

Prioritizing Resiliency, Education & Preparation (PREP)
...a project of the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) ...

Application Section I: Community Connectors Program Description

HEMI PREP is a program for foster youth in grades 7 through 10, in which highly trained mentors work with youth in Prioritizing Resiliency, Education and Preparation for future postsecondary education. The goal of HEMI PREP is to significantly *improve the outcomes for youth who are in foster care* by promoting their educational achievement and career readiness. Key strategies designed to result in future success will include: [i] strengthening students' social and emotional skills and sense of self-efficacy and confidence, [ii] promoting their participation in out-of-school enrichment opportunities, [iii] increasing their academic preparation, and [iv] providing job-skill acquisition and career preparation.

Young people in foster care have the same hopes, fears, and desires for a happy and productive adulthood as their peers who have not experienced life in a foster or group home or endured constant monitoring by an often fragmented, bureaucratic mixture of systems that are envisioned to promote self-sufficiency but in fact have different, often incompatible missions (e.g., healthcare, mental health services, education, social services, and judicial review¹). Unfortunately, their ability to achieve the future they envision is often limited by inadequate preparation and constrained by the efforts intended to support them. Foster youth outcomes have been discouraging. According to the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care², only 58% complete high school and only 3% earn college degrees, 25% are incarcerated within the first two years of emancipation, and 20% become homeless. Financial difficulties also complicate life for many foster youth. Relative to demographically similar, low-income youth, after aging out foster youth typically earn lower wages and are less likely to be employed³. Sadly, this income disparity relative to low-income youth continues until youth reach age 30⁴; little research on alumni youth exists beyond age 30.

- LEAD ORGANIZATION: *Partner for Achieving School Success (PASS)* [<http://www.uc.edu/cechpass>], the division within the College of Education, Criminal Justice & Human Services, University of Cincinnati that also is home to the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative
- PARTNERS
 1. Cincinnati Public Schools [<http://www.cps-k12.org>]
 2. Hamilton County Job & Family Services [<http://www.hcjfs.org>] and Kids in School Rule!, its collaborative program with Cincinnati Public Schools [<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/funding/funding-sources/federal-funding/cb-funding/cbreports/edcollaborations/kisr/#tab=summary>]
 3. OhioMeansJobs Cincinnati-Hamilton County [<http://www.omj-cinham.org>]
 4. Peoples Church [<http://peopleschurch.co>]
 5. Public Allies Cincinnati [<http://publicallies.org/cincinnati>]

Each partner brings specific support, expertise, resources and access needed in order to effectively create a program designed to address the individualized needs of foster youth. Their leadership holds as the core principle: foster youth can achieve academically and professionally to live productive lives if they are provided with the appropriate preparation and continued support from committed, caring adults who encourage them as they develop.

1. The target population is students in grades 5-12. Identify the grade level or levels at each school that your program will be targeting. Programs may serve students in one or more grade levels.

The HEMI PREP program will serve youth in grades 7-10 in protective custody of **Hamilton County Job & Family Services (HCJFS)** and enrolled in the **Cincinnati Public School (CPS)** District. Students in **Kids In School Rule! (KISR!)** will be invited to participate in HEMI PREP. KISR! is a collaboration of CPS, HCJFS, Hamilton County Juvenile Court, and the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati (LAS) designed to improve educational outcomes for foster youth. KISR! began in 2008 and received a prestigious grant in 2014 from the Children's Bureau in recognition of its success.

Participation in HEMI PREP is voluntary, but approval of the student's caseworker and guardian ad litem (GAL) is required. Students may be living in a foster home, a group home or under protective supervision

of HCJFS. Students with disabilities are eligible to participate, but youth in a residential treatment school are not eligible. Should a student participating in the program be transferred out of CPS or should a student's placement custody change, that student may continue in the program. Each student's school principal will be informed of her/his participation in HEMI PREP.

2. Provide the number of youth in each grade level and at each school your program proposes to serve.

Students eligible for HEMI PREP may attend any CPS school that serves students in grades 7-10, with the exception of a residential treatment school. There are currently 83 youth who meet the HEMI PREP criteria; they are enrolled in 15 different CPS schools. But the numbers change frequently, so it is not possible to specify the exact number of eligible youth in each grade level until the project actually starts. For comparison and to illustrate the scope of the problem, on any given day there may be up to 1,000 children (infants to adolescents) in HCJFS custody with about 200 aging out of the system at age 18 each year.

3. Which of the following best describes the proposed project?

C. Expansion of an existing program within the applicant organization

HEMI PREP is a 3-year project that expands HEMI, the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative for foster youth who attend public high schools within Hamilton County and are enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade. Participating HEMI PREP students (grades 7-10) will transition into the existing HEMI program when they enter 11th grade. By expanding the HEMI program to serve younger foster youth, we will create a continuum of educational support beginning with 7th grade students and extending through college graduation. Students participating in the HEMI PREP program will be much better prepared to take full advantage of the HEMI mentoring program by the time they become high school juniors.

Our decision to develop HEMI PREP is based on the findings of a research study HEMI conducted in 2011 (rf. Appendix 8) and on HEMI outcomes to date. Even though HEMI has achieved promising outcomes, too many youth struggle and many do not consider HEMI an option. Students struggle to maintain good academic status due to inadequate backgrounds, most pay to take remedial courses during postsecondary studies (which are not covered by financial aid), and most need to balance employment and education, inconvenient transportation (e.g., metro buses), the challenges of being self-sufficient at 18/19 years old and many are raising children. These complex challenges often cause the foster youth to sacrifice postsecondary educations. HEMI research indicates that foster youth need increased support and guidance before they start the transition to emancipation, so that these youth can develop personal "assets" and stronger interpersonal relationships in order to more successfully navigate the post-emancipation challenges that they encounter (rf. Appendix 8).

4. Please describe your project. How will it address each of the five Community Connectors core principles and what outcomes will you use to measure success.

To understand HEMI PREP's objectives and strategies, it is important to keep in mind the youth the program is designed to serve—youth who have experienced multiple traumas, some of which were responsible for their transfer into the protective custody of HCJFS and some of which were the result of that transfer itself. Think of the impact of being removed from the only home you have known, leaving behind the adults you are familiar with and most, if not all, of your personal belongings. These adverse childhood experiences can, without buffering, result in toxic stress that negatively affects a child's development, mental health, ability to learn and academic achievement, future health and life success. HEMI PREP is designed to provide buffering against the negative consequences of toxic stress by attracting and supporting highly trained volunteer mentors.

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 principle⁵. Results will help HEMI PREP assess progress and make program appropriate, targeted enhancements. DAP results are instrumental in achieving HEMI PREP goals, so a detailed section has been built into the Evaluation Plan to highlight which assets will be monitored (rf. Appendix 12).

Role of Mentors

In HEMI PREP, buffering is provided directly and facilitated indirectly by volunteer mentors. HEMI, and the proposed HEMI PREP, both rely heavily on highly trained volunteer mentors who work 1-on-1 with the foster youth. HEMI PREP mentors, like traditional HEMI mentors, will establish positive relationships with their

students that encourage them to share their dreams and goals and to be receptive to considering multiple pathways toward achieving them. Students may have up to two mentors working directly with them: Team Mentors and Peer Mentors. Peer mentors are college-age and work directly with the HEMI PREP youth on homework and tutoring. The purpose is to provide a younger role model who can engage and encourage them academically. Team mentors are committed adult mentors who work directly with the HEMI PREP students and Peer Mentors on the five core Community Connectors principals. These mentors may also encourage their own families to engage with their program mentee to widen the role-model base. Team mentors will be similar to those currently utilized by the existing HEMI program. Peer mentors may also be team mentors, but will be required to attend on-going training if they choose this dual role.

Mentor Recruitment

The HEMI staff is experienced in recruiting effective, committed mentors and in training and supporting them. HEMI PREP Team Mentors will be primarily recruited from our partner Peoples Church, and the community at large. The People's Church is already providing mentors for youth aging out of foster care and is therefore ideally suited and willing to expanding their mentoring mission. HEMI PREP Peer Mentors will be recruited through the University of Cincinnati's Center for Community Engagement (CCE)⁷. CCE connects young-adult, university students, as well as staff and faculty, to service projects in Greater Cincinnati. CCE maintains a database of ~10,000 students who wish to support the missions of nonprofit organizations. Its signature project, *Bearcat Buddies*, is aligned with HEMI PREP in intent; its partner organizations are CPS, GRAD Cincinnati, and the Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati.

The HEMI PREP program coordinator will be responsible for supporting the mentors, consulting with the mentor teams and guiding them to appropriate resources.

- Setting Goals to Be Prepared for 21st Century Careers

To prepare HEMI PREP students, mentors will help every participating student create SMART goals that encompass their personal and academic development. Student progress toward his/her SMART goals will be reviewed during Academic Conferences. The mentor team, caseworker, and program coordinator will review the student's progress toward her/his goals, identify and solve problems, and define next steps in the student's pathway. Incentives will be provided to encourage students to attain their goals. We anticipate that HEMI PREP youth will achieve 80% of their SMART goals each year.

In order for this process to be effective, the mentors will continually monitor the students' progress closely to support revisions where desired and to connect them to appropriate interventions and/or resources should they encounter barriers or lose confidence in their abilities. The process of goal setting can be foreign to a youth in foster care because so many decisions are made about rather than with her/him. Setting goals is key to having students become the stewards of their own lives. It will cultivate a sense of responsibility, the capacity to evaluate progress, and the understanding that goals undergo a developmental progression that involves the transition from "pie in the sky" unrealistic goals to high, but achievable-with-work realistic goals. SMART academic goals are particularly important for foster youth. Foster youth often lack "academic" role models, are typically not actively engaged in academics, lack information about graduation requirements and are even unaware of their academic standing (e.g., credits toward graduation, state test scores, GPA, community service requirement).

In addition, our partner OhioMeansJobs will play a key role in helping HEMI PREP students determine their career interests and so that they can create plans for a successful transition into their chosen fields. To facilitate participation in "education for employment" OhioMeansJobs is able to pay HEMI PREP students up to \$5,000 toward tuition costs for students to attend postsecondary school in Cincinnati and/or in work training programs. Moreover, OhioMeansJobs has a designated Career Coach for HEMI foster youth and this Coach will also be involved with HEMI PREP youth, whereby HEMI/HEMI PREP youth receive priority servicing. The Career Coach has the authority to provide flexible, outreach services and supportive services (e.g., gas/bus cards) for job search and/or education.

HEMI PREP students will be eligible and encouraged by their mentors to participate in OhioMeansJobs Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) that provides youth with employment experiences that teach responsibility, organizational skills, time management and good work habits through job experience. SYEP is designed to be the first step toward financial stability and economic independence. During the summer of 2014, more than 740 youth participated in work with 154 employers in the Cincinnati area. The employers hired many full-time after the summer program; hundreds more received good

references that will help them with future career endeavors. HEMI PREP youth will also have access to the many workshops available at OhioMeansJobs. Workshop topics include job-search skills, resume writing, interview skills and other similar topics. While some of the younger youth involved with the HEMI PREP may not yet be ready to make a career plan, we believe that it is never too early to learn the skills needed to obtain employment since these skills are also important life skills.

- Building Character

To support positive character building, mentors will be trained (utilizing a train-the-trainers model) in CHARACTER COUNTS!, a character education program administered by the Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics⁶. The CC! framework is centered on basic values called the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The HEMI PREP program coordinator will participate in the on-site Character Development training offered by the Josephson Institute and then provide in-house training for mentors. Lesson plans and character-building tools are offered online at no cost. At quarterly intervals mentors will be able to engage in interactive group activities (i.e., Quarterly Events) where elements of the CC! framework will be intentionally embedded to practice the strategies for building specific character traits. Mentors will be encouraged to document any examples, big or small, that illustrate how their mentees exhibit a character competency. Each quarter, students who have exhibited a positive character trait will be recognized.

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

HEMI PREP staff will implement enjoyable, activities throughout each year that intentionally provide advice and experiential learning in critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making. While most HEMI PREP activities (rf. Question 5 below) support this core principal to some degree, three specifically target this principle: Academic Conferences, Mentree Retreat, and Independent City (rf. 5vii). In addition, HEMI PREP mentees will likely encounter challenges and problems during their program tenure. As these occur mentors will continuously help mentees walk through these issues so that mentees learn to effectively solve their own problems. Student Self-reflection Essays are designed to encourage youth to further internal important CC Core Principles by recognizing how their actions have positively impacted their lives (rf. Question 5 below).

- Building Resiliency

All activities, events and mentor/student interactions identified in this proposal are intentional and aligned with the Developmental Assets[®] framework to increase assets whereby also increasing resiliency. In addition, the HEMI community resource guide we intend to develop (rf. section-5 below) will provide ideas and options within Greater Cincinnati intended to build and/or strengthen each developmental asset; this guide will be used primarily by mentors, but will also be distributed to students. The HEMI PREP staff will also use it as a reference as they create quarterly events and activities. Each quarterly event will be intentionally designed to address at least four Developmental Assets[®] targeted by the core principles (rf. Appendix 12).

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

Many, if not all, youth in foster care lack hope for the present and the future; some may not even understand the concept of hope. It is difficult for them to justify to themselves that preparing for a positive future they cannot fathom is worthwhile. Developing informed and sustainable hope that is not tied to pipe dreams requires work and education. HEMI PREP will offer specific activities designed to catalyze the development of positive visions of the future that complement the activities designed to give students the tools to realize those visions. The Student Workshop on Building Hope, Scholarship Celebration Dinner and college savings opportunities made possible by the Self-reflection Essays were specifically designed to build student assets on this dimension (rf. Question 5 below). By participating in the workshop, youth will learn about hope and how to build it in their own lives. The Scholarship Celebration Dinner will provide youth with an opportunity to see their successful foster youth peers receive scholarship funds to help them realize their future dreams. Lastly, winnings from the essay contest will be saved in a foundation account and put toward future postsecondary endeavors.

5. **Please describe the specific activities your program will conduct.**

The specific activities that HEMI PREP program staff will conduct to oversee and maintain the program's momentum include [i] overseeing program administration and public relations (including the

publication of the HEMI Herald newsletter), [ii] communicating with program partners, [iii] securing program funding, [iv] recruiting and training mentors, [v] serving as liaison between mentors and students, [vi] serving as liaison between mentors, students, social service agencies (HCJFS primarily) and educational institutions, [vii] identifying academic support and resources (financial assistance, links to technology, studying and writing learning opportunities) for students, [viii] designing and implementing enrichment activities for students, [ix] assisting with “life” issues (transportation), and [x] maintaining a comprehensive, vetted HEMI community resource guide that includes student out-of-school enrichment activities and organizations that accept students in community service projects, as well as healthcare and mental health providers.

For each of the following major HEMI PREP activities described below, caseworkers, mentor teams, Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are encouraged to attend, unless the event is specifically for mentees:

- i. Academic Conferences: These meetings (student, mentors, caseworkers, GALs, CASAs and a HEMI PREP staff member) will be scheduled twice a year to review the student’s progress toward her/his SMART goals, identify and solve problems, define next steps in the student’s pathway, and give the student and mentor the opportunity to renew/revise their relationship. These meetings can be held more frequently if issues requiring immediate intervention arise during the year.
- ii. Mentee Retreat: This is an annual retreat where students participate in activities focused on leadership development, team building, and goal setting. Most important, they are given the opportunity to assess HEMI PREP and influence future program content to better meet their needs.
- iii. Quarterly Activities: These will give students exposure to a larger support network made up of fellow students and community volunteers. They will attend special events that focus on subjects such as health and wellness, life-skills training, and academic needs. These events will often be held on college campuses for exposure to academic settings, often a first-time experience. Quarterly events will be intentionally designed to help increase a minimum of at least four Developmental Assets®.
- iv. Service Learning Projects: Students and their mentors will volunteer together in community service. Students will be encouraged to participate the two service learning projects planned: (1) Cedric Michael Cox⁸ who has developed art-for-social-justice service projects with HEMI students and (2) the Ronald McDonald House where students plan, cook, serve and clean-up a meal for residents whose children are undergoing hospital treatment.
- v. Self-reflection Essays: To encourage students to prepare for their education after high school and to cultivate their hope of obtaining a postsecondary degree, students will have the opportunity to earn money toward their Scholarship Banks by participating in HEMI PREP Essay Competition; \$500 will be awarded for the best essay submitted by a student in each grade level. The essay themes each year will emphasize key resiliency components (e.g., 7th grade “My choices and actions impact my life”, 8th grade “Supportive people help me be my best”, 9th grade “I resist situations that divert me from my goals”, and 10th grade “When the going gets tough, the tough find ways to achieve their goals”).
- vi. Education and Career Pathways Summit: The summit will give foster youth ages 15-21 access to information about their educational options and potential future earnings. Breakout sessions will include Why College, Post-Secondary vs. Vocational (Trade) Pathways, Admission Requirements for 2- and 4-year Degree Programs, Financial Aid & How to Obtain It, Non-Traditional Student Reentry, Dress for Success and so forth. The event will take place each year at a different HEMI partner campus to give students a broad view of career options (e.g., at Cincinnati State, students can learn about Culinary Arts, Fire Science and Horticulture & Landscaping, among many other careers).
- vii. Independent City: This is an established daylong program used effectively to “preview” what life might look like after emancipation by organizations that serve foster youth, notably in California. Typically businesses and service providers participate by providing information and advice; these can include banks, credit unions, communications providers, transportation providers, police, employers, and vocational school and college representatives. Each youth is given a “personal life sheet” outlining a variety of independent living tasks to be completed at the event. They have to keep a class schedule, budget their money, complete rental agreements and connect gas and electric service, in addition to keeping a work schedule. Throughout the day, they will be challenged and, at the same time, supported by the participating, collaborative partners.
- viii. Student Workshop on Building Hope: HEMI PREP will collaborate with the UC Center for Hope & Justice Education (CHJE), also a UC outreach program, and specifically with its director Dr. Stitzlein to develop and offer training on how mentors can build hope in their at-risk mentees. The CHJE staff implement educational programming and mentoring for high-poverty urban students at the Reds

Urban Youth Academy and is therefore experienced in the deficits and needs of at-risk youth. The workshops will emphasize the concepts that “hope” should be both realistic and generative so as to be practical and that it is best understood in terms of pragmatism and persistence. Strategies to cultivate hope will include: exposure to diverse viewpoints, people (including other youth) and experiences; building imagination by storytelling; and discussions of ways to cope with despair.

6. Discuss how the program will utilize best practices to ensure program success. Are there successful mentor programs after which you will model your program? Please name the program and describe what makes it successful.

Connecting adult mentors to at-risk children and youth is itself considered a best practice for improving the lives and prospects for a productive future of the mentees **IF** the mentors care deeply about and believe that all kids should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, and **IF** they are empathetic and nonjudgmental, appropriately prepared, capable of earning the trust of their mentees and know their legal limitations. We considered as models four local volunteer mentoring programs during the development of HEMI: Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, the University of Cincinnati CCE’s *Bearcat Buddy* tutoring program for schools within CPS, Big Brothers Big Sisters and ProKids (provides volunteer Court-Appointed Special Advocates to youth in child protective custody). These organizations have successful programs because they carefully screen mentors, provide appropriate mentor training, emphasize social-emotional and academic development, make a myriad of relevant resources available to mentors, and are generous with staff support for volunteers. These features became foundation practices in HEMI and will also underpin HEMI PREP.

In addition, for HEMI PREP we intend to explore and utilize the resources of the National Mentoring Partnership [www.mentoring.org], which has one affiliate in Ohio—The Mentoring Center of Ohio. The National Mentoring Partnership was formed to promote evidence-based mentoring. Its priorities are to [i] advance the quality of the local mentoring field by providing capacity building trainings and technical assistance grounded in evidence-based approaches, [ii] engage a wide variety of public and private stakeholders to increase both the number of volunteer mentors as well as resources for the local mentoring field, [iii] collect data on a regular basis to describe the impact of mentoring in the broader community and identify gaps in the range of services needed, and [iv] expand public and private support and investment in mentoring through public awareness and advocacy efforts that foster communities that prioritize quality youth mentoring. We anticipate that connecting with this organization will improve HEMI PREP and HEMI and increase the probability of sustaining our momentum.

7. Describe your organization’s previous experience with this type of program OR a program of a similar scale, including previous evaluations, size and duration of previously implemented programs, goals, and outcomes.

HEMI was created in 2009 at the request of HCJFS Director Moira Weir and Hamilton County Commissioner Greg Hartmann. They refused to accept the grim statistics associated with the educational outcomes of the Hamilton County youth in foster care. Together they approached the University of Cincinnati to assist with creating a program to ensure that the foster youth graduated from high school, to inform them about post-secondary educational opportunities, particularly as they were relevant to future careers, and to encourage and support them in achieving a post-secondary degree. The institutional support was and continues to be phenomenal: UC responded by formalizing HEMI as a partnership between the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners, HCJFS, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College (CSTCC), and Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development. Within the last year Mount St. Joseph University and Ohio Means Jobs have joined the partnership.

Since its inception HEMI has positively changed the lives of foster youth by connecting them with a long-term mentor to help them make the difficult transition from foster care to adult independence. HEMI accepts 15 new participants annually, pairing each youth with a trained HEMI mentor. As of today, 100% of active HEMI participants have graduated or are on-track to graduate from high school and almost 80% have begun work toward a post-secondary degree. Of the students currently active in the program: 23% are enrolled in high school, 26% are currently enrolled in a post-secondary program and 71% are employed. Since the program inception five years ago, the following postsecondary degrees have been obtained: 5 trade certificates, 1 associates degree, 4 bachelors degrees, and 1 masters degree. This success is due to the active support from caring mentors, who devote incalculable hours to their students, and to the key, effective backing from the HEMI staff and staff members at our participating colleges and universities.

HEMI is the right organization to improve outcomes of foster youth. It has an excellent track record of supporting foster youth through their final two years of high school to graduation and has made good strides in supporting those same youth transition into post-secondary programs and/or jobs. HEMI has significantly raised awareness of the negative personal, social and economic consequences of childhood adversity. Community backbone organizations such as United Way of Greater Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center have taken note and now host community forums on adverse childhood experiences. For the first time, the 2015 UW report on the "State of the Community" will include child maltreatment data for all the counties served by UW of Greater Cincinnati. Cincinnati's "collective impact" efforts to improve child and youth wellbeing and future outcomes (e.g., Cradle Cincinnati, Success By Six, Every Child Succeeds, Strive Together) have incorporated strategies to reduce child/family toxic stress into their action plan).

8. What will make this collaboration successful? What will the indicator(s) of success be for this collaboration?

As part of our ongoing evaluation, the HEMI PREP Leadership Partners will conduct an annual facilitated retreat of all partners to revisit roles and responsibilities, address concerns and problems, recommend modifications of the organizational structure and program, and renew our commitment to the goals. The focus is on "what worked" and "what did not work" that year and on establishing goals for the next year. During the retreat, Leadership Partners will evaluate the success of the collaboration by using the Collaborative Functioning Scale (rf. Appendix 9) provided by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati. This scale serves as a collaboration assessment tool and will also indicate areas of success. As such, it is important that our collaboration functions successfully on each of the dimensions evaluated. Of note, input is self-reported in advance of the retreat and the data are de-identified for the analysis to encourage honesty. The results summary is presented for discussion at the retreat.

Since this is a program expansion, HEMI already has a well-established collaborative. In essence we are entrenched and have previously identified the need to work with foster youth at an earlier age. Community Connectors will enable us to build the capacity to meet this local community need.

Application Section II: Program Management

9. Leadership Team: The leadership team should be comprised of no less than one member of each partnering organization. Please provide a brief bio of each leadership team member, including a brief description of the team member's passion for the program and interest in working with young people.

Rayma Waters, UC Partner for Achieving School Success (PASS) Co-Director and serves as the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) Director. Ms. Waters will supervise the HEMI PREP program coordinator as well as the implementation and the daily operations of this new program to ensure that all benchmarks are met with high quality services and compliance with the grant. Fifty percent of her time and effort will be devoted to this project and will be provided as match.

- Qualifications: Ms. Waters has administered a variety of state and federal grants and contracts. Prior to moving to Ohio her career at Oklahoma spanned 30 years as a public school teacher to an administrator in alternative education and served as a consultant with the Oklahoma Department of Education.
- Prior relevant experience: Ms. Waters has been recognized as an advocate for the most vulnerable youth. In 2005, the Oklahoma state legislature presented her with the "Office of Juvenile Affairs Volunteer Award" recognizing her "acts toward youth has meant the difference between a life of hope instead of one of despair". In addition she administered an OJJDP grant and implemented a mentoring project for adjudicated youth and the University of Oklahoma Law School students.

Rev. Katie Deyo, Peoples Church Leader of Embrace Foster/Adoptive Ministry. Rev. Deyo will be the point person to assist with the coordination of Peoples Church collaboration with HEMI PREP. Rev. Deyo's time and effort will account for 2.23 hours weekly.

- Qualifications: Rev. Deyo has a BS in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Family Development Credential, University of Connecticut and an Assembly of God Ministry License.
- Prior relevant experience: 14 years of ministry experience both with children and foster/adoption, Family Service Worker, Head Start and maintained a caseload of 96 families living in poverty and worked as a Core Team Leader for the Coalition of Care, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Kevin Holt, OhioMeandJobs Cincinnati/Hamilton County Section Chief. Mr. Holt's primary responsibilities include working with the HEMI PREP youth, staff and mentors to ensure the youth participate in the summer youth employment and Workforce Investment Act services. Approximately, 2.5% of Mr. Holt's time and effort will be devoted to HEMI PREP Lead Partners Advisory Board and assistance with coordinating meetings to provide workforce training/services to HEMI PREP youth.

- Qualifications: MPA, Director of the most effective and efficient public workforce agency in Ohio
- Prior relevant experience: 23 years serving families and children at HCJFS including prior administrative responsibility for areas of Public Assistance, Child Care, Children Services, and Workforce Development.

Shawn Jeffers, Public Allies Cincinnati Site Director. Mr. Jeffers will support the training and supervision of the Public Ally placed at HEMI PREP to ensure that youth development, leadership and service projects facilitated by the Public Ally are in compliance with AmeriCorps policies. Mr. Jeffers will host a forum of Public Ally Community Partnerships, which will build increased awareness about foster youth and will facilitate dialogue with other community resources for the HEMI PREP youth. Mr. Jeffers will serve on the Lead Partners Advisory Board and will inform the Public Allies National Office on the progress gained with this target population, foster youth, to seek future funding of the Public Ally position.

- Qualifications: BA, Political Science from Miami University. Mr. Jeffers has 12 Years professionally working in nonprofit youth leadership field, including 10 years in a Director/Manager role.
- Prior relevant experience: Served as the Director of Education at the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education, Director of Programs at BRIDGES for a Just Community and educator at the Cincinnati Reform Jewish High School.

Margie Weaver, Hamilton County Job & Family Section Chief. Ms. Weaver supervises the caseworkers of the youth HEMI PREP will be serving and will ensure they will be responsive to supporting the program by assisting with referrals, access to appropriate information and transportation to events and activities as necessary. In addition, Ms. Weaver supervises the Kids In School Rule! program and will support the education specialists in identifying students and access to school records. Ms. Weaver will serve on the HEMI PREP Lead Partners Advisory Board.

- Qualifications: Master degree in Education and Counseling. Over 20 years' experience working within the child welfare system.
- Prior relevant experience: Ms. Weaver has served on the HEMI Steering Committee since its inception (2009) and has been the essential link to JFS for support in the development and continued growth of the HEMI partnership. For the past 10 years she has worked in close partnerships and collaborations with various other public and private partners with the shared goal of serving and improving lives for children who have had the experience of involvement in foster care. Ms. Weaver believes education is the key to overcoming childhood challenges associated with poverty, disadvantage and chronic exposure to social ills including drugs and crime. Education provides hope and an alternate path to economic security and independence. Investment in education for youth in foster care is essential for this vulnerable population.

Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent will appoint appropriate delegate. The appointed CPS delegate will assist with the implementation of HEMI PREP by coordinating communication with the different principals at each school where foster youth are enrolled, sharing program information with students, providing facility space to house the program as needed, help with academic and/or behavioral needs as they arise, and provide data relevant to the required program evaluation.

- Qualifications: The CPS delegate should be a person with authority with an understanding of the challenges of the target population, foster youth, and who has a passion for improving the educational outcomes of these students.
- Prior relevant experience: The University of Cincinnati, specifically the Partner for Achieving School Success, has a long history of working closely with CPS in administering outreach programs; GEARUP, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, No Child left Behind SES contract, STEM Collaborative, etc.

10. A timeline of all major activities must be provided. Assessment, planning and initial training must be completed by September 7, 2015. Services must begin by September 7, 2015.

April 2015:

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

- Leadership partners host interviews for program coordinator

May 2015:

- Hire HEMI PREP program coordinator
- 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
- Attend the “Essentials of Asset Building for Trainers and Facilitators” (DAP), St. Paul, MN

June 2015:

- Attend the Mentoring Center of Central Ohio training session for non-profit agencies
- Attend the CharacterCounts! Training
- Facilitate DAP training at the monthly HEMI trainings for all HEMI mentors
- Educational and Career Pathways Summit for Foster Youth at Cincinnati State (June 19th)
- Introduce the HEMI PREP program to caseworkers at JFS staff meetings
- Start the process of student interviews and the administration of the pre-test (DAP)

July 2015:

- 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)
- Schedule and host an information sessions at Peoples Church to recruit “team mentors”

August 2015:

- Select Public Ally “fellow”
- Attend UC Welcome Week festivities & host 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”)

September 2015:

- Conduct mentor interviews, review background checks & mentor packets, host mentor training
- Host the “peer mentor” meet and greet at Peoples Church (Sept. 17th 6:00-8:00)
- Public Ally starts year of HEMI PREP service

October 2015:

- Host first quarterly event for mentees and “peer mentors” (Friday, October 16 no CPS school)
- Host “team mentor” initial HEMI PREP mentor training

November 2015:

- Attend and support Thanksgiving Dinner for Foster Youth, meet “team mentors” (Nov. 13th)
- Host 3rd HEMI PREP Leadership Partners meeting to review progress with team (Nov. 19th)

December 2015:

- Scholarship Dinner & Holiday Celebration - Dec. (10th)
- Service Learning Project (Dec. 22nd), social justice art project creations w/Cedric Cox for art exhibit & auction in May for National Foster Youth month

January 2016:

- Host special dinner for mentors National Mentor Month January 7th (Thursday 6:00-8:00)
- Mentor/mentee academic conferences (Jan. 15th no CPS school)

February 2016:

- Host 4th HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting to review progress with team (Feb. 18th)
- Host second quarterly event for mentees and “peer mentors” Feb. 8th at the Museum Center

March 2016:

- Service Learning Project (29th preparation & 30th at the Ronald McDonald House)

April 2016:

- HEMI mentor & mentee training at OhioMeansJobs Youth Summer Employment overview (April 7th 6:00-8:00)

May 2016:

- National Foster Youth Month (art exhibit & auction)
- Annual HEMI scholarship fundraiser May 7th (4:30-7:30)
- Host 3rd Quarterly Activity “Independent City” with combined Summer Job Fair (May 27th)

June 2016:

- Complete the administration of post DAP assessment to all participants

- Mentor/mentee academic conferences (date TBD, no CPS school)
- Submit all data to evaluator for 1st annual report
- 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
- Host 5th HEMI PLAN Leadership Partners meeting for annual review (July 16th)

11. Describe the implementation process for reaching the following milestones:

a. Screening, orientation, supporting, and monitoring process for mentors and other personnel working directly with youth:

In order to become a mentor, one must: attend an information session; complete a mentor application/questionnaire; interview with the Program Coordinator; provide current copies of a driver's license and car insurance; pass an FBI and BCI&I background check to ensure the safety of the students; and attend an initial mentor training.

The initial mentor training is a one-time, four-hour training that provides an overview of program expectations, the child welfare system, and how to appropriately engage youth. Various program activities are designed to further support and encourage the mentor-mentee relationship (see question 5). The HEMI PREP staff will support mentors, including 24-hour access to HEMI/HEMI PREP cell phone.

The monitoring process of the mentor-mentee match will involve weekly staff meetings to discuss individual participants, assess level of engagement and evaluate academic progress. Additionally, the HEMI PREP staff will meet with the KISR! educational specialists for a monthly review of student participation, progress and plan for interventions. Lastly, the annual mentor retreat provides collective mentor feedback on program efficacy and suggested improvements.

b. Identification and intake process for mentees:

KISR! will identify foster youth in grades 7-10 who are enrolled in CPS and refer them to HEMI PREP. HCJFS will also provide KISR! educational specialists to assist as the foster youth progress through the program and will communicate and coordinate with individual caseworkers to support the mentees involvement with HEMI PREP.

c. The means by which you will involve families of youth in your program; ongoing training of mentors throughout the life of the program, including topics and frequency:

With this target population of foster youth, "family" is defined as the custodial family (e.g., HCJFS) and caregivers/mentors are part of the extended family. Family representatives (caseworkers, caregivers, and mentors) are invited to the annual Thanksgiving Dinner, Educational & Career Pathways Summit and to engage in mentee academic planning. At the Thanksgiving Dinner, mentees are encouraged to bring anyone with whom they would like to spend Thanksgiving, which extends this invite beyond family representatives to friends. During the Educational and Career Pathways Summit caregivers, mentors, and caseworkers are encouraged to attend with their youth and/or attend individual adult-only breakout sessions offered on self-care, teaching fiscal literacy, and trauma. Family representatives are encouraged to take an active role in the mentee's academic planning.

Team mentors will also be expected to attend monthly, two-hour workshops on topics designed to help mentors best serve their mentees—peer mentors are also welcome to attend (rf. Appendix 10). Due to the high level of training provided, CEUs are available for some training sessions. Training offerings are evaluated on a yearly basis and modified based on mentor feedback and program needs.

d. Assessing fiscal accountability and faithful implementation of project plans:

The University of Cincinnati accounting department is equipped to maintain and assess the fiscal operation of the grant. Monthly budget meetings will be held with the project director, coordinator and the UC CECH business office to manage the budget. Due to the collaborative nature of this project, the Partners Leadership will meet five times a year to assess that all benchmarks are being met and identify additional support when needed in order to achieve successful outcomes.

This is the model used in the creation, implementation and evolution of HEMI. With the support of the current HEMI staff, the expertise of the partners and the detailed timeline attached (rf. Appendix 11) will guide the faithful implementation of HEMI PREP. In addition, we will leverage other HEMI funds to fiscally

support all activities and events associated with the program. Annually, we anticipate supplementing HEMI PREP with \$17,000 from the established HEMI UC Foundation account and the JFS contract. An additional \$2,000 from the HEMI scholarship fund will provide the necessary funds to support the annual essay contests for the HEMI Prep 7th-10th grade students.

e. Any other critical information you would want the Community Connectors team to know.

HEMI began as a grass roots effort in 2009 and was developed by a collaborative team of stakeholders committed to improve educational outcomes for Hamilton County foster youth aging out of the system. To date, 100% of active HEMI youth have graduated from high school and most have attended a postsecondary program. Since 2011, HEMI has raised and distributed over \$100,000 in scholarships to HEMI youth to support their postsecondary endeavors. Below is a listing of awards and recognitions:

- Achievement Award Winner in recognition of an effective and innovative program which contributes to and enhances county government in the United States, from the National Association of Counties (NACo), 2012
- Cincinnati Museum Center Difference Maker Nominee for making a difference in the lives of children in the Greater Cincinnati Community, October 2012
- Innovation Award for Getting Ready from CollegeKeys Compact (College Board Advocacy & Policy Center), February 2012
- Proclamation in Recognition of National Mentoring Month in Hamilton County, from the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, January 2010
- Proclamation in Recognition of National Mentoring Month in Hamilton County, from the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, January 2012
- Good Work Changes Lives Award from Social Venture Partners (SVP) 2015 Fast Pitch competition.

12. **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. Complete the Roles and Responsibilities worksheet attachment.** See Appendix 4.

Application Section III: Evaluation Plan

13. **The evaluation plan is intended to provide lead organizations with a framework that will ensure the program is on track to positively impact the lives of students and identify needs for additional support when challenges arise. Each evaluation plan must list the scope of work and describe the following:**

- a. Plans for keeping records of mentor contact hours, unduplicated count of students served each month, mentor training hours, etc. for ongoing reporting.

Mentors will be required to submit monthly the information detailed in the *Procedural Checklist for Mentors*. The required information includes, but is not limited to: (a) mentor contact hours, (b) unduplicated counts of students served each month, (c) mentor training hours, and (d) student discipline actions. A web-based portal will be used for the electronic submission of these data.

- b. Gathering of data to measure progress of program towards meeting the selected goals

The outputs (Evaluation Questions 3) and outcomes (Evaluation Questions 4-8) examined in the evaluation of the HEMI PREP Community Connectors Program are repeated measures. As such, they are ideally suited to serve as on-going measures of progress relative to the program goals. If frequent monitoring through the monthly mentor reports (i.e., mentor contact hours, disciplinary infractions) and quarterly student report cards (i.e., academic performance, school absences) indicates a concern, mentors will follow established decision rules to intervene and intensify support to the student.

- c. Projected indicators of success

The projected indicators of success include short-term outputs (i.e., number of mentors trained in the HEMI PREP model and the number of contact hours between mentors and students), short-term outcomes (i.e., gains in mentors' knowledge/skills), intermediate-term outcomes (i.e., increased grade point average, increased attendance, and decreased disciplinary actions), and longer-term outcomes (i.e., gains in student competencies/ developmental assets, increase in course credits earned, student satisfaction, and mentor satisfaction).

d. Anticipated barriers to successful evaluation including data collection and measurement of progress toward outcomes.

There are no anticipated barriers to the successful evaluation of the HEMI PREP. Although access to school data is notoriously fragile, the “Kids in School Rule” established by Legal Aid paves the way for the ethical collection of data that is timely and actionable, while respecting the rights of students in foster care. For a detailed evaluation plan, reference Appendix 12.

14. **Applicants are to complete the program model.** See Appendix 5.

Application Section IV: Sustainability

15. **Describe how you plan to maintain the program after the funding period. Include a discussion about financial sustainability and sustainability of the partnership commitment. Applicants are not required to include cash as part of their local contributions; however, funding sustainability is critical to the Community Connectors program. Applicants that show the potential for funding sustainability will be given preference in application scoring.**

Hamilton County Job & Family Services is currently the primary supporter of the HEMI program and has committed to sustaining the HEMI PREP program with the support of The University of Cincinnati Foundation office and the active fundraising and development of the College of Education, Criminal justice and Human Services (CECH) Partner for Achieving School Success (PASS) Co-Director, if evaluation of participating foster youth have demonstrated positive outcomes. JFS will support the HEMI PREP program coordinator’s salary once the Community Connectors grant period is completed.

HEMI has received and continues to receive generous program funding from the Haile Foundation to support activities and events. However, we are restricted from utilizing these funds for personnel. We have permission to access these funds to supplement HEMI PREP now and in the future.

In addition, we will leverage other HEMI funds to fiscally support all activities and events associated with the program. Annually, we anticipate supplementing HEMI PREP with \$17,000 from the established HEMI UC Foundation account and the JFS contract. An additional \$2,000 from the HEMI scholarship fund will provide the necessary funds to support the annual essay contests for the HEMI PREP 7th-10th grade students.

Since 2009, the existing HEMI partnership has evolved into an effective and efficient program due to the expertise and resources that each partner has contributed. HEMI has remained strong and survived devastating county budget cuts as well as some UC restructuring. Along the way, HEMI has established strong relationships with area foundations and created an annual fundraiser for student scholarships. HEMI has awarded over \$100,000 to HEMI students to pursue their postsecondary pursuits. This established partnership looks forward to serving younger students that will ultimately transition to the HEMI program with this Community Connectors opportunity.

Application Section V: Program Budget

16. **Complete the budget form attachment and justify each of the budget items by creating a budget justification.** See Appendix 6.

By clicking this box, I (Insert Name) Carole Donnellon agree, on behalf of this applicant, and any or all identified partners, that this application and all supporting documents contain information approved by a relevant executive board or its equivalent.