

4-H Citizenship Mission Mandate

Introduction

President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama have renewed the call in America for all citizens to engage in service to their communities. This renewed call comes at a time when America faces many challenges from rising unemployment to reduced services from non-profit and government agencies. Communities, regardless of how they are defined, face challenges and opportunities related to the environment; education; child care; youth programs; and family support. Communities rely on the government and non-profits, including youth development organizations to help address many of these challenges.

Unfortunately, youth are not engaged in their communities, outside of school (Lopez, Levine, Both, Kiesa, Kirby, & Marcelo, 2006) to the degree that will lead to successful contributions as adults. A leading contributor to the lack of engagement is the fact that opportunities for learning about citizenship is highly unequal (CIRCLE, 2008) among youth of different backgrounds, cultures, race, and socio-economic status. In a 2006 report, Lopez et.al. found that only 19% of young people (ages 15 to 25) worked within the last year “informally” with someone or a group to solve a problem in the community and only 10% were confident that they personally can make a great deal of difference in solving community problems. However, the same young people were confident that “people working together” can make a great deal of difference in solving problems. Conversely, 4-H members in grades 5-9 have been found to be more active and contribute more to their community than youth in other organizations (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2009).

Balsano (2005) has suggested that civic engagement represents an important vehicle in promoting positive youth development. For example, Yates and Youniss (1996) reviewed 44 studies exploring the relationship between adolescents’ participation in community services and potential developmental benefits of being involved in the program. Ninety five percent of the studies they reviewed were conducted in the United States and involved youth 12 through 24. Overall the studies indicated that civically engaged youth tend to have an increased sense of their competencies, be more internally driven to get involved in prosocial activities, and have higher self-esteem. These young people were also more likely than the youth who were not civically engaged to have higher internal locus of control and to show a higher level of comfort resolving social and interpersonal issues.

It seems clear that civic engagement has developmental benefits for youth and for society as well. It can therefore be argued that youth who are missing the opportunity to attain civic knowledge and skills and to experience civic engagement might be at a developmental disadvantage. Balsano (2005) has suggested that this may be especially true for youth growing up in communities that have deficiencies in contextual assets that can support their healthy and positive development. These factors may include, but are not limited to the following summarized items:

- a. **Lack of civic knowledge and skills.** It has been found that youth who participated in any of a list of organized activities (school newspaper, youth organizations, affiliated political party, environmental organization, Boys and Girls Scouts, student government) tended to show significant higher civic achievement (as measured by civic knowledge and skills) than did youth who did not participate in any of the organizations or clubs.

In some communities, however, the nature of the structure and socioeconomics makeup of the community may not support youth's need for civic knowledge, engagement, and connection (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998).

- b. **Lack of role models; parental characteristics and civic engagement among youth.** Several parental characteristics have been identified as playing important roles in youth's civic engagement. For example greater civic competence and development have been identified in children who have parents that are more educated, civically engaged, or have a higher income. (Hart & Atkins, 2002).
- c. **Lack of meaningfulness in civic experiences.** It is important for youth to know that their opinion and actions have value. It is important to provide youth meaningful experiences that also provide them an opportunity for reflection. By engaging youth in this process they are enabled to more quickly develop skills, attitudes and values more supportive of their development and future civic engagement (Pittman, 1999).
- d. **Living in stressful communities.** "Living in stressful, turbulent, conflict, or poverty-ridden communities rob youth of the sense of safety, security, hope, leaving little room for long-term aspirations and planning" (Bollard, 2003, p. 146). These are the communities where the challenges, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, to youth's civic engagement are likely to be the greatest. These settings are most likely to be found in urban communities. Research has shown that urban youth in particular seem to lag behind in civic development and activism. Hart & Atkins (2002) suggested that this trend is due in part to the fact that "urban America is disproportionately impoverished, poorly educated, foreign-born, and minority"(p. 233) all of which are factors that contribute to the lack of role models and opportunities for youth to acquire values supportive of civic involvement
- e. **Failure to acknowledge civic subculture.** In 2003, 12% of the US population was foreign-born which represents 33.5 million people. About 44% of the foreign- born population lived in urban, metropolitan areas and 12.6% were under the age of 21 (United States Census Bureau, 2003). Balsana (2005) lamented that "when talking about youth civic engagement and programs that support it, we often seem to overlook the fact that considerable number of youth in the United States come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds." Failure to take these cultural factors into account could challenge efforts for civically meaningful activities and further marginalize them.

These findings demonstrate the significant need for the 4-H Youth Development program to provide new and better opportunities, support, and access for young people to become engaged and make a difference in their communities. The Citizenship Mission Mandate Task Force will move forth an aggressive, nationwide agenda, building on our current infrastructure to eradicate the issue of not enough young people being engaged in their communities to the degree that would lead to successful contributions as adults. It is evident that opportunities for learning about citizenship is highly unequal (CIRCLE, 2008) among youth of different backgrounds, cultures, race, and socio-economic status and therefore unique and different strategies must be employed to effectively address the issues and concerns necessary for highly effective youth civic engagement.

For purpose of this work citizenship is defined as a “set of abilities that give youth the capacity to move beyond one's individual self-interest and to be committed to the well-being of some larger group of which one is a member” (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). This definition serves the 4-H program well as we seek to further engage young people in addressing the challenges and opportunities that they face. Therefore, we believe that:

- Citizenship is about an intentional process;
- Active youth contribution leads to a lifetime of engagement; and
- With appropriate adult support, access to resources, and knowledge and skills, youth can and will take an active role in their communities.

“What’s needed is a broad majority of Americans...of goodwill-who are reengaged in the project of national renewal, and who see their own self-interest as inextricably linked to the interests of others.” (Obama 2006)

The Education Commission of the States (2002) in a report on The National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools report that we should be concerned about helping youth create their democratic self. They profess there are several steps to achieving this goal. First is the ability to recognize and acknowledge one’s self-interest and self-worth in the collective decision and to identify one’s personal stake in public deliberations and decision-making. For example, young people who lack a realistic self-understanding of any situation are less likely to see the connection between the group decisions that have been made for the whole. This is why it is important to utilize an experiential learning process when engaging youth in these discussions.

Second, the National Study Group on Citizenship believes it is important for young people to see themselves as a community. It is believed that without such an understanding, young citizens have no sense of what the common good is or their part in achieving it. For example, they need to learn in their 4-H clubs and groups that they are no mere aggregate of individuals, but rather a group of people who belong to one another because they share a common experience.

Further scholars in this field have made assumptions that being a citizen also means acquiring an education in civic skills that nourishes the ability and willingness to make judgments about what is best for the whole. This includes a strong capacity for critical judgment and reflection, the ability to conduct critical inquires about facts and decisions, and the ability to participate in public deliberations impartially and objectively. In addition, it is believed that the process of gaining civic engagement skills involves the ability to be inclusive, respecting the heritage, diversity, and interest of others; to be comprehensive, seeking to understand other’s views; to be deliberative, willing to engage in mutual give and take without rancor; and to be cooperative, continuing to participate when things do not go their way.

Pittman and Martin (2007) suggested a youth engagement continuum that reflects the paradigm outlined below (see Table 1). The continuum seems to suggest effective strategies for Extension Educators to help staff and adult volunteers redefine roles that allow young people to simultaneously be 4-H participants and become change organizers. Successful 4-H programs have shown that it is extremely effective to offer a disadvantaged youth a chance to be a 4-H participant; it addresses an individual’s needs *and* provides an opportunity to

address collective issues. From left to right the engagement level climbs from youth being a recipient to being highly engaged with adults in the leadership of change.

Table 1. Utilizing Pittman & Martin's (2007) Youth Engagement Continuum Model for Age Appropriate Learning Outcomes for 4-H Youth

The Youth Engagement Continuum				
Intervention	Development	Collective Empowerment		Systemic Change
Youth Service Approach	Youth Development	Youth Leadership	Civic Engagement	Youth Organizing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines young people as clients • Provides services to address individual problems and pathologies of young people • Programming defined around treatment and prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides services and support, access to caring adults and safe spaces • Provides opportunities for the growth and development of young people • Meets young people where they are • Builds young people's individual competencies • Provides age appropriate support • Emphasizes positive self identity • Supports youth-adult partnerships 	<p>Includes components of youth development approach plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds in authentic youth leadership opportunities within programming and organization • Helps young people deepen historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community issues • Builds skills and capacities of young people to be decision makers and problem solvers • Youth participate in community projects 	<p>Includes components of youth development & youth leadership plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages young people in political education and awareness • Builds skills and capacity for power analysis and action around issues young people identify • Begins to help young people build collective identity of young people as change agents • Engages young people in advocacy and negotiation 	<p>Includes components of youth development, youth leadership and civic engagement plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds a membership base • Involves youth as part of core staff and governing body • Engages in direct action and mobilizing • Engages in alliances and coalitions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant in 4-H club meetings or community group meetings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a 4-H club officer or group leader at the community center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a 4-H neighborhood recreation center improvement (or holding meetings for a show barn at the fair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing grants and raising funds on the Fair Board (or Board of Directors) for the show barn (or recreation center)

• Youth Engagement Continuum originally developed by Listen, Inc. (LISTEN, Inc., 2003) downloaded from http://www.fcyo.org/media/docs/8141_Papers_no1_v4.qxd.pdf

In order for this model to work effectively in the 4-H world, we must also have a continuum of opportunities where young people own their own learning and create opportunities to reflect on their learning. The development of on-line communities of discussion forums or face-to-face forums and/or conferences will allow youth to reflect on impact and consequences of their decisions and actions. As suggested by Tynes (2007), on-line social networking can facilitate identity exploration, provide social cognitive skills such as perspective taking, and fulfill the need for social support, intimacy, and autonomy.

Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, McLaughlin, Silbereisen, 2002) seem to suggest that although civic competence will be developed through personal action in local context, the fundamental question is “Are young people being well prepared to take civic responsibilities in this new changing global reality?”

Credential

As a 4-H movement, youth have led the way in creating positive change in their communities and moving powerful new ideas and technologies forward.

For more than 100 years, 4-H members have actively engaged in addressing many of these and other challenges. However, now is the time for the 4-H Youth Development program to renew its commitment to citizenship as an integral and important component of the organization to ensure a lifetime of contribution as youth enter adulthood. From the 4-H Citizenship Ceremony at National 4-H Conference to the Citizenship Improvement Study to international exchanges to the formal establishment of the 4-H Citizenship Mission Mandate, citizenship has played an important role in shaping the 4-H Youth Development program.

In more recent years one approach in 4-H youth development has been the Youth in Governance (YIG) program, which highlights the power that youth have to create behavior change. YIG is “the authentic and meaningful engagement of young people in programs, organizations and communities, where they have or share voice, influence, and decision-making authority” (MacNeil, 2005). The YIG approach recognizes that youth need not be passive receivers of programs or services, but rather can be producers of change in their communities. Youth can make significant and unique contributions to problem solving and creating new opportunities, which creates an immediate impact for communities. In addition, research shows that when youth are engaged in meaningful ways in their community, there is a long-term impact of civic and philanthropic involvement as adults (MacNeil, 2005).

Other examples of excellence in citizenship program would include the Community Improvement Through Youth (CITY) project with Cornell University and the Diverse Youth-Adult Partnership in Rural Nebraska with the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Beyond these programs, every state/institution in the country carries out educational programs that contribute to the citizenship mission mandate and enhance the skills and abilities of young people to engage in their communities. As a part of citizenship, 4-H programs have successfully designed, delivered, and implemented programs related to community service, youth leadership, civic education, youth in governance, youth volunteerism, public speaking, service learning, and youth-adult partnerships. In addition, 4-H has successfully helped youth gain citizenship skills in their 4-H clubs by having young people

conduct their business meetings. In leadership roles such as club officers, junior leaders, teen ambassadors, junior fair boards members, camp counselors, animal knowledge contest teams, issue awareness teams, and conference planning/implementation teams youth practice understanding issues and working as a team member to create and implement related solutions. Further 4-H members participate in interstate, intrastate and international exchange program where they learn and practice global citizenship skills. Each of these contributes to the overall citizenship efforts carried out by faculty and staff in 4-H Youth Development programs across the country.

Throughout our history, we use the expertise in the land-grant university system to bring the latest research to affect sustained change in an issue or problem. We use the latest research findings to shape and implement strategies that engage stakeholders in the process. Our educational approach encompass age appropriate learning opportunities in which civic knowledge and skills is the foundation for integrated learning and discovery across disciplines, through active, engaging real-world experiences that are driven by the youth themselves.

We provide professional development support for volunteers; staff to engage in mentoring; and training others to engage young people in civic understanding and knowledge development. We are well- adept at training staff, volunteers and other community partners in a large array of content areas and adult education process. Further, we are experts in positive youth development and will bring a strong experiential learning process to this design. We develop activities, projects, and curriculum to enhance the learning so that youth will understand the social and political ramifications of the issues they are addressing. We partner with faculty and staff in county Cooperative Extension offices, with other agencies, and with faculty at land grant institutions throughout the US and internationally.

Project Goals

Build a system's approach to a youth engagement model that reflects a continuum in opportunities from the service approach to civic engagement so that there is increase in the number of youth civically engaged by providing the opportunities, support, and access for them to become empowered and make a difference in their communities.

Objectives

- Expanding opportunities for young people to plan, design, implement, manage, and evaluate meaningful service that arises from a real need within their communities.
- Preparing young people for civic engagement and service by studying the "context, problems, history, and policies" warranted by the service activity (Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, 1997).
- Developing young people's abilities to speak and write persuasively so they can effectively communicate in public about an issue and help them learn to listen to one another and to understand the interests of other individuals in their communities (Battistoni, 1997).
- Developing youths' knowledge with educational experiences needed to understand and analyze world problems from a global perspective.
- Increase the ability of young people to contribute to the solution of global problems, and relate to the world as a community in which they live.

Program Approaches

Initially the Citizenship Mission mandates will conduct an assessment of citizenship programming already underway with 4-H at their individual land-grant institutions. Once an understanding of current offerings is understood, an expert panel of leaders in the field of citizenship education (Think Tank), will be convened to serve as key informants for a gap analysis. They will provide insight on possible goals for the program, identify youth audiences not currently being served with citizenship programs, and identify potential partnerships, new audiences and opportunities for youth. Key strategies will be employed to nurture new partnership and audiences for 4-H citizenship education. This expert panel will also help the mission mandate team build strategies that are cutting edge and meeting untapped needs.

4-H Citizenship Think Tank

The purpose of the 4-H Citizenship Think Tank will be to convene internal and external stakeholders, who share a passion for citizenship and a commitment to setting young people on a path to contributing beyond themselves to benefit their communities. The participants' varied backgrounds and high levels of knowledge will bring strength and power to the strategy for taking 4-H citizenship to the next level.

A. Goals

1. Convene diverse stakeholders and audiences of differing viewpoints around the topic of citizenship and young people.
2. Increase interaction and dialogue about the role that 4-H could play in the area of citizenship.
3. Make recommendations and suggest strategies that would impact learning, application and behavior change related to citizenship and young people.
4. Organize and communicate results of the convening.

B. Objectives

1. Analyze the competitive space related to quality citizenship programs for young people
2. Identify gaps in citizenship programming for youth
3. Make recommendations on how 4-H could contribute in the area of citizenship
4. Suggest potential partnerships for 4-H that would help to advance the 4-H citizenship mission mandate, CES and the LGU system
5. Create a climate that will promote and increase the number of youth engaged in citizenship.

C. Desired Outcomes

1. Recommendations and strategies for how to proceed
2. A clear path for how to engage the field in the strategies
3. Strategic partners that would help to advance the citizenship mission mandate/TBD

The initial learning from the assessment of program offerings throughout the US and the information gained from the key informant meeting will shape our intended approach.

Understanding that the plans may change, we anticipate developing our principles of 4-H Citizenship Program as our next steps. Once this is achieved we will access our current curriculum and processes to determine if they would be effective to help us achieve the goal and principles outlined for 4-H citizenship. We currently have ample “singular” citizenship programs happening throughout the US. However it is impossible to evaluate the collective whole because the “whole” does not exist.

This is an ideal time to re-focus our energy on the purpose of 4-H citizenship programs and build a model that reflects a continuum of learning for youth that spans the different ages 4-H serves, 5 to 19 in most states. After the initial assessment we will design a program that has youth development principles and the following assumptions:

- Citizenship is a dynamic and fluid process and the learning must reflect this approach;
- Includes both short and long-term experiences; current and potential audiences are considered;
- Young people will drive their own learning with the support of an adult;
- Technology accelerates what we are doing;
- Community is defined broadly and in many ways by the audiences involved;
- Uniqueness is important; on-line communities are important;
- Opportunities will be provided for youth to have learning experiences at the local, state, national and global levels; and,
- Youth and adults communicate, interact, and collaborate in new and innovate ways.

After the materials have been revised or reviewed and accepted for the 4-H Citizenship Program, we intend to conduct a test of the materials, which would include professional development for the test sites. Once the learning from the test sites have been incorporated, the materials and processes will be rolled out to the system. Professional development will be offered to state teams as a train-the-trainer model. In addition to professional development workshops, we intend to create distance learning components and train-the-trainer modules so that communities may continue to benefit from this approach.

Benefits:

These goals, objectives and strategies will result in:

1. A systems approach to a 4-H Citizenship Program, which will include design, implementation, and evaluation.
2. Youth will be involved in the planning, design, implementation, management, and evaluation of meaningful service activities that arise from real needs within communities (Roebuck, Brockman, & Tepper, 2007).
3. Prepared young people for civic participation and service by utilizing an inquiry based approach as they gain an understanding of the context, problems, history, and policies warranted by the service activity of interest, as well as acquiring the appropriate attitudes and skills (Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, 1997: Meyers, 1999).
4. Increased young peoples' abilities to speak and write persuasively so that they can effectively communicate in public forums and listen to one another and understand the interests of other individuals in their communities (Battistoni, 1997).

5. Program processes that nurture an atmosphere that emphasizes equality and allows all young people to debate, disagree, negotiate, resolve difference, and reach group decisions (Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003).
6. Technology which enables young people to participate in on-line communities citizenship discussion and dialogues (Roker, Player & Coleman, 1999)
7. Increase youths' abilities to mentor and engage younger youth in the civic engagement process.
8. Youth gain the life skills and experience needed to emerge as effective leaders and contributing members of society.

Evaluation

A logic model will be developed to guide our evaluation of this project. Our evaluation approach will be ongoing and guide the work plan. We will begin with a survey of states to determine a baseline analysis of current programming in citizenship. We will conduct comprehensive literature reviews on process and product development. We anticipate that there will be surveys, focus groups, observations, and interviews with stakeholders which include youth, volunteers, extension staff, partners?, and other key decision makers.

As this is a national intervention, we will anticipate that we will employ professional expertise to assist in the evaluation design for curriculum, staff development and other key components of this project.

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