4-H Civic Engagement

*Connecting, learning, engaging, leading and impacting*

**Definition:**
4-H Civic Engagement involves working to make a positive difference in one’s community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference (Elrich, 2000). 4-H youth engage within communities on many scales—from local to global—making contributions that reinforce their sense of purpose and strengthening their sense of belonging with peers and community adults.

**Vision:**
Youth will make a positive difference by engaging in learning opportunities that give them a heightened sense of responsibility and capacity to connect as active members of their communities, nation and world.

**Key Focus Areas**
- **Community engagement**
  - Youth voice
  - Informed decision making
  - Civic responsibility
  - Global engagement
  - Social justice
- **Service**
  - Community service
  - Service learning
  - Community youth development
- **Civic education**
  - Government principles, processes and structures
  - History and cultural heritage
  - Global context
  - Personal roles and responsibilities
- **Personal development**
  - Leadership
  - Character
  - Mutual respect and understanding
  - Critical thinking and problem solving
  - Intercultural competence and communication
  - Civility
Effective 4-H Youth Civic Engagement programs will allow young people to:

- **CONNECT**—Be active partners in a larger community as they recognize, appreciate and respect human diversity and commonality; understand their part in shaping change and work together towards the common good.
- **LEARN**—Learn from others, self and environment to develop informed perspectives, empathy, ethics, social values, positive self-identity and sense of social responsibility.
- **ENGAGE**—Engage in civic education, awareness, and responsibility; social justice; public problem solving; community service, etc.
- **LEAD**—Develop leadership skills where youth use their voices, work, ideas or behavior for the greater good.
- **IMPACT**—Make a difference in community, country and world

Effective 4-H Youth Civic Engagement programs will include the following strategies for learning & positive youth development:

**Learning**

- Based on appropriate national and state learning standards
- Meet youth where they are
- Mentorship
- Experiential learning providing opportunities for practice, application and reflection including critical thinking and problem solving.
- Motivation--achievement, affiliation and power/influence (McClelland’s Motivational Model)
- Learning styles
- Using appropriate technology

**Positive Youth Development**

- Youth/Adult Partnership approach—youth and adults work together in a positive and respectful environment, contributing their unique strengths to the project and their relationship.
- Youth are engaged in the identification, planning, implementation, leadership and evaluation of the program.
- Youth in Governance
- Includes the Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development—mastery, independence, belonging and generosity
- Parent/guardian component running in parallel
- Provide a continuum of developmentally appropriate experiences and opportunities

This is a guiding document created at a National 4-H Program Summit in Baton Rouge, LA in 2010. The framework was updated and revised under the direction of the 4-H Program Leadership Working Group (PLWG) in 2018.

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