4-H steering committees; youth and adults leading the way for teen programs in Idaho

AT A GLANCE
The reorganization of Idaho 4-H teen programs led to the development of steering committees, made up primarily of youth, who now plan, evaluate and facilitate all statewide teen programs.

The Situation
A purpose, organizational structure, membership and operational plan, were required to guide the establishment of steering committees. It was crucial these committees provide true leadership opportunities for teens, and improve existing programs, while maintaining the integrity and traditions of these long-standing state events.

Our Response
Initial research and recommendations from an Idaho 4-H Teen Task Force led to the development of steering committees for three key statewide teen programs including Idaho 4-H Ambassadors (district and state), Idaho 4-H Know Your Government Conference and the Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention. The steering committees, made up primarily of youth, also include 4-H professionals and certified 4-H volunteers. They are successfully developing content-rich, engaging and educational programs. Purpose statements, position descriptions with term limits, committee structures and evaluation tools, for each steering committee’s program, have been developed. 2018 is the second year all three steering committees have been fully functioning.

Program Outcomes
Considering the value of teen programming, the importance of youth adult partnerships, national mission mandates and other youth development principles, the 4-H Teen Task Force formulated the following purpose statement: The purpose of the Idaho 4-H Teen Program is to inspire, educate and support teens across Idaho in learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. All materials, programming content and planning for the steering committees were based off this purpose statement.

Specific position descriptions and operational handbooks developed for each steering committee assist committee members in understanding their contribution as well as determining the focus of the teen event.
Position descriptions include; purpose, qualifications, responsibilities and time commitment details.

The handbooks for each steering committee include; committee membership, event goals and objectives, event schedule, planning timelines, position descriptions, sub-committee responsibilities, 4-H project completion (if applicable), UI event rules and policies and other information as needed by the specific committee.

2017 was the first year under the new reorganization and an evaluation tool was developed to determine the effectiveness and success of aligning the teen programs in Idaho. Common Measures Outcomes pertaining to each of the statewide teen programs were selected with “Build Connections” being used in all three programs. Preliminary evaluations show eligible youth from ages 13-19 are attending statewide teen events, youth are attending more than one statewide teen event and participants are gaining specific knowledge from the statewide events they attend.

Idaho 4-H Ambassador Steering Committee membership includes:

- Committee chair; regional 4-H educator
- 4-H Youth Development: logistical coordinator
- Two district faculty/staff reps: four year term
- Two volunteers: two year term
- Eight district youth: up to two year term
- District retreat co-chairs: one adult four year term; one youth: up to two year term

Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention Steering Committee membership includes:

- Committee chair; regional 4-H educator
- 4-H Youth Development: logistical coordinator
- Four district faculty/staff reps: four year term
- Two volunteers: two year term
- 24 youth: one justice; one speaker of the house, one news editor, one video producer, six judges, six legislators, eight reporters; one year term
- Six adults track co-chairs: two judicial, two legislative, two reporter; four year term

This reorganization has increased participation and has made Idaho 4-H teen programs more accessible, more rigorous, as well as more symbiotic and consistent. Youth steering committee members now have a better understanding of the impact their leadership experience has on other teens, as well as greater insight in planning events for their peers.

Idaho 4-H steering committees have been recognized as an important youth development concept with information shared at the 2017 NAE4-HA professional development conference.

Future

Steering committee effectiveness and efficiency continue to improve with knowledge gained from the first two years of operation. At the onset, it was difficult to find interested youth and adults to fill the committee positions. As positions change due to term limits, it is becoming evident that there are many qualified youth and adults who are interested in participating in the committees and in the future of Idaho 4-H teen programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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