

Pennsylvania 4-H Program Review: Final Report

December 14, 2007

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Introduction

The review team would like to congratulate the Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service and more specifically the 4-H program for taking the time and effort to do an in-depth review of the program. This indicates to the review team that the program is striving to become a premier youth development organization.

This report is structured to focus on the following major areas:

- Strengths of the current program and system
- Challenges identified by Penn State faculty and staff and the review team
- Foundational issues and recommendations necessary for future success
- Additional issues and recommendations
- Final comments

Strengths

The Pennsylvania 4-H program has a long and rich history dating back to 1912. This program has evolved and grown over the last century. While it has not escaped the multiple organizational changes and the resulting periods of reorganization experienced by many Extension programs throughout the country, it has displayed a survivor spirit which has strengthened the resolve to continue to find ways to meet the ever changing needs of youth.

The 4-H program, as it exists today, has a very strong subject matter focus. This is especially true in the various agriculture and animal science disciplines. This is evidenced by the fact that 73.32% of projects statewide are in these areas. Strong faculty and staff support from the Department of Dairy and Animal Sciences, Department of Poultry Science, and the School of Forest and Natural Resources continues to facilitate this discipline area emphasis.

The development of 10 curriculum development teams also points to the desire to provide strong discipline based materials and educational programs in other subject areas. Faculty support for 4-H in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education has assisted in providing support for the youth development, family and consumer sciences, citizenship, diversity, international, and healthy lifestyles education. Additional support is being supplied from other departments on a limited basis.

The “traditional” club model remains a major strength of the program. After school programs and school enrichment efforts are also reaching additional youth. Camping programs remain strong.

Efforts have begun to strengthen in recent years to outreach to at-risk audiences. This is especially true related to the CYFAR project YET – Youth Engaged in Technology and the prevention work PROSPER – Promoting School / Community – University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience.

The placement of the Development function for Extension with a heavy emphasis on 4-H in the Outreach office is a particular strength for the long term growth of the 4-H youth development program

All leadership that the review team met appear to strongly support the 4-H program from the Extension Director to the Program Leader for Children, Youth and Families to the department chairs and regional directors.

The current state 4-H program leader appears to have the trust and support of the field based staff and the leadership as well as a solid understanding of youth development and what it will take for expanded success in the program.

Challenges

Issues and concerns were raised over a variety of topics. These concerns do not necessarily imply major problems with the program or the system. Rather they are beginning points for discussions on ways to work on continuous improvement. Challenges are listed in broad topic areas without any effort to prioritize their importance. Recommendations in later sections will bring greater focus related to the priority, approach, and timing recommended to address these challenges and build a growing premier 4-H youth development program:

Name and nature of program:

- The name of the program is unclear- is it the 4-H program, the 4-H Youth Development program, or the 4-H and Youth Development program
- The program appears to be a fragmented series of programs around different content areas rather than strongly unified program ground in a pervasive youth development approach

Image:

- 4-H program appears to be viewed by many clientele and staff as traditional and primarily agricultural in its scope (with some accuracy as noted above)

- The program is hard to market to new and diverse audiences, and unevenly branded, in part due to this rural agricultural image
- 4-H Educators, and especially program assistants, may not be seen as youth development experts within their communities and may not have the degrees or background to do so effectively in all places -- nor the time or stakeholder support to step outside the operation of their 4-H programs to do so effectively

Outreach to new and underserved audiences:

- The urban 4-H program is relatively non-existent, especially in Philadelphia, and has no coherent state support
- Explicit efforts to grow 4-H and to reach specific cultural, ethnic, racial, and ability groups were not apparent to the reviewers on a statewide level other than the development of some activities
- The review team heard no explicit plan or deliberate supports for reaching new audiences, no clear analysis of which deliver modes or project areas held the greatest potential for such growth, and little agreed upon understanding of the nature or geographic distribution of the diversity

Organizational Structure:

- The current organizational structure and actual communication between levels on campus and between campus and field does not lend itself to effective program delivery or programmatic change
- The 4-H program is supervised and managed more by an administrative rather than programmatic chain making changes in direction and program quality improvement more difficult
- State 4-H Program Leader position is not on same level with other State Program Leaders and therefore not at the administrative team discussions for Extension where important decisions are made
- The representation of 4-H at the administrative level by the program leader for children, youth and families – while well intentioned and capably staffed – does not provide adequate representation for one of Extension’s largest, most politically valued, and county requested programs
- Lack of a direct administrative voice in Extension administration is especially problematic when Extension itself is inside a college of agriculture with clear goals and strategic plans that do not adequately include youth development -- perhaps a more appropriate option would be to place Extension more directly in the University’s broader outreach office

- The 4-H Program leader is also significantly out of the loop on the development side though quite helpful when involved
- The continued movement of county level funds into endowments and donors into effective databases was noted as an ongoing challenge with lots of support for cooperation
- County Educators feel left out of the loop related to major organizational policy decisions even in areas that clearly impact when and what they are expected to deliver

Field Staff and Professional Development

- Local funding of positions and the apparent variety of titles, payment systems, and expectations has created a two tier system related to pay, benefits, and work hours that likely harms program implementation and effectiveness, is hard to manage efficiently, and is frankly hard to justify
- Current staff development processes such as in-service days are not perceived as working well nor do they allow for systematic implementation of a consistent, high quality 4-H program
- The special staff development provided for 4-H in the animal science areas, supported by the animal science related departments, stands in sharp contrast to the apparent lack of such strategically focused efforts for the 4-H program as a whole
- There appears to be an inadequate distinction between *professional development* that is selected by individual staff members to enhance their ability to grow as experts and professionals in their field and *staff development* that is designed to help staff perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently in order to enhance quality and impact
- The lack of distinction noted above can lead to a sense of entitlement of choice at the very points where being able to deliver consistent messages and systematic training are critical
- Staff development for field educators are too dependent on county funding to provide an effective system for supporting, let alone transforming or significantly growing, a program such as 4-H
- Vacated field positions that are primarily funded by the University revert to the college resulting in long delays in re-filling which are incompatible with the effective delivery of a county based, high demand program such as 4-H
- The new promotion expectations and especially pressure to get grants could be counter productive and ineffective without better supports for effective implementation

- Not all educators have masters degrees or degrees highly relevant to positioning them as experts in youth development
- Morale for county educators may be slumping due to unclear but frequent expectations from various levels of the organization, poor timing of such requests, limited support staff at the local level, heavy reporting demands, and the perception that 4-H is not a priority for the college

Program Direction:

- Whether growth in the 4-H program should be strategic and focus on quality or emphasize dramatic growth with less emphasis on quality/depth is unclear or inconsistent
- County programs all feel they are unique and thus there is a loss of efficiency as counties create similar programs and materials and communication tools
- Strong county ownership of 4-H is both an asset and a liability since there are few systems in place to provide statewide checks on quality of implementation
- The systems that exist are too often guided by well meaning people who do not understand youth development as a research-based program area rather than a set of activities for youth that primarily promotes higher education and select careers
- The 4-H program does not appear to be adequately or at least consistently driven at the local level by research on youth development
- The role of school enrichment in the 4-H program is unclear and not strategically thought about in ways that capitalize on its ability to grow other delivery methods
- Programmatic direction and decisions from the State 4-H Leader must rely on charisma and persuasion to bring about change – no direct program line of authority from county to state exists and there is no mechanism for effective input into performance of local educators by people with youth development expertise
- There is also currently inadequate state and regional supports to assure important changes are made
- 4-H programs have heavy competition components and/or events that result in heavy time demands and increased conflict resolution efforts to address fairness issues – thus taking away from other programmatic opportunities
- College Strategic Plan does not contain a strong 4-H or youth development focus, rather the plan's agricultural/commodity focus is oriented in ways that work against the type of potential growth and diversification of 4-H that is needed, possible, and expected

- Vision for the scope and direction for the 4-H youth development program and a strategic plan is unclear
- Even with a clear vision the current structure would not allow for effective leadership or successful implementation
- Program fragmentation and ownership by content areas, while intended as supportive, is a threat to an effective, efficient, and high impact youth development program – even in the areas of animal science

State Specialist Support:

- The state staff appears to lack sufficient authority to directly require appropriate program quality, program changes, and even risk management implementation evenly across the state and inadequate resources to overcome the lack of authority through technical assistance and persistence
- State staff with specialization in volunteerism, SET (science, engineering, and technology), and organizational delivery systems are missing
- Obtaining faculty support for 4-H in other colleges has been limited but interest and opportunity are high with the current public engagement and outreach emphasis

Marketing and Branding efforts:

- Marketing efforts appear weak and not well directed at the state level in spite of request for such coordination and support at the regional and local levels
- Use of the 4-H brand is inconsistent and plans for changing its image are more wishful than strategically or data driven

Communication:

- County Educators often feel communication links are not operating effectively
- Communications about major Extension and college efforts do not appear to reach 4-H staff in a timely fashion or in ways that reflect an understanding of the unique features of the 4-H program

Data and Reporting Systems:

- The reporting system and/or its interpretation appears to underreport the youth development efforts happening in the state

- The lack of a state 4-H program database that is current more than once a year is an outdated approach to effective program management and inhibits effective statewide and local communications using technology
- The reporting system appears to have little value, or at least is seldom used, at the local level and is seen as having no added value for that level increasing the likelihood it is seen only as a burden
- More sophisticated analyses of participation database for issues of retention, and impact data were not discussed beyond studies briefly noted in the background materials which showed promise
- Efforts to report time appear not to be well received or analyzed at the program level to provide a realistic and complete picture of who is doing what in 4-H
- Metrics of success and growth for the 4-H program have not been established, shared, or owned by staff

Establishing Strong Foundations

In order to enhance Penn State University Extension Youth Development efforts, including and especially the PA 4-H youth development program, there are a set of critical foundations that must be in place. These foundations can build on the strengths noted above as well as help address the challenges faced. Our goal in defining these foundations and making recommendations for how to build them is to help ensure the long term growth, success and recognition of Penn State University Extension Youth Development work – work at the state, regional, and local level that is fitting for a world class university that is publicly engaged through effective research-based, educationally driven programmatic outreach.

The review team identified four critical foundations that must exist for success:

- **COMMITMENT TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**
- **STRONG STATE LEADERSHIP**
- **APPROPRIATE GOALS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**
- **STRONG PROGRAM SUPPORTS**
- **ENGAGING CONTENT**

These foundations, when strongly in place and well aligned to University and community needs, will allow for the more effective utilization of public resources, the generation of private resources, and effect positive impact on youth, families, and communities.

FOUNDATION I – A COMMITMENT TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The 4-H program in Pennsylvania and nationally has a long history of delivering research-based content to the youth of communities – especially but not exclusively content related to food and agriculture. Its future, however, depends on not only rich and diverse content but highly engaging, hands on ways of delivering content -- *ways that are*

youth centered, not content center. Formal educational programs in schools are driven from a content centered approach and have the responsibility for assuring basic content is learned. Extension's youth development efforts, and especially the 4-H programs it creates and delivers directly to youth, should be driven by a clearly articulated commitment to youth development.

Such a youth development approach places value on non-formal, intentional ways to meet youth where they are and take them to exciting new places through hands-on learning opportunities that support their learning and challenge their thinking – opportunities that encourage them to explore new possibilities, develop life skills, build increasing competence and confidence, and help them to become connected, caring and contributing members of Pennsylvania and the world. For non-formal learning, content is the critical vehicle for engaging youth but it is engagement – generating excitement about learning and seeing new possibilities that is its heart.

A research study by Reed Larson brings this point home most clearly. When youth from a wide variety of settings and cultures were given beepers and asked to respond when beeped, he found the following results. Youth when beeped in school were concentrating slightly better than average but were generally not very motivated. When youth were with their friends, they were very motivated but not concentrating very well. Only in voluntary, non-formal learning opportunities (such as 4-H) were youth both more motivated and more likely to be concentrating. It is that combination of motivation and concentration that comes from using a youth development approach that establishes optimal conditions for learning. Once engaged, the youth begins to drive their own learning in ways that, when guided by caring adults and challenging possibilities, lead to high performance, healthy life skills, and the competence, confidence, connections, caring, and contributions that become the hall mark of an effective student, employee, and citizen.

Rather than trying to primarily drive content and achievement in content areas, the 4-H program is uniquely positioned to support and enhance such efforts by schools and other by exciting and engaging youth in hands on learning in areas they freely choose. That advantage is currently under recognized and not well articulated.

Recommendation 1.1

Penn State Cooperative Extension should clearly and unambiguously commit to using a youth development approach as its highest priority and guiding philosophy for all youth development programs, activities, and events.

FOUNDATION II: STRONG STATE LEADERSHIP

In order for the Pennsylvania 4-H Youth Development Program to become a premier program in the state with a national reputation for excellence a second critical foundation is strong state leadership. Such leadership must be able to not only articulate the commitment to youth development approach but also have the authority, resources, and dedicated time and capacity to make it real throughout the state. Based on the current strengths and challenges observed by the review team, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 2.1

A state program leader position for youth development should be created at the Director's Program Leadership table with all the rights, access, and responsibilities of other program leaders. This position should be distinct from but work in collaboration with other program leaders – including the position with responsibility for young children and family programming. A doctorate degree should be required for this position in order to assure they can be an effective leader in engaging other faculty and partners both across the campus as well as the state. Whether or not this position is called the ***state program leader for youth development*** (to better describe the field of work rather than the specific programs for youth and leave open new programming designed to train others in youth development as noted in recommendations below) or the ***4-H youth development state program leader***, the person should serve as the state's 4-H program leader at national meetings.

Recommendation 2.2

The state program leader for youth development should continue to be housed in the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education as long as extension remains in the College of Agriculture. This department has many faculty and professional staff that can and do teach and do research on youth development and provide critical support to aspects of the 4-H Youth Development Program.

Recommendation 2.3

The Department of Agriculture and Extension Education should explore formalizing a center or similar unit branded as 4-H in order to explicitly serve as the headquarters for the Pennsylvania 4-H Youth Development Program. A unit with dedicated staff and the State Program Leader for Youth Development serving as its director would provide a visible as well as tangible commitment to the 4-H program. Such a commitment is needed to reassure key stakeholders, attract private funders, and effectively unit and support the current fragmented statewide program in all of its various deliver modes and content areas. This center or unit should include the proposed investments in program supports recommended in that section.

FOUNDATION III: APPROPRIATE GOALS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A third foundation to effectively drive a successful growing, and high impact 4-H youth Development Program is to clearly articulate a set of challenging but reachable goals and a useful set of metrics to positively, as opposed to punitively, drive accountability. The review team believes the goal of reaching 25% of the states youth population is an inappropriate and unreachable goal in six years. It could unintentionally encourage undesirable consequences such as a race for quantity over quality or the use of low impact, light touch approaches. Such approaches could undermine Extension's reputation for quality programs and decrease rather than increase impact on youth.

Clear goals alone, however, are unlikely to drive the program effectively. An aligned and appropriate set of metrics that are owned by program staff, effectively measured

periodically, and used to drive changes in strategies, investments, and partnerships is also required.

Recommendation 3.1

Establish, with input from multiple stakeholders, a clearly articulated set of growth goals for 4-H programs that address quantity, quality, and diversity issues and are either explicit by deliver method or include strategies for reaching them that are explicit. Such goals should call for high quality programs that use evidence-based and best practice approaches, whose implementation, participation, quality, and effectiveness are researched, and are designed in ways that are age-appropriate in ways that challenge youth and retain them over extended periods of time.

Recommendation 3.2

Connect measurable indicators at county, regional, and state levels in ways that make real each of the goals. This set of metrics should focus more on percentage increases in numbers within and across delivery modes more than simply the percentage of youth served. The percentage of youth in a population that participate may be used to help prioritize strategies for growth and as a measure of progress at a county or regional level but is probably not a good statewide indicator.

Recommendation 3.3

Establishing quality goals should be an integral and measurable part of the goal set. Such quality goals should be based on the burgeoning research and practice literature on quality indicators such as recently summarized by the Forum for Youth Investment or the Harvard Family Research Project and illustrated by the Youth Program Quality Assessment of High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Efforts to improve quality appear to be more powerful in engaging staff than accountability for outcomes that are determined by too many factors outside of the programs influence (e.g., achievement gains, prevention of drug use). Quality goals should be measured and monitored along with short term and longer term outcome goals.

Recommendation 3.4

To the extent possible attach incentives to working on goals and rewards for reaching them that are not competitive between staff but are given for reaching established targets. For example, this might include awards and cash bonuses for increasing 4-H club programs by 10% at a county level or expanding the number of school based clubs by 10% or when a county's 4-H participants fully represent the youth population of the area served or demonstrate effectively reaching underserved audiences.

FOUNDATION IV: STRONG PROGRAM SUPPORTS

The review team heard about and sees evidence of a significant decrease various forms of program support in the last 15 years that has had detrimental effects on the 4-H program in numerous ways – both real and perceived. The fourth critical foundation for success is a system of strong program supports. Such foundational supports are particularly critical in three areas: 1) leader and volunteer development, 2) establishing an effective and efficient program-driven regional support and supervision system, and 3). making the

most of Science, Engineering, and Technology mission mandate opportunities. Each of these are addressed in the sections and recommendations that follow.

1. Leader and Volunteer Development

Volunteering has long been at the heart of citizen action and central to people's ability to serve their communities (Independent Sector, 2004). Several comprehensive studies have demonstrated that the everyday generosity of American volunteers is paramount to the over 1.23 million organizations that utilize volunteers in the achievement of their mission. Since the establishment of the Cooperative Extension Service, volunteers have helped Extension professionals expand the reach of their services. As Extension's breadth of programs and the need for its services continue to grow, volunteers remain integral to its programs' implementation and success. This is especially true for 4-H Youth Development programs. Volunteers help the 4-H Program realize its goals on a daily basis, bringing more hands, skills and knowledge to our youth development efforts through their direct service with young people.

A diverse and well supported corps of volunteers is considered a basic element of high quality 4-H programs. (Riley, Schott 2001) Their delivery of the programming and skills for program and project related support to youth within our communities is a valued and important component of outreach efforts. Through volunteer contributions, 4-H Youth Development staff can more effectively educate, manage and administer program delivery. In order for 4-H Youth Development professionals to effectively utilize volunteers however, our practice must be based in a strong research base and paid staff must have access to the training and tools needed to recruit, select, orient, train, utilize, recognize and evaluate volunteers who serve in all aspects of our programs.

Recommendation 4.1

The Review Team strongly recommends that Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension add a professional staff position (non-faculty) to the State 4-H staff team that will focus on volunteer development and implementation of an effective management system for the total 4-H program. Because it is a priority for Pennsylvania 4-H to expand and diversify the audiences it serves, a critical component of this person's efforts should also focus on helping staff in local communities identify and expand ways volunteers can be involved in the design and delivery of youth development programming regardless of the delivery vehicle being used. There currently appears to be a strong club and animal science program in Pennsylvania 4-H, that is supported by volunteers who serve as club leaders and event planners. The development of resources to support expanded roles for volunteers across the county program, including involvement in after-school programs, short-term special interest programs, school enrichment and individual programs like mentoring, will aid staff in reaching out to and effectively involving a more diverse corps of volunteers who may not currently see participation in 4-H as possible or desirable.

2. Regional Staff and Supports

In a state as large and diverse as Pennsylvania it is not feasible to closely support local 4-H youth development programs well from the state level alone. The Review Team feels

that the best organizational structure for the 4-H youth development program that would address a multitude of issues conveyed by state and county staff and faculty during the 3 day review process, must involve some form of regional supports that go beyond but utilize the informal regional meetings of educators and program assistants now taking place.

Recommendation 4.2.1

Create a set of masters level, regionally based, University funded youth development or 4-H youth development program leader positions that also serves on the state team and does not have county program responsibilities. By creating these regional positions, 4-H will strengthen communication between county 4-H staff and state 4-H program leadership as well as provide additional state level support for implementation of critical foundational components noted in this report. A disconnect in communication was the resounding issue of state and county staff.

The responsibilities of such regional 4-H youth development program leaders could include:

- To provide leadership for consistent, high quality, locally appropriate 4-H programs
- To provide local 4-H personnel staff development training at the regional level
- To bring diversity to the program in various areas of expertise and backgrounds that would encourage a well rounded 4-H youth development program
- To provide grant writing support to the regions
- To provide program evaluation support to the regions
- To provide periodic on-site observation and supervision to the county 4-H staff
- To lead or at least participate in county 4-H staff's program review
- To problem solve with county staff issues related to local programming
- To provide marketing strategies and tools for county staff and program
- To provide a seamless stream for statewide and national initiatives that increase opportunities for funding and programming
- To support the National 4-H mission mandates
- To assist in creating and providing opportunities for regional programming in project areas
- To assist with volunteer recruitment and training for their region and implementation of volunteer development efforts
- To provide feedback to state on unique regional and county issues involving youth
- To provide leadership and support for regional events and activities including camping, horse, youth leadership, and teen programs
- To participate in the 4-H Youth Development Advisory Council

Recommendation 4.2.2

These regional 4-H youth development program leaders should report directly to the state program leader for youth development and county 4-H program staff would report to their regional 4-H youth development program leader.

The review Team feels this model would be versatile enough to utilize these regional staff to engage faculty and professional staff across the university in the 4-H youth development program and would solicit collaborative projects and generate interest in a variety of program areas outside agriculture. This would support successful growth that would broaden the diversity of the program to successfully address the mission mandates (science, engineering and technology; healthy lifestyles; and citizenship).

The regional 4-H youth development program leader model could be a mechanism to collectively research and address teen attrition trends in the program with local staff and resources from faculty and staff at the university.

Time constraints and funding issues were cited as barriers to participation in staff development trainings. By moving the trainings into the regions and under the leadership of the regional program leaders, there would be less cost in travel and time as well as the opportunity to address topics of greater interest to county staff.

Recommendation 4.2.3

Create an explicit plan and timeline for addressing the disparities between how county positions are funded, the roles they play in programming, and the support for their work.

The review team feels the current differences between locally and state funded county positions, as well as the differences between regions, has led to a lack of clarity about titles, roles, and expectations that is inappropriate and must be addressed. The team encourages consideration of a bold statement of the goal of addressing this with an explicit statement on the direction and nature of the changes to be made and a deadline for doing so successfully.

Increasing the capacity of Science, Engineering, and Technology programming

A major national push has begun to increase the amount of effort directed at SET programming. This is highlighted by recent reports indicating the students in the United States are lagging far behind other developed countries in the preparation of youth to enter these job fields. To assist in correcting this trend, National 4-H has initiated a mission mandate in SET with the goal of reaching 1 million new youth over the next five years. For Pennsylvania 4-H to position itself to assist in this effort (and position Pennsylvania for the future) and therefore, receive substantial potential funding from National 4-H to support the effort, a strong plan of action must be developed. Currently the 4-H program in Pennsylvania lacks a strong SET program outside of the traditional animal and plant science arena (with the exception of the CYFAR project at basically two community sites). Leadership to this curriculum area has been under the direction of the State 4-H leader which has limited the available time to lead this charge.

Recommendation 4.3

Create a full time state professional staff position (non-faculty) to give leadership to this emerging national initiative. Specialized leadership could result in a broader

diversity of SET programming and provide time to link into resources from other science related colleges within the university. This effort has the potential to broaden the image of 4-H, especially in urban and suburban areas. The subject area also carries broad appeal to funders, urban audiences, and employers. It may also open the opportunities for increasing the teen representation in the 4-H program.

FOUNDATION V: ENGAGING CONTENT

The final critical foundation, and one where the review team believes Penn State Cooperative Extension can build on notable strengths, is the development, implementation, and training around integrated, high quality content curriculum that feeds and drives the 4-H program. The ability to access engaging, hands on, age-appropriate, university-developed curriculum content is a strong competitive advantage of the 4-H program that is perhaps underutilized in Pennsylvania outside of the area of animal science area. The recommendations below call for focusing the number of curriculum areas, maintaining the strength of the animal science efforts, and aligning curriculum areas more closely with national 4-H mission mandates.

Pennsylvania 4-H Youth Development currently has ten curriculum management committees that are charged with providing support to major program areas of the current 4-H program. An identified objective for the program is to develop a structure that will allow for the integration of the national mission mandates of Science, Engineering and Technology, Healthy Lifestyles and Citizenship

Curriculum Management and Mission Mandates

Pennsylvania 4-H Youth Development currently has ten curriculum management committees that are charged with providing support to major program areas of the current 4-H program. An identified objective for the program is to develop a structure that will allow for the integration of the national mission mandates of Science, Engineering and Technology, Healthy Lifestyles and Citizenship.

Recommendation 5.1

The Review Committee recommends that the existing Curriculum Management Committees be reorganized into the following four committees: Animal Science; Science, Engineering and Technology; Healthy Lifestyles; and Citizenship. This approach will allow county 4-H educators to present program opportunities to potential new audiences and partners under the umbrella of broader youth development concepts and deemphasize the project focus of current programming efforts. Restructuring from ten committees to four will also allow for more efficiency in the management of the curriculum development process by current staff.

Recommendation 5.2

The Review Team would not recommend changing the structure or function of the animal science group unless there are reasons for doing so that were not apparent during the review process. The current Animal Science Curriculum Management committee appears to be well functioning and provides support for a very significant

component of the existing 4-H program. Participation in animal science related projects currently accounts for 63% of youth participation in Pennsylvania 4-H. There appears to be strong faculty, department, educator and volunteer support for this committee and.

Recommendation 5.3

We do, however, recommend that the remaining curriculum management committees be consolidated under the mission mandate headings in the following ways:

- Science, Engineering and Technology would include the current Science and Technology and Environmental Education & Earth Sciences committees. Overall leadership for this committee would be provided by the new staff person responsible for SET programming.
- Healthy Lifestyles would be restructured to include the current Consumer and Family Sciences and Healthy Lifestyles Education committees.
- The current International and Diversity, Communications & Expressive Arts, Intergenerational and Citizenship & Civic Education Curriculum Management committees would be combined into a Citizenship Curriculum Management Committee.

Recommendation 5.4

A major thread throughout all 4-H curriculum development efforts should be leadership, life skills and youth development. The Review Team strongly recommends that these topics be integrated into efforts of all of the committees and made an intentional part of programming efforts. This should include an explicit description and strategies for enhancing youth engagement with the materials and opportunities for youth to lead.

Additional Issues and Recommendations

Staff and Professional Development

The lack of structure and strategies for staff and professional development and the freedom of individuals to choose among too many competing offerings is problematic for developing and leading the 4-H program.

Recommendation 6.1.1

A larger portion of in-service weeks should be dedicated to program area core staff development.

Recommendation 6.1.2

A clearly identified and articulated set of competencies related to youth development and 4-H program development that all 4-H educators and staff are expected to possess should be developed.

Recommendation 6.1.3

We recommend that Extension require and find ways to support attendance by all county staff with major 4-H program responsibilities at either new staff development opportunities or the changed use of in-service.

Opportunities for Preparation of Youth Development Workers

Throughout our visit we heard about exploring ways to make local Extension professionals recognized and credible youth development experts outside the scope of just the 4-H program. Based on individual review team members own experiences, particularly in Minnesota and Illinois, we make the following additional recommendations.

Recommendation 6.2.1

Explore the role Extension could and should play statewide or in specific areas such as Philadelphia in the preparation, training, support, and credentialing of youth workers around the state in the growing fields of school-based care, afterschool programs, and recreation and youth programs of various types which use a youth development approach. There is a new energy and national movement lead by the *Next Generation Youth Work Coalition* (in which both USDA CSREES and National 4-H Council are members with dedicated staff) to develop the workforce for youth programs in the 21st century. Some states, including Pennsylvania, are already working on ways to create career pathways for youth workers both with and across organizations and communities – pathways that have incentives for professionalizing the workforce. Penn State University, and specifically Extension and the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education (e.g., the masters in youth and family education, applied youth development course, established partnership with Mott Statewide Afterschool network), could be well positioned in this larger effort to support for youth development in Pennsylvania. Often these efforts involve a continuum of community-based, non-credit offerings up through and including a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs.

Recommendation 6.2.2

If this work with preparing adults to effectively use a youth development approach is likely to become a significant part of the Extension youth development portfolio, think carefully about the use of the 4-H brand in this work. Experience in Minnesota and some other states suggest it is hard to brand this work as 4-H rather than by the broader label of youth development or youth work. Unfortunately branding such work as 4-H makes people believe it is only for people doing 4-H programs and that both limits the customer base and decreases the visibility and value of the University brand. It is this experience and caution around using the brand or effort to expand the meaning of the brand beyond stereo types of it as a specific program for youth or only one for rural youth that has lead us to frequently use dual references periodically to youth development vs. 4-H youth development in position titles, unit titles, and such). These efforts should minimally be united under Extension's youth development work as should 4-H programs that work directly with youth. The market for this type of program work with the adults who run youth programs is significant, just emerging, especially strong in urban areas, and plays well to Penn State's strengths in prevention, youth development, resiliency, and

the type of adult education programming out in the state that Extension often does. It is also an area where private foundations and businesses see value in funding as part of a change effort since they, often better than non-profit programs, see the relationship between quality and impact and between quality programs and a quality staff. National 4-H efforts around the PRKC and Extension work in other states are strengths to build on here.

Recommendation 6.2.3

Explore the value of positioning Extension to build a field of youth development that bridges research into policy, program, practice and public understanding using visible public symposium, white paper series, and other efforts to make bridging resources available. Although Extension is widely known for its ability to apply research to important issues and has built fields of knowledge around this expertise, it is less well known for its research and field building efforts in youth development. Instead, it is more widely known for the 4-H program it runs with youth and whose research base is more often around the content delivered than the youth development approach and outcomes that are most relevant to this emerging applied field of development. Just as in the recommendation above, position of Extension and the University's outreach efforts in this area could benefit from a broader label of the program area as youth development rather than 4-H youth development. None of these recommendations change the need to directly and fully support the other recommendations in this report as a higher priority. They are just intended to round out those recommendations with important possible strategic positioning efforts that may slightly change the labels and branding in selected areas.

Retention of Teens

The Review Team did not have adequate time to explore the issues regarding teen involvement and retention or the role of the new position.

Recommendation 6.3.1

This issue should be clarified in the forthcoming strategic plan and effectively communicated - especially to county level staff.

Recommendation 6.3.2

Work in this area should be more data driven and possibly broadened in nature to include youth leadership.

Engaging Faculty and Staff Across the University

The success of the 4-H program historically and in the future is strongly connected to structures that remove barriers or provide effective ways to engage faculty from around the University in program development, delivery, and research

Recommendation 6.4.1

The Review Team believes that the youth development efforts of Extension of the future would be better positioned in the broader context of University outreach rather than exclusively in the College of Agriculture – especially given the essential absence

of youth and youth development in the college's strategic plan and the strengths in colleges like Health and Human Development

Diversity

Given the complexity and importance of issues in this area from the diversity of the staff to the diversity of participants to cultural sensitivity and multicultural respect, the Review Team is unable to determine useful recommendations beyond the need for more explicit attention to this area in the strategic plan than is currently evident.

Final Comments

The Review Team appreciates the opportunity to learn from and dialogue with the quality leaders, faculty and professional staff involved with the Pennsylvania 4-H Youth Development Program. The team hopes this report will stimulate and support the changes and investments needed to ensure a bright future for Pennsylvania youth.