Youth Policy Institute of Iowa is Awarded LCAN Grant

Des Moines, Iowa – August 14, 2019 – Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) has been awarded a Year 1 Local College Access Network (LCAN) grant from Iowa College Aid. The grant will support the work of the OPT-in College Access Network initiative, a multi-agency partnership focused on increasing post-secondary enrollment and attainment among young people who have been involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system in Iowa.

As few as 3% of youth who age out of foster care earn a college degree by age 25. Many with a desire to enroll in a post-secondary program lack the support and guidance often provided by parents. Of foster youth who do enroll, many quickly become overwhelmed and fewer than half make it beyond a single semester.

“Our goal is to ensure that these youth have the support, resources and opportunities they need to pursue college, vocational, or career training beyond high school,” says Carol Behrer, executive director for Youth Policy Institute of Iowa. “The LCAN grant provides a helpful framework and resources that will enable our existing post-secondary partnership to take its work to the next level and achieve measurable results for the young people we serve.”

Utilizing the LCAN collective impact framework, the OPT-in Network will begin by formalizing the structure of the OPT-in leadership team, refining the team’s goals and measures, expanding a resource map, and prioritizing the work for future years. Over the next several months, they will invite new team members from institutions of higher education, area education agencies, secondary education, juvenile justice, foster care service providers, and additional young adults with lived experience in foster care/out-of-home placement to join the Network.

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About Youth Policy Institute of Iowa

Founded in 2000, the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) works to expand and improve the delivery of services and supports for Iowa youth by partnering with public and private entities throughout the state. YPII is involved in a wide range of initiatives, but specializes in policies and programs affecting youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, particularly those who have been involved in child welfare (foster care) or juvenile justice systems. YPII also provides coordination, outreach, and evaluation support to the Iowa Aftercare Services Network.