

Initiative 7: Preparing youth to be responsible citizens and productive members of the workforce

Today's youth are tomorrow's citizens, consumers, parents, and leaders. Florida Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program offers age-appropriate, learn-by-doing educational opportunities that complement K-12 education to develop knowledge, life skills, and leadership abilities in Florida's youth. These qualities empower youth to positively influence their communities and become contributing members of society.

P1 - Youth Development

Community members, leaders, and local officials are very concerned about opportunities for youth in their communities. Florida Extension 4-H programs must continue to work to supplement formal education, enhance life skills development, and prepare youth for tomorrow's workforce. Participation in 4-H clubs provides the positive, supportive environment youth need to succeed. School enrichment, day and residential camps, and other types of programs introduce youth to longer-term learning experiences. Through participation in 4-H clubs and other educational activities, efforts will focus on meeting the highest-priority educational needs: helping youth develop science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) literacy; helping youth develop an interest in learning that will equip them to succeed in a rapidly changing society and global economy; teaching youth responsibility, developing their ability to become leaders, and engaging them in their communities; helping youth develop healthy lifestyles; and encouraging youth to get outdoors to appreciate nature, agriculture, and natural resources.

P2 - Organizational and Volunteer Systems

Research shows that the continuous presence of caring adults is critical to achieving positive youth development. With limited staff, volunteers can assist in reaching more youth. Florida 4-H is committed to developing youth and adult volunteers, valuing inclusiveness, and increasing the diversity of program participants. Florida Extension will provide training needed for volunteers to serve youth and their communities. In addition, Florida Extension will work to provide the support needed for volunteer-led organizations to be effective in helping the 4-H Youth Development Program meet its mission and goals. As an integral part of the land-grant mission, the 4-H program is relevant to diverse youth, achieves positive youth development, and, in the process, also provides opportunities for adults to develop their own leadership and workforce skills. Because 4-H is the youth development program of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, UF and FAMU Extension faculty and staff will contribute their expertise to 4-H to achieve Extension's youth development goals.