Exceptional People, Innovative Practices

We know people are our strength. In fact, attracting, training, supporting, and rewarding our youth, volunteers, and employees is our most important investment. We want people to flourish, to have a chance to change their lives because of 4-H.

Goal 1:
Extension and 4-H will recruit, hire and retain top-notch people who have a heart for working with youth and an enduring commitment to youth development.

Goal 2:
4-H will design volunteer management systems that attract, retain and energize youth and adult volunteers with a progressive and enduring commitment to youth.

California

Empowering 4-H Leaders Through Middle Management In Three California Counties

Situation:
Numerous 4-H Youth Development Advisors (YDAs) feel that they need to spend a large percentage of their time "managing" the 4-H club or standard program, which leaves little time for more fulfilling academic and applied research work. This project is an important component in the transition of the 4-H YD Program to a dynamic program, which has its strengths in its issue-focused and applied research approach to youth and community development, as well as in its nonformal experiential club program.

The empowerment of 4-H leaders to take more responsibility for segments of both the program development and management aspects of the standard 4-H club program has been an ongoing goal of the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County 4-H YDA. Since the SLO County Program transitioned to a "middle management" approach in the 1980's, the 4-H Management Board (MB) and the 4-H Program Development Board (PDB) have functioned smoothly and performed well, and have contributed greatly to a strong, dynamic youth development program which is issue-focused and research-based. The two components of this project included reviewing and fine-tuning the operational structure in SLO County, and assisting two other California counties to transition to a "middle management" approach.

Program Description:
For the SLO County portion of the project, the SLO County 4-H YDA worked closely with both the 4-H MB and the 4-H PDB, as entities, as well as working individually with Management Board Directors and Program Development Board Key Leaders. He met four times a year with each board and discussed such areas as program planning and development, educational goals and objectives for projects and events/activities, affirmative action, evaluation of countywide events/activities, trainings, and program goals. In between meetings of the boards, he met individually with the "middle managers" to further discuss, in depth, the subjects or concepts raised during the board meetings.

For the Yolo County portion of the project, the two 4-H YDAs worked closely over a period of approximately 18 months, sharing information via phone and meetings on restructuring and redeveloping the 4-H Program. During this time, the SLO County 4-H YDA also presented to a group of 4-H volunteers in Yolo County early in the process, and then to a larger group, called the Yolo County 4-H Task Force. The SLO County 4-H YDA then provided feedback and input to the Yolo County 4-H YDA and the task force over a period of approximately six months, either at task force meetings or via phone consultations. For the San Joaquin County portion of the project, the SLO County 4-H YDA supplied the San Joaquin 4-H YDA with a packet of information, discussed ideas and the components of the package several times, and presented to the San Joaquin County 4-H Vision Committee.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:
For the SLO County portion of the project:
Efforts with Key Leaders and Management Board Directors have impacted the members and families in the program by providing a high quality and dynamic program, which focuses on life skill development in all program areas and levels. In 2001, the program experienced a 90% retention rate of first year members and the standard club program grew by 66 members, to a total or 1412, which represented the fourth largest 4-H standard club program in California. These are indications of a high quality program which people want to be a part of. Also, the recruitment of a Community Service/Civic Engagement Key Leader has dramatically increased the emphasis on community service at the county, club and project levels. During the last two months of 2001, the 4-H program was featured three times on local TV for its community service efforts. This helps to change perceptions about 4-H in a very positive way, both with individuals in the program and the general public.

For the Yolo and San Joaquin Counties portion of the project:
Approximately 120 people in two counties (Yolo and San Joaquin) heard and participated in presentations on restructuring and redeveloping the 4-H program through volunteer leader empowerment and defining roles and responsibilities.

Accomplishments and Impacts:
For the SLO County portion of the project :
-The Key Leaders and Management Board Directors currently in the program are united in the focus on a dynamic, positive youth development program based on research-based principles.
-All 4-H program areas are focusing on life skill development as a result of the work with the Program Development Board.
-4-H Community Leaders and Project Leaders receive regular training.
-The “middle-management” approach allows the 4-H YDA to perform other academic work while still maintaining involvement with and educational influence on the club program.

Both Yolo and San Joaquin Counties are transitioning to a ‘middle management” approach with the standard 4-H club program. San Joaquin County has officially made the transition and will be refining and strengthening the structure during 2002. Yolo County has incorporated numerous aspects of a “middle-management” structure into its 4-H program allowing for improved program development and management. The Yolo County 4-H YDA and various members from the original Yolo County Task Force are continuing to work on further changes and redefinition of both staff and volunteer roles. The impacts are more effective program

development, enlisting the support and services of more adult and teen volunteers, having the 4-H volunteer experience be a more rewarding one, and, very importantly, having a program which can more effectively meet the changing needs of youth, families, and communities.

Resource Commitment:
Approximately .10 FTE was allocated to this project.

Collaborators:
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Base Program:
4-H Youth Development

Iowa

Governor's AmeriCorps After-School Initiative

Situation:
Year-round out-of-school time programming for middle school students, ages 10 – 14, is limited across the state of Iowa. The need for out-of-school time programming for middle school students is highlighted by the fact that Iowa middle school youth without adult supervision after school hours and during the summer has increased steadily over the past ten years; research indicates that juvenile crime incidents are most prevalent from 3:00 – 6:00 PM each school day; and national research indicates that 73% of youth state they do not have adults in their lives who model positive and responsible behavior, 80% do not perceive that communities value youth, 50% do not engage in community service events one or more hours per week, and 55% of youth reported they do not spend one or more hours on homework each day.

Program Description:
With administrative leadership from Iowa 4-H Youth Development, twenty full-time and twenty half-time AmeriCorps members serve in twelve statewide school districts developing and strengthening year-round out-of-school time programming at thirteen project sites for at-risk middle school students. AmeriCorps members and community volunteers assist youth in completing homework assignments and provide one-to-one tutoring in academic areas such as math, reading, and science. AmeriCorps members also recruit adult volunteers to develop positive and nurturing mentor-mentee relationships with youth. Additionally, members and community volunteers assist youth in developing student-identified community service learning events. In partnership with secular and faith-based community entities, AmeriCorps members develop educational enrichment activities and community advisory boards to strengthen and

sustain out-of-school time programming. AmeriCorps members also engage in Iowa 4-H Youth Development professional training to strengthen their skills in youth development principles and practices and implementation strategies for quality out-of-school time programming.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:
Year-round programming is implemented and evaluated by one Program Director (1 FTE), 13 site coordinators (6.5 FTE), and a maximum of 20 full-time and 20 half-time AmeriCorps members (30 FTE). Year-round student enrollment at each project site ranges from 10 to 130 students per day, Monday through Friday. Each out-of-school time program emphasizes tutoring, service learning, positive adult-youth mentor-mentee relationships, community-based experiential enrichment programming, volunteer recruitment, and AmeriCorps professional development training. School district staff, 4-H Youth Development staff, and community youth development partners examine the developmental appropriateness of each project site's programming. State and local level stakeholder satisfaction with the initiative has been overwhelmingly positive due to the cost-effectiveness of the program and the impact data that highlights increases in middle school students' academic performance, increases in students' volunteer service, increases in students' engagement in experiential enrichment programming, increases in students' school attendance, decreases in students' inappropriate behavior, and strengthened community involvement and support of out-of-school time programming.

Accomplishments and Impacts:
During the 2001 programming year, impact data indicated that on average, each quarter AmeriCorps members and 93 community volunteers provided 351 middle school students tutoring assistance; 712 middle school students participated in educational enrichment programming; students' homework completion rates increased 38%; students' GPA's increased .33 points; students' school attendance increased 27%; students' problem-based school referrals decreased 42%; 258 middle school students provided 1,634 service learning hours; 48 mentors spent 291 mentor-mentee hours with 49 middle school students; 105 community entities partnered with the AmeriCorps projects to strengthen out-of-school time programming; and 43 members attended state and local level professional development training.

Resource Commitment:
During the 2001 – 2002 programming year, the initiative secured $363,00 in federal funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and $150,000 in state match funding from the Iowa Department of Education to support the year-round out-of-school time program.

Collaborators:
The initiative is financially and programmatically supported by state level partnerships with Iowa 4-H Youth Development, the Governor's Office on Volunteerism, the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, and the Iowa Department of Education. Locally, the initiative's thirteen project sites are supported by partnerships with school districts, county Extension offices, and secular and faith-based citizens, citizen associations, and institutions including: banks, businesses, churches, city/town government, colleges, DNR technicians, hospitals, Kiwanis/Lions Clubs, law enforcement agencies, libraries, discount chain stores, neighborhood associations, newspaper and radio stations, nursing homes, restaurants, and youth organizations.

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Base Program Areas to Which this Program Applies:
4-H Youth Development
Leadership and Volunteer Development

New Jersey

New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series

Situation:
Effective volunteers are the key to a successful 4-H youth development program. Key components to this success (and the ISOTURE model) are orientation and ongoing training of these volunteers. The success of this training is often dependent on high quality, educational materials targeted for volunteers.

Program Description:
This is a progressive approach to volunteer training that attracts, retains, and energizes youth and adult volunteers. The New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series was first developed in 1990. It is currently in its Third Edition (2001). The purpose of this manual is train 4-H volunteer staff who work directly with youth. It was developed as a result of an expressed need by 4-H volunteers and salaried staff for training materials; the NJ 4-H Long Range Planning Committee recommendation; a statewide interview of volunteers; volunteer review of the contents; and research about working with volunteers with limited experiences and resources.

Contents include: Introduction and 62 two-to-four page information sheets categorized in the following: Introduction to 4-H; Starting Your Own 4-H Club; Enriching the Club Experience; Understanding Youth and Their Needs; Volunteers in 4-H; Did You Know?; an appendix of sample forms; and a glossary of terms.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:
Information sheets were developed by professional staff, including county faculty, program associates, and specialists. All were reviewed by peers and volunteers. The entire effort was coordinated the Adult Volunteer Training and Support Committee of the Department of 4-H Youth Development. The NJ 4-H Leader Training Series is provided free-of-charge to any 4-H volunteer. County faculty and staff use the notebook for orientation and on-going training.

Accomplishments and Impacts:
Volunteers and paid staff have all commented on the depth and organization of this curriculum. It has been utilized throughout the entire training process. It is used in a notebook format with new volunteers, with new leader training outlines being provided. Individual information sheets are used for specific subject training. For example, the most recent addition, "Character Development in 4-H" is an excellent supplement to volunteer or teen training on the subject.

Several other states have adapted this concept and actual information sheets for use in those states. With each new edition, new information sheets have been developed to continually meet the changing needs of the program.

In addition, as an effort to reach new audiences, key information sheets were translated into Spanish. There are used in the recruitment and orientation process. Most recently, all individual information sheets have been posted on the RCE 4-H website for easier accessibility.

Resource Commitment:
NJ 4-H Development Fund grant was used to translate portions into Spanish.

Collaborators:
Contributors to the effort include numerous county and state faculty and staff, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Resource Center Services (for desktop publishing)

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Base program areas to which this program applies:
Leadership & Volunteer Development
4-H Youth Development

Oregon

Adult Development Matters! A Statewide New Leader Training Program for 4-H Volunteers

Situation:
The obvious emphasis of 4-H youth development programs is on young people. But the success of 4-H programs is highly dependent on a large number of adult volunteers who deliver the 4-H program to youth. Many volunteers serve as 4-H leaders because of their expertise in certain content areas, as well as their desire to make a difference in the life of youth. The enthusiasm and dedication of adult 4-H volunteers is very apparent. In recognition of the important role that adult

volunteers play in 4-H, and in an effort to help ensure that the volunteer's experience as a 4-H leader is positive, an emphasis on quality new leader training programs was implemented in Oregon in 2002. It was hoped that the new leader training programs would result in better leader satisfaction and retention. In addition, the new leader training programs are seen as opportunities to develop skill that volunteers could use in other settings.

Program Description:
All new 4-H leaders are required to attend a new leader training before becoming an official 4-H leader. Because of this, we made a concerted effort in 2002 to gather aggregate data from all sites. County 4-H faculty in Oregon were invited to participate in the multi-site study. At a meeting in the fall of 2001, the learning (short-term) outcomes were reviewed, discussed, and agreed upon and an evaluation tool, data collection method, and standardized reporting form were developed to ensure accurate information that could be easily aggregated. This multi-site evaluation strategy worked extremely well.

An emphasis in the trainings was placed on developing the leader's knowledge about the 4-H program and the relationship of 4-H to the County Extension Service and Oregon State University. In addition, specific skill building outcomes were addressed including how to plan a yearly 4-H club, how to work with children of different ages, different teaching techniques, as well as other specific details such as how to enroll a 4-H club and obtain materials. The goal of the training was that potential new leaders would leave feeling ready to enroll as a 4-H leader and confident in his or her ability to undertake a 4-H club.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:
Fifteen of Oregon's 36 counties agreed to participate in the statewide program. In all, 62 different trainings were held over a total of 160 hours (the average length of the trainings was just over 2.5 hours). In total, 443 new leaders received training. Thirty-four paid Extension Staff, contributing over 330 hours, were involved in planning and conducting the trainings. Paid staff were assisted by 14 volunteers who contributed 31 hours and 2 4-H youth who contributed 4 hours.

A total of 311 volunteers participated in the program evaluation. Over 87% of the participants reported having a good or great deal of knowledge about 4-H after the training. Seventy-nine percent reported feeling prepared to be a 4-H leader.
Over 98% of the participants reported that they were likely to use the information that they learned at the training. The participants also reported rated the training session highly, with over 97% rating the overall instructor's ability as "above average" or "excellent" and 98% rating the instructor's knowledge of the material the same way.

Accomplishments and Impacts:
At the end of each training session evaluation participants were asked to fill out a learning assessment survey. The survey was designed to measure change in self-reported levels of knowledge and skills. These skills included how to plan a 4-H club meeting, how to plan a yearly 4-H program, techniques for teaching, the relationship between 4-H and Oregon State University, and how to participate in the county 4-H program. Participants were asked to complete the survey questions regarding their level of knowledge on a scale of 1-5, both before attending the training and after attending the training. A paired t-test was used to test the significance of the difference in the group mean scores from before the training to after the

training for each item. Mean scores revealed that participants reported a higher score after the training than before for all learning outcomes. Further analysis revealed that the change in self-reported knowledge level was statistically significant for all learning outcomes. These results indicate that the learning outcomes for training were met. A follow-up survey is planned for later this year to assess how this learning was turned into action as a 4-H leader.

Resource Commitment:
The resources for each training session were provided solely though the County Extension offices. In addition to the paid Extension staff FTE, county office supplied support for material preparation, meeting and training space, training materials, and data collection. The state 4-H office provided data analysis and report preparation.

Collaborators:
The statewide evaluation of new leader training programs was possible through the collaborative efforts of 15 Oregon counties and the state 4-H office. The ability to plan and conduct the new leader trainings and ensure uniform, measurable outcomes was dependent on the high degree of collaboration and commitment from 4-H staff at both state and county levels, as well as the 443 volunteers who received training.

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Base Programs:
4-H Youth Development

Texas

Master Volunteer Programs Continue to Grow in Texas!

Situation:
All research concerning agencies of the future leads us to know that expanding the outreach and programing components through all volunteer efforts is essential. In the area of volunteerism, master volunteer programs are at the exemplary level of volunteer development and management. The "master" concept continues to grow in Texas.

Program Description:
More than a year ago, the video and handbook, "Master Volunteer Programs-An Orientation for Agents" were distributed across the state. As the result of continued development of new Master programs the video is currently scheduled to be updated. In addition to the video and handbook, county Extension agents also were provided with bimonthly lessons and fact sheets to be used in a "cafeteria style" format to enhance volunteer training. This is collectively called the *Volunteer Management Tool Box* notebook. The target audience covers all areas of the population including rural, suburban and urban audiences. Lessons and Fact Sheet Tips are appropriate for the horticulture, agriculture, family consumer sciences and 4-H & youth development areas.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:
Master programs continue to be a priority of Texas Cooperative Extension and volunteers like the prestige and accomplishment it provides to them.

Accomplishments and Impacts:
More than 100 low income families have been helped in the Master Home Buyer program to develop a plan for becoming homeowners in the future, the Texas Master Gardening program is the biggest in the country according to a recent survey from California. There are over 6000 volunteers giving more than 225,000 hours of service in 90 counties.

Resource Commitment:
External funds to support Texas Cooperative Programs come from private sources, grants and consumer fees.

Collaborators:
Collaborators include: Community Health Departments, the Chicago Board of Trade, Texas Fisheries & Wildlife, Public and Private School Educators, Apparel and Home Interior Consultants, Realtors, Chambers of Commerce, Public Housing Personnel, Texas Legislators, Environmental Protection Agency, Solid and Hazard Waste Management Agencies, Local producers, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Child Care Agencies, Law Enforcement Agencies, Social Service Agencies, Various Military Bases throughout Texas, Retail Sales Personnel, Local Water Districts, Community Family Education Units and local government and elected officials, the Department of Public Safety, Childrens' Protective Services, Real Estate Brokers, Mortgage companies, and Community Developers.

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Base Program:
4-H Youth Development