

# MEZZANINE-STAGE FINALISTS



**Friends of the Children** | [www.friendsofthechildren.org](http://www.friendsofthechildren.org)

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**Scaling Initiative:** Friends of the Children (FOTC) has a three-year network-wide scaling plan with a goal to impact over 7,500 of the most vulnerable children by 2016.

**Problem:** Systemic causes of poverty include a lack of equity for children living in high poverty areas and a lack of investment in the service intensity and duration needed to break the generational cycles of poverty, school failure, teen parenting, and involvement in the justice system. Short-term, siloed, mono-intervention strategies don't do the trick for the most vulnerable children living in the highest-risk environments.

**Solution:** FOTC's mission is to break generational cycles of poverty, school failure, teen parenting, and criminality. FOTC pro-actively selects kindergartners facing the most significant barriers to future success, living in the highest poverty communities. This rigorous process, validated by research as effective for identifying the most vulnerable children in the highest-risk environments, considers the number and severity of risk factors in a child's life. FOTC provides selected children with an intensive, individualized relationship with full-time, highly trained, salaried mentors (Friends) for 12 years, through graduation of high school — *no matter what*. Its long-term, relationship-based model provides the most vulnerable children with the tools and resources to become healthy, contributing citizens.

**Evidence of Results:** Third party evaluation has found: 85% of FOTC youth graduate from high school, while over 50% have a parent who did not complete high school; 97% avoid the juvenile justice system, while 60% have at least one parent who has been incarcerated; and 98% avoid early parenting, while 60% were born to a teen parent. A rigorous Social Return on Investment Study conducted by the Harvard Business School Association of Oregon in 2011 found that every dollar invested in FOTC returns more than seven dollars benefit to the community.

**Scaling Strategy:** FOTC will utilize a four-pronged approach to scale our initiative: 1) *Scale Chapters:* Strengthen and grow FOTC chapter capacity; 2) *Scale Through Affiliates:* Embed the FOTC model within other youth serving organizations; 3) *Grow Collaborative Partnerships:* Impact more children identified during our selection process, and 4) *Share What Works:* Expand evidence and share best practices.

**Capital Required:** To achieve its plan to grow from impacting the lives of 760+ children to over 7,500 children by 2016 requires an investment of \$6 million over the next three years, half of which will expand FOTC demonstration sites to serve more children, and half of which will expand affiliates, collaborative partners, and sharing FOTC's evidence base with organizations and policy-makers focused on impacting the highest-risk children in our nation.

**Capacity:** FOTC began with three Friends in 1993. Today, 114 mentors serve over 760 children in over 250 schools in five cities including Boston, New York, Seattle, Portland, and Klamath Falls, OR. Terri Sorensen, President, has led FOTC's founding chapter for 10 years. The organization is governed by a 15-member national board with expertise in law, finance, non-profit and business strategy, healthcare, and youth services. Board members with strategic planning expertise also have skill in scaling programs and businesses.