

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Quality curriculum counts

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### AT A GLANCE

Idaho 4-H curriculum prioritization increases quality of materials for youth and volunteers.

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### The Situation

The 4-H curricula collection is a key tool in recruiting and retaining 4-H members. Nationally, there have been changes to the breadth and scope of 4-H curricula. Idaho 4-H works to stay abreast of these changes and maintain a collection of quality curricula and resources. The combination of staff turnover and over 150 different project areas, our 4-H curricula was not being reviewed, becoming a monumental challenge sure program continuity and quality.

### Our Response

In 2013, the Idaho 4-H Curricula Team (4-HCT), composed of 4-H professionals and UI Extension faculty, organized to conduct a curriculum review and prioritization process. Team members worked within subcommittees to evaluate curricula materials (print and web-based curricula and support materials), project requirements and exhibit requirements. Additionally, 4-H professionals completed a curricula/materials survey and analyzed enrollment figures (2007-2011) for usage trends.

### Program Outcomes

The 4-HCT major outcomes are: 1) organize curricula 2) provide training materials for 4-H professionals and



4-H poultry camp participants doing livestock modules in Minidoka County. Photo credit by Jeni Bywater.

volunteers; 3) create and implement standards for curricula; 4) enhance communications at the state and county level; 5) gather feedback from regional curriculum meetings; 6) implement recommendations from curriculum subcommittees. Specifically, the 4-HCT discovered through evaluation feedback the need for curriculum review process and checklist for state and county-based projects; and lesson plan templates to help volunteers utilize content-rich curriculum

The 4-H Curriculum Resources Review Checklist was adapted from the 4-H National Headquarters, NIFA-USDA checklist and includes inquiry components. This provides a platform for quality and consistency for statewide projects. The county curriculum review checklist utilizes the same elements and provides a consistent framework for counties to review and eval-

uate county-based projects using the same standard. County-based 4-H projects offer pertinent projects and materials for local programming.

Significant statewide project area impacts:

- A new wildlife curriculum was adopted that effectively integrates experiential learning components.
- Multiple 4-H Shooting Sports educational support materials were created to guide and expand program opportunities for over 1,000 Idaho youth.
- Revision and addition of project materials for youth involved in Know Your Government (KYG) and the KYG Steering Committee. A higher percentage of youth are completing the project, which in turn opens additional opportunities to participate in KYG for a second year and to possibly serve on the steering committee.
- The Idaho 4-H Leadership Portfolio, complements Leadership Road Trip (The Ohio State University, 2013) and evidence-based leadership curriculum. The leadership portfolio allows 4-H youth to record their leadership activities on the local, district, state and national level. This provides recognition for their leadership and gathers important data for scholarship and job applications. The impact will be an increase in number of youth completing a leadership project and being able to track their growth in leadership and other life skills.

The curricula/materials survey feedback indicated that there has been a shift in the volunteer skill set when it comes to content knowledge of projects. Volunteers are engaged in a project area because the youth have

an interest in the topic versus the volunteer having prior knowledge of the project area.

The prioritization process resulted in a framework for what it means by “state-supported materials.”

The framework includes: curricula used by most county 4-H programs; regular curricula/materials review; project and exhibit requirements review; and training and materials developed and delivered for 4-H professionals and volunteers.

Because of the prioritization process there have been significant changes in the materials utilized and the number of project offerings. The curricula and materials are current and research-based or evidence-based. There is a strategic method — evaluate and replace, versus adding to the offerings.

Curriculum showcases highlighting major changes and accomplishments thus far were held in the four Extension districts in the fall of 2017. The showcases provided the 4-HCT an opportunity to train 4-H professionals and faculty on the curriculum review process and highlight emerging trends and feature quality curricula from the following priority areas: Civic Engagement; Communications and Expressive Arts; Environmental Education and Earth Sciences; Family and Consumer Sciences; Healthy Living; Personal Development and Leadership; Plants and Animals; and Science and Technology.

### The Future

The bar has been raised in Idaho 4-H curricula and opportunities for training and engagement will increase. The team is planning to do an evaluation to assess if curriculum and training results in increased volunteer and member retention and recruitment.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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