



Center for Strategic Partnerships



**fostertogether**  
NETWORK

# TECH & TAY INITIATIVE

The Tech & TAY Initiative aimed to unearth how innovative technologies can improve the lives of transition-age foster youth (TAY): how it can address systemic challenges and how it may better be used to engage, connect, and empower TAY.

The project also piloted an innovative co-leadership approach - co-designing and pursuing all project components with individuals with lived experience. It established and collaborated with a board of former foster youth at every step of the process, from research to recommendations. In doing so, it models the way organizations and systems can offer TAY powerful leadership opportunities in projects that add greater value for everyone involved.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Top Technology-Related Findings

*The full report and comprehensive recommendations are available at [FosterTogetherNetwork.net/TAYtech](https://FosterTogetherNetwork.net/TAYtech).*

<p><b>How To Use Technology to Better Connect TAY to Resources</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resource connection is not a one-stop shop program: each youth should be met with the type of communication that works for their engagement. It is important for caregivers and professionals serving TAY to responsively utilize all forms of technology (text, email, apps such as WhatsApp and Zoom) to maintain communication and to connect youth to resources.</li> <li>2. It is important to leverage all available resources to better support youth. Lots of resources exist to provide TAY with technological tools but are not being fully utilized, all too often leaving TAY without access to online resources or awareness of what and how to navigate.</li> <li>3. It is important that social workers and resource parents receive training on the best ways to navigate websites, apps, applications, and support services, so they are better empowered and motivated to effectively create space for coaching youth and exploring opportunities together.</li> <li>4. It is important that an app be developed that connects youth to services and allows them to read reviews of providers to ensure the right fit for everyone involved.</li> </ol>
<p><b>How Technology Can Help TAY Cultivate Positive Relationships</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth recommend technology (such as Zoom, text, etc.) be used more frequently to help them connect to birth families and siblings - including incarcerated parents - and to share information amongst other TAY and resource parents.</li> <li>2. Creating courses or learning models to train youth, caregivers, social workers, and program leaders on ways to use technology to access resources, to understand both the benefits and the risks that come with engaging with net citizens, and how technology can be used to grow relationships.</li> </ol>
<p><b>How Technology Can Better Support Pregnant and Parenting Teens</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pregnant and parenting TAY should be offered virtual support groups. Virtual parenting support is a desired resource not always offered.</li> <li>2. Pregnant and parenting TAY should be supported through tech communications that work for them individually. Again, not a one-stop shop.</li> <li>3. Resources for underrepresented groups such as TAY who are parents or pregnant need to be amplified! Underrepresented groups (disabled, incarcerated, LBGQT+, bilingual as well as pregnant &amp; parenting) are often a component of a call to action instead of the priority. Parenting youth could benefit from customized approaches.</li> </ol>

Perhaps the most important and valuable part of the Tech & TAY project is that it reimagined what initiatives can look like when youth with lived experiences are placed in the driving seat.

One of the first project objectives was to show board members the value of their lived experience and how it can be used to drive system change.

Based on the positive experiences of our Leadership Board members, we wanted to provide recommendations that those who serve TAY can use to invite system-impacted youth into the leadership of their projects– including tips on how to create a cohesive environment where they can learn, explore, develop skills for future careers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Co-Planning with Youth with Lived Experience

We hope others will use these as they strategically engage those with lived experiences to create positive outcomes for both TAY participants and the projects they pursue.

<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members can develop public speaking skills through participation in important conversations where technology and transitional-aged youth needs and challenges are the focus.</li> <li>2. Members can learn interview skills by conducting interviews with content experts.</li> <li>3. Members can research scholarly journals and other academic tools which enhance their research and critical thinking skills.</li> <li>4. Members can draft, collect, and examine survey results thereby building up their critical thinking and analytical skills.</li> <li>5. Members can participate in op-ed writing to raise awareness around technology and TAY connections; they can learn journalism editing skills and become published article writers .</li> </ol>
<p><b>Challenges to anticipate:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timing is everything-- allocate extra time for a successful process that works for all.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. It was difficult to schedule interviews with content experts that aligned with youth schedules</li> <li>b. More time was needed to process and teach skills</li> <li>c. The time allocated for each meeting felt like it should have been longer.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Paying adequate compensation: our project budget had to be reconfigured to provide for an organized and youth-led board. This included needing to develop a compensation structure and affiliated documentation that would support a greater number of Advisory Board members with lived experience, clarity around roles, and a greater amount of time allotted for each member. Planning for this in advance is recommended.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Recommendations What worked:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appointing youth board members not only as advisors but also as researchers and designers (of focus groups, surveys, and recommendations) throughout the project, so that youth built career skills while simultaneously improving the outcomes and value of the project.</li> <li>2. Identifying funds and setting up clear documentation to ensure proper compensation for youth time and expectations, advising and researching in their Board roles.</li> <li>3. Utilizing online video conferencing apps like Google Meet, Zoom, and communication tools and When2meet to determine best scheduling times for interviews and one on one training.</li> <li>4. Using the project to teach career/workforce enrichment skills that individually matched each member's needs and expand their current workforce experience and capacity.</li> </ol>