



4-H Curriculum Guiding Principles

The 4-H Youth Development Program is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) premiere youth development program. National 4-H Headquarters, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides leadership for 4-H, which operates through the Cooperative Extension System through the Land Grant Universities and at the county level in the US States and Territories and in every Army installation worldwide. The mission of the Land Grant Universities is to serve society by providing access to knowledge to everyone who desires it and can benefit from the experience. 4-H is the programmatic outreach of the Land Grant Universities to our youngest citizens, in their communities.

4-H Youth Development seeks to promote positive youth development, facilitate learning, and engage youth in the work of the Land Grant Universities and in their communities to enhance the quality of life. The educational foundation for 4-H lies in three mission areas tied to the knowledge base of the Land Grant University and USDA: science, engineering and technology; healthy living and citizenship. 4-H National Curriculum has three components: content and educational learning opportunity designs, professional development, and evaluation.

4-H Curriculum is key to the 4-H positive youth development program.

4-H National Headquarters defines **curriculum as the sum total of all intentional learning experiences**. Curriculum includes outputs such as: activities, events, workshops, trainings, field trips; contexts such as club, school enrichment and special interest camps, and after-school; and print and on-line learning materials that is intentional for youth and adults.

4-H Curriculum Guiding Principles

Based upon focused interviews, the follow elements surfaced as 4-H Curriculum Guiding Principles:

- **Support and advance Mission Mandates through foundational, critical, and emerging issues**
Science, Engineering and Technology, Healthy Living, and Citizenship provide the content framework for 4-H curriculum.
- **Content is framed around the Essential Elements, inclusivity, and life skills**
The contextual framework for positive youth development programming includes Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. Inclusivity means curriculum is relevant and fair to multiple groups, builds and strengthens relationships and fosters respect across various differences. Life skills are those skills one needs to be ready for life and career prepared with an emphasis on decision-making, responsibility, communication, and leadership.
- **Learning experiences are developmentally appropriate**
Human and positive youth development theory and research shapes intentional learning experiences relevant to age and is cognizant of physical, emotional, social, and mental development.
- **Content has a scope and sequence; has objective and standards; and is research-based**
Curriculum is based upon the experiential learning model with opportunities to experience/explore, share/process, generalize, and apply. Curriculum has a process based upon educational standards for learning design from start to finish. The focus on inquiry-based learning, includes opportunities for experimentation, investigation, questioning, and argumentation.
- **High-quality with a comprehensive development process**
Peer review is critical to maintaining quality throughout the curriculum development process. Evaluation and research studies enhance and promote evidence-based program practices.
- **Individual and group learning are valued; youth and adults are both learners**
Based upon the assumption that learning is life-long, youth and adults are both actively engaged in learning. Through individual and group settings, intentional learning experiences are presented.

H E A D , H E A R T , H A N D S , H E A L T H