



MINNESOTA 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Diversity and First Generation 4-H Lens





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WHAT IS A “LENS,” AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

The 4-H program in Minnesota currently does not reflect the diversity of youth in our state, in large part because the majority of new membership comes from those already familiar with the program. To remain relevant and responsive to changing demographics, Minnesota 4-H has named this issue as a priority. This document provides a tool, in the form of a “lens,” for helping staff identify areas of strength and growth. Just as the lens of a magnifying glass helps us see more clearly, the lens proposed in this document should help us see our work in a new way—a way that helps us do our best to engage **diverse and first generation 4-H youth and families**.

First Generation 4-H Defined

Youth and families not previously engaged in 4-H,

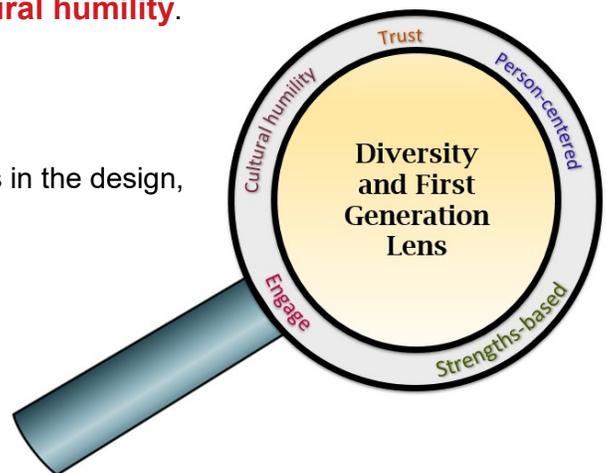
- with a purposeful goal that the 4-H Program reflects the community, and
- an understanding that it may require specific, intentional work to engage populations historically excluded or left behind.

Staff should apply this “first generation 4-H lens” framework as they develop their programs, as they make decisions about policies, practices and resource allocation, and as a tool for reflection at all levels of their work.

5 PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR WORK

The following are principles to consider as we look at reaching new audiences. The accompanying questions are designed to help staff reflect on current practice, policies, and tools.

1. We commit to approaching our work with **cultural humility**.
2. We commit to building **trust**.
3. We are **person-centered**.
4. We commit to a **strengths-based** approach.
5. We **engage** program participants and partners in the design, decision-making, and evaluation of programs.





Principle 1: HUMILITY

We commit to approaching our work with cultural humility. Culture is complex and continually evolving.¹ Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience,² exercising self-reflection and critique, recognizing the dynamics of power and privilege, and being comfortable with not knowing."³ Approaching our work with humility may keep us from making assumptions about a person's culture and allow us to relate as individuals.

Principle 2: TRUST

We commit to building trust. Trust is vital in the process of building positive relationships. We can build trust by exhibiting humility and vulnerability, asking with interest and curiosity, sharing information, gathering input thoughtfully, being cognizant of historical trauma, and being in relationship through repeated interactions and conversations.⁴ When we build strong relationships with people, partners and communities, they want to work in partnership with us to address community priorities through positive youth development.⁵

Principle 3: PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

We are person-centered. A person-centered approach is a way of thinking and acting that respects the points of view of others and places them, rather than the organization or program, in the driver's seat. This type of approach helps staff focus on fulfilling the person's or community's needs.⁶ This is important because it builds a sense of ownership that engages participants long term and supports the promise of continual adaptation. A person-centered approach keeps the work relevant.⁷

Principle 4: STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

We commit to a strengths-based approach. "Strengths-based approaches value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities."⁸ When we acknowledge, develop and build on those strengths, we promote positive youth development and contributions to society.⁹

Principle 5: ENGAGEMENT

We engage program participants and partners in the design, decision-making, and evaluation of programs. Engagement occurs when people play a meaningful role in discussions, decision-making and/or implementation of projects or programs affecting them.¹⁰ This change requires letting go of some of the traditional power structures and trusting that others can and will effectively engage. The result is a partnership that is healthier for the program and community.



Using the Lens: **INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This Diversity and First Generation Lens is a reflection tool—a way to help you see your work through different contexts, in order to identify areas of strength and areas of growth in yourself and the organization. The lens asks questions but does not answer them for you. Asking questions is the first step. The next step, after using this lens, is to find opportunities for solutions. Some of these opportunities may come from colleagues or resources developed by Minnesota 4-H as a companion to this document. Some may come from external partners. Either way, the goal is improvement.

This guide is designed to help you consider each principle in two contexts. The first context is that of your own work as an **individual**. What can you do to embody these principles in your own work? The second context is that of your role in the **organization**. To make organization-wide change requires the effort of all levels of people and systems. What can you do to guide the organization towards living these principles--within your county or tribal program, your region, or statewide?

For each principle, you will find a list of actionable questions to help you consider your **individual work** as well as what your **organizational influence** could be.

As a way to start, choose just one or two principles to focus on. Then choose one or two questions from those chosen principles to help you consider what actions you can take to better engage new audiences.



Principle 1: HUMILITY

We commit to approaching our work with cultural humility. Culture is complex and continually evolving.¹ Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience,² exercising self-reflection and critique, recognizing the dynamics of power and privilege, and being comfortable with not knowing.³ Approaching our work with humility may keep us from making assumptions about a person's culture and allow us to relate as individuals.

Your individual work: Consider what you can do individually to approach *your* work with cultural humility.

Choose one or two questions:

1. Do I humbly acknowledge my own lack of experience with, or knowledge of other communities?
2. How might I practice cultural humility when I meet someone new? What are ways I can learn more about and from others?
3. In what aspects of my work could I do a better job of taking risks and learning from mistakes? Where could I build in reflection time to talk with others so that I might learn from them?

Your organizational influence: Consider what you can do to influence others in the organization to approach our work with cultural humility.

Choose one or two questions:

1. How am I engaging and supporting volunteers, youth, partners, stakeholders, and co-workers to build their cultural responsiveness and practice cultural humility?
2. Where can we take action to make changes rather than apologizing for not doing better?
3. What cherished organizational assumptions or traditions need to be respectfully challenged, and how can I advocate for change?
4. What will we do to support and recognize volunteers, youth, and staff who are taking risks and practicing cultural humility?



Principle 2: TRUST

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Your individual work: Consider what you can do individually to build trust in *your* work.

Choose one or two questions:

1. What am I doing to build relationships with people and their communities? What else could I do to build relationships?
2. How do I seek out and invite people in a way that is relevant to them?
3. How am I providing access to information networks (meetings, newsletters, social media, and email distribution lists) in a way that helps them feel they belong?
4. What “champions” could I cultivate within a community to help extend our reach to additional program participants and partners?

Your organizational influence: Consider what *you* can do to influence *others* in the organization to work at building trust.

Choose one or two questions:

1. How can I find out if current policies, practices, or tools are building trust with people new to 4-H or leaving them feeling excluded, used, or tokenized (e.g., language that assumes certain knowledge or “4-H background;” inviting a young person to an all-adult committee to ensure youth voice but not giving them a true say in decision making)?
2. How does the organization prioritize and build time into staff schedules for building relationships?
3. How do we define and talk about “volunteerism” and “volunteer” in a way that is relevant to multiple community or cultural perspectives?



Principle 3: PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

We are person-centered. A person-centered approach is a way of thinking and acting that respects the points of view of others and places them, rather than the organization or program, in the driver's seat. This type of approach helps staff focus on fulfilling the person's or community's needs.⁶ This is important because it builds a sense of ownership that engages participants long term and supports the promise of continual adaptation. A person-centered approach keeps the work relevant.⁷

Your individual work: Consider what you can do individually in *your* work to employ a person-centered approach.

Choose one or two questions:

1. What have I done to learn about why people participate? How might I provide opportunities for them to meet their goals?
2. Which of my biases may be affecting who and how I recruit for specific program opportunities?
3. Where in my programs am I lacking parity (e.g., the demographic of the community is reflected in both short and long-term experiences, youth and adult leadership positions)?
4. How am I designing my programs to meet community needs rather than organizational needs?

Your organizational influence: Consider what *you* can do to influence *others* in the organization to employ a person-centered approach.

Choose one or two questions:

1. Where does program staff have the authority to make accommodations to best meet needs?
2. How do we ensure that our approaches and programs are meaningful to individual program participants and partners?
3. What current policies, practices, or tools, that I have control over, are not responsive to the realities of program participants' and partners' lives? Which ones can I prioritize this year for change, in order to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community, participants, and program partners?



Principle 4: STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

We commit to a strengths-based approach. “Strengths-based approaches value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities.”⁸ When we acknowledge, develop and build on those strengths, we promote positive youth development and contributions to society.⁹

Your individual work: Consider what you can do individually in your work to use a strengths-based approach.

Choose one or two questions:

1. What am I doing to help people **identify** their strengths and skills?
2. How can I help people **use** their strengths and skills?
3. How can I **recognize** or show appreciation for the strengths people contribute to the program?
4. What can I do to help volunteers and partners use a strengths-based approach with young people?

Your organizational influence: Consider what you can do to influence others in the organization to use a strengths-based approach.

Choose one or two questions:

1. How do our programs adapt based on the strengths of the participants and partners?
2. What assumptions do our current policies, practices, and tools make about our program participants and partners (e.g., assumptions about finances, language, availability, interest, desire to participate, knowledge of program)?



Principle 5: ENGAGEMENT

We engage program participants and partners in the design, decision-making, and evaluation of programs. Engagement occurs when people play a meaningful role in discussions, decision-making and/or implementation of projects or programs affecting them.¹⁰ This change requires letting go of some of the traditional power structures and trusting that others can and will effectively engage. The result is a partnership that is healthier for the program and community.

Your individual work: Consider what you can do individually in your work to promote engagement.

Choose one or two questions:

1. What am I doing to ensure authentic opportunity for participant voice?
2. What am I doing to engage new program participants and partners in program planning and evaluation?
3. What am I doing to co-create and clarify role expectations for volunteers and partners?
4. As I engage new voices, am I aware of how current voices are responding to change? What am I doing to help alleviate fears and help them embrace change?

Your organizational influence: Consider what you can do to influence others in the organization to support engagement.

Choose one or two questions:

1. How do we best balance the needs and expectations of the community (public, youth, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders) with that of the organization?
2. What am I doing to engage people with relevant cultural experience/knowledge to strengthen program design?

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