

Fostering Success Michigan Developmental Evaluation 2012 - 2014

Elizabeth Brass, LLMSW
February 2015



W Center for Fostering Success
An initiative of WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Contents

Contents	1
About Fostering Success Michigan	2
Developmental Evaluation	4
What We Learned.....	6
Outcome 1 (Short Term)	6
Outcome 2 (Intermediate)	7
Outcome 3 (Long Term).....	8
Outcome 4 (Short Term)	9
Outcome 5 (Short term).....	10
Outcome 6 (Intermediate).....	11
Discussion	12
Conclusion	15
References	15
Endnotes.....	15
Appendix A: Logic Model.....	16
Appendix B: FSM HEC	17



Special thanks to the Kresge Foundation, the Havirmill Foundation, and to Western Michigan University for their generous support of Fostering Success Michigan.

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

The Kresge Foundation is a \$3 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and investing in arts and culture, education, environment, health, human services, and community development efforts in Detroit.

How does FSM utilize Collective Impact to increase awareness, access and success in higher education for young people from foster care?

Backbone Organization

As a backbone organization, FSM supports Michigan's expert organizations, bringing together the combined knowledge, skills, and resources from partners across the State of Michigan.

Common Agenda

FSM has adopted the Lumina Big Goal of increasing the number of students from foster care who obtain high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025. By aligning with the Lumina Big Goal, Fostering Success Michigan is joining the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) and other stakeholders in education toward their efforts to achieve this common agenda.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Each partner in the FSM network plays a vital role in ensuring that youth who have experienced foster care are supported in their education to career trajectory. Partners agree to work collaboratively and share best practices.

Shared Measurement

A shared measurement strategy is being established and implemented through the collaborative efforts of the Fostering Success Michigan Higher Education Consortium (FSM HEC) – which is composed of on-campus support programs at Michigan colleges and universities.

Continuous Communication

To ensure that the diverse group of partners maintains an awareness of successes, challenges, priority issues and shared solutions, FSM supports continuous communication through the FSM Google Group listserv, FSM Regional Network Meetings and the FSM Annual Summit. To be effective, communication must be shared at state, regional and local levels. Email campaigns are also dispersed to the statewide network.

About Fostering Success Michigan

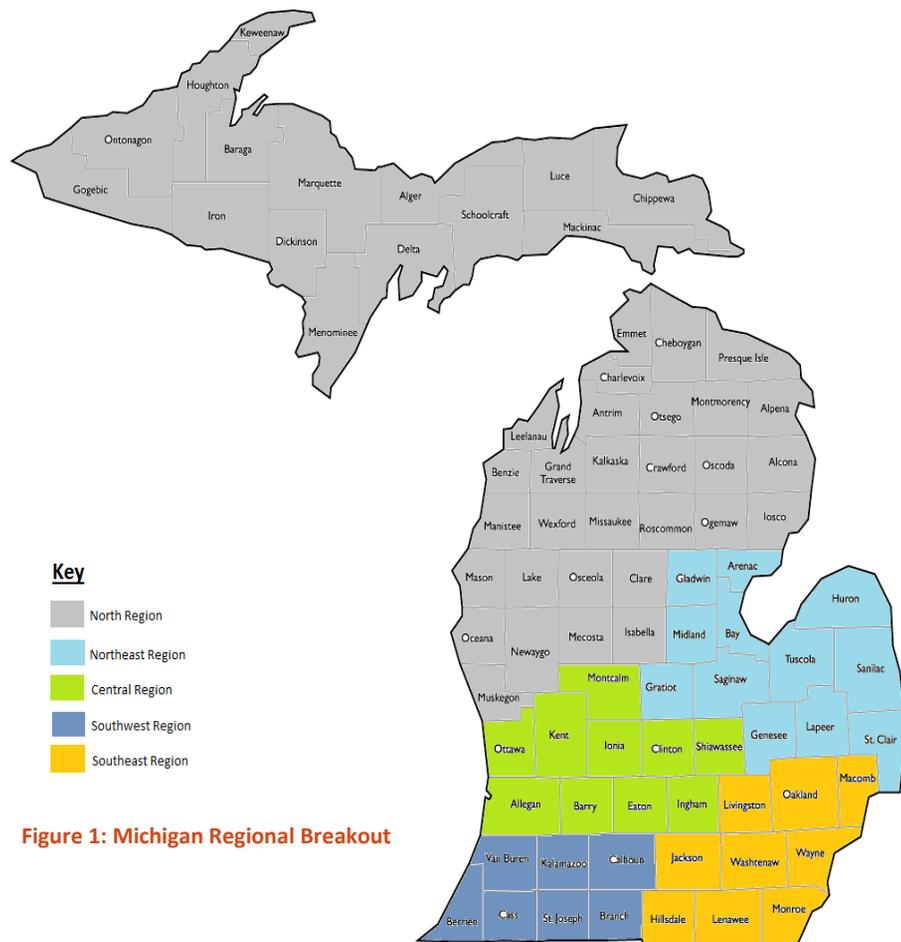
Fostering Success Michigan (FSM) is an initiative of the Center for Fostering Success at Western Michigan University. Established in 2012, the goal of FSM is to increase awareness, access and success in higher education and post-college careers for Michigan youth and alumni of foster care aged 12 to 25 years old. To create large scale social change for Michigan youth who have experienced foster care, FSM has utilized the Collective Impact Framework (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The Collective Impact Framework employs five distinct conditions for social change: Backbone Organization, Common Agenda, Mutually Reinforcing Activities, Shared Measurement, and Continuous Communication (Kania & Kramer, 2011). To understand how FSM carries out each condition, please read the sidebar on the left. As a Backbone Organization, FSM performs activities through the strategies of resourcing, supporting, and networking and in doing so; progress is made toward the overall goal of FSM. This report encompasses the developmental evaluation of the FSM initiative from 2012-2014.



Fostering Success Michigan's Statewide Network

Regional Breakout

FSM is building a statewide network by strengthening localized community efforts toward increasing access and success for youth who have experienced foster care. Five regions covering the state of Michigan are targeted by FSM: Southwest, North, Central, Southeast, and Northeast (see Figure 1). These regions are used for Regional Network Meetings, a main activity of FSM that occur in the fall of every year. Regional Network Meetings offer an opportunity for professionals to come together, to give



updates on programs, collaborate with other professionals in their area, hear directly from youth in their region, share resources, and discuss current barriers and strengths that are unique to their community.

Network Partners

FSM has been actively building an education to career pipeline by networking professionals and organizations that touch the lives of young people from foster care. Professionals and organizations from a variety of sectors across the state of Michigan become network partners by participating in core FSM activities, thereby joining FSM in its effort to achieve the goal of increasing awareness, access and success. Below is a list of key network partner types:

- Youth and Alumni of Foster Care
- Caregivers and Mentors
- Community Organizations and Other Service Providers
- Middle and High School Educators and Staff
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Local College Access Networks (LCAN)
- Department of Education
- Courts, Law Enforcement and Juvenile Justice System
- Career and Work Force Services
- Housing
- Postsecondary Education Institutions Staff and Campus Champions

As a Backbone Organization that serves as a hub for the five regions and many network partner types, FSM uses the three main strategies of resourcing, supporting, and networking.

Strategies of Resourcing, Supporting, and Networking

Figure 2 displays definitions for the three strategies of resourcing, supporting, and networking. Formal definitions were developed during the evaluation to clarify the intention of the strategies beyond the activities they encompassed. The resourcing strategy includes activities such as the FSM website, educational webinars, and the “Getting to Know...” series resource guides (all titles referenced below). The supporting strategy includes the FSM Higher Education Consortium (FSM HEC), offering technical assistance to network partners and student support. Lastly, the networking strategy is actualized through the Annual Statewide Summit, Regional Network Meetings and web-based communications. FSM has been using these strategies to build the knowledge, skill, and social capital of its network.

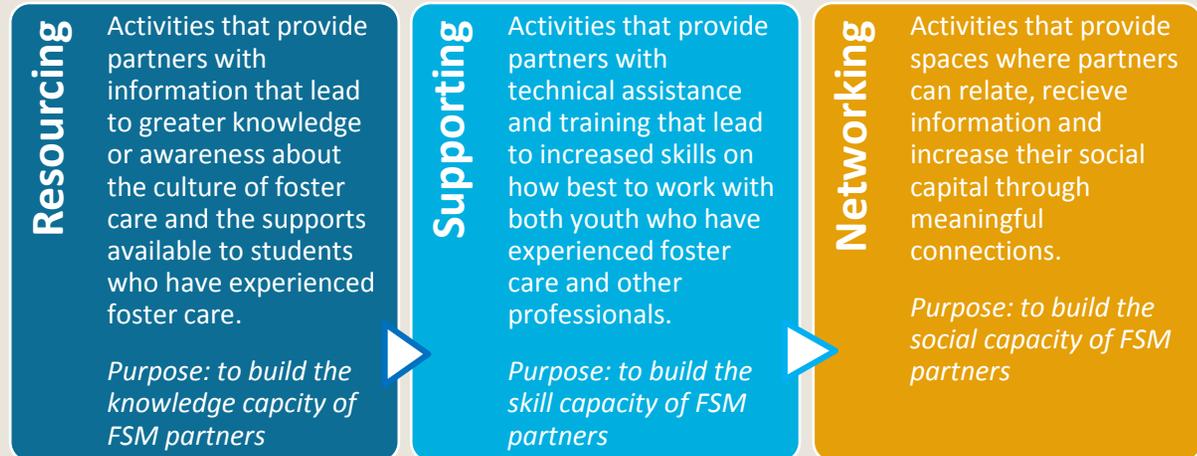


Figure 2: Defining Resourcing, Supporting, and Networking

Fostering Success Michigan’s “Getting to Know...” resource guide series includes:

Getting to know Financial Aid; Getting to Know Students from Foster Care; Getting to know Higher Education Resources; Getting to Know the Affordable Care Act; and Transition checklist

Access them here: <http://fosteringuccessmichigan.com/library/fsm-guides>

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental evaluation is used to examine the early strategies of FSM in view of its long term goal from January 2012 to December 2014. Developmental evaluation is well suited to social innovation where long term targeted outcomes are not yet known or are vaguely estimated (Calgary United Way, 2013). Projects using the Collective Impact framework, such as FSM, typically use developmental evaluation in their early years as it guides planning efforts toward achieving optimal outcomes (Preskill, Parkhurst & Splansky, 2014). The central questions for developmental evaluation are:

- What overall progress is being made towards outcomes?
- And, what needs to happen next?

Additionally, how has FSM evolved, adapted, and responded to both internal and external conditions? FSM has two goals and six outcomes (these outcomes were derived from the original Kresge proposal) to guide its efforts, which are featured in the initiative’s logic model see [Appendix A](#)) and in Figure 3. During the first three years, FSM has focused its main efforts on the short term outcomes (see [Figure 4](#), as it relates to the Collective Impact timeline).

Figure 3: Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1: Build a higher education consortium that is focused on promoting efforts to improve college access and achievement, as well as successful transition from college graduation to career, for youth 12 years and older, living in Michigan’s foster care system.

Outcome 1 (Short Term): Increased number of effective on-campus support programs for students emancipating from foster care.

Outcome 2 (Intermediate): Increased enrollment in Michigan higher education institutions.

Outcome 3 (Long Term): Improved college graduation rates, leading to a successful career transition.

Goal 2: Develop technology and internet resources that will (a) provide access and information for foster youth who may have interest in attending college and (b) serve as a central repository and “go-to” resource for practical programming and student support solutions for higher education, agency and government/community officials who are engaged with foster youth populations.

Outcome 4 (Short Term): Increased understanding of best practices.*

Outcome 5 (Short Term): Increased number of organizations enhanced to support youth from foster care.*

Outcome 6 (Intermediate): Improved college preparation among youth in foster care.

Methods

Administrative data from Fostering Success Michigan and key partners were used to monitor the progress of the six outcomes* and subsequent success indicators. Objective data (e.g., attendance at meetings, types of partners, products and outputs, website analytics) and subjective data (e.g., partner feedback at events) gathered in FSM's start-up phase (i.e., 2012 – 2014) were a main source of data for this evaluation. As a supplement, a stakeholder survey was administered in 2014 for this evaluation via telephone interviews, and inputted into an online survey database.

Stakeholder Survey

A random selection of network partners was contacted via email in July 2014 notifying and inviting partners to participate in the survey. However, because of a high number of non-responses a purposive method of partner selection was employed. In the second step of sampling, partners were purposively chosen based on their high level of involvement in FSM activities. In total, 51 network partners were reached and 44 agreed to take the survey (15 FSM Higher Education Consortium (FSM HEC) Members, 2 youth, 5 LCAN coordinators, 4 MYOI coordinators, 8 DHS caseworkers, 3 DHS education planners, 3 higher education faculty/staff, 1 caregiver, 1 government official, 2 community organizations, and 1 out of state partner). Additionally, participants represented all of the regions: North = 10, Northeast = 4, Central = 7, Southeast = 11, Southwest = 11, and out of state = 1. The survey results represent a small portion of the overall FSM network. Because of the low response rate (2.5%), generalization of results is cautioned.

Involvement with FSM

The majority of survey participants (70%) heard about FSM through either their employment or another FSM network partner, and (73%) have been involved with FSM for either 1-2 years or 2 or more years. 77% of the participants in this survey were aware of FSM's goal of increasing the number of students from foster care who obtain high quality degrees and credentials by year 2025. These participants also indicated which activities, resources, or services they have utilized, where: the FSM website (91%), presentations by the director of FSM or other staff (80%), and the annual statewide summit (66%) were the most popular resources. Of those who have used the FSM website, 25% use it every few months, 36% use it monthly, and 28% use it weekly. The highest accessed pages of the website as indicated by participants were the: resource library (85%), the events (55%), and the stories section (53%).

*The language of Outcome 4 and 5 have been changed from the original Kresge proposal. The language presented in this report (in the text, and logic model) reflect the updated language of these outcomes. For original language, see [endnotes](#).

Figure 4: Progress toward Outcomes

Preskill, Parkhurst, and Splansky (2014) break down the timeline of a collective impact initiative into early, middle, and late years (specific years vary between initiatives and are not specific). Below, corresponding outcomes are associated with the years that an initiative should focus their efforts towards. The early years are dedicated to short term outcomes, intermediate outcomes are central to the middle years, where there is some overlap of short term and long term outcomes. And late years are filled with work on the long term outcomes. FSM has been attentive to the short term outcomes during its early years.



Adapted from: Preskill, Parkhurst, and Splansky (2014).
Figure 1: A Framework for Performance Measurement and Evaluation of Collective Impact Efforts. *Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact: Part 1*.



What We Learned about Fostering Success Michigan's Progress toward Outcomes

Goal 1: Build a higher education consortium that is focused on promoting efforts to improve college access and achievement, as well as successful transition from college graduation to career, for youth 12 years and older, living in Michigan's foster care system.

Outcome 1 (Short Term)

Increased number of effective on-campus support programs for students emancipating from foster care.

Success Indicator: Number of on-campus support programs as of October 2014 as compared with the number of on-campus support programs identified in January 2012, the start of the project.

Finding: Five programs were identified in 2012, and as of October 2014, there were twelve on-campus support programs.

Increased Number of On-Campus Support Programs

Five campus support efforts were established in Michigan prior to the start of FSM in 2012. Shortly after FSM was launched, the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) offered bid-grants to establish life skills coach positions (these positions are central to the support offered by on-campus support programs). FSM leveraged this opportunity by identifying DHS as a key partner and focused efforts on the seven grantees (two existing and five new programs, see [Appendix B](#)), which increased the total number of on-campus support programs to ten. The number of on-campus support programs expanded again, after FSM made a concerted effort to reach out to community colleges that were showing signs of readiness for program development. This process yielded two additional programs which launched early in 2014, making a total of twelve on-campus support programs for Michigan students emancipating from foster care (see [Appendix B](#)).

Increased Effectiveness of On-Campus Support Programs

As the backbone organization, FSM works with on-campus support programs through the FSM Higher Education Consortium (FSM HEC). The sidebar on the right highlights ways FSM provides backbone support to FSM HEC. To date, most of these programs are in their early years of growth and have each made significant strides in program development such as organizing mentoring programs and increasing the number of individuals who are campus and community champions for the effort. Some champions from the community include directors of residential facilities, Local College Access Networks (LCANs), or education staff from Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs). The Casey Family Programs *Supporting Success Guide* (2010) serves as a blueprint for the development of these programs; however, each campus has had unique challenges to successfully implementing their program. To help new and existing programs diminish barriers, FSM has been working on a "New Campus Support Outreach Guide," scheduled to be released in 2015. FSM has also facilitated an initial shared measurement effort with the on-campus support programs in FSM HEC and has gathered program level data looking at the number of students served and the number of students who have graduated in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. These data are displayed and discussed further in outcomes 2 and 3.

Support for On-Campus Support Programs Includes:

Professional development opportunities

Peer based support through quarterly FSM HEC meetings

Campus visits from the director of FSM once a year to meet with coach and key campus champions

Ongoing technical assistance provided by the director of FSM via phone or email

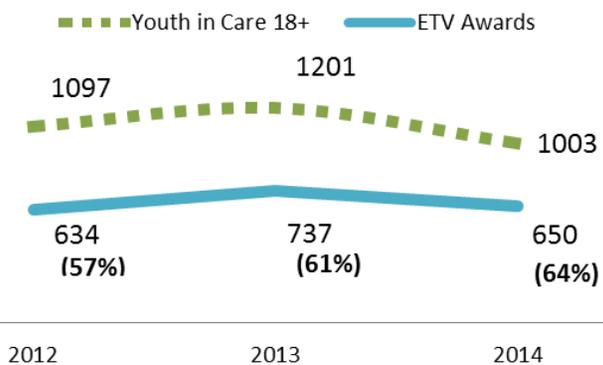
Connecting programs to outreach opportunities such as college access events across the state

Based on the stakeholder survey, FSM HEC partners believe that FSM supports them in their work to help youth who have experienced foster care succeed in their educational goals and that their work performance supporting youth has been enhanced as a result of FSM activities.

Michigan Education and Training Voucher (ETV)

Through federal legislation, ETV vouchers are provided to eligible youth to help fund their post-secondary educational and training endeavors. Eligibility criteria are: youth who were in foster care after their 14th birthday, adopted on or after their 16th birthday, who have their high school diploma or equivalent, attending a college or vocational program, and are younger than 21, are eligible. Funds from this source are available to youth until their 23rd birthday as long as all eligibility requirements continue to be met (LSSM, 2014).

Figure 5: Youth in MI Foster Care 18+ and Awarded ETV 2012-2014



Outcome 2 (Intermediate)

Increased enrollment in Michigan higher-education institutions

Success Indicator: Number of youth in or aging out of foster care who are enrolled in higher education institutions for the fall of 2014 semester as compared with the number of youth in or aging out of foster care are enrolled in higher education institutions for fall of 2012 semester.

Finding: Shared data measurement of students served in programs shows an increase from 213 in the 2012-2013 to 238 in the 2013-2014 academic years.

Institution vs. Program Level Enrollment

As an intermediate outcome, Fostering Success Michigan has been moving toward building the foundation of this outcome through supporting the shared data measurement effort among the on-campus support programs in FSM HEC. Each program tracks the number of students supported during the academic year, and FSM is working with all programs to track this information using common counting definitions. Nevertheless, the on-campus support programs in FSM HEC only represent a portion of all higher education institutions in Michigan. To date, a total of 213 students were supported in Michigan on-campus support programs in the 2012-2013 academic year and 238 in 2013-2014. The data show the growth of the number of students supported in on-campus support programs. However, these account for 9 out of all 12 of the on-campus support programs that make up HEC. See [Appendix B](#) for a list of on-campus support programs that provided data.

Michigan Education and Training Voucher (ETV) data (independent from FSM) also helps capture enrollment of youth in foster care in higher education institutions in Michigan (learn more about ETV in the left sidebar) and may be the longest standing data source for enrollment. Figure 5 shows the number of youth in Michigan foster care ages 18 and older (DHS, 2012-2014) and the number of ETV awards for 2012, 2013, and 2014 (LSSM, 2014). The percentage of ETV awards in relation to the number of youth in foster care has increased from 57% to 64%. This means that a higher percentage youth in foster care are (1) enrolled in some form of higher education or training and (2) are utilizing this financial resource. These numbers may be excluding those youth who are enrolled that are not receiving ETV and/or those who are older than 21 that are enrolled. Interestingly, of the top ten schools where students receive ETV awards, representation of on-campus support programs in FSM HEC have increased from 2 in 2010, to 5 in 2014 of the top ten schools (LSSM, 2014). And, total ETV awards for all 12 programs in FSM HEC have increased from 129 in 2010 to 274 in 2014 (LSSM, 2014). This means that more students who receive ETV awards are increasingly attending institutions where there is an established on-campus support program.

How does FSM Celebrate Student Success?

Fostering Success Michigan believes in sharing and highlighting student success in all forms – not just academic. FSM has celebrated student success by:

- Bringing Student Leaders from on-campus support programs to Washington D.C. on the 2013 Center for Fostering Success Leadership Retreat.
- Seeking to include students in presentations in local communities and nationwide.
- Highlighting student success in email newsletters and in a separate email campaign called the “FSM Student Spotlight.”
- Piloting the FSM Student Ambassador position (a position sought and created by the student) that gives first-hand experience of navigating higher education with a foster care background through monthly blog posts on the FSM website and FSM representation at outreach events across the state.
- Increasing the use of person first language through leading the “Words Matter – Student Voices from the FSM Network” project (watch it here: <http://goo.gl/Upl8ZL>).

FSM believes celebrating academic and non-academic success infuses a collective response from many individuals in the network. For students in college, it increases their sense of belonging in the network and acts as a motivator for professionals and youth alike. The above-mentioned activities have been met with positive feedback from many network partners.

Outcome 3 (Long Term)

Improved college graduation rates, leading to a successful career transition

Success Indicator: Number of youth who aged out of foster care to graduate in the state of Michigan in 2014 as compared with the number of youth who aged out of foster care to graduate in the state of Michigan in 2013

Finding: Shared data measurement revealed that graduation rates remained the same from 2013-2014 (n=22) among on-campus support programs in FSM HEC.

Graduation Rates

Fostering Success Michigan is in the early stages of developing ways to track graduation rates through the shared data measurement of FSM HEC. Most of the on-campus support programs that make up FSM HEC have been reporting graduation rates where there were 22 students to graduate in both the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years, for a total of 44 students. This number is not without its weaknesses as not all on-campus support programs have reported numbers (8 of 10 programs reported numbers in 2013, and 9 of 12 programs reported in 2014, see [Appendix B](#)) and a complete four year graduation cycle has not been completed (most FSM HEC on-campus support programs are housed in four year institutions). Additionally, a majority of programs (7 of 12) are contracted to serve students up to the age of 21, which is well below the average age of Bachelor’s degree attainment, in which studies show it takes an average of six years to complete a four year degree; and, four year colleges graduate less than 50% of their full-time students in the ‘traditional’ four year time frame (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Complete College America, 2014). Despite the barriers associated with measuring graduation rates, FSM has sought to celebrate student success in other ways (see the “How does FSM celebrate student success?” left sidebar). Student success does not equal graduation rates; however, it is important to consider other factors that are included in student success and how this may be related to successfully completing a college degree.

Goal 2: Develop technology and internet resources that will (a) provide access and information for foster youth who may have interest in attending college and (b) serve as a central repository and “go-to” resource for practical programming and student support solutions for higher education, agency and government/community officials who are engaged with foster youth populations.

Outcome 4 (Short Term)

Increased understanding of best practices⁴

Success Indicator: Accessibility of web-based resources/information for youth in and aging out of foster care, LCANS, and community based organizations whose mission includes support of foster care

Finding: The FSM website, www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com was unveiled in 2013 at the 2nd Annual Summit and streamlines and centralizes the accessibility of resources to both youth and professionals.

Statewide Resource Website

With over 400 resources, the FSM website organizes information by audience type, spanning from middle school students to supportive adults, and arranges resources by using the seven life domains identified by Casey Family Programs (2010) as essential to successful transition from foster care to young adulthood. Library resources highlight partner organizations by linking to their individual network profile page. This allows users to access materials from multiple perspectives. Resources created by FSM have also been embedded into the website, including the FSM guides and webinars. The webinars are recorded live and made available for access in the resource library. The FSM newsletter also highlights resources available on the website that partners may not be aware of. Accessibility of web-based resources and information has been evident during the early years of this initiative.

Responses from students when asked what they liked about the website...

“I liked that it was really easy to navigate and as well as easy finding the information that you needed.”

“I am thankful for the Fostering Success website as a resource to help me in the future.”

FSM Responsive to Network Partners

FSM has continued to seek feedback from network partners. Website feedback surveys completed by students and professionals have been used by FSM to refine and build the website to keep resources current. For example, after the launch of the FSM website, professionals expressed an interest in networking opportunities and wanted to hear more about the experiences of students with a foster care background. Heeding this feedback, updates were and implemented to expand the interactive network map and the stories page to feature a student blog and other short stories written by students. The website also has a search function where users can search for specific resources (see the “FSM Website Analytics” right sidebar). The data (8% of visits used site search) pose some interesting questions: How effective is the search function? Why is the percentage of users accessing searched resources low? And are users quickly finding the resources they need? The answers to these questions are unidentified at this stage.

FSM Website Analytics 2013-2014

Pageviews: **65,429**

Top pages viewed

FSM homepage: **15,215**

Library page: **6,636**

Story page: **3,067**

News & Events page: **2,420**

Network page: **2,020**

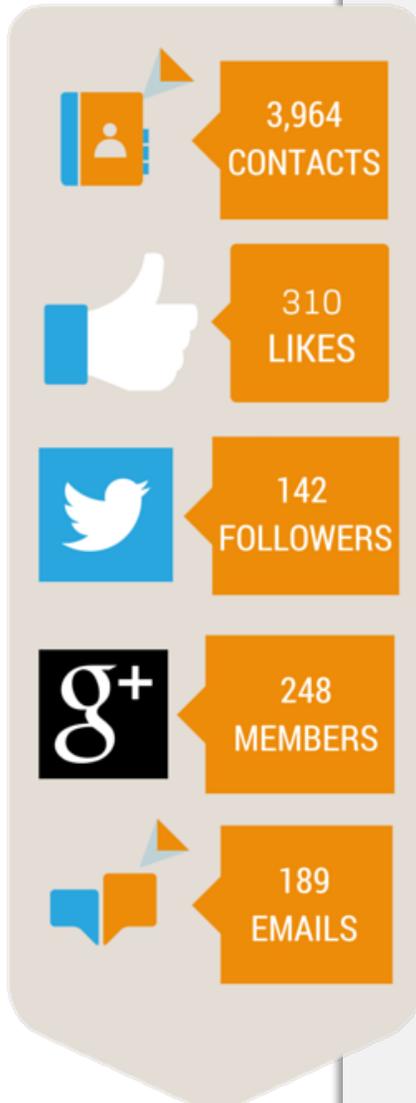
Top unique search terms

**College
Financial Aid
Webinar
Video
Forums
Scholarships
Guides**

8% of visits used site search

Total unique searches: **2,550**

Figure 6:
FSM Network Connections



Outcome 5 (Short term)

Increased number of organizations enhanced to support youth from foster care²

Success Indicator: Number of active LCANs without foster-youth specific supports as of 2014 as compared with the number of active LCANs in 2012 with one or more foster-youth specific supports, according to the needs of the demographic in each local community as of 2012.

Finding: Student Support Networks were not established and the focus of the partnership with LCAN shifted early on in the FSM initiative.

Shifting Focus

Early in year 1, Fostering Success Michigan realized that engagement of LCANs would be a challenge due to the unique nature of their work as it is directed by community priorities and often looks different from site to site. However, FSM continued to partner with MCAN closely through engaging in an environmental scan (survey) in 2012 which influenced the creation of two of FSM's guides (*Getting to Know Students from Foster Care* and *Getting to Know Higher Education Resources*). FSM also utilized the bid grant opportunity with DHS to focus the Collective Impact effort on building the FSM HEC. Additionally, both MCAN and FSM have been involved in similar conferences and continue to share strategies and resources with one another. Since MCAN also uses a collective impact framework, FSM seeks guidance from MCAN on how best to leverage partnerships between LCANs, on-campus support programs, and other network partners. The two organizations also reciprocate support through presenting or speaking at their respective conferences or meetings (such as the MCAN annual conference, FSM Statewide Summit, and FSM Regional Network and HEC meetings). While it is unknown how individual LCANs are including students from foster care in their ongoing outreach, it is evident that the partnership that FSM and MCAN have is mutually beneficial to the backbone organizations. As both LCANs and on-campus support efforts continue to grow and mature, it is possible that the local levels can experience this benefit through identifying students from foster care early on and through a successful transition to higher education.

Enhancing Organizations

FSM has been building the capacity of the statewide network, primarily through activities that fall within the strategies of resourcing, supporting, and networking, so that the individuals and organizations who are directly engaged with students from foster care are best equipped to increase the access and success in higher education for the youth they serve. The activities of note are the webinar series, FSM website, Annual Statewide Summit, Regional Network Meetings, and the continuous communication that occurs via email and social media. Figure 6 highlights network connections that have been made during the early years of FSM and details data from FSM's contact list, Facebook page, Twitter account, Google Group, and the number of lifetime emails sent. While FSM has a large reach with nearly 4,000 email contacts, the other connections show that there is a smaller, possibly more engaged group of students, supportive adults, and professionals that continue to be enhanced by FSM activities.

Outcome 6 (Intermediate)

Improved college preparation among youth in foster care

Success Indicator: Number of youth first enrolled in Michigan colleges and universities for fall semester 2011 that required remedial courses to meet enrollment criteria as compared with the number of foster youth enrolled in Michigan colleges and universities for fall semester 2014 that required no remedial courses to meet enrollment criteria.

Finding: Fostering Success Michigan has been increasing awareness of college opportunities through multiple resources that are available to both professionals and youth. This is an incremental step to effectively measure college preparation statewide.

Increasing awareness of college opportunities for youth

As an intermediate outcome (please see [Figure 4](#) on page 5 for a reference of a Collective Impact timeline in relation to outcomes) little data has been collected to determine college preparation for youth who have experienced foster care. At this time, the majority of on-campus support programs do not have the capacity to collect this level of data. While it is too early to measure college preparation, information is being made available via the FSM website, webinars, FSM guides, various conferences and events that allows students who have experienced foster care to become better educated about the opportunities available to them in higher education. The increased number of professionals becoming and staying involved with FSM may show that these professionals are better equipped to point out specific and necessary resources to college age youth transitioning out of the foster care system so that they are better prepared for college. FSM is also undertaking a Middle and High School outreach strategy which includes an annual webinar targeted specifically for these educators and releasing a new guide targeted toward educators that highlights how they can best support students who have experienced foster care in middle school and high school.

Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative

FSM has identified the Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative (MYOI) as a key partner in reaching the precollege age young people in foster care. Not only is MYOI focused on increasing positive outcomes for transition age youth, they are focused on increasing educational attainment. To date, the partnership between FSM and MYOI has been strengthened through participation of the FSM director on the MYOI self-evaluation team, a delegate to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities National Convening in 2014, presenting to the Michigan DHS Director, and serving on planning committees for statewide conferences. This partnership may prove to be a starting point for working toward measuring college preparation among young people in foster care.



Discussion

The initial findings of this developmental evaluation reveal that Fostering Success Michigan is on target to making meaningful progress on all 6 outcomes. The overall goal of FSM is to increase awareness, access, and success in higher education and post-college careers for youth and alumni of foster care 12 to 25 years old. While making significant advances in the short term outcomes (outcomes 1, 4, and 5), FSM has been building the foundation for ongoing work with intermediate (outcomes 2 and 6) and long term outcomes (outcome 3), mainly through developing the capacity of the statewide network and mutually reinforcing activities, that is best measured (at this point) by the shared data measurement of FSM HEC. The following are recommendations that FSM may consider as it moves forward.

Moving Forward

Recommendations for short term outcomes

FSM has focused its efforts in the first three years on the short term outcomes.

Outcome 1 – Increased number of effective on-campus support programs

Continue the strategy of supporting on-campus support programs in FSM HEC as a means to both developing individual programs and increasing the number of overall programs. As FSM continues to engage new and existing programs, and as programs continue to develop, FSM will have to reevaluate its capacity for this supporting strategy. Some questions that FSM may consider answering are: Is there a standard way that on-campus support programs are established and developed? What are the variables that are necessary for the success of an on-campus support program? How is 'effective' defined, and what makes an on-campus support program effective? Given the ever changing environment (i.e. changes in funding sources for on-campus support programs in Michigan or the changing and varying needs of both new and seasoned programs) FSM should think ahead of how FSM HEC will be sustained in the years to come.

Outcome 4 – Increased understanding of best practices

FSM has amassed over 400 resources on the website and is orienting cross-sector partners across the State of Michigan to issues and resources addressing the educational and career needs of young people in foster care. FSM appears to be developing a strong reputation in the state as the go-to authority for up-to-date information. To remain responsive to the network, FSM should continue seeking feedback from partners to increase the accessibility of needed web-based resources and continue adding and refining resources on the website as a core resourcing strategy. Some questions to consider are: What resources are most valuable to network partners? How can resources (and the overall website) be improved? And in what ways can feedback be built into the website? Establishing feedback loops could facilitate the culture of shared data measurement and data informed decision making throughout the broader statewide network.

Outcome 5 – Increased number of organizations enhanced to support youth from foster care

FSM should revisit the idea of Student Support Networks, given the changing environment across the state of Michigan. Both FSM and MCAN have increased in on-campus support programs and LCANs respectively, and both of these groups are in the early stages of establishing themselves in the communities they serve. While the initial focus of Student Support Networks was targeted on the partnership between FSM and MCAN, FSM may consider leveraging other partnership(s) for this effort. This may increase the viability of the Student Support Networks. Specifically FSM should ask, what resources would make up a Student Support Network? What would the main functions of this network be? And where would a potential pilot Student Support Network be successful? Another recommendation is to determine the use of the three strategies of resourcing, supporting and networking. While these strategies have helped the network understand what FSM does in relation to the three strategies, a transition should occur to move from 'this is what FSM does' to 'this is why they do it.'. FSM should reinforce that these strategies lead to the overall goal and the common agenda.

Recommendations for intermediate outcomes

As intermediate outcomes, Fostering Success Michigan should focus concerted efforts toward these areas as they move into their next phase of development. Given the Collective Impact timeline, the next phase may last from as little as 6 years to as long as 9 years (see [Figure 4](#)).

Outcome 2 – Increased enrollment in Michigan higher education institutions

Baseline data are needed to determine if enrollment has increased over time. While students supported in on-campus support programs and using state Education and Training Voucher (ETV) data can allude to a baseline, it does not fully account for *all* youth who have experienced foster care and their enrollment status in Michigan's higher education institutions. A key to progress in this area will be to determine the understanding of the FSM HEC members about shared data measurement and deciding as a collective how FSM, as a backbone organization, can best support measuring enrollment across the state. Further exploration may be done surrounding the relationship of ETV awards and the increased number of students receiving ETV and their enrollment in institutions where there are on-campus support programs. Is this increase due to increased exposure and awareness of on-campus support programs in Michigan? Or are institutions with on-campus support programs more appealing to students because they offer more than just financial support? As a long term outcome FSM, in collaboration with network partners, will have many opportunities to explore the connection between enrollment rates at institutions where there is an established on-campus support program as compared to institutions without on-campus support programs.

Outcome 6 – Improved college preparation among youth in foster care

As FSM moves forward, it should continue to increase awareness of college opportunities and provide advocacy to promote the positive outcomes associated with higher education within the child welfare system. FSM should ask: is college preparation best measured through the numbers of youth who have experienced foster care who require remedial courses? FSM should also continue working with partners such as Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative (MYOI), MCAN, DHS, Community Organizations, Michigan Department of Education, and Middle and High School educators and staff to best leverage resources that help increase awareness of college preparation among youth in foster care. Once these partnerships have been further developed, these organizations can identify students earlier on who need academic support, connect those students to the resources they need, and maintain connected to the student to follow up and ensure that they are progressing academically.

Recommendations for long term outcome

Long term outcomes are central during the latter part of the middle years and encompass all of the late years in the Collective Impact timeline ([Figure 4](#)). Given this, little progress has been made toward the long term outcome, and more time and resources will be needed to see the long term impact of this work.

Outcome 3 – Improved college graduation rates, leading to a successful career transition

Similar to outcome 2, a baseline needs to be determined in order to see if graduation rates have been improved. Shared data measurement of graduation rates has been a good starting point for this outcome; however, FSM will need to determine how to collect *statewide* college graduation rates of youth who have experienced foster care. This will take time, resources, and a committed effort involving a variety of network partners. Questions that FSM may consider for moving forward are: what are the types of support that students need to successfully graduate and transition into career? And what partnerships can be directed toward establishing a statewide mechanism of measuring statewide graduation rates of students who have experienced foster care? FSM may also utilize similar strategies for increasing enrollment as they would toward increasing graduation rates as these two outcomes are strongly connected.

Fostering Success Michigan partners were asked “What does FSM mean to you?” on a number of feedback surveys from the Annual Summit and Regional Network Meetings. The following are some highlights from these sources.

“An organization that supports and connects the work that is happening at institutions and organizations across the state to improve the services and resources available so that we can best serve youth who have experienced time in foster care.”

“It means that we have a centralized place to go to for support. It means that FSM is thinking about the work as a whole and is trying to better understand how we can be working together more effectively.”

“To me, FSM has always represented advocacy, resources, and support. FSM has personally provided me with a multitude of opportunities which have in turn fostered hope for my future. FSM in so many ways is providing the support and access to resources to young people from care that they may not receive anywhere else.”

“This initiative has created a network of service providers that genuinely care about the success of students that have experienced the foster care system. From this, I have professionals to lean on, bounce ideas off, collaborate with, and plan for future success of the young adults we support.”

“FSM has helped provide resources and guidance in building stronger and more productive relationships with community partners and local colleges and universities. It has been an excellent resource.”

To sum up what FSM does in 3 words it would be...

Resourcing, Supporting, and Networking

Conclusion

The central questions for developmental evaluation are: What overall progress is being made toward outcomes? And, what needs to happen next? FSM has made progress toward the original identified outcomes. Not only have they completed the short term outcomes, they have been building the capacity of the statewide network to move into the intermediate and long term outcomes. FSM has effectively built a strong foundation for a statewide network in its first three years. Next steps involve a strategic review of how to leverage its strategies and partnerships to continue steady progress towards accomplishing stated intermediate and long term outcomes. The outcomes should remain the focus to guide FSM's decisions and efforts in the coming years as a backbone organization.

References

- Calgary United Way (2013). What is Developmental Evaluation? Calgary's Network for Collaborative Social Innovation — Backgrounder Series #7
- Casey Family Programs (2010). *Supporting Success: A Framework for Program Enhancement (V 2.0)*.
- Complete College America (2014). Four-year myth. Retrieved from: <http://completercollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/4-Year-Myth.pdf>
- Department of Human Services. (2012). *DHS foster youth age by county* [Data file]. Unpublished dataset.
- Department of Human Services. (2013). *2013 DHS youth in care count* [Data file]. Unpublished dataset.
- Department of Human Services. (2014). *8124* [Data file]. Unpublished dataset.
- Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Pp. 35-41.
- Lutheran Social Services of Michigan (LSSM). (2014). Michigan Education and Training Voucher. Retrieved from: <https://mietv.lssm.org/>
- Lutheran Social Services of Michigan (LSSM). (2014). Data requested by WMU ETV [Data file]. Unpublished dataset.
- Preskill, H., Parkhurst, M, and Splanskey Juster, J. (2014). Guide to evaluating Collective Impact: Part 1 learning and evaluation in the Collective Impact context. Pp. 1-24.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). The Condition of Education 2014 (NCES 2014-083), Institutional Retention and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Students.

Endnotes

¹ Original language of outcome in Kresge proposal read as: "Web resource online by the end of the second quarter, year two. The information gathered, analyzed and reported by the end of year one will constitute as the foundation for building this tool." Language was changed to capture a larger scope of what was to be accomplished in this short term outcome. This not only includes the website, but many other activities such as the creation and distribution of the resource guides, activities at the Statewide Summit and Regional Network Meetings, and the availability of the webinar series.

² Original language of outcome in Kresge proposal read as: "Increased number of LCANs enhanced with Student Support Networks for foster youth." The focus of mainly partnering with LCANS shifted toward on-campus support programs when DHS offered the bid grants for the life skill coach positions.

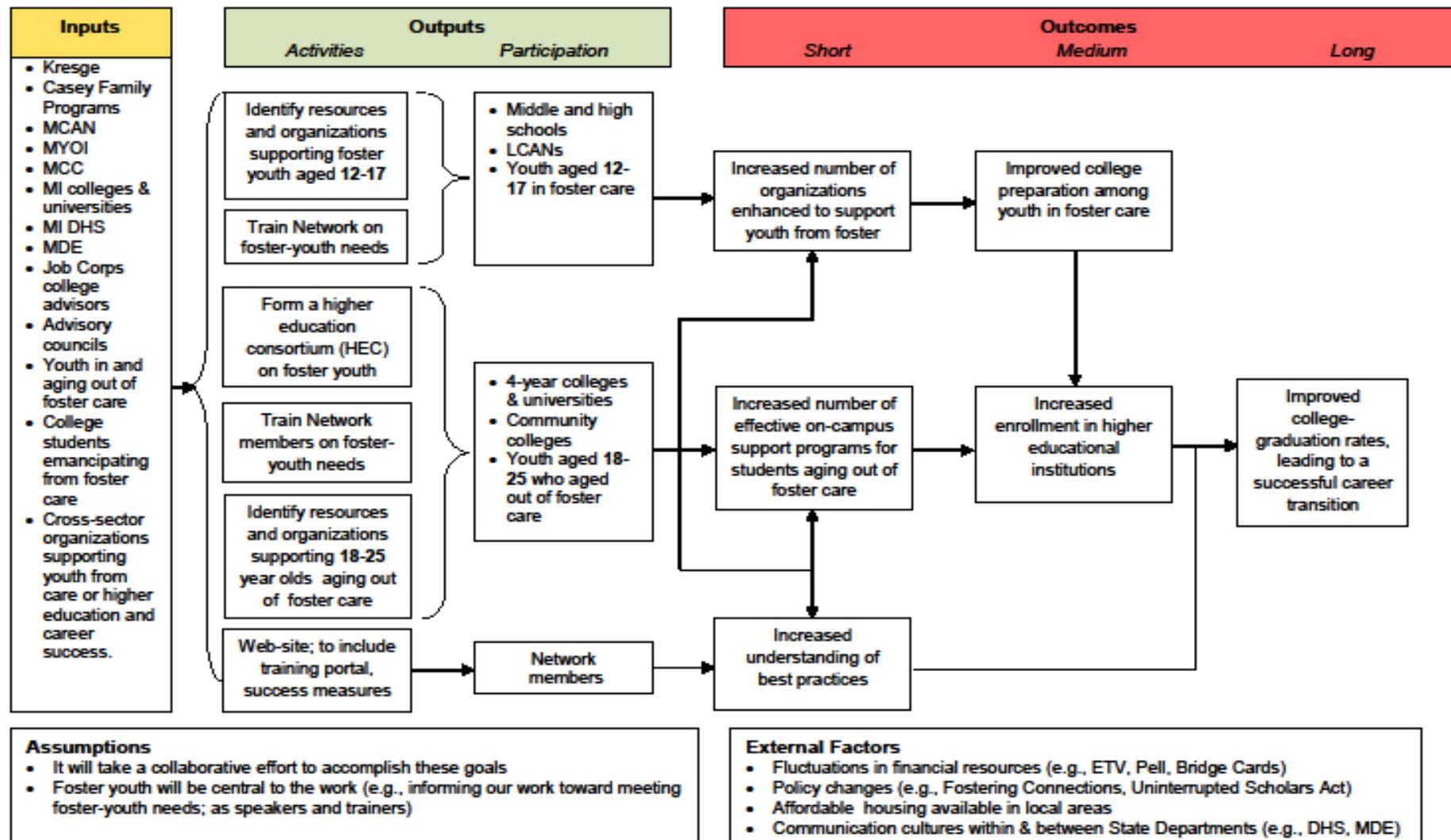


Appendix A: Logic Model

Logic Model – Fostering Success Michigan



Goal: To increase college-going rates (short term), graduation rates (medium term), and successful career transitions (long term) among Michigan's youth aging out of foster care by building a statewide network through a collective-impact initiative.



Appendix B: FSM HEC Higher Education Institutions

Fostering Success Michigan Higher Education Consortium (FSM HEC) Higher Education Institutions and On-Campus Support Programs***		
<i>On-Campus Support Programs in 2012</i>	Reported Data in 2013	Reported Data in 2014
Western Michigan University – Seita Scholars Program	X	X
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor – Blavin Scholars Program	X	X
Ferris State University – Ferris Youth Initiative **	X	X
Michigan State University – Fostering Academics Mentoring Excellence (FAME) Program **		*
Aquinas College – Fostering Success Scholarship	X	
<i>On-Campus Support Programs in 2013</i>		
Saginaw Valley State University – The Fostering an Academic Successful Transition (FAST) Program **	X	X
Eastern Michigan University – Mentorship Access Guidance in College (MAGIC) Program **	X	X *
University of Michigan – Flint – Mpowering My Success Program **	X	X
Wayne State University – Transition to Independence Program **		
Baker College – Flint – Living Independently Networking Knowledge (LINK) Program **	X	X
<i>On-Campus Support Programs in 2014</i>		
Northwestern Michigan College – yourNMC Program	N/A	X
Kalamazoo Valley Community College – Campus Support Program	N/A	X

* Data from these programs included students other than youth who have experienced foster care and therefore were not included in the numbers reported in this evaluation. In the case of Eastern Michigan University, the numbers of youth who have experienced foster care were reported separate from the numbers of other youth that the program serves.

** Programs that received the DHS- bid grants for life skills coach positions

*** In December of 2014, Lansing Community College was awarded a Life Skills Coach grant from DHS. For the purposes of this evaluation, LCC was not included in the overall number of on-campus support programs in FSM HEC because programming will start in 2015.