

Vision 2020: Relevant, Valued, Sustainable 4-H Youth Development

Kids want to have fun with friends.

Parents want to prepare them for life.

4-H is the best of both worlds.

This is a vision statement, a picture of Kansas 4-H Youth Development in the year 2020. It describes what we want to build. While it does not include every detail of how we will complete our task, it provides direction for planning.

Today's Kansas 4-H Youth Development program brings together youth and adults to acquire skills by learning and working toward a better community, country, and world. Kansas 4-H programs are based on the best practices of positive youth development. They provide opportunities for youth to learn healthy living, social, workplace, and civic leadership skills.

The local K-State Research and Extension 4-H Youth Development program is **Relevant, Valued, and Sustainable**.

Relevant

• Focus on Positive Youth Development

4-H, the K-State Research and Extension educational program for school-aged youth, provides timely information and applies the best practices from research to Kansas communities.¹ Guided by caring adults, young people learn life skills through practical, experience-based, hands-on activities.

4-H youth become lifelong learners and sound decision-makers, achieving goals as concerned citizens. They discover ways to become valued family members, peers, neighbors, and employees.² 4-H develops people of character who are competent, confident, connected, and concerned about issues beyond themselves.³

• Fit for Today's Families

Kansas 4-H Youth Development builds strong, resilient families that can flourish in today's society and are crucial to healthy communities, a strong nation, and a

safe world. 4-H supports the family strengths research-based model that defines six major qualities among all successful families across cultures: appreciation and affection for each other, commitment, positive communication, enjoyable time together, emotional well-being, and coping abilities in times of stress and crisis. Children and adults with stable and satisfying family relationships experience greater emotional stability and physical health.⁴

• Multiple Ways to Participate

4-H learning environments promote self-confidence and skill-building, encouraging youth to take safe risks, seek out challenges, and focus on self-improvement.⁵ To provide youth with a sense of success and accomplishment, 4-H offers opportunities including community, project, in-school, and after-school clubs; school enrichment programs; after-school programs; residential and day camps; short-term special interest programs; and Web-based learning. 4-H embraces new technologies to expand youth development and learning that go beyond traditional boundaries.

• Diverse 4-H Program

Kansas 4-H members and volunteer leaders reflect the diversity of the Kansas population. 4-H provides an inclusive atmosphere where diversity is valued and respected. Increased diversity enriches the lives of educators, 4-H volunteers, 4-H participants, and their families by providing opportunities for greater self-understanding. Intercultural experiences increase positive perceptions of all groups and reduce exclusion. Kansas 4-H demonstrates an appreciation of ethnic, cultural, intellectual, and physical diversity and provides multicultural understanding at meetings, events, programs, and activities. 4-H learning environments are free of barriers to participation and enrollment.

• Align with National Priorities

Science, citizenship, and healthy living align with the research and educational efforts of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and K-State Research and Extension. This framework organizes and focuses toward stronger and more effective youth programs, staff and volunteer development, evaluation criteria, and financial and human resource support.⁶

Valued

• Positive Return on Investment

Youth involved in 4-H grow in competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection with other people. Collectively, these traits result in youth who contribute to their personal development and their communities energetically and optimistically, avoiding risk or problem behaviors, and pursuing higher education.¹

• Solid Past, Relevant Present, Strategic Future

Kansas 4-H was established 115 years ago to promote learning, transform young people, and sustain a healthy, safe food supply. While grounded in valued traditions, Kansas 4-H addresses current needs of school-aged youth and looks toward future requirements of families, the workforce, and sustainable communities.

Sustainable

• 4-H Thrives in Extension Districts

Extension districts create expanded 4-H program opportunities for youth and families. Districts have additional resources to increase the quantity and quality of 4-H member and volunteer offerings.

• Engaged Volunteers

4-H makes a commitment to involve youth and adult volunteers as partners. The volunteer system includes both management of volunteer resources and development of 4-H participants. Extension staff members serve both as educators and as managers of a volunteer system.

- Volunteers develop knowledge and skills while benefiting personally from their involvement.
- Through training and experience, volunteers create safe environments for themselves and participants.
- Extension agents manage systems that involve volunteers in a range of roles and help limit risks, liabilities, and conflicts related to volunteer involvement.
- Volunteer management systems respond to the contemporary challenges and characteristics of today's volunteers. Innovative communication and teaching methods enhance volunteer training and engagement.⁷

• Successful Partnerships

Relationships with coalitions, decision-makers, and other youth development workers support expanded roles and program needs. Extension agents establish, build, and nurture internal and external relationships that strengthen and advance the 4-H Youth Development program.

Vision and Mission:

Kansas 4-H Youth Development

The Vision of 4-H Youth Development

Kansas 4-H Youth Development provides a world where youth and adults acquire and advance positive life skills by learning, growing, and working together.¹

The Mission of 4-H Youth Development

Kansas 4-H Youth Development uses unique strategies and opportunities to engage youth in reaching their full potential through partnerships with caring adults.¹

Vision 2020 Citations

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5. **Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development: Key Ingredients for Program Success.** National 4-H Headquarters, Cooperative State, Research, Education and Extension Service, Washington, DC. 2001.
6. **Background: National Institute for Food and Agriculture.** United States Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC. 2009.
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— Kansas 4-H Youth Development Department