



NATIONAL 4-H
COUNCIL

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN
NATIONAL 4-H COUNCIL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MARCH 1, 2021



Investing in Opportunity4All kids,
no matter their circumstances.

Our Mission Has Become More Important, More Urgent.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in seismic shifts in how people live, work, and learn. And, it has brought additional attention to existing systemic inequities—a spotlight on injustice, access, and an ever-widening opportunity gap in America.

More than 55 million young people have been impacted by school and camp closures in the U.S. They must now navigate a new way of learning while simultaneously achieving critical developmental milestones for their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. Moreover, they have remained physically distant from their teachers, coaches, mentors, and peers at a time when interaction and mentorship is critical to growth and development.

These events have put youth in jeopardy and inequities into stark relief. While the average student may fall 7 months behind, Black students are more likely to be 9 months behind, and low-income students one year. Relatedly, the digital divide is real and growing—more than a quarter of Black and Latino youth have unreliable access to online learning and nearly three-quarters of rural schools had no online instruction while schools were closed. Perhaps most importantly, we see severe mental health effects, with 70% of teens reporting struggles.

This environment brings a new sense of urgency and importance to National 4-H Council's work to bring a 4-H experience to millions more young people.





How We Will Respond—And Re-imagine Council.

What is certain is that the future is uncertain. With vaccines beginning to be deployed, some aspects of the crisis will resolve, and some will remain. A direct impact of the pandemic has been the closure of the National 4-H Conference Center, which is now projected to run an annual deficit.

Moving forward, National 4-H Council must adapt to a new set of circumstances, financial challenges, and markets. This will mean a more market-driven approach, with an eye toward positioning our work against two external, but influential, drivers:



The level of private and public sector investment in and attention to youth—specifically to positive youth development



The capacity of Cooperative Extension—aided by Council resources and support—to deliver 4-H positive youth development in new communities and in new ways.

As we continue to learn more about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, we anticipate that some factors will remain prevalent, and to a certain extent, indicate a market readiness for 4-H’s message and new methods of program delivery.

External Influences

- Elevation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).** Social and economic inequities will persist as the effects of the pandemic disproportionately impact our most vulnerable families because of their health status, race, ZIP code and employment status.
- Hybrid Learning Norm.** Even after the pandemic subsides, distance learning will be part of the “new learning normal” for many young people. Remote access to social opportunities will become more common and the critical need to ensure internet access, sufficient equipment and family support for learning will grow stronger.
- Importance of Positive Youth Development.** Positive youth development demonstrates the benefits to intentional design and implementation of youth programs. A focus on the whole child is gaining traction through collaboration between in-school and out-of-school time programs and aligns with Biden administration priorities.
- Continued Interest in Rural America.** Efforts to expand rural broadband access, address hunger and economic opportunity have broad support—and rural issues remain a mainstay of many corporate CSR portfolios.
- The Importance of Youth Voice in Civil Discourse.** As youth look for the chance to be recognized for their strengths—additional investments will be needed to give equal opportunities to develop their talents and to have their voice elevated as part of the solution.

Now is the time to help ensure the opportunity gap is closed. If we do not seize this opportunity, we risk losing the talent, vision, and future of our young people, and with it, our chance of a vibrant, healthy, just, civil, and democratic America.



Our Vision and Mission:

Despite the turbulent times we find ourselves in, our central purpose is unchanged. National 4-H Council remains dedicated to a future in which millions more young people are engaged in Cooperative Extension’s high quality 4-H youth development programs, and where 4-H youth, volunteers and staff are representative of the diversity of our nation.

National 4-H Council Mission:

To expand opportunities for all of America’s youth through increased investment and participation in 4-H positive youth development.

Who We Serve and How:

National 4-H Council (Council) is the private sector, non-profit partner of Cooperative Extension (Extension) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 4-H programs are implemented by the nation’s 100+ land-grant colleges and universities through Extension and its 3,000+ local offices across the country. Council supports Extension’s goal to reach millions more young people in three unique ways:



Convene the 4-H movement:
Stimulate collective action on the nation’s most pressing issues.



Tell the 4-H Story:
Leverage the power of trusted brand partners and 4-H alumni to elevate the visibility of 4-H.



Create Public-Private Partnerships:
Generate financial resources to create opportunities for all youth.

OPPORTUNITY4ALL

Is Our Goal—And Our Call to Action.

Cooperative Extension is a partnership between more than 100 land-grant universities and local, state, and federal government. It delivers positive youth development programming built on the principles of inclusion and belonging, and helps create opportunity for millions of youth.

National 4-H Council works to support Extension, and to provide ALL youth with access to opportunities and experiences so they develop the skills they need to succeed in life. We believe in the power of young people, and that when provided opportunities, they create positive change and address inequity in their communities.

Youth face a widening 'opportunity gap', a term increasingly being used by organizations and educators to describe how the circumstances in which people are born and/or live determine their opportunities in life. This opportunity gap must be addressed, and the playing field adjusted, so all children have an equal opportunity to succeed.



Areas of Operational Focus: **Our Five-Point Plan**

FY 21-23 objectives are aligned with Cooperative Extension priorities and represent Council's unique assets and singular role in the 4-H movement. Each objective comprises one component of a reimagined Council—prioritizing a digitally-enabled brand that engages with kids and families directly, a nimble and data driven business model, and a people-first culture that values entrepreneurial spirit. In an uncertain and volatile environment, Council teams will stay focused on our core mission—but use data and feedback from our stakeholders to make tactical adjustments along the way.



1: Expand Access to Positive Youth Development

Increase operating revenue across restricted, unrestricted, and earned income segments, building Council and Extension's capacity to increase participation and access.

1.1 Programs and Partnerships. Focus the corporate and foundation portfolio to areas of both donor interest and Council ROI, including programs focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), civic engagement, closing the digital divide, workforce readiness, sustainable agriculture & health equity.

1.2 4-H at Home/eCommerce. Build and expand a consumer-facing platform with the power to deliver 4-H positive youth development to more kids and more communities.

1.3 Cause and Individual. Invest in capacity & structure to grow turnkey unrestricted revenue models—driving brand relevance and reach through Cause Marketing and donor retention and increased investment through robust stewardship planning.

1.4 Extension Engagement. Drive revenue through educational opportunities for youth and professionals.



2: Grow our Purpose Driven Brand

Increase favorability among our core target audience of Alumni moms. Leverage the purpose platform and Opportunity4All message to improve brand relevance and engagement among partners, stakeholders, and alumni.

2.1 Elevate Youth Voice. Expand the visibility of Opportunity4All platform through youth-centered stories that demonstrate the power and value of 4-H.

2.2 Multi-channel Marketing. Amplify reach through multi-channel marketing to stimulate donor cultivation process.

2.3 Thought Leadership. Maximize opportunity to drive brand value with current supporters while also expanding the audience through publicity & influencer engagement.

2.4 Research. Invest in brand evaluation research to demonstrate improved relevance to stakeholders, evaluate impact of brand efforts and take advantage of market opportunities.



3: Win-Win with Cooperative Extension

Strengthen Council's partnership with Cooperative Extension by developing collaborations that have clear benefits (financial and otherwise) for both Extension and Council.

3.1 Government Relations. Build relationships within Capitol Hill and the Administration to cultivate new federal resources for Council and Extension.

3.2 Land-grant University Engagement. Engage land-grant university (LGU) leadership in the development of new corporate and foundation partnerships, and to continue an intentional approach to building the capacity of 1890 Institutions.

3.3 4-H at Home Platform Collaboration. Develop infrastructure & technology to reach more kids through the 4-H at Home/eCommerce partnership with LGUs.

3.4 Brand Campaign. Invest in customizable advertising assets through an on-demand model to create positive awareness of 4-H locally.

3.5 Shared Governance and Communications. Facilitate coordination and collaboration with Extension leadership groups through active participation and logistical support.

3.6 Streamline the Grant-making Process. Update the application process to create fewer barriers to entry for all LGUs.



4: Achieve Long-term Financial Health

Move from stabilizing organizational financial health through increased liquidity and reduced losses to a recover phase focused on the income statement—with a focus on increasing margin from our core RD/MKT/eCommerce businesses over the next three years.

4.1 Reinvest to Grow Revenue. Develop ROI thresholds to evaluate investments—balancing revenue producing initiatives with necessary infrastructure capacity.

4.2 Improve Operational Efficiency. Refine business units' operations—including financial processes, PCM processes, and policy/procedures—to produce efficiencies, increase productivity and lower costs.

4.3 Strengthen Risk Management. Establish an enterprise wide risk management framework—providing tools for accurate analysis of risk and mitigation strategies.



5: Invest in Council's People & Culture

Invest in and nurture Council's most valuable asset—our people. We will help all Associates connect to 4-H's mission and purpose, continue our authentic commitment to work-life balance, and support Associates' personal and professional growth.

5.1 DEI Commitment. Accelerate plans to continue our learning journey and take action steps to engage the entire organization in changes to people, policies, and practices.

5.2 Culture Development. Recognize and reward entrepreneurial spirit and innovation, with a focus on innovative approaches to achieving our strategic goals.

5.3 Succession Planning. Develop actionable succession plans for key leaders and business units.

5.4 Professional Development. Prioritize Associates' professional development planning as a part of the Performance Management process.

I pledge my **H** **AD** to clearer thinking,

my **HE** **RT** to greater loyalty,

my **H** **NDS** to larger service,

and my **HE** **LTH** to better living,

for my club, my community, my country

and my world.



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National 4-H Council is the private sector, non-profit partner of the Cooperative Extension System and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture within the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at [4-H.org](https://4-h.org)

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