



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Snohomish County 4-H

Strategic Plan

2020-2023

Executive Summary

Introduction. Snohomish County 4-H conducted a needs assessment in 2019 in order to collect information about Snohomish County youth and families, as well as information specific to Snohomish County 4-H program participants and volunteers. The information collected was used to inform strategic goals and objectives that will guide programming decisions through 2023. This executive summary provides a brief description of the community needs as well as the strategic initiatives developed as a result of that study. For the complete report, please refer to the Snohomish County 4-H Strategic Plan - 2020-2023.

Summary of Community Needs. The needs identified in Snohomish County focused primarily around youth, as 4-H is a youth development organization. The primary sources of information were the Washington Healthy Youth Survey, the Snohomish County Health District, and the U.S. Census. The identified needs were grouped into four main categories: Youth Mental Health, Youth Substance Use, Youth Physical Activity, and Youth Protective Factors. A brief summary of findings in each of the categories is below:

Youth Mental Health (2018 Washington Healthy Youth Survey)

- 31% of 8th graders, 38% of 10th graders, and 44% of 12th graders reported depressive feelings
- 18% of 8th graders, 22% of 10th graders, and 26% of 12th graders considered attempting suicide in the past year
- 14% of 8th graders, 16% of 10th graders, and 20% of 12th graders reported making a suicide plan in the past year
- Mental health outcomes have generally been getting worse since 2008

Substance Use (2018 Washington Healthy Youth Survey)

- Recent use of vapor products is on the rise for youth
- 10% of youth reported using vapor products in 2018 compared to 7% in 2016

Youth Physical Health (2018 Washington Healthy Youth Survey)

- Majority of youth are not meeting physical activity recommendations (60+ minutes per day) and have reported 3+ hours a day of screen time
- 74% of 6th graders, 75% of 8th graders, 78% of 10th graders, and 79% of 12th graders are not meeting the recommended daily physical activity
- 55% of 6th graders, 61% of 8th graders, 63% of 10th graders, and 61% of 12th graders report 3 or more hours of screen time per day

Summary of Snohomish County 4-H Needs. Snohomish County 4-H's specific needs were explored in a variety of ways. First, office procedures and staff positions were analyzed. Second, volunteer program leaders were interviewed as a part of an annual program review process. Third, feedback was solicited from adult volunteers and family members via a focus group

session and an annual survey. A summary of the needs discovered through this process is below.

Office Needs:

- 4-H staff position roles and responsibilities, workload, and volunteer responsibilities are unclear and in flux due to the level of turnover in the 4-H office.
- Office budget and spending priorities are not clear and need to be developed to address current programmatic needs.
- Physical resources are abundant but not all are current or relevant – a plan needs to be developed to address the replacement and organization of resources to better meet the needs of the 4-H community.

4-H Program:

- Volunteers report a desire to receive consistent, clear, professional, and welcoming communication, in written, electronic, and face-to-face interactions with office staff.
- Volunteers and 4-H families report confusion with program requirements and Fair participation eligibility, inconsistencies between programs and projects, and confusion around 4-H policies and procedures.
- Program leaders and 4-H volunteers and families report a desire to grow 4-H programs (increase enrollment and attendance), with a special emphasis on diversifying the youth and volunteer members.
- Volunteers report a desire for training in the following areas: managing conflict, including youth with special needs in program activities, ensuring inclusive environments for all youth, handling challenging behaviors, and involving youth in decision-making and planning processes.
- Volunteers and parents/guardians report that youth need more voice in the program, genuine leadership opportunities, and access to training on specific skills (such as career readiness and college readiness, as well as peer support, mental health, and bullying).

While these needs are not all-inclusive, they are those that came up multiple times during the data collection process, indicating that they are the most pressing in the community. The information presented above was used to develop the following broad goals and more specific objectives that will guide programming priorities over the next three years.

2020-2023 Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Improve electronic, in-person, and print communication with volunteers and community.

- Objective 1: Increase Snohomish County 4-H exposure to local, state, and national audiences via publications, articles, and social media posts.
- Objective 2: Increase availability and visibility of 4-H faculty and staff to volunteers and clubs via meeting attendance, clear and consistent office hours, and method of reaching staff outside of office hours during large or out-of-state events.
- Objective 3: Standardize and improve written and electronic communication methods between office, programs, clubs, and projects.

Goal 2: Increase engagement and recruitment of diverse volunteers, youth, and community partners.

- Objective 1: Recruit and retain volunteers from diverse backgrounds.
- Objective 2: Improve the perception of inclusive environment for all participants by providing training on use of materials designed to foster physically inclusive spaces (signage, disability resources, etc.).
- Objective 3: Engage with community partners whose mission is to increase diversity and inclusion in order to form partnership and recruit/retain volunteers.

Goal 3: Grow the 4-H volunteer pool and strategically evaluate and improve the volunteer training program currently in existence.

- Objective 1: Offer training to volunteers on youth leadership and Positive Youth Development to increase the use of these strategies at the club/project level.
- Objective 2: Analyze current workshops and trainings and determine if they are (1) perceived as valuable, and (2) align with volunteer needs, other goals, and current research.
- Objective 3: Utilizing existing data and established research to create a training plan that aligns volunteer continuing education workshops with (1) program/club needs, (2) skills that volunteers can use outside of 4-H, and (3) skills that address the broader community

needs including youth mental health, substance use (especially vaping products), college/career readiness, and physical health.

- Objective 4: Develop a training evaluation plan to measure workshop reaction, learning, behavior change, and results at the club/program level.

Goal 4: Grow and strengthen Snohomish County 4-H/community partners and outreach activities.

- Objective 1: Establish and track a list of community partners that can help further the goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan.
- Objective 2: Develop workshops that can appeal to community partners to give back and spread Positive Youth Development techniques.
- Objective 3: Create a list of annual outreach activities and develop a plan to regularly attend events.

Goal 5: Improve youth development educational, leadership, and college/future preparedness offerings.

- Objective 1: Develop a youth advisory committee that will advise the Snohomish County 4-H faculty and staff on youth priorities, and will help plan educational, leadership, and experiential activities.
- Objective 2: Provide workshops and trainings for youth at the county level that focus on specified priorities and that help to increase college and career readiness.
- Objective 3: Explore the development of programs and curriculum that link current 4-H activities to future careers options.
- Objective 4: Develop a program that connects youth to professionals in a variety of careers to expose them to options after high school.

Goal 6: Develop and implement a spending plan, revenue generation plan, and reporting process.

- Objective 1: Evaluate spending from previous 3 years and create a report and dashboard designed to understand and communicate income and expense distribution.
- Objective 2: Using volunteer and youth feedback, create a budget with spending priorities that align with program needs and strategic initiatives.

- Objective 3: Create a budget tracking sheet that will feed into a public dashboard that will be available to volunteers and community members.

Goal 7: Build a data collection, analysis, and reporting plan that will tell the Snohomish County 4-H story.

- Objective 1: Evaluate current data sources and methods of data collection and combine into one useable data source.
- Objective 2: Evaluate 4-H (county) measures that are important for strategic planning, program planning and delivery, reporting to community partners, evaluation activities, and fiscal planning, and create a data management and reporting plan based on results.
- Objective 3: Create a long-term data management plan with goals and objectives for the next 5 years.
- Objective 4: Create dashboards for common metrics, including enrollment, youth and volunteer retention, workshop attendance, workshop evaluation, and fiscal data.

Goal 8: Strategically plan and improve the office environment for volunteers, youth, and public.

- Objective 1: Create a plan for a welcoming environment by manipulating physical space, providing comfort items, and access to items needed to facilitate a meeting or discussion with volunteers, youth, or public.
- Objective 2: Develop, clarify, and train staff on a “customer service” approach to handling all volunteer, youth, and community communications that emphasizes service and professionalism.