Communications

Volunteers demonstrate the ability to create, deliver and interpret information effectively through formal and non-formal means. This includes:
- Speaking Skills
- Listening Skills
- Writing Skills
- Non-Verbal Skills
- Information Delivery & Dissemination
- Marketing & Public Relations
- Use of Technology

Organization

Volunteers demonstrate the ability to engage others in planning, providing and delivering positive 4-H youth development programming in a community. This includes:
- Planning & Organizing
- Time Management
- Parent Recruitment & Involvement
- Delegating Tasks to Parents
- Service to the Community
- Marketing & Publicity

4-H Program Management

Volunteers must understand and follow appropriate policies, procedures and safety guidelines when acting on behalf of Extension. This includes:
- Organization & Structure of Extension
- Upholding the 4-H Mission
- Risk Management/Risk Reduction
- Liability Awareness and Reduction
- Club Management
- Behavior Management
- Record Keeping
- Financial Management
- Computer Skills

Using the VRKC Taxonomy

- VRKC provides county 4-H professionals with an outline for volunteer development.
- VRKC provides state specialists with a format for agent education in volunteer development.
- Staff may choose to focus on one domain each year for all 4-H volunteers in a county, district or state.
- Staff may choose to assess the needs of individual or groups of volunteers and tailor a volunteer development plan specifically for each one.
Educational Design & Delivery

Volunteers demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate research-based learning opportunities that effectively promote positive personal development. This includes:
- Use of Age-Appropriate Activities
- Utilization of Multiple Teaching Strategies
- Understanding of Differences in Learning Styles
- Knowledge of Subject Matter
- Team Building Skills
- Application of Experiential Learning Program Evaluation Methods

Positive Youth Development

 Volunteers demonstrate the ability to intentionally and appropriately apply the principles and best practices that result in the positive development of youth. This includes:
- Developing Life Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Understanding Ages & Stages of Youth Development
- Empowerment of Others
- Practicing Youth - Adult Partnerships
- Ability to Motivate & Encourage Youth
- Appreciating Diversity

Interpersonal Characteristics

 Volunteers demonstrate the ability to develop effective relationships, work competently with individuals and groups, and express empathy and understanding for others. This includes:
- Care for Others
- A Compassionate Nature
- Acceptance of Others
- Honesty, Ethics, Morality
- Patience
- Ability to Develop & Strengthen Relationships
- Flexibility

Developing the VRKC Model

The study on which this taxonomy is based identified the competencies that volunteers will need in order to effectively deliver 4-H Youth Development programs and activities in the next decade. This taxonomy will provide 4-H professionals with a national focus and direction related to the levels of competency and the perceived needs of 4-H volunteers. While the study provided benchmark data for future comparisons, the VRKC taxonomy provides insights into priorities for volunteer development.

During 2003 and 2004, 4-H Agents and volunteers in 21 states in all four Extension regions and all State 4-H Volunteerism Specialists were surveyed to discover and identify the skills or core competencies that volunteers would need to effectively deliver 4-H Youth Development programs, activities and projects. Phase I was qualitative and exploratory, and identified 32 competencies. In the quantitative phase II, the original 32 competencies were separated and collapsed into 22 measurable skills and 6 personality characteristics. Their level of importance, level of competence and frequency of use were explored.

The VRKC Taxonomy is expressed in six domains: Communications, Organization, 4-H Program Management, Educational Design & Delivery, Positive Youth Development, and Interpersonal Skills. These six domains are listed in the cumulative order of importance, competence and use, as determined by the results of the study.
VRKc Domains & Volunteer Competencies

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Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency

Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development