

Michigan 4-H Youth Development in Action

A Companion to *Defining Michigan 4-H Youth Development*

In response to the development and release of the *Defining Michigan 4-H Youth Development* tool that defines what we believe, what we do and who we are for our external audiences, Michigan 4-H Youth Development staff who attended the 2002 4-H Spring Conference expressed a desire to have a companion document that provided a universally agreed-upon and formally adopted definition of the work of Michigan 4-H professionals in action at both the county and state levels.

The *Michigan 4-H Youth Development in Action* document was created in answer to that request. It provides working guidelines for state and county 4-H youth development staff members that define how we do our work. The document was drafted by the Programs Team of the state 4-H staff and by MAE4HA board members, who gathered feedback through regional meeting dialogues that resulted in this set of recommended 4-H programming practices.

The “4-H in Action” guidelines serve as a companion to the *Defining Michigan 4-H Youth Development* document for staff to use in implementing 4-H methodology. These methods include program and curriculum development, volunteer and club development, educational events and workshops, research and evaluation, resource development, partnerships and collaborations, professional development and communications. Each method has recommended practices for both county and state staff.

Ways to Use “Michigan 4-H Youth Development in Action”

The purpose of the “Michigan 4-H Youth Development in Action” guidelines is to provide a common definition for how professional staff members work in Michigan 4-H. Ways to make this tool more effective in your work include:

- Use as a staff, and possibly as a volunteer, orientation tool.
- Use as a yardstick for establishing annual work goals.
- Use to evaluate whether your 4-H programs reflect recommended work guidelines.
- Use as a guideline for setting professional development goals and priorities.
- Use as a way of sharing, in more detail, the way we work with administrators and decision makers.
- Use as a tool for developing job description language.

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Method 1

We provide program and curriculum development.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Conduct local needs assessments that involve input from county staff and volunteers to identify program and curriculum needs.
- Advocate for, and partner with, state-level MSU Extension specialists and 4-H program staff to develop and deliver programs and curricula to address local needs.
- Provide access to all Michigan 4-H and MSU Extension programming opportunities, learning materials and resources to all community residents.
- Work to ensure that programs offered and curricula used are culturally appropriate.
- Provide training and resource materials on county program opportunities and guidelines for programming to meet local needs.
- Collaborate on program delivery with other community-based organizations (such as schools, government agencies and other not-for-profit organizations) that have similar program goals.
- Ensure that local program delivery and curriculum materials used to deliver youth programs meet the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Vision, Mission, Programming Philosophy, Guiding Principles and 4-H Participant Age Policy.
- Seek local resources (such as grants and fund-raising) and volunteer support (such as recruiting and development) to deliver programs and curricula.
- Use the MSU Extension Areas of Expertise (AoE) teams to keep 4-H programming on track and current, to evaluate 4-H programming for consistency with current research and knowledge, and to develop processes by which 4-H programming and its outcomes inform the research base.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Conduct state-level needs assessments that involve input from county staff and volunteers and develop strategic plans that help set and implement priorities for county, regional and state programming.
- Partner with county MSU Extension staff, specialists and other on- and off-campus partners to develop and deliver programs that are consistent with county needs and that reflect the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Vision, Mission, Programming Philosophy, Guiding Principles and 4-H Participant Age Policy.
- Coordinate identification and development of relevant educational materials.
- Facilitate the identification and distribution of the most current research and knowledge to inform 4-H youth development practice.
- Explore new delivery methods for programs and curricula.
- Facilitate the distribution and evaluation of successful county program delivery methods.
- Develop and maintain a list of county and state 4-H staff members' areas of expertise.
- Work to ensure that programs offered and curricula used are culturally appropriate.

- Use the MSU Extension Area of Expertise (AoE) teams to keep 4-H programming on track and current, to evaluate 4-H programming for consistency with current research and knowledge, and to develop processes by which 4-H programming and its outcomes inform the research base.

Method 2

We provide volunteer and club development and management systems to mobilize communities to meet the needs of youth.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Develop and implement a system for county volunteer and youth recruiting, orientation, recognition and management.
- Support local 4-H program delivery by providing access to volunteer training and development.
- Apply the MSU Extension Child Well-Being Volunteer Selection Process to recruit and orient volunteers at the county level.
- Continue annual updates of program goals and features for continuing and new volunteers. Introduce volunteers to new 4-H program opportunities and learning materials.
- Collaborate with local partners to develop effective volunteer and youth development opportunities.
- Integrate the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Vision, Mission, Programming Philosophy, Guiding Principles and 4-H Participant Age Policy for positive youth development in all volunteer orientation and training.
- Facilitate the development, distribution and consistent awareness of county and state 4-H guidelines and procedures.
- Develop, implement, maintain and oversee a county enrollment system for youth and volunteers that includes county enrollment guidelines, policies and procedures.
- Oversee local resource development and financial management to ensure compliance with county, university, state and federal guidelines and regulations.
- Develop and implement award and recognition systems for youth and volunteers.
- Address issues of inclusiveness and diversity in all volunteer development and youth development programming.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Work with county 4-H staff to develop statewide guidelines and a support system for 4-H volunteer and club development.
- Provide training and replicable workshops and resource materials for county staff on Michigan 4-H Youth Development volunteer and club development philosophy and policies.
- Collaborate with statewide partners to develop effective volunteer and youth development opportunities.
- Serve as a state and national resource for expertise, knowledge and training related to nonprofit volunteer and youth development.
- Address issues of inclusiveness and diversity in all volunteer development and youth development programming.
- Provide guidelines and support for local resource development and financial management to ensure compliance with university, state, and federal guidelines and regulations.
- Develop and provide support to volunteer selection, management and evaluation.

- Develop and implement award and recognition systems for youth and volunteers.

Method 3

We provide educational events and workshops for volunteers and members to enhance and strengthen life skill development and content mastery, and to provide recognition.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Offer age-appropriate local and regional educational events and workshops that provide program-specific training in different needs areas that use the knowledge and skills of volunteers and outside presenters.
- Incorporate the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Vision, Mission, Programming Philosophy, Guiding Principles and 4-H Participant Age Policy for positive youth development into all events and workshops.
- Notify volunteers and members about and encourage their attendance at educational opportunities to strengthen their clubs and programs.
- Keep state 4-H staff abreast of the educational events and workshops their clientele want and need.
- Work to create positive recognition experiences for youth and adults through events, workshops, collaborations with fair boards and other efforts.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers and youth to share the skills they have learned and the knowledge they have gained.
- Enhance efforts to recruit broader, more diverse audiences for county and statewide events and workshops.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Continue campus-based educational events that provide positive youth development and links to Michigan State University.
- Provide age-appropriate and inclusive learning activities that, regardless of program content, emphasize positive youth development and actively reflect the Michigan 4-H Guiding Principles and 4-H Participant Age Policy.
- Offer state and regional workshops, events and shows that:
 - Provide ideas, research and training tools that can be shared at the county level.
 - Are research-based and have measurable educational outcomes.
 - Are promoted in a timely manner.
- Enhance efforts to recruit broader, more diverse audiences for statewide events and workshops.
- Evaluate all statewide events annually to ensure they're meeting the needs of participants.

Method 4

We use research and do evaluation to provide program direction, to support issues identification and to facilitate strategic planning through links with MSU research and subject matter specialists.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Review and evaluate local programs on an ongoing basis.
- Share county perspectives and volunteer input by serving on MSU Extension AoE teams, state 4-H committees and Michigan 4-H Foundation committees.
- Stay informed of current research and youth development trends.
- Identify local expertise and request support from appropriate AoEs for local strategic planning.
- Identify local expertise available in specific content areas through resources such as local colleges and universities and health departments.
- Be active participants in MSU Extension advisory boards, professional associations and 4-H Extension councils.
- Ensure perspectives represent various community needs through broad-based partnerships.
- Consult with community members and advisory groups to identify local needs and determine program directions.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Review and evaluate programs on an ongoing basis.
- Annually review program areas offered to ensure that they reflect current research trends.
- Use local and statewide reviews and current research to set program directions and implement goals. Involve MSU Extension AoEs in these processes.
- Expand collaborative efforts and links with MSU departments to develop or strengthen evaluation components in 4-H programming.
- Identify and compile models of youth and volunteer impact evaluation that can be adapted across programming efforts.
- Strengthen research links by serving on MSU Extension AoE teams and special committees.
- Serve as liaisons between county 4-H staff and campus-based researchers.
- Identify needs and help build staff capacity to conduct evaluation, program planning and impact identification.

Method 5

We provide financial resource development that is supported by groups such as the Michigan 4-H Foundation and other private and public funding sources.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Strengthen the connection between the county and the Michigan 4-H Foundation by designing opportunities for collaboration such as establishing county endowments and serving on Michigan 4-H Foundation committees.
- Seek public and private resources that are available to meet local needs.
- Develop and manage grants at a county and regional level.

- Work with state 4-H staff to identify and implement new grant opportunities at the county, regional and state levels.
- Promote the work of the Michigan 4-H Foundation and opportunities to contribute to it.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Make basic grant writing and grant implementation information and resources available for county 4-H staff.
- Identify the major fundable 4-H efforts in partnership with counties and the Michigan 4-H Foundation to develop and submit proposals to public and private funders.
- Identify and disseminate information on grants and other resource development opportunities for county, regional and state programming to state and county 4-H staff.
- Seek, assist with and manage regional and statewide grants.
- Promote the work of the Michigan 4-H Foundation and opportunities to contribute to it.
- Facilitate responsible financial management and business practices.
- Develop a process to design, create and market revenue-enhancing products such as training materials, curricula and certificate programs.

Method 6

We expand and build partnerships and collaborations with local, state and national networks.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Form and support partnerships and collaborations with other youth-serving groups in the community to pursue youth issues.
- Share the most current research and knowledge of Michigan State University Extension with partners and collaborators.
- Ensure that partnerships and collaborations with other youth-serving groups represent the diversity of local communities.
- Acquire the knowledge and skills to address when, how and why to form partnerships and collaborations.
- Identify, develop and support an external constituent group to provide continuous feedback to and support for local 4-H programming.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Form and support state and national partnerships and collaborations for county, regional and state efforts.
- Share the most current research and knowledge of Michigan State University Extension with partners and collaborators.
- Provide training opportunities that address when, how and why to form partnerships and collaborations.
- Ensure that partnerships and collaborations with other youth-serving groups represent the diversity of local communities.
- Keep county staff informed of work being done to build partnerships and collaborations on the state level.
- Partner with other community-based organizations (such as schools, government agencies, and other not-for-profit and for-profit organizations) with similar program goals.

- Build MSU academic partnerships and communicate with these partners about the 4-H mission and about specific ideas on what links with Michigan 4-H Youth Development can provide them.

Method 7

We provide professional development and support that are sustained by an extensive and ongoing in-service education system for new and experienced county and state 4-H staff.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Mentor each other.
- Serve on AoEs and on state and regional MSU Extension committees and associations to further their own professional development and the professional development of others.
- Use the MSU Extension core competencies as a guide to professional development on a regular basis.
- Attend in-service educational opportunities including regional, state and national events.
- Identify county staff development training needs and facilitate implementation of these trainings.
- Provide input into personal and organizational staff development plans.
- Become familiar with state 4-H staff and their responsibilities.
- Acquire knowledge of and sensitivity to issues of staff, volunteer and youth diversity and multicultural issues.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Mentor each other.
- Serve on AoEs and on state and regional MSU Extension committees and associations to further their own professional development and the professional development of others.
- Use the MSU Extension core competencies as a guide to professional development on a regular basis.
- Provide campus and regional trainings on:
 - New staff orientations.
 - Youth development curricula.
 - Core competencies.
 - The Michigan 4-H Youth Development model.
- Provide in-service workshops and opportunities that support county staff needs.
- Attend in-service educational opportunities, including regional, state and national events.
- Offer certificate programs related to the 4-H Youth Development profession.
- Become familiar with county 4-H staff and their responsibilities.
- Acquire knowledge of and sensitivity to issues of staff, volunteer and youth diversity and multicultural issues.

Method 8

We provide communication strategies and support that inform and educate internal and external constituents.

County 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Create an open and accessible communication system that informs and educates internal and external constituents.
- Are prepared to communicate the work of Michigan 4-H Youth Development to policymakers.
- Inform potential partners and collaborators that the opportunities and research-based information of MSU Extension are valuable assets to communities.
- Inform and educate internal and external constituents through technology, public relations and marketing activities.
- Attend MSU Extension meetings to share ideas and network with staff at regional and state levels.
- Develop a system for countywide, interclub networking and communication.
- Provide information and resources through regular communications to volunteer leaders and families.
- Use various reporting systems, including EIS and Blue Ribbon, to inform both internal and external constituents about the work of Michigan 4-H Youth Development.
- Know the regional linker and who to contact for various content expertise.

State 4-H Youth Development Staff:

- Act as information conduits among counties, regions and the State 4-H Office.
- Create an open and accessible communication system that informs and educates internal and external constituents.
- Be prepared to communicate the work of Michigan 4-H Youth Development to policymakers.
- Inform potential partners and collaborators that the opportunities and research-based information of MSU Extension are valuable assets to communities.
- Inform and educate internal and external constituents through technology, public relations and marketing activities.
- Use various reporting systems, including EIS and Blue Ribbon, to inform both internal and external constituents about the work of Michigan 4-H Youth Development.
- Attend MSU Extension meetings to share ideas and spend time with staff from across the state.
- Maintain a current list of state 4-H staff members to contact for information about and assistance with various topics.
- Respond to the needs and concerns expressed by volunteers and staff.



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