

# Iowa 4-H Youth Development Plan

## *How we achieve our mission*

### Our Mission

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

### Our Niche

Positive youth development helps young people become competent, caring, contributing, confident, connected, and capable through a series of progressive learning experiences with caring adults. (Lerner et al, 2005). These experiences involve meeting the four needs of youth (Brendtro et al, 1992), fostering the eight essential elements (National 4-H Headquarters, 2001), and achieving the five life skill outcomes.

Iowa 4-H will focus on positive youth development. Staff will work with youth, volunteers, and professionals to plan, implement, and evaluate a progressive series of educational programs and experiences that work toward multiple life skill outcomes. *Positive youth development programs focus on connecting young people with caring adults and involving them over an extended period of time.*

Staff will work with youth, volunteers, and professionals to plan, implement and evaluate programs and experiences that have short term contact with young people to reach new and under-served audiences, address priority topics, and build collaborations. Ideally, the goal is to move youth into long-term sustained programs.

Staff will model youth-adult partnerships in the 4-H program. Staff will work with state and community organizations and leaders to assist them in creating positive youth development environments that will engage youth in decision-making roles. This work will help build the community's capacity for youth/adult partnerships.

The outcome of a quality 4-H Youth Development Program is a young person who can demonstrate

1. Leadership—the ability to influence and support others in a positive manner for a common goal.
2. Citizenship—the opportunity, right, and responsibility to contribute to shaping the world around oneself and provide service to others.
3. Communications—the exchange of thoughts, information, or messages among individuals, as well as, the sending and receiving of information using speech, writing, and gestures.
4. Personal Life Management—the skills needed to navigate in a changing world and to lead a healthy lifestyle.
5. Knowledge—the mastery of new skills and information related to self-selected areas of interest.

# ■■■■■■■■■■ Our Priorities, Emerging Issues and Strategies ■■■■■■■■■■

## **Our Priorities**

1. Extraordinary Learning Experiences—to provide learning experiences and environments for youth to develop competencies in the areas of leadership, citizenship, communication, personal life management, and knowledge.
2. Capacity Building for Positive Youth Development—to build state and community level capacity to ensure policies and opportunities that are based on the principles and practices of positive youth development.

## **Emerging Issues**

1. Initiating Youth in Governance
2. Investing in 4-H Afterschool
3. Expanding 4-H Clubs
4. Strengthening Volunteer Development

## **Strategy: Curricula and Program**

1. Intentionally design learning experiences that contribute to the five outcomes, eight essential elements, and four needs of youth.
2. Facilitate progressive learning experiences that connect caring adults with youth over an extended period of time.
3. Create and model youth-adult partnerships in designing, implementing, and evaluating curricula and programs.
4. Utilize research base for program content and delivery.

## **Strategy: Program and Activity Assessments and Outcome Evaluation**

1. Develop training and methods of program evaluation to measure the life skills inherent in the five outcomes.
2. Collect and use data to help with evaluation and decision making (*i.e.*, cost-benefit analysis, statistical information, current research articles, authentic assessments, surveys, and outcome evaluations).
3. Analyze activities and their policies and procedures to ensure alignment with positive youth development.

## **Strategy: Volunteer Development**

1. Create a statewide youth and adult volunteer development system and supports to sustain a positive youth development program (*i.e.*, identification, selection, orientation, training, use of volunteer skills, recognition, and evaluation).
2. Engage adult and youth volunteers in helping guide volunteer development.
3. Strengthen communication among youth, volunteers, and staff.

### **Strategy: Audience Development and Marketing**

1. Create an image of 4-H as a leader in positive youth development.
2. Research and utilize 4-H youth development delivery methods that are practical for today's youth and adults.
3. Identify and apply proven strategies to develop, retain, and sustain involvement of youth.
4. Review statistics and set audience development goals to reach new, diverse, and under-served audiences with positive youth development experiences.

### **Strategy: Strategic Positioning**

1. Assess the needs and strengths of youth in the state and community.
2. Assess the role of the 4-H Youth Development Program in meeting the needs and utilizing the strengths of youth in the state and community.
3. Position the 4-H Youth Development Program to better serve the needs of youth in the state and community.

### **Strategy: Community Capacity Building**


1. Support and influence state and community partners—the people, programs, policies, and practices—that impact the lives of young people and their families.
2. Assist communities and organizations in increasing their ability to design positive youth development opportunities.
3. Engage young people as partners in addressing state and community issues.
4. Provide training, coaching, and consultation to state and community youth organizations and leaders to assess needs and strengths that ensure positive youth development.

### **Strategy: Resource Development**

1. Create opportunities for the development of public and private funding at the community, county, and state levels.
2. Develop consistent processes/guidelines for use across our 4-H system in securing outside funds.
3. Develop strategic collaborations and partnerships to achieve the 4-H mission and priorities.

### **References**

- Brendtro, Larry, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service. 1992
- Lerner, Richard M. et al. *Positive Youth Development, Participation in Community Youth Development Programs, and Community Contributions of Fifth-Grade Adolescents: Findings From the First Wave Of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*. *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 2005 25: 17-71. 2005  
<http://jea.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/25/1/17>
- National 4-H Headquarters. *Prepared and Engaged Youth: National 4-H Impact Assessment Project*. 2001  
<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/about/impact/impact1.pdf>
- Iowa State University Extension 4-H Youth Development. *The Iowa 4-H Youth Development Experience*, Iowa State University Extension, 4H 3020. 2005

4-H is a community of  
 young people  
across America who are learning  
leadership, citizenship and  
life skills.

... and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Stanley R. Johnson, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.