



# STRATEGIC PLAN

4-H Youth Development A 2025 Vision





The 4-H Youth Development Program is the youth outreach program from the land-grant universities' Cooperative Extension Services and the United States Department of Agriculture.

### **4-H Vision**

A world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change.

### **4-H Grows: A Promise to America's Kids**

In 2025, 4-H will reflect the population demographics, vulnerable populations, diverse needs and social conditions of the country. This vision has the elements of inclusion, caring adults, serving at minimum 1 in 5 youth, and the volunteers and staff reflect the diversity of the population.

### **4-H Mission**

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

The mission of 4-H is to provide meaningful opportunities for all youth and adults to work together to create sustainable community change. This is accomplished within three primary content areas, or mission areas – civic engagement and leadership, healthy living, and science. These mission areas reiterate the founding purposes of Extension through agriculture (e.g., community leadership, quality of life, and technology transfer) in the context of 21st century challenges and opportunities.



# 4-H Guiding Principles

THE 4-H GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE AT THE BASE OF ALL 4-H STRATEGIES.

## Positive Youth Development

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4-H creates the context and content for positive youth development, subscribing to a set of essential elements characteristic of high quality youth development.

4-H helps young people see themselves as unique, resilient, life-long learners who actively participate in their own future—setting personal goals and practicing self-determination.

4-H values results-driven educational opportunities and experiences that are based upon cutting edge youth development research and best practices proven to have impact.

## Partnerships

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4-H values partnerships.

4-H is the youth development program of the US Department of Agriculture and is implemented by the Cooperative Extension system through the over 110+ land-grant colleges and universities.

4-H creates connections between public and private entities, non-profits, schools, and community organizations.

4-H funds programming through a partnership of federal, state and local governments, National 4-H Council, state 4-H foundations and other private entities.

4-H connects youth and caring adults as partners in planning and striving for individual, and community change.

4-H engages well-trained, enthusiastic professional staff who lead, advise, and partner with youth and are regularly provided opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction.

4-H recognizes volunteers as critical partners and fosters relationships that lead to positive outcomes for youth and adults.

## Learn

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4-H engages the broader community in supporting youth development and involves youth in building stronger communities through science, healthy living, and civic engagement and leadership.

4-H designs challenging and interesting experiences with important consideration given to the depth of the content, age appropriateness of the experience and the context in which it is delivered.

4-H integrates knowledge, skills and behaviors of formal and non-formal education strategies.

4-H builds life skills in youth and adults.

4-H youth and adults develop and evaluate intentional learning experiences.

4-H evolves to meet the interests and needs of youth and adults.

4-H staff are recognized as leaders in high quality youth development, teaching, research and evaluation.

4-H relies on the extensive network of research from the land-grant universities to support positive youth development and program content.

## Youth

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4-H matches the needs, interests, abilities and cultural norms of young people, their families, and their communities.

4-H believes that all young people, as members of families and communities and citizens of a global society, should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

4-H builds a culturally competent workforce engaging adults and youth from diverse backgrounds.

4-H is inclusive and embraces diversity.

4-H values the safety and well-being of youth and adults.

4-H conducts programs under the authority of the USDA and is committed to affirmative action.



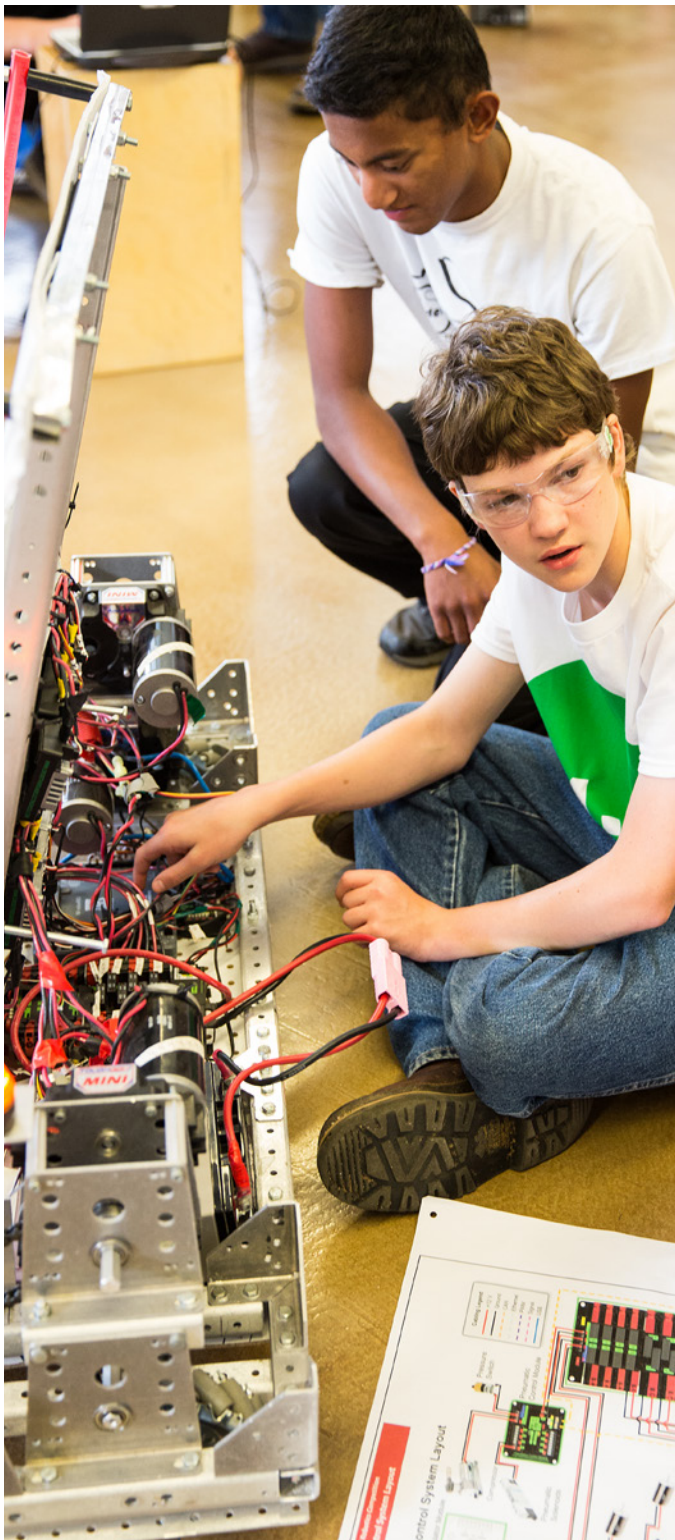
**Effective  
Organizational  
Systems**

**Access,  
Equity, and  
Opportunity**

**Power of Youth**

**Exceptional  
People, Innovative  
Practices**

**Extraordinary  
Opportunities  
to Learn**



# OUTCOMES & STRATEGIES

Power of Youth

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Access, Equity, and Opportunity

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Extraordinary Opportunities to Learn

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Exceptional People, Innovative Practices

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Effective Organizational Systems

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# Power of Youth

GOAL: YOUTH, THROUGH 4-H INVOLVEMENT, DEVELOP THEIR POTENTIAL AND ARE LEADERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

OUTCOMES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES
<p><b>Youth are partners in their success.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth participate in meaningful youth-adult partnerships.</li> <li>2. Youth culture is incorporated into program design and delivery.</li> <li>3. Youth and adults work together to plan, design and evaluate 4-H programming.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Youth are civically engaged.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth participate in community change.</li> <li>2. Youth engage in global, state and local citizenship efforts.</li> <li>3. Youth engage in service learning.</li> <li>4. Youth from all communities are empowered to engage in positive change.</li> <li>5. Youth-adult partnership education and implementation is common practice.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Youth are prepared for college and career.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4-H promotes first-generation college access.</li> <li>2. 4-H provides exposure to career opportunities and post-secondary education.</li> <li>3. All youth have opportunities to engage in college and career opportunities.</li> <li>4. Youth engage in activities and programs that empower positive decisions in college and career readiness.</li> <li>5. 4-H experiences prepare youth for college and/or provide learning experiences that lead to employment.</li> <li>6. 4-H youth are work-ready, financially literate and prepared for college, career and life.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Youth display the skills needed to succeed throughout life.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth transfer life skills learned to current and future experiences.</li> </ol>

# Power of Youth

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Youth are partners in their success.	
Youth are civically engaged.	
Youth are prepared for college and career.	
Youth display the skills needed to succeed throughout life.	

# Access, Equity, and Opportunity

GOAL: ALL YOUTH ENGAGE IN PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

OUTCOMES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES
<p><b>Access to 4-H programs is systematically valued and implemented.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4-H defines and prioritizes access and opportunity.</li> </ol>
<p><b>All youth, families and communities have opportunities to be involved in high-quality 4-H programs.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4-H generates resources to reach diverse audiences.</li> <li>2. All programs use culturally relevant pedagogy and promote intercultural understanding, learning and respect.</li> <li>3. 4-H engages youth from all socio-economic levels.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H volunteers and staff are skilled, knowledgeable and prepared to work with all members of their community.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff and volunteers access tools, curricula and competency-based training on inclusion.</li> <li>2. Broad audiences are reached with 4-H positive youth development training and information.</li> <li>3. Staff and volunteers have the skill sets to reach youth representing all parts of the community.</li> <li>4. Youth development training fits the needs of the target audience.</li> <li>5. Volunteers, teens and the community collaborate to determine needs and to develop new approaches to creating access.</li> </ol>



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# Extraordinary Opportunities to Learn

GOAL: YOUTH ENGAGE IN HIGH QUALITY, DIVERSE, AND RELEVANT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

OUTCOMES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES
<p><b>4-H learning is grounded in research based theories and practices.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A positive youth development research agenda is developed.</li> <li>2. National reporting systems are integrated.</li> <li>3. National impact data systems are in place.</li> <li>4. Programs are based on researched best practices.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H programs reflect sound educational models.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective 4-H experiences are described and outlined.</li> <li>2. The 4-H Positive Youth Development Learning Framework is utilized.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Programs are delivered in a variety of ways that engage youth.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth centered learning is the focus of 4-H experiences.</li> <li>2. A variety of program delivery opportunities that maximize participation and resources are offered.</li> <li>3. Youth are engaged in planning their own learning.</li> <li>4. The role of the learning facilitator is defined.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H programs meet a high standard of quality and accountability.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The integrity of the 4-H name and emblem is upheld.</li> <li>2. All programming is consistent and aligned with evidence-based positive youth development.</li> </ol>

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# Exceptional People, Innovative Practices

GOAL: YOUTH ARE SURROUNDED WITH COMPETENT, PREPARED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.

OUTCOMES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES
<p><b>4-H staff have a strong understanding of positive youth development and the communities they serve.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professionals are hired with positive youth development focus.</li> <li>2. Professionals reflect each state's population.</li> <li>3. 4-H implements staff retention and recruitment strategies that lead to increasing program capacity.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The 4-H program is supported by a well-trained volunteer force.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A volunteer workforce is mobilized that reflects community demographics and volunteer needs.</li> <li>2. 4-H provides volunteer opportunities that are appealing and relevant to the volunteer and the program.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H staff and volunteers engage in meaningful professional development experiences.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive youth development is the focus of professional development.</li> <li>2. Consistent onboarding training is provided.</li> <li>3. Professional development experiences focus on sustained transferable learning.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H is a leader in the research and practice of positive youth development.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Federal, state and local leaders in positive youth development work collaboratively to advance the field.</li> <li>2. External stakeholders know what positive youth development means and links 4-H to that definition.</li> <li>3. The 4-H Positive Youth Development approach embodies inclusivity.</li> <li>4. 4-H leadership fosters collaborations within and among land-grant universities.</li> <li>5. 4-H leadership fosters collaborations with other youth serving organizations and the larger positive youth development research community.</li> </ol>

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# Effective Organizational Systems

GOAL: THE 4-H SYSTEM DEVELOPS THE CAPACITY TO EFFECTIVELY IMPACT THE LIVES OF YOUTH THROUGH THE NATION.

OUTCOMES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES
<p><b>4-H is led through a shared leadership model.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A current Memorandum of Understanding between USDA/NIFA, National 4-H Council, and the Extension Committee on Policy (ECOP) is in place.</li> <li>2. The ECOP committee on 4-H engages in regular and substantive discussion about issues of national importance related to the land-grant university Cooperative Extension System implementation of the 4-H program, including issues of organization and policy.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Partnerships are utilized to build the impact of 4-H programming.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4-H develops and fosters innovative internal and external partnerships.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4-H has the capacity to grow and thrive.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programs are funded in a sustainable way.</li> <li>2. Resources are generated to facilitate program implementation to ensure the fullest potential for participants.</li> <li>3. Staffing levels and organizational structure meet the needs of the system.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The public recognizes 4-H as a quality positive youth development program.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The 4-H brand is a trusted source of positive youth development.</li> <li>2. Marketing strategies that respond to the emerging needs and interests of diverse youth are developed.</li> </ol>



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NIFA

United States Department of Agriculture | National Institute of Food and Agriculture | 4-H National Headquarters



NATIONAL 4-H  
COUNCIL

COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION