



## PILOT PROPOSAL

# 'Glow Up' Web Application

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This document describes the scope and structure of the proposed pilot program for the youth-centered “Glow Up” web app that the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) should build and test with real users.

## GOAL OF THE PILOT

We want Glow Up to make foster youth feel more in control of defining and achieving their “Plan for My Future” by providing a more interactive interface centered on their experience that puts them in charge of managing their plan, and introduces them to the resources available to support them. This pilot will be successful if it demonstrates that pilot participants are more likely than nonparticipants to achieve their transition-related goals and to use Oklahoma Successful Adulthood Program (OKSA) resources.

## PILOT FORMAT

We propose that OKDHS make the Glow Up app available to a small set of users through the pilot, before making it more widely available to foster youth. This will enable OKDHS to gather feedback from users that can inform future improvements to the app and give them the opportunity to iron out any issues, such as scaling customer support, that arise before making the app available to more users.

**Proposed structure:** We propose that the Glow Up app be made available to a small set of users in a 12-month pilot program. The development of the app will take the first 6 months, and the execution of the pilot will be another 6 months. The pilot will consist of 50 total foster youth users, with 25 aged 14–15 and 25 aged 16–17.<sup>1</sup> We grouped users by age because OKSA offers different support services according to these age groups. This will enable us to measure use of OKSA services across the 2 groups.<sup>2</sup> Each of the youth users' caseworkers and supportive adults should also be given access to the pilot app.

**Enlisting pilot participants:** OKDHS should promote this pilot to caseworkers and foster youth at OKSA-related events and communication channels such as conferences and email campaigns. In addition to direct solicitation, OKDHS should allow foster youth to voluntarily sign up to participate in the pilot should they learn about it by means such as word of mouth.

To encourage continued participation, OKDHS should offer a modest cash incentive (e.g., \$25 per goal) to youth who achieve goals, as verified by their caseworkers. To prevent abuse of this incentive program, cash payments should be limited to the duration of the pilot program and each participant should be limited to 2 payments.

## **WHAT USERS WILL BE ABLE TO DO IN THE PILOT**

The pilot version of Glow Up will focus exclusively on helping youth set goals related to **Health** and **Essential Documents**. These 2 categories represent 2 of the 7 key elements outlined in OKSA's *Plan for My Future* template.

Our choice to start with these 2 categories was based on interviews with OKDHS staff and research by [Think of Us](#), a research and design firm that focuses exclusively on improving child welfare systems. Interviews with OKDHS staff indicated that helping aging-out foster youth to get their state ID was a huge pain point, so having the pilot focus on goals related to essential documents will be incredibly valuable. Think of Us conducted a study in 2022 in which it interviewed current and former foster youth in 5 locations across the United States to understand the needs and challenges of aging foster youth. It asked interviewees what features they would want to see in an app to help them transition into adulthood, and the second most requested feature was mental and physical health support.<sup>3</sup> This is why the pilot will also focus on helping youth set goals related to health.

For more details on what users will be able to do in the pilot version of Glow Up and overall concept, see the [Design Concept](#) video.

## FEATURE LIST FOR THE PILOT

The advantage that Glow Up offers over the current paper-based system is to give foster youth, in a format designed by and for them, the tools to (1) identify their own goals, (2) break down those goals into achievable steps, and (3) ask for help from OKDHS caseworkers and other supportive adults. The Glow Up app would accomplish this by offering the following features to start, which are tailored toward helping youth identify and achieve their goals. Following feedback from pilot users, it may be appropriate to modify these features or add new ones:

- ▶ **Flexible goal-setting**, allowing youth to adapt goals suggested by OKDHS or set their own goals (for example, “Get my driver’s license by Xth birthday”). This follows a similar format to the *Plan for My Future* form that OKSA has foster youth participants fill out today. Currently, the main copy of *Plan for My Future* is filed away in the OKDHS KIDS database, which is accessible only to OKDHS staff, while foster youth and their supportive team have access only to the paper copy that they initially filled out. This feature will make this form more easily accessible and useful to the youth and their supportive team.
- ▶ **Suggested steps to accomplish each goal**, helping youth break down big goals into a series of achievable steps (“Get a copy of my birth certificate by MM/DD/YYYY”; “Pass 2 practice written driver’s tests by MM/DD/YYYY”). In its [Aged Out report](#), national nonprofit [Think of Us](#) found that youth need help practicing breaking down big goals into smaller steps.<sup>4</sup> This feature allows the youth to do just that.
- ▶ **Links to related resources**, to help youth know how to access programs and other forms of assistance in achieving individual steps (such as a list of local driving instruction schools and links to practice written tests). This feature will also be used to point youth to OKSA resources.
- ▶ **Progress tracking**, with reminders, nudges, and digital achievement badges to motivate continued youth engagement.
- ▶ **Lightweight dashboard for OKDHS and supportive adults**, to notify caseworkers when their inaction is delaying goal achievement or to prompt supportive adults to track goals and proactively. In an interview with OKDHS, we heard that a youth’s progress is often blocked because they are waiting for an action to be taken by their caseworker or a supportive adult. This feature will encourage and nudge the caseworker or supportive adult to take the necessary action to support the youth.

- ▶ **User authentication and authorization**, so that users can save their data and keep it secure. This feature is necessary for the privacy and security of our users' data.

## **MONITORING PROGRESS AND ENGAGING WITH USERS DURING THE PILOT**

At the beginning of the pilot, participants will be asked to fill out a survey collecting baseline data for their Health- and Essential Documents-related goals, as well as their **feelings of self-empowerment and mental wellness** regarding achieving those goals. The app will ask the foster youth user to fill out the same survey on a monthly basis, so the results can be compared over time. In the final month of the pilot, the survey will also ask participants how satisfied they are with the app so that we can measure user satisfaction/experience.

During the pilot, OKDHS will have access to progress reports and user feedback from the app itself. In addition to the monthly surveys, users will be able to submit feedback through the app. Finally, data analytics will be implemented in the app, so that OKDHS can monitor engagement and user behavior on the app.

In addition to the in-app engagement and monthly surveys, we propose that OKDHS gather other feedback from participants on a monthly basis. This could be in the form of roundtables (talking with a group of pilot participants), individual user interviews, and/or feedback surveys. Gathering live feedback from participants is beneficial because it will give OKDHS the opportunity to dig into trends and specific feedback that they are seeing in the in-app survey responses.

At the end of the pilot, OKDHS should evaluate survey and app data (such as user engagement and goals set and achieved) to determine the success of the pilot program, whether the app needs adjustments or additional features, and whether to roll it out more widely.

## SUCCESS METRICS

Since the goals of the Glow Up app are to (1) make foster youth feel more agency in defining and achieving their goals, (2) put them in charge of managing their plan, and (3) introduce them to the resources available to support them, we propose that the success of the pilot program be measured by whether survey data shows that the following metrics are achieved:

- ▶ Users' average **"feeling of self-empowerment"** score increases by 50%.
- ▶ Users' average **"feeling of agency"** score increases by 50%.
- ▶ Pilot participants, on average, use more OKSA resources than nonparticipants.

At least 75% of pilot participants say they are somewhat satisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied with the app.

We also propose measuring users' average "self-reported mental wellness." In its 2022 study, [Think of Us](#) found that foster youth commonly feel that their "healing and emotional well-being are a 'check the box' exercise and not a holistic, prioritized, or even named goal." One of the long-term outcomes that we hope Glow Up achieves is to improve users' emotional well-being.

We also propose that the following metrics, as measured through app data, inform OKDHS' assessment of the pilot's success:

- ▶ At least 85% of pilot participants set at least 2 goals, with one related to Health and one related to Essential Documents.
- ▶ At least 75% of participants are somewhat satisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied with the app.
- ▶ Each participant has completed at least 1 Health goal.
- ▶ Each participant has completed at least 1 Essential Documents goal.
- ▶ Each participant has made, on average, at least 50% progress on all Health goals with a deadline within the pilot period.
- ▶ Each participant has made, on average, at least 50% progress on all Essential Documents goals with a deadline within the pilot period.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PILOT

If the pilot is successful, OKDHS should make the app available to all foster youth aged 14 and older, and market it to both foster youth and caseworkers. A marketing plan for the app should include:

- ▶ Publicizing the app to caseworkers and helping them understand how it will enable them to better support aging foster youth in their caseload;
- ▶ Publicizing the app to foster youth through OKSA's youth conferences, social media, text/SMS campaigns, and emails;
- ▶ Asking pilot users to recommend the app to their peers. Think of Us' research and experience running the [Check for Us campaign](#) indicates that the most effective means of publicizing resources is peer-to-peer referrals; and
- ▶ Training caseworkers on how to use the app.

In addition, OKDHS should continue investing in adding features to the app. For example, future iterations of the app should allow users to set goals related to the other elements of *Plan My Future*, which are Housing, Education, Employment, Life Skills, and Permanent Connections.

The application could also be kept available to all aged-out youth to continue to use as a goal-setting and resource discovery tool.

## PROPOSED BUDGET AND RESOURCES

### Cost

We estimate that a successful pilot would cost about \$350,000. This estimate represents the cost of developing the app and running the pilot. If OKDHS decides to roll out the app to all foster youth aged 14 and older after the pilot, we estimate that ongoing software development and maintenance would cost about \$238,00 annually. A more detailed budget can be found in the Appendix.

### Funding Sources

A portion of costs could be funded through existing resources. For instance, OKSA already has a dedicated budget for cash incentives. OKDHS may also be able to apply for additional funds from the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Think of Us also has strong relationships with

philanthropic partners, such as The Annie E. Casey Foundation, that are interested in supporting aging-out foster youth. Think of Us may be able to broker introductions for potential pilot financing. To support the application design, OKDHS should also partner with Think of Us to leverage their existing research, learnings, and code base.

## Staffing

We suggest that the pilot program and further implementation of the pilot include the following staffing, which accounts for project management, app development, and marketing roles. For more details on the proposed staffing and budget, see the Budget addendum.

- ▶ **Program Manager:** Accountable for the overall implementation and rollout of the web application and pilot, and sets strategic priorities for the project. This role should be filled by OKDHS. The Program Manager would manage 2 primary implementation partners:
  - ▶ A technical vendor that will build the web app. The [Digital Services Coalition](#) is a pool of potential technical vendors who specialize in human-centered, agile government application development.
  - ▶ A content and marketing vendor that will curate resources and coordinate marketing campaigns. [Think of Us](#) would be an excellent vendor partner for this role.
- ▶ **Product Manager:** Owns the product roadmap and partners closely with the Program Manager to define project goals and priorities. This role can be filled by the technical vendor or OKDHS.
- ▶ **Researcher / UX designer:** Conducts qualitative research (e.g., user interviews, usability testing) and develops the user experience and user interaction patterns for the web app. This role should be filled by the technical vendor.
- ▶ **Software Engineers (3):** 1 focused on front-end, 1 focused on back-end, and 1 focused on security. These roles should be filled by the technical vendor.
- ▶ **Data Visualizer:** Works with software engineers to design data in-application views for youth, caseworkers, and OKDHS.
- ▶ **Marketing Manager:** Works with OKDHS and OKSA to develop and execute a marketing strategy to make the app and pilot known to foster youth, supportive adults, and caseworkers. This role can be filled by the content and marketing vendor.

- ▶ **Content Curator:** Develops content for the app, informed by user research and interviews with OKDHS and OKSA staff. This role can be filled by the content and marketing vendor.

For more information, please see the attached appendix for a pilot budget and the [Technical Considerations](#) guide that provides more information on the app's architecture.



## **APPENDIX: PILOT BUDGET AND STAFFING PROPOSAL**

Notes:

1. Hourly rates for this budget are based on data from the General Service Administration's Contract-Awarded Labor Category.
2. We suggest OKDHS designate an internal project manager who will manage two primary implementation partners: a technical vendor that will build the web app; and a content & marketing vendor that will curate resources and coordinate marketing campaigns. Descriptions of the roles are included in the Pilot Proposal.

The Digital Services Coalition is a pool of potential technical vendors who specialize in agile government application development.

For the content and marketing vendor, OKDHS can consider working with Think of Us. They may also be able to suggest other potential partners.

3. A portion of this budget could be funded through existing resources. For instance, OKSA already has a budget for cash incentives. OKDHS may also be able to apply for additional funds from the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Think of Us has offered to provide suggestions on potential philanthropic partners willing to fund a demonstration project.

### Pilot Development Costs

Labor				
Role	Via	Hourly Rate	Hours	Cost
Program Manager	OKDHS	\$136	75	\$10,200
Senior Product Manager	OKDHS	\$144	200	\$28,800
Researcher / UX Designer	Technical vendor	\$134	400	\$53,600
Senior Engineer (Frontend)	Technical vendor	\$138	400	\$55,200
Software Engineer (Backend)	Technical vendor	\$138	800	\$110,400
Security Engineer	Technical vendor	\$126	200	\$25,200
Data Visualizer	Technical vendor	\$122	40	\$4,880
Marketing Manager	Think Of Us (suggested)	\$122	40	\$4,880
Content Curator	Think Of Us (suggested)	\$104	200	\$20,800
			Labor Subtotal	\$313,960

Materials				
Item	Owned by	Unit Price	Quantity	Cost
Domain registration	OKDHS	\$20	1	\$20
Cloud servers	OKDHS	\$600	1	\$600
Design workshop materials	Technical vendor	\$500	4	\$2,000
Ancillary software services	OKDHS	\$30,000	1	\$30,000
Marketing materials	Think Of Us (suggested)	\$2,500	1	\$2,500
Cash incentives	OKDHS	25	50	\$1,250
			Materials Subtotal	\$36,370
			TOTAL	\$350,330

### Annual Post-Pilot Development & Maintenance Costs

Labor			
Role	Hourly Rate	Hours	Cost
Program Manager	\$136	50	\$6,800
Senior Product Manager	\$144	200	\$28,800
Researcher / UX Designer	\$134	200	\$26,800
Senior Engineer (Frontend)	\$138	200	\$27,600
Software Engineer (Backend)	\$138	400	\$55,200
Security Engineer	\$126	40	\$5,040
Data Visualizer	\$122	20	\$2,440
Marketing Manager	\$122	40	\$4,880
Content Curator	\$104	200	\$20,800
		Labor Subtotal	\$178,360

  

Materials			
Item	Unit Price	Quantity	Cost
Domain registration	\$20	1	\$20
Cloud servers	\$600	2	\$1,200
Design workshop materials	\$500	2	\$1,000
Ancillary software services	\$30,000	1	\$30,000
Marketing materials	\$2,500	1	\$2,500
Cash incentives	\$25	1000	\$25,000
		Materials Subtotal	\$59,720
		TOTAL	\$238,080

## ENDNOTES

1 OKSA provides support to young adults aged 18–26 in certain circumstances as well, but this pilot will focus on youth aged 14–17 because our focus is on aging-out youth, not youth who have already aged out of the foster care system.

2 Under its [authorizing legislation](#), for youth aged 14–15, OKSA offers youth development funds, incentive payments, and teen panels. For youth aged 16 and older, OKSA offers the following additional services: community-contracted services, educational opportunities and scholarships, youth and adult advisory boards, voluntary placement, and credit reports.

3 Sixto Cancel, Sarah Fathallah, Marina Nitze, Sarah Sullivan, and Emily Wright-Moore, [“Aged Out: How We’re Failing Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care”](#), Think of Us, (2d ed. 2022): 47.

4 Id. at 49.

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