

# impact

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## Counties collaborate to offer more options for 4-H new volunteer orientation

### AT A GLANCE

Collaboration across southern Idaho provides multiple opportunities for new volunteers to attend required orientation and 4-H professionals to make the best use of their time and resources.

### The Situation

Volunteer recruitment, orientation and development is an ongoing, high priority for 4-H professionals in Idaho. Individuals, adults or community members who wish to become certified volunteers must go through a rigorous screening process. One step of this process is to attend a 4-H New Volunteer Orientation (NVO) which will provide information and resources for them to confidently fulfill their role as a 4-H volunteer. A single NVO can take hours to prepare, and the training itself can last between three and four hours. Because of this, providing multiple opportunities for volunteers to attend NVO training can be difficult. Further, the class is best taught using multiple presenters, which can be a stretch for county offices of all sizes.

### Our Response

To best utilize 4-H professionals' time and offer multiple opportunities for volunteer applicants to complete their orientation, a team of county and 4-H professionals have developed a standardized volunteer orientation. This standardized orientation can be used in many different settings and group sizes. The NVO materials include an agenda, lesson plan, teaching tools and a participant assessment. Teaching tools include



New volunteer orientation participants engaging in a goal setting activity.

video links, detailed activity instructions, discussion points for each learning concept, reference documents and handouts.

To determine the agenda, the team reviewed existing training required in the volunteer application process to avoid duplication of orientation topics. They also reviewed existing orientation agendas in multiple counties to determine priority topics. Current and new research-based resources were combined to create consistent onboarding training. Once a draft agenda was created, a variety of experiential activities were researched or created to teach key concepts. It was critical to the team to ensure the orientation was comprehensive, modeled experiential learning and valued the volunteer's time.

## Program Outcomes

A pre-post retrospective survey is used to evaluate the orientation. Evaluation data to date include results from 10 counties and 387 volunteers. Quantitative results show increases in all knowledge topic questions (Table 1) and all confidence indicators (Table 2). Participants were asked to reply on a scale of one to five (one=No knowledge/confidence, five=A lot of knowledge/confidence).

Table 1. How much do you know about the following topics?

Topic	Before training	After training
Getting a 4-H club started	2.21	3.97
Planning a 4-H meeting	2.70	4.45
4-H project requirements	3.04	4.39
Using 4-H record books	3.20	4.37
Oral presentations	3.31	4.44
Risk management	2.49	4.45
4-H policies and procedures	2.39	4.41
Essential elements of 4-H (BIGM)	2.09	4.28
SMART goals	2.86	4.55

These results indicate that immediately following the training volunteers feel prepared for their roles. Participants were also asked to share the most valuable thing they learned. Some quotes include:

- “The kids are the middle of everything, how to make them feel like they belong and encourage independence.”

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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- “How to approach all ages of youth and how to help them grow.”
- “We just started 4-H. So learning about the record books was huge. Also, the risk management and policy and procedures games were very helpful.”

## The Future

The 4-H New Volunteer Orientation team plans to continue to update and utilize the training materials throughout southern Idaho, as well as train new 4-H staff and faculty hires.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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Table 2. How confident do you feel about the following as a new 4-H volunteer?

Topic	Before training	After training
I know who to contact if I have a 4-H question	3.21	4.77
I know where to find 4-H resources	3.09	4.66
I am able to empower 4-H youth to lead club business meetings and activities	2.87	4.41
I have the tools necessary to lead a 4-H club/program	2.82	4.43
I have a clear understanding of what 4-H is	2.99	4.60