

Appendix Directory

Required Attachments

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11	Detailed Timeline
12	Evaluation Plan (including DAP®)
13	Letter of Support-Board of County Commissioners
14	Letter of Support-HCJFS

Appendix 1

References

1. <http://www.fc2success.org>
2. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/archived-projects/commission-on-children-in-foster-care>
3. http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/Midwest_IB3_Employment.pdf
4. Steward, J. C., Kum, H., Barth, R. P., & Duncan, D. F. (2014) Former foster youth: Employment outcomes up to age 30. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 36, 220-229.
5. www.search-institute.org
6. <https://charactercounts.org>
7. <http://www.uc.edu/cce/student/ovd.html>
8. <http://cedricmichaelcox.com>



Office of the Treasurer
51 Goodman Drive
University Hall, Suite 500
University of Cincinnati
PO Box 210641
Cincinnati OH 45221-0641
Phone (513) 556-5002
Fax (513) 556-2504

January 3, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

The attached correspondence from the Internal Revenue Service confirms the tax-exempt status of the University of Cincinnati under section 115 of the Internal Revenue Code. This status is determined based upon the existence of the university as an instrumentality of the State of Ohio.

Although the IRS correspondence is from 1991, the status of the university as an instrumentality of the State of Ohio has not changed since that time. Accordingly, classification under section 115 of the Internal Revenue Code remains in effect, and was more recently confirmed by the Internal Revenue Service during their comprehensive tax audit of the university which was completed in September 1999.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barry L. Holland'.

Barry L. Holland, CPA
Director, Tax Compliance

attachment

Internal Revenue Service
District Director

Department of the Treasury

P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Date: January 23, 1991

Person to Contact:
Sarah Varnum
Telephone Number:
(513) 684-3957
Refer Reply to:
EP/EO

RECEIVED

JAN 30 1991

O.G.C.

University of Cincinnati
300 Administration Building
Cincinnati, OH 45221-3483

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your recent request for an exemption letter for your organization.

We have no record of having issued a determination with respect to this matter. However, your letter indicates that you are a governmental instrumentality or a political subdivision of a state.

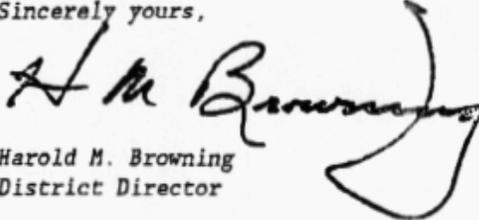
Governmental instrumentalities and political subdivisions of states are not subject to Federal income tax because they are described in section 115 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Governmental instrumentalities and political subdivisions of states may receive donations which are tax deductible to the donors under section 170(c) of the Code.

Organizations which are described in section 501(c)(3) of the Code may make grants to governmental instrumentalities and political subdivisions of states. Such grants do not jeopardize the exempt status of the grantors because section 170(b)(1)(A)(v) of the Code provides that governmental instrumentalities and subdivisions of states are not private foundations.

If you have any questions on this matter, please call me at the telephone number shown above.

Sincerely yours,


Harold M. Browning
District Director



Description of Nature of Partnership

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the Community Connectors program throughout the state, applicants are required to partner with education stakeholders from the faith, business, and nonprofit communities. Each applicant must identify its partners and include description of each respective partner's roles and responsibilities in question 12 of the grant application.

A partner agrees to provide human and material assets or access to academic and administrative resources to the grant applicant to develop or execute a Community Connectors grant application. However, in partnership, only the grant applicant is responsible for ensuring the grant is developed and executed according to the terms of the grant agreement.

Each member of the partnership is responsible for the following assurances:

- 1) Be knowledgeable about the applicant's Community Connectors grant proposal and application, including advocacy of the Community Connectors program.
- 2) Maintain a familiarity with the partner's services to enhance the proposal, including specific goals and practices.
- 3) Demonstrate a commitment to clear roles and responsibilities of each partner as it relates to the grant proposal and application.
- 4) Sustain consistent communication among partners and stakeholders with a shared vision of the goals of the grant proposal. This includes participating in regularly scheduled meetings for project management and identifying areas for improvement.
- 5) Ensure partners have appropriate access to data for purposes of grant program improvement and evaluation in accordance with state and federal law.

Lead Applicant

Name: Rayma Waters

Title: Co-Director, UC PASS

Organization: University of Cincinnati

Sign:

Partner

Name: Kevin Holt

Title: Section Chief

Organization: Ohio Means Jobs - Cincinnati

Sign:

Partner

Name: Katie Deyo

Title: Minister of Foster Youth and Adoption

Organization: Peoples Church

Sign:

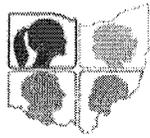
Partner

Name: Margaret Weaver

Title: Section Chief

Organization: Hamilton County Jobs & Family Services/Kids in School Rule!

Sign:



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Additional Partner (Optional)

Name: Shawn Jeffers

Title: Site Director

Organization: Public Allies, Cincinnati

Sign:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Jeffers', is written over a solid horizontal line.

Additional Partner (Optional)

Name: Mary Ronan

Title: Superintendent

Organization: Cincinnati Public Schools

Sign:

A solid horizontal line intended for a signature.



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Lead Applicant

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: University of Cincinnati

Sign: _____

Partner

Name: Mary Roman

Title: Superintendent

Organization: Cincinnati Public Schools

Sign: 

Partner

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Sign: _____

Partner

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Sign: _____

Appendix 4

Roles and Responsibilities Worksheet

Describe how each applicant partner plans to contribute to the overall program plan including, but not limited to, time contribution, personnel contribution, monetary contribution, shared responsibilities, use of facilities, etc.

1. Faith-based organization: Peoples Church

- Time contribution

Recruitment and Training:

There will be information sessions held at the church to recruit members as well as inform the congregation of this unique partnership. Four 1-hour information sessions will be held at Peoples Church in order to accommodate the membership schedules. 4 hours total for information sessions. Our goal is to ensure that the entire (100%) congregation is aware of this project.

A mandatory initial intensive training designed to give mentors an overview of the project and a cross-systems training provided by JFS to learn more about the foster care system and the youth in their care as well as Kids In School Rule! (KISR!), education specialists to identify unique educational needs of this population. This will be a 4 hour training offered multiple times to accommodate the new mentor's schedules. Total estimated time contribution per church mentor 4 hours x 50 mentors.

Again, the training will be held at the Peoples Church.

Ongoing monthly training will be held throughout the year. Mentors will be expected to attend these monthly training sessions held on the first Thursday of each month (6:00-8:00 p.m.) at Peoples Church to learn about best practices as well as provide pertinent training relevant to the needs of this targeted population, foster youth. By meeting monthly, the HEMI PREP staff can also provide additional support, ongoing advice and problem-solving support.

Direct service: Members of the congregation will be recruited to serve as mentors, trained and supported by the HEMI PREP staff. We anticipate each mentor to spend a minimum of one hour per week with each HEMI PREP mentee; there will be approximately 50 mentees matched with 50+ mentors resulting in a total of 50+ hours of direct support weekly, with a total of 2600+ hours of mentoring provided in a years' time.

Event(s):

Peoples Church and the Foster Care Alumni of America host an annual Thanksgiving Dinner for southwest Ohio foster youth ages 15+ and includes young adults who have aged out of foster care. The congregation volunteers are responsible for the food preparation to the themed decorations when hosting this event. This event is held on a Saturday prior to Thanksgiving. Approximately 200 individual members volunteer 6-8 hours to host this event.

In addition, the HEMI PREP mentees will be invited to events the Peoples Youth Minister arranges for the church's youth/teen program. An example will be the annual ski trip to Perfect North in Indiana.

- Personnel contribution

Rev. Deyo serves as the Leader of the Embrace Foster Care and Adoption Ministry at Peoples Church and will be the point person to assist with the coordination of Peoples Church collaboration with HEMI PREP. Rev. Deyo's time and effort will be volunteered but, will be extensive. Approximately, 2.23 hours weekly.

- Monetary contribution

There will not be a monetary contribution directly to the HEMI PREP budget.

However, the value added/in-kind contributions of facility usage for monthly trainings and special events as well as the collective hours the individual church members volunteer as mentors will be phenomenal.

Documentation of volunteer mentor hours will be tracked on a monthly basis to determine the amount of in-kind contribution.

- Shared responsibilities

The HEMI PREP program coordinator will submit a monthly report to Pastor Chris Beard and Rev. Deyo to provide an update of the church member's mentor/mentee status and progress.

All of the HEMI & HEMI PREP mentor trainings will be held at Peoples Church. A training guide and calendar will be posted on the People's Church website and any interested member of the church will be invited to participate even if they are not currently serving as a mentor.

There will be HEMI PREP program meeting/training/event/activities announcements detailed in the church bulletin.

A featured article about HEMI PREP will be included in the quarterly HEMI Herald newsletter.

- Additional roles and responsibilities

By utilizing the church's space for all the trainings and special events, HEMI PREP will not have to pay for parking in the University of Cincinnati garages. This has a value of \$8.00 per vehicle per meeting which calculates to approximately \$5,000.00 saved in parking expenses.

Rev. Deyo will serve on the HEMI PLAN Leadership Partner Advisory Board which will meet 5 times a year.

2. School district partner: **Cincinnati Public Schools**

- Time contribution: Program activities will take place at the partner school throughout the academic year.
- Personnel contribution: The school principal will serve as the primary on-site contact. Teachers will participate, as needed, to help with the identification of students and/or help resolve academic needs as they arise.
- Monetary contribution: In-kind contributions of facility space will be provided by the partner school. Any additional in-kind contributions require approval of the partner school and district.

- Shared responsibilities: The district and partner school commit to supporting the implementation of the mentor program and its desired goals for the school's students.
- Additional roles and responsibilities: The partner school agrees to support implementation of the program by helping identify students for participation, sharing program information with students and families, providing facility space to house the program as needed, help with academic and/or behavioral needs as they arise, and provide data as it pertains to the required program evaluation. Should the partner receive a Community Connectors grant, the partner will sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the district.

3. Business partner: **Ohio Means Jobs Cincinnati**

- Time contribution: Priority access for the HEMI PREP youth to summer youth employment and Workforce Investment Act services would draw on a full time equivalent FTE (40 hrs/week) for the duration of the program.
- Personnel contribution: Personnel will be provided primarily by the Hamilton County Summer Youth employment vendor. That will be primarily in the form of case management but will necessarily include time from fiscal, contracting, IT, and administration.
- Monetary contribution: Anticipate each summer youth earning \$700. If 50 successfully enroll and complete the program, that dollar value will be \$35,000
- Shared responsibilities: Our greatest need will be timely and fully informed referrals of participating youth as well as follow up supplemental reinforcement of our case management efforts.
- Additional roles and responsibilities
We will collaborate on data, reporting, and success stories. In addition, Ohio Means Jobs will partner on the Educational and Career Pathways Summit hosted for Hamilton County foster youth each summer.
The Ohio Means Jobs Cincinnati Section Chief will serve on the HEMI PREP Leadership Partner Advisory Board which will meet 5 times a year.

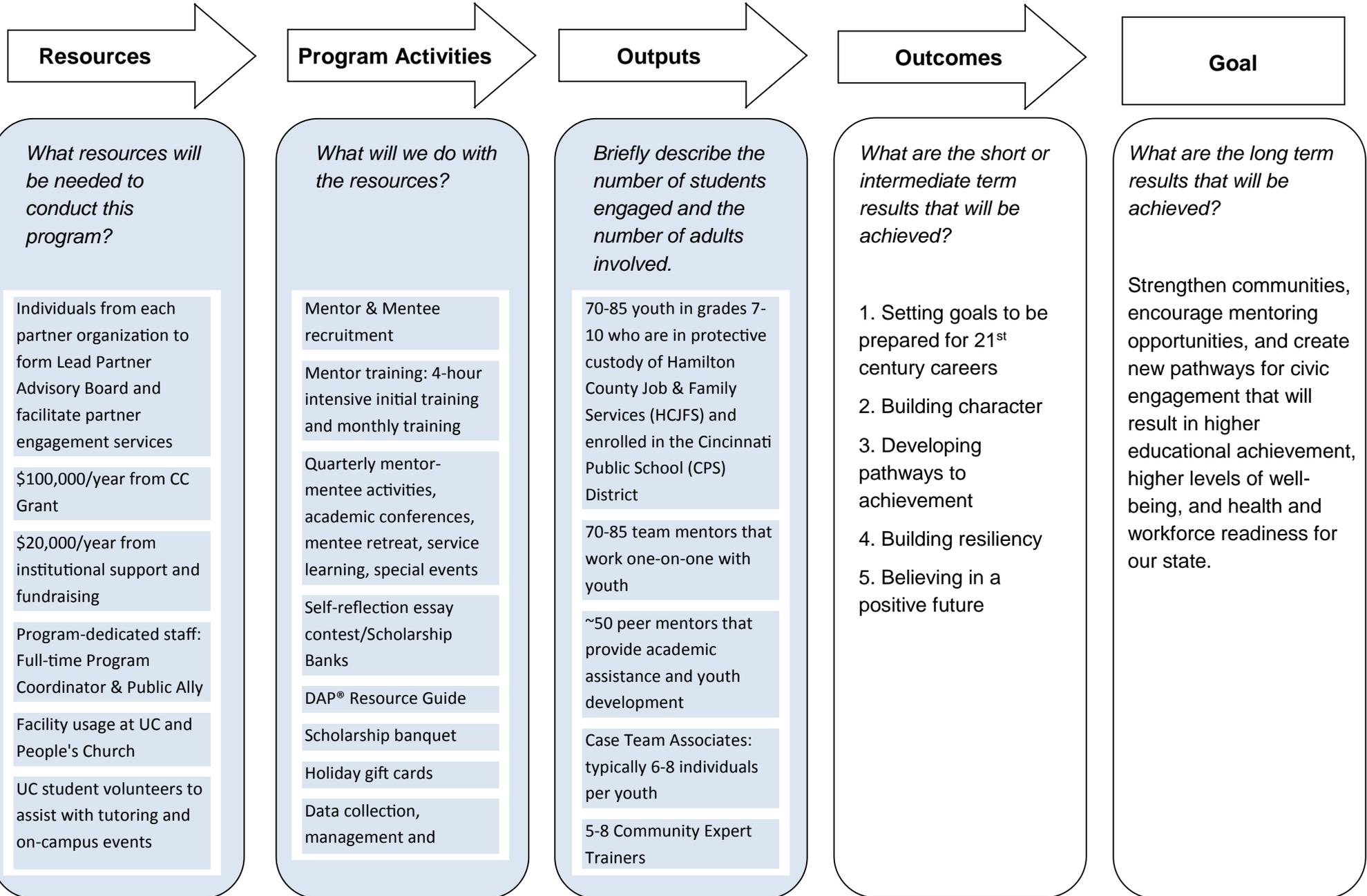
4. Community nonprofit: **Public Allies Cincinnati**

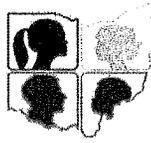
- Time contribution: An ally would contribute 1300 hours to the project during their 10-months from September 2015-June 2016. This would be 32-34 hours a week during this time period.
- Personnel contribution: An Ally would be supervised by the HEMI PREP program coordinator. Additionally, an Ally would be supported in their development by a member of the Public Allies Cincinnati staff and Allies would tap into the resources of the 40 Allies working at partnering organizations in the community as well to assess what they could bring to this project. Public Allies Cincinnati will also identify relevant resources to complete the grant objectives through other collaborations by promoting events jointly, sharing resources on activities related to objectives and recruiting volunteers from the Public Allies network. The Public Ally Cincinnati director will serve on the HEMI PREP Leadership Partner Advisory Board which will meet 5 times a year.

- Monetary contribution: The cost to host an Ally for 10 months is \$11,959. This expense is included in the program budget.
- Shared responsibilities: The objectives for the Public Ally are designed to build capacity for an organization and are tailored to serve a need within the organization. Specifically, the Public Ally placed at the HEMI PREP program would be to support the establishment and development of the program, with a special focus on supporting the youth by serving as a mentor and assisting them in navigating access to resources. This process would be enabled by the ability that several of the Allies are placed at nonprofit organizations in the community and can assist the students with connections to gain access to the services they desire to help them in their future paths.
- Additional roles and responsibilities: There are a variety of community events and program specific events which Public Ally leadership and staff as well as HEMI PREP staff will support and attend. The Public Ally Cincinnati director will serve on the HEMI PREP Leadership Partner Advisory Board which will meet 5 times a year.

5. Community nonprofit: Hamilton County Job and Family Service/Kids In School Rule

- Time contribution: There will be an extensive amount of time contributed from JFS in order for HEMI PREP to be successfully implemented. An estimate of 95 collective hours per month has been projected based on the meetings, trainings, events and activities scheduled for 2015-16 (Appendix 11: Detailed Timeline).
- Personnel contribution: There are many JFS staff including KISR! that will contribute time to HEMI PREP. They include the following; the Director of Hamilton County Job and Family Services, two Section Chiefs, mentees caseworkers and the two to KISR! Education Specialists. Each of these staff are responsible for different aspects of HEMI PLAN.
- Monetary contribution: In the current HEMI JFS contract there is money allocated to support foster youth education. When needed, we can access this money with approval of the JFS director to support HEMI PREP activities and events. The time and effort of the JFS & KISR! staff is contributed and not charged to the grant.
- Shared responsibilities: HEMI PREP is a partnership and all decisions affecting the youth served in HEMI PREP requires approval of JFS. All of the HEMI PREP activities and events will be planned together and have a JFS presence.
- Additional roles and responsibilities: The JFS section chief will serve on the HEMI PREP Leadership Partner Advisory Board which will meet 5 times a year.





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Community Connectors GRANT ASSURANCES

The parties referred to in this document are the Ohio Department of Education, herein referred to as "THE DEPARTMENT," and the applicant, herein referred to as the "GRANTEE," and any partnering entity who is not the lead applicant, herein referred to as the "CO-APPLICANT." THE DEPARTMENT may make funds available to the GRANTEE for programs operated by the GRANTEE in accordance with requirements and regulations applicable to such programs.

Consistent with state laws and regulations, the GRANTEE assures, if awarded a grant:

1. That the GRANTEE will accept funds in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes, regulations, program plans, and applications, and administer the programs in compliance with the United States and Ohio Constitutions, all provisions of such statutes, regulations, applications, policies and amendments thereto.
2. That the control of funds provided to the GRANTEE under the Community Connectors and title to property acquired with those funds will be in a designated eligible recipient and that a designated eligible recipient will administer those funds and property.
3. That the GRANTEE has the necessary legal authority to apply for and receive the proposed grant and enter into the contract.
4. That the GRANTEE will keep and maintain the required financial and compliance records in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code Section 117.11, utilizing generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) unless the GRANTEE has requested and received a waiver from the DEPARTMENT as to the method of accounting practices.
5. That the GRANTEE will make reports to THE DEPARTMENT as required or requested, and that may reasonably be necessary to enable THE DEPARTMENT to perform its duties. The reports shall be completed and submitted in accordance with the standards and procedures designated by THE DEPARTMENT and shall be supported by appropriate documentation.
6. That the GRANTEE will maintain records, and provide access to those records as THE DEPARTMENT and authorized representatives in the conduct of audits authorized by state statute. This cooperation includes access without unreasonable restrictions to its records and personnel for the purpose of obtaining relevant information.
7. That the GRANTEE will provide reasonable opportunities for participation by teachers, parents, and other interested agencies, organizations and individuals in the planning for and operation of the program, as may be necessary according to state law.
8. That any application, evaluation, periodic program plan or report relating to the Community Connectors will be made readily available to parents and to other members of the general public.

9. That no person shall, on the ground of race, color, religious affiliation, national origin, handicap or sex be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the GRANTEE receives state financial assistance.
10. That the GRANTEE may not use its state funding to pay for any of the following:
 - A. Religious worship, instruction or proselytization.
 - B. The salary or compensation of any employee of the GRANTEE or any CO-APPLICANT, whose duties or responsibilities include the activities specified in paragraph 10A, herein. Salary or compensation of an employee paid directly by a faith-based entity or house of worship is permitted to be utilized as an applicant's in-kind contribution to draw down state matching funds, and is not otherwise prohibited by this section.
 - B. Equipment or supplies to be used for any of the activities specified in paragraph 10A, herein.
 - C. Construction, remodeling, repair, operation or maintenance of any facility or part of a facility to be used for any of the activities specified in paragraph 10A, herein.
11. That the GRANTEE shall continue its coordination with THE DEPARTMENT during the length of the grant period.
12. The GRANTEE shall cooperate in any evaluation by THE DEPARTMENT.
13. That the GRANTEE will comply with all relevant laws relating to privacy and protection of individual rights including 34 C.F.R. Part 99 (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974).
14. That the GRANTEE will comply with any applicable federal, state and local health or safety requirements that apply to the facilities used for a project.
15. That it shall maintain records for five years following completion of the activities for which the GRANTEE uses the state funding and which show:
 - A. The amount of funds under the grant.
 - B. How the GRANTEE uses the funds.
 - C. The total cost of the project.
 - D. The share of that total cost provided from other sources.
16. That in the event of a sustained audit exception, and upon demand of THE DEPARTMENT, the GRANTEE shall immediately reimburse THE DEPARTMENT for that portion of the audit exception attributable under the audit to the GRANTEE. The GRANTEE agrees to hold THE DEPARTMENT harmless for any audit exception arising from the GRANTEE's failure to comply with applicable regulations.
17. That the GRANTEE is aware all state funds granted to it are conditioned upon the availability and appropriation of such funds by the Ohio General Assembly. These funds are subject to reduction or elimination by the Ohio General Assembly at any time, even following award and disbursement of funds. Except as otherwise provided by law, the GRANTEE shall hold THE DEPARTMENT harmless for any reduction or elimination of state funds granted to it. In the event of non-appropriation or reduction of appropriation and notice, the GRANTEE shall immediately cease further expenditures under the Community Connectors.
18. The GRANTEE will adopt and use the proper methods of administering the grant and any sub grants, including, but not limited to:

- A. The enforcement of any obligations imposed by law.
 - B. The correction of deficiencies in program operations that are identified through program audits, monitoring or evaluation.
 - C. The adoption of written procedures for the receipt and resolution of complaints alleging violations of law in the administration of such programs.
19. The GRANTEE, by submission of a grant proposal, agrees that THE DEPARTMENT has the authority to take administrative sanctions, including, but not limited to, suspension of cash payments for the project, suspension of program operations and/or, termination of project operations, as necessary to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations and assurances for any project. The GRANTEE acknowledges this authority under Ohio Revised Code Section 3301.07 (C), as applicable.
 20. . In the purchase of equipment and supplies, the GRANTEE will comply with state ethics laws and Ohio Revised Code Section 2921.42.
 21. That the GRANTEE will have effective financial management systems, which includes, but is not limited to, the ability to report financial data verifying compliance with program regulations and maintaining effective internal control over the operations of the approved grant.
 22. That the GRANTEE will obligate funds within the approved project period as set forth in the approved application and will liquidate said obligations not later than 90 days after the end of the project period for the grant.

This assurance is given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all grants, loans, contracts, property, discounts or other financial assistance extended after the date hereof to the GRANTEE by THE DEPARTMENT, including installment payments, after such date on account of applications for financial assistance which were approved before such date. The GRANTEE recognizes and agrees that such financial assistance will be extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in this assurance, and that the State of Ohio shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance. This assurance is binding on the GRANTEE, its successors, transferees and assigns. The person or persons whose signatures appear below are authorized to sign this assurance on behalf of the GRANTEE.

GRANTEE

Chris C. [Signature] 2/13/15
 Authorized Representative Date

John D. Ungruhe 2/13/15
 Fiscal Representative Date

Christine Jones
 Printed
Director Grants & Contracts Admin

John Ungruhe, Director
Sponsored Program Accounting
PO Box 210222
Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0222

Appendix 8

**The following manuscript has been submitted to
Children and Youth Services Review for publication.**

Title:

Developing Strategies for Positive Change: Transitioning Foster Youth to Adulthood

By:

Kara E. Graham
Annie R. Schellinger
Lisa M. Vaughn

Draft: Submitted to Journal for Publication

1. Introduction

Foster youth face challenging life circumstances that result in them being moved in and out of homes as children. Each move typically means adjusting to new people, new rules, and new schools. For some youth who stay in state care, struggles arise when they “age out” or emancipate as many of these youth have socioemotional and educational challenges resulting from their often complicated and difficult childhoods (Courtney et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2005; Harden, 2004; Pecora et al., 2005). Nationally, youth who age out of foster care are less likely to complete high school or graduate from a postsecondary education program, and they are more likely to experience financial difficulties, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, and teen pregnancy than their non-foster peers (Courtney et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2005; Pecora et al., 2005).

The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) in Hamilton County, Ohio (see Figure 1), a mentoring program that encourages and assists foster youth interested in higher education attainment, noticed that their transitioning youth were experiencing challenges hindering both personal and academic progress. This study’s objective was to better understand the barriers and contextual factors that impact transitioning foster youth in Hamilton County, Ohio, so that recommendations could be made to help aging-out foster youth experience a successful and fulfilling adult life.

Figure 1. HEMI Program Description

Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI)

HEMI is a mentoring program offered within Hamilton County, Ohio that encourages and assists transition-age foster youth interested in higher education attainment. It is a collaborative effort between the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County Job and Family Services, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development, OhioMeansJobs (2014) and Mount St. Joseph University (2014). Since its inception in 2009, HEMI has connected more than 75 foster youth to mentors.

HEMI mentors are committed to working with their mentee for up six years in order to help them graduate high school and complete a post-secondary education program. Each mentor works uniquely with his/her mentee and may take on duties such as helping with homework, attending school and program events, helping find housing, guiding appropriate educational decisions based on each mentee’s individual college readiness and generally encouraging program youth to work toward their educational goals. Mentors also work with their mentees on key yearly HEMI events like academic conferences and a mentor/mentee retreat. Prior to meeting their mentees, HEMI mentors are trained on the needs of foster youth transitioning to adulthood. Continuous training opportunities, program activities, and support are offered to mentors throughout their involvement with HEMI. To date, 100 percent of active HEMI youth have graduated high school and most have enrolled in higher education. Currently, nearly three-fourths of the high school graduates participating in HEMI are enrolled in a postsecondary program (Higher Education Mentoring Initiative, 2014).

1.1 Issue scope and relevance

Nationally, nearly 400,000 youth are in foster care and each year roughly 20,000 emancipate from care at approximately age 18—although some states continue care until 21 years of age (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Children are removed from their homes primarily due to neglect and abuse, with over half experiencing more than one type of maltreatment (Harden, 2004). Studies have found that maltreatment negatively impacts brain development, emotional/behavioral regulation, and social skills, which likely contributes to the unfavorable outcomes experienced by many emancipated youth (Harden, 2004; Kerker & Dore, 2006).

Once in care, foster youth experience an average of three home placement changes (Casey Family Programs, 2011). Besides the obvious challenges of adapting to a new home, a move can also initiate a school change. More than one-third of foster youth have had five or more school changes (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004), which often adversely impacts their academic progress (Casey Family Services, 2010; Research Highlights on Education and Foster Care, 2014). In addition, foster youth are two times more likely to be absent from school versus their peers (Research Highlights on Education and Foster Care, 2014). While truancy can be a contributing factor, these youth also miss school for court hearings related to their foster care placement and experience enrollment gaps when they are transferred between schools (Kelly, Guenther, Fink, & Warren, 2013; Pecora, 2012).

The compounded impact of maltreatment and school transitions affects academic achievements for many foster youth. Over 40% of foster youth 15-17 years old have repeated a grade (Wilson, Dolan, Smith, Casanueva, & Ringeisen, 2012) and foster youth are more likely to receive special education services at 2.5 to 3.5 times the rate of their general population peers

(Research Highlights on Education and Foster Care, 2014). With these challenges, fewer foster youth graduate high school versus their non-foster peers (Casey Family Programs, 2011; Research Highlights on Education in Foster Care, 2014). Only 3-11% of foster youth graduate college with a bachelor's degree after 6 years, versus 28% of their non-foster peers (Casey Family Programs, 2011).

With academic setbacks, employment and financial difficulties are more likely to further complicate life after aging out. Compared to low-income youth who are demographically similar, foster youth who age out of care typically earn lower wages and are less likely to have a job (Hook & Courtney, 2010). Income disparity relative to non-foster, low-income youth is known to continue until youth reach 30 years old (Stewart, Kum, Barth, & Duncan, 2014)—little research on alumni foster youth exists beyond age 30. In a foster youth study done in the Midwest, approximately 50% of former foster youth 23-24 years old were employed versus 75% of their peers (Courtney et al., 2004). At 23-24 years old, the median income for emancipated foster youth was \$8,000/year, which was much lower than their non-foster peers who earned about \$18,000/year (Courtney et al., 2004). Researchers have found that the income disparity between former foster youth and their non-foster peers increases as the youth reach their mid-twenties (Courtney et al., 2011; Stewart et al., 2014). Further, these employment and financial instabilities contribute to experiences with homelessness; somewhere between 20-40% of foster youth alumni experience a period of homelessness (e.g., sleeping in a homeless shelter, couch surfing, etc.) after leaving state care (Casey Family Programs, 2011; Courtney et al., 2004; Pecora et al., 2005).

Foster care alumni also experience mental health issues at rates higher than the general population (Casey Family Programs, 2011; Pecora, Jensen, Romanelli, Jackson, & Ortiz, 2009).

Among foster youth 12 years and older, roughly 60% have used some type of mental health service with about 40% using prescription medicines indicated for mental health purposes (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2013).

Additionally, foster youth alumni are also more likely than their non-foster peers to experience parenting responsibilities and engage in delinquent behaviors. While data are not comprehensive, teenage birth rates among foster youth are at least twice the general population rates (Pecora et al., 2003). Delinquency can also be a problem, as maltreated youth are 47% more likely to become involved in some type of criminal activity versus the general population (Haight, Bidwell, Marshall, & Khatiwoda, 2014). Youth involved in both the criminal justice system and in the foster care system are at a heightened risk for adverse developmental outcomes (Haight et al., 2014).

As HEMI youth began to experience life after emancipation, they also began undergoing challenges similar to aged-out youth nationally: service/support changes that resulted in financial and housing issues, problems obtaining and maintaining employment, academic challenges, minimal individual supports, mental health issues, and parenting responsibilities. Such difficulties were hindering postsecondary progress for most HEMI youth. While HEMI mentors could help their youth navigate some of these barriers, ultimately the challenges reached far beyond what HEMI alone could address. Other local agencies and individuals working with aged-out foster youth also noticed numerous unmet needs.

This study identified the barriers and contextual factors that impact transition-age foster youth in Hamilton County, Ohio by obtaining insights from relevant stakeholders and transition-age foster youth so that strategies could be developed within the community to make the transition to adulthood more successful and fulfilling for aging-out foster youth.

2. Method

In order to tackle this large, community-based issue locally, HEMI was challenged to identify a collaborative research method that would quickly yield appropriate community action at minimal cost. Collaboration was particularly important due to the variety of community organizations and individuals working with transition-age youth. HEMI youth were already experiencing issues aging out and these foster youth needed expeditious changes in the local community. Lastly, as a two-year-old, non-profit organization, HEMI had minimal funds to support community research.

HEMI used a qualitative method called the Group-Level Assessment (GLA), because it utilizes an action-based, participatory research process that provides each participant with the opportunity to have an equal voice in data generation, evaluation, and action planning. The GLA is a validated method used to generate information about a specific community issue by engaging a wide range of stakeholders in a collaborative, issue-identification process that includes relevant, action-based plan generation which can then be applied (Vaughn, 2014; Vaughn, Jacquez, Zhao, & Lang, 2011; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014).

This study targeted transition-age foster youth (age 16-25) within Hamilton County, Ohio as well as other individuals within Hamilton County who worked closely with transition-age foster youth: county caseworkers, representatives from various organizations serving foster youth, magistrates, educators, and community volunteers. The GLA empowered local stakeholders to have an equal voice while collaboratively working to define the needs and issues surrounding the local transition-age foster youth population and appropriate action-plan development. Costs were minimized by employing a local GLA expert to conduct and guide the

research process and by utilizing office staff and HEMI volunteers to assist with development and execution.

2.1 Sample and participants

Sixty-three community stakeholders attended a 5-hour GLA session. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling approach whereby aging out foster youth and individuals working closely with them from a variety of local agencies and groups were personally invited, and then those individuals invited other

appropriate people they knew or worked with locally (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

Participants were from a wide range of

backgrounds: 30% were individuals dedicated

to working specifically with foster youth

(county caseworkers, Court Appointed Special

Advocates (CASA)/Guardian Ad Litem

(GAL), mentors), 25% were transition-age

foster youth (of the foster youth 63% were

emancipated), 10% were administrators from

various local organizations working with foster

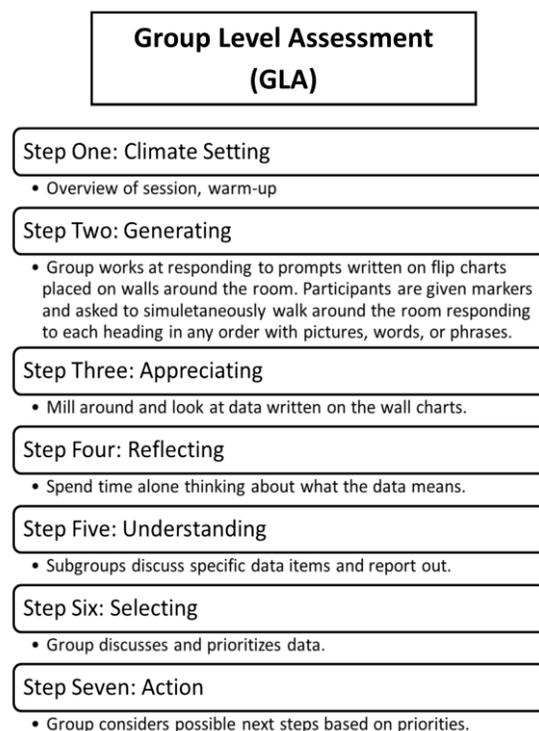
youth, 8% were foster parents, and the remaining 27% included social workers, teachers, and

other supporters involved with foster youth locally. The majority of participants were female

(75%) and a range of ethnic backgrounds were represented (55% Caucasian, 37% African

American or Black, and 8% either Appalachian Caucasian or Hispanic).

Figure 2. Group Level Assessment Process



2.2. Measures and procedures

The GLA process utilized seven steps (see Figure 2). **Step 1--Climate setting:** First, participants were provided with an overview of the GLA and a short, warm-up activity. **Step 2--Generating:** The group was then instructed to walk around and answer pre-written prompts

Figure 3. Participants Responding to Prompts



displayed on 45 flip charts that hung around the room. Participants were provided with markers and asked to try to respond to each board by either providing a unique comment and/or corroborating an existing comment by adding a check mark or star (see Figure 3). A prompt was listed on each flip

chart with information relevant to foster youth aging out of care. Prompt examples included:

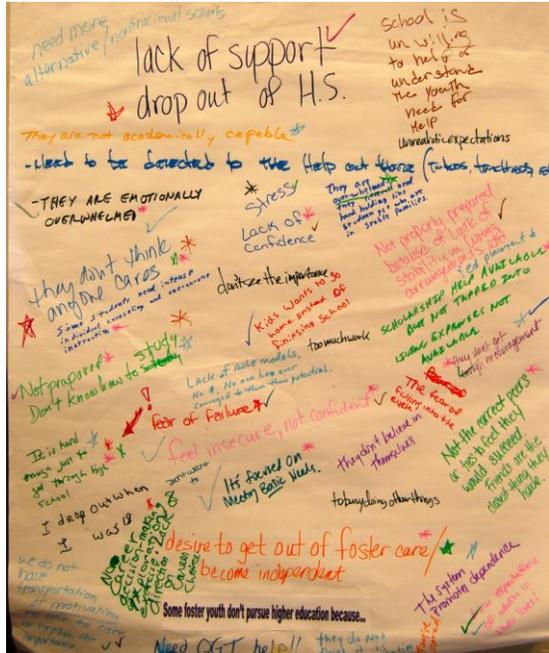
“The most pressing need for foster youth aging out is...”, “Foster youth are successful after they age out because...”, “School would be easier for foster youth (~age 16-25) if _____”,

“Some foster youth drop out of higher education (i.e., trade school, college) because...”. **Step 3--**

Appreciating: The group was then given time to walk around and read the written responses provided to the prompts (see Figure 4). **Step 4--Reflecting:** Additional time was provided so individuals could digest and reflect on the information gathered. After reflection, the remainder of the session was spent understanding the information provided so it could be used to help identify the barriers that aging out foster youth encounter. **Step 5--Understanding:** The moderator divided the group into seven smaller groups of seven to ten people and provided each with six to seven flip charts that the larger group had populated. These small groups were instructed to analyze the information on their boards for salient themes/overlapping ideas. A

representative from each small group then reported out to the entire group the common themes identified. The facilitator recorded the major themes presented by each small group on flip charts

Figure 4. Example of GLA Prompt with Responses



at the front of the room so that the entire large group

could watch the themes unfold. **Step 6--Selecting:**

The large group reconvened to discuss the data and prioritize the themes. **Step 7--Action:** Interested individuals then signed up to be part of ongoing action groups to address the priorities identified.

At the GLA session, all participating foster youth received a small gift card and three raffle items were provided as attendance prizes. Adults working with youth were offered Continuing Education

Credits (CEUs) for their participation, and all attendees were provided lunch.

2.3 Data analysis

Individual qualitative data was generated by the 63 participants in response to the 45 prompts hung on the walls. In small groups, the participants at the GLA extracted and condensed the data into several themes after analyzing their assigned flip charts. The large group identified six themes, with two overarching capacities that could lead to positive outcomes.

3. Findings and Discussion

Six themes highlighting the challenges foster youth encounter when they emancipate from state care were prioritized by stakeholders at the GLA: 1) Education; 2) Jobs; 3) Housing;

4) Life Skills; 5) Foster Care System/Continuum of Care; and 6) Individual Needs of Foster Youth.

Education is both a local and national issue for foster youth (Kelly et al., 2013).

Nationally, high school graduation rates are lower for foster youth than the general population (Casey Family Programs, 2011). Participants indicated that in order for high school graduation rates to increase, foster youth need more stability and support.

Corroborating the literature about foster youth and school transfers, GLA participants stressed that minimizing elementary and secondary school transfers is an important factor in increasing positive educational outcomes.

Participants noted that increased high school support for foster youth was helpful in several areas. First, those working with high school youth (caseworkers, teachers, magistrates, etc.) need to have a more positive approach that encourages, assists and helps promote self-esteem in the youth they serve. Second, more understanding is needed among teachers and administrators on what foster youth experience and their unique schooling needs. Third, foster youth need to be provided easy access to tutors and other support services to assist with schoolwork, and be encouraged to take advantage of this support, so they can be more academically prepared. Lastly, it was indicated that people working with foster youth need to have higher expectations regarding both school attendance and grades so that youth know that the community at large values their education. Often times, foster youth receive mixed messages about the importance of education. For example, many foster youth are pulled out of school for court hearings and case administrative meetings during the school day, which may communicate to youth that school attendance is not valued.

Nationally, about 70% of foster youth want to continue their education after high school (McMillen, Auslander, Elze, White, & Thompson, 2003), but only 3-11% end up earning a bachelor's degree versus 28% of the general population (Casey Family Programs, 2011). Foster youth in Hamilton County, Ohio typically age out of the foster care system at about 18 years of age, which is when many of their non-foster peers start to engage in some sort of postsecondary education. While many foster youth involved in the HEMI program start a postsecondary program, they still tend to experience barriers that can necessitate temporarily taking time off or completely dropping out of their program.

Prior research has indicated that multiple factors contribute to lower college graduation rates among foster youth: elementary/secondary education disruptions, service and support changes that result in financial and housing challenges, lack of individual supports, parenting responsibilities, mental health, legal system issues, and general financial limitations (Courtney et al., 2011; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2013a). Locally, participants identified barriers similar to those experienced nationally, but also communicated that foster youth would be more successful in higher education if they were encouraged and truly understood the importance of postsecondary education.

Because many foster youth have a difficult time finding and maintaining jobs, **employment** was another barrier that emerged during the GLA. When faced with a job loss or struggles finding a job, some local youth resorted to supporting themselves through "any means necessary," which could include selling drugs or their bodies, stealing, and borrowing from check cash stores. When foster youth age out of foster care, they do not always have an adult to help support them during a time of financial need (Courtney et al., 2011) as many youth their age would, which may help explain why some youth use this any-means-necessary approach.

Participants indicated that foster youth primarily need more training and support to acquire necessary hard and soft job skills to be successful in obtaining and maintaining a job. For example, they need people to help them with appropriate clothing, job search correspondence, interview techniques, time management, networking, work ethic, motivation, and general job-skills training.

Lastly, GLA attendees suggested that transportation improvements are also needed to help employment outcomes. While in state care, foster youth in Hamilton County, Ohio are provided bus tokens to get to and from work, if necessary; however, these youth are not encouraged to get a driver's license and thus often emancipate with minimal to no driving experience (HCJFS, personal communication, May 2014). Public transportation is a good option, but for some youth it is difficult. In these cases, long commutes (common with bus transfers) and/or bus timing issues can interfere with punctuality. For some youth, bus reliability issues negatively affect employment outcomes and can limit employment options. Other studies have also found similar transportation problems among foster youth aging out (Batsche et al., 2014; Mares, 2010) and immobility can contribute to lower wages in the workforce (Michaelides, 2010).

Housing for aging out foster youth has been identified as a major challenge, both locally and nationally, with homelessness as a particular area of concern (Courtney et al., 2004; Casey Family Programs, 2011). When foster youth emancipate in Hamilton County, they are typically provided housing in a subsidized facility. Unfortunately, participants noted that these residences are often in unsafe neighborhoods and the overall supply is limited. Waiting lists for subsidized housing in Hamilton County have been known to be as long as a year or more, with priority given to families (Schellinger, A. R., personal communication, January 2014). Youth placed in

subsidized housing run into challenges if they need to move for work or school. For housing to be more effective locally, participants requested that safer, more convenient housing options be made available to foster youth alumni. They also thought it would help if emancipated youth had adult supervision for support, information, and accountability.

Hamilton County foster youth 16 years and older in state custody are required to attend an independent living training program. Through these local programs youth have an opportunity to learn about various aspects related to living on their own before they exit care. Even still, participants reported that foster youth between the ages of 16 and 25 are only moderately to not well prepared for most **life skills**. While participants thought youth were most prepared for basic survival and navigating bus routes, they were least prepared for driving/maintaining a car, managing their personal finances, goal setting, independently navigating school/work/social/family systems, maintaining a household, healthy friendships and healthy meal planning—many of the skills needed for positive outcomes in adulthood.

Issues within the **foster care system/continuum of care** also emerged as a theme from the GLA. Participants offered numerous suggestions on how to improve caring for foster youth who will eventually age out. GLA participants believed that more personal and financial support would benefit youth, including having youth stay in state care longer. There is evidence that lengthening care to 21 years old does help, particularly with regard to increased positive educational and employment outcomes (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). In addition, having resources like a driver's license, cash and home goods upon emancipation has been found to increase positive education and financial outcomes for transitioning youth (Pecora et al., 2006). GLA participants also suggested that more consistency (less turnover) is necessary with regard to home placement/housing, school and caseworkers. While the coordination of this effort is

difficult, because it involves numerous parties coming to the table to develop a collaborative solution, government policy is continuing to make this easier. Nationally, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 mandates that child welfare agencies ensure that children remain in the same school whenever possible, even if their home placement changes (Stoltzfus, 2008). More recently the Uninterrupted Scholars Act of 2013 gives individuals or entities, particularly child welfare agencies and supporting agencies engaged in addressing students' educational needs, access to educational records (Kelly et al., 2013). Previously, this access was limited under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Kelly et al., 2013).

Another finding from the GLA related to the foster care system was that communication improvements should be made among those working with foster youth, so that information transferred is both correct and consistent. Communication among those working with foster youth locally is complicated because as many as six to eight individuals can be involved with youth in state care. In Hamilton County, caseworkers handle the state care responsibilities and communicate with various placement agencies that work with the youth. State agencies work with various organizations, each designated to specific areas supporting foster youth: a magistrate in charge of the care, a guardian ad litem that advocates for the youth, the school each youth attends, placement agency representatives (foster placement agency, group home, or independent living agency), and at times volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates, HEMI Mentors, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Mentors, etc.) or professional counselors. Thus, when a youth comes into state care, they go from having one or two parents to three times the number of individuals who work with them regularly, creating potential communication challenges (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007).

GLA participants also recommended that those involved in the state care provide more “unconditional care and support,” with a better understanding of the individual feelings, thoughts, and needs of the youth in care. It was also suggested that coordinating organizations should have higher expectations of the youth. Some state-funded agencies that work with foster youth are already stretched to capacity by monetary limitations, making it difficult to truly deliver this relationship enhancement. State and federal spending cuts have resulted in about a 50% decrease to the operating budget for Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS), Hamilton County’s local agency coordinating child welfare (HCJFS, personal communication, June 2, 2014). Dramatic spending cuts make this a significant challenge for HCJFS, yet despite these challenges they have embraced the Casey Foundation’s mission to safely reduce the number of kids in care by 50% by 2020 (Casey Family Programs, 2014, Casey Family Programs & Badeau, 2011).

The **needs of foster** youth emerged as the final theme from the GLA. GLA participants described foster youth as having the same basic needs as non-foster youth—supportive, loving, genuine caring adults who can help guide them and continue to support them during hard times. At the time of the GLA, participants believed that these basic human needs were inconsistently met for many youth.

Youth advocacy also surfaced as a primary need. It was noted that many negative stereotypes, predominantly from others in the community who do not understand their situations, weigh on foster youth. Klein (2012) found that some foster youth identified with the stigma and stereotypes, which negatively impacts their self-concept. Advocacy in the community at large, particularly with those who interact most frequently with youth (e.g., school professionals) could help minimize these unnecessary pressures.

Participants indicated that youth need services beyond age 18 to help them navigate housing, jobs, education, connections with other foster youth, and other individual needs like medical care, mental health issues, and childcare. Numerous experts have recommended increasing assistance for foster youth, citing the need for more program supports for youth well beyond age 18 (Courtney, Hook, & Lee, 2010; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Hook & Courtney, 2010; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2013b; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010; Pecora et al., 2006). In fact, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 continues to encourage and expand support beyond the age of 18. With this new legislation, states can seek federal funding to help support foster youth through age 21, so long as the youth are either enrolled in school, maintaining a job at least 80 hours per month, or are engaged in an activity that is designed to promote or reduce employment barriers (Stoltzfus, 2008). The law extends the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program eligibility so that Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), valued at up to \$5,000 annually, may be awarded to foster youth who were in care after their 16th birthday and exited through emancipation without a permanent family, guardianship or adoption (Stoltzfus, 2008). The ETV funds may be used to help pay for college or other training programs until the former foster youth has reached the age of 21 (Stoltzfus, 2008).

Regardless of the resulting obstacles from the six themes described above, participants indicated two essential capacities central to improving youths' lives as they age out: 1) individual support and 2) personal development. These two capacities were considered the main reasons GLA participants thought foster youth succeeded upon emancipation.

Those closely involved with foster youth in Hamilton County viewed **individual support** as key to helping foster youth experience successful outcomes like succeeding in school, staying

in school, and obtaining/maintaining employment. Other studies have also found that foster youth benefit from positive interpersonal relationships with family, peers and/or community members which lead to more encouraging outcomes like increased academic success and a decreased rate of homelessness (Collins, Spencer, & Ward, 2010; Hass & Graydon, 2009; Klein, 2012; Pecora, 2012). Moreover, youth with broader support networks, also referred to as social capital, experience better life outcomes in general, leading to healthier lifestyles and greater educational attainment (Ahrens, DuBois, Richardson, Fan, & Lozano, 2008; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011b; Scales & Leffert, 2004; Osgood et al., 2010; Pecora, 2012). Many foster youth realize they need these relationships and try to seek them out, namely from foster mothers (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014). Regrettably, foster youth do not always have the skills to build strong relationships and some do not recognize their importance (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014; Scannapieco et al., 2007).

Personal development was also identified as important for local youth to experience more positive outcomes post emancipation. During the GLA respondents' noted numerous personal qualities that they believed were important for local youth to experience increased positive outcomes post emancipation. These personal qualities included self-esteem, perseverance, resilience, patience, focus, and emotional maturity, which are all characteristics that help identify a person's level of maturity or "personal development" (i.e., personal growth). Not surprisingly, GLA participants indicated that being more personally developed increases success in numerous areas: life skills, education and making healthy lifestyle choices. Literature on personal development further supports these findings (Osgood et al., 2010; Scales & Leffert, 2004; Search Institute, 2014). The Search Institute, an organization committed to helping children succeed, has identified 40 Developmental Assets[®]. Youth with more assets experience

greater positive outcomes than youth with fewer assets. Specifically, youth with more assets are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors like delinquency and drug use and more likely to practice behaviors that promote positive outcomes like social and academic competence and healthy lifestyles (Scales & Leffert, 2004; Search Institute, 2014). It is thought that all youth can successfully work toward increasing their assets and subsequently experience increased positive outcomes, regardless of racial, ethnic or economic levels (Scales & Leffert, 2004; Search Institute, 2014). Other researchers have also found that asset building promotes resilience and protection from adverse outcomes (Howse, Diehl, & Trivette, 2010).

3.1 Community Action Group formation and impact

Central to the GLA method, community action groups were formed from the resulting prioritized themes to help formulate plans to address the barriers and community needs identified during this group assessment. Participants identified which group they wanted to join, if any, and were subsequently invited to attend quarterly meetings hosted by HEMI. At the first Action Group meeting, HEMI presented a summary of the GLA results so that Action Group members could use the research findings to guide group goals and objectives.

Action Groups formed from the resulting six themes identified during the GLA have evolved into three main groups: education, employment and housing. These three areas were considered top priorities and are themes where community members and engaged youth could have the strongest collaborative impact. Since their inception, each Action Group has targeted efforts mostly toward HEMI foster youth, because HEMI mentees represent a population of foster youth in Hamilton County who are focused on obtaining an education and exploring postsecondary options.

The **Education Action Group** has primarily focused their attention on helping HEMI youth make appropriate, informed postsecondary choices to help increase postsecondary retention rates for HEMI youth.

To do this, the Education group helped build awareness about foster youths' unique educational challenges by presenting to local high school counselors. They also provided guidance to HEMI mentees to ensure their college majors better align with their true interests and abilities by administering a career-oriented personality assessment and providing additional college information. A 90-statement personality mosaic survey based on Holland's six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional, was identified and distributed to HEMI students. Possible career fields were identified from the individual survey outcomes (Holland, 1997). A list of local two-year and four-year universities, along with potential majors, was also provided so that students could consider applying to educational institutions that aligned with their career interests. Lastly, a collaborated effort with the Employment Action Group provided job-shadowing opportunities by compiling a list of professions represented by the HEMI mentors.

GLA findings indicated that many foster youth do not have the skills and training necessary to obtain and maintain a job, so the **Employment Action Group** chose to hold job skills workshops for HEMI youth.

In the first workshop, foster youth listened to a panel of professionals from Legal Aid (a non-profit law firm), Procter & Gamble (a Fortune 500 multinational consumer product company), Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (a pediatric hospital) and Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development (an institute with adult education and career-planning programs). These professionals taught the youth about appropriate social media usage

(including marketing yourself), business manners, appropriate workplace attire, expected behavior during an interview, and interview tips (as well as how to handle sensitive interview questions). Through generous donations by the Cincinnati Computer Cooperative, each student received a laptop computer, a portfolio, an external hard drive, breath mints, and their own business card.

A second workshop was created to build on the first workshop themes, while addressing additional job skill needs identified by the post-workshop evaluation. This second workshop focused on interview skills, resume writing and further addressed appropriate attire for the workplace. The Employment Action Group partnered with the University of Cincinnati Career Development Center so that students could observe and participate in mock interviews and create a resume draft to take home at the end of the evening. Dress for Success and the Urban League provided a complimentary interview outfit for all youth in attendance.

The **Housing Action Group** has begun to identify the complexities in improving housing options due to the required community, legal, and financial coordination. The Housing Action Group attempted to pursue housing voucher subsidies for HEMI mentees but found that the complex and intricate contracts that were required for plan execution interfered with implementing the potential voucher subsidy program. However, during the process, important relationships were established with the local housing agency and funders that have helped create a greater understanding of what is feasible in the future. Currently the Housing Action Group is investigating alternative housing options offered in other areas of country in order to better understand how other communities are addressing housing issues for transition-age youth (but not necessarily foster youth), so that they can develop a new plan locally. New Housing Action

Group members include expert contractors, builders, and local housing advocates who all hope to create a new housing option for HEMI youth.

Action Groups were not formalized for the remaining themes (Life Skills, Foster Care System/Continuum of Care and the Needs of Foster Youth) due to proactive efforts already underway to improve outcomes for aging-out foster youth in these areas. Kids In School Rule! (KISR!) is a corporative engagement between the Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS), Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), Hamilton County Juvenile Court and Legal Aid Society of South West Ohio. KISR! was established to improve educational outcomes by increasing communication, systems coordination, and school stability. Recent data show that this program, which has been in existence with minimal funding since 2007, has successfully reduced school transfers despite home/district changes and positively impacted academic outcomes for the youth it serves (Kelly et al., 2013).

In addition, a separate (but overlapping) group of local organizations working with transitioning youth meet to discuss the needs of youth aging out in Hamilton County. The Transition Work Group meets bi-monthly and engages in knowledge sharing, resource collaboration and advocacy. For example, the group has developed a formal independent-living training curriculum that educates nearly 100 providers, caseworkers and foster parents each year (Caples, C., personal communication, May 2014). While no specific Action Group was formed to address the “system,” there is much activity with successfully engaged organizations that are making changes at the ground level to improve life for current and transitioning foster youth in Hamilton County, Ohio.

Overall, this GLA has been successful in generating local action by the HEMI Action Groups. Importantly, the GLA and subsequent Action Groups have brought a collective

awareness and understanding of the issues transition-age youth face locally to not only the participants and represented stakeholders, but to school counselors, business professionals, community activists, donors and other local organizations servicing transitioning foster youth. Increased dialogue on these community issues seems to have helped spark other community efforts, such as improving housing options for youth and funding support for education-minded, transitioning students, as well as providing additional scholarship funds for local foster youth.

3.2 Research limitations

The study purpose was exploratory in nature and conducted among transition-age foster youth and local professionals familiar with transitioning foster youth. As such, caution should be exercised when generalizing results to foster youth nationally because the findings reflect localized programming and policy.

4.0 Conclusions and Implications

Transitioning foster youth, and those working with them, consistently juggle difficult issues where there are often minimal and/or undesirable solutions and outcomes. This GLA approach provided a unique forum that brought local experts and youth out of their silos, empowering them to work collectively to identify and analyze local issues, while creating direction for action groups to facilitate positive community change. Even though the GLA is by nature exploratory, the findings and conclusions are substantiated in existing research literature, confirming this research method's appropriateness for addressing this large-scale community issue. Not only does HEMI more fully understand the individual education, employment, housing and system challenges that limit positive outcomes for local youth post emancipation,

but utilizing the GLA has charged the community at large to initiate positive changes both through efforts initiated by the action groups and through increased focus on these issues by involved donors and local community organizations.

The research findings in this study suggest that increased supports need to be in place after emancipation to positively impact postsecondary outcomes, and outcomes in general, for aged-out foster youth. First, for transitioning youth to experience positive outcomes they need an individual (or multiple individuals) to support and guide them, well into their young adulthood, just as many parents do for their children. Hamilton County Job and Family Services is working toward finding permanent families for youth in care (Casey Family Programs & Badeau, 2011). However, some youth will continue to age out of care without a permanent home. For these youth, there is a need for programs that encourage, facilitate, and help youth learn to develop supportive, long-term relationships (Hass & Graydon, 2009; Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014; Pecora, 2012; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Caseworkers are largely unable to provide these transition supports for foster youth because turnover rates can be high, child welfare departments are often resource stretched, and caseworkers no longer manage cases post emancipation (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003). Plus, caseworkers need to primarily focus on each child's safety. Individual support is better suited to come from community members or programs that follow transition-age youth through their last years of care and post emancipation. GLA participants suggested that individual support includes a loving, caring adult(s) with high expectations who will help positively guide and teach youth as they maneuver through social/life challenges, as well as academic and employment endeavors. In addition, these advisors should ensure that youth

thoroughly understand the benefits that result from positive academic and employment outcomes.

In Hamilton County, several individual support programs exist to help youth who are aging out, however, these programs are self-governing and youth are not required to participate in these programs post emancipation. For example, Lighthouse Youth Services (and other local contracted foster care agencies) offer independent living programs, Cincinnati Works offers employment support and mentoring specifically for aging-out foster youth seeking employment assistance, the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) offers mentoring for foster youth interested in postsecondary education, and ProKids provides Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to some youth in state care. Not all youth aging out choose to utilize these programs post emancipation and most program services end at emancipation. Additionally, these programs are not primarily focused on relationship building, though this may grow out of program involvement in some cases. As such, more concerted efforts prior to exiting state care may help youth garner the relationship-building skills that they need (but do not always want or know they need) so that they can begin to form healthy, supportive relationships (i.e., social capital) before they emancipate (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012). Moreover, a collaborative effort across these organizations may help streamline efficiencies by promoting partnership and minimizing program silos, creating a unified resource and message to transition-age foster youth.

In addition to teaching relationship-building skills so that youth cultivate supportive interpersonal relationships, findings from this study suggest that personal development is a second, related capacity that needs to be nurtured so that foster youth can further experience increased positive outcomes. Different developmental assessment tools are available; HEMI has chosen to use the 40 Developmental Assets[®], created by the Search Institute, as a way to

understand an individual's personal development so that mentors can work on activities that would help increase assets for their transition-age youth (Search Institute, 2014).

Overall, early intervention is thought to have the most beneficial impact on transitioning foster youth. Earlier intervention may be critical to help promote positive behaviors before negative patterns become engrained and before youth are apprehensive about professional interventions related to emotional regulation (Lewis, Granic, & Lamm, 2006). A small-scale study among foster youth who entered the foster care system in preschool suggests protective factors in early childhood impact later asset development (Healey & Fisher, 2011). Maximizing asset development is important because the number of assets a youth develops directly impacts positive outcomes. The Search Institute has found that early asset development can compound positive academic outcomes. In a longitudinal study conducted where St. Louis Park, Minnesota youth were tracked in 6th through 8th grade and then again in 10th through 12th grade; asset-rich students experienced increased longitudinal grade point average (GPA) progression relative to asset-challenged students. Moreover, for each asset increase, student GPA advanced one-fifth of a grade point (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2003). These findings should encourage local agencies to develop effective, collaborative efforts to promote asset building when youth first enter foster care to improve personal development for these youth before emancipation, in an effort to maximize personal and academic outcomes while in state care and after.

Hamilton County foster youth would also benefit from resources post emancipation to ensure that aged-out youth can successfully address any financial, employment, housing, parenting, and mental health issues that arise. Ohio currently has a proposed bill that would allow youth to remain in foster care until age 21 (Ohio House Bill No. 423, 2013-2014). Should it pass, youth in Hamilton County may then be able to utilize a formal after-care program. To be

effective, a formal after-care program would need adequate funding by the state and federal governments, as well as provide age-appropriate programming. For example, a transition-age program could work with other local organizations to provide housing supports with appropriate oversight and skill-building activities where youth are empowered to engage in the transition processes (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2013b). Research has indicated that extending foster care supports into young adulthood helps increase educational and employment outcomes for youth who choose to stay in care until age 21 and decrease homelessness and teenage pregnancy (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011a; Pecora, 2012). The human brain goes through a major development cycle between the ages of 14 and 25, “this period shapes the planning, decision-making, judgment and coping skills a person needs as an adult” (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012). Extending care beyond age 18 with effective supports will likely have lasting impacts by positively shaping maturation for those individuals who choose to continue service involvement.

Foster youth may be able to navigate the post-emancipation challenges thrust upon them more successfully by providing an individual (or individuals) to help guide transition-age foster youth, building assets related to personal development, promoting stronger, healthier interpersonal relationships, and providing wrap-around services beyond age 18. More research is needed to explore programmatic impacts on foster youth to help illuminate the longitudinal impacts of effective asset building, strengthened interpersonal relationships and increased individual and community supports for these high-risk youth.

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Appendix 9

Collaborative Functioning Scales

DIRECTIONS: Research has identified 19 factors that influence the success of a collaborative. Twelve of these factors are listed below. Indicate how you feel the collaborative is functioning by highlighting the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive of your collaborative.

Please note that in all questions (except question 6) 7 is the highest rating and 1 is the lowest rating.

Question 1 is an example of how you can respond.

1. Shared Vision

1 = We do not have a shared vision

2

3

4

5

6

7 = We have a shared and clearly understood vision

2. Goals & Objectives

1 = Members do not understand goals or objectives

2

3

4

5

6

7 = Members understand and agree on goals and objectives

3. Responsibilities & Roles

1 = Roles and Responsibilities of members are not clear

2

3

4

5

6

7 = Members are clear about their roles

4. Decision Making Procedures

1= We do not have effective decision making procedures

2

3

4

5

6

7= We have effective decision making procedures

5. Changing Members

1= We do not have procedures for changing members

2

3

4

5

6

7= We have procedures for changing members

6. Conflict Management (This is reverse rated)

1= We are able to successfully manage conflict

2

3

4

5

6

7= Conflict keeps us from doing anything

7. Leadership

1= Leadership is not shared and is inadequate

2

3

4

5

6

7= Leadership is effective and shared when appropriate

8. Plans

1= We do not follow work plans

2

3

4

5

6

7= Plans are well developed and followed

9. Relationships/Trust

1= People don't trust each other

2

3

4

5

6

7= Members trust each other

10. Internal Communication

1= Members do not communicate well

2

3

4

5

6

7=Members communicate well with each other

11. External Communication

1= Members do not communicate well externally

2

3

4

5

6

7= Our external communication is open and timely

12. Evaluation

1= We never evaluate our performance

2

3

4

5

6

7= We built evaluation into all of our activities

Appendix 10

HEMI PREP Mentor Monthly Training Calendar

1st Thursday of the month (6:00-8:00) @ Peoples Church unless otherwise noted

May 2015*	Summer Youth Employment Job Prospects @ OhioMeansJobs
June 2015	Developmental Asset Profile training (DAP)
July 2015	CharacterCounts!/ Mentor/Mentee Training: ETV for post-secondary mentees
August 2015	New Mentor Initial Training (offered multiple times throughout the month)
September 2015	New Mentors: Educational Law / Experienced Mentors: Self Care
October 2015	Independent Living and Emancipation
November 2015	Mentor Annual Meeting: Retreat (Service Learning focus)
December 2015	No Training/ Holiday Celebration Scholarship Dinner (Dec. 10 th)
January 2016	Mentor/Mentee Training: FAFSA & special dinner celebrating Mentors (National Mentor Month)
February 2016	Creating Hope for our youth
March 2016	Effects of Trauma
April 2016	Financial Literacy
May 2016*	Summer Youth Employment Job Prospects @ OhioMeansJobs

The training schedule repeats itself

Appendix 11

Detailed Timeline HEMI PREP

April 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Host 1st Leadership Partner meeting to address preparation of grant implementation and commitment to a shared vision (April 23rd).

Create a job description for the HEMI PREP program coordinator in preparation of award. Upon announcement of grant award, post the job position and start the interview process. Leadership partners host interviews for program coordinator.

Facilitate an orientation with the HEMI staff for the new PREP coordinator to provide an overview of the original HEMI program

Write an announcement for publication among all media contacts to inform community about the award of the Community Connectors grant

May 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Hire HEMI PREP program coordinator.

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation

Provide orientation to HEMI PREP goals and objectives

Attend the Mentoring Center of Central Ohio training session for non-profit agencies

Define the Public Allies daily tasks and service expectations

Host and conduct interviews for the Public Ally Cincinnati candidate

Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings

Start the IRB process at UC to conduct research study utilizing the DAP

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Develop a Student Referral process and packet in conjunction with KISR! to distribute to JFS caseworkers

Meet with the Kids In School Rule (KISR!) team to start the process of identifying foster youth grades 7-10 in CPS and determine the specific schools where students are enrolled

Participate in the PUBLIC Ally interviews

Write a posting for the UC Center of Community Engagement list serve to recruit UC students to serve as “peer” mentors upon return to school in August.

Create a mentor recruitment strategy and schedule information sessions throughout the community and host at Peoples Church.

Develop a mentor handbook including policy and procedure.
Coordinate a background check procedure with Hamilton Job and Family Service for all the potential HEMI PREP mentors.
Reach out to community agencies in an effort to build collaboration
Attend the “Essentials of Asset Building for Trainers and Facilitators” (DAP), St. Paul, MN
Post UC student service opportunity to become a HEMI PREP “peer mentor” on the UC Center for Community Engagement (CCE) list-serve
Monitor and respond to UC student inquiries emails regarding becoming a mentor
Develop peer & team mentors application packets
Develop the training curriculum
Create a training schedule
Create a HEMI PREP pamphlet for distribution
Attend and present HEMI PREP at the Education Success of Children in Foster Care Collaborative
Attend and present HEMI PREP at CASA ProKids meeting
Continue to work on community collaborations
Attend the Foster Care Educational Summit planning committee meetings
Serve on the Foster Care Thanksgiving Dinner committee

June 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Attend the Mentoring Center of Central Ohio training session for non-profit agencies
Meet weekly with HEMI PLAN program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Convene a committee to create a DAP community based asset resource guide for mentors
Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings
Select Public Ally “fellow”

HEMI PLAN Program Coordinator will:

Facilitate DAP training at the monthly HEMI trainings for all HEMI mentors
Attend the CharacterCounts! Training
Present at the Educational Summit for Foster Youth at Cincinnati State to introduce HEMI PREP to student participants (June 19th)
Introduce the HEMI PREP to caseworkers at JFS staff meetings
Monitor and respond to UC student inquiries emails regarding becoming a mentor
Continue to meet with KISR! education liaisons to identify students
Start the process of student interviews and the administration of the pre-test (DAP)
Continue to finalize program documents designed for implementation
Continue to work on community collaborations

Serve on the Foster Care Thanksgiving Dinner committee

July 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation

Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings

Continue the work of creating a DAP community based asset resource guide for mentors

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Facilitate CharacterCounts! Training at monthly mentor training (TBD due to July 4th holiday)

Host HEMI PREP 2nd Leadership Partners meeting to update progress (July 21st)

Finalize all program documents designed for implementation

Conduct student interviews and the administration of the pre-test (DAP)

Continue to meet with KISR! education liaisons to identify students

Monitor and respond to UC student inquiries emails regarding becoming a mentor

Host an information session at Peoples Church to recruit "team mentors"

Continue to work on community collaborations

August 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PLAN program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation

Complete the DAP community based asset resource guide for mentors

Distribute the newly designed DAP resource guide to stakeholders for feedback

Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Draft a sample letter to send to each CPS school where identified foster youth are enrolled to introduce HEMI PLAN

Attend UC Welcome Week festivities & Host a booth at the UC Student Service Fair (Aug. 22)

Initial Mentor training (scheduled multiple times throughout the month to accommodate schedules, repeat in October for "team mentors")

Host a community information session (TBD)

Finalize all program documents designed for implementation

Continue to conduct student interviews and the administration of the pre-test (DAP)

Monitor and respond to UC student inquiries emails regarding becoming a mentor
Continue to work on community collaborations
Serve on the Foster Care Thanksgiving Dinner committee

September 2015-

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PLAN program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Finalize the DAP resource guide and work with graphic designer to get printed
Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings
Host a HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting to review progress with team, set calendar

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Mail letter to CPS schools where identified foster youth are enrolled to introduce HEMI PREP
Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Host a community information session (TBD)
Finalize all program documents designed for implementation
Continue to conduct student interviews and the administration of the pre-test (DAP)
Monitor and respond to UC student inquiries emails regarding becoming a mentor
Host “peer mentor” training, conduct mentor interviews, review background checks & mentor packets
Attend monthly meetings with KISR! education liaisons to review mentee participants progress
Match UC students to CPS schools and targeted students
Host the “peer mentor” meet and greet at Peoples Church (Sept. 17th 6:00-8:00)
Continue to work on community collaborations
Serve on the Foster Care Thanksgiving Dinner committee

October 2015:

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Review grant progress to ensure benchmarks are met
Meet with program evaluator and program coordinator to make any necessary adjustments
Accompany program coordinator to appropriate community partner meetings

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Host first quarterly event for mentees and “peer mentors” (Friday, October 16 no CPS school)
Meet with KISR! education specialists to obtain individual student first quarter grade reports, review mentee participants progress
Review mentees first quarter grade report and share with “peer mentors”
Distribute incentives to students who met academic/school-based SMART goals
Develop recommended academic interventions where needed
Host “team mentor” initial HEMI PLAN mentor training
Serve on the Foster Care Thanksgiving Dinner committee
Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee
Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

November 2015:

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.
Host 3rd HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting to review progress with team (Nov. 19th)

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student’s engagement level and progress
Attend and support Thanksgiving Dinner for Foster Youth, meet “team mentors” (Nov. 13th)
Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee
Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

December 2015:

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student’s engagement level and progress
Holiday Celebration Scholarship Dinner- Dec. (10th)

Service Learning Project (Social Justice Art w/Cedric Cox for art exhibit & auction in May for National Foster Youth month) Dec.22nd

Coordinate & schedule Academic Conferences for mentees & mentors for Jan. 15th

Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee

Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

January 2016-

HEMI program director will:

Meet with program evaluator and program coordinator to make any necessary adjustments

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation

Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.

Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Host special dinner for mentors National Mentor Month January 7th (Thursday 6:00-8:00)

Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress

Mentor/mentee Academic Conferences meetings (Jan. 15th no CPS school)

Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee

Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

February 2016

HEMI program director will:

Meet with program evaluator and program coordinator to make any necessary adjustments

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation

Host 4th HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting to review progress with team (Feb. 18th)

Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.

Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)

Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress

Host second quarterly event for mentees and "peer mentors" Feb. 8th at the Museum Center

Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee

Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

March 2016

HEMI program director will:

Meet with program evaluator and program coordinator to make any necessary adjustments
Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress
Service Learning Project (29th preparation & 30th at the Ronald McDonald House)
Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee
Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

April 2016

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

HEMI mentor & mentee training at OhioMeansJobs Youth Summer Employment overview (April 7th 6:00-8:00)
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress
Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee
Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

May 2016

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.
National Foster Youth Month

Annual fundraiser May 7th (4:30-7:30)

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Host 3rd Quarterly Activity "Independent City" with combined Summer Job Fair (May 27th)
Coordinate activities (art show & auction) in support of National Foster Youth month
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress
Serve on the HEMI Fundraising Committee
Serve on the Educational & Career Pathways Summit committee

June 2016

HEMI program director will:

Meet weekly with HEMI PREP program coordinator to ensure successful program development and implementation
Host 5th HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting for annual review (June 16th)
Attend all HEMI PREP trainings and events.
Participate in any community and/or partner meetings when appropriate.

HEMI PREP Program Coordinator will:

Attend HEMI monthly mentor continuous training (1st Thursday 6:00-8:00)
Meet monthly with KISR! to monitor student's engagement level and progress
Educational & Career Pathways Summit (date TBD) 4th Quarterly Activity

July 2016

Mentee Retreat (TBD based on student/mentee input) 1st Quarterly Activity for Year 2

Appendix 12

Evaluation Plan for HEMI PREP's Community Connectors Program

The evaluation of the HEMI PREP's Community Connectors Program will be both formative (examining implementation) and summative (assessing impact) in nature. Formative evaluation elements are designed to provide the leadership team with timely information to ensure the HEMI PREP's Community Connectors Program is on track to positively impact the lives of the students it serves, including how to improve the program, what aspects are most effective, how discrepancies in implementation might impact results, and where problems occur that might interfere with results. Summative evaluation elements are designed to provide information regarding the impact of the HEMI PREP program on student outcomes.

The external evaluation of the HEMI PREP will be structured according to nine evaluation questions:

1. To what degree were mentors satisfied with the professional learning opportunities and support they received from the HEMI PREP Program?
2. To what degree did mentors gain knowledge and skills from the professional learning opportunities offered by the HEMI PREP Program?
3. To what degree did the mentors implement the HEMI PREP Program with fidelity (i.e., as documented by mentor contact hours, unduplicated counts of students served each month, mentor training hours)?
4. To what degree did students demonstrate increases in competence in the Five Core Principles, as measured by the Development Asset Profile?
5. To what degree did students in Grades 7-10 demonstrate increases in grade point averages (GPA) relative to baseline performance?
6. To what degree did students in Grades 9-10 earn course credits at the expected rate?
7. To what degree did the HEMI PREP Program students demonstrate lower rates of discipline relative to a comparison group of at-risk grade-level peers.
8. To what degree did the HEMI PREP Program students demonstrate higher rates of attendance relative to a comparison group of at-risk grade-level peers.
9. To what degree were the students satisfied with the mentoring they received through the HEMI PREP Program?

Table X. Scope of Work for the Evaluation of the HEMI PREP's Community Connectors Program

Evaluation Questions	Data Source	Data Collection Timeline
1.	Mentor Satisfaction Questionnaire	Questionnaire will be administered to mentors annually at the end of the program year.
2.	Retrospective Self-Assessment	Each self-assessment will be administered to mentors upon completion of the training session.
3.	Procedural Checklist for Mentors (web-based portal)	Mentors will submit monthly the information detailed in the <i>Procedural Checklist for Mentors</i> (e.g., mentor contact hours, unduplicated counts of students served each month, mentor training hours, student disciplinary actions).
4.	Developmental Asset® Profile	The Developmental Asset Profile® will be administered to each student prior to their participation in the HEMI PREP Program as a pre-assessment and after each program year completed as a post-assessment and monitoring tool for each of the Core Principles (details on the next page).
5.	Student Report Cards	Quarterly student report card data will be accessed at the end of each quarter at the school level through the Kids in School Rule in collaboration with Legal Aid.
6.	Student Report Cards	Semester course credit completion data will be accessed at the end of each quarter at the school level through the Kids in School Rule in collaboration with Legal Aid.
7.	Discipline Data	Discipline data will be accessed at the end of each school year at the school level through the Kids in School Rule in collaboration with Legal Aid.
8.	Attendance Data	School district attendance data will be accessed from the quarterly student report card Through the Kids in School Rule in collaboration with Legal Aid.
9.	Student Satisfaction Questionnaire	Questionnaire will be administered to mentors annually at the end of the program year.

DAP® HEMI PREP Evaluation Components

The Developmental Assets framework created by the Search Institute was established from research based on youth development, resiliency and prevention. It has become “the most widely used approach in positive youth development in the United States and, increasingly, around the world”¹. The more Developmental Assets youth possess the more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors and the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviors. Importantly, Scales (pg. 7) found that “these relationships between assets and youth well-being remain fairly consistent for adolescents across differences of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic background, community size and region²,” making DAP® an appropriate tool to use with foster youth in Hamilton County. All of the Community Connector’s Core Principles are embedded in the Developmental Assets framework, making this a great tool to help measure HEMI PREP efficacy on each of the five core principles.

The DAP is a 58-item Likert scale survey used with children ages 11-18 years of age. This survey identifies 40 Developmental Assets youth possess in eight areas of human development: Internal Assets: (i) Support, (ii) Empowerment, (iii) Boundaries & Expectations, (iv) Constructive Use of Time and External Assets: (v) Commitment to Learning, (vi) Positive Values, (vii) Social Competencies, (viii) Positive Identity¹.

The DAP® assessment will be administered to program youth by the HEMI PREP program coordinator who will be trained by the Search Institute to develop assets among youth and to implement the DAP® assessment tool. To ensure that HEMI PREP students are developing assets important to achieving each of the Community Connectors Core Principles, HEMI PREP will monitor the Developmental Assets® that pertain to each core program principle. Results will help HEMI PREP assess progress and make program appropriate, targeted enhancements.

- Setting Goals to Be Prepared for 21st Century Careers

To measure program impact on mastery goal setting, HEMI PREP will monitor for progressive improvement on the Commitment to Learning Internal Developmental Asset® because it evaluates intrinsic learning motivators/behaviors. The Commitment to Learning dimension is comprised of the following assets: [21] Achievement Motivation – young person is motivated to do well in school, [22] School Engagement – young person is actively engaged in learning [23] Homework – young person reports doing homework at least one hour every school day [24] Bonding to School – young person cares about his/her school, and [25] Reading for Pleasure – young person reads for pleasure three or more times per week.

- Building Character

To measure program impact on building positive character, HEMI PREP will monitor for progressive improvement on the Positive Values Internal Developmental Asset® because it evaluates several positive character traits: [26] Caring – young person places high value on helping others, [27] Equality and Social Justice – young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty, [28] Integrity – young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs, [29] Honesty – young person tells the truth even when it is not easy, [30] Responsibility – young person accepts and takes personal responsibility, and [31] Restraint – young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. Some additional Social Competency internal assets will also be used: [33] Interpersonal competence – young person has empathy, sensitivity,

and friendship skills and [35] Resistance skills – young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

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- Developing Pathways to Achievement (decision making and critical-thinking skills)

To measure program impact on this dimension HEMI PREP will monitor progressive improvement on the following assets: [2] Positive Adult Communication - young person and important adults in his/her life communicate positively and young person is willing to seek advance and counsel from this/these important adult(s), [32] Planning and Decision Making – young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices, [37] Personal Power – young person feels he or she has control over things that happen to them, and [39] Sense Of Purpose – young person reports that “my life has a purpose”.

- Building Resiliency

To measure impact on this dimension HEMI PREP will monitor progressive improvement on the following assets: [3] Other Adult Relationships-young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults, [7] Community Values Youth – young person perceives that adults in the community value youth, [9] Service to others – young person serves in the community one hour or more per week, [13] Neighborhood Boundaries- Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior, [14] Adult Role Models – Other adults model positive, responsible behavior, [16] High Expectations – Mentors encourage the young person to do well, [17] Creative Activities – young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts, [18] Youth Programs – young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs or organizations at school and/or in the community [33] Interpersonal Competence – young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills, [34] Cultural Competence – young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds, [35] Resistance Skills – young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations, [36] Peaceful Conflict resolution- young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently, [38] Self-esteem – young person reports having a high self-esteem.

- Believing in a Positive Future (gaining hope and trust)

To measure impact on this dimension HEMI PREP will monitor progressive improvement on the following assets: [8] Youth As Resources – young people are given useful roles in the community, [19] Religious Community – young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution [39] Sense Of Purpose – young person reports that “my life has a purpose”, [40] Positive View Of Personal Future – young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

¹ www.search-institute.org

² Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000) Contribution of Developmental Assets to the Prediction of Thriving Among Adolescents, *Applied Developmental Science*, 4, 27-46.



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February 26, 2015

Rayma Waters
University of Cincinnati
Commons Edge South
P.O. Box 210392
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0392

Re: Higher Education Mentoring Initiative and the Community Connectors Program

Dear Rayma,

The Board of Commissioners of Hamilton County, Ohio, would like to express its strong support for the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative's application to the state of Ohio's Community Connectors program.

The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) is an existing program here in Hamilton County that aligns perfectly with the goals of Community Connectors. HEMI pairs foster students in high school with long-term academic mentors from a diverse population across the County. These mentors help encourage and prepare foster youth for post-secondary education after high school, a relationship that can change the life trajectories for a vulnerable population that often faces immeasurable challenges on the path to adulthood.

As Commissioners, we oversee the Hamilton County foster care system and the 9,500 foster children served annually by Job & Family Services (HCJFS). Unfortunately, we often see this population at risk of falling into poverty, homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse and incarceration after aging out of the foster system at 18 years old. While many of us enjoy a safety net and family support, most of these youth face uncertain futures as adults.

HEMI is an innovative program that helps reduce the chances for these outcomes through mentoring, and succeeds as an initiative with little government funding. HEMI has been fortunate to receive funding support from several local organizations that believe in HEMI's mission, including The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, The University of Cincinnati, Insured Success, AT&T, Inc., and private donations. Even with this financial support, however, the need for financial resources for HEMI is critical.

HEMI's success, exemplified by HEMI students' 100 percent high school graduation rate and 70 percent enrollment rate in post-secondary education and career training, proves the need for the program's interaction with foster youth even earlier in high school and middle school. Imagine the kind of success these foster children can achieve with the support of HEMI and its mentors at earlier stages in their lives.

The Board of Commissioners offers its full support to your Community Connectors application. Please contact our offices if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Greg Hartmann
President



Chris Monzel
Vice President



Todd Portune
Commissioner



Board of Commissioners:
Greg Hartmann, Chris Monzel, Todd Portune
County Administrator: Christian Sigman
Director: Moira Weir
General Information: (513) 946-1000
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www.hcjfs.org
www.hcadopt.org
www.hcfoster.org

February 26, 2015

Rayma Waters
University of Cincinnati
Commons Edge South
P.O. Box 210392
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0392

Re: Higher Education Mentoring Initiative and the Community Connectors Program

Dear Rayma,

As the Director of Hamilton County Job & Family Services (HCJFS), I would like to express my support for the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative's application to the state of Ohio's Community Connectors program.

Over the past five years, Hamilton County has been fortunate to have the award-winning HEMI program in place to support our foster youth by providing long-term academic mentors from a diverse population across our community. HCJFS oversees the foster care system in Hamilton County. While so many of us have had the privilege of a support system in our lives, foster youth who age out of the system at 18 years old often face a future that is unclear. This population faces an unusually high risk of living in poverty, homelessness, incarceration, mental illness, and substance abuse.

By pairing foster students with long-term mentors, HEMI helps support and encourage high school graduation and the pursuit of post-secondary education and career training. Since the program's inception, 100% of HEMI students have graduated from high school, and roughly 75% of those students have enrolled in post-secondary education or career training.

HEMI has achieved successful results that warrant the implementation of this program earlier in middle school and high school. Industry knowledge and common sense indicates that reaching out to students at a younger age can help change the life trajectories for this vulnerable population at an earlier stage, increasing the chances for success in adulthood.

While HEMI is provided minimal support by HCJFS, HEMI has also been fortunate to receive funding support from several local organizations that believe in HEMI's mission, including The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, The University of Cincinnati, Insured Success, AT&T, Inc., and private donations. Even with these financial resources, however, the need for funding support for HEMI is critical.

The HEMI program is very deserving of inclusion in the Community Connectors program. Please contact me at (513) 946-2203 if I can provide additional support for this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Moira Weir".

Moira Weir
Director

