



Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Strategic Plan

Revised and approved May 19, 2008

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, 2003, and 2005 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 initial plan on May 10, 2006. The plan was posted on the 4-H Horse Program website and shared with extension faculty, staff and volunteers at Advisory and Development Committee meetings in 2006-2008, the 2007 4-H Horse Forum and 4-H Animal Science In-Services in 2006 and 2007. Draft revisions were made by a subcommittee of the Development Committee on April 22, 2008 based on input from these events in 2005-2008 as well as suggestions from educators and volunteers. The revised plan was approved on May 19, 2008.

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.
- Conduct continuing education for trained examiners.
- 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 additional horsemanship skills resources as needed.
- Develop and conduct regional/state horse camps and/or events to promote horsemanship and life skills of youth.
- Complete the horse reference manual for members and volunteers.

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 marketing plan with materials to be used at state, regional or county levels to recruit 4-H horse members and volunteers and assist in fund development. The plan would include but is not limited to: color brochure, program display and web based materials.
- 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.
 - Create member and volunteer awards program in accordance with the 4-H Horse Program Endowment Guidelines.
 - 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 additional programs for urban and suburban youth who do not own horses, youth at risk, and youth with disabilities.
- Develop a Youth Trails Stewardship Program in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Equine Council.

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.

- Maintain the established 4-H Horse Program fee to provide continued funding for personnel and a program endowment.
- Establish and grow the 4-H Horse Program Endowment and other sources of funding to provide for additional resources and personnel to meet goals outlined in the strategic plan.
- 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.

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 regional and/or state 4-H Horse Forum(s).
- Continue to develop and conduct horse show management training.
- Adopt new technology to enable volunteers to share information and ideas about the 4-H Horse Program.
- 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.

- Adopt new technology to enable youth leaders to share information and ideas about the 4-H Horse Program.
- Create a 4-H Horse Program Youth Advisory Council 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.
- Maintain and further develop horse show judges training and requirements for judges.
 - Continue horse show judges school.
 - Consider revisions to requirements and qualifications for judges
 - Maintain and expand horse show judges list and related information.
- Adapt new technologies to inform and communicate with industry professionals about key components of the 4-H Horse Program.
- 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.