Call for Expert Academy Design Consultant

New Yorkers For Children (NYFC) seeks to retain an individual consultant with a demonstrated track record in program design and at least five years of lived experience in the foster care system to lead the design of a new initiative, the Expert Academy. The Expert Academy will elevate lived expertise by engaging NYFC program alumni and other individuals with foster care experience to lead learning sessions of their own design on the practical realities of adulthood. The Expert Academy responds directly to feedback from young people in NYFC's programs who have asked for more guidance on life skills, taught by those with the unique perspective of having lived through foster care, from building credit and filing taxes to securing housing and succeeding in the workplace. The Academy will help participants build confidence, expand their professional networks, and envision successful futures for themselves. NYFC is committed to the Academy being fully co-designed and led by individuals with lived experience and seeks to hire a part-time consultant to lead the design over the coming months. We have held one co-design session with six participants (three older youth and three young adults, all with lived expertise in NYC foster care), and retaining the consultant is the next step in the design process. Additional information about the Expert Academy and the scope of work is below.

About New Yorkers For Children

New Yorkers For Children (NYFC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young people impacted by the foster care system by providing direct financial, educational, and emotional support programs, working to ensure that every young person has access to the resources they need to navigate the transition to adulthood.

About the Expert Academy

The Expert Academy is a new NYFC initiative designed to help current and former foster youth build the practical knowledge, confidence, tips and connections needed to navigate adulthood. The Academy responds to a need consistently expressed by young people: access to meaningful guidance on the real-life responsibilities and decisions that come with independence, delivered by adults who understand their experiences first-hand.

Rather than relying solely on traditional instruction, the Academy will draw on the knowledge of individuals who have navigated foster care and successfully built lives beyond the system. Through interactive workshops, shared learning, and ongoing connections with trusted adults, the program will address the skills and experiences that young people identify as most relevant to their lives.

NYFC is committed to co-developing the Academy in partnership with adults and youth who have experienced foster care. The Expert Academy Design Consultant will play a central role in ensuring that the program reflects their perspectives, responds to their needs, and is grounded in the realities of transitioning from care to adulthood.

Project Summary

New Yorkers For Children seeks a professional with demonstrated experience in designing and launching youth-focused programming and lived experience in the foster care system. The Expert Academy Design Consultant will partner with the NYFC's Programs team to develop and shape the Academy from its earliest stages, while serving as overall design lead.

In collaboration with NYFC Programs team, the consultant will contribute to the Academy's curriculum, workshop structure, participant engagement strategies, and long-term vision. They will help identify potential facilitators and subject matter experts, recommend practical resources, and ensure that the Academy creates an environment where young people feel respected, supported, and empowered to participate.

This individual will bring the perspective of someone who has experienced the child welfare system firsthand and understands the challenges, gaps in preparation, and opportunities that young people encounter as they work toward independence. Drawing on their personal experience, professional knowledge, and understanding of the broader foster care community, the consultant will help translate what young people need into meaningful, relevant, and engaging program experiences.

Project Deliverables

1. Program Design and Development

- Partner with NYFC's Programs team, youth, NYFC program alumni and others with direct foster care experience to develop the vision, goals, and overall structure of the Expert Academy.
- Help translate insights from youth focus groups, participant surveys, and ongoing conversations with young people into actionable program recommendations.
- Contribute to the development of a learning model that allows participants to explore different topics through recurring workshops and shared experiences.
- Recommend approaches that balance practical instruction, peer connection, mentorship, and opportunities for personal growth.
- Help determine the appropriate program format, frequency, and duration, with consideration for the needs and schedules of young people balancing school, employment, family responsibilities, and other commitments.

- Ensure that program activities are engaging, accessible, culturally responsive, and grounded in the lived realities of current and former foster youth.

2. Curriculum and Workshop Development

Collaborate with NYFC to identify, organize, and develop learning topics that address the practical knowledge and life skills young people need to navigate adulthood. Potential areas of focus include:

- **Financial literacy:** Budgeting; banking; building, repairing and managing credit; understanding debt; filing taxes; and investment and financial planning.
- **Housing and independent living:** Understanding leases and rental agreements, navigating housing applications, maintaining housing stability, Section 8 recertification, and accessing available resources.
- **Health and wellness:** Understanding health insurance, accessing Medicaid, scheduling medical appointments, navigating reproductive and mental health services, and advocating for personal health needs.
- **Essential documents and systems navigation:** Obtaining identification, birth certificates, passports, and driver's licenses, as well as navigating the DMV, USPS, and other public systems.
- **Education and career development:** Exploring college, vocational training, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, career pathways, networking, and professional development.
- **Self-advocacy and leadership:** Building confidence, understanding personal rights, navigating systems, developing leadership skills, and advocating for oneself and one's community.
- **Identity and personal development:** Exploring self-identity, building healthy relationships, developing a sense of belonging, and establishing a vision for the future.

The consultant will lead collaborative design sessions with other alumni and youth in care to help determine which topics should be prioritized, how they should be presented, and what practical tools or resources participants should receive to apply their learning beyond the workshop.

3. Lived Experience Leadership and Expert Engagement

- Help identify and engage alumni and other professionals with foster care experience who can serve as workshop facilitators, mentors, and guest speakers.
- Craft a recruitment concept and help identify a diverse group of experts whose experiences reflect different pathways through and beyond foster care, including individuals who have recently transitioned out of care and those with more years of experience navigating adulthood.

- Contribute to the development of a supportive network that allows young people to maintain connections with Academy experts after formal programming concludes.
- Help ensure that current foster youth remain central to the Academy's design and are not overlooked in favor of alumni perspectives alone.

4. Youth Engagement, Outreach, and Accessibility

- Help develop outreach strategies that reflect how young people communicate and access information, including social media, peer networks, and other accessible platforms.
- Contribute ideas for making the Academy welcoming and relevant to youth at different stages of their educational, professional, and personal development.
- Recommend approaches to encourage consistent participation, including meaningful incentives, clear expectations, and opportunities for participants to build relationships with one another.
- Help explore hybrid participation options when needed to accommodate young people whose circumstances may limit their ability to attend in person.

5. Program Implementation and Continuous Improvement

- Participate in planning meetings with NYFC staff and other program partners.
- Review program materials, workshop plans, and participant resources to ensure they are relevant, practical, and accessible.
- Support the development and implementation of a pilot Academy, as determined in collaboration with NYFC.
- Gather feedback from participants and facilitators and recommend adjustments to improve the program experience.
- Help identify ways to measure the Academy's impact beyond attendance, including participants' confidence, practical knowledge, sense of connection, and ability to access resources.
- Contribute to the ongoing refinement of the Academy as NYFC learns from participants and evaluates the effectiveness of its approach.

Required Skills and Experience:

- 3- 5 years of demonstrated professional experience in youth program design and/or management, at least one of which was programming for youth with foster care experience.
- Exceptional project management and team coordination experience demonstrated in a professional role.

- Experience mentoring, facilitating workshops, speaking publicly, and/or working with young people.
- Reliable, well-organized self-starter with the proven ability to meet agreed-upon deadlines and project commitments.
- Personal experience of five years or more in the New York City foster care system, including experience navigating the transition toward adulthood and greater independence.
- A strong understanding of the challenges, strengths, and diverse experiences of young people involved in the child welfare system.
- The ability to reflect on personal experiences and use those insights constructively to inform program design and support the development of others.
- Demonstrated interest in youth development, mentorship, advocacy, education, or community engagement.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to engage respectfully with young people, professionals, and community partners.
- Ability to collaborate with a team, contribute ideas, receive feedback, and participate in a shared decision-making process.
- A commitment to creating inclusive, supportive, and youth-centered spaces.

Preferred:

- A bachelor's degree in a relevant field.
- Familiarity with New York City's child welfare system and the resources available to current and former foster youth.
- Professional or personal experience in one or more of the Academy's anticipated content areas, such as housing, financial literacy, education, career development, or health care navigation.

NYFC recognizes that lived experience, professional expertise, and personal growth take many forms. Candidates will be considered holistically, with particular emphasis on their ability to contribute meaningfully to the Academy's development based on professional experience in program design and coordination.

Guiding Principles

The Youth Expert Academy Design Consultant will help NYFC bring the following principles to life:

- **Lived experience is expertise.** Young people who have navigated foster care bring knowledge that cannot be replicated through professional training alone.

- Young people should help shape the programs designed for them. The Academy will be informed by the voices, priorities, and experiences of current and former foster youth.
- Preparation for adulthood must extend beyond basic survival skills. Young people deserve opportunities to build confidence, pursue their aspirations, establish meaningful relationships, and envision futures beyond the limitations of their circumstances.
- Connection matters as much as content. The relationships formed through the Academy should be a lasting source of guidance, encouragement, and support.
- There is no single pathway to success. The Academy must recognize the diversity of experiences, identities, goals, and circumstances within the foster care community.
- Learning should be practical and immediately useful. Participants should leave each experience with knowledge, tools, and resources they can apply in their everyday lives.

The ultimate goal is to build an Academy that young people recognize as their own: a place where their experiences are respected, their voices influence decisions, and they gain the knowledge, relationships, and confidence to shape their futures on their own terms.

Budget and How to Apply

The role is envisioned as a compensated consulting engagement to be delivered by the consultant in a part-time capacity over a three-month period. The total compensation for the project is up to $20,000.

NYFC is committed to creating a collaborative environment in which the consultant's perspective is valued, their contributions are acknowledged, and their role in shaping the Academy is clearly defined.

To apply, interested consultants should submit a concise proposal including the following:

- Approach to the project
- Timeline with milestones
- Budget
- Resume illustrating required skills and history requirements outlined above

Please submit to program@newyorkersforchildren.org by December 4, 2026, at 5:00 pm EST.

Feel free to direct any questions to program@newyorkersforchildren.org. Thank you for your interest.