

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Goals:

- To provide a guide to help the 4-H program be successful in reaching out and engaging with Latino youth and their families.
- To realize that through this actions, and with the investment of the local Hispanic community, the 4-H program and the community can both prosper.

Objectives:

- Recognize, understand and implement strategies needed for outreach in the Latino community through long-term staff commitment, administrative leadership and clientele support.
- Build a strong foundation in the 4-H program to better reach out and engage Latino youth and their families.
- Recognize and understand commonalities and differences when reaching out and engaging with traditional audiences and Latino audiences.

Demonstrated Support From Extension Leadership

A strong foundation for outreach programming to the Latino community requires three elements:

- Administrative leadership
- Staff commitment
- Clientele support

Long term support must be present from the top administrators at the state level as well as those in the counties. There are many steps that Extension administration might take to demonstrate support for Latino outreach. For example:

- Identify outreach to Latino youth and families in the 4-H program as a priority in the Extension and 4-H strategic plans.

- Create an Assistant Director for Diversity and Expansion / 4-H Youth Development Advisor similar to what is present at the University of California Cooperative Extension to support engagement of Latinos and other under-represented populations through expansion and innovation of the 4-H Youth Development Program. This position would work across programs to help staff work with diverse groups and to particularly increase their skills in cultural competence.
- Direct the development of county, district, or regional Latino Taskforces and a state-level Cooperative Extension Latino Advisory Council that includes non-Extension representatives. These groups will advise 4-H programming.
- Establish a performance standard in performance appraisal instruments that assesses a staff's capacity to engage Latino youth and families into the 4-H program. Recognize and reward for noteworthy outreach efforts.
- Embed outreach and relationship building efforts to historically untapped communities in the job description of 4-H staff and review efforts and accomplishments in these areas during annual performance reviews.
- Appoint an Extension Communications Specialist to provide Spanish-English translation of publications.



Additionally, Extension administrators at all levels should develop an understanding of outreach programming and expectations. It is important for Extension administrators to recognize Latino outreach is time intensive and results often come slowly (Hobbs, 2009). By acknowledging these facts, administrators will create a safe environment for 4-H outreach efforts, alleviating a major concern of 4-H staff that supervisors would undervalue their efforts (Hobbs, 2009).

PERSONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO OUTREACH

4-H Latino outreach efforts should be approached on the belief that Latino community members possess unique knowledge and understanding regarding what Latino youth need to thrive. 4-H should approach any new community with an open mind and ready to learn how the program can help promote the positive development of Latino youth. The 4-H staff who will be involved have to *want* to be involved. It will require a long term commitment and willingness to entertain and respect new ways of “doing” (Hobbs, 2009).

- The 4-H staff must understand that sociocultural differences in the way the family unit is structured are a critical component; that if misunderstood, may limit success when engaging Latino families (Springer, Hollist, & and Buckfink, 2009). Latinos come from a rich collective or family-oriented culture (Falicov, 2013). Their immediate and extended family ties are very important to them. This is known as familismo. The term familismo is based in a collectivist view that focuses on creating strong, reciprocal bonds with immediate and extended family members. Family values and family well-being are held in high regard rather than on individual opportunities (Vesely, Ewaida, & Anderson, 2014). The Latino community is very close knit and often times parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins may come to their children’s activities. The importance of the extended family in decision making, involvement, and participation must be kept in mind when working with families. Allowing for family members to participate in 4-H meetings, function, camps, or other programs is important.
- Staff must stay focused on what the people identify as their needs and interests. For example, initially Latino youth may prefer to explore 4-H projects such as film, music, soccer, computer science, dance, foods and nutrition over more traditional 4-H projects of gardening, animal science, and natural resources. Whatever the subject matter, by allowing the creation of projects that are of interest to Latino youth will provide a protected space where they will learn skills and learn more about 4-H. As their confidence grows as 4-H participants, the youth will be encourage to expand their participation to include other 4-H opportunities, such as sports nutrition in conjunction with soccer (Herndon, Molly C; Behnke, Andrew O; Navarro, Maria, 2013).

- Staff should approach topics from a positive perspective, identifying assets as well as needs. Put the personal first, before moving to the task/program or service to be offered. Developing relationships and trust will be on-going and should always take precedence (Hobbs, 2009)
- The 4-H staff must commit to actively participating in outreach. Even when additional outreach staff is hired to implement programs, the 4-H staff must maintain full responsibility for outreach and cannot wholly turn it over to the outreach staff (Hobbs, 2009)
- Outreach is the responsibility of all Extension employees. An Extension staffer who approaches outreach from a teamwork perspective will be successful versus from an individual stand. Latinos in the community will associate the program with people, not an organization. One of these people needs to be the 4-H staff member. This also reinforces the fact that outreach represents a broadening of the county 4-H program, not the creation of a separate 4-H program (Hobbs, 2009). A separate 4-H program will be problematic in the long term. It often leads to an us versus them mentality and proves to be unsustainable.
- Finally, 4-H program leaders and staff may need to investigate their own views about youth development and family engagement. This may include exploring personal assumptions about youth development and family engagement processes, identifying the personal experiences and cultural contexts that shape these views, and reflecting on how these ideas influence practice in ways that might or might not serve Latino youth and families well (Erbstein & Fabionar, 2014).

AN INFORMED & EDUCATED AUDIENCE

A third element in the foundation is the support of the existing 4-H audience - 4-H members, families and volunteers. Often times outreach is initiated without bringing the existing 4 H audience along. Experience has shown that when the 4-H staff raises the current audience's level of awareness about the presence of Latino youth in the county and invite their comments on how 4 H might reach out and engage Latino communities, the majority of the existing 4-H audience supports the outreach efforts. Varying attitudes exists in the general public regarding new audiences, their place in society, the services they should receive, and whether different 4-H models should be created for the new audience. There may be those who oppose Latino outreach programs and voice opposition. This opposition may further marginalize Latino youth who may be vulnerable in large part because they and their communities have been marginalized by social and institutional systems. Their involvement in the program may challenge entrenched interests. Anticipating such opposition may help to ensure that staff and other allies are prepared to support Latino youth as they navigate through the 4-H program and culture (Erbstein N. , 2013). That is why obtaining local support for outreach is a definite asset. The 4-H staff with the support of the entire Extension staff need to be prepared to address the challenges to outreach as part of the outreach work (Hobbs, 2009).

