

impact

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New 4-H staff orientation guide provides foundation for quality programming

AT A GLANCE

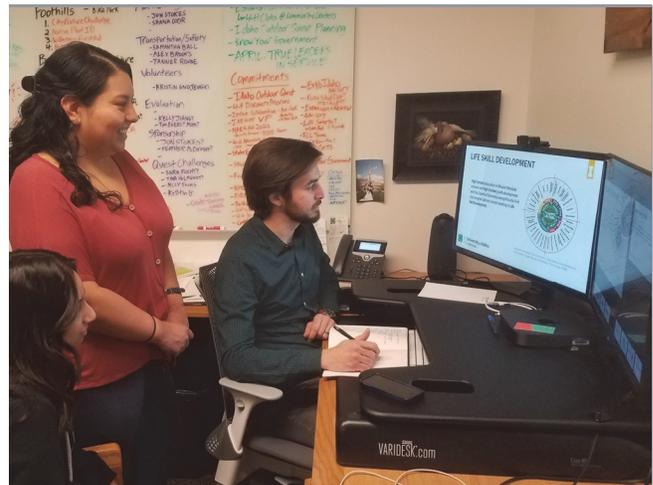
The new 4-H Staff Orientation Guide offers consistent, relevant information in a timely manner for new, as well as experienced 4-H staff statewide.

The Situation

New 4-H staff orientation has not been offered for several years and existing training materials are outdated and incomplete. The number of “new” 4-H professionals in Idaho changes from one month to the next, with an estimate of 20 to 25 individuals at any given time who have been working in Idaho’s 4-H for less than two years. Orientation for new 4-H staff is critical for them to gain a base knowledge of the 4-H youth development program and specifically Idaho’s 4-H policy and practices. It also provides a consistent “go to” source of accurate reference information and provides consistent statewide training of current, relevant information.

Our Response

A team of seven educators and specialists developed the 4-H Staff Orientation Guide. After reviewing existing training materials available on the state level and evaluating the needs of county-level 4-H professionals, the team then collectively determined the topics to be developed into learning modules. Each team member helped develop between one and nine modules, for a total of 20 modules comprising the 4-H Staff Orientation Guide. Recognizing the volume of information, the team prioritized the modules into three groups.



Ada County 4-H faculty and staff reviewing a 4-H staff orientation module. Photo credit: Nancy Shelstad.

The first group represents what the teams’ collective experience (ranging from five to 35 years each in 4-H youth development) indicated was most important for new 4-H professionals to know and understand early in their first year. The second group of modules being the next priority tier of information and third group as the third priority tier. Ideally, new 4-H professionals would participate in all 20 modules in their first nine to 12 months on the job. Each module includes a lesson plan with clearly stated learning objectives, a presentation with embedded activities, and reference or supplemental materials.

The new 4-H Staff Orientation Guide is organized into a training menu as follows:

4-H Professionals Training Menu

Within 4 to 6 Months	Within 6 to 9 Months	Within 9 to 12 Months
Introduction to 4-H Youth Development	Recognition	4-H Event Planning and Management
Culture of 4-H	Extension Reporting and Documentation	State, National and International Opportunities
Structure of 4-H	4-H Committees	Community Partners
4-H Financial Management	4-H Delivery Modes	Evaluation
Risk Management	Working with New 4-H Clubs	Work/Personal Life Balance
4-H Volunteer Management	Working with Existing 4-H Clubs	Introduction to PRKC (professional, research, knowledge and competencies)
4-H Online and Enrollment Management		4-H and FFA Partnership

The modules are delivered primarily as webinars but have also been used in person to groups ranging from two to 65 individuals and used as independent learning materials.

Program Outcomes

All modules were offered as webinars in 2018-2019 and again in 2019-2020 approximately every two weeks from mid-September through May. Participa-

tion is open to all 4-H staff regardless of title, percentage of 4-H responsibility or length of time employed. Participation in the webinars is voluntary. In the current 4-H year, attendance has averaged 20 participants per webinar with a high of 30 to a low of nine. Because the training is not mandatory and all the modules have been presented within the past year for all to attend, this participation level is higher than expected. The level of attendance also confirms the quality of topics and information, and that the presentations are valued and impactful for participants.

Surveys administered before and after the webinar trainings in 2019-20 show that participants are taking part in the training because they are new or because they want a refresher course on the information. Two participant comments include, “To understand the basis of 4-H and develop the foundational knowledge to be a more effective educator” and “To learn more about the 4-H programs so that I can better support the office staff and people we serve.” Also:

- participants appreciate the sessions and the majority report the sessions were useful.
- growth in knowledge with posttest responses showing mostly positive gains over the pretests.

The Future

The presentations are edited as policies and best practices change to keep information current. All the modules are posted on the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development website for employee access and reference at any time.

Acknowledgement — Nancy Melville was also an author and contributor to this project, she is now retired.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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