



**Chief Financial Officer**  
Oakland or Los Angeles, CA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**First Place for Youth** (First Place) helps foster youth build the skills they need to make a successful transition to self-sufficiency and responsible adulthood. Believing that foster youth, like all youth, need a runway of support to transition from adolescence to adulthood, First Place partners with young people in finding a safe place to live, getting their first job, and continuing their education. Headquartered in Oakland, CA, First Place has expanded rapidly in recent years and now serves young people in six California counties and two additional states, with additional expansion on the horizon. As it navigates a new era of scale and impact, First Place seeks a mission-driven, collaborative leader and strategist with experience leading in the context of growth, programmatic excellence, and sustainability to serve as **Chief Financial Officer** (CFO).

Reporting to the CEO, the Chief Financial Officer will drive the financial planning and accountability functions throughout the organization as they plan for further national expansion of an affiliate network. Working closely with the Chief Executive Officer and the senior management team, s/he/they will bring strategic financial acumen to bear in setting the agency's future direction, shaping policy and funding priorities, monitoring relevant shifts in the regional and national landscape, and developing the systems and practices that will allow First Place to fully capture those opportunities for expansion.

The ideal candidate will be a seasoned and strategic finance professional with experience in nonprofit management, preferably in the context of a multi-site program with diverse funding streams. S/he/they will demonstrate exceptional analytical, consultative, and collaborative leadership skills in both guiding and developing the finance team, creating and implementing systems and processes to ensure compliance, efficiency, and excellence across the department, and as a crucial member of the senior leadership team. S/he/they will have a strong personal commitment to First Place's mission to serving youth; a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and continuous learning and reflection; and the ability to grow along with the organization as it plans for a new era of expansion and impact.

This search is being conducted with support from [NPAG](#). Application instructions can be found at the end of this document.

## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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**First Place for Youth** (First Place) is a national leader in building and utilizing evidence for how to most effectively address the needs of foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Driven by a relentless pursuit of excellence, First Place is working to increase awareness, change perceptions, and build a movement to eliminate the disparities between foster youth and their non-foster peers.

## VISION, HISTORY & KEY PROGRAMS

**First Place for Youth believes that all foster kids in the United States can make a successful transition to adulthood, eliminating the disparities between foster youth and their non-foster care peers.** First Place knows that, just like all youth, foster youth need a runway of support in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Unfortunately, in the United States, many foster youth lack supports for housing, education, or other assistance from caring adults; without this:

- 35% of former foster youth experience homelessness;
- 20% will be arrested or incarcerated;
- 54% will drop out of high school; and
- 99% will never graduate from college.

First Place partners with young people in finding a safe place to live, getting their first job, and continuing their education – interventions that are carefully designed, tested, and proven to lead to decreased rates of chronic homelessness, incarceration, and long-term poverty. Since its inception, First Place’s programs have demonstrated that with the right leadership and support, transition-age foster youth can defy these odds.

Founded in 1998 by graduate students Amy Lemley and Deanne Pearn at the University of California at Berkeley-Goldman School of Public Policy, First Place began with a small grant to provide critical housing and education support to four alumni of foster care. With growing awareness of the significant challenges youth face in exiting foster care, First Place became the first organization in Northern California dedicated exclusively to addressing the lack of affordable housing and resources for this population. With the support of transformational leadership, including that of outgoing CEO Sam Cobbs, First Place has grown into a nationally-recognized organization providing evidence-informed, customized interventions that drive meaningful and measurable change in the long-term success of young people exiting foster care.

Grounded in positive youth development theory, First Place’s approach focuses on partnering with youth in service delivery and providing opportunities that meet their full range of developmental needs – educational, economic, social, and psychological. First Place delivers these interventions through three key program models:

## **My First Place**

*My First Place (MFP)* is a nationally-recognized model for providing current and former foster youth necessary support in their transition to adulthood. The program provides one or two-bedroom apartments, support with move-in costs, rent, furnishings, health and nutrition resources, employment support, and other essential services. Program staff work directly with young people to collectively set and work toward goals, allowing young people to move toward greater independence. MFP serves the most vulnerable former and current transition-age foster youth (ages 18 to 24) who are otherwise often unprepared for independent living. MFP employs a youth-centered, needs-driven, trauma-informed approach to providing youth with support and coaching to learn independent living skills across life domains through real world application.

## **Steps to Success**

The *Steps to Success* program within First Place is a Career Pathway Program that provides current and former foster youth critical educational and employment supports that increase their ability to perform effectively at a post-secondary level, and ultimately to secure sustainable, living-wage employment. Youth receive one-on-one support to explore and identify a career pathway of interest, work toward stackable vocational certificates, and transition into internships where they gain technical skills and work-based experience. Program staff also work directly with young people in providing education planning, course selection, tutoring, career counseling, resume writing, and other services that directly support their long-term goals.

## **First Foundation/ Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP)**

Key to First Place's commitment to providing preventative services to foster youth still in care, the *First Foundation* program is a nationally-recognized, intensive academic and personal counseling program (part of the larger Independent Living Skills Program) that works to keep foster youth from dropping out of school. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has highlighted First Foundation as one of 20 "best practice programs" in the country.

## **IMPACT & EXPANSION**

Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, First Place has demonstrated extraordinary impact and success as measured by the outcomes of the foster youth and former foster youth that they serve.

With the support of Tipping Point Community, The Kresge Foundation, The Conrad Hilton Foundation, and New Profit Inc., among others, First Place has built upon its early work in specialized housing and services for former foster youth in Oakland, incorporating and expanding its nationally-recognized employment and education programming. This holistic, evidence-based and comprehensive approach is changing the dialogue around emancipated youth, shaping the culture and practices of child welfare, and affecting legislation in a way that supports the desired outcome of self-sufficiency.

Since its founding, First Place's work has been driven by two simultaneous goals: provide result-driven direct services to young people while also initiating and shaping public policies that will improve the lives of youth as they transition out of foster care. By ensuring that effective, evidence-informed direct services drive the organization's public policy

efforts, First Place has a unique opportunity to continually inform, test, implement, and refine services for young people in order to support policies that drive the best long-term outcomes for the largest number of foster youth.

The success of First Place's programming has also attracted significant support from a diverse group of private and public funders, furthering the long-term sustainability of the work. Now one year ahead of schedule, First Place's *Ready to Launch Campaign* has raised more than the \$15M goal, building a financial foundation for the expansion and enrichment of programs as the work continues to scale rapidly.

### **My First Place Affiliate Network**

Over the past five years, First Place has focused significantly on the refinement and expansion of the flagship *My First Place* (MFP) program. The newly formed *My First Place Affiliate Network* has begun to replicate this model in Boston and the state of Mississippi, with plans for additional expansion to New York City in process. First Place plans to continue this work, partnering with independent 501(c)3 organizations to launch additional affiliate MFP programs in five to seven cities in the next few years. This affiliate network model allows First Place to leverage existing infrastructure and talent and allow for necessary adaptation while still upholding rigorous standards for quality and outcomes that are driven by evaluation.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE NEW CFO**

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The CFO will be a forward-looking and flexible thinker with the ability to quickly gather and synthesize information to drive rigorous planning and decision-making processes. S/he/they can expect to engage with the following challenges and opportunities:

### **Finance Leadership and Strategic Vision**

- Provide proactive financial planning support and bring an entrepreneurial approach to creating and assessing financial strategies and funding mechanisms by way of recommendations, development of benchmarks, and analysis of progress. Work closely with the CEO and senior leadership team to ensure that organizational initiatives and activities are aligned with the financial growth strategy of First Place.
- Refine systems for generating real-time forecasts and other financial tools to support the organization in making sound business decisions, developing philanthropic support, and building capacity to review programs from a budgeting perspective.
- Advise CEO and key members of senior management on finances including planning, budgeting, cash flow, investment priorities, and policy matters.
- Serve as the management liaison to the board and audit committee; effectively communicate and present critical financial matters at select board of director and committee meetings.
- Lead proactive communications efforts to keep the CEO, senior leadership team, and board continuously up to date on the financial status of the organization and drive momentum on new initiatives.
- Represent the organization externally as necessary, particularly with respect to banking and lease negotiations.

## **Organizational Management and Development of the Finance Systems and Processes**

- Create systems to produce accurate and timely information on the financial status of all programs and departments upon request, including reports that enable First Place directors and managers to monitor and manage their own departmental, team, or project budgets.
- Oversee the annual audit and ensure a clean opinion.
- Plan, coordinate, and execute the annual budget process. Lead the development of a set of annual planning tools and systems that encompass broader strategic goals.
- Upgrade and implement an appropriate system of policies, internal controls, accounting standards, and procedures. Provide analytical support to the leadership team including development of internal management reporting capabilities.
- Improve administrative and accounting services such as treasury management, 403B plans, grants payment processing, payroll, accounts payable, and purchasing. Ensure accuracy and compliance with First Place accounting policies and procedures as well as regulatory compliance and sales tax reporting.

## **Staff Development and Performance Management**

- Ensure that staff members receive timely and appropriate training. Establish and monitor staff performance and development goals, assign accountabilities, set objectives, establish priorities, conduct annual performance appraisals, and administer all aspects of employee relations for assigned staff.
- Promote a culture of high performance and continuous improvement that values learning and a commitment to quality and customer service.
- Exemplify First Place's commitment to serving and empowering youth and advance a culture of respect and inclusion that respects individuals and their unique contributions.

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

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While no one candidate will embody all the qualifications enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal capacities, attributes, and experiences:

- Sophisticated leadership skills and presence developed through a minimum of eight to ten years of progressive nonprofit financial leadership experience preferably in a high-growth, best-in-class organization with a youth-facing and/or direct service focus; Demonstrated values-based leadership and the highest levels of personal and professional integrity;
- Experience managing a variety of sources of grants and contracts, and gathering accurate financial data for government and foundation grant proposals and reports is required; Comprehensive and expert knowledge of internal controls, FASB, GAAP, government accounting policies, cost allocation procedures, and fund accounting is desirable;

- Experience leading budget development, financial modeling, and forecasting processes in a non-profit organization; Strong cross-functional capacity to both lead and participate across teams to define issues and agree on processes, strategies, and outcomes;
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills including the demonstrated ability to research, synthesize, and analyze information, compose documents, and present data in a clear and concise manner to appropriate personnel, including top management, program staff, and/or Board of Directors;
- Strong customer service orientation and willingness to be a consistent resource to staff around issues of finance, budgeting, and planning;
- Collaborative work style and the ability to either take direction or work independently as the situation requires; Sets clear goals with staff and uses data to evaluate progress towards goals; Creates and communicates vision and then empowers team to carry it out; Proactively addresses performance issues by diagnosing problems, developing solutions, and monitoring progress; Celebrates accomplishments, and invests in staff using both collaboration and guidance;
- Strongly results-driven with detail orientation; Demonstrated ability to think strategically while executing tactically within a resource-constrained environment;
- Sense of humor, humility, perspective, and balance;
- Proficiency with standard finance systems and tools is required; Working knowledge of Sage MIP fiscal software not required, but a plus;
- Bachelor's degree in relevant field from an accredited institution required. Advanced degree and/or CPA preferred.

## TO APPLY

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More information about First Place for Youth may be found at: [www.firstplaceforyouth.org](http://www.firstplaceforyouth.org)

This search is being conducted with support from Allison Kupfer Poteet, Nureen Das, and Chris Cannon of [NPAG](#). Nominations, inquiries, and/or applications, including a cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, and your resume should be submitted to: [FPFY-CFO@nonprofitprofessionals.com](mailto:FPFY-CFO@nonprofitprofessionals.com)

**First Place for Youth is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity.  
Candidates of all backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.**