

Work ready skills gained from Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention

AT A GLANCE

Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention offers a unique opportunity for youth to experience college life, explore career paths, and develop skills essential for success in work and life.

The Situation

Today's rapidly evolving job market, technical skills are vital, but employers increasingly value soft skills — qualities that enable effective collaboration, adaptability and interpersonal communication. Skills such as teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, work ethic and communication are essential for workplace success. Research demonstrates that 4-H programs cultivate these life skills, fostering responsibility, teamwork and adaptability in youth. Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs like 4-H are recognized as powerful platforms for developing these critical competencies.

Our Response

The Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention (STAC), planned by a collaborative team of youth, 4-H professionals and volunteers across, is a four-day, three-night event held on the University of Idaho campus each June. Designed for youth in grades 8-12, STAC offers educational workshops, career-focused tours, service-learning projects and leadership development opportunities. Participants stay on campus, building connections with peers and adult mentors. Aligned with the National 4-H Beyond Ready initiative, STAC equips youth with the skills and mindsets needed for success in work, life and post-secondary



4-H youth practice communication skills, teamwork and exercise their leadership skills throughout the convention.

pathways. The initiative emphasizes creating high-quality PYD environments, building workforce readiness, fostering emotional and social development, supporting post-secondary planning, and ensuring youth are healthy, engaged and prepared to thrive.

Program Outcomes

On a post-program survey, 127 out of 144 youth responded to how true statements were for them because of their STAC experience. The response revealed significant outcomes, with high percentages of youth reporting that the following statements were "very true" or "extremely true."

Professionalism and work ethic: 89% know how to act professionally, and 97% understand that employers

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expect high-quality work. Additionally, 88% feel capable of working hard on challenging tasks.

Career readiness and exploration: 80% reported that STAC helped prepare them for work and career, while 81% explored career areas that align with their interests.

Teamwork and collaboration: 80% feel confident in helping a group succeed, and 83% believe STAC improved their ability to be better team players. Moreover, 81% can remain positive even when a group decision conflicts with their preferences.

Responsibility and accountability: 90% accept responsibility for their actions, 94% strive to make things right when they err and 88% apologize when they hurt someone's feelings.

These outcomes demonstrate that STAC effectively fosters the soft skills — teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, work ethic and interpersonal communication — that employers value, preparing youth for success in work, life and post-secondary pathways.

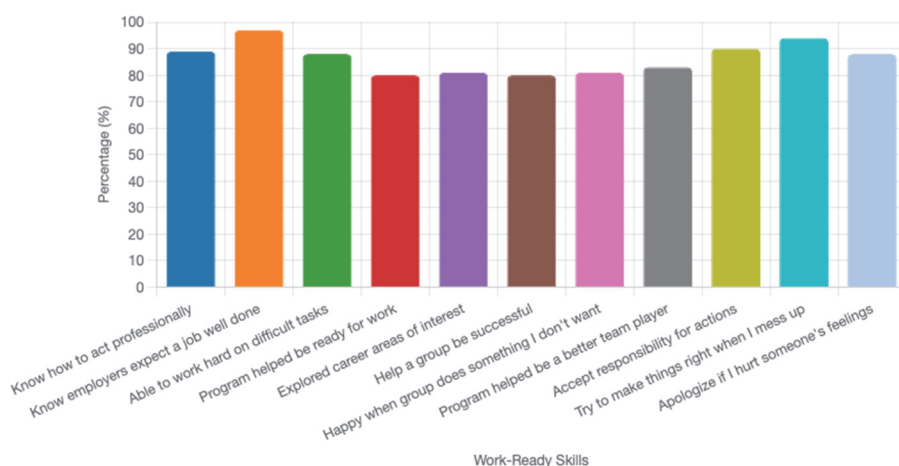
On the evaluation, participants had the option of sharing the most positive thing about their experience at STAC for which 79% provided a comment. Here are just a few of those statements:

- It is a super friendly environment.
- I gained more friends, and I am even more positive on what I want to do in the future.
- Felt like I belonged even though I barely knew anyone here and I like how everyone is super nice.
- I have loved how much I learned from STAC. From public speaking to making friends, it is an amazing experience.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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