



4-H Curriculum Guiding Principles

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 and scientific research of learning and youth development of the Land Grant University and USDA: science, 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 intentional learning materials that are intentional for youth and adults.

4-H Curriculum Philosophical Framework

The development of curriculum should incorporate the following elements:

- **Support and advance Mission Mandates through foundational, critical, and emerging issues**
Science (including engineering, technology and applied mathematics), Healthy Living, and Citizenship provide the content framework for 4-H curriculum. These content areas provide for strong development of subject matter knowledge and high competency of demonstrable skills.
- **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.
- **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 explored.
- **Scientific approach to learning, engagement, and change**
The inquiry process is nested within or overlapped with the experiential learning process. When the scientific inquiry learning objectives are primary in curriculum design, the inquiry process is central within the experience. The focus on inquiry-based learning includes opportunities for experimentation, investigation, questioning, and argumentation.