Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Foster Youth Strategic Initiative

2014 EVALUATION REPORT

Executive Summary

PREPARED FOR:

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

December 15, 2014

PREPARED BY:

Westat

Silberman School
of Social Work at Hunter College

and

University of California Los Angeles
Luskin School of Public Affairs

SILBERMAN SCHOOL of SOCIAL WORK

UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

Westat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Westat joined with two subcontractors, the University of California, Los Angeles Luskin School of Public Affairs and the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, to evaluate the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative in Los Angeles County (LAC) and New York City (NYC). The Initiative grew out of an extensive research and synthesis process that helped the Foundation better understand challenges facing Transition-Age Youth (TAY), identify key levers and successful models for change, and incorporate the perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders. The Initiative is built on a theory of change proposing that funding three components (TAY self-sufficiency services, systems change, and new knowledge) will synergize efforts in LAC and NYC around improving outcomes for TAY.

The Hilton Foundation provides grants to organizations and entities with the potential to actualize the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative's components. As of May 2014, grantmaking totaled $23,917,033. Currently 19 grantees are funded to support TAY self-sufficiency through direct services; 11 funded grantees are focusing on systems change; and 6 grantees are generating new knowledge about TAY. From a regional, or site-level perspective, there are 16 grantees focused on changes for TAY in LAC; 9 grantees are focused on TAY in NYC; and 4 grantees (designated as dual geography) are focused on changes in both LAC and NYC.

The primary goal of the evaluation is to inform learning about TAY. In order to investigate a multi-faceted and strategically informed initiative, the evaluation is designed to be broader than a program evaluation. Over 3 years, the evaluation team will assess the value added by Hilton Foundation's investments in improving outcomes for TAY and will ground the data in national and regional contexts. A variety of data collection tools are being used to answer the overarching questions below.

Since the inception of the Initiative in 2012:

1. **Are TAY in LAC/NYC on a better path to success?**

2. **What impact did the Hilton Foster Youth Initiative have on the grantees' programs?**

3. **What changes have occurred in LAC/NYC in collaboration and alignment of systems serving TAY? How did the Initiative contribute to these changes?**

4. **What impacts did the knowledge grantees have on policy, practice, and research innovations?**

The research questions measure the Initiative's progress in reaching its 5-year goals. Goals are identified for each area of the Initiative and include:

- **Youth Outcomes**

  — **Postsecondary outcomes improved for 50% of TAY in LAC and NYC;**

  — **Improved long-term outcomes for 50% of parenting foster youth and crossover youth in LAC and NYC; and**

  — **Capacity improved for caregivers of 90% of TAY in LAC and NYC.**

- **Systems Change**

  — **Create/strengthen cross-sector coordinated efforts;**

  — **Annual convenings of organizations and agencies supporting TAY; and**

  — **Advocacy resulting in positive and enforced policy for improving outcomes for TAY in LAC and NYC.**

- **Knowledge and Funding**

  — **Research base around programs to improve TAY outcomes is expanded and shared at local and national levels.**

  — **Hilton Foundation funding leverages $20M in private funding in alignment with Initiative goals.**

The Year One Evaluation Report describes activities occurring and progress achieved from the inception of the Initiative through July 2014. Data collected through interviews with 19 grantees, focus groups with 21 TAY and 30 caregivers, submission of a semiannual data collection form (by 24 grantees), reports from 11 grantees, and additional existing documents informed assessment of progress.

Progress on Foster Youth Strategic Initiative Goals

In Table 1, progress in reaching goals is identified with one of three colors. Progress is based on the data available during the reporting period Year One of the evaluation. Areas highlighted in green indicate that the Foster Youth Strategic Initiative is on track to reach the goal within the 5-year implementation period. Areas highlighted in yellow indicate limited progress, and grey areas indicate that progress cannot be judged with available data.

Table 1.   Progress on 5-Year Goals

Initiative Goals	Los Angeles County	New York City
YOUTH OUTCOMES		
Education: Postsecondary outcomes improved for 50% of TAY	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, focus groups, and grantee progress reports.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, focus groups, grantee progress reports, and PYA.*
Vulnerable Youth: Improved long-term outcomes for 50% of **parenting foster youth**	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews and progress reports.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and PYA.*
Vulnerable Youth: Improved long-term outcomes for 50% of **crossover youth**	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews and progress reports.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews and progress reports.*
Caregivers: Capacity improved for caregivers of 90% of TAY.	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, focus groups, and grantee progress reports.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, focus groups, and grantee progress reports.*
SYSTEMS CHANGE		
Create/strengthen **cross-sector coordinated efforts**	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and archival research.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and archival data.*
Annual convenings of organizations and agencies supporting TAY	*Data Sources: Grantee semi-annual data form and evaluation team attendance at convenings.*	*Data Sources: Grantee semi-annual data form and evaluation team attendance at convenings.*
Advocacy resulting in positive and enforced policy for improving outcomes for TAY in target geographies	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and archival research.*	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and archival data.*

Table 1.	Progress on 5-Year Goals (continued)	
Initiative Goals	**Los Angeles County**	**New York City**
FUNDING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING		
Research base around programs to improve TAY outcomes is expanded and shared at local and national levels	*Data Sources: Grantee semi-annual data form, progress reports, and archival research.*	*Data Sources: Grantee semi-annual data form, progress reports, and archival data.*
Hilton Foundation funding leverages **$20M in private funding** in alignment with our goals	*Data Sources: Grantee interviews, progress reports, and direct inquiries.*	

Key

Current Data Indicates On Track to Reach Goals
Current Data Indicates Limited Progress
Not Enough Region-Wide Data to Determine if Strategy Will Reach Desired Outcomes

Youth Outcomes Summary

- **Both regions show concentrated activity around improving postsecondary outcomes for TAY.**
- **Though less activity took place around crossover and parenting youth**
  - **Both regions had similar amount of activity for crossover youth**
  - **LAC reported more work on behalf of parenting youth.**
- **More knowledge is needed about developing caregiver's capacity to support TAY self-sufficiency.**
- **One year is not sufficient to measure long-term youth outcomes.**

The evaluation team used grantee-level data to assess the progress of youth outcomes in the Year One report. These data revealed that there is concentrated activity around improving postsecondary outcomes for TAY in both regions and relatively less activity around crossover and parenting youth. For example, the self-sufficiency grantees that submitted progress reports reviewed during the Year One evaluation period served over 3,200 youth. While efforts to improve outcomes for crossover youth are fairly even in both regions, there was more work reported in LAC on behalf of parenting youth.

There is not enough knowledge about developing caregiver's capacity to support TAY's achievement of self-sufficiency. First-year evaluation activities included asking caregivers about needed capacities and asking grantees about their direct and indirect services for caregivers.

Together these data indicated that caregivers need interpersonal skills such as patience and concrete supports such as training about educational opportunities and support groups. Though the data were rich, the first-year findings alone cannot significantly advance the state of knowledge.

Overall, long-term youth outcomes must be measured with site-specific and robust administrative data that clearly identify TAY, crossover youth, and parenting TAY and links identified youth to outcomes associated with Initiative goals. Further, the data must be extracted after sufficient time has passed to observe outcomes. One year is not sufficient for reporting progress on outcomes.

Systems Change Summary

- **Initiative is on track to reach systems change goals in LAC, galvanized by AB 12 implementation.**
- **Though NYC did not need a policy change similar to AB 12 no other policy innovations were implemented on the same scale. NYC has made limited progress on systems change.**

First-year findings indicate that the Initiative is on track to reach systems change goals in LAC within the 5-year implementation period. Implementation of AB 12 is galvanizing change in LAC. There is no singular and similar policy innovation driving change in NYC and that contributes to the limited progress on reaching cross-sector coordination and advocacy goals in NYC during the first year. Grantees in both regions are facilitating progress on the annual convenings goal, and the Initiative is on track in both regions to reach that goal.

Funding and Knowledge Sharing

- **LAC grantees are on track to reach research and dissemination goals.**
- **NYC grantees are still in the process of data collection and analysis.**
- **The cross-site leveraging goal is likely to be met as grantees have already leveraged more than half the goal amount.**

The Initiative is on track in LAC to reach the goal of expanding the research base on TAY and sharing findings on local and national levels. There is limited progress toward this goal in NYC because the grantees funded for region specific research are still in the midst of data collection and analysis. The Initiative's leveraging goal, $20M in private funds, is cross site. The goal will likely be reached before the end of the 5-year Initiative as grantees have already leveraged over $12M in the first 2 years of implementation.