



Engaging Youth, Serving Community

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A Rural Youth Development Project

USDA-CSREES
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Year 4 Final Evaluation Report

Report submitted by

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Evaluation of Project Outcomes

This report provides a summary of evaluative efforts from year 4 of the Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC) project. The report reflects data collected from 14 state projects: Arkansas, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas – Texas A&M, Texas – Prairie View, and Wisconsin.

The following outcomes are addressed in this report:

1. Youth and adults will gain skills, experience, confidence needed to emerge as effective leaders of society.
2. Community leaders will demonstrate more positive attitudes about youth being actively involved
3. Projects will reflect the diversity of the communities.
4. Communities will see an increase in opportunities for youth to be involved in positive youth development as a result of the projects.
5. Project participants will show an increased commitment to the community as a result of the project.

Outcome 1 as described here is considered a short-term outcome in the project logic model. Outcomes 2 through 5 are considered medium-term outcomes.

In this section, the procedures used to collect information regarding these outcomes are presented first, followed by a presentation of the findings for the outcomes.

Procedures

Outcome 1 was assessed using the following measures:

- a. For youth and adult participants, skills, experience and confidence were measured using a post-then-pre instrument originally developed as part of the revised version of the self-report Personal Skill Assessment Guide in the 4-H Curriculum, Leadership Skills You Never Outgrow, Book III and revised by Blackwell (1990). During a pilot test using 4-H members, Blackwell estimated the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha at .9457. A correlational procedure was used to establish construct validity for the instrument. Scores on the instrument can range from 0 to 45. The instrument is recognized as a suitable measure of general leadership skills (see e.g., Newman, Holder, & Wilkinson, 2006).
- b. Activities were measured using several questions added to the Blackwell instrument. These questions were based on instruments from Seevers and Dormody (1995) and Mueller (1989).
- c. Efforts of youth and volunteers (4-H Clubs started and hours worked) were measured using the USDA output reports which are summarized in the following section.

Outcomes 2 through 5 were assessed using the state outcome instrument. This instrument simply asked participants to indicate whether they accomplished the outcomes as stated in the project proposals and to provide details through comments about their results.

Findings: Youth/Adult Leadership Skills and Activities (Outcome 1)

Youth and adults who participated on leadership teams at the state or local level reported their leadership skills from before and after the EYSC project using a post-then-pre questionnaire. On each of the 16 questions, the youth/adults consistently reported an increase in skill levels after the project. On the questionnaire as a whole, the results went from a mean of 1.68 on a 3-point scale to a mean of 2.25. This result was statistically significant at the .001 level. The results for each question are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *Leadership Skills Post-then-Pre Questionnaire Results*
(Scale: 0 = no ability; 1 = some ability; 2 = good ability; 3 = excellent ability.)

Question	Responses	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean
1. I can organize a group activity	510	1.55	2.19
2. I can organize information	510	1.78	2.30
3. I can establish time use priorities	510	1.53	2.07
4. I can lead group discussions	510	1.53	2.18
5. I can evaluate programs	510	1.39	1.99
6. I can work as a team member	510	2.15	2.65
7. I can speak before a group	510	1.67	2.29
8. I can keep written records	510	1.54	2.07
9. I can see things objectively	510	1.67	2.18
10. I follow a process to make decisions	510	1.62	2.21
11. I can plan programs	510	1.53	2.18
12. I can identify resources	510	1.50	2.08
13. I can share new ideas with others	510	1.97	2.50
14. I can teach others	510	1.78	2.33
15. I can meet with others	510	2.05	2.55
16. I can relate to people from other cultures and backgrounds	510	1.69	2.21
Overall		1.68	2.25

Note: *t*-test probability < 0.001 (pretest and posttest means are significantly different).

The leadership skills questionnaire also had five questions related to the activities of the youth and adults during the project. A high percentage of youth/adults reported participating in the major activities of the project. The percentage of respondents indicating they agreed or strongly agreed with the activity statements ranged from 80% to 95.9%. Specific results for each question are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Leadership Activities Questionnaire Frequencies of Responses*

Question	Responses	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Percent A or SA*
17. I taught others	509	15	59	301	134	85.5
18. I acted as a mentor to others	509	9	80	294	126	82.5
19. I planned learning activities	509	18	82	275	134	80.4
20. I am more confident in helping others	509	2	19	266	222	95.9
21. I am more confident in myself overall	509	2	26	239	240	94.5

* Percent of respondents reporting “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Findings: Community Outcomes (Outcomes 2 through 5)

Each of the 55 project sites was asked to select four individuals to complete the project outcomes questionnaire: one adult and one youth from the leadership team, and one adult who participated but was not on the leadership team, and one parent of a youth participant who was not on the leadership team, for a total of 220 possible respondents. A total of 122 people responded, although some respondents did not answer every question.

The project outcomes questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding the community sites’ accomplishment of the medium-term outcomes (Outcomes 2 through 5) provided in the project logic model. These outcomes are expected to become evident in the second and third years of the project. Results for this year, while encouraging, should be considered preliminary.

The results indicated that the sites accomplished the medium-term outcomes of the project at a high rate. For the six outcomes expected in the project, the rates of accomplishment ranged from a low of 80% (Has the project reflected the diversity of the community?) to a high of 97% (Did the youth and adult leaders apply leadership skills from their training to local situations?). Specific results for each question are given in Table 3.

In addition to the answers to the yes/no questions, respondents were asked to make comments or give examples to show how the outcomes were met. In most cases where the answer to an outcome question was no, the project sites identified the problem(s) and possible solutions to implement next year to try to improve the result. These qualitative results, as well as the examples given by sites that were successful, will be useful to help all sites accomplish these outcomes in future years.

Table 3. *Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Project Outcomes Questions*

Question	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Have community leaders demonstrated more positive attitudes about youth being actively involved in leadership roles in the community?	104	85	18	15
Has the project reflected the diversity of the community?	92	79	25	21
Has the community seen an increase in opportunities for youth to be involved in positive youth development activities as a result of the project?	96	83	20	17
Have project participants (youth and adults) shown an increased commitment to the community as a result of the project?	108	92	10	8
Did youth and adults learn how to identify community issues and assets while participating in the project?	105	89	13	11
Did the youth and adult leaders apply leadership skills from their training to local situations?	108	97	3	3

Have community leaders demonstrated more positive attitudes about youth being actively involved in leadership roles in the community?

With 85% of youth and adult respondents answering yes to this question, it is clear that changes in communities are happening. Terms such as routinely asked, involved, trusted, accepting, listened to, valued, empowered were listed in the responses. Time was the only factor given for answering no to the question.

Has the project reflected the diversity of the community?

Even though 79% of respondents answered yes to this question, it was obvious that reaching diversity was difficult. Many strong efforts were made but in part diversity was not an issue due to the homogenous populations on some of the communities. Efforts to include Hispanic and Native American audiences were identified. In one county, it was an almost 100 % Hispanic population being worked with on this project. Partnering with schools helped to reflect the diversity of the communities.

Has the community seen an increase in opportunities for youth to be involved in positive youth development activities as a result of the project?

Eighty-three percent of the respondents answered positively to this question. An impressive number of programs were listed as results of the project. Key phrases included collaboration and joint programs. Programs centered around recreation, governing groups, camps, suicide, youth employment, adolescent sexuality, arts, alcohol and drug prevention/abstinence, school leadership, character education, foster children and health and fitness.

Have project participants (youth and adults) shown an increased commitment to the community as a result of the project?

Clearly, respondents felt almost total commitment to their communities as a result of this project with 92% answering yes to the question. Respondents indicated that youth are taking more initiative, serving beyond their traditional 4-H club programs, and working with more schools groups. They are helping other youth (younger) to be prepared for leadership. One adult recorded that “Youth, once given the ability to express their ideas in a safe environment, are much more willing to participate in committees that involve activities that affect them and are willing to share their opinions”. Furthermore the youth feel empowered. Another adult reported that youth “...have more awareness of the strengths of their community, as well as where they best can share their strengths”

Did youth and adults learn how to identify community issues and assets while participating in the project?

Eighty-nine percent of the youth and adults felt strongly that the training received from the national team enabled them to replicate the same efforts in their communities. One adult stated that their largest challenge was “keeping the lines of communication open between youth and adults and making sure that youth ideas are heard.” The following statement best summarizes the comments: “At the training, the youth learned how to identify community issues and assets. They were able to put these into action at the community forum. The youth learned to conduct a forum and the value of participating.”

Did the youth and adult leaders apply leadership skills from their training to local situations?

Finally the last question found the largest agreement (97% indicating yes to the question). It is very clear that the youth have applied the skills learned and are continuing to do so in many other venues. One adult reported, “Youth are better able to establish an agenda or logic model for meetings and projects. They are better able to organize their thoughts and turn them into action. Along with this, their public speaking skills, decision-making skills and sense of engagement in their communities have increased.”

Summary of Outcome Evaluation

The project was very successful in all three areas evaluated: 1) youth and adults on the leadership teams improved their leadership skills; 2) youth and adults on the leadership teams participated at a high level in leadership activities; and 3) project sites reporting a very high level of accomplishing the state outcomes of the project.

Evaluation of Project Outputs

This section contains a compilation of efforts reported by 14 state projects and 55 individual community action plans. The information is described in the following categories: volunteer efforts; collaborations; leveraged funds; race, sex and ethnicity of participants; youth outcomes; and community issues.

Volunteer Efforts

A significant contribution was made to the project via volunteer efforts, with a total of 3,365 participants. These efforts were provided by three groups of volunteers: salaried staff, adult volunteers, and youth volunteers. The number of volunteers by category, hours worked, and value are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Volunteer Efforts Contributed to EYSC*

Type of Volunteer Effort	Number	Hours	Value
Salaried Staff - No Grant Funds	145	7,931	\$194,428
Salaried Staff - Excess Time	17	3,747	53,003
Adult Volunteers-Intensive	272 (241)	8,823 (9,124)	161,187 (\$160,126)
Adult Volunteers-Non Intensive	638 (601)	6,294 (6,697)	111,248 (\$117,006)
Youth Volunteers-Intensive	692 (688)	23,305 (41,169)	399,884 (\$722,516)
Youth Volunteers-Non Intensive	1,601 (3,654)	17,552 (113,987)	314,452 (\$2,000,472)
Totals	3,365 (5,414)	67,651 (181,951)	\$1,234,202 \$3,247,551)

Collaborations

Of the 55 local sites reporting, 47 reported the establishment of collaborations with other agencies and organizations. A total of 104 government agencies and 165 non-governmental organizations participated. These collaborations involved 1,086 youth and 926 adults.

Leveraged Funds

Community sites used EYSC funds to leverage other resources, both in real dollars and in-kind sources. A total of \$64,423 was reported in cash and grants. In-kind contributions of building space, transportation, supplies, and food were reported in the amount of \$97,234.

Race, Sex and Ethnicity of Participants

Outcome reports grouped participants by race, sex, and ethnicity. Of the 3,698 participants identified in the reports, 545 (14.7%) were Latino and 3,153 (85.3%) were non-Latino. States reported a total of 1,444 youth participants that had not previously been in a 4-H program. Table 5 contains a breakdown of participants by the categories.

Table 5. *Race, Sex and Ethnicity of Participants by Type/Level of Participation*

Type/Level of Participation	White		Black		American Indian		Asian		Pacific Islander		Multiple Races		Undetermined	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Youth-Intensive	212	286	20	25	20	31	0	3	0	0	2	2	1	0
Youth-Non Intensive	770	980	108	150	37	44	5	12	1	0	28	31	34	42
Adults	138	389	37	44	23	90	0	0	0	1	7	28	0	0
Totals	1,120	1,655	165	219	80	165	5	15	1	1	37	61	35	42

Youth Activities

States reported activity by 1,443 youth in leadership roles in their clubs and communities. Youth spent 30,990 hours serving in these roles. The specific numbers and categories of service are provided in Table 6.

Table 6. *Youth Leadership/Service Activities by Number and Hours Spent*

Type of Activity	Number of Youth	Hours Spent
Planning, Delivering, & Evaluating Sessions	1,036	27,255
Leadership Roles in 4-H Organization	249	2,564
Leadership Roles in Other Community Organizations	158	1,171

Community Issues

States identified 118 community issues during this project. Project participants acted on and resolved 47 of these issues. Sites were in various stages of progress on 60 of the issues, but had not completed work on them. On 11 of the issues, community sites determined that projects were not likely to resolve the issue satisfactorily.

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