



Executive Summary

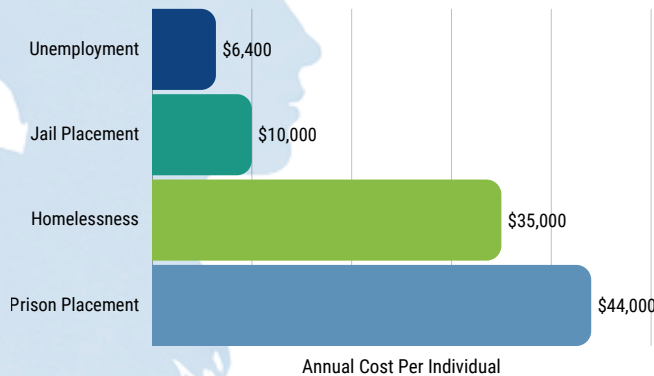
B.R.I.D.G.E. MO is a statewide initiative designed to prepare older youth in foster care for successful transition into adulthood through career exposure, job shadowing, and workforce readiness development within state government.

MLA Capstone - Class 17

September 2026

Negative Outcomes

Young adults who exit the foster care system disproportionately experience negative outcomes, including homelessness, incarceration, and unemployment. These outcomes also have a significant fiscal impact to the State of Missouri as shown below.



State Turnover

As of June 2026, the State's Talent Management Dashboard revealed departmental turnover averages, driven heavily by workforce shortages. Most notably, entry-level roles accounted for the positions with the highest turnover rates, highlighting an urgent struggle to retain staff at the ground floor of state service.

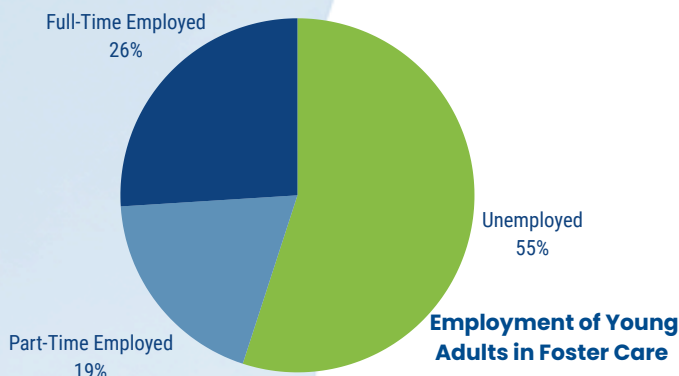
TURNOVER RATE
25.1%

TIME TO FILL
69 DAYS

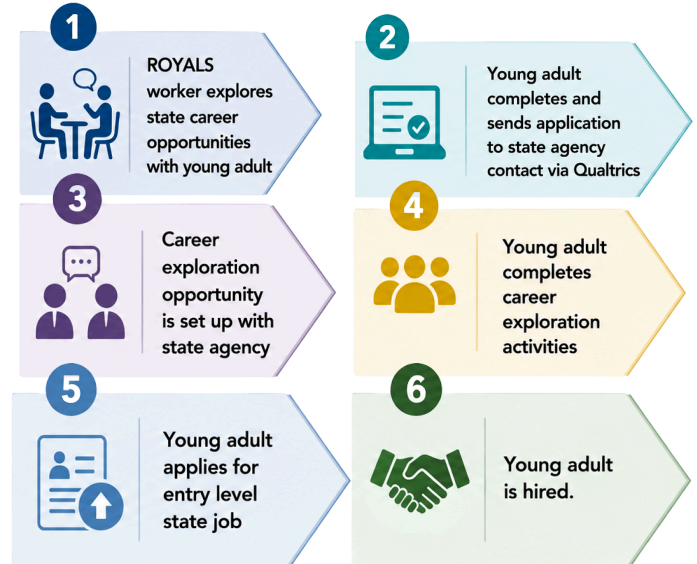
COST TO FILL
\$18,629

Employment

Nearly 74% of young adults in foster care lack full-time jobs with a living wage. With less than a year before aging out, securing stable employment is crucial to prevent negative outcomes.



The Process



GREAT for Missouri



It is an innovative pathway that helps vulnerable youth move from relying on public benefits to becoming active contributors to Missouri's economy.



It is cost-neutral, requiring no new funding or additional FTEs. Rather than expanding budgets, it leverages existing resources.



It strengthens cross-agency collaboration and allows each agency the flexibility to shape the career exploration in a way that meets their needs.



Instead of a future reactive cost, the program is a proactive investment—replacing systemic dependency with a direct pipeline into public service.

Conclusion

The absence of a structured "bridge" between foster care and public sector employment represents a missed opportunity to strengthen Missouri's workforce, improve youth outcomes, reduce long-term public costs, and build a sustainable pipeline of engaged public service.

Questions?

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