

F•E•G•S Health and Human Services System

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The Academy: Scaling a Model to Improve Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Scaling Initiative: FEGS' Academy provides educational, employment and supportive services to help youth aging out of foster care reach their goals and transition to productive adulthood. The Academy has been identified in three external assessments as a best practice or promising model. This plan proposes to scale the Academy model in New York City (NYC). At an average annual per-youth cost of \$5,000, this model ultimately has the potential for replication nationally and a very high ROI.

The Problem: Research has shown that youth aging out of foster care have high rates of unemployment, homelessness and incarceration. These and other poor life outcomes carry high human costs for the youth who experience them and high financial costs to society, as youth transition to the public welfare, unemployment and correctional systems as adults. Existing education/employment programs serving the general population have criteria and expectations that exclude many foster youth and lack the experience and resources to work with this population; and most foster care agencies do not have education/employment resources within their programs. As foster care systems in NYC and across the U.S. continue efforts to improve family reunification and adoption rates, services should better address the needs of those who do age out.

Proposed Solution and Evidence of Results: Located in the South Bronx, the Academy has served 600+ youth since 2007 with promising results, with most making academic gains, obtaining jobs or remaining in the program working toward their goals. Demonstrating "market penetration," since inception, the number of youth served annually has doubled; the number of NYC foster care agencies making referrals grew by 400%; and the number of foundations supporting the program grew from one to 11. NYC and NY State governments have provided letters of support for this submission; and the strategic plan recently issued by the NYC foster care agency identifies this population as one of its top priorities.

Scaling Strategy: The Academy currently serves 175-200 foster youth annually, but, at any given time, there are 1,600 young people age 16 and older in the NYC foster care system who are slated to age out. The plan is to scale the model across NYC over 7 years through 4 strategies: 1) **Promote the model** to advance penetration into the NYC foster care system; 2) **Increase private funding** through existing/new foundation funders, individual donors and a possible social impact bond initiative; 3) **Replicate the model** by fully *manualizing* the program and first replicating "in-house" at another FECS location in NYC, and then replicating outside of FECS; 4) **Conduct public policy advocacy for government funding** that would be competitively bid to deliver the Academy model.

Capital: Required capital totals \$21.6 million over seven years—\$19.5 million for direct services and \$2.1 million for scaling infrastructure and a technical assistance/intermediary role to ensure fidelity to the model.

About F•E•G•S: FECS is one of the largest health and human service organizations in the U.S., serving 100,000 New Yorkers annually. Its mission is to help people achieve greater success, independence and dignity at work, at school, at home and in the community. The Education and Youth Services Division, which has management responsibility for the Academy, helps 4,500 at-risk youth annually work towards and achieve their academic and career goals. FECS' Board of Directors and executive staff are committed to executing this plan. FECS has highly sophisticated management capacity and a robust infrastructure which enable it to effectively launch, operate and scale new initiatives.