



Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Strategic Plan

Approved May 10, 2006

The plan was developed and approved by the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Development Committee. Needs assessment included input from volunteers and extension educators at the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Forum in 2001 and 2003, and meetings of the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Advisory and Development Committees in 2001-2005. There was final review and comments by the Advisory Committee at the state meeting on April 21, 2006. The Development Committee approved the plan on May 10, 2006.

Mission

The Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program helps young people become responsible adults and self-directed, productive, and contributing members of a diverse society by developing life skills through involvement with horses, educational programs, and club activities.

Vision

The vision of the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program is to provide the benefits of the human-horse experience to youth from diverse backgrounds and engage youth in meaningful experiences that will have positive, life long impacts. We strive to help youth develop their potential and acquire skills and knowledge to become responsible, contributing citizens. We seek to prepare youth to become future leaders and participants in the equine industry or their chosen profession. We believe that many of these youth will become active adult volunteers who will continue to share the benefits of 4-H and horse activities with future generations. We strive to develop educated equine owners and professionals who will maintain and grow the equine industry. As a result, these future leaders will maintain a connection with agriculture, support the agricultural economy, help preserve open space, and positively contribute to the quality of life in Pennsylvania and beyond.

Program Overview

The Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program promotes life skill development of youth, knowledge of horsemanship, and responsible, ethical, equine use, care and management. Educational programs and activities facilitate development of vital skills such as leadership, responsibility, decision making, communication, the ability to set and achieve goals, avoidance of negative or risky behavior, and personal safety. All youth, including those from rural, urban and suburban areas, as well as youth at risk, and youth with special needs are embraced within the program and encouraged to succeed. Volunteers, extension and industry professionals cooperate to meet the common objectives of youth development and education. The horse is an effective tool to help youth meet these objectives and become responsible adults.

Goals

Programming should be focused toward the outcomes set forth in these goals. The objectives and strategies to accomplish each of the goals are described separately.

- 1. Increase horsemanship and life skills of 4-H members, through development of safety, horse management, horse handling and riding skills.**
- 2. Increase awareness of 4-H Horse Program opportunities for youth, volunteers, industry professionals, and the general public.**
- 3. Increase the number of members and volunteers in the 4-H Horse Program.**
- 4. Identify and procure additional resources (personnel and/or funding) to maintain and further develop the 4-H Horse Program.**
- 5. Increase involvement of volunteers in the planning and implementation of 4-H horse programs and events.**
- 6. More actively engage youth leaders in planning and conducting 4-H horse programs.**
- 7. Continue to provide high quality educational materials for youth members, volunteers, and industry professionals.**

Goal 1

Increase horsemanship and life skills of 4-H members, through development of safety, horse management, horse handling and riding skills.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Provide a planned progression of skill development for 4-H members, volunteers and professionals to work with project animals in a safe, enjoyable non-competitive program. Additionally, youth and adult participants will develop educational and life skills by working together to increase horsemanship skills and maximize the usefulness of project animals.

- Increase the number of members participating in the horsemanship skills program.
- Increase the number of volunteers trained to be examiners in all levels of the horsemanship skills program.
- Complete horsemanship skills explanation sheets for use by members and examiners.
- Develop horsemanship skills and explanation sheets for members with therapeutic riding projects.
- Develop horsemanship skills and explanation sheets for members with driving projects.
- Develop horsemanship skills and explanation sheets for members with production projects.
- Complete the horse reference manual for members and volunteers.
- Develop and conduct a state Horse Camp to develop horsemanship and life skills of youth, generate revenue, and increase awareness of the 4-H Horse Program.

Goal 2

Increase awareness of 4-H Horse Program opportunities for youth, volunteers, industry professionals, and the general public.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Increase public awareness and support of the 4-H Horse Program and increase involvement of industry professionals in the program.

- Develop a tri-fold brochure detailing opportunities for 4-H Horse Program members to be used as a marketing tool.
- Maintain and enhance the 4-H Horse Program website in order to highlight program activities and more readily provide information to 4-H members, volunteers, extension educators, and industry professionals.
- Increase publication of press releases and use of 4-H horse program promotional materials at equine and other events to increase awareness of the 4-H Horse Program with the general public.

Goal 3

Increase the number of members and volunteers in the 4-H Horse Program.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Increase the number of youth, volunteers and industry professionals in the 4-H Horse Program, and encourage participants to gain the maximum benefit from their 4-H experience.

- Expand the recognition program for youth and volunteers in the 4-H Horse Program.
 - Increase the number of 4-H members applying for the Outstanding 4-H Horse Program Member award.
 - Increase the number of members, clubs, and volunteers applying for the 4-H Horse Safety Awards.
 - Secure funding to further expand awards
 - Secure funding to further support 4-H horse teams competing at national events.
- Develop a recreational riding program and riding recognition program.
- Develop a Youth Trails Stewardship Program in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Equine Council.
- Develop additional programs for urban and suburban youth who do not own horses, youth at risk, and youth with disabilities.

Goal 4

Identify and procure additional resources (personnel and/or funding) to maintain and further develop the 4-H Horse Program.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Provide additional resources to maintain current programs and support further development of programs to meet priority needs.

- Develop strategic plan for the PA 4-H Horse Program to use as a marketing tool for the program.
- Establish a committee to identify and secure resources to support the 4-H Horse Program.
- Pursue options for Penn State funding for additional resources and personnel to support the 4-H Horse Program.
- Establish a 4-H Horse Program Endowment and other sources of funding to provide for additional resources to meet goals outlined in strategic plan.

Goal 5

Increase involvement of volunteers in the planning and implementation of 4-H horse programs and events.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Engage more local volunteers in planning and implementation of 4-H Horse programs and events, improve distribution of information and communication about 4-H horse programs, and provide more training and leadership opportunities for volunteers.

- Further develop regional volunteer trainings.
 - Develop a list of items to be addressed at regional trainings.
 - Identify personnel to travel to regional sites and conduct trainings.
 - Identify locations and host personnel to organize and coordinate trainings.
 - Implement regional volunteer training.
- Continue to develop and conduct 4-H Horse Forum.
- Explore options for creation of a “Master Horseman” Program for volunteer training and development.

Goal 6

More actively engage youth leaders in planning and conducting 4-H horse programs.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Increase the involvement of youth in the development and implementation of 4-H programs and develop leadership skills of youth. These opportunities will allow youth to gain skills in planning, management, and implementation of projects, and further develop life skills.

- Create a 4-H Horse Program Youth Advisory Committee composed of teen leaders from various regions throughout the state.
- Secure volunteers and extension educators to be advisors to the youth advisory committee.
- Involve members of the youth advisory committee in planning educational programs and regional and state-wide activities.

Goal 7

Continue to provide high quality educational material for youth members, volunteers, and industry professionals.

Objectives and Strategies to Achieve Goal:

Provide educational materials for members and volunteers to use for developing equine and life skills.

- Maintain and revise project materials to remain current with the industry.
- Develop new project materials as warranted to educate members and volunteers.
- Complete horse reference manual for members and volunteers.
- Maintain and update current reference list(s) for members and volunteers.
- Maintain web site to help provide easy access to reference materials as possible.