

Proposal for The Mockingbird Society's Tribal Youth Chapter

Executive Summary: The Mockingbird Society is a non-profit advocacy organization in Washington State that works towards improving the foster care systems and ending youth homelessness. Mockingbird was founded on the philosophy that young people with lived experience in the systems of care are truly the experts in what needs to be changed in the systems that serve them. Mockingbird's Youth Programs are offered through seven chapters across the state that focus on empowering young people, ages 13 to 25, to be their own best advocates in order to change policies and perceptions so that every child can have a safe and stable home.

There were over 9,000 children and youth in foster care in Washington State in 2017 (Partners for Our Children, 2018). According to the National Indian Child Welfare Association, American Indian/Alaska Native children and youth are over-represented in the child welfare systems, with Washington ranking in the top ten states with the highest disproportionality rates. Youth who experience foster care are at increased risk to demonstrate low academic achievement, live at or below the poverty line, experience homelessness, and to have mental health problems (Pecora et al., 2005). Indeed, 28% of youth who age out of foster care will experience homelessness within the first 12 months (Mayfield et al., 2017).

The purpose of this proposal is to seek funding to conduct a one-year pilot expansion of Mockingbird's Youth Programs to include a specific Tribal Youth Chapter. This chapter would serve young people, 13-25, who have experience with the tribal welfare systems. The goal of the chapter would be to elevate the unique needs of these youth by proposing at least one state-wide policy change. In addition, program participants will learn valuable leadership and advocacy skills while connecting with peers who understand the challenges of receiving care within the tribal welfare system of foster care in particular.

Organizational Introduction: The Mockingbird Society is a non-profit advocacy agency in Washington State. Mockingbird was founded in 2000 by Jim Theofelis with the philosophy that young people with lived experience are truly the experts in what needs to be changed in the child welfare system. In 2013, Mockingbird expanded to work in the homeless response system as there is a clear link between foster care and homelessness. Almost one in three young people who age out of foster care will become homeless within one year. Today, The Mockingbird Society's mission is to improve the foster care system and end youth homelessness. It continues to center its work on the youth development philosophy that youth voice is essential in decision making processes (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner et al., 2005).

Mockingbird has three program departments. First, Family Programs works to implement the MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™, which is a unique model of foster care delivery. It creates an intentional community of 6-8 foster families centered around a Hub Home, which is an experienced foster family who provides emotional and logistical support. The Public Policy and Advocacy department leads Mockingbird's state-wide policy work. Finally, the largest department, Youth Programs, has a dual focus on youth development and advocacy. Youth Programs manages seven chapters of young people across the state. Each chapter engages young people, 13-25 years old, who have personally experienced out-of-home care and/or homelessness. Mockingbird partners with community-based youth organizations in each region to host the local chapter. The youth-led chapters meet monthly to develop policy proposals for systems improvement and to build participant leadership and advocacy skills.

Since its founding, Mockingbird's youth advocates and allies have successfully advocated for the passage and implementation of more than 30 policies. Some policy successes include the enactment of the Extended Foster Care program and the establishment of the

Washington State Office of Homeless Youth. Additionally, by the end of 2018 more than 600 families across the U.S. and world will be in a MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™. Mockingbird is seen as a leader by policy makers in bringing authentic youth voice to the decision-making table.

Need for Project: Youth who experience foster care are at an increased risk to have low academic achievement, live at or below the poverty line, experience homelessness, and to have mental health problems (Pecora et al., 2005). Indeed, 28% of youth who age out of foster care will experience homelessness within the first 12 months (Mayfield et al., 2017). However, there are protective factors that can be maximized to support young people's development into thriving young adults. Some of these factors include encouraging strong social supports, placement with relatives, limited placement moves, and engagement in school (Drapeau et al., 2007; Shah et al., 2017). Importantly, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and youth's wellbeing is directly correlated with their connection to their culture, extended family, and tribal network (Simmons, 2014).

There were over 9,000 children and youth in foster care in Washington State in 2017 (Partners for Our Children, 2018). According to the National Indian Child Welfare Association, AI/AN children and youth are over-represented in the child welfare systems, with Washington ranking in the top ten states with the highest disproportionality rates. It is estimated that nationwide between 30-40 percent of AI/AN youth are placed in tribal child welfare systems with the remainder being placed in state systems of care (Woods & Summers, 2016). Data shows that in 2017 at least 450 AI/AN youth were in foster care in Washington (Partners for Our Children, 2018). Accurate data on the number of youth in tribal child welfare systems is difficult to obtain due to the fact that there are over 10 distinct programs throughout that state, each maintaining separate data tracking systems and reporting processes.

In addition to the number of youth in each system, the access and quality of foster placements and services varies by tribal system because each child welfare program has a separate set of policies and practices. In a national survey of tribal child welfare programs, the National Child Welfare Center for Tribes found that many programs faced significant barriers to providing appropriate services to children, youth, and families involved in their systems. One of the largest barriers identified was funding. The federal and state governments do not provide the same funding assistance for children and youth who are dependents of tribal systems as is provided for state dependent youth. Therefore, many beneficial policies and programs that have been implemented in the state child welfare system are not universally available to tribal youth or adopted by tribal programs. An example is the Passport to College Scholarship Program, which tribal dependent youth were only made eligible for in 2018 by the advocacy efforts of Mockingbird and its allies.

There is a lack of any concerted effort to advocate for tribal child welfare systems improvement in Washington. Both the National Indian Child Welfare Association and the National Child Welfare Center for Tribes agree that greater collaborative efforts for state policy advocacy is needed. One barrier to collective advocacy efforts is the variable governance, policies, practices, and cultural norms that exist among the tribal nations. A Tribal Youth Chapter would create an opportunity for youth who are or were dependents of a tribal child welfare system to come together with other youth of multiple tribal affiliations, to identify specific problems within these systems and propose policy solutions to improve them. If implemented, the policy solutions would increase the access and quality of services that tribal youth receive, while also empowering youth voice. This Tribal Youth Chapter could be the catalyst for state-wide advocacy for tribal youth welfare systems improvement.

Project Description: Systems improvement is needed to support youth in foster care to become thriving adults and contributing members of the community. Youth who have experienced foster care are the experts in what improvements need to be made. The goal of Mockingbird’s Tribal Youth Chapter is to provide a platform for youth voice in proposing systems improvement for tribal youth who have been involved in the child welfare systems in Washington State. In addition, the chapter program activities will provide an environment for the development of the 6 C’s of Positive Youth Development (Lerner et al., 2005). Participants will build *competence* and *confidence* in communication skills, *connection* to peers and community members, and *character* and *caring* for others while *contributing* to the community through their advocacy.

The Tribal Youth Chapter is modeled after the current Mockingbird youth chapters. These chapters bring together youth and young adults, ages 13-25, with lived experience in the foster care and homeless response systems to work through Mockingbird’s advocacy cycle and build leadership and advocacy skills, as well as connections with peers. The chapter will meet five times throughout the calendar year. Each meeting will last between six to eight hours and occur in various locations throughout the state to encourage participation from the greatest number of tribal nations. A staff made up of Network Representatives (current Mockingbird youth participants hired in a leadership role), Tribal Youth Chapter Leaders, and the Tribal Engagement Coordinator will co-facilitate the meetings. Tribal Youth Chapter Leaders will also attend quarterly State Leadership Councils with the existing chapters, in order to receive feedback from community advisors on the advocacy proposals.

The five specific chapter meeting dates are outlined in the table below and are strategically arranged to fit within the annual Mockingbird Youth Programs’ calendar.

February/March	Seattle	-Brainstorm on Issues that Impact Tribal Youth in Foster Care
April/May	Yakima	-Determine and Research Solutions to Top Issues
June/July	Tacoma	-Refine Solutions and Select Top Proposal for Change
July/August	Seattle	-Continue to Refine Solution -Prepare for Youth Leadership Summit Presentation
October	Spokane	-Review other Chapter Proposals for Impact on Tribal Youth -Evaluate and Provide Feedback on Tribal Chapter Programming

Recruitment of Tribal Youth Chapter members will occur in a variety of ways utilizing current networks, social media, and other outreach materials. First, the Tribal Engagement Coordinator will invite current Mockingbird chapter members who are American Indian/Alaska Native to participate in the chapter. Individuals can participate in both the regional chapter and tribal chapter activities. Second, there will be informational meetings with Tribal Child Welfare offices across the state. To assist with this, an initial meeting will be held with the state director of the Indian Child Welfare Act office, who currently serves as a community advisor for Mockingbird’s State Leadership Councils and can provide relevant contact information for all the offices. Furthermore, information about the Tribal Youth Chapter will be shared on social media platforms, on a dedicated page on the organization website and in the *Mockingbird Times*.

To support the program expansion, The Mockingbird Society will hire one part-time (0.5 FTE) Tribal Engagement Coordinator (TEC). The TEC will recruit and engage youth and young adults with tribal child welfare experience to participate in the chapter. The TEC will also hire two highly engaged chapter participants to be Chapter Leaders. Together the TEC and the Chapter Leaders will plan and facilitate the chapter meetings. The team of Network Representatives will also support this work. The TEC will work with Regional Engagement Coordinators to facilitate regional outreach activities, support participation in phone and video conference meetings, and coordinate travel logistics.

As with any program expansion, there are several anticipated challenges that may impact the success of the Tribal Youth Chapter. The biggest challenge in implementation will be

supporting chapter members throughout the state to stay engaged. To minimize the impact of distance, the chapter meetings will take place in communities that already host a regional chapter. This will allow for the Regional Engagement Coordinators to support chapter members in ways that the Tribal Engagement Coordinator may not be able to due to distance. Support will include providing transportation, technology assistance, and in-person contact. In addition, program staff will encourage tribal chapter members to participate in the regional chapters. The regional chapters meet monthly, which allows for more consistent program engagement throughout the year. Despite the challenges, it is crucial that tribal youth are able to meet together to learn leadership and advocacy skills and influence policy improvements.

Evaluation: The outcomes for the Tribal Youth Chapter align with the stated outcomes for Mockingbird's Youth Programs. Specifically, program participants will have increased *connections* with their peers, community, and decision makers. Program participants will feel *empowered to advocate* to make *systems reform*. Finally, program participants will build both their written and oral communication skills through *community education* opportunities. Externally, program activities will result in increased community support for tribal youth and young adults experiencing foster care and/or homelessness, and local and statewide policy changes will be implemented. Mockingbird's Youth Programs currently use the strategies of activity tracking and participant surveys to evaluate program impact. The Youth Programs Manager will lead the evaluation and reporting.

To achieve the program outcomes, Mockingbird has outlined a set of program objectives for the Tribal Youth Chapter (see table below). The objectives fall within three categories, Connection and Empowerment, Advocacy and Systems Reform and Community Education.

<p>Connection and Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chapter will convene five times throughout the year for all-day meetings - 25 individuals will participate in at least one chapter activity - 5 individuals will be considered highly engaged by participating in at least 7 Mockingbird activities
<p>Advocacy and Systems Reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eight chapter members will attend and present an idea for policy improvement at the Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit - Chapter members will attend at three policy maker meetings throughout the year - Eight chapter members will attend Youth Advocacy Day to speak with policy makers about Mockingbird’s 2020 legislative agenda (outside of grant cycle)
<p>Community Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two <i>Mockingbird Times</i> articles/blogs will be submitted by chapter members - Chapter members will facilitate one Culture of Foster Care community training

Program activities will be tracked in a Social Solutions™ Apricot database by Engagement Coordinators. Importantly, individuals who participate in both Tribal Youth Chapter and regional chapter activities will be un-duplicated for reporting purposes. The Youth Programs Manager will complete quarterly reports of program activities which will be used to identify areas for increased support and/or to problem solve barriers to meeting program objectives.

Additionally, individual outcomes will be measured through participant surveys. The largest of the surveys is the Youth Program’s Annual Survey which is conducted each year in the fall through SurveyMonkey™. The survey measures participant sense of connections to peers, growth in communication skills, knowledge of civic processes, and satisfaction with programming. Survey respondents are given \$10 gift cards for their participation. Additional Tribal Youth Chapter-specific questions will be added to the survey to elicit feedback from members on their experience with the pilot project. In addition to surveys, time during the final chapter meeting will be used to receive feedback from Tribal Youth Chapter Members and staff allies. The information gathered during the survey and the in-person meeting will be compiled by the Youth Programs Manager and will inform and improve the design for the Tribal Youth Chapter programming for the 2020 calendar year.

Organizational Capacity: Over the last 18 years The Mockingbird Society has grown from a small grassroots organization based out of Seattle into a state-wide network engaging over 400 participants each year. Mockingbird's annual budget for 2018 is over two million dollars. The Tribal Youth Chapter is not the first expansion that Mockingbird's Youth Programs has undertaken. Most recently, in 2013, the Raikes Foundation funded a pilot expansion of programming which has grown to become the Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness, or YAEH Chapter. Today, the YAEH Chapter is an integral part of youth programming and annual events. Mockingbird and its youth advocates continue to be seen by policy makers and non-profit leaders as area experts in the child welfare and homelessness systems as well as in the authentic engagement of youth. In 2018, The Mockingbird Society received the Best Starts for Kids grant which will fund efforts to increase Mockingbird's capacity to provide technical assistance to other agencies on positive and authentic youth voice and engagement.

Sustainability: The Mockingbird Society's model for youth engagement through dedicated chapters has been shown to be successful in changing state policies and providing environments for positive youth development. The Tribal Youth Chapter will extend these benefits specifically to tribal youth, as such, continued funding will be sought by the multiple tribal nations throughout the state. Mockingbird currently receives funding from several tribal foundations and will leverage these connections to secure increased foundation funding to continue the expansion. Mockingbird is also working to diversify funding sources through increasing fee-based services, including enhanced community and service provider trainings. Through the assistance of the Best Starts for Kids grant, the Youth Programs department will bring in more revenue through technical assistance and training fees which will allow Mockingbird to seek out grant funding for program expansions including the Tribal Youth Chapter.

Program Timeline:

	Lead
November-December 2018	
Finalize 2019 Youth Programs Calendar	Youth Programs Director
Finalize Tribal Engagement Coordinator Job Description	Youth Programs Director
January 2019	
Post and Hire Tribal Engagement Coordinator	Youth Programs Manager
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
February/March 2019	
Kick-Off Chapter Meeting In Seattle	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Post and Hire Tribal Chapter Leaders	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
State Leadership Council #1	Youth Programs Director
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Quarter 1 Report Completed	Youth Programs Manager
April/May 2019	
2nd Chapter Meeting in Yakima	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
<i>Mockingbird Times</i> article submitted	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
June/July 2019	
3rd Chapter Meeting in Tacoma	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
State Leadership Council #2	Youth Programs Director
Selection of Advocacy Issue for 2020 Legislative Session	Tribal Chapter Members
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
July/August 2019	
4th Chapter Meeting in Seattle	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
State Leadership Council #3	Youth Programs Director
Youth Leadership Summit	Youth Programs Manager
<i>Mockingbird Times</i> article submitted	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Quarter 2 Report Completed	Youth Programs Manager
October 2019	
5th Chapter Meeting in Spokane	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
State Leadership Council #4	Youth Programs Director
Culture fo Foster Care Presentation	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
Quarter 3 Report Completed	Youth Programs Manager
November 2019	
Annual Survey	Youth Programs Manager
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
December 2019	
Annual Survey Results Compiled	Youth Programs Manager
Outreach to Tribal Child Welfare Offices and Youth/Young Adults	Tribal Engagement Coordinator
January 2020 (Outside of Grant Cycle)	
Youth Advocacy Day	Youth Programs Manager
Annual Survey and Final Reporting Completed	Youth Programs Manager

Budget Narrative:

	Annual Cost	In-Kind*
Personnel		
Tribal Engagement Coordinator** (\$17.50/hour for 20 hours/week)	\$ 18,200.00	
2 Tribal Chapter Leaders (\$15.00/hour for 10 hours/month)	\$ 3,600.00	
Youth Programs Manager (5% of full time at \$48,000/year)	\$ 2,400.00	
Youth Programs Director (5% of full time at \$65,000/year)		\$ 3,250.00
2 Network Representatives (\$15.00/hour for 10 hours/month)	\$ 3,600.00	
5 Regional Engagement Coordinators (\$17.50/hour for 10 hours/month)		\$10,500.00
Subtotal Personnel	\$27,800.00	\$13,750.00
Fringe at 21% for Full Time Staff	\$ 4,326.00	\$ 2,887.50
Fringe at 10% for Part Time Staff	\$ 720.00	
Stipends for Youth Participation	\$70	
Total Personnel	\$32,916.00	\$16,637.50
Travel		
Meeting in Seattle (x2)		
Airfare: 2 Trips Spokane x3 (\$175), 1 Trip Yakima x3(\$150)***	\$ 1,500.00	
Mileage (0.50/mile)		
Tacoma(60mi), Everett(60mi), Olympia(120mi), 1 Trip Yakima(300mi)	\$ 390.00	
Meeting in Yakima		
Mileage (0.50/mile)		
Tacoma(300mi), Everett(200mi), Olympia(360mi), Seattle(300mi),	\$ 780.00	
Meeting in Tacoma		
Airfare: Spokane x3 (\$175)	\$ 525.00	
Mileage (0.50/mile)		
Everett(120mi), Olympia(60mi), Yakima(300mi), Seattle(60mi)	\$ 270.00	
Meeting in Spokane		
Airfare: For all West Side Members and staff x8 (\$175)	\$ 1,400.00	
Mileage (0.50/mile)		
To airport: Tacoma(30mi), Everett(80mi), Olympia(100mi), Seattle(30mi)		
Yakima(400mi)	\$ 320.00	
Misc. Local Travel	\$ 250.00	\$ 300.00
Total Travel	\$ 5,435.00	\$ 300.00
Food		
Chapter Meetings \$350 for breakfast and lunch x5	\$ 1,750.00	
General Outreach (Individual Meetings, Leadership Team Meetings, Etc.)	\$1,000	\$ 500.00
Travel Food		
For Those Flying or Traveling more than 150 miles - \$20/day; For Others - \$10/day	\$1,060	
Total Food	\$ 3,810.00	\$ 500.00
Supplies		
Laptop	\$1,200	
Office Supplies	\$1,000	
Total Supplies	\$2,200	\$0
Project Total	\$44,361.00	\$17,437.50

Total Project Cost = \$61,798.50**Total Funds Requested = \$44,361.00**

*In kind contributions provided by The Mockingbird Society by board approval.

**The Tribal Youth Engagement Coordinator position may be combined with the current part time Yakima Engagement Coordinator position to create 1 FTE position.

***During the February/March Meeting Yakima members will fly due to potential hazardous driving conditions over the mountain pass.

Attachment A: Organizational Brochure:



Improving foster care &
Ending youth homelessness

Our Mission is to improve foster care and end youth homelessness.

Our Vision is for all young people to reach adulthood healthy, supported, and with full opportunity to thrive in life.

By the Numbers in 2017:

16,971 audience members educated by youth advocates on issues of foster care and youth homelessness

63 policymaker meetings attended by Mockingbird youth in 2017

25,079 hours of respite care provided by Hub Homes in Washington, giving foster parents the opportunity to recharge

“Mockingbird has given me growth and leadership opportunities which make me the strong advocate I am today.”

— James, Mockingbird Youth Network
Seattle Chapter Leader

THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY is an advocacy organization that thinks holistically, creatively, and passionately about meeting society’s obligations to children and youth who need out-of-home care. Our advocacy is rooted in the direct experience and voices of young people who have experienced foster care and youth homelessness.

Our youth programs train young people who have been homeless or in foster care to be their own best advocates. Our family programs advocate for innovation in the way services, such as foster care, are delivered. By creating supportive systems of care, youth thrive while developing lasting connections to support their successful transition to adulthood. Together, our solutions focus on improving the social service systems that ultimately service thousands of children, youth, and families each year in Washington and beyond.

“Late night conversations on our couch, cooking together, going on hikes, and tucking children into bed are all parts of building long-term relationships that are steeped in a true connection that you get from spending time together, being vulnerable, and celebrating joyous occasions. Our goal is to build the kind of relationships with youth that we want our kids to have with other adults.”

— Emily & Mary Pico on being a
Mockingbird Family Model Hub Home

LEARN MORE AT WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG

Attachment B: List of Board of Directors:

Board of Directors

Officers

President:

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*University of Washington Court
Improvement Training Academy*

Vice-President:

Beth Van Fossan
*University of Washington School
of Social Work*

Secretary:

Kate Reddy
Community Volunteer

Treasurer:

Jennifer Bellin
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

**Executive Director (non-
voting)**

Annie Blackledge
The Mockingbird Society

Members

Nicole Bascomb
Homestreet Bank

Jeff Bell
Stone Arch Capital/Toysmith

Christina Bernard
Pacific Hospital PDA

Lisa A. Chang
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