

Extension Program

APPROVED as of 04/02/2021

[University of Alaska Fairbanks](#)

Funding Source

Extension Capacity Fund (Smith-Lever 3(b) and 3(c))

Primary Critical Issue

[4-H & Youth Development](#)

Title

Fostering positive youth development through mentoring and culturally relevant education in healthy living, STEM, civic engagement and leadership for Alaskan youth

Start Date

10/01/2020

Project Initiator

Alda Norris

Non-Technical Summary

Issue: Research shows better outcomes for youth who have connections with caring adults. According to Alaska Children's Trust, 45,000 Alaska children do not have access to an afterschool program, yet 78 percent of Alaskan parents say such programming helps working families. CNN reported in 2015 that Alaska has the top three most diverse census tracts in all of the U.S. Outside of cities, there are many areas with minority youth that can only be reached by boat or plane. Thus, in many rural communities, engagement activities for youth are limited. In addition, childhood obesity continues to be a major concern in Alaska. Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services 2017-2018 data from students in grades K, 1, 3, 5 and 7 in two Southcentral school districts documented an obesity rate of over 18 percent. As the 4-H Essential Elements note, the youth development field recognizes that positive development requires structure, support, skill-building, and "strong links between families, schools and broader community resources." 4-H is uniquely positioned to provide culturally relevant opportunities for Alaska's youth in healthy living, STEM, civic engagement and leadership.

Statewide Goals

- **Goal 1:** All faculty and staff associated within the program area will understand the Essential Elements of Youth Development.
- **Goal 2:** After receiving training in the Essential Elements of Youth Development, volunteer leaders and youth will apply at least two of the Essential Elements in their interactions during programming.
- **Goal 3:** Clubs and afterschool programs will expand opportunities for underserved and minority youth through the development of culturally relevant programming.
- **Goal 4:** Youth will demonstrate confidence and knowledge gained from opportunities for leadership.
- **Goal 5:** Youth will develop improved aspirations for and skills in healthy living habits, including nutrition and physical activity.
- **Goal 6:** Youth will increase knowledge of STEM and consideration of STEM-related careers.

Target Audiences: Youth programming in Alaska primarily targets children ages 5-18 and their caregivers. 4-H strives to reach underserved youth, and provides programming to many diverse audiences including youth in state custody and foster care, low-income families and rural communities.

Expected Outcomes: Training will lead to use of best practices. Opportunities for personal growth and community engagement will lead to increased confidence and healthy choices. Leadership can utilize tools like 4-H Common Measures to document any changes in attitudes, awareness, knowledge and behavior. Parent and volunteer leader feedback is also collected on observations of changes in youth engagement, STEM learning and healthy decision-making.

Integrated Activities

Researchers assist in providing educational opportunities to youth about small and large livestock including reindeer.

Multistate Activities

Program staff facilitate 4-H exchanges with other states, make multi-state presentations and help youth attend national activities like Citizenship Washington Focus.

Edit