



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

4-H National
Headquarters

4-H Youth Development

4-H offers a youth development experience for youth ages 5-19. 4-H encourages youth to reach their full potential through working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

Guiding principles

The four guiding principles of 4-H youth development programs are:

- Positive Youth Development
- Partnership
- Learning
- Youth Potential

Experiences

4-H'ers are often involved in long-term learning experiences with peers and adult volunteers. Active, hands-on learning is a staple of the program. Youth choose topics that interest them, ranging from the many areas of science, healthy living, and citizenship/civic engagement. Community service, leadership, and public speaking are usual opportunities.

4-H is about having fun, learning, exploring, and discovering. In 4-H, young people make new friends, develop new skills, become leaders, and help shape their communities.

The essential elements of the 4-H program include creating an environment where youth feel a sense of **belonging**, have an opportunity to **master** skills, practice **independence**, and develop a spirit of **generosity**.

Partners

4-H is a public-private partnership with federal, state, local, and non-profit support. Youth and their families access 4-H programs at a community or county level through the cooperative extension unit of their land-grant university.

Reach

4-H reaches nearly 6 million young people in the United States through local 4-H clubs, schools and after school programs, camps, and special interest groups. Programs vary to meet local needs.

Strengths

4-H has a rich history of being a leader in positive youth development for more than a century. The tie with land-grant universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture assures a research and science base to the program. Local, state, and national partners look to 4-H for advice in positive youth development.

Volunteers in 4-H

Volunteers are important to the successful delivery of 4-H programs. Nationally, more than 500,000 volunteers support the program and the youth involved.

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge....My Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, my Health to better living, For my club, my community, my country, and my world.



1Caring people and innovative learning are all part of the experience that makes 4-H fun!

Promesa 4-H

The U.S. Department of State provides the following Spanish translation of the 4-H Pledge: Prometo usar mi mente para pensar con más claridad, mi corazón para ser más leal, mis manos para ser más servicial, mi salud para cuidarme más, por mi club, mi comunidad, mi país y mi mundo.