Beyond Ready

2026 National 4-H Leadership Meeting

Westin San Antonio Riverwalk, San Antonio, TX



AGENDA

DAY 1

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

1:00 – 5:00 pm	**Optional Pre-Meeting Activities:**	*Madero*
1:00 – 3:30 pm	**Enhancing 4-H Reach & Resources through AI** **Alexa Groff**, *National 4-H AI Specialist, Iowa State University* **Rachel Hasleby**, *Computer Science and AI Specialist, Purdue University* **Mark Light**, *4-H STEM Specialist, North Carolina A&T University* **Rukeia Draw, Ph.D.**, *Executive Director, ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee and 4-H Program Leaders Working Group (PLWG)* This session equips program and foundation leaders to use generative AI in ways that are fun, creative and productive to enhance statewide youth development, communications, fundraising, and strategic operations. It also increases their awareness of AI contacts, resources and initiatives in 4-H and the Cooperative Extension System.	
4:00 – 5:00 pm	**Leading 4-H Forward – A Mentorship Workshop for New and Aspiring 4-H Program Leaders** Facilitated by: **Matthew Newman**, *Department Chair/4-H State Program Leader, Rutgers University* Explore strategies for navigating leadership challenges, alongside a panel of seasoned program leaders and peers. Participants will come away with new connections, resources and insights to support their leadership journey.	
4:30 – 6:00 pm	Meeting Registration	*Goraz Foyer*
6:00 – 8:00 pm	Welcome Reception Kick off your 2026 National 4-H Leadership Meeting experience by connecting with your colleagues from around the country. Heavy appetizers and a "cashless" cash bar will be offered.	*Olivares*

Download the Meeting Resources

Support for this meeting provided by National 4-H Council and the Marcus Foundation.

AGENDA

DAY 2

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 am	Breakfast Buffet	*Navarro B*
7:30 – 8:30 am	Meeting Registration	*Navarro Pre-Function*
8:30 – 9:00 am	**Welcome and Meeting Overview** **Dave Francis, Ph.D.**, *Co-Chair, 4-H PLWG, Extension Youth Development Program Director, Utah State University* **Jeremy Johnson**, *Co-Chair, ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee, Associate Director for Youth and State 4-H Leader, Virginia Tech*	*Navarro A*
9:00 – 10:30 am	**Joint Session & Opening Keynote** **Kathleen deLaski**, *Founder and Board Chair at Education Design Lab*	*Navarro A*
10:30 – 10:45 am	Networking and Refreshment Break	*Navarro Pre-Function*
10:45 am – 12:00 pm	**Joint Session Continues** **From Farm to Future: A Replicable AgriCulinary Career & Workforce Skill Builder Model Connecting Youth to Skilled Trades and Career Pathways** **Nicole Swinson**, *Youth Development Associate Specialist, Virginia State University* **Radelle Reese**, *Chef Instructor/Assistant to the Chair Department of Hospitality Management, Virginia State University* This interactive session presents the AgriCulinary Academy, a land-grant–based youth workforce development ecosystem that connects young people to skilled trades, credentials, and work-based learning through agriculture, culinary arts, and hospitality. Participants will engage in a simulation demonstrating how to recreate the model using Career and Workforce Skill Builders, experiential learning, and strategic partnerships.	*Navarro A*
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch 1890 4-H Program Leaders will meet during this time in the Carranza Room.	*Navarro B & Carranza*

AGENDA

DAY 2

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026 *(continued)*

1:00 – 3:00 pm	**Breakout Sessions:** **4-H Program Leaders - Beyond Ready Initiative Building** Facilitated by: **Lisa Diaz, Ph.D.**, *National 4-H Beyond Ready Director, Sr. Director, Learning Innovations in Workplace Readiness, University of Illinois* **Jennifer Skuza, Ph.D.**, *Associate Dean and Department Head: Department of Youth Development University of Minnesota, ECOP 4-H NC Representative* ● Annual Beyond Read Progress Report and Self Assessment review ● 2026 Beyond Ready Leadership Academy ● Beyond Ready Growth Strategies in focus	*Navarro A*
	Development Executives - Who are We Talking to? **Mike Stefanski**, *President, Aperio Philanthropy* ● Identifying 4-H fans who will be inspired by Beyond Ready ● Strategies for finding more of those fans	*Madero*
3:00 – 3:30 pm	Networking and Refreshment Break	*Navarro Pre-Function*
3:30 – 4:45 pm	**Joint Session: National 4-H Index Study and Public Value Statements** **Jill Lingard, Ph.D.**, *Extension Professor, 4-H Youth Development, University of Nebraska-Lincoln* This session will showcase findings from the 2025 Index Study and allow for collaborative discussion on demonstrating impact to stakeholders.	*Navarro A*
4:45 – 5:00 pm	**Joint Session: Recap and Pulse Check**	*Navarro A*
6:00 pm	Regions' Night Out	

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DAY 3

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 am	Breakfast Buffet	*Navarro B*
7:30 – 8:30 am	4-H Development Executives' Breakfast & Listening Session with Council's Resource Development Team	*Madero*
8:30 – 8:45 am	**Welcome and Day 3 Overview**	*Navarro A*
8:45 – 10:15 am	**Joint Session:** **Mobilizing the Network: 4-H's Tentpole Moments & Alumni Strategy** **Heather Elliott**, *Chief Development and Marketing Officer,* **Natalie Godwin**, *Vice President, Communications, and* **Jake Worcester**, *Vice President, Development, National 4-H Council*	*Navarro A*
10:15 – 10:30 am	Networking and Refreshment Break	*Navarro Pre-Function*
10:30 – 11:45 am	**Breakout Sessions:** **4-H Program Leaders - Internal/External Mobilization Strategies** Facilitated by: **Lisa Diaz, Ph.D.**, *National 4-H Beyond Ready Director, Sr. Director, Learning Innovations in Workplace Readiness, University of Illinois* **Jennifer Skuza, Ph.D.**, *Associate Dean and Department Head: Department of Youth Development University of Minnesota, ECOP 4-H NC Representative* ● Developing your Beyond Ready vision statement and ask	*Navarro A*
	Development Executives - Telling the Story **Mike Stefanski**, *President, Aperio Philanthropy* ● Building a case framework around Beyond Ready that inspires larger gifts and moves donors to action	*Madero*
11:45 am – 12:00 pm	Networking Break	
12:00 – 1:00 pm	**Regional Lunches:**	
	North Central	*Zapata*
	Northeast	*Carranza*
	Southern	*Navarro B*
	Western	*Villa*
	4-H Foundation Executives	*Madero*

AGENDA

DAY 3

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026 *(continued)*

1:00 – 2:30 pm	**Breakout Sessions:** **4-H Program Leaders: Credential Programs Showcase** **ForestryWorks Certification: Make the Forest Your Career** **Chad Niman**, *Forest Products Specialist,* **Laurie Thomas**, *Extension Forester, and* **Ashley Osborne**, *Extension Specialist, State 4-H Office, University of Kentucky* Join UK Forestry and Natural Resources Extension to learn about the national ForestryWorks program which offers industry-recognized high school curricula alongside a range of tools and resources for all ages. Learn how the ForestryWorks program is being implemented in Kentucky to certify teachers, extension agents, and youth. Youth completing the program acquire the ForestWorker Certificate which is recognized by the Kentucky Department of Education and forest industry. **Beyond Ready to Launch: Integrating Drones, AI, and Financial Literacy to Build Credentialed Career Pathways for 4-H Youth** **Richard Whittington,Ph.D.**, *4-H Program Leader/Youth Development & Engagement Specialist, and* **Sheanell Edwards**, *Youth Agent, Tuskegee University* Learn about a promising 4-H program model that integrates drone/UAS training, applied AI tools, and financial literacy to prepare youth for credentialed, work-based learning pathways. Participants will explore a scalable framework aligned with Beyond Ready that strengthens career readiness, retention, and cross-sector partnerships.	*Navarro A*
	Development Executives - Portfolio Management **Mike Stefanski**, *President, Aperio Philanthropy* ● Plan the Work, Work the Plan, Win.	*Madero*
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Networking and Refreshment Break	*Navarro Pre-Function*

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DAY 3

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026 *(continued)*

2:45 – 4:00 pm	**Breakout Sessions:** **4-H Program Leaders - Skilled Trades Showcase: University of New Hampshire Grit to Grow Collaborative** **Kate Korbas, Ph.D.**, *Extension Program Team Leader 4-H Youth Development and Education, University of New Hampshire* **Steve Turner**, *Bring Back the Trades* In response to growing demand for trade career pathways for youth, UNH Extension 4-H launched the NH Grit to Grow Collaborative (G2G), a cross-sector initiative uniting education, industry, and civic leaders to break down silos and expand workforce opportunities. This workshop, co-facilitated with Bring Back the Trades, will share G2G's early successes and provide a blueprint for building partnerships that strengthen trades and beyond.	*Navarro A*
	Development Executives - Donor Strategies **Mike Stefanski**, *President, Aperio Philanthropy* ● Real world strategies for donor interactions	*Madero*
4:15 – 5:00 pm	**Joint Session: Wrap Up and Next Steps** **Jeremy Johnson**, *Co-Chair, ECOP 4-H Leadership Committee, Associate Director for Youth and State 4-H Leader, Virginia Tech*	*Navarro A*

** ECOP 4-H and 4-H PLWG will meet on Thursday, February 26 and Friday, February 27. Agendas for those meetings will be provided by the ECOP 4-H and PLWG Executive Director.