4-H Professional Development Models

Competency Models

Next Generation Youth Work Coalition

These areas appear in a majority of core competency frameworks:

- Curriculum
- Environment
- Child & Adolescent Development
- Cross-cultural Competence
- Guidance
- Connecting with Families
- Connecting with Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professionalism
- Professional Development
- Program Management

4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competencies Taxonomy

- Youth Development: Understanding how young people learn and grow
  - Topics: Growth and Development, Youth Development Theory, and Youth Development Practice
- Youth Program Development: Creating quality experiences for young people
  - Topics: Situation Analysis, Program Design, Program Implementation, and Program Evaluation
- Volunteerism: Preparing volunteers to make a difference
  - Topics: Personal Readiness, Organizational Readiness, Engagement of Volunteers, Education of Volunteers, and Sustainability of Volunteer Efforts
- Equity, Access, and Opportunity: Ensuring that each young person has a chance to succeed
  - Topics: Sensitivity, Awareness, Communication, Relevant Programming, and Inclusive Organizations
- Partnerships: Uniting young people and adults for stronger communities
  - Topics: Youth-Adult Partnerships, Youth Action, Organizational Alliances, and Community Development
- Organizational Systems: Connecting people and priorities for the greatest impact
  - Topics: Organizational Effectiveness, Personal Effectiveness, Communication Strategies, Resource Development & Management, Risk Management, and Professionalism

Educator/Agent Perceptions of Competencies

- Early career – Competencies perceived as most important for early career 4-H Educators. Most from 4-H PRKC domain of organizational systems, especially the topic of personal

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1 Harder, A. and Dooley, K. E. (2007). Perceptions of important competencies for early-career and Established 4-H agents Journal of Southern Agricultural Education Research 57 (1)
effectiveness. May be hypothesized that mastering the topic of personal effectiveness must occur before success can be maximized in the other 4-H PRKC domains.

- Organizational skills
- Communication skills
- How to provide youth development through 4-H
- Adult education
- Volunteer management
- Work/life balance

- Experienced agent – competencies perceived as most important for established 4-H Educators.
  - Conflict management
  - Multi-tasking
  - Communication skills
  - Volunteer management
  - Developing partnerships and collaborations
  - Youth development

### By Career Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Stage</th>
<th>Motivators</th>
<th>Organizational Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-entry Stage*</td>
<td>Pre-entry competencies needed: Self-management, program development process, communication skills, interpersonal skills, technical/subject matter expertise, and teaching skills.</td>
<td>Pre-service examination of competencies before entering the Extension organization, and; Pre-service training before starting the job.</td>
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<td>Entry Stage</td>
<td>Understanding the organization, structure, and culture; Obtaining essential skills to perform job; Establishing linkages with internal partners; Exercising creativity and initiative, and; Moving from dependence to independence.</td>
<td>Peer mentoring program; Professional support teams; Leadership coaching, and; Orientation/job training.</td>
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<td>Colleague Stage</td>
<td>Developing area of expertise; Professional development funding; Becoming an independent contributor in problem resolution; Gaining membership and identity in professional community; Expanding creativity and innovation, and; Moving from independence to interdependence.</td>
<td>In-service education; Specialization funds; Professional association involvement; Formal educational training, and; Service on committees or special assignments.</td>
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<td>Counselor and Advisor Stages</td>
<td>Acquiring a broad-based expertise; Attaining leadership positions; Engaging in organizational problem solving; Counseling/coaching other professionals; Facilitating self renewal, and; Achieving a position of influence and stimulating thought in others.</td>
<td>Life and career renewal retreats; Mentoring and trainer agent roles; Assessment center for leadership, and; Organizational sounding boards.</td>
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The Skills & Attributes of 21st Century Extension Professionals

Study done for Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). Reviewed posted job descriptions, interviewed Extension professionals, and survey Extension administrators. In this study, researchers considered skills to be competencies that people can develop, while attributes describe characteristics that are more challenging or impossible to develop. Skills and attributes prioritized by job descriptions, interviews, and survey results:

- **Professional Skills**
  - Organizing skills
  - Excellent knowledge base/subject matter expertise
  - Effective written and oral communication
  - Understands how to be an effective team player
  - Effective teacher

- **Extension Programming Skills**
  - Conduct robust needs assessments
  - Collaborative partnerships
  - Technology to enhance learning
  - Secures new financial resources
  - Defines learning objectives
  - Matches teaching strategies to learning styles
  - Program evaluation
  - Creates interesting and motivating learning environment
  - Builds learners’ confidence

- **Attributes**
  - Engaging personality
  - Listener
  - Flexible, adaptable, and willing to change
  - Positive outlook/optimistic
  - Passion for Extension and helping others
  - High personal standard of excellence
  - Operates with minimal guidance

Also had an Advisory Committee review and reflect on research results. Advisory Committee suggested the following as emerging skills and attributes in the future:

- Strengthen cultural competency
- Strengthen engagement with learners and partners to facilitate co-learning and co-discovery of new knowledge
- Develop and assess innovative, engaging learning experiences using a variety of methodologies and technologies
- Develop and apply innovative resource generation strategies
- Improve marketing, public relations, branding, and public value skills
- High emotional intelligence

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Standards for 4-H Professional Development

National 4-H Professional Development Task Force

- Foundations for Learning
  - Professional development activities and resources focus on building competencies included in the 4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competencies (4HPRKC, 2004) taxonomy.
  - Content is based on credible, up-to-date sources of knowledge.
  - Learning objectives are clearly stated. It is clear how the learner will benefit from the learning experience or resource.

- Relevance to the Learner
  - Learners have an opportunity to assess their current level of knowledge and skill. An assessment of current knowledge and skill can also serve as a baseline for measuring change.
  - Learners have a say in what is learned, how it is learned, and when they learn it.
  - Learning experiences help the learner apply what is learned in real-world settings, especially the communities in which they work. Alignment between learning and daily work is evident. Technology is used in a manner that supports and accelerates learning and achievement.

- The Learning Experience
  - Content is delivered through a variety of methods which are suited to the learner and content.
  - Learning experiences are well organized and sequential in nature.
  - Learning experiences are of sufficient magnitude to produce the outcomes desired.
  - The forces which initiate and or support change must be greater than the forces resisting it. Learners “learn-by doing.” When learners experience the benefits of a practice firsthand, they are more likely incorporate that practice into their daily work.

- Assessment and Reflection
  - Learners have opportunities to monitor progress, gauge improvement, and assess the impact of their learning.
  - Learners are presented with situations which equip them to deal with uncertainty and future change.
  - Learners are able to reflect on their learning and identify further opportunities for growth.

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Benchmarking

- Elements of effective program implementation:
  - Present background information, theory, philosophy, and values of the program or practice to staff;
  - Introduce and demonstrate important aspects of the new practice or skill;
  - Provide opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback;
  - Provide ongoing support and follow-up training; and
  - Allow sufficient time for training, including opportunity to demonstrate skills.

- Dimensions of professional development planning
  - Variety
  - Intentionality
  - Continuity
  - Collaboration
  - Verification

- Personal learning environment = a Web-based hub for personal and professional development for learners to set learning goals, summarize and manage learning content, and communicate with others in the learning process (like portfolio?)

- 2012 national level assessment of educator professional development needs across all Extension programmatic areas. 4-H educators represented 27% of respondents and indicated their most important need was learning to evaluate and report program effectiveness. 4-H educators expressed the least need for developing effective programs. These findings give some indication of professional development topics to guide national benchmarking.

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