

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP)

### A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW: As the eligible grant making institution applicant, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) is collaborating with three leading non-profit organizations to apply for an issue-based SIF under the Corporation's Youth Development Issue area to assist "system involved" underserved youth age 14 to 25 that are transitioning to independence from foster care, are involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice system or are homeless. Subrecipients will be competitively selected from at least 40 potential geographies including the following states: AL, AR, AZ, CA, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, WA, WV, and WI. AECF's non-profit partners playing key roles in SIF project implementation include the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), Jobs for the Future (JFF), and MDRC. All three organizations will be involved in the selection, support, monitoring and evaluation of subrecipient organizations and their implementation of one or both pre-identified evidence based interventions which include elements of both the Jobs for America's Graduates' (JAG) and Back on Track program models. AECF requests \$1.5 million in federal funds for Year 1 of the proposed 5-year project. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is committed to raising the required matching funds from internal and external sources and is making a matching commitment of \$750,000 to support the project each of the five years through internal sources.

PROJECT SUMMARY: Through its Learn and Earn for Vulnerable Youth (LEVY) SIF program for youth, AECF and collaborating partners will build evidence on two pre-identified interventions that support "system involved" youth ages 14-25 to connect to post secondary education and employment. For the purposes of this SIF, "system involved" youth include young people who are transitioning out of foster care, are currently involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice system, or are homeless. In many cases, homeless young people have been involved in one or more public systems. AECF will invest in high performing, trusted, financially stable community organizations that understand the specific needs of youth in or leaving public systems and that pursue five core strategies to maximize employment and educational outcomes. AECF and its national partners will select between 9 and 12 subrecipients and will make annual subawards ranging between \$100,000 to \$200,000 for a period of

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between 3 and 5 years. Primary LEAP outcomes for youth in or transitioning from public systems include improved rates of school graduation, increased rates for youth entering and persisting in post secondary education, and increased rates for youth securing work experience and/or employment. As a collaboration among a national foundation, with a decades-long focus on youth in public systems, including child welfare and juvenile justice, and three national nonprofits -- CSSP, a leader in developing, promoting, and implementing innovative policy solutions that support low-income families; JFF, a leader in scaling solutions to pressing education and workforce challenges; and MDRC, a national leader in workforce and education evaluation -- the LEVY partnership brings exceptional experience and capacity to support sub-recipient program implementation and growth through replication and expansion.

### Program Design

#### B. PROGRAM DESIGN

##### Bi. RATIONALE AND APPROACH

1. APPROACH AS ISSUE BASED SIF: Informed by work on the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and long history of systems reform initiatives, The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) is proposing an issue-based Youth Development SIF program to invest in community based partnerships focused on improving the lives of low income youth transitioning out of the foster care system, or currently system-involved, to significantly improve their educational and employment related outcomes. With the support of a national collaboration led by AECF and including the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), Jobs for the Future (JFF), and MDRC, subrecipients will adapt evidence based employment and post secondary bridging models from Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) and JFF's "Back on Track" models to serve young people as they transition out of foster care or remain involved in public systems. Informed by evidence from previous qualitative and quasi-experimental evaluations, Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) will accelerate advancement to employment and post secondary education and credentials for these very vulnerable and underserved population.

LEAP will competitively select high performing subrecipient organizations from targeted high need geographies that are home to significant numbers of low income youth transitioning out of the foster care system or involved in child welfare or juvenile justice. These include geographic areas in which the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (Jim Casey) is operating. Jim Casey is focused on advocating that each youth has a permanent, supportive relationship with an adult, and the tools and

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skills they need to transition from foster care to adulthood. The Jim Casey Initiative includes community and statewide networks in the 18 states below. (Children below 100% of Poverty "CP" and is from Kids Count 2013, Foster Care data is from AFCARS 2012. Youth under 21 in Juvenile Detention "JD" is from Kids Count 2011. Foster youth in transition are young people 14 years and older who transitioned out of the foster care system)

Arizona (CP: 27% Foster youth in transition: 782 Total foster care: 2214 Total JD: 936),  
Connecticut (CP: 15% Foster youth in transition: 72 Total foster care: 2105 Total JD: 252),  
Delaware (CP: 18% Foster youth in transition: 80 Total foster care: 313 Total JD: 180),  
Florida (CP: 24% Foster youth in transition: 1179 Total foster care: 3523 Total JD: 3744),  
Georgia (CP: 27% Foster youth in transition: 485 Total foster care: 1676 Total JD: 1788),  
Hawaii (CP: 13% Foster youth in transition: 77 Total foster care: 237 Total JD: 99),  
Indiana (CP: 22% Foster youth in transition: 144 Total foster care: 2097 Total JD: 1878),  
Iowa (CP: 16% Foster youth in transition: 407 Total foster care: 2041 Total JD: 729),  
Maine (CP: 18% Foster youth in transition: 76 Total foster care: 276 Total JD: 165),  
Michigan (CP: 24% Foster youth in transition: 794 Total foster care: 4605 Total JD: 2085),  
Mississippi (CP: 34% Foster youth in transition: 86 Total foster care: 977 Total JD: 258),  
Nebraska (CP: 18% Foster youth in transition: 305 Total foster care: 1917 Total JD: 669),  
New Mexico (CP: 31% Foster youth in transition: 78 Total foster care: 237 Total JD: 522),  
North Carolina (CP: 25% Foster youth in transition: 504 Total foster care: 2146 Total JD: 567),  
Ohio (CP: 23% Foster youth in transition: 1153 Total foster care: 3563 Total JD: 2490),  
Pennsylvania (CP: 19% Foster youth in transition: 881 Total foster care: 5835 Total JD: 3075),  
Rhode Island (CP: 22% Foster youth in transition: 121 Total foster care: 806 Total JD: 186),  
Tennessee (CP: 27% Foster youth in transition: 471 Total foster care: 2763 Total JD: 783),

AECF will also seek proposals from prospective subrecipients in the 22 additional states that comprise the JAG national affiliate network and/or the 12 places that are home to jurisdictions in which AECF is working on juvenile justice reform (particularly in states seeking to safely reduce youth in confinement) and/or local community change efforts including AECF's Civic Sites in Baltimore, MD and Atlanta, GA and Family Centered Community Change initiatives in Buffalo, NY, Columbus, OH and San Antonio, TX. These additional states include: AL, AR, CA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MN, MO, MT, NV, NH, NJ, NY, OR, SC, SD, TX, VA, WA, WV, and WI.

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2. THE CASE FOR SELECTED APPROACH: In FY 13, 23,090 young people transitioned from foster care without permanent family connections. Over the past 5 years, more than 100,000 young adults have made this journey without benefitting from the typical growing up experiences in families and communities that teach essential life and self-sufficiency skills. Many studies highlight generally poor employment outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care. Across the existing literature, youth who age out of foster care are found to have less stable employment and lower earnings than youth in the general population and many of these trends persist into early adulthood. For example: More than one in five will become homeless, often on their 18th birthday (Casey Family Programs); only 58 percent will graduate high school by age 19, compared to 87 percent of all 19-year-olds (Courtney and Dworsky); 71 percent of young women are pregnant before age 21, facing higher rates of unemployment, criminal conviction, public assistance, and involvement in the child welfare system (Pecora, Kessler, Williams, O'Brien, Down, English, White, Hiripi, White, Wiggins, and Holmes); at the age of 24, only half are employed (Pecora et al); Fewer than 3 percent will earn a college degree by age 25, compared to 28 percent of all 25-year-olds (Pecora et al), and one in four will be involved with the criminal justice system within two years of leaving foster care (Courtney, Dworsky, Terao, Bost, Cusick, Keller, and Havlicek).

In addition to youth transitioning from foster care, there are also thousands of young people being removed from their home and incarcerated every day which is threatening their connection to family and community and thus their access to a bright future. Every day roughly 60,000 youth are confined in detention centers, juvenile prisons and other forms of out-of-home placement, oftentimes hundreds of miles from their families and communities. In addition, an estimated 9-29% of these youth are "cross over" youth and have been connected at one time to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 12/2012). Confinement threatens the well being and life-long chances of the young people themselves. These facilities are plagued by abusive conditions and achieve consistently poor outcomes for youth and public safety. The consequences of pulling young people deeply into the juvenile justice system are also dire for youth and the public, whether measured by recidivism rates, educational, employment and/or social outcomes.

The transition from systems to adulthood and independence is made more difficult by conditions in the current labor market. Youth employment is at its lowest level since World War II; only about half

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of young people ages 16 to 24 held jobs in 2011. Among the teens in that group, only 1 in 4 was employed, compared to 46 percent in 2000. Overall, 6.5 million people ages 16 to 24 are both out of school and out of work (AECF), statistics that suggest dire consequences for stable employment and long-term financial stability for the population targeted by this effort.

Simultaneously, postsecondary credentials have become the threshold for access to the middle class and financial independence. The share of US Jobs that require post secondary education will increase from 59% in 2008 to 63% in 2018. (Carnevale, Strohl, and Smith). A recent study from the state of Maine indicates that 80% of former foster care youth who enrolled in college either dropped out or stopped out (dropped out then re-enrolled) more than once during the study period. The study also noted that the average college enrollment rate among Maine high school graduates from 2006 to 2013 was 61%, double the college enrollment rate among former foster youth. The differences in college completion are even larger: Maine high school graduates have a six-year college graduation rate of 38%, compared with 2.5% for the former foster youth in this study. (Mitchell Institute 2014)

The case for helping youth in transition to increase their financial independence and to secure post secondary credentials is clear considering that fewer than 3% of the population to be served under this proposal can currently be expected to earn a college degree by the time they are 25. As in other areas, success in youth education and employment is much worse for youth of color, particularly African American males. Fifty-nine percent of youth ages 14 and older aging out of the foster care system in 2013 were youth of color (AFCARS). Youth of color are disproportionately overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, as 2/3 of youth incarcerated are of color even though they represent just 1/3 of the total population (AECF Race Matters 2009)

3. INADEQUACY OF CURRENT SOLUTIONS In 2003, the Urban Institute conducted the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs. Of the four programs evaluated using a randomized control design, only one had a statistically significant effect on youth outcomes. Nearly 13 years later, this study is still the only rigorous evaluation of independent living programs for youth transitioning out of foster care. Thus, the field knows little about which programs are effective, for which youth they can be most effective, and which program interventions are essential. In 2014, the Urban Institute completed a literature review and concluded that helping young people transition out of foster care connect to employment and develop skills necessary to succeed in the workplace is

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important to ensuring lasting economic self-sufficiency for this vulnerable population. Yet, despite the importance of preparing youth for employment, there is little rigorous evidence indicating whether and how employment programs for disadvantaged youth lead to positive long term employment outcomes (Edelstein and Lowenstein). Similarly, research tells us that youth in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school, attend college, or earn a college degree than their peers (Urban Institute 2014).

4. THEORY OF CHANGE, PROGRAM OUTCOMES, AND VALUE ADDED ACTIVITIES: The hypothesis driving the LEAP strategy is that if subrecipients can provide youth in or transitioning from systems with post-secondary bridging programs with first year-post secondary supports and/or workforce coaching, or both, then these youth will achieve positive and significant education and employment outcomes and successfully prepare for, enroll and persist in post-secondary programs, build job readiness skills, and gain and retain employment. AECF and its partners further assert that education credentials and youth employment are predictors of future employment and higher future incomes. (Sum, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University)

To maximize outcomes, the LEAP investment approach will draw on the principles of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's logic model, as they are relevant to both system involved youth and broader disconnected youth populations. AECF will invest in high performing, trusted, financially stable organizations, institutions or systems that understand the specific needs of the target population and that pursue five core strategies to maximize outcomes for youth in transition: 1) authentically engaging young people, 2) partnering and collaborating with other organizations, and especially secondary and post secondary institutions, to develop, coordinate, and leverage resources and supports, 3) researching and evaluating their work to ensure continuous improvement, 4) building public will to improve outcomes for foster youth and 5) increasing economic opportunities for participants including financial capability, asset building, employment and education. Subrecipients must demonstrate strong leadership, commit to working in collaboration with a diverse set of partners who will advance the LEAP hypothesis and adopt the five strategies above, and who collectively possess the capacity to implement one or both of the pre-identified interventions.

OUTCOMES: This SIF will significantly increase the number of youth in transition within subrecipient sites that reengage with education and employment opportunities, advance towards post

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secondary credentials and, secure work experience and employment. Over the next 5 years, AECF and its partners will work with subrecipients to measure and track the following five specific and measurable outcomes for an estimated 3,000-5,000 youth: 1) The number and demographics of youth served under either or both the pre-identified interventions, 2) The number of youth served who graduate high school, it is estimated that youth will graduate at a rate 33% higher than the rate of a comparison group, 3) The number of youth who enter into postsecondary education or training, 4) The number of youth who persist through the first year of postsecondary education; it is estimated that participants will persist through the first year of post secondary about twice the rate of a comparison group, and 5) The number of youth who acquire employment or work experience, estimated to be at least 20% higher than a comparison group. Outcomes may likely be refined during the first year as a result of the first step, formative evaluation process.

LEAP will build upon the collective, extensive experience of AECF and its national partners over the last several decades to add value to grantees and partners working to implement new employment and post secondary training program models with strong evaluation components. AECF's Family Economic Success unit has been a lead in the field in this area since its launch of the Jobs Initiative with a network of partners in 1995 and more recently with the design of the Centers for Working Families in the 2000s. CSSP and JFF will coordinate the delivery of a robust set of technical assistance services to subrecipients as they develop implementation plans and adapt evidence based program models in their communities and align partners with the initiative's theory of change. To support this process, CSSP will establish a learning community of subrecipients and their partners to ensure a rich cross-site learning experience. During early implementation, MDRC will work with sites to assist with data collection set-up to ensure high quality evaluation results. JFF will provide on the ground technical assistance and coaching support to sites implementing the Back on Track program model. Additionally, if sites are selected that have JAG programs proposed in their application, JAG would be a key local partner in the site for program implementation and will work with the JAG national office and the other national partners to support the local effort.

5. PROGRAM STRATEGIES AND EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS: Each subrecipient will implement one or both pre-identified interventions that have been identified by AECF based upon preliminary evidence of success and demonstrated scaling potential to propel youth transitioning from foster care and other system-involved youth toward positive education and employment outcomes. These

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interventions, 1) preparation for success in school and work through the JAG model and 2) a postsecondary bridge program with first-year postsecondary supports through the JFF model for youth who have already attained or are poised to attain a high school credential, have been identified by AECF based upon preliminary evidence of success and demonstrated scaling potential. Even though both programs have experience working with youth with multiple barriers to success, they still have some entry requirements for youth in terms of basic literacy and stability.

Preparation for success in school and work: Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) seeks to improve the ability of at-risk high school students to graduate from high school to the world of post-secondary education and the labor market. The JAG model improves opportunities for full-time employment among graduates going directly into the labor market upon graduation and/or continuing with post-secondary education. Key components of the intervention include core curriculum delivered in-school or out-of-school, adult mentoring, youth leadership development, guidance and counseling, employment and post secondary education placement services, linkages to school and community services, and 12 months of retention support. The JAG program has multiple variations including its in-high school program, its out-of-school program and its college success program.

Postsecondary bridging with first-year postsecondary supports: This intervention will take two core components of the evidence-based Back on Track (BOT) model developed by JFF and adapt them specifically for transition-age youth in foster care or other systems. The key elements of the postsecondary bridging component are: 1) Intensive, accelerated preparation for credit-bearing coursework, 2) Development of postsecondary success strategies (e.g. navigational skills, a growth mindset, resilience, self-agency), 3) Supported first experience in postsecondary education and/or training (e.g. through dual/concurrent enrollment); and 4) Career guidance focused on connecting to postsecondary education and training that pay off in the labor market. The key elements of the first-year supports component are: 1) support for students to earn first-year postsecondary credits that are predictive of completion, including academic and social supports and performance-based incentives; 2) just-in-time support to ensure persistence, such as emergency funds and counseling/case management; and 3) building attachment to postsecondary education, including independence and self-agency, technological tools to provide follow-up and coaching support, mentoring, and small cohort learning and leadership communities.

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All of the services above are necessary for youth who are transitioning out of or currently involved in systems. AECF and its partners will also provide technical assistance and support to embed within the JAG and Back On Track models a trauma-informed approach that takes into account the particular challenges and strengths of young people who have spent years in the system. This approach will ensure that there is a safe space to deal with identity issues, address trauma, and help the young people see the assets and resiliency they have developed through their years of coping with difficult situations, and understand how to apply these strengths to succeeding in postsecondary education and careers.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS: The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University utilized a quasi-experimental evaluation to examine the impact of the JAG high school program for in-school youth on employment rates among graduates of its senior and multiyear programs. Using a comparison group of similar-aged high school graduates living in the same states as JAG graduates from the Class of 2011 and statistical methods to control for differences between the JAG and comparison groups, the evaluation found that 1) JAG participants maintained an employment rate that was 21% greater than the comparison group 2) college-enrolled JAG graduates maintained an employment rate 11% greater than the comparison group 3) non-college-enrolled JAG graduates exhibited a 27% increase over their predicted employment rate and 4) full-time employment rates for those not in college were a remarkable 36 percentage points greater than their predicted level. The Center for Labor Market Studies evaluation demonstrates the strength of the JAG model. Their high school model has achieved a moderate level of evidence of effectiveness. While ten common elements undergird the six applications of the JAG model, the out-of-school model will likely be the primary intervention to appropriately serve the transition-age youth. This application of the model is serving a population with greater needs and has not undergone a quasi-experimental evaluation. In addition, the adaptation of the model application for transition-age youth will require embedding a trauma-informed approach within the program as well as additional supports in the areas of financial capability and asset-building. For all of these reasons we consider the evidence level to be preliminary.

Likewise, there is preliminary evidence of effectiveness of the Back on Track intervention. A third-party evaluation by Brandeis University for the Gates-funded Postsecondary Success Initiative, which tested the Back on Track framework as a strategy for building pathways to postsecondary credentials for formerly disconnected youth, indicate that high numbers of participating youth (57%) are entering

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some form of postsecondary education through Back on Track interventions. For youth entering bridge programming after earning a diploma or GED, the numbers are even higher. Youth prepared through bridge programming show evidence of succeeding in higher education--60% are enrolled in full-time study and over 50% completed a first year. The Brandeis analysis was a qualitative analysis designed to understand implementation of the Back on Track model and partnership development, as well as an observational study that drew from a participant database developed for the evaluation. Data on participant performance with respect to GED acquisition and college enrollment compared favorably to results of national studies, thus providing preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of the Back on Track interventions.

Recent research also provides preliminary evidence regarding the positive impact of postsecondary/bridging and first year supports on postsecondary persistence and completion. In a study of eight summer bridge programs at community colleges and four-year colleges in Texas utilizing a randomized experimental design, researchers found that students in these programs passed their college-level introductory courses in math and writing at a higher rate than students in the control group, and over 80% of the participants enrolled in college the following semester (Barnett, Bork, Mayer et al. 2012). A recent study from Stanford University School Of Education, also utilizing a randomized experimental design, found that providing non-traditional college students with coaching services significantly increased their persistence during the treatment period and one-year post-coaching services. Coaching will be a critical part of the First Year Supports intervention.

6. COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL FUNDING PROGRAMS: AECF is neither a current recipient of, nor under consideration for other federal funding. AECF is a co-investor in the JFF Opportunities Youth Incentive Fund SIF award, although that initiative serves a much broader group of populations and is not focused primarily on youth in transition and other system involved youth.

### Bii. PROPOSAL FOR SUBRECIPIENT SELECTION:

1. IDENTIFICATION OF SUITABLE SUBRECIPIENT ORGANIZATIONS: AECF will fund high performing, trusted, financially stable community organizations demonstrating that they can implement the five strategies associated with the LEAP theory of change. Subrecipients must demonstrate significant experience working with partner organizations and young people in the context of the child welfare and other systems to build key developmental assets, namely: social

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connections, material resources, human capital, independent living skills, and psychosocial/relationship skills. Subrecipients must be able to demonstrate how either they themselves or in partnership are able to develop these assets, have the ability to gain youth referrals from systems and generate positive outcomes around not only employment and education, but also associated outcomes that make gains in employment and education durable: health and wellbeing, relationships and social capital, housing stability, financial capability, and permanence.

2. COMPETITIVE SELECTION AND SUBAWARDS: The leadership team, comprised of AECF, CSSP, JFF, and MDRC, will convene following notification of award to complete and submit its subrecipient selection plan to CNCS with the goal of releasing a call for proposals to prospective partners within 6 weeks of award. AECF and its partners will select between 9 and 12 subrecipients within 4 months of award notification and will make annual sub awards ranging between \$100,000 to \$200,000 for a period between 3 and 5 years. The awards will be of sufficient size and scope to enable subrecipients to build their capacity to manage, sustain and grow their local initiatives. Larger grants will be made to programs that have current experience implementing evidence based programs and have greater capacity, as demonstrated through the RFP process and early implementation. In the rare instance when AECF might make a minimum grant of \$100,000, the leadership and TA staff will work closely with the applicant to ensure that it has sufficient capacity to meet minimum program and evaluation requirements. AECF is retaining a minimum grant of \$100,000 as the foundation is concerned about smaller, rural, or philanthropically underserved sites that may have challenges, even with AECF support, to raise the required 1:1 match.

CSSP will be the project manager for the competitive selection and sub award process and will work with AECF and its partners to develop an RFP that clearly defines the parameters and requirements for the project. CSSP will define and manage the scoring and award process based on criteria that are clearly aligned with the project's theory of change and result in the selection of high performing subrecipients. Criteria will be clearly identified in the RFP and include demonstrating 1) Experience working with youth transitioning from foster care to independence and youth in systems; 2) experience and/or a commitment to promote youth engagement and leadership; 3) effective partnerships with child welfare, juvenile justice, education, employment services, and other critical system partners; 4) past programmatic and policy successes; 5) ability to provide supplemental services to participant youth, including youth access to financial education and asset building; 6)

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experience with collecting and using data, and applying research, setting goals, and tracking outcomes and using data to determine what works and for continuous improvement; 7) demonstrated fiscal stability and capacity to manage complex funding streams over the grant term; 8) the ability to attract outside funding required to meet match requirements and to ensure long term programmatic sustainability and/or growth after SIF funds end; and 9) the ability to effectively implement evaluation requirements.

CSSP will finalize the RFP documents and will disseminate them in accordance with the project's CNCS approved subrecipient selection plan to ensure a fair and transparent process. Proposals will be due within two months of the release date to CSSP. All proposals will be reviewed and scored by representatives of the collaborating organizations. A review team, comprised of staff people from the national partners, will meet within one month after receipt of proposals to collaboratively review high scoring proposals. To build impact and facilitate evaluation, the review team will also consider whether youth in the target community are already receiving services similar to those proposed as part of this effort. In month three, finalists will participate in a site visit by members of the review team to assess their understanding of and commitment to the proposal, and their readiness to proceed. Final awards will be made within 4 months of award.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH PERFORMING SUBRECIPIENTS: The RFP process will be designed to solicit applications from high performing organizations in at least 40 targeted geographies that best meet the criteria in the previous section. Through competitive selection, AECF will seek organizations, institutions or systems that have demonstrated capacity and experience with the key components of the SIF program, including working with external evaluators, implementing systems, managing complex grants and contracts fiscally and programmatically, and investing in innovative strategies to change outcomes for the target population in their communities. Applicants must also demonstrate the knowledge and ability to ensure successful implementation of at least one of the two identified interventions, plus a familiarity with financial education and asset building programming.

Applicants will also be required to identify what other evidence based programs they have implemented and/or interventions in which they have participated in an external evaluation. To ensure alignment with the LEAP theory of change, applicants will be asked to demonstrate the presence of a diverse set of partnerships via letters of agreement and memoranda of understanding, to

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make certain that the needs of the target population can be met. Partners should include community based organizations, local colleges, public systems and others to ensure delivery of academic, and career-oriented experiences and the navigational and self-efficacy skills needed for transitional youth to succeed in their next step career pathways or postsecondary programs of study.

In addition, applicants will be required to specify the criteria used to identify potential partnerships in this work, and to provide a detailed plan of the steps that they will undertake to ensure the successful implementation and scaling up of the pre-identified intervention. They will further provide a resume of experience that demonstrates their ability to launch new programs quickly and effectively. This should include information on their current access to the target population, ability and experience in engaging them in new program opportunities, and their capacity to maintain quality programming while continuing to scale up. Applicants must also document their ability to maintain programs after initial funding ends. Proposals must include strategies for meeting the match requirements. Proposals will include initial funding commitments to demonstrate the organization's ability to garner the short and long term financial commitments required for the project. Finally, subrecipients must be able to demonstrate how they will be able to collect data and report on participation and outcomes.

4. CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT SUBAWARD SELECTION PROCESS: AECF, as a national grant-making organization, has extensive experience in developing and implementing grant selection processes both independently and as part of national collaboratives. AECF will partner with CSSP to lead the sub-award RFP design and selection process to enhance the Foundation's current capacity focusing on Strategy B: selecting subrecipients who are well suited to implement the predetermined models. CSSP has long-standing experience in managing national competitive applications for funding, including developing and managing the RFP process, monitoring grants to multiple organizations and sites, and supporting grant recipients to ensure successful project implementation. Examples of this include CSSP's work as: the managing entity of the Department of Health and Human Services Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood (QIC); the national intermediary and leader for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's ten year multi-site Community Partnerships for Protecting Children initiative; managing contractor for the federal Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) funded through the U.S. Department of Justice, representing co-funding by HUD and the US Departments of Education, HHS, and Treasury, and operating in neighborhoods in eight cities; identifying and supporting a network of states implementing Strengthening Families

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and as the manager for multiple grants and contracts for AECF's Making Connections community change initiative. In these examples, CSSP designed and carried out an RFP and site selection process as part of a collaborative team and managed the proposal development and review, administration and communications required to ensure a successful and timely process to select sites and support their implementation. In selecting LEAP subrecipients, CSSP will build both on its own knowledge and expertise working with communities and organizations serving system involved youth, and will leverage the extensive networks and experience of the national partners to ensure the selection of subrecipients who are well-suited, committed, and have established capacity to implement the pre-identified models.

Through the national LEAP collaboration, CSSP will draw also upon the considerable expertise of JFF and MDRC during the selection process. JFF has extensive experience designing and managing competitive selection processes for multiple initiatives, including for the National Fund for Workforce solutions and the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, and their respective SIF subrecipient competitions. In these and other competitive processes, JFF has developed RFPs, conducted outreach to prospective applicants, coordinated and managed proposal review, conducted site visits, and developed selection recommendations based upon a careful review of applicant commitment, implementation capacity, and ability to participate in the initiative's evaluation. MDRC has played key roles in the selection process for two other SIF programs, administered by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Mayor's Fund to advance NYC.

5. ASSESSMENT OF SUBRECIPIENTS FOR PROGRAM GROWTH: The RFP process will require each subrecipient applicant to outline their organizational qualifications, their experience working with public systems with special focus on youth transitioning out, and their capacity to leverage other key stakeholders to support, sustain, and expand the interventions being implemented. Specifically, CSSP will require each sub recipient to produce: 1) a demographic analysis of the targeted population; 2) a needs assessment of youth's educational and employment needs, 3) a gap analysis of services in the community and a description of how the selected intervention will address these gaps; 4) specific results and performance measures that the site will meet in each of the years of the initiative; 5) experience bringing and sustaining strategies to scale; 6) a list of meaningful partnerships for carrying out the project; 7) initial commitments for reaching the match requirements of the initiative, and; 8) ability to collect and use data to report on participation, program management and outcomes.

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Beyond the written application, the subrecipient selection process will utilize site visits to finalists to gain additional insight into the organizational capacities; the skills of the management and leadership team; the range of community partners and relationships that exist to support the work; the working relationships with the child welfare agency and other partner organizations; the staff capacity to engage youth in this work and the ability of the sub-recipient to use principles of implementation science and data and other quality improvement strategies to assure adherence to the pre determined models; monitor performance; and make adjustments as needed

6. SCALING SUBGRANT AWARDS FOR DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS: Grants to subrecipients will range between \$100,000 - \$200,000 and will be appropriately scaled to meet the requirements of implementing the proposed model, as well as the accompanying evaluation. The range will consider the proposed size and scale of the subrecipient's proposed implementation plan, their ability to secure the 1:1 match during the first year of the grant, their existing management infrastructure and the extent of their existing performance management and quality assurance protocols, and their experience and current capacity to work with an external evaluator from the outset of the award. AECF does not expect to make many \$100,000 subgrants, but is retaining the \$100,000 minimum grant amount in the event that a prospective high performing site could be severely challenged raising the required match.

### Biii. PROPOSAL FOR EVALUATION

1. CAPACITY TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL EVALUATION OF PORTFOLIO: AECF and its partner MDRC bring exceptional qualifications and decades of experience providing quality evaluation and research to produce the evidence required to improve workforce, postsecondary education, and child welfare practice and policy around the country. AECF's Research, Evaluation and Learning (REAL) unit manages the Foundation's evaluation, research, data development, performance management and knowledge and learning related strategies and investments to inform program innovation and policy reform and build the evidence base for the Foundation's work. REAL sustains and improves existing data resources, and in partnership with the Foundation's Evidence Based Practice Group, works to increase the quantity and use of evidence-based programs within public systems to ultimately improve child well-being. REAL centralizes, monitors and strengthens performance management and use of evidence across all Foundation portfolios and connects staff and grantees to

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the information and knowledge they need to learn from and advance their work.

REAL managed evaluations of funded program models will inform Casey's work on LEAP and have recently included: a comprehensive third-party evaluation requested by AECF's Family Economic Success unit of the Working Families Success Network's community college expansion and providing data support for the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative through grants to Metis Associates and Morehouse College. Other projects involve evaluating the Treatment Outcome Package tool to measure efforts to improve child well being funded by the Foundation's Child Welfare Strategy Group and supporting the Foundation's Evidence-Based Practice Group to use information gathered from the evaluation of its Evidence2Success pilot to improve child well being in Providence, RI. AECF's REAL Unit and Evidence Based Practice Groups consistently see government, philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, including grantees, take-up of lessons and findings from Casey-funded studies and evaluation to improve program performance. Examples include the results of the foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative from the past two decades, including a 42 percent reduction overall in the use of detention by JDAI sites, representing 2,400 fewer youth in detention.

AECF's evaluation advisor, MDRC, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with more than 40 years of experience designing and conducting rigorous evaluations of programs that aim to improve the well being of low-income people. MDRC is intimately familiar with the SIF concept, and is currently partnering with two other SIF recipients, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (EMCF) and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Though best known for mounting large-scale randomized controlled trials (RCTs), MDRC has extensive experience with a broad range of research activities, including the kind of formative/design work required as part of LEAP. For example, MDRC frequently helps EMCF and other funders assess whether their grantees are ready for rigorous evaluation and identifies the pros and cons of various design options for measuring program impacts. Disadvantaged youth have been a central focus of MDRC's work since its creation. In recent years, MDRC completed a 10-site evaluation of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program, a residential program for high school dropouts, and is currently leading an 80-site national evaluation of YouthBuild, a highly regarded education and employment program for disadvantaged youth.

MDRC has extensive experience with programs for foster youth. For example, MDRC is currently

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using an RCT design to evaluate the Transitional Living program operated by Youth Villages in several states. The evaluation is testing the TL program in Tennessee, where it operates statewide, serving youth exiting from the foster care and juvenile justice systems. MDRC is also working with First Place for Youth, a California-based program for foster youth, to help assess the organization's readiness for rigorous evaluation, and with the Children's Institute, a SIF sub-grantee that provides services for children who have been exposed to violence, including many foster youth. Earlier, MDRC worked with the California Gateway Project, an effort to assist in the transition to college for at-risk populations which included a significant focus on youth aging out of foster care. In addition to conducting an assessment of evaluation readiness, MDRC provided formative feedback on issues related to recruitment and enrollment, data collection, and the strength of program services.

2. PLAN TO ACHIEVE MODERATE TO STRONG LEVELS OF EVIDENCE OVER 3 TO 5 YEARS: AECF and MDRC propose a two-step process to increase the level of evidence achieved from preliminary to moderate over the next 3-5 years. Both JAG and Back on Track have preliminary evidence now, as both have been evaluated for populations that included limited numbers of youth in child welfare and juvenile justice, with the exception of the YouthBuild sites. A study of the models' impact on youth in systems will be required to achieve a moderate level of evidence. However, because the subrecipients will generally be implementing the two pre-identified models with some variation for new youth populations, the partners will design and implement a two-step evaluation process.

Step 1 will assess and describe the early implementation of each model for youth in transition in the selected sites and, drawing from this formative work, identify the most appropriate design to measure impacts on youth outcomes. The impact study will be Step 2.

MDRC will be responsible for leading the Step 1 assessment and design process, which will start when the subrecipients are selected and continue until the end of Year 1 of the SIF grant. This period will include several months of pilot operations for each grantee, allowing MDRC to observe the programs "in action," serving youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems. The following key questions will guide the Step 1 process: 1) How are the models adapted to best serve young people transitioning from systems? Do these adaptations adequately address the needs of the young people who are served? 2) How do the programs establish referral relationships to gain access to eligible youth? Do those

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linkages operate as planned and are the programs able to recruit and serve the projected numbers of youth? 3) What processes do the programs use to recruit and screen potential participants? What does the application "funnel" look like (i.e., how many youth apply and how many make it through each stage of the screening process)? 4) What are the characteristics of the youth who are served? 5) What dosage of services do youth receive from the subrecipients? How does this compare with the program model? What are the key reasons for attrition? 5) Is there evidence that the programs are substantially different from other services for system-involved youth in their communities? 6) What is the most appropriate design to measure the impact of the models? Is an RCT feasible and, if not, what is the best nonexperimental design to provide the type of causal evidence required by the SIF? What data sources should be used to measure the key outcomes?

MDRC will address these questions by conducting site visits to the subrecipients to interview staff and youth and, potentially, other service providers in the communities and observe program activities. They will also review data from the programs' management information systems to assess system capacities and measure participant characteristics, as well as program participation patterns, attrition, and dosage.

Near the end of Year 1 of the SIF grant period, MDRC will produce a report that will describe the early implementation of the subrecipient programs, provide recommendations on areas that should be addressed in order to support a rigorous evaluation, and lay out the pros and cons of alternative impact designs, including whether random assignment is suitable, practical, and ethical given the population being served and available services. MDRC will not only address the feasibility of an RCT -- focusing, for example, on whether there is excess demand for program services and whether local staff and referral sources would support an RCT -- but will also recommend options for alternative quasi-experimental designs. After considering MDRC's recommendations, AECF will use a competitive process to select an evaluator for Step 2, the impact analysis. The MDRC report will be provided to all potential bidders, ensuring a level playing field.

The Step 2 evaluation will measure the impact of the two models on youth's outcomes, focusing primarily on the education and employment domains. In order to assess what difference the programs make, it will be necessary to compare outcomes for youth who are offered the services described above with outcomes for youth who are not offered those services. The ideal way to identify the comparison

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group is through random assignment, but it is not clear at this point whether an RCT design will be feasible and ethical. Thus, strong quasi-experimental design options will also be considered. Also, to the extent feasible, MDRC will analyze program impacts separately for subgroups of youth who have been in foster care and those who have been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Regardless of whether the impact evaluation uses an RCT, we anticipate that key outcome data will be obtained from administrative records -- notably quarterly earnings data from state unemployment insurance systems, post-secondary enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse (possibly supplemented by more detailed data from local community colleges), and high school completion data from the participating states or local school districts. In addition, LEAP's evaluator will likely obtain data on arrests and convictions from state criminal justice agencies. Individual surveys are likely to be prohibitively expensive.

Staff assume that relatively small sample sizes in the individual sites will require the analysis to pool across sites that are implementing the same model. If, for example, six of the 10 sites are selected to participate in the impact study, the analysis might pool together results for 3 JAG sites and 3 Back on Track sites. Assuming that youth enter the impact study research sample starting in early 2017, it should be possible to produce preliminary impact findings by the end of Year 3 (i.e., by the end of 2018). These findings will likely focus on the first cohorts of youth to enroll in the study, and they will likely emphasize shorter-term outcomes such as post-secondary enrollment -- as opposed to progress or completion. The specific targeted outcomes for this preliminary analysis will depend to some extent on the age of the youth who are served.

**3. PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SUBRECIPIENTS TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST MODERATE LEVELS OF EVIDENCE:** During Year 1 of the grant period, MDRC will provide technical assistance to the subrecipients on evaluation-related issues. This will include assessing subrecipients' technical assistance needs as they prepare for evaluation related activities and educating the subrecipients, their referral partners, and other local stakeholders on the strengths, limitations, and operational realities of various impact design options. The level of local support for different potential designs will be a key factor in MDRC's ultimate description of the pros and cons so it will be critical for subrecipients to understand the options.

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MDRC will also work with the subrecipients to ensure that they are ready for a rigorous evaluation. This will include an assessment and strengthening of data collection systems, formalizing program intake processes to minimize attrition, and ensuring that referral relationships are clearly defined. This type of TA will be closely coordinated with the programmatic TA provided by JFF and other partners, to ensure maximum benefit to subrecipients and program participants. For example, both programmatic and evaluation TA will require site visits and reviews of program MIS data.

During the Step 2 impact evaluation phase, CSSP, AECF, and JFF will work closely with the designated evaluator to ensure that subrecipient staff are trained to implement certain research procedures, such as obtaining informed consent from potential study participants and ensuring that youth assigned to a control group are not served in the program being tested. This TA will be particularly important in the event that the partners select an RCT design.

4. HOW BUDGET SUPPORTS REASONABLE EVALUATION ACTIVITIES: Ten percent of the budget will be dedicated to project evaluation for the two-step process, beginning with MDRC leading a formative evaluation and following up in years 2-5 with a rigorous impact evaluation to achieve a moderate level of evidence. The 10% will be \$1.5 million in total or approximately \$300,000 a year for five years. The first year's budget of \$311,271 will be sourced from both CNCS's share (\$150,000) and the national match (\$161,271). None of the costs of the evaluation are expected to come from the sites or the local match, although sites will likely have some more modest local data collection, measurement and reporting costs.

### Biv. GROWING SUBRECIPIENT IMPACT

1. CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SUBRECIPIENT GROWTH: The LEAP partnership brings exceptional experience and capacity to support sub-recipient program growth through replication and expansion. AECF possesses significant capacity to support subrecipient growth and replication through its ongoing investment in its capacity building portfolio. As subrecipients grow their impact, they will be able to draw on the expertise of multiple AECF initiatives, including: KIDS COUNT; National and State Policy Reform; Strategic Communications; National Partnerships; Talent and Leadership Development; Research, Evaluation and Learning, and social investments. AECF has leveraged these resources in the past to help grow and replicate evidence based initiatives as well as influence important stakeholders from policy-makers and government agencies to employers and communities.

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One important example from AECF's Family Economic Success unit is the development, replication and scaling of the Centers for Working Families model -- which now exist in more than 26 states through a range of intermediaries -- and the launch of the national Working Families Success Network with other major public and private funders.

In sites that include JAG affiliates, the implementing partners will work closely with the National JAG organization which brings substantial experience to the LEAP initiative and is uniquely qualified to replicate its model. JAG has an existing relationship with all of its affiliates as its sites are membership organizations to the national office and provide an ongoing membership fee. Since 1980, JAG's national office has overseen impressive program growth and expanded its model to 32 State networks and replicated programs in over 1000 affiliate sites. As the partnership's primary TA partner for the Back on Track initiative, JFF brings considerable expertise in supporting grantee program growth. JFF has developed, documented, and scaled effective education reform and workforce development models in multiple national and multi-site initiatives. JFF brings particular experience expanding effective program models that prepare and accelerate underrepresented youth to college and career readiness and success. This includes managing the expansion of the effective Early College High School model -- which blends secondary and postsecondary coursework in a supportive environment to set more low-income students on a path to educational and career success -- to 250 early colleges serving more than 100,000 students nationwide. Through the Pathways to Prosperity initiative, JFF is guiding the expansion of secondary-postsecondary pathways in high-demand career and technical fields in regions across 10 states. Over the past eight years, JFF has replicated and expanded Back on Track interventions to community-based organizations, alternative schools, and school districts across the country. Through the Postsecondary Success Initiative, in partnership with the Gates Foundation, JFF supported expansion of Back on Track interventions to more than 30 sites of leading youth-serving organizations.

CSSP has pioneered and grown models of community-driven technical assistance to mobilize community capacity and leadership, build strategic local partnerships, engage resident leaders, use data to create accountability, and align and leverage financial resources and policy with efforts to grow local impact. Current examples include CSSPs role as the technical assistance contractor or part of the technical assistance team on the federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative (the U. S. Department of Education), the Choice Neighborhoods initiative (through the U. S. Department of

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Housing and Urban Development), and the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (U.S. Department of Justice). In addition, CSSP has deep experience with prior initiatives, including service as lead technical assistance manager and provider for AECF's ten year Making Connections initiative, as well as leadership on: the Quality Improvement Center (QIC), the Community Partnership for Protecting Children, and the First 5 LA's Best Start Initiative.

Drawing upon its collective expertise and track record, the LEAP partnership will deliver a comprehensive range of resources to support the successful growth of subrecipient programs adopting one or both of the pre-identified interventions. CSSP, with JFF, will deliver or broker a range of ongoing technical assistance to support subrecipients, including: intensive coaching to sites to help them implement their identified interventions serving youth transitioning from foster care or other systems; peer learning opportunities so that subrecipients can learn from other practitioners and subject matter experts; and the development of planning tools and other resources. A portion of the national matching funds raised each year will support these activities, and AECF, CSSP, and JFF will devote the time of multiple staff members, including a CSSP project director, as well as content experts, evaluation and documentation specialists, trainers and coaches, and policy experts from across organizations to support subrecipient growth.

2. APPROACHES TO GROWING EFFECTIVE SUBRECIPIENT PROGRAM MODELS: In approaching the challenge of growing effective models in multiple sites, AECF and its partners will draw on their long history of developing and enhancing effective youth development and education models in communities across the country. The LEAP approach is aligned with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative's logic model of investing in strong community organizations that bring specific expertise in serving the target population of system-involved youth, a track record of strong collaborations and advocacy efforts to build public support and policy for transitioning youth, an unswerving commitment to youth development principles, and attention to continuous improvement principles in their operations.

The LEAP coaching and technical assistance team will begin with an initial thorough assessment of subrecipients' capacity (e.g., to implement the interventions and track progress, coordinate partners, align resources, facilitate strategy development, and use data to drive increased effectiveness). Using a benchmarking process informed by the LEAP theory of change, the TA team will undertake a gap

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analysis of what is happening currently and needs to happen on the ground to improve outcomes for youth transitioning from systems, resulting in a strategic action plan to guide the site work. The TA team will use evidence, including program data compiled in a data dashboard as well as third-party evaluation data, to guide the implementation and spread of the pre-identified interventions, providing ongoing technical assistance both through site-based coaching and a rich set of cross-site learning opportunities, both face-to-face and virtual. Throughout the project, the coaching/technical assistance team will carefully plan for sustainability of the reforms through technical assistance on policy advocacy and strategic funding alignment.

3. ASSESSING SUBRECIPIENT CAPACITY FOR GROWTH: In selecting subrecipients, partners will look for evidence of the following key characteristics that bear on subrecipient capacity for growth: organizational experience and expertise in serving transition-aged foster youth; strong management and commitment to continuous improvement; a clear understanding of local assets as well as gaps in services and programming, along with a proven track record of collaboration; and an initial sustainability plan, including identified policy targets and financing mechanisms.

Each subrecipients' capacity for growth will be assessed initially through a thorough review of its funding application, including: the organizational qualifications the applicant youth-serving organization, including its experience working with transitioning youth from foster care and the juvenile justice system; the potential for the organization and its collaborating organizations and stakeholders to significantly increase the number of youth in transition within subrecipient sites that become connected to employment and education opportunities, are prepared for and secure employment, and who advance towards post secondary credentials; and the associated commitments they have made thus far. Specific attention will be paid to sites that have the potential to scale through partnerships with local, regional or national networks and or foster care or other systems focused on improving opportunities for youth leaving foster care or in youth serving systems.

Once subrecipients are selected, coaches will conduct an initial site visit to build on the information provided in the proposal process, add to the assessment of how completely the applicants embody the characteristics described above, and further plan for capacity building of key local players and successful implementation and growth of the interventions.

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AECF (including its newly merged Jim Casey team) and its External Affairs team will also support selected sites and the national partners in accessing broader networks and leveraging strategic communication resources to foster partnerships, disseminate results and gain policy adoption and increased funding.

4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, DATA SYSTEMS AND OTHER RESOURCES TO SUPPORT GROWTH AND LONGTERM SUSTAINABILITY: Once selected, each subrecipient will work with a coach from the LEAP national coaching and technical assistance team. The sites that select the Back on Track model will have access to coaches from JFF, and the sites that select the JAG model, in partnership with the local JAG partner will work with staff from local affiliates and the JAG national office. For the postsecondary bridging with first year supports intervention, the coaching/TA team from JFF will assist in the implementation of curricular scopes, and sequences, staffing configurations, student support structures, counseling/case management, mentoring, schedule, calendar, and budget and the team will assist in guiding choices in the use of technology for skill remediation/acceleration, credit recovery, acquisition of college success skills and follow up and coaching support. For the JAG affiliates, the coaching/TA team will include a representative of the JAG organization to coordinate the model design and its variations with the evaluation protocols.

For all sites, regardless of which intervention(s) they implement, national staff will be available for just-in-time support virtually and through phone conferencing, and will be on-site quarterly to support the work on the ground. As the pre-identified interventions are being implemented, the coaching/TA team will build the capacity of program leaders and their partners by: ensuring alignment, and benefitting from learning associated with the theory of change and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, establishing high quality data collection and management, preparing for, and learning from, the initial evaluation activities, sharing emerging best practices, and supporting ongoing resource development and policy work to sustain and grow AECF and CNCS's investment.

In addition, the technical assistance strategy will feature a robust, CSSP led learning community of subrecipients and their key partners to support cross site learning, professional development, youth engagement, and to meet other emerging needs identified by subrecipients as crucial to effective model implementation. The partners will meet at least twice a year in addition to regular interactions

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through structured TA calls and webinars. Sites will convene at least once a year in person as a group with the national partners. AECF will also provide opportunities to broaden this learning community with sites from other initiatives, including its Youth Jobs Initiative which will have a robust demand-driven set of employment partners.

As the interventions begin to demonstrate results, the coaching/TA team will help subrecipients develop their highest-performing schools/programs into "learning labs" for the spread of effective practices. This will involve helping them to identify promising strategies and approaches and develop their capacity to host study visits to demonstrate these practices for other programs. Further, the coaching/TA team will work closely with subrecipients to prepare their programs for maximum impact and sustainability. This will include coaching and technical assistance on the use of data, not only to strengthen programs, but also to make the case for sustainability for both interventions, with an increasingly intensive focus on sustaining operations as implementation proceeds. In addition, the coaching/TA team will assist subrecipients in creating a communications plan to regularly share data and results with key stakeholders, policy leaders, and funders.

The coaching/TA team will also help subrecipients develop a financing strategy to ensure effective pathways for youth transitioning from foster care or other systems can be sustained. For the JAG employment coaching intervention, this will involve working with the national JAG office. For sites implementing the Back on Track postsecondary bridging intervention, JFF coaches will use cost model tools to analyze existing financing for the interventions against current revenue and typical costs per intervention. This will include ascertaining funding that might be leveraged through partners who are part of the local collaborative, as well as through newer mechanisms the collaborative could champion such as social impact bonds.

Ultimately, planning for strategic and effective growth that results in sustainability long beyond the five years of the initiative must include a plan for combining public funding streams that are currently operating in isolation, each with its own set of eligibility and reporting requirements. A key function of subrecipient capacity that will be enhanced through the LEAP initiative will be to advocate for the administrative, regulatory, and legislative changes needed to enable public funding, policy and practice to more cost-effectively and efficiently result in improved outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care and other systems. In addition, technical assistance to sub grantees will include

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planning for securing private sector engagement, including employers, and private funding that will support continuing innovation.

### Organizational Capability

#### C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

##### Ci: ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFF CAPACITY:

1. CASE TO SUPPORT APPROACH AND OUTCOMES: The LEAP initiative will leverage the collective resources of AECF and its partner organizations to successfully support the initiative. AECF leadership will come from the Foundation's Center for Community Economic Opportunities, which will draw on resources from the Foundation's: Center for System Innovation, which houses its Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategy Groups; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (formally merging into the foundation as of June 30th); Research Evaluation and Learning; Capacity Building and Finance and Administration units. The collective resources of these groups include significant experience demonstrating, evaluating, and disseminating lessons from foundation-led initiatives to strengthen families and improve opportunities for children, youth and families. Youth have been central to Annie E. Casey's mission since it was founded more than 60 years ago. From AECF's first large, community-based initiative, New Futures, focused on urban youth transitioning to adulthood in 1988 to its start of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) in 1993 and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative for youth aging out of foster care in 2001, vulnerable and system-involved youth have been a major priority.

AECF will also bring its Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) framework to LEAP as a resource to advance the initiative. AECF cares deeply about issues of race and equity and is committed to reducing disparate outcomes by anchoring this work to the result that every child deserves a fair chance to achieve his or her full potential. AECF has developed the REI framework to build on the Foundation's commitment. This framework will inform work on LEAP as the foundation, its partners, and its subrecipients will be required to think critically and intentionally concerning matters of race and equity to strengthen decision making, measure progress toward results, promote best practices, and advance policy and practice changes that increase equitable opportunities and outcomes for all children.

AECF's experience and resources will be significantly enhanced by the experience of its evaluation and technical assistance partners. CSSP, with whom AECF has been working for decades, has a long

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history of national collaboration and technical assistance provision and managing complex projects with multiple sites, partners, and funders to improve youth welfare. JFF, with more than 30 years in the field, brings specific experience expanding effective program models that prepare and accelerate underrepresented youth to college, careers and success. MDRC has more than 40 years of experience designing and conducting rigorous evaluations of programs that aim to improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care and other systems.

### 2. EXPERIENCE, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES OPERATING YOUTH PROGRAMS:

AECF has developed deep experience improving outcomes for low income youth by helping to promote policies and practices that foster permanence, reduce institutionalization and increase access to opportunity, particularly for youth transitioning out of the foster and juvenile justice systems and youth of color. AECF has been the lead investor in the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a 14-year-old effort focused on ensuring that young people ages 14-25 make successful transitions from foster care to adulthood. The Jim Casey Initiative focuses on implementing a site-based model of practice, now in 18 states, and oversees a matched savings program called the Opportunity Passport<sub>™</sub> in each of its sites. Results from the Jim Casey Initiative are very promising. The percentage of Jim Casey initiative participants with a high school diploma or GED grew from 67 to 82 percent. High school students with a part-time job or internship rose from 34 to 45 percent. Eighty-eight percent of the young people now have a permanent connection to an adult. Results are based on survey data collected twice yearly since the Initiative's inception and a response rate of 80% in 2014. As of 2013, a data analysis by the Jim Casey Initiative on its Opportunity Passport<sub>™</sub>, a matched savings funds for youth transitioning from foster care, revealed that there have been 5,176 assets purchased by participants totaling over \$5 million since 2001. The primary uses of the matched savings funds for youth transitioning from foster care were for purchase of a vehicle (37%) to get to school and work, educational expenses (23%) for books and fees and housing costs (21%) for rental deposits. This same analysis by the Jim Casey Initiative also concluded that participants who purchased assets through the Opportunity Passport<sub>™</sub> were more likely to report maintaining full time employment and improvements in safe, stable and affordable housing. In addition, the analysis found that youth reported an enhanced sense of independence, a critical component to a successful transition to adulthood. The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative has also seen positive outcomes in Success by 18, its national policy effort launched in 2012 that focuses on encouraging states to extend foster care for youth older than 18. To date, 22 states have extended foster care to age 21 or beyond. AECF's

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programmatic experience is complemented by its TA partner, JFF, who possesses deep experience operating and overseeing youth related employment and postsecondary initiatives, including: Breaking Through, Accelerating Opportunity, and Community College Student Success Centers, which have each promoted institutional and policy reforms to promote postsecondary success and credential attainment for underprepared learners.

3. EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA: Both AECF and MDRC possess deep capacity to collect and analyze data required for evaluation, continuous improvement, compliance and other purposes and routinely conduct surveys and collect administrative data for analysis to establish baselines and to measure impact. As part of AECF's Evidence2Success initiative in Providence, RI, staff worked with local partners to combine the proven strategies and programs that benefit children's health and development into a single, unified framework. Since inception, Evidence2Success has completed a Youth Experience Survey with an 80 percent response rate, and completed the fund mapping process for public education, health, and welfare systems to identify potential resources for reinvestment in 2015.

Evaluation advisor MDRC has decades of experience collecting and analyzing data on program performance and participant outcomes. This includes data from management information systems that measure service provision and participant milestones, and data from government administrative records that are used to measure post-program outcomes (including data from school districts, community colleges, criminal justice agencies, public welfare agencies, state labor departments, and others). MDRC has extensive internal capacity to house and analyze large data sets while maintaining strict standards of confidentiality required by federal funders. MDRC recently conducted a random assignment evaluation in 10 ChalleNGe sites. The results demonstrated that the participants were more likely than the control group to have earned a high school diploma or GED, obtained post-secondary credit and be working. This study led to increased federal and private funding

4. CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET, PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET, AND IMPLICATIONS: AECF has a 2015 budget of \$176 million and an endowment of about \$3 billion. The funding request of \$1.5 million to SIF in Year 1 represents just under 1% of the budget. Though this percentage is small it is significant, representing the first time AECF has applied for federal funds. In addition, AECF's commitment is new money at a time when AECF has a flat budget, which in turn, results in

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fewer resources being available for new and innovation solutions. Finally, the federal dollars will help AECF continue to build evidence and integrate its work across the foundation to leverage its youth related expertise across divisions, particularly between its Family Economic Success initiatives and Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategy Groups.

5. STAFF AND CONTRACTORS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM: Patrice Cromwell, Director of Strategic Initiatives at AECF's Center for Community and Economic Opportunity, will be the Program Director and will have principal responsibility for the SIF initiative. Ms. Cromwell will be the primary point of contact to the CNCS. In her current role, Ms. Cromwell oversees several grant making portfolios include one focused on helping vulnerable youth -- system involved youth, young parents and low income youth of color -- get back on track to school and work through various models. During her tenure with Casey, Ms. Cromwell worked as an executive-on-loan for the Governor's Office of the State of Maryland to create a new delivery unit focused on helping agencies accelerate implementation and achieve quality results in the areas of human services and workforce development. Before joining Casey, she was Associate Director of the Open Society Institute-- Baltimore and led the start-up and operations of three non-profit organizations in the workforce and economic development field. Ms. Cromwell holds a MBA from Yale and a BA in economics from Princeton.

In addition to serving as Program Director, Ms. Cromwell will direct a leadership team that will oversee the implementation of the initiative. Other senior AECF staff on the team will include: Bob Giloth, PhD, Vice President, Center for Community and Economic Opportunity. Dr. Giloth will be the senior officer of the foundation to assist with guiding the Program Director and leadership team on program design, implementation and evaluation strategies. Dr. Giloth has been a lead architect in many multi-state Casey- and national partner-led initiatives related to economic opportunity, including the Jobs Initiative, the Centers for Working Families and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Prior to joining Casey in 1993, he managed community development corporations in Baltimore and Chicago and served as deputy commissioner of economic development under Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. He holds a Ph.D. in city and regional planning from Cornell University.

The program's lead advisor on programmatic interventions for youth transitioning from foster care will be Sandy Wilkie, Director of Research and Evaluation for the Jim Casey Youth Initiative. She

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leads the Initiative self-evaluation team's continuous improvement process and manages the data collection, analysis, translation of findings, and capacity building for the national Initiative and the 18 states engaged in improving outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood. Sandy has 30 years of experience in social and child welfare programs and systems reform initiatives dedicated to improving the well being of vulnerable children, youth, and families. For the past 15 years, she has held executive management positions in state agencies and with a national foundation. Sandy holds a Master of Social Work from Washington University and a Bachelor of Social Work from Rhode Island College. AECF's advisor on juvenile justice will be Mr. David E. Brown who is a senior associate with the Juvenile Justice Strategy Group of the Annie E Casey Foundation, where he helps coordinate the foundation's juvenile justice system reform work. Prior to joining Casey in 2011, David was deputy director of the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), where he led the development of a comprehensive community-based continuum of care and a service delivery system. Before joining DYRS, David served as Executive Director of the National Youth Employment Coalition and as a senior policy analyst with the National Governors' Association. Ms. Kimberly Spring, Director, Research Evaluation and Assessment and Learning will advise the team on external evaluations. Dr. Spring manages evaluation and research studies related to child development, family economic success, community change, and influence-related activities. She currently manages the Family Economic Success-Early Childhood Education initiative. Prior to joining the Casey Foundation, she worked as a research and policy analyst at the Corporation for National and Community Service. Kimberly completed a Masters in Comparative Cultural Studies from the Ohio State University and a Masters in International Development Studies from George Washington University. She received her PhD in Sociology from the New School for Social Research in New York City. Ms. Karen Miller, Director of Finance and Chief Compliance Officer, and her staff will oversee the finance and compliance of the SIF. Ms. Miller is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and joined AECF in 2002.

AECF staff will be joined by Lili Allen, Associate Vice President of JFF, to oversee site technical assistance on the Back on Track to College model, and John Martinez, Deputy Director of Program Development, will join the team from MDRC to oversee the evaluation related work. Finally, Susan Notkin, Associate Director at CSSP will help lead subrecipient selection and coordinate TA to the sites. The team will work closely with Ken Smith, President and CEO of JAG, to coordinate program and evaluation related work among JAG sites participating in the initiative. Mr. Smith will serve on the

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leadership team, though JAG would not be part of the request for proposal process as JAG affiliates will likely be part of a number of local site responses to the request for proposal.

The above team members, and the organizations and resources they represent, bring ample experience to effectively implement the proposed program. Senior AECF staff will report on LEAP progress to the AECF Board and President through regular senior leadership and Board meetings.

6. ABILITY TO DEVELOP SYSTEMS TO MAINTAIN GRANT COMPLIANCE: AECF will engage an external CPA firm or other resource with an experienced federal grant compliance team to review its existing policies and procedures to ensure that they align with 2 CFR Part 230 (OMB Circular A-122: Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations) as necessary. AECF's Finance team includes staff members who are actively licensed CPAs with A-133 audit experience. Designated members of AECF's Finance team will ensure conformance of AECF policies as a result of the third party review and will meet regularly with the Project Director and members of the Leadership Team to review all SIF related requirements. In addition, as part of AECF's competitive selection process, and again, as part of the subgranting process, Foundation staff will inform grantees of their legal requirements to comply with appropriate OMB Circulars, rules, and regulations, including OMB Circular A-133, relevant cost principles, the requirement to comply with CNCS' criminal history background checks, and relevant procurement rules and regulations. AECF will require consistent monitoring standards and procedures for each of the subrecipients based on their varying risk levels, and will ensure technical assistance is provided to SIF subrecipients and compliance is monitored on an ongoing basis.

7. GOALS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUBRECIPIENTS: Change does not happen quickly, and generating high quality evidence to support and sustain change takes time. Given its data driven approach and focus on changing policy, AECF staff members understand and embrace this fact. AECF is currently engaged in multiple long-term investments. Examples include its 10 year Making Connections Initiative that invested \$500 million in 22 sites to the 14 year investment in the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and the more recent investments in Evidence 2 Success and AECF's two-generation community change effort called Family Centered Community Change. AECF views its investment in LEAP similarly, as the purpose of the initiative is intentionally aligned with the long-term goals of the foundation. Given this, AECF and the initiative's partners will work with subrecipients and their partners, using the Results Based Accountability<sub>2</sub> framework as described

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below, to establish shared annual short and long term goals for their initiatives to support effective programming over the short and intermediate terms, and to generate evidence and engage in advocacy and systems reform over the longer term.

### Cii. SUBRECIPIENT SUPPORT, MONITORING, AND OVERSIGHT

1. EXPERIENCE SETTING AND IMPLEMENTING GOALS WITH RECIPIENTS: AECF is committed to effective performance management and works tirelessly with its staff, grant recipients, and partners to focus on results and use data to guide decision making, improve programs, and achieve and document outcomes. Central to this effort is the foundation's use of goal setting with grantees using the Results-Based Accountability<sub>2</sub> (RBA) framework. Growing out of the initiative's Making Connections initiative, the Foundation has employed the framework since 2004 to systematically and consistently develop goals, objectives, and attainable and measurable performance measures, targets and outcomes for the organizations it funds. The foundation has incorporated this methodology to increase accountability and measure performance with its grantees, leading to better evidence and clearer more compelling results for the Foundation's grantees and the youth and families they serve. In 2014 AECF began embedding RBA principles across the entire foundation.

2. EXPERIENCE EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF GRANT RECIPIENTS FOR OUTCOME FOCUSED INITIATIVES: The Annie E. Casey Foundation was created by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service. Jim Casey believed that efficiency and productivity were primary generators of profit. To that end, he encouraged the measurement of every part of the process of getting packages from one place to another. The trustees and staff of the Casey Foundation hold a similar conviction that measuring child well-being shows what works and what does not. Measurement improves accountability and produces better outcomes for disadvantaged children. AECF's commitment to measurement is reflected in substantial investments to evaluate its work, in the national KIDS COUNT project and in driving data-based system reform. Today, AECF's REAL unit develops and manages evaluations and data support for a number of different projects. Comprehensive third-party evaluations are underway for our two-generation demonstrations, the Working Families Success Network's community college expansion pilot and several programs used in the Foundation's Baltimore Civic Site. In support of the foundation's system reform work, REAL manages a third-party evaluation of the Juvenile Justice Strategy Group's new initiative to reduce youth incarceration and oversees data support for the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

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through grants to Metis Associates and Morehouse College.

3. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT SUBRECIPIENT SUCCESS: To support subrecipient success, the LEAP coaching and technical assistance team will launch its work with an initial thorough assessment of subrecipients' capacity, undertake a gap analysis with subrecipients, and using a RBA approach, develop a strategic action plan to guide implementation. Informed by data and evidence, team members will provide ongoing technical assistance both through site-based coaching and quarterly visits and through robust cross-site peer-to-peer learning opportunities that will be facilitated by CSSP. In addition, the LEAP coaching/TA team will provide assistance to subrecipients on data collection and analysis for shared measurement, accountability, evaluation, continuous improvement, and sustainability planning. Please refer to Section B.iv.4 above for a complete description of the LEAP technical assistance plan to support subrecipient success.

4. SUBRECIPIENT CAPACITY AND GRANT COMPLIANCE: AECF will engage a third party consultant with specific experience in providing SIF grant compliance with a national foundation, such as O'Connor Davies which worked with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, to ensure systems and procedures are developed on the front end of the program both at the national and local levels. The third party consultant will strengthen the capacity of subrecipients to develop compliant federal grants management systems through initial trainings, provided through site visits and webinars, and through regular visits and follow-up calls during the term of the grant to ensure all subrecipients develop and implement proper policies, procedures, and key internal controls (e.g., proper procurement, travel and reimbursement, and other policies) to assure compliance. In addition, AECF expects to hire additional staff and/or consulting expertise to advise the foundation on its financial, tax and administrative requirements.

5. BUILDING SUBRECIPIENT CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE SCALING, EVALUATION, AND OTHER GOALS: As described earlier in the proposal, technical assistance will be provided by the national partners to help subrecipients build capacity to implement the programs and scale them within sites. Please refer to Section B.iv.4 above for a description of the LEAP technical assistance plan to support subrecipient growth and other program related goals. Initial learning and results from the LEAP initiative will be amplified via AECF's ongoing investment in its Capacity Building portfolios which contains a broad, complementary set of grants that support the work of the foundation nationally:

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KIDS COUNT; National and State Policy Reform; Strategic Communications; National Partnerships; Talent and Leadership Development; Research, Evaluation and Learning, and Social Investments. These programs will work in concert to help the Foundation, its implementation partners, subrecipients, and practitioners around the country influence policy and practice reforms, continue to build evidence and measure performance outcomes, develop strong messages, distribute new and innovative ideas across key networks, strengthen leadership capacity at the Foundation and in the field, and stimulate new investments in subrecipient communities.

6. SUBRECIPIENT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS: The coaching and technical assistance team will assist subrecipients to develop performance measures and monitoring plans to track project progress towards program outcomes and targets over the course of the grant. Performance measures will align with LEAP strategic goals and the common measures for the initiative, but may differ slightly by subrecipient based upon the selection of interventions. Monitoring plans will include interim benchmarks and milestones toward achieving project goals, data collection and tracking methods, and procedures for altering project goals or project activities based upon data collected. Each subrecipient will be responsible for implementing performance measurement systems in collaboration with its community partners and with support from the coaching/TA team. CSSP has considerable experience to support the overall team in this area through its work with child welfare systems under class action litigation to track and monitor their performance against identified court ordered benchmarks and milestones. In that work CSSP has specifically provided TA to states to develop their capacity to collect, track and utilize data for program improvement.

7. SUBRECIPIENT MONITORING FOR COMPLIANCE AND PROGRESS: A 3rd party consultant identified to ensure AECF compliance with SIF requirements will work with foundation staff to support subrecipient monitoring and compliance in the following specific areas: 1) Assessing risk of sub-recipient relationships prior to selecting sub-recipients, 2) Onboarding sub-recipients -- training on major grant requirements through webinars, site visits and other resources 3) Developing sub-recipient agreement language and templates, and 4) Determining appropriate billing intervals (monthly, quarterly, etc.) and required supporting documentation. The consultant will also provide ongoing grant management review and pre-approval of invoices, assistance with budget management, and will monitor budget spending rates in relation to programmatic performance. In addition to the compliance issues addressed above, subrecipients will be monitored regularly for

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progress towards the goals initially articulated in applicant proposals. These goals will be reviewed upon subaward through a thorough assessment, and monitored by both the LEAP technical assistance and leadership teams through regular reports and quarterly coaching and TA visits. Subrecipient goals will be updated and revised as necessary annually and monitored according to an annual implementation plan.

### Ciii: STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

1. COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE INVESTMENT PRIORITIES: AECF is committed to continue investment in the priorities articulated in this proposal beyond the life of the grant. The work set out in this proposal is aligned directly with the mission of the organization to create bright futures for all children and youth. AECF has a long-term priority of developing solutions, programs and policies that help the most disadvantaged children -- those whose futures are far from bright, whose opportunities are limited by the circumstances of their birth and who face the steepest barriers and challenges. AECF will continue to work to strengthen families, build stronger communities and ensure access to opportunity because of the organization's fundamental belief that children -- those in whom the future lies -- need all three to succeed. Good education for children and youth and good jobs for young parents lead to future financial stability and long-term success. Our focus on the 14-25 age population is at the core of the ongoing work of the organization, and AECF demonstrates regularly through its actions that it will continue to invest in these priorities and populations for years to come.

2. EVALUATION AND PROGRAM GROWTH BEYOND GRANT: Each subrecipient will build capacity on the ground via collaboration to sustain program growth by establishing and/or strengthening partnerships, improving and embedding practice, and by acquiring new local resources as sites generate the evidence to demonstrate success. The AECF coaching/TA team will support the development of long-term sustainability plans as part of its technical assistance to subrecipients to help them leverage local matching requirements to develop a long-term sustainability plan for continuing to scale up effective interventions after SIF funding has ended. Sustainability plans will be expected to outline the specific public and private funding streams that have been leveraged to support the sustainability of the interventions. To facilitate growth and scaling beyond the initial SIF sites, learning and results from the LEAP initiative will be amplified via AECF's ongoing investment in its Capacity Building portfolios which contains a broad, complementary set of grants that support the work of the foundation nationally: KIDS COUNT; National and State Policy Reform; Strategic

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Communications; National Partnerships; Talent and Leadership Development; Research, Evaluation and Learning, and social investments. These programs will work in concert to help the Foundation, its implementation partners, subrecipients, and practitioners around the country influence policy and practice reforms, continue to build evidence and measure performance outcomes, develop strong messages, distribute new and innovative ideas across key networks, strengthen leadership capacity at the Foundation and in the field, and stimulate new investments in targeted communities to improve economic and educational outcomes for youth in transition out of the foster care system.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

#### D. BUDGET AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

##### Di. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

1. REASONABLE AND SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES: AECF is applying for \$7.5 million from CNCS's Social Innovation Fund which will leverage \$7.5 million in private recipient level match funding over a 5 year period, resulting in a recipient level budget of \$15 million. 10% of the recipient level budget, or \$1.5 million will be used to support the two-step evaluation described in section Biii. At the time of application, AECF committed \$750,000 in year 1 matching funds, or 50% of the first year matching commitment plus an additional \$750,000 in years two through five. Over the five year grant period, subrecipients will receive a total of \$9 million in Federal and private grant funds. Of this \$9 million, \$6 million, or 80% of the requested \$7.5 million federal share, will come from CNCS funds. The remaining \$3 million in subrecipient funding comes from AECF and other external sources and comprises 40% of the \$7.5 million national match. A total of \$1.8 million per year will be subgranted to a maximum of 12 communities at an approximate range of between \$100,000 and \$200,000 per year depending on the number of subrecipients selected, the quality of subrecipients proposals and implementation plans, ability to access matching funds, and the number of interventions selected within each funded site. As per CNCS SIF guidelines, sites will be required to match this funding on a 1:1 basis. AECF expects to support subrecipients in raising their local matching funds.

The proposed budget provides for \$1.2 million per year so that AECF's national partners are able to access adequate staff capacity and resources required to successfully support program activities including well executed and robust processes and supports relating to: subrecipient selection, project management, evaluation, program growth, subrecipient support and oversight, technical assistance, peer learning and other tasks required to establish and evaluate the LEAP initiative. AECF will also set

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aside funds to ensure grant compliance by the foundation and its subrecipients and is considering the accounting firm of O'Connor Davies given their previous experience working with Edna McConnell Clark on their SIF. Specific uses of these funds and the supported partners and activities are set out in section below. The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the proposed program activities.

### 2. EXPLANATION OF YEAR 1 EXPENSES:

The total budget for Year 1 activities is \$3 million. An explanation of the expenses are set out below:

\* Subgrants: \$1.8 million in subgrants will be made to between 9 and 12 subrecipients as described in the narrative above. Of this total, \$1.2 million will come from CNCS funds and the remaining \$600,000 will come from AECF and external matching sources.

AECF will make \$1.2 million in subgrants to partners to perform the activities required to advance the initiative. Subgrant amounts and activity descriptions are set out below:

\* MDRC: \$311,271 total (\$150,000 from CNCS and \$161,271 from the national match). As AECF's evaluation advisor, MDRC will participate in subrecipient selection activities, design data collection strategies with subrecipients, complete a "Step 1" formative evaluation, and work with CNCS and AECF to design recommendations for the "Step 2" impact evaluation.

\* Jobs for the Future: \$321,369 total (all from the national match). JFF will participate in the subrecipient selection process and be the primary technical assistance provider and coach to sites implementing the Back on Track model. Costs provide for individual and group technical assistance as well as support for subrecipients use of their Data Dashboard platform.

\* Center for the Study of Social Policy: \$392,360 (\$150,000 from CNCS and \$242,360 from the national match). CSSP will support project management and coordination of national partner activities, establish the initiative's cross site learning community, and lead associated learning activities. CSSP will assign 5 staff people to responsibilities for the initiative whose total time on the project will total just over 1.32 FTE. This figure also includes fringe benefit, office and occupancy, costs for meeting space, background checks, and travel.

\* Jobs for America's Graduates: \$35,000 (all from the national match). JAG National will provide staff training on trauma-informed counseling in about 6 sites. Costs include travel, lodging and materials. (This is a revision as of 5/27/15 and was sourced through a slight reduction in CSSP's original staff costs as noted above.)

\* AECF will also retain \$140,000 (all from the national match) to secure the 3rd party consultant to perform compliance and monitoring related work for both AECF and the sites. AECF has explored the

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possibility of working with O'Connor Davies a top 100 accounting firm on the east coast. Costs account for two accountants performing one site visit and one desk audit for each subrecipient and costs for planning, administration and travel.

Please refer to the budget and budget narrative for additional detail.

3. PHILANTHROPICALLY UNDERSERVED AREAS: AECF is seeking to identify places through an open proposal process in which communities and systems are engaged in supporting youth in transition. The 40 states specifically listed in the beginning of the proposal have one or more of a range of programmatic initiatives already underway, from Jim Casey partnerships to JAG initiatives to juvenile justice reform efforts. AECF will seek places that meet the subaward criteria described in this proposal as well as places that together will offer a diversity of geographies and populations. Many rural, southern and southwestern places have significantly fewer philanthropic partnerships and resources and thus AECF will seek to pay particular attention to these geographies as the subaward pool is determined. AECF has a history of working in rural places for more than a decade through its Rural Family Economic Success work (RuFES) which has brought the Family Economic Success "earn it, keep it, grow it" set of tools to community partners supporting low income families in rural places.

Dii: CAPACITY TO RAISE MATCH:

1. PRIOR EXPERIENCE ACHIEVING NON-FEDERAL FUNDRAISING GOALS: AECF has very similar goals to those of the Corporation, including working with partners to identify solutions to barriers to success and scale them with co-investors for the benefit of millions of children, youth and families in the U.S. AECF staff hold themselves accountable to the work of the foundation using three areas of measurement -- 1) impact on the priority populations -- were they better off? -- 2) influence - did systems adopt the approach? -- and 3) leverage -- were AECF's resources matched by other public and private partners? In the area of leverage, one of the best examples at AECF of raising funds has been AECF's KIDS COUNT state data book and issue-oriented publications, as they have been at the core of the Foundation's identity as an organization that values data-based decision making and has a proven track record in influencing reform and debate on key issues affecting children and youth. KIDS COUNT publications have been a successful tool to raise the visibility of policy and practices critical to the success of vulnerable families and children on a national scale. In addition, the strength of KIDS COUNT is due in large part to the strategic work of AECF's 53 state-level KIDS COUNT

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grantees (all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Casey is the only foundation in the country with a national infrastructure of state-based organizations focused on the well-being of kids and families. We support these organizations through grants that enable them to disseminate our national brand publications so they can pursue specific opportunities in their state in the areas of child welfare, early childhood/grade-level reading, family economic success, juvenile justice and health. In 2014, our network achieved policy changes in 33 states, resulting in \$8.3 billion in new or defended public and private investments that will serve an estimated 20.6 million children and more than 11 million families.

2. DESCRIPTION OF MATCH RAISED OR COMMITTED: As per the letter submitted as part of the application process, AECF has committed \$750,000 to provide 50% of the Year 1 national match requirement. In addition, the Foundation will commit \$750,000 a year for the remaining four years of the grant term, for a total \$3.75 million match commitment over the 5-year program. Also in its letter to CNCS committing the aforementioned funds, AECF has certified that it has cash on hand sufficient to meet 50% of the first year matching requirement and that the Foundation has established a reserve of uncommitted funds sufficient to meet this obligation as required by the FY 15 Social Innovation Fund NOFA. Additional national matching dollars will be secured by foundation staff working with external partners. At the local level, AECF will also help subrecipients raise local matching requirements, as it often does now with local partners. For example, a coalition of 19 co-investors currently support the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative sites. Jim Casey, in partnership with AECF, has built a diverse group of local and national Jim Casey Initiative investors from its original few, including Atherton Family Foundation, Central Indiana Community Foundation, Delaware Center for Justice, The Duke Foundation, Ekerd Family Foundation, Hawai'i Community Foundation, Indianapolis Private Industry Council, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Lumina Foundation, McNerny Foundation, Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, Ruth Lily Fund, The Sherwood Foundation, Victoria S. and Bradley L. Geist Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation, and the Winston-Salem Foundation.

3. PLAN FOR SECURING TOTAL 1:1 MATCH REQUIREMENT: With its commitment to fund 50% of the matching requirement each year over the 5 year program term, AECF has already demonstrated significant progress towards the 1:1 match requirement. To build off of this investment,

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AECF staff will work to leverage its existing \$3,750,000 commitment to attract new philanthropic investment from its extensive network of funders. AECF's philanthropy engagement strategy is to position Casey and its portfolios for influence and leverage within the philanthropic sector by actively engaging with other foundations, philanthropic networks, organizations, partnerships and initiatives. AECF's staff in each program area are the best ambassadors the foundation has for our work and stand to benefit the most from interacting with others working in similar areas. That is why AECF prioritizes investments and activities that prepare and support staff to successfully find, engage and leverage relationships with other philanthropies. To continue build the skills of our staff to engage with their peers in philanthropy, AECF develops and deploys a variety of assessment and planning tools, searchable databases, customized research capabilities and peer learning sessions. AECF also supports staff participation in 37 affinity groups and regional funder associations that are the most relevant to their work. AECF's staff hold leadership roles in nearly all of these organizations, a good barometer of the foundation's ability to leverage their membership and influence their agenda for our benefit.

AECF has a long history of initiating and scaling major initiatives that required securing significant local and national co-investment to get launched. For example, AECF was one or just a few funders that help catalyze the National Fund for Workforce Solutions which has now grown to more than a dozen public and private national funders and a network of 500 local funders and \$200 million in matching funds. Most recently, AECF has been helpful with several other philanthropies and national intermediaries in helping scale the Working Families Success Network's bundles services approach. National funders such as the Bank of America, Citi, Kresge, Lumina and Kellogg foundations are now investing nationally and locally. Today, more than 115 organizations in more than 30 cities are integrating family economic success services because of Casey's early efforts and the continued efforts of our funding and implementation partners. Additionally, to support the Foundation's fundraising, AECF staff, including its President, Patrick McCarthy, will advocate for resources through existing, aligned platforms and funder collaborations, including the Executive Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color given the shared goals of philanthropy and business to invest an additional \$200 million in identifying and spreading evidence-based solutions that have the greatest potential to positively impact the future of boys and men of color.

4. ASSISTING SUBRECIPIENTS TO SECURE REQUIRED MATCH: AECF works hand in hand

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with its partners and grantees, wherever the foundation invests, particularly around securing co-investment from systems and philanthropy. An example of that is the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading which seeks to increase significantly the number of children in low-income families who read proficiently by the end of third grade and to close the gap in reading achievement that separates many of these students and children of color from their peers. AECF's goal is to ensure that, by 2020, a dozen or more states will increase by at least 100 percent the number of kids in low-income families who are reading proficiently at the end of third grade. To date, 152 communities in 39 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have become members of the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network. The number of campaign partners has grown from three in May 2010 to 50 sector-leading organizations today. And AECF has been helpful in mobilizing philanthropy as a major supporter of the work being done in communities, providing technical assistance, program support and new program development. Philanthropy has helped move the work forward as well. More than \$11.1 million has been invested in the campaign itself, and more than 100 local United Ways and 100 non-United Way local funders support the coalitions or grade-level-reading work in network communities.

### Clarification Summary

#### Programmatic Issues

1. Please provide an analysis of JAG and Back on Track's participant demographics. For example, are these two programs currently serving system involved youth but not achieving as strong outcomes for these high needs participants compared to the other disadvantaged youth being served? Are these programs currently reaching system involved youth?

Both the JAG and Back on Track (BoT) programs are currently reaching system involved youth, as noted in the information below. However both programs likely served more youth than known because many youth either did not chose or have the opportunity to identify system involvement and/or programs did not have access to administrative data. As a result, no data exists that compares outcomes of JAG and BoT for system-involved youth with outcomes from other disadvantaged youth. In general, research suggests that youth in transition appear to have lower education and employment outcomes compared to other youth ([www.jimcaseyyouth.org/about/aging-out](http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/about/aging-out)). With LEAP, we will identify and measure system-involved youth to better understand and grow interventions that work for these populations.

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JAG: In 2014-15, JAG served 46,880 youth nationally across its programs. Approximately half were males and 56% youth of color. Both of these percentages are higher in the alternative school and out-of-school programs. JAG's intake and assessment process collects information on demographics and barriers. One question related to system-involvement asks youth if they are 'living with a foster parent or in a group home.' Overall, few JAG youth responded affirmatively. Of the 46,880 youth served by JAG in 2014-15, 501 youth identified themselves as living in a foster or group home. In addition, on average, about 5% of the JAG students served annually have had a criminal offense other than a traffic violation, and approximately 25% have been suspended, expelled, or put on probation during high school.

BoT: BoT programs have anecdotal evidence of system-involved youth. The BOT currently underway in Philadelphia is estimated by JFF to be one of the largest system-involved youth populations within the broader disconnected/opportunity youth population, at about 30% system-involved youth. However, similar to JAG, BoT sites serve a diverse opportunity youth population, with few programs exclusively targeting youth transitioning out of foster care or juvenile justice systems.

2. Please provide an analysis of why you propose to target different populations of youth in transition and not target one specific population of youth in transition such as just serving youth transitioning out of foster care.

The LEAP initiative will focus on two populations of system-involved youth: youth in transition from foster care and youth that are involved with the juvenile justice system. Many of these youth will have experienced homelessness, but homeless youth will not be an independent subpopulation as part of the evaluation. Homeless youth will be eligible for LEAP related services. The two LEAP subpopulations were chosen for three reasons:

First, the populations cross over. Research described in the original proposal notes that up to 29% of youth in transition from foster care are likely 'cross-over' youth and have been connected at one time to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Second, the JAG and BoT interventions require significant numbers to support cohort -based programming, peer-to-peer community building, and appropriate evaluation design. Drawing from both populations will also ensure an adequate sample

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size of system involved youth that can be disaggregated for evaluation purposes. And three, there is growing recognition that juvenile justice and child welfare agencies must collaborate to address the complex problems and needs of the cross over population. The LEAP data collection and evaluation design will ensure detailed demographic data is collected so we can learn about the impacts of each intervention relative to both of our sub-populations. The two-step evaluation process will allow us to structure these subpopulation studies in step 1, after site selection.

3. Please provide a discussion of how the JAG and Back on Track models will be adapted to target the specific populations including youth aging out of foster care, court-involved youth, youth of color, and youth who have experienced homelessness.

The JAG and BoT models will be adapted to target the two sub populations discussed above by drawing on recent brain research and its implications for youth development. We will also draw on the lessons from systems, national partners and community-based work in providing coaching and stabilization supports for system-involved youth.

The primary adaptations to the JAG and BoT programs include building staff capacity in the areas of 1) trauma-informed counseling and 2) navigational coaching for youth to help them build self-advocacy-solving and resiliency skills and to access supports while in transition to independence. Staff will be trained in trauma-informed counseling relative to youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and JAG and JFF will identify the strongest frontline staff training programs and adapt them to support counselors in the sub grantee sites. To build on what we are learning in science and enable youth to stay on track when faced with setbacks or challenges, JAG and JFF will ensure curricula has a greater emphasis on building problem-solving, resiliency and self-advocacy skills and will provide local staff with training in navigation coaching. Several models exist for this type of coaching, including in some of the JAG sites, and JAG and JFF will be assisting sites to determine how to adapt and offer this type of support in their programs.

4. The SIF has a particular interest in expanding our reach in rural communities. Please describe any current work you are supporting in rural communities and how/if rural communities will be considered in your sub grantee selection process.

Rural sites are a focus of various AECF-supported initiatives that work with disconnected youth,

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including the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), the Family Economic Success Two Generation initiative and through support of Aspen's Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund. In addition, AECF is a supporter of the national Rural Family Economic Success network, which comprises more than 1,300 members from 48 states to improve family stability in rural America.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative includes jurisdictions in rural areas. Of the 18 states currently implementing the Jim Casey Initiative, 12 are near statewide coverage, including rural areas. Each of these Jim Casey sites has a site liaison who provides concentrated TA and brings expertise in effective outreach and engagement strategies in rural communities. In addition to the Jim Casey Initiative, the JAG network is mostly rural - 70% of its 970 sites are in rural locations. JAG has programs in Blackfeet and Crow Reservations in Montana as well as Wagner County in South Dakota. JAG has operations throughout the Delta Region in Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Missouri, as well as the Appalachia region in West Virginia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The LEAP initiative will leverage these relationships and networks to do targeted outreach to rural regions to ensure consideration of rural sites during the sub grantee selection process.

5. You state various initiatives in which you and your partners have scaled and provided TA. Please provide additional details regarding how you scaled these initiatives, outlining specific elements of the process and baselines when applicable. Please describe examples of the TA you provided in these efforts.

AECF and its partners believe in identifying strategies, building evidence of success and then supporting the replication and scaling of these approaches for better population outcomes. JDAI is one example of a scaling effort managed by AECF with local and national partners.

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI): In a 2009 report on the first two decades of the JDAI (entitled 'Two Decades of JDAI: From Demonstration Project to National Standard'), the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that JDAI was 'on track to become the standard of practice for how local justice systems nationwide handle the critical front end of the juvenile court process.' JDAI's demonstration phase started in 1992 and involved five pilot sites, each of which received extensive financial and technical support to implement a multifaceted reform strategy. Two of the original sites

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- Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon, and Cook County (Chicago), Illinois - recorded significant successes, as did two of the initiative's first replication sites, Santa Cruz County, California, and Bernalillo County, New Mexico. To support scaling, AECF built a training and technical support infrastructure including expert consultants, specialized training, site visits, publications and conferences to lift up what worked and assist other jurisdictions and the next generation of leaders in the field in planning and implementing detention reforms. As JDAI grew, AECF shifted its focus from single site replication to working primarily with state cohorts of multiple sites wishing to initiate JDAI simultaneously. At the end of 2013, JDAI was active in more than 250 localities in 39 states plus the District of Columbia. Those counties are home to 9.8 million youth between the ages of 10 and 17, meaning that an estimated 29 percent of the total U.S. youth population resides in communities where JDAI is being implemented. One key factor in the recent growth of JDAI has been a partnership with the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which provided \$500,000 per year for three years to support TA and training in seven new JDAI states.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: The Jim Casey Initiative began in 10 states in 2001 and is now in 18 states, with nearly two-thirds implementing statewide. The initiative provides strategy-specific TA including training and on-going technical support on youth engagement, public policy, data collection and evaluation and, financial education, including its Opportunity Passport™. TA is provided on sustainability planning, fiscal analysis, and content specific knowledge and skill building. Jim Casey TA takes many forms: an assigned, seasoned Jim Casey Initiative site liaison who has a deep knowledge of the state and has developed strategic relationships with key stakeholders to advance the work; data collection tools and an evaluation liaison; peer to peer consultations; curriculum and train the trainer materials; and a host of resources including tools, trainings, annual conference, topic specific convenings, and written products.

CSSP: CSSP will play the role of project manager to both coordinate TA and the Learning Community as AECF and the other national partners align with CSSP's approach to providing TA for replication and scaling. An example of CSSP's TA work includes their current efforts to advance the federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative. CSSP assesses sites' TA needs and priorities; develops a customized TA plan with local leaders in each site; organizes and manages TA delivery for sites; and organizes and creates resources for the 'learning community' of sites by creating learning guides, conducting webinars and tools, and organizing annual convenings inclusive of the full network of implementation

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grantees. CSSP focuses on providing results-based TA and leadership development to the federally-funded Promise Neighborhoods sites as well as to the broader network of cities that are using a cradle-to-college-to-career approach.

6. Your applicant states that it will use the current program lead staff for the JFF/OYIF project to oversee technical assistance. Please provide a clear justification for the staff person's capacity to manage participation in both grants and how you will ensure that funds for both SIF projects will not be comingled.

JFF's staffing plan for LEAP fully takes into account the time commitment of Lili Allen, JFF's Associate Vice President for Reconnection Designs and Strategies, to direct the JFF/Aspen OYIF SIF project, and it ensures that she will have the capacity and time to manage JFF's participation in both grants. On the JFF/OYIF project, she has principal responsibility for, and significant time devoted to, TA and capacity-building services to sub grantee sites, and performance management. In this role, she manages a team that also includes site coaches, an evaluation expert and liaison, and a recently hired project manager with expertise in federal grants management and contracts. For the LEAP SIF project, in contrast to the JFF/OYIF project, Ms. Allen's role and time commitment will be more limited. She will provide senior level oversight for JFF's TA effort but only up to 20% of her time will be allocated to this project. For the LEAP SIF project, she will have the additional benefit of supervising a senior-level staff person with extensive experience in BoT programming to lead the day-to-day management and delivery of JFF's TA.

To ensure that funding streams will not be comingled, JFF will use the financial and operational systems it has developed over the past 30 years to ensure accountability to its public and private funders. JFF has the mechanisms, software and internal controls in place to track activities that are directly attributed to each specific grant. JFF's general ledger tracks each grant with a unique chart of accounts code, enabling JFF personnel to track time and expenditures and authorize payments for each grant. In addition, as an internal policy, JFF staff members provide a biweekly certification of their time and activities for each federal grant.

7. You state that you will hire a third party experienced with federal funds to review your policies and procedures, please provide additional detail on how you will implement systems and practices

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necessary to meet stringent federal requirements, such as timesheets and criminal background checks. How will you ensure that the third party is properly trained regarding SIF requirements and ensure they are effectively monitoring the program?

AECF has seven Certified Public Accountants (CPA) on staff. Two of these CPAs have direct experience with federal grant compliance and accounting and will act as the leads for the LEAP SIF grant compliance and sub-recipient monitoring. AECF will also contract with an accounting firm, O'Connor Davies LLP, who has direct experience with federal grant compliance and sub-recipient monitoring specifically for the SIF program. This accounting firm currently acts as the third-party compliance component for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, a SIF grantee, and has helped them tremendously in providing assistance directly to the Foundation as well as performing TA and reviews of all sub-recipient processes to ensure grant compliance. O'Connor Davies will train and assist LEAP sub-recipients and review timesheet and criminal background check systems and practices to ensure compliance.

Grantee monitoring procedures.

8. Regarding sustainability, please clarify what you mean by 'building a sub grantee's capacity to advocate for administrative, regulatory, and legislative changes.' In addition, describe your understanding of advocacy and how you will ensure that advocating does not violate federal prohibitions around lobbying?

Through LEAP and its rigorous evaluation, sub grantees will generate and have access to information, including data, results and evidence that can be shared to inform practice and educate local decision makers about the most effective strategies to improve outcomes for system involved youth. As a private foundation, AECF is strictly prohibited from participating and/or funding any attempts to influence legislation or lobby. Our in-house compliance team reviews all our grants (over 1,300 a year) to ensure that we are not in violation of any federal lobbying laws as it pertains to private foundations. Our compliance team will hold trainings prior to any SIF-related work being performed by both AECF staff and sub-recipients to ensure their understanding of these federal rules. All sub recipient agreements will include language certifying that no funds will be used for lobbying purposes, regardless of source. Compliance with all federal regulations will be reviewed as part of AECF's regular

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sub recipient monitoring.

9. Please describe how the TA JFF will provide relates to existing coaching through its existing National Fund for Workforce Solutions and Aspen/Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund SIF projects?

JFF's work on the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) and the JFF/Aspen OYIF SIF is staffed by two different project teams. While the OYIF SIF effort has drawn lessons from the coaching provided by the National Fund, as well as from other SIF projects, the programmatic approach and theory of change for the OYIF SIF is distinct from the NFWS. There is indeed alignment between the coaching approach for the OYIF SIF and what is proposed under LEAP, and we see this as a particular strength of this project. JFF has designed a coaching infrastructure for the OYIF SIF that will serve as a template for the LEAP coaching strategy. Specifically, we expect to provide .25 FTE of coaching time per site; four coach visits per year; monthly conference calls; and on-demand TA. Importantly, the topics addressed by the coaches will complement each other. While both initiatives will have, at its core, the BoT interventions, the population focus of the LEAP project will require specific coaching expertise on system-involved youth as noted previously in Q3. Lessons learned from the three OYIF SIF sites that have some focus on system-involved youth - San Francisco, Philadelphia and Santa Clara County - will inform the work of LEAP, while the lessons from LEAP will inform and strengthen BoT programming for system-involved youth in the OYIF SIF. We will ensure the learning communities of these initiatives will share information. We are confident that JFF will deliver coaching for LEAP that will meet the needs of the sub grantees while maintaining strong coaching support for OYIF SIF sites, as well.

10. Please describe how you have helped grantees raise local funds in the past.

At AECF, we intentionally cultivate relationships with other philanthropies and philanthropic networks. We have active working relationships with more than 150 local, regional and national philanthropies including private, community and corporate foundations, giving programs and individual donors. We facilitate access to these partners and coach our grantees on leveraging these relationships. This same approach is pursued by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a major grantee of AECF since its inception. Following a demonstration period to test the theory of change with ten states that included fully funding them, the Jim Casey Initiative shifted to a co-

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investment strategy defined as a partnership in a geographic area to implement the Jim Casey approach with sufficient local public and private resources where the initiative's contribution is TA, resource development, and education. While some of the original 'demonstration sites' receive funding directly from the foundation, most are supported by local and regional funders. There are currently nearly 50 funder partners supporting the site-based work in 18 states. Jim Casey and AECF have worked together to recruit national, regional and local foundation support to the sites. In addition to AECF and Jim Casey, both JFF and JAG often work with national funders to develop local relationships to help sites secure funding for growth. In 2014, JAG secured a \$3.55 million grant from USA Funds. All of these funds are being distributed to the states of Delaware and Missouri and the cities of Las Vegas and Detroit to grow their JAG programs.

### Evaluation Issues

11. Your proposal indicates that some of the selected sites may be implementing the adapted JAG model, and that JAG would be a key local partner to support program implementation. The budget, however, does not allocate any funding to JAG, but does allocate \$321,369 to JFF as a Back on Track technical assistance partner. Why is this the case?

TA for JAG will be supported primarily with resources at the local level. For sites selected to implement the JAG intervention, JAG Affiliates will be a local operating partner on the ground. Like JFF, which is not operating programs directly in sites but providing governance and expertise support to a network of implementers, JAG Affiliates run the operations of its programs in local sites with JAG National consultation and TA. Local JAG sites pay modest affiliation fees to the JAG national office for TA (minimum of \$12,500 a year per site). Upon further reflection, to better support assistance to JAG sites, we have adjusted the national budget to add \$35,000 to JAG National (and reduced the CSSP budget by the same amount) so that JAG can assist with staff training across the JAG sites in the areas of trauma-informed counseling.

12. Please discuss any potential risks involved in meeting the SIF evaluation requirements or strategies to mitigate those risks effectively.

We believe the biggest risk for the evaluation will be obtaining the necessary sample for a statistically

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valid study and that is why we have chosen to implement a two-step evaluation. The populations we have targeted can be harder to identify and engage as many youth involved in foster care and other systems have had unsuccessful experiences with adults, been traumatized, and lost trust in reaching out for help. The strategies that we propose to use to mitigate this risk is to: 1) conduct extensive outreach and recruitment of youth through our local and national partners that have strong, trusted relationships and collaborative efforts on the ground - Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, JAG, JFF's local partnerships and AECF's sites; 2) select at 10-12 sites and consider in the selection process the ability to match sites with similar populations and other characteristics into clusters for pooling impacts; and 3) keep the youth eligibility criteria broad enough to have large enough cohorts in sites (as discussed in Q2 above). The formative implementation information from Step 1 of the evaluation and will enable MDRC to develop the most appropriate design to measure impacts in Step 2.

A second risk is that an RCT will not be feasible, in which case a strong quasi-experimental design will be required. At this point, it is not possible to determine which QED would be most appropriate, but MDRC will commit time from a senior methodologist to recommend the best QED if that approach is recommended after Step 1 (this is discussed further in Q15 below).

Additional risks include ensuring that sites are prepared to participate in the impact evaluation and have timely access to quality administrative data. To ensure that sites are ready to contribute to the impact evaluation, the LEAP partnership has developed an aggressive project timeline, with outreach over the summer and time allocated for careful site selection and the delivery of TA with the evaluators to ensure that sites are well prepared to participate in Step 2 of the evaluation. Both MDRC and AECF have significant experience with administrative data and, as part of the site selection process, will ensure that local systems have adequate capacity to support evaluation related activities.

13. Please provide an estimated timeline for the intervention and the impact study.

1. Begin grant and release RFP - Week of September 1, 2015 (outreach to be done prior to grant release)
2. Bidder's conference - Week of September 8, 2015
3. Proposals Due - Week of October 1, 2015
4. Proposal review and site visits - November and December, 2015

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5. Final selection and notification of Awards - December 15, 2015
6. Sub grantee grant period begins - January 1, 2016
7. Evaluation Step 1 begins - January 1 - September 31, 2016 - Sites will begin and implement pilot operations for several months and MDRC will provide TA, observe the programs in action using both data and interviews of youth and staff in site visits. MDRC will then develop a recommended plan for Step 2 of the evaluation to produce the appropriate impact evaluation. AECF and its partners will use this plan to conduct a competitive evaluator selection process among a pre-qualified list of evaluators for Step 2.
8. Evaluator proposals and selection - September 31 - November 30, 2016 - Evaluator selected and work begins
9. Evaluation Step 2 begins - December 1, 2016 - August 31, 2018 - The selected evaluator, CSSP and the partners will work with the sites to set up protocols and implement the impact evaluation.
10. Step 2 preliminary results - Late summer/Fall, 2018 - Preliminary results report prepared by the evaluator that focused on the first 6-9 months of enrollees and their results over the following 6-9 months. Early learnings imbedded into TA and shared with networks.
11. Evaluation Step 2 final results completed - September 1, 2018 - August 31, 2020 -Site implementation, TA and learning continues with another 12-18 months of follow-up for the full sample. Final evaluation completed and shared with learning community and national networks.
  
14. Based on current SIF evaluation budget, your proposed budget seems low for the impact evaluation at 10% of program budget to the evaluation, which comes out to about \$300K per year over the course of the grant. Please review your budget and either provide justification for your proposal or revise it accordingly in eGrants.

The evaluation will be a two-step process and staff understand that a total budget of 10% may be tight, since the formative Step 1 process may not reduce the needed resources for the Step 2 impact evaluation. Based on MDRC's experience with major evaluations, we believe the proposed budget for MDRC in year 1 is adequate for Step 1. For years 2-5, about \$300,000 a year may be too tight and we could imagine the cost being higher and in the range of \$1.2-1.5 million over 4 years. If the costs of the evaluation is higher than expected, AECF is prepared to work with the national partners to shift resources from other areas of the budget and/or identify additional sources to ensure the evaluation is fully resourced. In addition, it is assumed that in year 1, as well as out years, some of the TA provided

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by CSSP will incorporate topics supportive of the evaluation such as data collection and measurement.

15. The SIF program requires an impact study that would at least be able to target a moderate level of evidence. Your application notes that following the implementation study it may not be feasible to conduct an RCT and a non-experimental study may be more feasible. Please clarify this statement and your understanding of SIF evaluation requirements.

Right now, both the JAG and BoT models have preliminary levels of evidence. Each model has been evaluated, but not for the specific system-involved population targeted in the proposed project. We will raise each model's evidence level to at least moderate, which we understand is defined by SIF as 'evidence the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity) or vice versa - studies that only support moderate causal conclusions but have broad general applicability.' MDRC will use Step 1 of the evaluation to analyze the selected programs and population information and identify the best design for the Step 2 impact evaluation, including an RCT or, if not feasible, a quasi-experimental design. The main question for the team is to understand, relative to the RCT feasibility, whether the programs can recruit enough youth to both fill their program slots and create a control group. If a QED is the recommended approach by MDRC, a rigorous design would be developed identifying good comparison groups and data (in this case the National Youth in Transition Database could be a key resource). The design would also provide significant detail on how important baseline information on participants (and subpopulations) would be obtained, and how services would be documented for both the participants and comparison groups and how the design would ensure that performance measures would align. MDRC is confident that the level of evidence will be able to be raised to at least a moderate level in the LEAP Step 2 impact evaluation.

Budget Issues -- Please answer the following questions in your email or make the changes requested below directly in the application budget and budget narrative in eGrants.

16. In the clarifications narrative, please confirm that you do not plan to charge personnel costs for the grant. If so, what is your plan for staff that will be managing the grant? AECF staff managing the grant will not charge personnel costs to the grant as these costs will be absorbed by AECF directly.

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17. In the budget narrative, Section F. Contractual & Consultant Services, please provide the daily or hourly rate for the TA contract. The hourly rate for the principals at O'Connor Davies proposed for the LEAP initiative range from \$165-300.

AECF confirms that each contracted partner identified in the budget was or will be procured in accordance with the federal procurement requirements outlined in the NOFA.

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A