

IMPACT

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Idaho 4-H teen programs – restructuring for the future

AT A GLANCE

4-H teen programs in Idaho have been restructured. Providing an exciting change in leadership opportunities for all Idaho youth.

The Situation

Initial research and recommendations from an Idaho 4-H Teen Task Force led to the development of statewide steering committees for the three key statewide 4-H teen programs in Idaho. The steering committees, made up of 4-H professionals, certified 4-H volunteers and mostly youth, were delegated to develop content-rich, engaging and educational programs accessible to all youth across Idaho.

Our Response

In 2015 a group of 4-H professionals, volunteers, and youth were brought together under the leadership of Idaho 4-H Youth Development to consider the state of 4-H teen programming in Idaho and to develop shared a vision for how these programs could best serve Idaho youth and their families. A survey was conducted with Idaho 4-H professionals to determine current practices. Combining this data with established youth development research (which included National 4-H Mission Mandate information), the 4-H Teen Task Force went to work. Utilizing member experience and guided by the new purpose statement, 4-H Teen Task Force members began to identify what an “ideal” teen program might look like for Idaho 4-H. The outcome produced an exciting, new vision for the teen program – a premier program in place that offers a wide range of opportunities to a greater number of teens statewide through accessible,



Steering committees, made up mostly of youth, now oversee all major Idaho 4-H teen programs. Photo by Donna R. Gillespie.

engaging, diverse and research-based experiences. A white paper was developed from their research, planning and recommendations.

Implementation of the recommendations began with state and district teen programs in 2016 with full application in 2017. Counties were also encouraged to use the recommendations and materials to improve their local teen programs.

Program Outcomes

Considering the value of teen programming, the importance of youth-adult partnerships, national mission mandates and other youth development principles, the 4-H Teen Task Force formulated the following purpose statement: The purpose of the Idaho 4-H Teen Program is to inspire, educate and support teens across Idaho in learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. The Idaho 4-H Teen Program Content Grid was developed using Common Measures re-

search. The task force felt that if program content is truly the basis of an “ideal” teen program, then 4-H professionals, volunteers and youth need to have an understanding of what program content is and how they can effectively integrate it into their developing teen events.

The Content Grid was designed to be utilized by planning committees to determine what content should be included to reach the purpose and learning objectives they have set for their program. Another important and useful outcome of the task force was the development of several documents, checklists and planning guides that will help teen program committees operate effectively, consistently and in accordance with University of Idaho policy.

This restructuring led to the development of steering committees for three key statewide teen programs including Idaho 4-H Ambassadors, Idaho 4-H Know Your Government Conference and the Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention. The steering committees include 4-H professionals, volunteers and youth with representation from across the state. Specific position descriptions, term limits and requirements and duties have been fully defined for each member. Operation handbooks have been developed for each steering committee.

An Idaho 4-H Teen Programs Evaluation Plan has been created with questions aligned to Common Measures. Common Measures outcomes pertaining to each of the statewide teen programs were selected with “Build Connections” being used in all three programs. This will allow comparisons across statewide teen events. There will also be process questions included in each programs’ evaluations. The TurningPoint “clicker” tool will be used for all evaluations.

- 4-H Ambassador Conference (leadership)
 - Effective communication
 - Intrapersonal skills; goal setting
 - Build connections
- 4-H Know Your Government Conference (citizenship)
 - Understanding the democratic process
 - Awareness of community and community issues
 - Build connections
- Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention (postsecondary education and career exploration)
 - Make positive choices
 - Appreciation of cultural diversity
 - Decision making and problem solving

The Future

Since the reorganization, a synergy has developed amongst 4-H programs across Idaho and opportunities for Idaho youth have greatly increased. Through the continued strengthening of the Steering Committees, greater accessibility and participation in all Idaho 4-H teen programs will continue to rise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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