

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
CONSULTANT TO SERVE AS THE DIRECTOR  
(BACKBONE LEADER) OF THE 12-to-24 COLLABORATIVE**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.** The 12-to-24 Collaborative, a collective impact initiative working to improve outcomes for youth ages 12 to 24 in Frederick County, MD, is seeking a Consultant to serve as its Director (Backbone Leader). This contract is funded through The Community Foundation of Frederick County, with strong support and endorsement from The Ausherman Family Foundation.

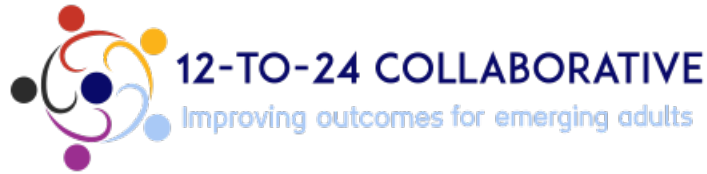
This is a unique opportunity to lead a growing, community-driven initiative that has the potential to become a nationally recognized model for youth-centered systems change.

**Key Responsibilities.** The Director will:

- Serve as the Collaborative's backbone leader and neutral convener, building trust, authentic relationships, and alignment across diverse partners.
- Facilitate shared governance, manage operations, and coordinate communications, community events, and partner convenings.
- Lead development of the Collaborative's common agenda, shared measurement systems, aligned workgroups, and a multi-year strategic plan.
- Build and steward a funder collective and lead fundraising efforts to sustain the initiative.
- Serve as the administrative lead of the Frederick Youth Council.
- Guide the Collaborative in building a culture of learning, continuous improvement, and data use, with a focus on elevating equity, youth, and community voice.

**Essential Qualifications.** This is not a traditional Executive Director role - it requires a trusted, facilitative, and adaptive convener who can foster cross-sector collaboration, lead through influence rather than authority, and prioritize shared success over individual recognition. They will be community-centered and equity-driven; able to navigate ambiguity and build consensus; and model humility, authenticity, and adaptability. An ideal candidate will also bring:

- Lived experience in Frederick County.
- At least 5 years of leadership in nonprofit, public, or cross-sector roles.
- Strong facilitation skills and the ability to guide collective action without formal authority.
- A deep commitment to racial equity, youth development, and systems change, paired with cultural humility and collaborative leadership.
- Exceptional communication and relationship-building capacity across diverse sectors.
- Comfort using data to inform decisions and coordinate multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- Proven success in fundraising, grant writing, and resource development.



**Engagement Period, Compensation & Contract Structure.** Seeking a high-engagement independent contractor to provide strategic program management services, a role that requires **significant time commitment—estimated at 35 to 40 hours per week—and scheduling flexibility** to meet project needs, including availability for daytime meetings and evening/weekend events. While the Director sets their own schedule, they are expected to be responsive to the Collaborative’s timelines, schedules, and stakeholder availability.

The contractor will invoice monthly at an agreed-upon hourly rate, not to exceed a total of **\$120,000 annually** (inclusive of all fees and expenses).

The contractor will be responsible for the self-directed execution of outlined deliverables and quarterly reporting of progress. This is a time-limited, deliverables-based engagement. The contract is funded on an **annual basis** and **may be renewed for up to three years**, based on performance, funding availability, and the evolving needs of the Collaborative.

This role is not a salaried or employee position and does not include benefits. The contractor will be responsible for managing their own taxes, insurance, and benefits in accordance with independent contractor status.

#### **Selection Process & Schedule:**

All proposals will be reviewed upon receipt. Selected candidates may receive a brief screening call or email from the search coordinator prior to interviews. Candidates advancing to the next stage will be invited to participate in a first-round panel interview via Zoom during the week of August 11th, 2025. Finalists will then participate in an in-person panel interview in Frederick, Maryland, during the week of August 18th, 2025.

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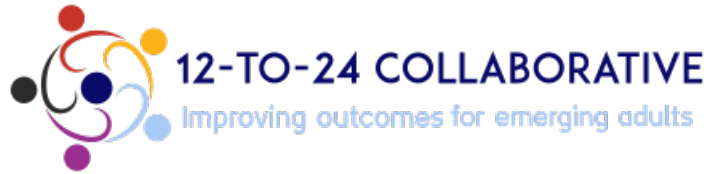
Proposal Submission Deadline	Friday, August 1st, 2025
Zoom Initial Interviews	Week of August 11th, 2025
In-Person Finalist Interviews	Week of August 18th, 2025
Final Selection and Award Notification	Week of August 25th, 2025
Contract Start Date	Week of September 7th, 2025

**Submission Instructions:** Proposals will be accepted until Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, at 11:59 PM ET, with proposal subject line: “[Last Name, First Initial]- 12-to-24 Collaborative Director Proposal.”

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Include in your submission packet the following items:

1. Cover Letter
2. Resume/CV
3. Hourly Billing Rate
4. Two Work Samples demonstrating administrative ability (e.g., project plan, SOP, internal memo, meeting notes, budget tracker, etc.)



## 5. Three Professional References

Submit inquiries, questions, and proposals by email to:

Search Coordinator, Katie Napolitano

Email: [katie@sharedhorizon.co](mailto:katie@sharedhorizon.co)

No phone calls, please.

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### **BACKGROUND: THE 12-to-24 COLLABORATIVE**

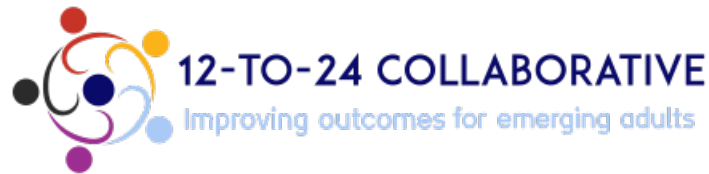
The 12-to-24 Collaborative is a collective impact initiative in Frederick County, Maryland, committed to improving outcomes and well-being for young people ages 12-to-24 across the county. This cross-sector collaboration unites young people, nonprofit organizations, funders, educators, government partners, and community members to strengthen resources, amplify youth voice, and improve coordination across systems, with a focus on increasing access and equity so young people can thrive.

Over the past two years, the 12-to-24 Collaborative has built strong momentum, engaging nearly 60 organizations and supporters across the public and private sectors, including local municipalities, businesses, and the school system. Additionally, an Interim Charting Committee was established, and a vibrant Frederick Youth Council was formed that helped shape the design of the future Frederick Youth Center. The Collaborative also launched a capacity-building initiative for local youth-serving providers, began developing a shared data collection tool, and secured multi-year investments from local funders. With this strong foundation in place, the Collaborative is now poised to enter its next phase—and is seeking a deeply collaborative, dynamic Director to serve as backbone support, consensus builder, and spokesperson/public liaison for this growing initiative.

With the right leader, this initiative has the potential to become a nationally recognized model for community-driven, youth-centered systems change—and to secure sustainable funding for generations to come.

### **SUMMARY OF DIRECTOR ROLE**

The Director will serve as the steward of the Collaborative's shared work, functioning as the backbone by managing day-to-day coordination, supporting partner alignment, building consensus, and serving as the primary spokesperson to communicate the Collaborative's collective voice externally. This is **not a traditional Executive Director role**—it requires a trusted, facilitative, and adaptive convener who can foster cross-sector collaboration, lead through influence rather than authority, and prioritize shared success over individual



recognition. Effective backbone leaders bring humility, emotional intelligence, and a low-ego approach, along with a commitment to building trusting relationships, advancing equity, and cultivating collaboration across diverse partners in pursuit of measurable, systems-level change. The Director will not create or drive the vision—they will support the Collaborative in defining and advancing its shared goals through consensus-building, ensuring that all partners have a voice in shaping the direction and priorities of the work.

The ideal candidate will have deep roots in Frederick County and be a trusted, behind-the-scenes operator who moves the work forward through relationship-building and shared accountability. The Director will work to expand Collaborative membership, strengthen community partnerships, and deepen youth engagement. This is a multi-faceted role that encompasses **facilitation, administration, advocacy, and strategic systems leadership, and coordinating core backbone functions** such as communication, administration, operations, and collaborative governance.

Early responsibilities will include organizing community events; launching a local funder collective; facilitating a community-driven process to clarify the Collaborative’s vision, establish measurable goals, and align cross-sector efforts; supporting the administration of the Frederick Youth Council, the Interim Charting Committee and all-member meetings and convenings, and managing member outreach through newsletters and ongoing communications. The Director will also support the development and execution of a 3-year strategic plan; formalize the Collaborative’s governance structure; and play a central role in fundraising, grant writing, and identifying additional resources to lay the foundation for a long-term public-private partnership that sustains and scales the work.

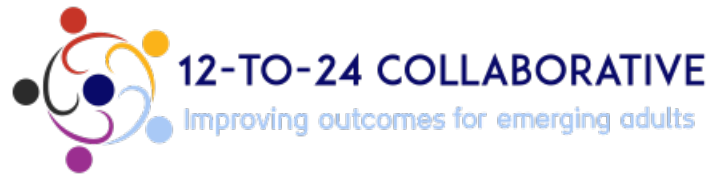
The Director will oversee the continued development of shared measurement systems, coordination of workgroups to ensure strategic alignment and continuous learning, and lead consistent, transparent communication across all partners. The Director will also support the development of programming in the future Youth Center and with developing an advocacy agenda.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The Director will work in tandem with and under the mentorship of a national consultant across many of the below areas, as needed (see “Support & Opportunities” section below). The Director’s specific responsibilities are outlined below and categorized by key functional areas to reflect the multi-faceted nature of this strategic backbone position.

### **I. Relationship Building, Culture-Building, & Member Engagement**

- Serve as the Collaborative’s **backbone and convener**, fostering **shared, authentic relationships** between the Interim Charting (and future Steering) Committee, young people, grassroots leaders, nonprofit leaders, public systems, and funders.

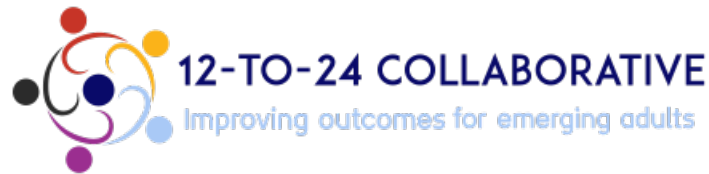


Build identity as a respected, neutral convener among a broad spectrum of local partners.

- Build **individual relationships** with all Interim Charting (and future Steering) Committee members, funders, and senior community leaders in a way that can inspire collective action without any formal authority.
- **Support and expand the Collaborative's membership and increase individual member engagement.** This will include facilitating individual conversations and group sessions with Collaborative members and the broader community to generate additional buy-in and understanding of the benefits of collective impact and membership.
- **Collaborate closely with and support the Frederick Youth Council** and its current mentor-advisor, ensuring young people are positioned as co-decision-makers, co-creators, and ambassadors of the initiative.
- **Center equity, youth, and community voice** in all aspects of the Collaborative's work, ensuring decision-making processes are inclusive and grounded in lived experience.
- **Promote a culture** of learning, experimentation, celebration, and reflection among partners to adapt and improve strategies over time.
- Act as a **neutral arbitrator** and help resolve disputes or disagreements while fostering ongoing consensus among Collaborative partners.

## II. Governance & Backbone Infrastructure

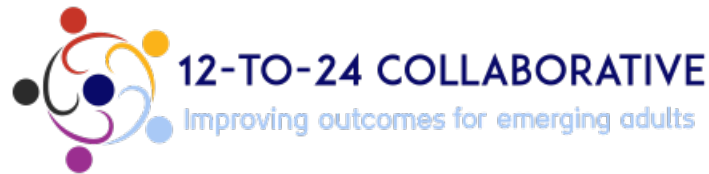
- **Support and facilitate the work of the Interim Charting (and future Steering) Committee**, ensuring that members have the information, structure, and coordination needed to make informed, inclusive decisions, including:
  - Providing logistical and planning support; developing materials; curating data and insights; sharing best practices; identifying "quick wins" and helping the group stay aligned to the shared vision, goals, and values.
- Lead the Collaborative's **internal operations**, including governance, budgeting, and administrative processes.
- **Transition** the group from the Interim Charting Committee to a permanent Steering Committee, including development of key governance documents and decision-making protocols.



- Lead a community-informed process to **identify and establish the long-term backbone structure**. Develop fiscal sponsorship, an RFP process, and/or a new entity - ensuring it reflects equity and long-term sustainability.

### III. Collective Impact Strategy & Implementation

- Lead the development of a **clear, inclusive, community-driven common agenda** to define the shared goals the initiative seeks to achieve, including measurable outcomes and strategic priorities.
- **Building on the existing 3-year data workplan and partnership with Data Driven Frederick** to establish and oversee shared measurement and continuous improvement systems that are closely aligned to the common agenda and enable partners to track progress, evaluate impact, and adjust strategies.
  - Ensure all partners are aware of targets/indicators and support with any needed data sharing agreements.
- **Foster a collaborative culture of data** use that emphasizes transparency, shared accountability, and continuous learning—where data is used not for comparison, competition, or determining funding allocation amongst individual organizations, but rather, as a tool to strengthen collective impact, build a shared case for support, and elevate all member organizations. The Director will play a critical role in building trust among partners, helping them move beyond siloed practices and fear of losing resources, and toward a shared belief that collaboration and data-sharing benefit everyone. This includes supporting the development of data dashboards and reports that inform decision-making and demonstrate collective progress across the Collaborative.
- **Support the Steering Committee in evaluating and refining the existing workgroup structure and membership** in light of the newly defined priorities (Common Agenda). The goal is to ensure “mutually reinforcing activities” – i.e., partners working on different strategies that coordinate toward the shared goals and indicators.
  - **Guide working groups** in developing specific goals, metrics, and implementation strategies based on the Common Agenda.
  - Provide **planning and logistics support**, including scheduling meetings and developing agendas, presentations, and data reports, as needed.
  - **Facilitate alignment** across workgroups, identifying opportunities for collaboration, data and best practice sharing, and eliminating redundancies.

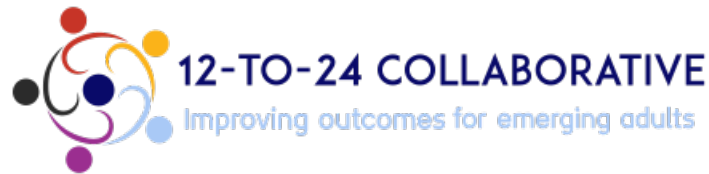


- **Analyze and monitor progress**, including indicators against specific goals identified by the Working Groups, to evaluate progress.
- **Facilitate communication** between the Interim Charting (and future Steering) Committee and Working Groups around challenges, wins, and strategic coherence.
- Co-develop **annual legislative agenda, policy, and funding recommendations** with guidance of the Interim Charting (and future Steering) Committee.
- **Lead and maintain continuous communication across the Collaborative**, ensuring transparency, trust, and alignment among all stakeholders. This includes producing regular updates to the Steering Committee and broader membership, managing external communications (e.g., website updates, newsletters, community announcements), and fostering consistent, two-way communication between partners, workgroups, youth, and the public. Lead or support briefings to city and county officials, school district leaders, and state delegates on the Collaborative's progress, including coaching the Youth Council to participate when appropriate.
- **Develop key documents**, including a cohesive, actionable 2–3 year strategic and implementation plan, building off the existing 2-year work plan, and a high-level timeline to guide ongoing work.
- The Director may support the programming at the new Youth Council.

#### **IV. Funder Engagement & Resource Mobilization**

- Build and steward a **local funder collective** to support key infrastructure such as backbone staffing, Youth Council programming, a potential resource directory, etc.
- Support the development of a **5-year budget and proposal materials**.
- **Plan and lead a public launch event** following the common agenda and funder commitments, with participation from community leaders, public officials, and potentially State leadership; also coordinate future formal or public-facing meetings of the membership, including annual meetings.
- Lead all fundraising and development efforts for the Collaborative, including strategy, grant writing, funder engagement, and post-award administration, ensuring compliance with reporting requirements and aligning resources to support shared goals.
- Help lay the groundwork for a **long-term public-private partnership** to sustain





and grow the Collaborative's work, including cultivating public sector champions.

## **V. Youth Council Administrative Lead**

In addition to the above, the Director will immediately assume full **administrative responsibility for the Frederick Youth Council**, including logistics, operations, and coordination to ensure the Council's continued growth and youth-led focus. In partnership with the Council's current mentor-advisor, the Director will also begin to support the Council's developmental and advisory needs, with the intention of gradually assuming that role over time. This role may eventually evolve into a separate position as the Council expands, but will for now include (and is not limited to):

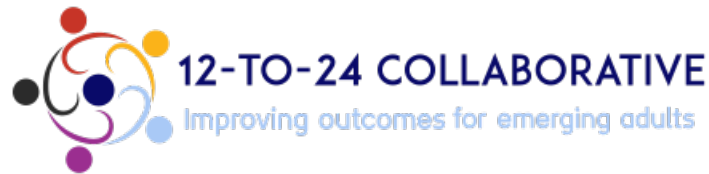
- Attending and supporting Youth Council monthly meetings.
- Ordering and coordinating food and supplies.
- Managing stipends, including banking, distribution, and budget tracking.
- Tracking attendance at all meetings and events.
- Scheduling and coordinating logistics, and obtaining parental permission (where applicable) for Youth Council events and activities.
- Managing social media, publicity, and internal communications.
- Arranging meeting sites, preparing agendas, and circulating materials.
- Coordinating transportation for Council members.
- Assisting with recruitment and nominations for the new Council.
- Supporting revisions to the Council's Charting.
- Helping organize and coordinate the Council's public engagements/events, youth trainings, and volunteer opportunities.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Experience**

- Lived experience in Frederick County is required.
- A minimum of 5 years of progressively responsible experience in nonprofit, public, and/or cross-sector leadership roles.
- Experience collaborating with or within public agencies and nonprofit service providers, especially in community-based or collective impact efforts.
- Comfort operating in fast-paced, evolving environments that require adaptability, initiative, and coordination across diverse stakeholders.
- Direct experience working with youth and youth-serving organizations, particularly in a facilitative, programmatic, or advocacy capacity. Demonstrated success in fundraising and development, including grant writing, grant seeking, grant management, and engagement with philanthropic partners.





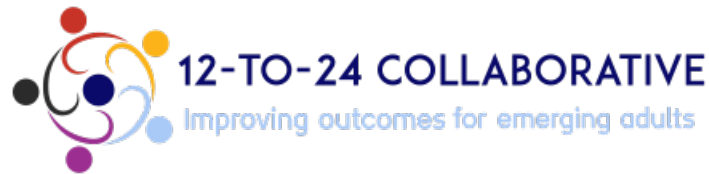
## **Core Skills & Knowledge**

- Bachelor's degree required, preferably in a relevant field such as nonprofit management, public administration, education, or a related area—or an equivalent combination of lived and professional experience, particularly within a youth-serving nonprofit or community-based organization.
- Demonstrated experience working in or with nonprofit organizations, public agencies, or cross-sector initiatives, ideally in a leadership, programmatic, or partnership capacity.
- Direct experience in youth programming, youth development, or youth advocacy, with a strong commitment to centering youth voice and supporting youth as co-leaders.
- Deep understanding of racial equity, inclusive collaboration, and systems-change practices that build trust and accountability across diverse stakeholders.
- Strong facilitation and consensus-building skills, with the ability to lead through influence, navigate power dynamics, and foster trust across lines of difference.
- Proven success in strategic planning, program implementation, and coordinating across coalitions or multi-organization initiatives.
- Demonstrated expertise in fundraising strategy, grant writing, grant management, and philanthropic engagement.
- Familiarity with data systems, shared measurement frameworks, and continuous improvement practices, and the ability to use data to inform learning and decision-making.
- High-level administrative and operational skills, including budget development, documentation, and reporting.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with comfort engaging a wide range of stakeholders—from youth and caregivers to public officials and funders.
- Ability to thrive in a fast-paced, evolving environment that requires adaptability, initiative, and long-term relationship-building.

## **CORE VALUES & ATTRIBUTES**

The Director will be a facilitative, equity-centered leader who brings humility, curiosity, and integrity to the work. This role calls for someone who:

- Recognizes collaboration as the most effective and equitable path to driving meaningful, lasting change—and is committed to building a culture of trust, transparency, and shared success across organizations.
- Is deeply aligned with the Collaborative's mission and shared values.
- Centers youth and community as co-creators of lasting change.



- Builds trusting relationships and navigates complex dynamics with care and awareness.
- Moves work forward without ego, personal agenda, or need for recognition.
- Prioritizes transparency, accountability, and shared decision-making.
- Values process and partnership over control.
- Inspires trust and alignment while honoring existing local dynamics.
- Approaches challenges with a learning mindset and emotional intelligence.
- Is energized by helping others shine and by creating collective success.
- Is comfortable with ambiguity and has the ability to thrive in a fluid, entrepreneurial environment.

## **SUPPORTS & OPPORTUNITIES**

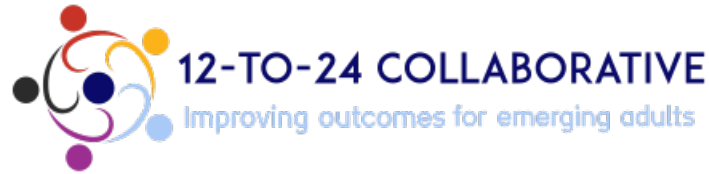
The Director will receive 1:1 guidance and coaching from a **national consultant and certified coach** with deep expertise in collective impact, fundraising, and backbone leadership for a large-scale, cross-sector initiative. Support will include:

- **Individual coaching sessions** focused on leadership development, goal-setting, and well-being.
- **Thought partnership and strategic advising** to help navigate challenges and opportunities, including curated connections to external leaders, networks, and best-in-class resources.
- **Ongoing research and adaptation of national best practices** - including tools, templates, and frameworks - tailored to the local context.
- **Support** with the development of core documents such as the 2–3 year implementation plan, governance materials, membership engagement tools, funding proposals, the common agenda, and other strategic deliverables.
- **Facilitation and presentation design** for convenings, community sessions, and funder engagements.

**Operational support** in synthesizing data and meeting materials. Additional learning and leadership opportunities include:

- **Connections to peer leaders and initiatives nationwide** through curated introductions, learning communities, and national convenings.

**Support in serving as a public ambassador and spokesperson for the Collaborative**, including public visibility and professional growth opportunities such as speaking



engagements at the city, county, and state levels, and participation in conferences, working groups, and leadership roundtables.

### **Suggested Reference Materials**

To support applicants in developing strong, contextually grounded proposals, we encourage review of key foundational documents, including the 12-to-24 Collaborative Charter, Steering Committee Report, Youth Council documents, and the Community Assessment that informed the development of the Frederick Youth Center. While not required, these materials will provide critical insight into the Collaborative's history, goals, and cross-sector approach. All reference documents can be found online at the 12-to-24 Collaborative's website: [www.frederick12to24.org](http://www.frederick12to24.org).