

Effective Management Of Affirmative Action Plans For Meeting Nondiscriminatory Legal Standards In The Conduct Of 4-H Programs

Each state and county Extension Service has an obligation to pursue the elimination of any discriminatory 4-H program practices. These suggested 4-H program strategies related to Affirmative Action will assist in meeting this obligation.

1. "All Reasonable Effort": The term "all reasonable effort" is used pertaining to 4-H units serving inter-racial communities in defined geographic areas. Extension staff members need to know the minimum effort and criteria for meeting the USDA requirement. These include the following: (1) Use of all available mass media including radio, newspaper, and television, to inform potential recipients inviting them to participate, including dates and places of meeting or other planned activities; (2) personal letters and circulars addressed to defined potential recipients inviting them to participate, including dates and places of meetings or other planned activity; (3) personal visits by the county Extension staff member(s) to a representative number of defined potential recipients in the geographically defined area to encourage participation. The Extension Service is required to discontinue service to those units for which "all reasonable efforts" have not been fully carried out.
2. Review Boundaries as Program Management Tool: The County 4-H Expansion and Review Committee along with the county Extension staff should study and review geographic service areas. The map of 4-H service areas or communities is semi-permanent. Such study and possible periodic revision provides a management tool to improve services. The committee and staff should give attention to community boundaries: (1) not clearly and precisely delineated; (2) in which geographic service areas are too large to provide effective management of 4-H program services; (3) in which geographic boundaries originally including entire counties or large metropolitan areas which need to be subdivided. The committee may establish service areas by using present election districts, school districts, census tracts, or natural boundaries. Each local 4-H unit should be located within a 4-H service area and so identified. The service area must be identified as inter-racial or single race.
3. Organization and Structure of County 4-H Program Expansion and Review Committee: From time to time, the organization and structure of these committees should be examined to determine how they can function more effectively and efficiently. The primary function of such committees is to assist in the expansion or improvement of 4-H. Its purpose is to assist in the planning of the 4-H program including involvement of minority clientele.
4. Educational Methodology and Audience: The selection and utilization of educational methods for different audiences and different degrees of intensity of program participation is a sound educational principle. The selection, however, must not be made on basis which involve any discrimination because of race, color, sex, disability, or national origin of potential recipients. Methods may need to be analyzed and monitored from time to time to determine if a particular method is the only service to a clientele and thereby indicates discrimination in delivery of program services to clientele groups.

5. 4-H Program Emphasis and Affirmative Action: Appropriate program planning is a critical factor. The offering of a previously designed program to "all comers" without real involvement of minorities in the design is not sufficient. State and district level personnel should periodically review and monitor the nature of the county 4-H program planning processes to insure its availability to youth of all racial-ethnic groups and economic levels.
6. Extension Staff Responsibility for Volunteer Staff: The volunteer leadership program including recruitment, training, roles, recognition, and leadership incentives should be examined thoroughly in relation to racial ethnic participation of both adult and youth volunteers. New training areas and innovative programs should be outlined for increasing the leadership resources of minority groups, and their involvement in 4-H programming. Substantial involvement of minority adult and youth volunteers can have a significant impact on the scale of minority youth participation.
7. Program Reviews: 4-H affirmative action programs and the effectiveness of steps being taken to implement these programs (in accordance with the guidelines and legal requirements) should be an integral part of county and State 4-H program reviews. Focus should be on both the current pace of progress and future 4-H programming steps needed to maintain and increase progress toward more nearly optimum situations. By their very nature, 4-H program reviews focus on the 4-H programming process and the effectiveness of the Extension Service in its delivery of services. Affirmative action in this context provides an opportunity to expand 4-H programs and to address the needs and interests of minority youth as well as those of the majority.
8. Evaluation and Accountability: State Extension Management Information Systems (SEMIS), including 4-H enrollment systems, need to be designed to reflect accurately the services rendered to racial-ethnic minorities and their levels of participation. Periodic evaluation of 4-H program components should include assessment of the appropriateness of overall 4-H program planning procedures, design of the 4-H curriculum and delivery processes, evidence of expansion of opportunities for minority youth to have their needs met, and documentation that services by Extension are provided on an equitable basis.
9. Affirmative Actions Roles and Responsibilities of County Extension Staff in Relation to Local 4-H Units: In a legal sense, the county Extension agent is responsible for all local 4-H units since they are instruments of the Extension Service. The agent assists with their formation, often through others, and recognizes their existence through approval for the use of the 4-H name and emblem. If the unit operates in a discriminatory manner, such services must be terminated after due notification. The agent is responsible for "all reasonable efforts" to integrate local 4-H units in racially-ethnically mixed 4-H service areas or communities. The agent is responsible for documenting that local 4-H units in racially/ethnically mixed service areas are either (1) integrated, or (2) "All reasonable efforts" have been made and certified to the Director of Extension. The Extension agent is responsible for assisting local 4-H units to overcome unnecessary 4-H program participation barriers. In local inter-racial situations, as well as county, there must be minority racial-ethnic involvement in 4-H program determination.

Source: ES/USDA