ENGAGING MORE YOUTH

“Engaging more youth, grow 4-H, inclusivity, providing access, equity and opportunity, widening the circle, and expanding the 4-H program were all words mentioned during the 2015 National 4-H Leadership Meeting. The phrases heard on a federal level are “underserved, underrepresented youth, emerging young adults, disconnected youth, and opportunity youth”. All of this fits into the framing of how 4-H addresses the needs and challenges of youth today, to be involved, to be engaged, to be supported and sustained in positive youth development through programmatic efforts and best practices. These types of challenges are not new to 4-H. The 4-H program has addressed demographic shifts from rural to urban outreach in the 1970s and 1980s and to the work done to address at-risk youth in the 1990s and beyond. There are admittedly demographic shifts; there are disparities, geographically, and then with subpopulations that may vary by race, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, disability status, or involvement in systems such as foster care or justice, status as pregnant or parenting and other vulnerabilities.

4-H addresses the challenges through programmatic efforts at the state and local levels; yet there is a need to provide focus and strategic direction nationally. The National 4-H Leadership Meeting provided the venue, the time and opportunity to dialog about priorities and efforts to address. Those discussions will ensure high quality positive youth development programs have the flexibility to address and reduce barriers, engage more youth and more adults to provide an equation that simple states: Positive relationships + positive environments + positive experiences + positive risk-taking = 4-H as the positive youth development program model.

PROGRAM QUALITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

4-H Common Measures Social/Emotional Pilot

A set of national social/emotional common measures have been drafted to validate the development of: intrapersonal and interpersonal coping, social networks, teamwork, cultural diversity, and civic responsibility. The first round of pilot testing is underway and additional sites to complete the second round are currently being sought. Site criteria include:

- Meet and complete a program evaluation between April 1 and July 31, 2015
- Targets youth in grades 4-12
- Utilizes a variety of delivery modes (project clubs, camps, or youth trainings)
- Include a variety of 4-H youth
If you have program(s) that meet these criteria, and would be interested in assisting with the pilot, please contact Carol Fink (cfink@ksu.edu) or Kendra Lewis (kmlewis@ucanr.edu).

This work is being led by the Military Working Group but is designed to be used with all youth in the 4-H program. In addition, these efforts dovetail with the social/emotional work being conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/index.cfm).

Program Quality and Accountability Task Force

To ensure high-quality, the Public-Private Partners (P3WQG) Working Group has initiated a Program Quality and Accountability Task Force (PQA) that Debbie McDonald, WV State 4-H Program Leader and Lisa Lauxman, 4-H HQ’s Director of Division Youth & 4-H, USDA are co-chairing. Seventeen different land-grant universities are devoting expertise to this effort. The goals of the task force are to:

- Bring together experts in assessing program quality, program development and positive youth development research to review accomplishments to date in assessing program quality in 4-H and move a program quality agenda forward.
- Develop consensus on a core positive youth development programmatic model for 4-H.
- Build capacity and support for program accountability efforts through developing consensus on standards of high quality 4-H programming and how these standards will be assessed and shared with the system.

Vulnerable Populations Working Group

The Vulnerable Populations Working Group (VPWG) has been working to develop a program for the populations which comprise a large and growing percentage of our country’s young people who disproportionately contend with conditions that often compromise healthy development and access to support for it, even as they carry rich cultural resources and cultivate strength and insight through adversity. The members of the Working Group are as follows:

- Kim Allen, Ph.D. NC. State
- Mara Bacsuja, University of Alaska
- Alicia Cassels, West Virginia University
- Nancy Erbstein, Ph.D. University of California-Davis
- Alejandra Gudino, University of Missouri
- Nia Imani Fields, University of Maryland
- Fe Moncloa, University of California-Davis
- Keith Nathaniel, Ed.D., University of California-Davis
- Prosper Doamekpor, Ph.D., Tuskegee University
- Bonita Williams, Ph.D., NIFA/4-H HQ

A rollout of the Program will be forthcoming which will include the Vulnerable Populations Logic Model, Social Conditions Matrix and Champions who are serving as experts to support the system in relation to the eight identified vulnerable populations. The Champions were identified by the State 4-H Program Leaders. For more information, contact Bonita Williams, bwilliams@nifa.usda.gov.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Vulnerable Populations Working Group

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LEARNING

Agents of Change

Change Agents is a good way to describe delegates to the annual National 4-H Conference. April 11-16, 2015 239 4-H teens from 46 land grant universities and Canada will be ascending on Washington, D.C. to provide their voice to relevant issues on a federal level. Small groups of youth delegates will be preparing briefing presentations to deliver to 14 different federal agencies in person. The individual agencies and the topics being presented can be found at http://www.4-h.org/4-h-conference/youth-delegate/.

4-H National Headquarters leads a team of 43 individuals representing the 4-H system in implementing this citizenship and civic engagement hands on experience. Included are 5 teen 4-Hers on the youth leadership team, 15 college age facilitators, 3 state 4-H office staff, 6 4-H National Program Leaders, 10 additional NIFA staff, a conference planning company, and individuals from the National 4-H Conference Center and National 4-H Council.