



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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