









Beyond Ready

Campaign Message Toolkit

September 2024

Telling the Story

READY...OR NOT?

Our nation's youth are at risk.

It's evident from declining test scores, plummeting mental health, and rising levels of hopelessness that America's largest generation urgently needs help. They are growing up in tumultuous times that are steeped in uncertainty, division, and disconnection. Many of them haven't had the chance to learn and practice foundational life skills. Their future has become a moving target, and they're longing for a clear path ahead; for a reason to believe it's all going to turn out okay.



As the world changes rapidly, young people are bearing the brunt of the unexpected and the unknown. But 4-H has a time-tested solution. Decades of youth development research shows that kids need to be ready at every milestone to succeed in the next. And, if they're simply not ready? This has implications for every aspect of their future – from family life and community involvement to college and career prospects. Our country's future depends on a talent pipeline to solve society's greatest challenges. And our youth depend on us to equip them.

There's still time to turn things around. As the nation's largest youth organization, 4-H has a powerful solution to ensure young people are beyond ready for whatever comes next.

The 4-H Solution

4-H has been around since 1902; so, we've seen a thing or two. The world has changed significantly and yet, our impact on youth has stood the test of time. We have a tried-and-true, research-backed approach to helping kids reach their potential. We tap into the nation's most expansive network of educators and mentors who work with youth daily to teach, equip, and encourage. So, when we tell you that young people need us now more than any other time in our nation's history? You can trust us. And, you can join us.

With our scientifically proven approach to youth development and our unparallelled national network, 4-H is the only youth organization that can tackle this massive challenge. K-12 schools can't do this alone. Our 4-H educators teach youth the skills that traditional classrooms can't always guarantee, like resilience, confidence, adaptability, leadership, and lifelong personal growth. We empower young people to conquer life's obstacles. Our volunteers instill hope, tenacity and positive identity in a generation that is struggling to find belonging and purpose. Our programs offer a place to learn where it's fun to try, okay to fail, and easy to grow.

But our approach to developing young people isn't just anecdotal; it's grounded in science. Kids who participate in 4-H programs are more likely to make healthy choices, serve their communities, and live with purpose. They are 97% more likely to get along with those different than themselves. They have dreams that are fueled by their unique passions and aspirations to lead with intentionality. They are more likely than their non-4-H peers to feel competent, positive, and confident in what the future holds. And with the help of 4-H, 84% have identified a career path before high school graduation.

Our 6 million 4-H'ers are living proof that a Ready Generation is possible.

The 4-H Difference

20 Years of Proven Impact

Tufts University measured the impact of 4-H programming through a 10-year longitudinal study. They compared 4-H youth to their non-participating peers, and then reconnected with those same youth 10 years later to see how 4-H impacted their outlook and outcomes. Finally, researchers replicated the study with current 4-H'ers to measure how 4-H continues to help prepare youth for success in life and career.

4-H Youth Compared to Peers (2001-2011)	Same 4-H Youth Ten Years Later (2021)	Today's 4-H Youth (2021)
10-year longitudinal study of 4-H youth compared to peers	Reconnecting with Youth from the Original Study	Replication of the original Tufts study with today's 4-H'ers
3X more likely to give back to their community	**3X** more likely to participate in community service	**4X** more likely to make a positive contribution to their communities
2X more likely to go on to careers in STEM	**2X** more likely to report living life with intentionality and purpose	**2X** more likely to participate in out-of-school time science programs
2X more likely to make healthy choices	**2X** more likely to have the goal of being a leader	**2X** more likely to make healthier choices
		3X more likely to report in feeling competent
		2X more likely to feel positive about their wellbeing

A Ready Generation

We like to think of 4-H'ers as the "original influencers." Long before the arrival of social media, 4-H youth have been shaping our nation and bringing their peers alongside them. In fact, 4-H was founded on the belief that young people had the ambition, creativity and ability to adopt new ideas so they could tackle society's biggest problems. We have invested in young people for more than 120 years so that our 4-H'ers are well-equipped, our communities are stronger, and our future is brighter.

Of America's 72 million youth ages five to 18, six million of them are healthy, productive, engaged 4-H members. Our bold goal is to reach 10-20% of America's kids (or, approximately 10 million) with our scientifically proven 4-H programs. We believe if 10 million youth can experience the life-changing work of 4-H, we can create a tipping point that has the power to influence behaviors and meaningful outcomes. This is our path to a Ready Generation:

1. **Prepare Teens for Life**
    - Provide national leadership opportunities through events, a teen recognition platform and teen-led content development
    - Expand college and career readiness through unparalleled access to college credentialling, dual-credit programs, and apprenticeships
    - Foster connections and belonging through in-person and online experiences

2. **Invest in 4-H Educators**
    - Train and retain 4-H educators through workforce fundamentals training, on-demand employee orientation, and thought leadership cohorts

- Grow our reach through technology using CLOVER by 4-H – our online learning management system - as an indispensable resource for teachers and mentors

3. **Mobilize Our Unparalleled Network**
    - Create a unifying national initiative that rallies our educators; volunteers; federal, state, and local partners toward growing a Ready Generation
    - Replicate best practices in youth programming, fund development and communications
    - Develop an Innovation Fund to fuel pioneering work in positive youth development
    - Deepen and broaden partnerships at the national, state and local level

The Ready Index

Everything we do has a science behind it, and our approach to building a Ready Generation is no exception.

4-H Common Measures – our program evaluation tool – gathers consistent annual data on participant growth and outcomes by focusing on key areas of leadership, citizenship and life skills. We use standardized surveys and assessments to measure how 4-H involvement impacts youth skill-building and overall well-being. This valuable tool helps us monitor trends, assess program effectiveness, and make informed decisions when changes are necessary. It tells us – without a doubt – if we're moving the needle on positive youth development.

To create a Ready Generation, we need effective programs to reach more youth, and we need to assess the preparedness of these young members for life, college and career. We need to be able to demonstrate that they're entering into adulthood with a clear path, the right skills, and a healthy dose of confidence. The Ready Index will be an annual assessment to evaluate youth readiness as it relates to their health, productivity and engagement.

Above and Beyond

If you want to be ready for anything, you need to start with the basics. We can't reliably prepare kids for the jobs of the future if 85% of them haven't been invented yet. But we can teach skills like adaptability and resilience. We can instill a work ethic and nurture a heart for service. We can give kids opportunities to learn, fail, and lead. Then, when the time comes, they're ready to tackle whatever comes their way.

Research shows that 4-H youth are more ready for life's challenges and opportunities than their non-4-H peers. But we're doing more than just preparing them. 4-H empowers kids to reach their potential and go beyond expectations. By going beyond ready, youth can push past what's expected and imagine what's possible. That's why so many 4-H'ers give back – invest in others, serve their communities, and make a difference larger than themselves.

Beyond Ready is a mindset that sets 4-H'ers apart: they are more than prepared for the workforce, classroom, and life. Imagine the shift in our communities if all kids had what they needed to realize their limitless potential. Envision a world where every young person is ready to tackle whatever life throws their way. We can; and we're beyond ready to make it happen.

Join us. Together, we'll create a Ready Generation so more kids can conquer today's challenges and shape tomorrow's world.

Beyond Ready Word Bank

How do you describe youth who are "Beyond Ready?"

Resilient
Engaged
Versatile
Adaptable
Ambitious
Creative
Innovative
Purposeful
Intentional
Prepared
Healthy
Productive
Flexible
Critical thinkers
Responsible
Authentic

Bring "Beyond Ready" To Life

You want your supporters to be inspired by the 4-H mission, motivated by the case for support, and driven to make a donation. To bring the "Beyond Ready" campaign to life, here's how you can strengthen your messaging and have fruitful conversations with potential donors:

1. **Youth Stories and Anecdotes:** Nothing makes a case for 4-H quite like the stories of our incredible youth. Identify 4-H'ers who are open to sharing their story in detail – zeroing in on the challenges they faced, the obstacles they overcame, and the difference 4-H made in their lives. Incorporate quotes and photos when possible. Showcase their character in a way that leaves no doubt in the donor's mind that 4-H'ers are beyond ready for anything life sends their way.

   Using the story of Georgia 4-H'er Kingston Ryals, here's how you can use a youth's personal story to show what "Beyond Ready" looks like:

   - **Identify the youth's challenge(s):** Kingston struggled with a speech impediment and feared public speaking.
   - **Demonstrate how 4-H provided meaningful skill-development, mentoring and leadership opportunities:** 4-H helped him learn confidence and refine his public speaking skills. He had opportunities to practice leadership, develop courage, and experience true belonging in his 4-H community. His friends and mentors empowered him to push past his fear and enter a speaking competition.
   - **Showcase powerful youth quotes:** "I remember the feeling when they called my name for 2nd place. All my friends were cheering for me, the tears were streaming down my face with a red ribbon around my neck, and my parents telling me they knew I could do it. Georgia 4-H proved to me that I am so much more than I ever thought; this organization showed me the person I wanted to be, and ever since, I have never looked back. Because of that moment, I grew the courage and confidence to become a fearless public speaker."
   - **Celebrate the youth's success:** Today, Kingston is a confident public speaker. He's had the chance to lead workshops for his peers, served as Georgia 4-H's STEM and Civic Engagement speaker, and partnered with his state 4-H leader to teach hundreds of youth at the Georgia State Fair.
   - **Show how the youth went *beyond* and invested in others:** Kingston learned that many of his 8th grade peers didn't know anything about resumes, the SAT, GPAs, or how to apply for colleges or jobs – especially those who were African American like him. He wanted to equip them for a promising future the same way that 4-H prepared him. He founded The ROCK Project, which helps African American youth learn leadership skills and prioritize college and career readiness. Participation in the group grew quickly – from 5 to 40 youth – and his 2023 project group celebrated 100% university enrollment.
   - **Highlight their future aspirations:** Because 4-H instilled in him a passion for civic engagement and a newfound confidence in public speaking, Kingston dreams of one day running for public office.

2. **Proven Results:** Lean into what differentiates 4-H; what makes it special. Not only are we the largest youth development organization, but we're the most capable of affecting change across a generation because of

our expansive network, our partnerships with land-grant universities, and our proven approach to positive youth development. 4-H works; it's science!

3. **Demonstrate Urgency:** The most effective way to inspire a donor to give is to convince them that the problem is *real* and that it needs solved *now.* Use provided evidence of the current challenges facing youth and the mounting concerns for the future. Our Beyond Ready slide deck incorporates plenty of statistics and figures that help paint a picture of what's going on with youth and how 4-H can help.

Calls to Action

ACTION	RESULT
• Donate Today • Donate Now • Join Us • Make a Gift • Give Now	• So more kids can lead the way. • So more kids can take on the world. • So more kids are ready for tomorrow. • So we can create a Ready Generation. • So kids can conquer today's challenges and shape tomorrow's world.

Taglines

- Building a ready generation in a world of change
- Ready then. Ready now. Ready for anything.
- More youth. More community. More ready.
- Ready to lead. Ready to serve. Ready to build. Ready to conquer.
- Be Life Ready. Be Work Ready. Beyond Ready.