



Cooperative  
Extension Service

*An Equal Opportunity University*

**Kentucky 4-H**



# 4-H Core Program Areas **Action Plans**

*Updated June 2025*



## Public Value Statement

Kentucky 4-H is a community of young people learning communication, leadership, and civic engagement skills through high-quality 4-H programs grounded in the 4-H Thriving Model. Youth need access to opportunities that will help construct more effective leaders that demonstrate the basic skills necessary to become more confident, competent, and contributing members of their communities. Youth who participate in high quality positive youth development programs through Kentucky 4-H become healthy, productive, and engaged members of their communities. Based on the National 4-H Index Study (2024):

- Youth reported positive youth development experiences that promote sparks, relationships and belonging.
- Youth reported strong and positive results across the seven indicators of thriving.
- Youth reported strong and positive results across all positive youth development outcomes.
- Youth who reported experiencing high-quality developmental contexts in 4-H, reported better identification of their personal strengths and understanding of future career options.
- Youth who reported higher levels of thriving, reported greater levels of civic engagement and inspiration to volunteer in their community.

## Vision Statement

Kentucky 4-H is a community of young people learning communication, civic engagement, and leadership skills.

## Essential Skills

Kentucky 4-H provides education and development opportunities for youth to grow in the following essential skill sets that contribute to the growth of life and work readiness:

### Communication

Through gaining communication skills Kentucky 4-H aims to empower youth to express their thoughts and opinions, use information they've learned to communicate with others, and be able to demonstrate a skill they have learned.

### Leadership

Through gaining leadership skills Kentucky 4-H aims for youth to serve in leadership roles, work in a team or group to accomplish a common task or goal and realize how their actions impact others.

### Civic Engagement

Through practicing civic engagement Kentucky 4-H aims for youth to gain the ability to identify the needs of others in their community, participate in a service activity, and recognized leaders in their community or area of interest.

## Core Program Areas

4-H opportunities are designed to promote long-term involvement in 4-H, encouraging participation by a pathway through the advancement of skills (beginner, intermediate, advanced) and levels of experience (county, area, region, state, national, and international). Kentucky 4-H has seven core program areas which include:

- Agriculture
- Health & Wellbeing
- Natural Resources
- Communication & Expressive Arts
- Leadership
- Science Engineering & Technology
- Family & Consumer Sciences

## Delivery Modes

Kentucky 4-H delivers programs in a variety of ways to increase access to opportunities for all young people. Programs are offered through clubs, after-school activities, camps, school enrichment, individual study, and special interest or short-term programs.

## Progressive Experiences

4-H opportunities are designed to promote long-term involvement in 4-H, encouraging participation by a pathway through the advancement of skills (beginner, intermediate, advanced) and levels of experience (county, area, region, state, national, and international).

## Curriculum

Kentucky 4-H Programs utilize an approved curriculum that has been vetted and provided for use by the University of Kentucky 4-H Youth Development Department. Approved curriculum can be found through the local county extension office or the Kentucky 4-H Curriculum Page on Shop4-H.com.

## Volunteers

Kentucky 4-H depends on volunteers in all capacities to provide programming for young people. Through volunteers, 4-H can increase access to opportunities for involvement to all young people. Volunteers serve in various roles from general support to accredited or certified in specific core program areas.

## What is the Plan of Work?

The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Plan of Work outlines strategic goals and priorities for all Extension areas, including 4-H. It aligns programming with community needs, guides program development and evaluation, and supports impact reporting through KERS. Kentucky 4-H contributes to multiple state-level concentrations, such as agriculture, natural resources, health, leadership, and civic engagement—each with defined goals, learning opportunities, and evaluation tools.



## Health and Wellbeing - Overview

Kentucky youth deserve access to educational and life skill-building opportunities through 4-H Health and Wellbeing programs. America's future depends on a ready workforce and engaged communities to solve society's greatest challenges. The 4-H Health and Wellbeing program is designed to promote the holistic wellbeing of youth through a comprehensive approach that integrates positive youth development principles. This program aims to empower young individuals to make informed decisions about their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health.

### Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Increase knowledge and awareness of healthy habits and practices that promote physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health and wellbeing among 4-Her's.
- Improve attitudes and beliefs towards healthy habits and practices among 4-Her's.
- Develop skills and competencies necessary for 4-Her's to adopt healthy habits and practices in their daily lives.
- Increase social support and connectedness among 4-Her's by fostering positive relationships with peers and adults.
- Encourage self-reflection and exploration of personal values and beliefs related to health and wellbeing among 4-Her's.

### Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to health and wellbeing include:

- Minimizing youth substance abuse.
- Improved access to mental health and wellbeing resources.
- Reducing youth obesity through nutrition and/or exercise.
- Support for substance use addiction prevention.
- Minimizing bullying and/or school violence.
- Coping strategies to support youth wellbeing.
- Strengthening youth peer-peer relationships.

### Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Health and Wellbeing
- Concentration: Substance Use Prevention and Recovery
- Concentration: Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

### Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Health and Wellness program aims to foster a healthier future for its members through a series of well-defined outcomes.

#### Short Term

In the short term, the program focuses on increasing knowledge and awareness among 4-Her's about healthy habits and practices. This includes improving attitudes and beliefs towards these habits, enhancing understanding of healthy physical activity, positive mental health practices, and general wellness.

#### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, 4-H members are expected to start practicing general wellness habits regularly. They will engage in self-reflection and explore their personal values and beliefs related to health and wellbeing. Additionally, there will be a noticeable increase in their physical activity levels.

#### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims for significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of Kentucky 4-H members. These include a decrease in obesity rates and a reduction in the number of youth considering suicide. The program also hopes to inspire more 4-Her's to pursue careers in health and wellbeing. Ultimately, youth will contribute more to their communities by applying critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills.

### Some Ways to Engage

- 4-H Summer Camp
- 4-H Day Camps
- 4-H Environmental Camp
- Youth Strong
- Mindful Me



## Leadership - Overview

Confidence gained through 4-H involvement inspires youth to serve as leaders. Through 4-H, youth can set and achieve goals, which foster personal growth and a sense of accomplishment. The leadership skills and experiences gained through 4-H can enhance youth's readiness for future careers by providing valuable experiences and demonstrating leadership potential. Through 4-H leadership, youth can build a network of peers, mentors, and professionals that can provide support and guidance in their personal and professional lives. In addition to leadership skills, 4-H involvement can help youth develop important life skills such as time management, organization, and public speaking.

## Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Explore their leadership potential by participating in activities, workshops, or discussions that spark an interest in leadership roles.
- Build essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution. By practicing and refining these abilities, youth can contribute more effectively to their communities.
- Foster a sense of responsibility and community engagement.
- Be better equipped to make decisions necessary for a club or groups success.

## Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment 2023, priority issues related to Leadership include:

- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g., leadership and communication skill building opportunities)
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (including entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc.)
- Improved access to mental health and wellbeing resources
- Minimizing bullying and/or school violence
- Strengthening youth-adult or mentorship relationships
- Maximizing youth voice in issues that matter to them
- Strengthening youth peer-to-peer relationships

## Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Building Leadership Capacity
- Concentration: Connected and Resilient Communities
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

## Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Leadership program is designed to cultivate the leadership potential of youth through a series of structured outcomes.

### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in leadership. Participants will identify their personal strengths that contribute to leadership skill development, such as communication, teamwork, and civic engagement. They will also gain experience working in team environments to accomplish tasks and understand the impact of their actions on others.

### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will practice essential skills such as teamwork, responsibility, communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. They will also have the opportunity to plan and implement a service project, putting their leadership skills into action.

### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to equip youth with the necessary leadership, teamwork, and communication skills needed for success in the workplace. There will be an increase in youth participation in community involvement, with many serving in leadership roles within their communities. Ultimately, youth will become more effective in communicating, collaborating with others, and contributing to driving change and shaping the future.

## Some Ways to Engage

- Teen Conference
- 4-H Summit
- 4-H Achievement Program
- State Teen Council
- 4-H State Officer Program
- 4-H Issues Conference
- Southern Regional Teen Leadership Conference
- Global Citizenship Program
- Capiol Experience



## Family Consumer Sciences - Overview

4-H Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) projects engage young people in a variety of subject areas. Through skill development, career exploration, and community involvement, participants gain the tools they need to become well-rounded adults prepared for long-term success. Areas of focus within FCS include culinary arts, textiles and fashion, nutrition education, financial management, entrepreneurship, home environment, and child care.

## Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Explore their interests in family consumer sciences.
- Apply knowledge gained in Family Consumer Science programs to their daily lives.
- Be equipped with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about food, nutrition, home environment, clothing, and financial management.
- Be life and work ready.

## Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to 4-H Family and Consumer Sciences include:

- Minimizing youth substance use.
- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g., leadership and communication skill building opportunities).
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (including entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc).
- Reducing youth obesity through nutrition education and/or exercise.
- Building financial literacy and/or resource management skills.
- Engaging all youth audiences in programming.

## Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Financial Security and Economic Wellbeing
- Concentration: Food Safety, Quality, and Access
- Concentration: Health and Wellbeing
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

## Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Family Consumer Science Core Program Area is dedicated to equipping youth with essential life skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in Family and Consumer Sciences. Participants will gain knowledge and develop skills in this field, becoming more aware of how their choices impact their own health and the health of others. Additionally, they will expand their life and work readiness skills within Family and Consumer Sciences.

### Intermediate Term

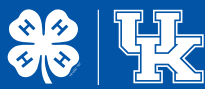
As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will practice the skills they have gained from 4-H Family and Consumer Sciences projects, clubs, and activities. They will confidently communicate ideas and concepts related to Family and Consumer Sciences and actively adopt advanced practices, demonstrating a growing commitment to their community.

### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to have a lasting impact on youth and their families. They will utilize skills that positively affect their economic stability and advocate for themselves and others as healthy consumers. Ultimately, youth will be life and work ready, contributing to their communities as consumers, leaders, and innovators.

## Some Ways to Engage

- Culinary Programs
- FCS Projects
- Up-cycling Projects
- FCS Bowl
- FCS Skill-a-thon
- Consumer Decision Making
- LifeSmarts
- Fashion Leadership Board
- It's Your Reality
- Kentucky State Fashion Revue
- National Family and Consumer Sciences Contest
- 4-H Life
- Entrepreneurship



## Agriculture - Overview

The Kentucky 4-H Youth Development program strives to increase agricultural literacy among youth in Kentucky. The National Agriculture Literacy Logic Model defines an agriculturally literate person as one “...who understands and can communicate the source and value of agriculture as it affects our quality of life” (Spielmaker et al., 2014). One of the key initiatives in Kentucky 4-H is to increase a young person’s awareness of the impact agriculture has on their daily life.

## Objectives

4-Her’s will:

- Explore various aspects of agriculture.
- Gain an appreciation of how agriculture impacts their daily lives.
- Apply skills gained from 4-H Agriculture projects and clubs.
- Be equipped with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about agricultural products and services and be advocates for agriculture in their communities.
- Be life and work ready.

## Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to agriculture include:

- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g. leadership and communication skill building opportunities)
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc.)
- Ensuring individuals and families have access to affordable, nutritious food
- Strengthening/supporting the local food and agriculture industry
- Promoting youth agriculture and natural resource literacy

## Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Animal Production and Management
- Concentration: Plant Production and Management
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

## Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Agriculture and Animal Science Core Program Area is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of agricultural leaders through a series of structured outcomes.

### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in agriculture. Participants will gain knowledge and develop skills in this field, fostering a greater awareness and appreciation for the impact of agriculture in their daily lives. Additionally, they will expand their life and work readiness skills, becoming aware of the diverse opportunities within the agricultural sector.

### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will practice the skills they have gained from 4-H agricultural projects and clubs. They will communicate agricultural ideas and concepts more effectively and actively adopt advanced agricultural practices, demonstrating a growing commitment to the agricultural community.

### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to equip youth with the ability to make informed decisions regarding agricultural products and services. They will advocate for agriculture and sustainable fiber and food production within their communities. Ultimately, youth will be life and work ready, contributing to the agricultural community as knowledgeable consumers, leaders, and innovators.

## Some Ways to Engage

- **Agriculture And Food Education**
  - Country Ham Project
  - Quiz Bowls
  - Knowledge Contest
  - Skill-A-Thon Contest
- **Agriculture Economics & Marketing**
  - Record Keeping And Record Books
  - Entrepreneurship
- **Selection & Evaluation**
  - Livestock Judging
  - Horse Judging
  - Meats Judging
  - Land Judging
  - Poultry And Egg Judging
  - Quiz Bowls
  - Showmanship
- **Agriculture Technology**
- **Production Agriculture**
  - Livestock, Equine, Dairy, Companion Animals, Poultry, Plant And Soil Sciences, Crops, and Horticulture Projects





## Communication and Expressive Arts - Overview

From film-making to public speaking, Kentucky 4-H Communication and Expressive Arts programs and curricula emphasize artistic expression and communication. 4-H's visual arts programs include both print and digital media so youth have the opportunity to use the latest technology. Theater and music programs teach communication skills, creative thinking, improvisation, and writing. Speech, demonstration, and mock interview programs foster the development and refinement of public speaking skills. Participants benefit from enhanced communication, improved critical thinking, increased self-confidence, career preparation, and leadership development.

### Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Explore their interests and passions in communication and expressive arts.
- Practice their creative, artistic, and performance skills gained in 4-H Communication and Expressive Arts programs.
- Communicate ideas and concepts effectively.
- Be life and work ready.

### Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to communication and expressive arts include:

- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g. leadership and communication skill building opportunities)
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc.)
- Maximizing youth voice in issues that matter to them

### Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Connected and Resilient Communities
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

### Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Communication and Expressive Arts Core Program Area is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of leaders in communication and the arts through a series of structured outcomes.

#### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in communication and expressive arts. Participants will gain knowledge and develop skills in these fields, identifying key elements of communication and expressive arts. They will also expand their life and work readiness skills, becoming aware of the diverse opportunities available in communication and expressive arts.

#### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will practice their creative, artistic, and performance skills gained from 4-H Expressive Arts programs. They will also hone their writing and presentation skills from 4-H Communication programs, effectively communicating ideas and concepts. Youth will aspire to explore careers in communication and expressive arts and apply the skills they have learned by completing 4-H projects, participating in 4-H activities, and integrating these skills into various aspects of their lives.

#### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to have a lasting impact on youth by enabling them to apply the skills gained from 4-H Communication and Expressive Arts programs to serve in roles within their community. They will pursue advocacy for the arts and share their knowledge with their communities. Ultimately, youth will recognize how the skills gained from these programs contribute to their life and work readiness, becoming effective communicators, leaders, and innovators.

### Some Ways to Engage

- Speech Contests
- Demonstration Contests
- Written Communication Contests
- Mock Interview Contests
- Performing Arts Troupe
- Photography Clubs
- Drawing and Painting Clubs
- 4-H Camp



## Natural Resources - Overview

Kentucky 4-H Natural Resources Programs provide young people an opportunity to find their spark through hands-on learning experiences. A variety of projects and activities are offered in the areas of environmental sciences, entomology, forestry, geology, soils, water, wildlife, and shooting sports. Through these programs, young people connect with other youth members and adult leaders who share similar interests and learn invaluable life skills such as wise use of resources, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.

## Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Explore various aspects of natural resources and environmental sciences.
- Gain an awareness of how their choices impact natural resources and the environment.
- Apply skills gained from 4-H Natural Resources projects and clubs.
- Make informed decisions about natural resources stewardship and conservation.
- Be life and work ready.

## Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to natural resources include:

- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g. leadership and communication skill building opportunities).
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc).
- Promoting youth agriculture and natural resource literacy.

## Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Sustainability, Natural Resources and Wildlife Management, and Environment
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

## Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Natural Resources Core Program Area is dedicated to fostering a deep appreciation and understanding of natural resources among youth through a series of structured outcomes.

### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in natural resources. Participants will gain knowledge and develop skills in natural resources and environmental sciences, understanding how their actions and choices impact the environment. They will set goals to become good stewards of natural resources and expand their life and work readiness skills, becoming aware of the diverse opportunities within the field.

### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will take responsible action in natural resources conservation. They will aspire to explore careers in natural resources and environmental sciences. They will practice the skills gained from 4-H natural resources projects and clubs. Additionally, they will communicate natural resources ideas and concepts more effectively.

### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to equip youth with the ability to advocate for natural resources in their communities. They will be life and work ready, contributing to the natural resources community as knowledgeable consumers, leaders, and innovators. Youth will actively adopt and apply advanced natural resources practices, demonstrating a growing commitment to our natural resources.

## Some Ways to Engage

- Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences Academy and Ambassador Program
- Entomology, Forestry, and Geology Projects
- Forestry Contests
- Wildlife Challenge Contest
- Stream Team
- Pass on Plastics Program
- Camping Programs
- Environmental Camp
- Shooting Sports Volunteer Certification Program
- Shooting Sports Team Ambassador Board
- Shooting Sports Camp
- State Shooting Sports Competition





## Science Engineering and Technology - Overview

Projects in the Kentucky 4-H Science, Engineering, and Technology Program equip young people with the skills they need to succeed in life through a variety of hands-on learning opportunities. Project areas such as Aerospace, Agriscience, Computer Science, Electricity and Energy, Petroleum Power, Robotics, and the 4-H Discover Boxes, help young people to develop through building relationships with other youth who share their spark for learning and doing through STEM. Youth will be challenged to expand their knowledge and be open to discovering new ideas and concepts while setting and managing goals for themselves and their project outcomes.

## Objectives

4-Her's will:

- Increase knowledge in and demonstrate the use of critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, leadership, and civic engagement through 4-H Science Engineering and Technology programs.
- Explore their spark, show an interest in, and pursue educational and career opportunities related to Science Engineering and Technology.
- Identify problems and solutions in their communities utilizing Science, Engineering and Technology.
- Increase contributions to their communities through applying critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication learning.

## Cooperative Extension Service Priority Issues

According to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Community Needs Assessment (2023), priority issues related to natural resources include:

- Youth life skill training opportunities (e.g. leadership and communication skill building opportunities)
- Strengthening youth workforce readiness (entrepreneurship, business development skills, etc.)

## Plan of Work Concentration

- Concentration: Connected and Resilient Communities
- Concentration: Work and Life Skill Development

## Outcomes

The Kentucky 4-H Science Engineering and Technology Core Program Area is dedicated to inspiring youth to explore and excel in the fields of science, engineering, and technology through a series of structured outcomes.

### Short Term

In the short term, the program encourages youth to explore their spark in these fields. Participants will gain knowledge and develop skills in science, engineering, and technology, understanding how their actions and choices impact the environment and society. They will set goals to become good stewards of natural resources and expand their life and work readiness skills, becoming aware of the diverse opportunities within these fields.

### Intermediate Term

As the program progresses to the intermediate term, youth will take responsible action in conservation and sustainability. They will aspire to explore careers in science, engineering, and technology, practicing the skills gained from 4-H projects and clubs. Additionally, they will communicate ideas and concepts more effectively, demonstrating a growing commitment to their community.

### Long Term

In the long term, the program aims to equip youth with the ability to advocate for science and technology in their communities. They will be life and work ready, contributing to the community as knowledgeable consumers, leaders, and innovators. Youth will actively adopt and apply advanced practices, demonstrating a growing commitment to the fields of science, engineering, and technology.

## Some Ways to Engage

- Aerospace
- Agriscience
- Computer Science
- Electricity
- Petroleum Power
- Robotics
- Science, Engineering, and Technology Leadership Board



## About Kentucky 4-H

The University of Kentucky 4-H Program, administered through the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Cooperative Extension Service, reaches more than 200,000 young people annually across all 120 counties in the Commonwealth.

Kentucky 4-H is dedicated to delivering intentional, research-based positive youth development programs for youth ages 5 to 18. These programs provide meaningful opportunities for young people to grow and thrive in leadership, civic engagement, and communication across seven core program areas:

- Leadership
- Communication & Expressive Arts
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Natural Resources
- Health & Wellbeing
- Agriculture
- Science, Engineering & Technology

Through hands-on learning and skill development opportunities, Kentucky 4-H empowers youth to become confident, capable, and contributing members of their communities.

### Cooperative Extension Service

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