

Answers to Staff Questions About 4-H Enrollment Reporting



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Questions about the Cooperative Extension Service Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report are common. Many are actually answered in the CES Form 237 itself, but some of the information may be easy to miss. Other questions have been answered only when asked, and there has been no easy way for staff to refer to the information they are interested in. This set of answers to common questions about the reporting system will be distributed via e-mail attachment, and will be posted on the 4h-usa web. It will be updated occasionally, as new questions surface.

1. When did the ES-237 start? How did it get its name?

4-H enrollment reporting has been going on since the very early days of the program. CSREES has some reports going back to 1914, when the Smith-Lever funding began. (That year 4-H had a total of 116,262 members reported!) In the early days a measure of impact in the states was "members per agent year devoted to Club work." Early reports included pounds of beef and bushels of corn produced, quarts canned, and other measures of agricultural outcomes.

Agents reported both first enrollment of members in 4-H, and re-enrollment. Project completion was also reported, and considered very important. Analysis and comparison between states focused on average years members were retained in the program, and % project completion. As time went on, various innovations in reporting continued to be introduced, and some items proved burdensome or not so useful and were dropped.

The original "ES-237" came out in 1969. For the first time 4-H distinguished "Special Interest Groups" from Clubs, reported enrollment in 4-H EFNEP, and enrollment in instructional TV series. The "ES" in the report name came from the Agency, then the Extension Service. The "237" was merely the form number assigned by the Agency. Member tenure by state was reported as percentage belonging 1 year, 2 years, 3-4 years, 5 years, and over 5 years. Ethnic data was reported as "White, Negro, and All Other." Participants were also reported in separate "Estimated Family Income" categories: \$3,000 and under; and over \$3,000. Exact numbers of first-year members were 41% in 1971, but no longer reported after that.

2. Do you foresee any major changes with this current federal reporting procedure? Are there any minor changes we should be made aware of that will be coming in the next five years?

Reviewing old records will certainly make you a believer in evolution...at least as bureaucracies go. Roughly every decade the reporting system has evolved, and tried to produce what the society and the administration of the time thought was important. In the past, this has involved a broadly representative task force consisting mostly of 4-H field staff and those responsible for enrollment in the states. The most recent Data Task Force worked from 1991 to 1993. Its recommendations for a new system were implemented in 1995. We cut the number of blanks to fill in half, while getting much new information. We promised "no significant changes until at least 2000."

4-H is now beginning a new Strategic Plan, to be introduced during our Centennial in 2002. Signs are clear in the AREERA Farm Bill, in the Government Performance Review Act, (GPRA) in the Kellogg Commission Report and in lots of other places that continued funding of all programs is likely to be contingent on proof of the impact they can demonstrate. Some of the state governments, and even United Way are already demanding impact reporting. It is a safe bet that within a very few years 4-H will routinely measure and report impact... somehow. EFNEP has been doing it for years. Until then, the only changes expected in the CES-237

will be a) to recognize the 1994 land-grant universities; and b) to annually update the list of CES National Initiatives to conform to ECOP decisions.

3. What is the purpose of the National Initiatives? Are there changes in these initiatives coming down the road? How is this information used?

The questioner actually called them "federal" initiatives, but they most assuredly are not. ECOP and its subcommittees, (SPC, PLC, PODC) determine the official National Initiatives of the Cooperative Extension Service each year. Initiatives are officially described as "emerging issues of wide public concern that rise for a time from the base programs, and are given special attention and emphasis. Eventually the issue is settled, the problem solved, or the attention of the public turns to other topics, and so the Initiative is 'graduated' back into the base program."

There have been changes in these every year, and it is likely that will always be the case. Naturally, every year the Congress, the Administration, and the state governments as well want to know on what the system of 105 land-grant universities is focusing its considerable resources. If decisionmakers like and agree with what they hear, they often find extra money to help advance the initiative. An example may help. Youth at Risk began as a National Initiative in 1991. Within a couple of years it evolved into Children, Youth and Families at Risk. Since 1991 it has attracted more than \$85 million in special federal appropriations, and far more than that in state match. ES-237 data has annually demonstrated the scope of the state CYFAR programs. Last July ECOP declared it graduated back into base programs, and elevated Child Care to the status of a National Initiative. Clearly, public interest is now higher in that topic.

4. How are the overall statistics used at the national level? Are state allocations determined in any way by the number of participants reported on ES-237?

The enrollment report is the principal way the 4-H program gets credit for what it is doing. Every year there are numerous Congressional inquiries for specific information, such as: rural vs. urban enrollment; involvement of minorities in 4-H; youth involved in community service, trends in volunteer leadership; trends in subjects participants choose to study, program content which may aid in violence prevention, program content relating to developing values, etc.

Other federal departments and agencies monitor 4-H involvement in "their" subject matter or interest area, i.e.: Interior, EPA and Forest Service are interested in 4-H Environmental and Natural Resources. Education is interested in our School Enrichment, and Community Service Learning. The National Science Foundation and Energy are interested in 4-H science literacy, etc.

Practically all reports of the land-grant university system, and certainly those of Cooperative Extension, include some of the youth outreach data provided by 4-H enrollment. In many cases, 4-H is almost the only part of the system with hard data on audience involvement, and it greatly helps to justify appropriations to the land-grant universities.

As National 4-H Council seeks private sector partners, they rely on our 4-H enrollment data to show the scope of the proposed target audience for any given subject. The larger our numbers in an area, the more attractive we are to potential cooperators, public and private.

Every few years NPLs prepare extensive trend information and present it to State 4-H Leaders. We figure "market share" for each state as a means of comparing between large and small states. We show trends in age, place of residence, delivery mode, racial and ethnic outreach, and the curriculum areas which seem to be emerging or declining. These data are the best available for State 4-H Leaders to use in management decisions and future planning. Hopefully, we nip some problems in the bud, and prepare to catch the crest of the next wave, because we have the data to do it.

Every year Congress determines the annual funding for Smith-Lever formula funds and special programs. The level is at least partly determined by how impressed the Congress is with the outreach and impact CES has on solving the current problems of people and communities. The appropriated funds are parceled out to states and territories using a formula which includes population and agricultural production. Your Director of

Extension decides how much of it 4-H will get based (at least in part) on how impressed s/he is with the outreach and impact you can demonstrate in your state. State support for Extension is also affected by your outreach and impact. In lots of counties your 4-H participation numbers help determine local funding.

5. Why should local and county staff be conscientious about filling out their ES-237 reports? Isn't it just another report that doesn't really make any difference to anyone?

The whole point of the 4-H program management software has been to create and maintain the county 4-H records you need to efficiently manage your county 4-H program, take credit locally for 4-H accomplishments, provide recognition to deserving leaders and participants, spot trends and potential problems, and demonstrate your own proficiency as a 4-H staff member. If you keep records accurately throughout the year, generating an electronic ES-237 report to send to the state takes only a few keystrokes. 4-H enrollment reporting is critically important at the county, state and federal level, both to 4-H youth development itself, and to appropriations for the whole of the land grant university system.

6. Why do we need to report all of our youth development efforts as 4-H?

The Cooperative Extension Service has only one way to systematically aggregate and take credit for the scope of its efforts in youth development. It is called "CES Form 237", the Annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report. No matter what you call a youth development program locally, take credit for what you are doing! Make sure all youth development efforts of CES in your county are reported on your 237. That includes (usually) collaborative efforts with other groups. However, if your effort (independent or collaborative) is a one-shot Event, for which youth do not enroll, then don't report it.

In recent years CES has begun any number of wonderfully innovative, cutting-edge new youth development programs in various states. Unfortunately, in some places, the more innovative the program, the less likely that it will be called 4-H. Consequently, we don't get credit for being as innovative as we really are, and the image of 4-H continues to lag behind reality. Often those uniquely-named CES youth development efforts don't get counted on the ES-237, so CES does not really get credit for them. Consequently, we probably have a huge undercount in 4-H.

The 4-H umbrella is big enough that it covers all CES youth development. The official definition of 4-H, for some 30 years, has been: 4-H: The youth development education program of the Cooperative Extension Service. Not "A" youth development program. Not "part of" the youth development program. But the sum total of youth development education provided by the Cooperative Extension Service. 4-H is a rich collection of delivery modes, ways of learning, subject specializations and unique local adaptations. Almost every club or group has its own unique name, but continues to be, and be reported, as part of overall 4-H. This is true for all youth development programs originating from the 1862, 1890, and 1994 land grant universities, Tuskegee University, and the universities in the territories.

Here's another source of undercount recently discovered. Joe Agent trains all the sixth grade teachers in his county on a particularly good 4-H school enrichment unit. Joe provides them with the curriculum. Most teachers use it in their classrooms. Joe counts 2,000 school enrichment participants that year. The next year Joe doesn't conduct training in that topic, so he doesn't report the school enrichment participants. **WRONG!** Phone calls to the teachers show that 1,800 students benefitted from the school enrichment the second year, 1,500 the third year, etc. As long as the teachers keep using the unit, Joe Agent should report the participants.

7. How is "Leadership Training" in Question 16 defined, and numbers counted?

Leadership is defined as "topics relating to organizing, managing and teaching youth in a nonformal education setting." The % of leaders trained each year is an important indicator of 4-H program quality in each state.

8. What if a 4-H Agent is involved in helping the county extension office train business leaders, should that be counted on ES-237?

Item 16A says "Leadership - topics relating to organizing, managing and teaching youth in a nonformal education setting." If that's what you were training the business leaders to do, count them. If not, don't.

9. What if other agents in the county office help teach leadership to 4-H leaders and youth leaders, should their hours of training be counted?

At least at the federal level, we don't count hours per se. But we do count CES youth and youth leader audiences, no matter who is doing the teaching.

10. What if Extension-trained leaders teach leadership to other 4-H leaders and youth leaders, should their hours of training be counted?

Count them in the Adult volunteers trained column of 16A. Question 16 does not ask how much training Agents conduct, but how much training is conducted. Using volunteers to train other volunteers is good management, an effective multiplier of our staff efforts.

11. What about "Parenting Training"? Why is this needed at the national level?

Anytime you "teach knowledge and skills relating to developmental and learning needs of children and youth," record the audience under 16B. This information is useful in many ways. There is a great deal of interest in the land-grant university system in interdisciplinary work at present. Parenting Training illustrates 4-H as the vehicle through which a classic Family and Consumer Science audience (parents) can be reached, with youth development subject matter. It recognizes that youth live in the context of families, and to be effective in youth development, we need to influence the parents as well.

Our reporting system began in 1995 recognizing the category of "4-H Adult Participant: Any adult who works for the benefit of youth who is recorded by Extension as a participant in a 4-H sponsored adult learning experience. May include parents, volunteers and professionals of agencies and groups beyond 4-H." The classic Extension Pyramid model tells us adult leaders are likely to be our most important 4-H participants, in that they will have a direct influence and impact on many youth. Perhaps we train one adult, and impact 50 youth over the years.

12. Can you give us some examples of "Other" adult training, beyond leadership and parenting?

Anything within our 4-H curriculum list, A to HDD, except leadership and parenting. Often described as "subject matter training." Common ones are Environmental, Communications and Expressive Arts, Healthy Lifestyle, Horsemanship, or Science and Technology.

It is not at all uncommon for a leader training session to include both a leadership component and "Other" subject matter training as well. By all means, count participants in both components! We interpret the "other" category as a measure of the total number of volunteers and other adults you are providing with content training in subject matter areas beyond leadership and parenting.

13. How do you define an activity and how do you define a project?

The 4-H reporting system purposely avoids the use of those two terms, because they are generally used only in the Club delivery mode (now less than 20% of 4-H participants). Common usage in Club circles (in most states) is that a "Project" is the level at which the youth enrolls and is recorded. The project is made up of many activities, some done alone, some with others in project meetings, and some may even be done at a countywide or statewide level. In the Special Interest Group delivery mode, youth may be enrolled for a period of time in what would be considered an Activity within the 4-H club structure.

14. Do you want counties to count all their 4-H activities on ES-237?

Record your actual enrollments on ES-237. If you don't collect and record participation in a given event (whatever you call it) don't report it. However, if you record Community Service participation (for example) for individual members, by all means report it. We suspect that 4-H participation in Community Service is probably ten times as high as what is being reported!

15. How do you define a youth leader?

This is another term the 4-H reporting system avoids. Instead, we use "4-H Volunteer: Any adult or youth recognized by Extension as giving service to the 4-H program without salary or wages from Extension." Some states use the term Teen Leader, some say Junior Leader, some say Youth Leader, others use two of those three terms, and a few define each of the three terms differently.

Naturally, if a volunteer (youth or adult) is being given a leadership role, we strongly endorse the principle of either assuring that the individual has already been adequately trained, or we provide the training concurrently with the leadership experience. As we compare the total numbers of youth volunteers to those reported to have been trained, it is clear that most are merely "thrown into the water and expected to learn to swim." There are limitations to "learning by doing!"

16. How do you define a "unit?"

CES-237, page 4 "4-H Unit: An identifiable group of youth sanctioned by Extension organized to have similar learning experiences. E.g.: club, classroom of students, a camp session."

17. How should we handle the race category of "mixed?"

You should not. In compliance with Department of Justice rules and regulations, all recipient agencies of federally assisted programs, which are required to collect and record racial participation data, must use the following racial-ethnic categories:

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian or Pacific Islander

Black, not of Hispanic Origin

White, not of Hispanic Origin

Hispanic

If you use any different or sub-categories in your state, they must be combined into the categories above for the federal report.

18. How should we handle the category of "independent" membership?

That is reported in question 5, "Youth Participating in 4-H individual study/mentoring/family learning programs."

19. Any advice on how to count home schoolers?

Record them in question 5, "Youth Participating in 4-H individual study/mentoring/family learning programs."

20. How should we report youth involvement in EFNEP and FNP programs?

Those are curriculum (subject) categories. In our classification scheme, record them as ECA (all youth participants of EFNEP programs). Their delivery mode could be club, day camp, special interest, etc., depending on how it is done in your county.

21. Why did 4-H make the move from "ages" to "grades."

Good question, but an easy one to answer. Nearly 4 Million 4-H participants (over half) are in school enrichment. Most Club enrollment in the South (our largest region, by far) is in school classroom Clubs. We are a nonformal education program. Our educational materials are targeted at particular mental ages, which are best reflected by grade in school, not chronological age. In 1991, about half the States reported using Grade exclusively instate, then "translating" to age for the Annual Enrollment report. Such states don't have to worry about exact birthday for eligibility, etc.

22. To what degree, if any, are we expecting 4-H to be the administrators/managers of after-school programs ... as compared to simply being the teachers, teacher trainers, or curriculum developers of such programs led by others (such as the school, YMCA, etc.?)

We never even considered administration/management of after-school programs as a criteria for 4-H enrollment. 4-H doesn't administer/manage school enrichment settings, yet that is our largest delivery mode. It is perfectly OK to report kids in after-school programs run by someone else, if they are experiencing 4-H curriculum.

23. What is the primary difference between "School Age Child Care" and short-term programs held in school settings or youth centers "after school"?

Same thing. However, many special interest/short-term programs/Day Camps are held in summers, or on weekends. Ideally, the "after school" programs would be reported under that delivery mode, and the rest as Special Interest.

24. How do we report preschool 4-H enrollment?

We don't. See ES-237, p.3, General Information, Defn. of Participants in 4-H:
"4-H youth development education programs are created and conducted by the Cooperative Extension System and its partners principally for specific developmental levels of youth within the span of the grades K-12." (The exceptions which follow are for older people).

If you have other questions about the 4-H Enrollment Reporting System, feel free to ask them! We will attach one caveat: If your questions are specific to one of the many computer software programs being used to keep records in the county offices, ask the program source, or your state contact. We will continue to add to this list as questions are asked and answered.

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