also helped to form strong local networks of TAY stakeholders that actively communicate and collaborate around common system and policy goals. These partnerships have fostered several encouraging reforms at state and regional levels, including California’s Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), a groundbreaking effort to reduce the use of residential care and connect more young people to families, and New York City’s Home Away from Home, a citywide initiative to expand the number, quality and capacity of TAY foster caregivers.

The Initiative has made significant contributions to changing the way that research and data inform understanding of and decision making for this population, including the development and dissemination of several nationally recognized studies on long-term foster TAY outcomes and their interaction with multiple service systems. The Foundation has also supported efforts to change the way in which multi-agency administrative data is collected and analyzed. These innovations have, for the first time, linked critical data sources the field can use to define the foster TAY population and to advance better program and policy solutions to meet identified needs. They have also helped to improve cross-system collaboration among the different TAY-serving public agencies. In addition, the Foundation has also utilized its collaborative networks to leverage an additional \$31 million in private funding dollars to support foster TAY, a 65 percent increase over its initial five-year goal.

Based on the progress of the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative’s Phase I (2012-2017), the Board approved the proposed direction for the Phase II Strategy (2017-2022) at the November 2016 board meeting. On May 23rd, the Board approved the following Phase II Strategy implementation plan. This plan is informed by the critical input of the Board, senior leadership, grantees, experts and focus groups with foster TAY and foster caregivers to outline a detailed blueprint for continued progress in the future. The following memo provides details for the Initiative’s Phase II Strategy and summarizes Phase I learnings.

SUMMARY: PHASE II STRATEGY

Vision	All transition age foster youth in Los Angeles County and New York City become self-sufficient and thriving adults
Impact Areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen systems and policy for foster TAY 2. Expand and share knowledge with the field 3. Advance innovative foster TAY programs
2022 Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A strong system and policy framework will be in place to enable all TAY to become self-sufficient, reinforced by effective advocacy and strong public and private investments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public child welfare, education, juvenile justice, workforce development and public health agencies will coordinate service delivery and align funding to improve foster TAY outcomes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy capacity will be expanded to promote and ensure the effective implementation of TAY-focused system and policy reform • \$60 million in new public funding and \$30 million in private funding will be leveraged for foster TAY programs <p>2. A robust pipeline of foster-TAY focused research will be established to inform and guide the development of strong policy and practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of critical data will be expanded to address existing gaps in order to build a more complete understanding of foster TAY • A comprehensive cross-sector data strategy will enable all relevant foster TAY-serving agencies to share administrative data and measure progress towards self-sufficiency • Targeted research will be conducted and broadly disseminated to increase the knowledge and evidence base to improve foster TAY outcomes <p>3. Foster TAY will have access to the supports, education and career pathways they need to become self-sufficient and thrive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of foster TAY will graduate from high school by age 19 • 85% of foster TAY will attend only one school during a one-year period • LAC and NYC will track and report the rates of permanent part-time or full-time work for all foster TAY through age 24
Ultimate Result	All foster TAY have the education, skills and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives

PHASE I OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

...As they [the children] bear the burdens of our mistakes, so are they in their innocence, the repositories of our hopes for the upward progress of humanity
 – Conrad N. Hilton, Last Will and Testament

Challenges and Opportunities

The Foundation's Foster Youth Strategic Initiative addresses the multiple challenges facing transition age youth (TAY), ages 16-24, as they age out of the foster care system and move into adulthood. When the Foundation began its preliminary landscape assessment in 2011, existing research and frontline experience consistently pointed to extremely poor long-term outcomes for older youth as they leave the child welfare system. Educational and career outcomes were particularly sobering. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of foster TAY graduated from high school by age 19 as compared to 87 percent of their non-foster peers. One study found that only half of foster TAY surveyed were employed by the age of 24, and foster youth with jobs only earned an average annual income of \$7,500 per year. In addition, foster TAY experienced higher rates of early pregnancy, involvement in the criminal justice system, and substance use disorders than youth in the general population.

At the same time, the Foundation recognized the tremendous potential of foster youth to achieve, to demonstrate strength and resilience, and to contribute meaningfully to others. The Foundation also noted the emergence of promising strategies to improve young people's odds for a successful transition to adulthood. Initial research and practice underscored that stability, strong relationships with caregivers and effective education and career supports could put even the most challenged young people on a path to success. New advances in neuroscience also reinforced the importance of focusing on older youth at this critical juncture in their growth. Brain research demonstrated two findings particularly relevant to this population: (1) the adolescent brain experiences a major development period *comparable only to that of early childhood*; and (2) providing targeted interventions during this time are essential in counteracting trauma and promoting healthy social development. Investments in this population of foster youth are also cost-effective. Experts estimated that high school dropout rates, unemployment, justice system involvement and government dependence cost taxpayers an average of \$300,000 in lifetime expenses for each youth aging out of foster care. Investments in preventive services and supports for foster TAY further "upstream" could prevent the need for more intensive and expensive interventions throughout adulthood.

Landscape Assessment and Strategy Development

Consistent with its mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people around the world," the Foundation partnered with FSG to identify the most crucial gaps for older youth in foster care and develop a strategic approach to guide the Foundation's work moving forward. The Foundation's overall approach to this exploratory project was guided by the following principles:

- **Target a large and vulnerable population:** With approximately 66,000 older youth ages 16+ in foster care nationally and 22,000 "aging out" each year, foster TAY represented the potential for large-scale reform and the opportunity to impact individual youth.
- **Drive comprehensive system change:** While funding direct service interventions remains an important element of its strategy, the Foundation also seeks to reduce the systemic barriers that TAY encounter in navigating the foster care system and share knowledge and research to achieve lasting change.
- **Achieve significant and measurable impact:** As with its other priority programs, the Foundation is committed to establishing clear goals and strategies and defining measurable outcomes to gauge progress and inform improvement.
- **Align with other Foundation initiatives:** The Foundation considers how potential investments align with the overall approach, strategies and implementation of other programs in order to maximize collective impact, especially for overlapping populations. Research found that approximately one in five foster TAY became homeless after age 18. In addition, foster TAY experienced twice the rate of alcohol-related substance use disorders and seven times the rate of drug-related substance use disorders as their non-foster peers.
- **Leverage public and private funds:** Because even significant investments are insufficient to solve large-scale issues, the Foundation seeks to engage other funders, government and civil society to leverage additional resources to extend its strategies and reach.

- **Pursue partnerships with others:** Because no one entity can achieve its goals alone, the Foundation emphasizes the importance of engaging with a wide range of partners, including grantees, impacted populations and other public and private stakeholders.

Based on an extensive foster care landscape assessment, an analysis of available data, and interviews with leading experts in the field, FSG's preliminary research led to several key findings that laid the foundation for the Initiative's Phase I Strategy:

1. **Foster TAY experience poorer education and career outcomes than youth in the general population:** While foster TAY face many challenges, effectively addressing the poor education and career outcomes of youth in care is critical in helping them to become self-sufficient.
2. **Focus on Los Angeles County and New York City:** These jurisdictions have the two largest regional foster care populations (combined, they are home to one in ten of all foster TAY 16+ in the U.S.). In addition, both locations have local policy and funding environments which make them particularly ripe for effective systems and policy reform.
3. **Quality caregivers play a central role in TAY success:** To ensure successful transitions into adulthood, TAY need stable placements with high quality caregivers who understand their developmental needs and have the commitment and skills to parent older youth.
4. **Pregnant and parenting teens and crossover youth warrant special attention:** Approximately 71 percent of young women in foster care become pregnant by age 21. One in four foster TAY became involved in the juvenile justice system. These two sub-populations experienced the worst long-term trajectory of all foster youth in terms of education, employment, health and poverty outcomes.
5. **Systems and organizations need greater alignment to support optimal outcomes for foster TAY:** In addition to overlooking the developmental and service needs of older youth, child welfare and other TAY-serving agencies required increased collaboration around policy development and implementation, funding alignment and data sharing.

VISION AND STRATEGY

In March 2012, the Board approved Phase I of the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative. The overall vision for the Initiative was to:

Ensure that youth who are transitioning out of foster care are on the path to success, are able to live self-sufficiently, and have the interpersonal connections they need to thrive.

The strategy focused on three interconnecting impact areas to accomplish its vision in Los Angeles County and New York City:

1. **Systems and Policy Change:** Promote comprehensive systems reform and policy change and enhance cross-system collaboration to expand funding and increase the field's ability to support foster TAY.
2. **Knowledge Development and Dissemination:** Develop and share new knowledge and research to guide strong evidence-based policy and practice and improve outcomes for foster TAY.

3. **Program Support:** Find effective programs and models to help foster TAY gain the skills they need to become self-sufficient and thrive, with a primary emphasis on education and career success.

The Board also approved the Initiative's inclusion of three high needs sub-populations identified in the landscape assessment, including strategies to develop targeted interventions for high-risk **pregnant and parenting** and **crossover youth** and to increase the number, quality and parenting capacity of **TAY foster caregivers**.

OUTCOMES

Since the Phase I Strategy began in March 2012, the Board has approved \$53.5 million in total grant funding for systems and policy change, new knowledge development and self-sufficiency programs. These investments have helped grantees and partners achieve system and agency reforms; catalyze the development of TAY-focused legislation and administrative policies to improve education and career outcomes for foster TAY; increase training and support for TAY caregivers; and advance new research and administrative data-linking strategies to amplify policy and program impact in LAC and NYC and on the national level.

To identify key areas of progress, the Foundation partnered with Westat, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and the Action Research Partnership in New York City as the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) partner to assess the Initiative's overall progress and ability to influence change. The MEL concluded that in the first four years of implementation, the strategy has achieved many of its systems and policy, research, and programmatic goals, including improving outcomes for foster TAY target populations, securing the passage of local and national legislation, and influencing comprehensive system reform efforts in Los Angeles County and New York City.

Systems and Policy Change

At its core, the Initiative has prioritized and seen considerable success from its grantees' efforts to advance important policy and systemic reforms to improve services and outcomes for TAY populations. In particular, Los Angeles County grantees played a central leadership role in the **development and passage of California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR)**, a statewide effort to reduce the number of older youth placed in group homes and increase the availability of long-term family care for TAY. Grantees have also helped to secure California's new **Local Control Funding Formula, which provides school districts with additional funding for foster TAY educational supports**.

The Foundation's support has been pivotal in these efforts to re-structure the child welfare framework to meet the needs of adolescents and young adults and ensure that statutory, regulatory and agency structures align with this shift. "The arrival of the Hilton Foundation has fundamentally changed the conversation about our obligations and opportunities in serving youth in foster care," says Bill Baccaligni, President and CEO of The New York Foundling. "The insistence on making investments only in **ideas and interventions with measurable, long-term outcomes** has been a serious game changer, and I think it will continue to pay dividends in terms of outcomes for our young people."

In New York City, Foundation investments have helped to seed the **Home Away from Home Initiative**, a comprehensive citywide reform effort to develop state-of-the-art recruitment of caregivers for older youth and to improve the way in which foster and adoptive parents are licensed, supported and retained. In addition to comprehensive system reform, grantees have

advocated for the successful passage of more than 120 new state and local legislative proposals in Los Angeles County and New York City that expand services and supports for older youth in foster care. As Janis Spire, CEO of the Alliance for Children’s Rights explains, the Foundation “has been a critical force in changing the landscape for foster youth in Los Angeles and across California through their **investments in innovation, research and collaboration, especially in expanding educational and career opportunities for young people**. There is a momentum of positive change that is building among child welfare stakeholders which is in large part due to the infusion of attention, prioritization and accountability that the Foundation has inspired across the region.” Building on local gains, grantee efforts at the federal level also led directly to the **inclusion of foster youth in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016 (ESSA)**, the legislation that reauthorizes federal Title I funds for school districts across the country.

Phase I: Trends for Foster TAY in Los Angeles County and New York

- ✓ Youth staying in foster care longer (after age 18)
- ✓ More youth attending college or vocational training programs
- ✓ More employment opportunities for youth
- ✓ Expanded services for pregnant & parenting youth
- ✓ Greater awareness of crossover youth needs and issues
- ✓ Increased training and support for TAY foster caregivers

Knowledge Development and Dissemination

To help amplify the impact of its program and policy investments, the strategy has also **supported the development of three landmark research studies on older foster youth to help practitioners, policymakers, and the public better understand TAY needs:**

- *California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study*: the most comprehensive analysis to date on education, employment, health and other key outcomes for older foster youth (Chapin Hall University of Chicago);
- *California’s Most Vulnerable Parents Study*: which linked birth and child welfare records to predict outcomes for pregnant youth in foster care (University of Southern California); and
- *Young Adult Outcomes in Foster Care, Justice and Dually Involved Youth in New York City* (Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence).

In addition, **the Foundation has been instrumental in changing the way foster TAY data is collected, used and shared** through the development of the Children’s Data Network, which harnesses the scientific potential of linked, administrative data to inform children’s programs and policies.

The Foundation’s investments have also helped to **build strong networks of child welfare advocates, researchers, funders and other stakeholders** commonly focused on improving foster TAY outcomes and in translating new knowledge and research to diverse audiences. Westat’s recent Social Network Analysis (SNA) found that the strategy **has succeeded in strengthening the infrastructure and sustainability of child welfare services as well as expanding the network of grantees and other partners within and across the target localities**. According to the SNA, this increase in **cross-collaboration has resulted in the better alignment of programs, policy and funding initiatives to meet the Initiative’s strategic goals**. Since its launch, **grantees have also leveraged an additional \$31 million in private funding to improve TAY outcomes** – 65 percent over the initial \$20 million goal.

Based on these learnings, the MEL concluded that the strategy has also been instrumental in applying its knowledge about what works for older youth at the national level by **leading and helping to shape the agendas of several national funder collaboratives for TAY, including the Youth Transition Funders Group, the Child Welfare Funders Collaborative, the Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP)**, a Social Innovation Fund which leverages public-private partnerships to improve education and employment outcomes for TAY involved in both the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

Supporting Programs

The Initiative's program strategy is designed to ensure that the overarching systems and policy framework and growing knowledge base is directly informing the programs and services that support foster TAY on a daily basis. This third impact area is the mechanism by which frontline service providers can influence system and policy changes that affect their work. It also encourages grantees to act as **laboratories to develop, test, and replicate programs that work and contribute to a stronger evidence-base for the field.**

Because educational and career supports are a fundamental gateway to self-sufficiency, the Initiative has seen considerable success with its investments in these program areas. In particular, the Initiative has **improved educational and employment outcomes by supporting grantees in helping more than 12,000 transition age youth in foster care** with education, career readiness and employment services, including case management, mentoring and coaching, legal advocacy, and connections to other material resources. In addition to direct services, grantees **conducted informational outreach to an additional 4,500 foster TAY**, providing information about education rights, resources and related topics such as college preparation and financial aid. Supported by these efforts, **educational and employment outcomes have improved in each of the five years since the strategy began. Youth are staying in care longer, giving them greater access to the supports they need to transition more successfully into adulthood.** In addition, grantees also provided a range of employment opportunities for TAY, including the **launch of the Aspen Institute's 100,000 Opportunities Initiative creating "more pathways to economic prosperity for youth."** Catalyzed with assistance from the Foundation, this effort is becoming one of the **largest employer-led youth employment coalitions in the country.**

The MEL also found that the Strategic Initiative has made significant progress in addressing the challenges facing its target sub-populations. In addition to research and policy successes for pregnant and parenting teens, grantees reported **providing parenting classes, skill-building workshops, and specialized education and employment services to pregnant and parenting TAY.** In addition, the Initiative supported training to child welfare staff on conducting Pregnant and Parenting (PPT) conferences with youth to identify and gather their input on program and policy solutions. On the crossover youth front, four grantees were funded specifically to work with youth dually involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, **directly serving crossover youth and pushing systems reform through advocacy and education to increase awareness and understanding of crossover youth needs and the services needed to address them.**

Quality caregivers continue to provide an important source of support to foster TAY. When asked to identify the person who is most helpful to them in achieving their goals, foster youth most often identify their foster caregivers. To increase the number, quality and skills of caregivers, grantees have reported **reaching more than 5,700 caregivers and, in particular, providing 3,274 caregivers, educators and other providers with training on how to better support youth goals and well-being.** Most trainings focused on helping caregivers better support the education and employment goals of TAY in their care, but grantees also held regular orientation and training sessions for families interested in fostering TAY. The MEL found that these caregiver program

efforts, along with legislative victories to provide kin caregivers with equitable financial support, contributed to strengthening foster TAY relationships with foster caregivers (including those from their own family) and other caring adults, **with 95 percent of foster youth reporting that they have a permanent connection to an adult.**

PHASE II STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

The Phase II strategy will build on the momentum achieved during the Initiative's first five years by staying the course on its vision and continuing to leverage impact with a three-pronged strategy to ensure foster TAY become self-sufficient and thriving adults. In particular, the Initiative will continue its work to ensure that all foster TAY-serving systems recognize and address the critical period adolescence plays in shaping long-term opportunities and outcomes. Achieving this challenging sector-wide shift will be important in sustaining change over time and providing a healthy long-term environment for ongoing advances in research and program models. Phase II will also continue its central focus on creating education and career pathways for foster TAY as the primary gateway to self-sufficiency.

How do We Measure Self-Sufficiency?

The Strategic Initiative uses *self-sufficiency* as the ultimate measure of success because it captures the assumption that, in order to succeed, young people must have the fundamental skills, knowledge and tools needed to navigate the complexities of adulthood. While self-sufficiency is a term most often used to describe economic independence, the Initiative also uses it to connote its social and developmental aspects, i.e., a young person's confidence in their own internal resources and abilities. Because education and career opportunities are the principal gateway to achieving all facets of self-sufficiency, the Initiative focuses primarily on education and career outcomes to track its progress.

LANDSCAPE UPDATE

Two recent developments are likely to have significant impact on Phase II system and policy goals:

Aligning CCR Implementation with the Strategic Initiative

The first is the implementation of California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), one of the most sweeping statewide child welfare reform efforts in the country. Also known as AB 403, CCR provides a statutory and policy framework to ensure that supports provided to children in foster care connect them to stable, permanent families and reduce the use of congregate care. This development will have a particularly significant impact on TAY, who represent approximately 27% of all children currently residing in LA's residential care settings. CCR was signed into law in October 2015, but implementation efforts have begun in earnest over the past several months. Given CCR's impact and reach, ensuring that its implementation meets statutory goals and aligns with the Initiative's vision will require specialized policy and program expertise and intensive advocacy efforts. To increase the number of appropriate family settings for foster youth, CCR will

also explore new ways to engage and support relative and other foster caregivers using many of the strategies the Initiative’s grantees have supported over the past five years.

New York City ACS Office of College Bound & Support Programs

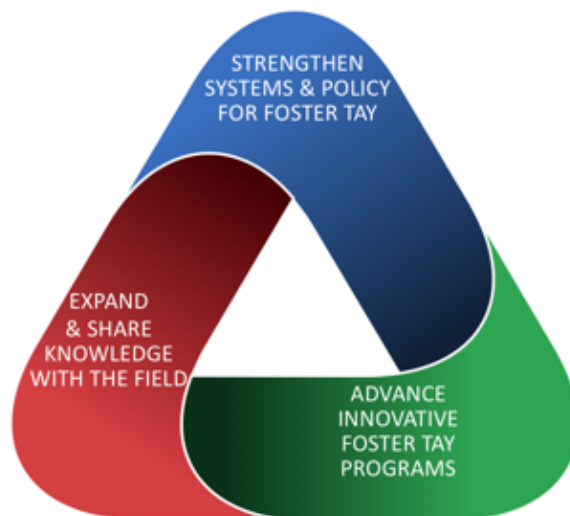
In February 2017, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the appointment of David Hansell as the new Commissioner of the New York City Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), following the departure of Commissioner Gladys Carrión. Over the past five years, the Initiative has forged a strong partnership with the City’s child welfare agency, most recently through the development of Home Away from Home, a comprehensive effort to improve caregiver recruitment for older youth. In the March 2017 preliminary budget hearing before the New York City Council, Commissioner Hansell announced the creation of a new Office of College Bound & Support Programs designed to implement ACS’s promise to provide financial assistance to youth attending the CUNY college system and connect older youth to academic, employment and internship opportunities. The new office is the product of multiple efforts the Initiative has supported to align ACS’s older youth agenda with its comprehensive vision for educational and career success, providing grantees with an important platform to test new models, advocate for additional funding and expand its collaboration with ACS.

VISION

With a continued focus on its three main impact areas, the Foundation is well-positioned to move forward with the following vision for Phase II of the Initiative.

Vision: All transition age foster youth in Los Angeles County and New York City become self-sufficient and thriving adults.

Approach: The Initiative partners with public agencies, philanthropic, non-profit and private sector stakeholders in three impact areas:



IMPACT AREAS

1. **Strengthen Systems and Policy for Foster TAY.** The Strategic Initiative will continue to support grantee efforts to build and institutionalize a comprehensive new framework to support foster TAY. This includes strategies to drive additional system reforms, effectively implement current policies, and ensure that public policy and funding improve foster TAY education and career outcomes. System and policy strategies also include improving cross-system collaboration among various TAY-serving systems, expanding existing stakeholder networks, and expanding advocacy capacity.

2. **Expand and Share Knowledge with the Field.** Strategies in this impact area include building on Phase I efforts to expand data-linking across sectors to provide a more complete picture of foster TAY demographics, needs and long-term trajectories. This impact area will also focus on new knowledge and research to inform effective policy and practice changes, evaluate and replicate new program interventions for special populations, and strengthen the field's evidence base.
3. **Advance Innovative Foster TAY Programs.** Phase I emphasis on supporting innovative programs and models helped to improve TAY education and career outcomes and expand opportunities for special target populations. Phase II will continue these advances by supporting new and existing programs to improve TAY education and career outcomes, prevention-focused interventions for pregnant & parenting and crossover youth, and programs that focus on building foster caregiver capacity to help TAY achieve self-sufficiency.

STRATEGY ENHANCEMENTS

Based on Phase I learning, the Initiative is also recommending three targeted enhancements to increase the Initiative's impact moving forward:

- **Focus on fathers in foster care:** In its work with pregnant and parenting foster youth, the Initiative has supported programs that have been successful in strengthening the relationship between teen mothers in foster care and their children. To build on this progress, a more intentional approach is needed to ensure that young fathers in foster care also develop strong parenting skills and new pathways to self-sufficiency, so they can parent successfully and support their families over the long-term.
- **Use technology to improve foster TAY outcomes:** The child welfare field often overlooks the potential of technology to connect older youth with key services and caring adults, expand the recruitment of TAY foster caregivers, and increase the efficiency and capacity of caseworkers. The Initiative has already supported the development of several new TAY-focused technology solutions, and Phase II will explore additional innovations to ensure that youth and the systems that support them benefit from the latest technological advances.
- **Expand advocacy capacity:** To sustain systems and policy gains, strong independent advocacy is needed to challenge institutional roadblocks, generate political pressure and media attention, and ensure appropriate implementation. Investments in LA and NYC advocacy organizations have been extremely effective in shaping critical policy proposals. Additional Phase II investments will help reinforce a strong, diverse, and coordinated advocacy voice that increases policy attention to foster TAY.

MEASURING SUCCESS

By 2021, the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative will achieve the following outcomes in New York City and Los Angeles County:

1. **A strong system and policy framework will be in place to enable all TAY to become self-sufficient, reinforced by effective advocacy and strong public and private investments**
 - Public child welfare, education, juvenile justice, workforce development and public health agencies will coordinate service delivery and align funding to improve foster TAY outcomes

- Advocacy capacity will be expanded to promote and ensure the effective implementation of TAY-focused system and policy reform
 - \$60 million in new public funding and \$30 million in private funding will be leveraged for foster TAY programs
- 2. A robust pipeline of foster-TAY focused research will be established to inform and guide the development of strong policy and practice**
- Collection of critical data will be expanded to address existing gaps in order to build a more complete understanding of foster TAY
 - A comprehensive cross-sector data strategy will enable all relevant foster TAY-serving agencies to share administrative data and measure progress towards self-sufficiency
 - Targeted research will be conducted and broadly disseminated to increase the knowledge and evidence base to improve foster TAY outcomes
- 3. Foster TAY will have access to the supports, education and career pathways they need to become self-sufficient and thrive**
- 75% of foster TAY will graduate from high school by age 19
 - 85% of foster TAY will attend only one school during a one-year period
 - LAC and NYC will track and report the rates of permanent part-time or full-time work for all foster TAY through age 24

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

A core component of the Foundation's philanthropic approach is sharing its insights from the implementation and evaluation process with the Foundation's other program areas and the broader child welfare field. Due to chronic underfunding, a weak child welfare evidence base, and the poor evaluative culture that characterizes most child welfare and related systems, Phase II of the Initiative will seek to share learning with stakeholders and related fields in several key ways. First, consistent with other strategic initiatives, the Foundation will continue to host annual grantee and partnership meetings to facilitate the exchange of information and research, encourage the replication of effective programs and create an ongoing community of learning. Second, the Initiative is committed to exploring new ways to translate its learning for multiple audiences by using social media, legislative briefings, and other strategies. Third, the Initiative will encourage its grantees to be more intentional about sharing the results of their work through the annual convening, other national conferences and their grant deliverables and publications. Throughout Phase I of its work, the Initiative has amplified the reach of its strategy through leadership roles in national funder groups such as the Youth Transition Funders Group. Phase II of the Initiative will continue to capitalize on these opportunities to share lessons learned, identify and leverage additional private funding to achieve key outcomes, and build strong and diverse learning networks.

CONCLUSION

Conrad N. Hilton believed that success, in business and in social change, requires us to “Think Big, Act Big, Dream Big.” In the first five years of its work, the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative and its grantees have conveyed this message directly to foster youth who have traditionally been denied the opportunity to succeed in education, career and life. Phase II will build on the growing momentum the Foundation, its grantees and community partners have helped to create for foster TAY in Los Angeles County, New York City and at the national level. The right vision, strategies and networks are now in place to further shift systems and policies, develop new knowledge to

guide this transformation and support programs that improve outcomes for foster TAY. Change of this magnitude requires patience and sustained commitment. With proven strategies to help foster TAY become self-sufficient and thrive, the Strategic Initiative will continue its progress to ensure, as poet and former foster youth Sade Daniels reminds us, “that our young people never lose sight of the beautiful colors around them.”