

Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
 Planning Grants to Develop a Model Intervention for Youth  
**FINAL SUMMARY OF CRITERION SCORES**

Application Number: CA13000094 Panel: 11

Application Name: Westchester County Department of Social Services

State: NY City: White Plains

Criteria	Max			
1. Brief Application Summary	0			
2. Objectives and Need for Assistance	10			
3. Approach	45			
4. Partnerships	20			
5. Evaluation	10			
6. Organizational Profiles	10			
7. Budget and Budget Justification	5			
Total:	<b>100</b>			
Average:		<b>97</b>		

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**Criteria**

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1. Brief Application Summary

**Strength**

(Summary) Westchester County Child Welfare, the applicant and lead agency, proposes to pursue 2 years of planning to coordinate and consolidate the evidence-based practices across the many governmental and private child serving agencies in the County. The key leaders for the planning phase are the County Director of Child Welfare, as the Project Director, and the County Coordinator for Youth Services, the County Department of Community Mental Health Deputy Commissioner, and Program Director for Children's Mental Health Services as co-chairs. The evaluation team will be contracted from Fordham University. Community partners include Family Ties, a peer group with youth members, a medical provider, the County Continuum of Care Partnership for the Homeless, probation, mental health, youth bureau and workforce development among others.

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**Weakness**

Not Applicable

No page found

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**Criteria****Page**2. Objectives and Need for Assistance**Strength**

The applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of the goals and objectives by consistently and clearly describing them in a way that reflects the Funding Opportunity Announcement. The applicant understands the outcomes to be achieved and states the overall goal of undertaking a planning process. For example, the application states it will develop a detailed blueprint for transforming Westchester's system of public and private resources to prevent homelessness among youth emerging from our child welfare system that can be rigorously evaluated, thoroughly documented, and used as a best practice model for communities nationwide. The applicant's stated goal and objectives relate to planning a systemic response that builds on an existing system of care which addresses trauma, homelessness, social and emotional well-being, education and employment, permanent connections with sustainable multiple service points. The applicant describes a sense of urgency for moving forward with this type of effort, in view of the many challenges confronting the target youth in this county. The challenges include steady decline in community conditions over the last twenty years of , the number of people living in homeless shelters has increased dramatically, in one shelter over at 50% increase in 24 months. The city of Yonker's Housing Authority experience severe HUD funding cuts to the Section 8 housing and opened a waiting list for the first time in seven years. Over 11,000 applications for assistance arrived within a week to an agency that normally receives roughly a 100 applications per week. In addition, has the nation's seventh highest housing cost.

4, 7-8, 10

**Weakness**

None

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Page</b>
<u>3. Approach</u>	
<b>Strength</b>	
<p>The applicant clearly states their commitment to being flexible and nimble in making system improvements throughout Phase I and beyond. The applicant refers to a youth- and community-driven management process and rapid data feedback loop to adjust services based on evidence, recommendations, changing local conditions, and youth needs (identified by youth and youth representatives). The evaluation contractor and Steering Committee will work closely to review data to make mid-course corrections. There is an expectation of having a final plan at the end of the planning period.</p>	10, 24
<p>The applicant is the Westchester Department of Social Services (DSS). The DSS is the designated child welfare agency for Westchester. The DSS has a strong record of effective system transformation. The applicant will partner with entities that also have a strong record of service to the target population. The county agency documents its active participation in the project as documented by the designation of agency staff (in-kind) as Project Director and co-chairs.</p>	11, 65-73
<p>The applicant's strategies are well thought through and reflect an appreciation for the diverse ways that youth and young adults could be drawn to participate in the intervention. For example, the applicant states that it is important to them that screening and assessment instruments be universal to address the social-emotional, behavior and mental health needs for youth who are homeless. They also involve youth in the critical decisions made regarding their welfare and well-being.</p>	2, 17
<p>The applicant clearly states their understanding of the role of trauma and trauma-informed practice in this project. For example, the applicant indicates proposing to transform the way children welfare, housing, employment and education systems respond to trauma. Their team of trauma experts has agreed to support the project. The applicant appropriately addresses the impact of trauma on all three target groups in all core outcomes. The application recognizes the broad impact of trauma as demonstrated by a focus on trauma-informed services including use of evidence-based trauma-informed curricula, and cross-system training.</p>	2, 8, 9,16, 21
<p>The applicant uses available data to demonstrate a clear understanding of each target group, detailing needs with respect to each of the core outcomes. Because of the position of the applicant within the foster care system, they have access to many databases such as Connections, which mandates all of the</p>	21-27

**Criteria****Page**

data for the state of New York and medical data from PSYCKES. The applicant will collect data in order to understand and categorize available datasets. They will collect information on all three age groups listed in the FOA in order to better understand risk and protective factors. The applicant explains their greatest challenge with serving youth and young adults up to age 21. Detailed information on the target population is presented clearly. The applicant identifies all data sources and explains the entity that collects and houses the data. Also, the applicant acknowledges data limitations, specifying that useful data are scattered across a number of databases (e.g., HMIS is used only with people in HUD funded homeless facilities). Within the context of these limitations, the applicant plans to hire a data warehouse consultant to pull together additional data from multiple systems to guide the planning process. The data collection includes measures and/ assessments for factors such as trauma, emotional distress, sexual risk behavior and substance abuse as well as protective factors.

The applicant provides a detailed preliminary plan for targeting services at each of the 3 points of engagement. The applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of the need to adjust the intervention framework for the three target groups, detailing each group's strengths and weaknesses in terms of the applicant's capacity to serve them. The applicant presents distribution charts for each group, care statistics for each group and each group's demographic information. They also provide a population analysis of conditions as well as an explanation of data availability and limitations for the target populations. The applicant consistently addresses the core outcomes in the planning process and explains how each target group requires potentially different strategies for those outcomes.

22

The applicant articulates a clear plan for how youth and young adults in each target group will be referred and selected. They will identify potential referral resources, create referral processes and tools, test the referrals on each target group and identify barriers and challenges to the flow of referrals. The second phase of their proposal focuses on testing mechanisms for the target groups from multiple sources. For example, the applicant describes that for youth/young adults up to age 21, referral sources will include family shelters, 24-hour adult shelters, and shelters for runaway youth. The applicant proposes different mechanisms for referral depending on the needs/risks of the target population. The applicant sufficiently describes how these referral processes will be vetted and tested through the Steering Committee and assessment/evaluation efforts.

22-24

The applicant recognizes throughout the proposal the need to address special populations. They focus largely on the LGBTQ population as one that will require technical support for the project. The applicant identifies an LGBTQ expert to be on the project. Furthermore, the applicant proposes various ways to engage youth and young adults.

25, 69-70

**Criteria****Page**

The applicant's plan for data analysis identifies the different uses of data for better understanding the target population, testing referral mechanisms, and assessing readiness. The applicant explains who will use the data, including the Steering Committee, project team, and evaluators. The applicant also intends to share data across systems and within the community, and to cultivate and strengthen public/private relationships in order to use the information to leverage the effective expenditure on the right resources in the community.

27-28

The applicant provides a clear description of the geographic area that they will serve. For example, they will serve Westchester County, New York, a 450 square mile area bounded by New York City on the south, the Hudson River on the west, Putnam County, NY on the north, and Connecticut on the east. The applicant's description of the history and current landscape of Westchester also helps to define the catchment area. Furthermore, the applicant demonstrates a long and successful history of their ability to create systems change in the community. For example, the applicant provides data on their foster care reduction efforts.

3-4, 6, 14-16, 28-31, 51

The applicant presents a plan that for each target group appropriately involves screening and assessment by individuals/agencies based on the point of entry. For example, the applicant states that there is scarcity of available housing and housing subsidies in the geographic area, however, the applicant's agency has begun to shift HUD funds into housing for the target group. The applicant has opened two new HUD financed housing programs. They have added 32 supportive housing units and a 12-bed transitional housing program. The applicant indicates that child welfare service providers would be appropriate for screening for youth in care.

32

The applicant clearly describes the status of the implementation of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). The applicant explains that they enter child welfare data into a statewide database called CONNECTIONS, which is an online case record system that the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) requires from all New York child welfare systems. The data is extracted by the statewide system, monitored for quality and fed into the NYTD. The applicant indicates that their data quality was rated excellent in a report from the OCFS.

36

The applicant provides a very strong theory of change using trauma-informed and system-of-care approaches to achieving outcomes. The theory of change is evidence-driven and models how the intervention contributes to a set of specific outcomes. For example, It has two components, a theory of change and a theory of action, that clarify the project activities and link them together. It defines all three target groups, identifies all the goals and objectives, describes inputs structured around achieving

39-40, 61-64

**Criteria****Page**

the core outcomes, breaks down activities by phases, explains outputs, and identifies short term and long term goals targeting the core outcomes as well as system-level changes. The applicant's logic model adds cogent meaning to the plans described in the narrative. It clearly shows the sequential and consequential progress of the intervention. It will support communication around the intervention and help those new to the project understand it at a glance. For example, this logic model can be read as a coherent and plausible story of cause and effect as it clearly shows the sequential and consequential progress of the intervention.

The application sufficiently describes how the project will use valid and reliable screening and assessment. For example, the applicant presents a list of credible and well-known instruments that the Participatory Research Advisory Council will assess for reliability, validity, usability with diverse populations, ease of administration, and commitment to adopt. Different data collection points (e.g., time 1 and time 2) are detailed in the evaluation plan. The use of screening and assessment is addressed for each core outcome. For example, in social and emotional well-being, the applicant explains how youth will be screened and assessed for risk and protective factors and how screening and assessment data will help determine needs. The applicant acknowledges that trauma-related functional assessments are likely to require more highly trained staff. Proposed technical support from multiple sources, including a partnership with the Department of Mental Health, is consistent with identified need for technical expertise.

43-45

The applicant consistently and clearly articulates how the project's intervention will be evidence-informed and evidence-based, addressing trauma and cultural appropriateness. The applicant indicates that their planning will be based on the best scientific data available. For example, in all four core areas detailed, they carefully explain the use of evidence-based instruments. The applicant acknowledges the diversity of the population and locations of Westchester, and sufficiently considers this diversity for different aspects of the project. The applicant understands that referral and assessment tools cannot be universally applied, and proposes to assess the usability of tools and processes on diverse populations in their catchment area. Furthermore, the applicant has key partners to provide the technical support to develop an intervention that is evidence-informed and/or evidence-based. Their partners include: Fordham's National Center for Social Work Trauma Education and Workforce Development, NYU Center on Coordinated Trauma Services in Child Welfare and Mental Health, and Casey Family Programs.

43-45

The applicant identifies those most at-risk of homelessness at each point of engagement by supporting their assessment with an understanding of the target population in terms of risk and protective factors. For example, the applicant explains that older youth with more complex and severe needs are the least

5-6, 18

**Criteria****Page**

equipped to make it on their own in Westchester's ferocious housing market. The applicant cites a recent report prepared for HUD that starkly lays out the challenges and barriers often faced by these youth. Additionally, the applicant proposes a specific seven step plan to refine the identification of the most at-risk, and details potential tasks and activities (e.g., proposes 35 tasks and 6 activities) to achieve project goals and objectives, as well as the core outcomes.

The applicant clearly describes the use of Chafee services. For example, the applicant indicates that Chafee funding of \$ 442,000 provides up to two years of aftercare services for youth up to the age of 21 and also allows youth below the age of 21 to sign themselves back into care. The applicant also explains how health insurance is provided and how services are provided that target improving financial capability. The applicant plans to maximize their Chafee allocation as part of their plan for sustainability by billing the state of NY for returned Chafee funds. They have netted a million dollars in the past.

6, 23, 35-36, 51

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how services provided to youth/young adults should fit well with their needs. Each target group is described with existing data and information from the literature.

61

They propose a readiness assessment by a private contractor to see if there is a fit between what they are currently doing and what needs to be completed.

68-70

The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the purpose of Phase I (planning) through the structure of the planning process. For example, the applicant's approach to meeting project goals and objectives is based on five major strategies that include cross-systems coordination, trauma-informed assessments and services, youth empowerment, capacity building, and rapid system transformation. The activities together encompass a solid planning process that addresses individual needs (e.g., youth trauma), organization capacity (e.g., training child welfare agencies on trauma), and systems transformation. The planning process is youth and community driven with strong leadership from an established peer agency. The applicant adequately identifies all three-engagement points and the four core objectives in detail throughout the narrative.

7-10, 14, 22, 24, 37-38,

The applicant describes a positive youth development approach that recognizes youth's strengths and abilities to increase protective factors and will impact the four core outcome areas. The applicant specifies their partners who will lead the effort to instill the positive youth development approach for

8, 14, 17, 20-21

**Criteria**

**Page**

the project. The applicant also consistently and effectively describes its proposed efforts to put youth front and center by giving youth major leadership roles. For example, youth will have leadership roles to include co-chairing the Steering Committee, serving as stipend members of the Planning Team and leading the Child and Family Teams (peer teams). Youth will identify needs, participate in selecting tools and interventions, and help evaluate programs and systematic change as well as drive their own child family teams.

**Weakness**

The application does not present a concrete preliminary plan for securing an extended range of housing options appropriate to youth at each engagement point. For example, the application does not describe steps in the planning process that will result in a detailed plan to continue to develop and refine the range of housing options for those at greatest risk of long-term homelessness.

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**Criteria****Page****4. Partnerships****Strength**

The applicant has in place strong partnerships to achieve project goals and objectives. The applicant will leverage these partnerships to pursue project goals. Specifically, the partnerships cut across government agencies, community stakeholders, foundations, private sector participants and most importantly foster care youth. The applicant describes how these partnerships will come together to address each target group's needs around housing and psycho-social functioning. For example, the applicant has support from state and local governments (e.g., Department of Mental Health, Department of Probation, Office of the County Executive, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Investment Board), as well as philanthropic entities and community-based, non-governmental agencies (e.g., Casey Family Programs, Fordham University National Center for Social Work Trauma Education and Workforce Development, New York University Langone Medical Center, WESTHAB, Family Ties (a peer group with youth members), The Children's Village, Family Services of Westchester, Andrus, Leake & Watts, Abbott House, and Family Service Society of Yonkers). The partnerships will include all the other major partners needed to meet our housing, education, and employment goals, that includes Southern and Northern West Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, local school districts, the State University of New York's Educational Opportunity Center of West, Community College, New York State Adult Career and Continuing Education Services, and the Yonkers Workforce Investment Board. The Department of Social Services will provide project management, child welfare, homeless housing and services, Food Stamps, public assistance and Medicaid. Together, the collaborative is strong. Each collaborative member's roles are described in the project narrative and in MOUs and Letters of Commitment. According to their MOUs, job descriptions and accompanying vitae and resumes, the applicant has chosen partners who can create and implement the systems changes proposed in the plan. For example, key county agencies have already agreed to share resources and coordinate planning.

12, 14-16, Appendix

**Weakness**

None

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**Criteria****Page**5. Evaluation**Strength**

The applicant provides a solid plan for a process evaluation during Phase I and to develop and finalize an evaluation design for Phase II. A key responsibility of the Fordham University evaluation contractor is to provide a team of evaluation consultants to help document all our Phase 1 activities, collect and analyze all the data needed to guide our Phase 1 decisions, assist with selection of assessment tools and evidence-based interventions and, most importantly, ensure that every element of our Phase II implementation plan has well thought out outcomes and evaluation mechanisms that fit together into a practical, affordable and effective evaluation plan. The applicant describes a detailed preliminary plan on how the intervention framework will be utilized. For example, the applicant provides an extensive and rigorous plan to conduct an in-depth assessment during the planning phase (Phase I). The applicant provides an extensive discussion of reliable and valid measures for assessment, which incorporate screening and assessment tools and protocols prior to and during the delivery of services. The potential measurement points are proposed at: baseline, 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24-months, and 30 months. Through further data collection (to address data limitations), the applicant plans to refine the population and to use this information to identify those at greatest risk. The applicant states that the Senior Policy Analyst will conduct analyses regarding the relationship between protective factors and outcomes. The applicant effectively describes the resources and supports that are currently available in the community for the target populations. The project partners that provide these services are identified. The applicant also reports that service utilization among foster youth is low (less than 50%). During the planning phase, the applicant plan to gather more in-depth assessment data to determine the appropriateness of services to address the four core outcomes is detailed and comprehensive.

5-9, 24-29, 39-40, 60

**Weakness**

None

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**Criteria****Page****6. Organizational Profiles****Strength**

The application provides sufficient information about the primary applicant (Westchester County Department of Social Services) and its partners to demonstrate that the applicant and its partners are qualified to develop, implement, manage, and evaluate selected intervention(s). The Department of Social Services is the Westchester County child welfare agency and has a strong record of systems change for foster children and youth. The proposed team is very strong and includes high level personnel to help shape the planning. The roles, responsibilities, and time commitments for project personnel, including consultants/contractors, are clearly stated. A timeline including project aims, outputs, and milestone is provided and is reasonable.

11, 12-14, 17-18, 36-38

**Weakness**

The applicant notes that a project team will be hired. The roles and responsibilities of the team are explained; however, there is not an adequate explanation of the qualifications necessary to fulfill each of these vacant positions.

17-18

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**Criteria****Page**7. Budget and Budget Justification**Strength**

The applicant provides detailed budget information. The costs are reasonable. The project is well-staffed with a full-time project director that is planned (along with an associate at three-quarter time). In-kind services by key leaders make the budget especially reasonable. The applicant includes a detailed narrative budget justification for each year of the planning phase project. For example, costs are clearly detailed and justified and are appropriate for the scope of the proposed project and activities. The budget document appears to be a cost effective with a thoughtful allocation of funds.

65-73

The application includes a discussion of fiscal controls and accounting procedures to ensure proper accounting of time and money.

52

The budget includes technical support consultants to provide training. The consultants are chosen experts in their field and will provide the technical and programmatic experience to increase the overall effectiveness of their planning. The budget also includes funds to pay youth advisors. A major part of this budget is allocated to evaluation, data mining and analysis which is called for in this planning grant. The funds for evaluation are supplemented with an in-kind contribution in the form of personnel time and a graduate student. The funds for evaluation are appropriate to provide the activities that ACF expects to happen in the Phase I planning grant.

68-69

**Weakness**

None