The Oregon 4-H Program Model
Developmental Outcomes Definitions

As presented in the Oregon model, the first group of developmental outcomes for the 4-H program include academic motivation and success, a reduction in risk behaviors, and an increase in healthful choices. These outcomes were chosen because of their particular salience to the goals of the 4-H program, with its emphasis on academic success and personal health and wellbeing.

**Academic Motivation and Success** – As Lerner (2007) points out, academic competence and success is a key factor in positive youth development. Lippman, et al (2014) distinguish the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of academic engagement and highlight the need for success in all three areas. As such the academic developmental outcomes in the model include engagement, motivation, and success.

**Reduction in Risk Behaviors** – adolescence is a time when risk behaviors related to health and wellbeing, such as sexual activity, substance abuse, smoking, personal safety begin to emerge (Kipping, Campbell, MacArthur, Gunnell, & Hickman, 2012). Positive youth development approaches have been shown to reduce risk behavior (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). The risk behaviors highlighted in this model relate to the use of substances and safe driving behaviors, two areas of particular risk concerns.

**Healthful Choices** – are adolescent behaviors that promote health and wellbeing. The 4-H program is particularly interested in the healthful choices that adolescents make in the areas of nutrition, physical activity and sleep.

The remaining developmental outcomes in the model align closely with the 5Cs of positive youth development proposed by Lerner (2007), although the definitions are modified slightly to match the 4-H program more directly.

**Competence** – similar to Lerner (2007) this outcome refers to cognitive, social, emotional, and vocational competence. However, in our definition we bracket out academic competence as a separate developmental outcome, and place specific emphasis here on social competence because of the important role successful social interactions play in adaptive developmental regulations. Furthermore, research has shown that social competence is one of the most important factors in a successful transition to adulthood (Lippman, et al., 2014).

**Personal Standards** – this outcome refers to a young person’s sense of right and wrong, and a personal commitment to make ethical and just choices. This definition is also similar to Lerner’s (2007) “character” construct. However, recent cognitive interviewing revealed that the term “character” is ambiguous to teens, invoking concepts more akin to personality than moral or
ethical grounding (Nott, Vuchinich, & Arnold, in press). In addition, we added dimensions of personal responsibility, trustworthiness, and integrity to complete the definition of personal standards.

Connection – this outcome reflects the importance of establishing and maintaining connections with other people – parents, friends, teachers, mentors, community members. These connections reflect our human need to have positive relationships with, and the support of, others for health and wellbeing (Lerner, 2007).

Contribution – although sometimes described as an outcome of the 5Cs (Lerner, 2007), contribution reflects the youth person’s ability and interest in giving back to others, and therefore we include it as one of the developmental outcomes of 4-H. As revealed by Lerner and Lerner (2013) contributing to others is a hallmark outcome of the 4-H program.

There are two Cs that are not included as outcomes in the proposed model:

Confidence – as Lerner (2007) points out, a young person’s areas of confidence changes over time. While the need for academic competence remains important across adolescence, younger youth need to develop physical and social confidence, while the developmental needs of older youth focus on intellectual, moral, romantic and creative confidence. Because of the developmental rather than status nature of competence we did not include confidence as a developmental outcome, electing instead to identify evidence of increasing confidence as part of a young person’s thriving trajectory.

Caring – refers to a young person’s ability to care for others through empathy, sympathy, and other demonstrations of pro-social actions (Lerner, 2007). Because a pro-social orientation is also a thriving indicator, we elected to omit caring from the list of developmental outcomes.

References
