

IOWA 4-H VOLUNTEER PLAN OF WORK COMMITTEE

2005 4-H STAFF SURVEY REPORT

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Background

A survey to Iowa 4-H Staff was distributed to approximately 220 staff members in February 2005. The intent of the survey was to obtain feedback from staff in an effort to develop a more consistent, efficient, and effective statewide 4-H volunteer development system that will meet the needs of youth, families, and volunteers. The first section of the survey consisted of items that requested demographic information (e.g., staff role, number of years coordinating 4-H club events). Several items focused on aspects of staff and volunteer training by assessing satisfaction with staff training, examining aspects of leader training (e.g., number of training sessions offered in county, number of volunteers who attended training sessions, topical areas, who implements training), and assessing satisfaction with the quality and content of volunteer training. Additional questions concerning volunteer training assessed types of volunteer development support that would be valuable, considered effective ways to for staff to receive training, explored methods used to provide volunteer training, and examined if training has helped clubs meet guidelines and expectations.

In addition to items concerning staff and volunteer training, the survey considered three other areas. First, the survey examined participation in and helpfulness of the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey. Second, the survey explored staff members' perceptions of consequences for a club leader if a club is not meeting 4-H expectations. Third, several open-ended questions addressed overall impressions of the 4-H experience including beliefs about outcomes for youth, volunteer needs to support youth outcomes, and staff member's self-perceived role in supporting the 4-H program.

Results

A total of 96 individuals completed the survey, representing over 70 counties in Iowa. Respondents included 19 County Extension Education Directors (CEED), 47 County Youth Coordinators (CYC), 26 Youth Field Specialists (YFS), and four Office Assistants (OA). Responses to the number of years staff members have coordinated 4-H club events in a county were as follows: CEEDs ranged from 1 to 30 years with a mean of 13.72 years, CYCs ranged from 0 to 25 with a mean of 5.77 years, YFSs ranged from 1 to 26 with a mean of 7.54 years, and only one OA reported the number of years coordinating 4-H club activities.

The survey results discussion first considers themes regarding staff and volunteer training. The next section examines club leader support items. The following section considers responses to questions regarding the Strengthening 4H Clubs Survey. The next section considers responses to the question regarding consequences for leaders of clubs that are not meeting expectations. Lastly, the results section provides a summary of themes regarding respondents' perceptions of outcomes for 4-H youth.

Staff Training

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with “the training you need to support your role.” It is important to note that the survey instrument listed the response scale in the following order: Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied, Not Satisfied. Therefore, the results below should be interpreted with caution in the event that a respondent did not carefully read the response scale. Table 1 provides the frequency distribution of satisfaction responses by staff role. It is difficult to determine if a majority of the overall respondents (52.7%) were somewhat satisfied with the training, or if individuals intended to rate their satisfaction as a “3” on a possible 4-point scale. In addition, the last column in the table should be interpreted with caution.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Satisfaction with Staff Training by Role

Item	Staff Role	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	% Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Training you need to support your role	CEED	5.3%	47.1%	35.3%	11.8%	47.1%
	CYC	0.0%	40.4%	38.3%	21.3%	59.6%
	YFS	0.0%	80.0%	12.0%	8.0%	20.0%
	OA	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
	All Respondents	1.1%	52.7%	29.0%	17.2%	46.2%

Respondents provided comments regarding their satisfaction with the training needed to support their staff role. These comments are provided in Appendix A. The comments provide a few recommendations for future training efforts such as providing hands-on training sessions that apply to the position, offering ready-to-use resources, and developing an intentional long-term training plan.

Respondents provided comments regarding the training that they are receiving or the training that they need. Staff suggested that future training include information about available resources, an overview of curricular resources, information about new ideas, basic information such as how to make presentations or produce quality fair exhibits, and a general overview of the 4-H program. Respondents’ comments are provided in Appendix B.

Staff were asked to indicate their beliefs regarding their role in support of the 4-H program. The comments are provided in Appendix C. In general, the comments indicate that staff see their role as individuals who provide training for staff, inform the staff and clubs, and support the leaders, members, and parents.

Volunteer Training

Staff respondents indicated that the counties offered an average of 2.69 leader trainings last year. The number of trainings offered ranged from 0 to 5 trainings. Staff members were asked to indicate how many volunteers attended leader trainings. Some respondents indicated the number of volunteers who attended each training session, while others provided the aggregate number of volunteers who attended any training sessions. For some responses, it is difficult to determine if the number represents an average attendance or total attendance, therefore, the results should be interpreted with some caution. The responses ranged from 2 to 82 with an average of 25.53.

Staff were asked to indicate who is in charge of designing and implementing volunteer training in the county. Table 2 provides a summary of staff responses. The most common responses included the CYC, the CYC and YFS, and a combination of the CEED, CYC, and YFS.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Individuals Responsible for Volunteer Training

Staff / Staff Combination	<i>n</i>
YFS	1
CYC	18
CEED	1
YFS and PA	1
CYC and YFS	28
CYC and CEED	5
CEED, CYC, and YFS	29
CEED, CYC, YFS, and PA	2
Committee (staff and volunteers)	3

One survey question asked staff to indicate the minimum amount of training a leader should participate in per year. As seen in Table 3, over half of the respondents thought two training sessions represented the minimum amount. Individuals who selected “other” indicated that leaders should receive as much training as possible and that these numbers represented a minimum.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Minimum Leader Training Amount by Role

Item	Staff Role	One Workshop	Two Workshops	Three Workshops	Other
What do you feel is the minimum amount of training a leader should participate in per year	CEED	21.1%	47.4%	10.5%	10.5%
	CYC	19.1%	53.2%	19.1%	6.4%
	YFS	16.0%	52.0%	16.0%	16.0%
	OA	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
	All Respondents	18.3%	51.6%	18.3%	10.8%

The frequency of topics covered in training sessions is displayed in Table 4. As seen in Table 4, a majority of the respondents indicated that the county provided training on fair information, project information, Eight Essential Elements, effective club meeting management, and how to work with kids. Other common training topics included experiential learning, how to involve parents, and youth and adult partnerships. Staff included examples of other training topics that were not listed including food and fitness, program planning, fundraising, risk management, and design/art principles.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Training Topics by Percent

Topic	<i>n</i>	Percent
Fair information	86	94.5%
Project information	79	86.8%
Eight Essential Elements	76	83.5%
Effective club meeting management	65	71.4%
How to work with kids	54	59.3%
Experiential Learning	41	45.1%
How to involve parents	39	42.9%
Youth and adult partnerships	39	42.9%
Ages and Stages	12	13.2%
How to start a club	8	8.8%

Staff were asked to provide ideas for training topics that are most important for new volunteers, volunteers with 3-5 years of experience, and volunteers with more than five years of experience. The responses are provided in Appendices D, E, and F.

Staff rated their satisfaction with the training quality and content. Again, it is important to note that the survey instrument listed the response scale in the following order: Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied, Not Satisfied. Table 5 provides the distribution of satisfaction responses by staff role.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Satisfaction with Volunteer Training by Role

Item	Staff Role	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	% Satisfied
						or Very Satisfied
How satisfied are you with the quality and content of the training that is held in your county for volunteers	CEED	11.8%	58.8%	23.5%	5.9%	29.4%
	CYC	4.3%	50.0%	34.8%	10.6%	45.4%
	YFS	4.3%	69.6%	13.0%	13.0%	26.0%
	OA	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	66.7%
	All Respondents	5.6%	56.2%	25.8%	12.4%	38.2%

Staff provided comments regarding their satisfaction with the quality and content of volunteer training. Appendix G provides staff comments. Staff comments indicate that leaders want practical information, compared to theoretical content such as leadership. Comments also suggest that leader attendance (frequency and motivation) is a concern for staff.

Staff noted effective ways to receive training in volunteer development. As seen in Table 6, nearly all individuals indicated that meeting face-to-face is an effective way to receive training. Over half of the respondents stated that Internet, DVD or videotape, and ICN are effective ways to receive training. In comparison to other staff members, CYC staff offered less support for the effectiveness of the Internet, while YFS staff offered less support for the ICN.

Table 6 Frequency Distribution of Effective Ways to Receive Training In Volunteer Development

Support Type	CEED		CYC		YFS		OA		Total	
	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent
Face to Face	15	93.8%	43	93.5%	23	95.8%	3	75.0%	84	94.4%
Internet	10	62.5%	22	47.8%	17	70.8%	2	50.0%	51	57.3%
DVD or Videotape	9	56.3%	29	63.0%	14	58.3%	2	50.0%	54	60.7%
ICN	11	68.6%	32	69.6%	13	54.2%	2	50.0%	58	65.2%
Other	4	21.1%	3	6.4%	5	19.2%			12	13.5%

Staff members provided other examples of effective ways to receive training in volunteer development including newsletters and Breeze.

Staff provided information regarding the methods used for training volunteers. As seen in Table 7, nearly all individuals reported using face-to-face meetings for training, with use of DVDs or videotapes as the second most popular method of training delivery. When comparing responses by staff role, CEEDs reported greater use of the Internet and DVD or videotape, while CYCs reported higher use of the ICN. Staff respondents listed other ways of delivering training including email, newsletters, and direct mailings.

Table 7: Frequency Distribution of Volunteer Training Methods by Staff Role

Training Method	CEED		CYC		YFS		OA		Total	
	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent
Face to Face	16	100.0%	44	97.8%	25	100.0%	4	100.0%	89	98.9%
Internet	4	25.0%	6	13.3%	3	12.0%	-	-	13	14.4%
DVD or Videotape	7	43.8%	13	28.9%	5	20.0%	-	-	25	27.8%
ICN	1	6.3%	10	22.2%	2	8.0%	-	-	13	14.4%
Other	4	25.0%	8	17.8%	5	19.2%	2	50.0%	19	21.1%

Two survey items asked staff to indicate if the training offered in the county helped the club meet 4-H expectations and helped the club meet 4-H leader expectations. A majority of the respondents ($n = 54$, 62.1%) indicated that the training helped their club meet 4-H club guidelines (i.e., build youth and adult partnerships, set annual goals and evaluate progress, plan educational programs, involvement in community service activities, and keep records of activities). Similarly, a majority ($n = 56$, 64.4%) responded that the training helped the club meet 4-H leader expectations (i.e., participate in training, guide members in planning program, provide supervision, follow expectations for adult behavior, and help clubs meet 4-H guidelines). The distribution of ratings regarding how training has helped clubs and leaders meet 4-H guidelines is provided in Table 8.

Table 8: Frequency Distribution of Training Impact

Item	Staff Role	Yes	Somewhat	No
Do you feel the training you offer in your county has helped <i>your club</i> meet 4-H club guidelines	CEED	43.8%	50.0%	6.3%
	CYC	60.9%	39.1%	-
	YFS	76.2%	23.8%	-
	OA	75.0%	25.0%	-
	All Respondents	62.1%	36.8%	1.1%
Do you feel the training you offer in your county has helped <i>leaders</i> meet 4-H leader expectations	CEED	62.5%	37.5%	-
	CYC	73.3%	26.7%	-
	YFS	45.5%	27.3%	27.3%
	OA	75.0%	25.0%	-
	All Respondents	64.4%	28.7%	6.9%

Appendix H provides comments regarding how training has helped clubs meet 4-H expectations. Appendix I provides comments regarding how training has helped club leaders meet 4-H expectations.

Staff members provided ideas for kinds of volunteer development support that would be valuable to have from area staff, the state 4-H office, and other sources. Respondents' comments are provided in Appendices J, K, and L.

Strengthening 4-H Club Survey

The survey also asked staff to comment on their participation in the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey and the helpfulness of the survey in improving the club climate for youth. A majority of the respondents (64.8%) indicated that they have participated in the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey in the past three years. Many individuals who have not participated in the club survey commented that they did not know about the survey. Others indicated a lack of interest from the volunteers, a lack of support in using the data, and a lack of time. One comment suggested that leaders may be reluctant to participate due to fear of evaluation.

When asked to indicate the helpfulness of the survey in improving the club climate for youth, the individuals who participated in the survey responded as follows: one person indicated that it was not helpful, 18 indicated it was somewhat helpful, and 14 indicated it was helpful.

Club Expectations

Respondents were asked to indicate their feelings regarding the consequences for club leaders when a club is not meeting 4-H expectations. Their responses are summarized in Table 9. Individuals who indicated "other" offered a variety of suggestions. Overall, many

comments indicated finding ways to meet with the leader and provide support. For example, many respondents suggested that staff (e.g., CYC) should visit the club, gather information, and offer support. Other comments indicated the importance of recognizing and being sensitive to the volunteer status of leaders. A few comments indicated that there is no method to determine if clubs are meeting expectations. While several comments recommended addressing the issue on a case-by-case basis, one person suggested the need to develop a statewide consensus on how to address this issue.

Table 9: Frequency Distribution of Consequences for Clubs Not Meeting Expectations

Consequence	CEED <i>n</i>	CYC <i>n</i>	YFS <i>n</i>	OA <i>n</i>	Total <i>n</i>
Replace leader	-	-	4.5%	-	1.1%
Leader given a warning and an opportunity to improve	31.3%	45.7%	18.2%	66.7%	36.8%
Club loses its charter	-	-	-	-	-
Club given warning its charter may be revoked and given an opportunity to improve	-	6.5%	13.6%	-	6.9%
Nothing	6.3%	4.3%	4.5%		4.6%
Other	62.5%	43.5%	59.1%	33.3%	50.6%

Outcomes of 4H Experience for Youth

Staff were asked to indicate their beliefs regarding the outcomes of the 4-H experience for youth. Table 10 summarizes their comments.

Table 10: Outcomes of 4-H Experience

Outcome	<i>n</i>
Communication/public speaking	47
Leadership	40
Confidence/self-esteem	19
Citizenship	18
Life skills	18
Community service	16
Set goals	10
Responsibility	9
Teamwork	9
Record keeping	8
Friendship	7
Independence	7
Organization skills	5
Social/interpersonal skills	5
Fun	4
Decision-making skills	4
Healthy relationships (peers, youth, adults)	3
Planning skills	3
Belonging	2
Career exploration	2
Time management skills	2

Staff respondents provided ideas regarding volunteer needs to reach the outcomes of the 4-H experience. These ideas are listed in Appendix M.

Club Recognition

Staff provided ideas for ways to recognize clubs that are meeting expectations. Several comments indicated that it would be nice to recognize clubs at the local, county, and state levels. Suggestions included receiving a call or personalized letter from a 4-H staff member, publicizing the accomplishments in newsletters and newspapers, providing certificates or plaques, using the Banner Club by providing buttons for banners, recognizing clubs at fairs, or providing a pizza party. Others, however, indicated that recognition was not necessary for

meeting expectations and that successful clubs will receive recognition as a result of their efforts.

One individual suggested developing standards of excellence and then providing a symbol to designate clubs that meet these standards.

Overall

The final questions asked staff members to provide information regarding what support, resources, and training they need from Area and State Specialists to offer great volunteer training; what barriers exist to providing quality training, and what support, resources, and training do they need from Area and State Specialists to meet the needs of members and families.

Staff responses regarding support, resources, and training needs from Area and State Specialists are provided in Appendix N.

When asked to indicate barriers to providing quality training, the comments suggested that volunteer attendance at training sessions and difficult time constraints for volunteers represent the most common barriers.

Staff also provided responses regarding support, resources, and training needed from Area and State Specialists to meet the needs of members and families. Comments are provided in Appendix O.

Summary

- Respondents indicated satisfaction with staff training, although it is difficult to determine the level of satisfaction. Individuals indicated the desire to receive practical information and access to resources.
- Respondents indicated satisfaction with volunteer training, although it is difficult to determine the level of satisfaction. The most common model of planning and implementing volunteer training was a team approach that involved the collaboration of multiple 4-H staff. The most common way of receiving information and providing training is through face-to-face meetings. A majority of the staff respondents indicated that the training helped the clubs meet 4-H guidelines.
- Over half of the respondents had taken the Strengthening Clubs Survey. Those who did not take the survey were either unfamiliar with the survey or indicated time constraints interfere with the survey.
- Respondents recommended working with leaders of clubs which are not meeting 4-H expectations.
- Several other ideas that offer suggestions for improvement are provided in the Appendices .