

Lead To Change at Ignite by 4-H 2026

Project Guide

What Is Lead To Change?

Lead to Change is a community action planning platform and grant funding opportunity that supports individual teens, groups or clubs in bringing their ideas for change to life. Projects span topic areas from agriculture, civic engagement, healthy living, STEM, to leadership, sharing a common goal: empowering youth to identify community needs and lead positive change. The program fosters confidence, collaboration, and problem-solving skills in the next generation of Beyond Ready Leaders.

Lead To Change is a launch pad that helps you build the skills, stories, and impact needed to take your leadership to the next level. Many participants go on to opportunities such as Youth in Action, Workshop Leader roles at Ignite by 4-H, and other National 4-H Council leadership experiences.

Food For All

National Lead To Change Winner, 2025

In 2023 Aya from Fort Collins, Colorado, launched "Food for All" after winning a Lead To Change implementation grant. Her project created pop-up food stands offering free, healthy food to residents, designed to reduce food insecurity and food waste. Today, her project has continued and won a combined $10,000 in grant funding.

Program Overview

After identifying a community issue, you will create a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based) **plan for implementation considering relevant partners to engage, local impact they hope to create, and how they will measure impact.** To bring great ideas to life, selected projects receive $2,000 implementation grants and qualification to apply for additional funding. Teams also receive national recognition to celebrate their leadership and initiative.

Lead to Change projects move through up to **three funding rounds**, allowing teams to grow their ideas, deepen their impact, and sustain their work over time.

Round 1: Implementation Grant- $2,000
After Ignite, you'll lay the foundation for your community impact project and receive feedback through the Lead To Change Gallery Viewing. Following the event, you're encouraged to apply for the $2,000 Implementation Grant to launch your project. This funding helps support early project costs such as supplies, materials, outreach, and program delivery.

Who Can Apply: Any teen or group of teens with an idea for a community action plan.
Deadline: May 15 & September 15

Round 2: Expansion Grant- Additional $3,000
Those teams and individuals who received the Implementation Grant are then invited to apply for the Expansion Grant, which provides an additional $3,000. This round supports projects that are ready to grow by reaching more people, expanding activities, or strengthening partnerships.

Who Can Apply: Any teen or team who received the Implementation Grant
Deadline: December 15

Round 3: Sustainability Grant- Additional $5,000
The Sustainability Grant provides an additional $5,000 to support projects that are ready to continue beyond the initial funding period. This funding focuses on long-term planning, sustainability strategies, and scaling impact within the community.

There is no separate application for the Sustainability Grant. Individuals or teams who receive the Expansion Grant are invited to deliver a project pitch during the Lead to Change Finals at Ignite. Ignite attendees vote for their favorite project pitch through the Ignite app at the conclusion of the Finals, and the team with the most votes is awarded the Sustainability Grant.

Before Ignite

Before joining us at Ignite, think about these questions- either on your own or with your team. It will help you hit the ground running when it's time to work on your poster and plan during the event. **These questions are meant to spark ideas for a community project you'd like to tackle!** Remember, there are no right answers to these questions. However,

thinking about your answers will help you envision a project that you'll develop further at Ignite and successfully bring to life when you return home.

About You

- What are things you like and are passionate about? What gets you excited and fired up?
- What are your strengths? What are you really good at?
- Who do you know that you might be able to influence to be a part of a change project?
- What are things you want to learn about or learn to do?
- What about your background, experience or life make you a natural advocate or champion for change?

About Your Community

- What are you proud of in your community? What needs to change?
- What is a specific issue or problem where you could help make positive change?
- Who are the leaders and decision-makers that you will need to influence? How do you get their attention?
- Who in your community might be able and willing to assist you?

Youth: Before Ignite, talk with your lead chaperone or adult mentor about your ideas. They can help you think through team possibilities, community connections, and how your project might take shape during Ignite and beyond.

Lead Chaperones: Before arriving at Ignite, establish how your delegation will participate in Lead to Change. Support collaboration by grouping young people by geographic area or shared topic interests, or by supporting individuals who are passionate about leading their own project. While there is no formal limit to team size, ensure that every participant has a clear role to play.

Lead To Change at Ignite by 4-H

Your Lead to Change experience begins at Ignite by 4-H with the **Lead to Change Kick-Off**. During this session, the Ignite Design Team and a former Lead to Change participant will walk you through the experience, share expectations, and offer tips for success.

Throughout the week, you'll participate in dedicated **Lead to Change Planning Time** with the support of your Lead Chaperone. You'll use this time to collaborate, refine your idea, and create a poster and short pitch that clearly communicate your project plan.

As the weekend comes to a close, you'll share your ideas during the **Lead to Change Gallery Viewing**, where you'll receive feedback, learn from other teams, and gather inspiration. When you return home, you'll refine your plan using the feedback you received and apply for the $2,000 **Implementation Grant** to bring your project to life.

During Ignite- Project Planning & Poster Creation

At Ignite, unleash your creativity! Dedicated **Lead To Change** planning time is built into the schedule throughout the event. You should come prepared and ready to collaborate, plan, and move your ideas forward. Lead Chaperones are encouraged to be intentional in supporting this planning time.

You will work individually or as a team to create a poster and a short presentation (1-2 minutes) for the Lead to Change Gallery Viewing. During the Gallery Viewing, you will use the poster to discuss your project plan, gather feedback from others and see what other teams are developing.

Posters should include the following:

- **Project Title:** Make sure to include the official name of your Land Grand University in your Title
- **Your Idea:** Give a one-sentence description of your project, what problem are you trying to solve? Try to make it as concise and clear as possible.
- **Your Goals and Objectives:** What do you want to accomplish?
- **Target Audience:** Who do you want to reach with your project or who will benefit from your project?
- **Data:** What data do you have to suggest that the thing you want to address is a problem that needs to be solved?
- **Plan:** What are the first steps you will take when you get home to get started? Who else do you need on your team?

During Ignite- Gallery Viewing

On Saturday, March 28, you and your team will participate in the **Lead to Change Gallery Viewing**. Teams will set up their posters and take turns sharing their ideas. Some team members will stay with the poster to pitch the project and gather feedback, while others rotate through the gallery to explore projects, ask questions, offer input and spark new ideas to incorporate into your project. This flexible format encourages collaboration, idea-sharing, and inspiration across teams.

After Ignite- Apply for the Implementation Grant

After Ignite, you will refine your project plan using the feedback you received and apply for the **$2,000 Lead to Change Implementation Grant.** This funding helps support the launch and execution of projects when teams return home.

The application builds on your poster and includes expanded questions about your budget, team roles, and community partners. **The application is available online** at www.4-h/org/lead-to-change.

The application is open on a rolling basis, meaning projects may be submitted at any time. Applications are reviewed twice a year, with **deadlines on May 15 and September 15.** Your application will be reviewed at the closest upcoming deadline, and you should expect to hear back within about one month after the review.

If your project receives an Implementation Grant, you will have one year to complete your project and will be invited to apply for the **Expansion Grant** for an additional $3,000 by December 15, 2026. Expansion Grant recipients will be invited to participate in the **Lead to Change Finals** at Ignite 2027, where teams compete for an additional $5,000.

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