



EXTENSION COUNCIL YOUTH ORIENTATION



Welcome to the Council!

Thank you for your agreeing to serve as a youth representative on your County Extension Council! The role of youth council member is the same as being appointed as an advisor on youth to your county government. Youth members represent the voice of 4-Hers, as well as all young people in their county. Serving on the Extension Council is a prestigious and respected position!

Youth-adult partnerships are one of the cornerstones that make 4-H so powerful and effective. The Missouri 4-H mission is engaging youth as valued, contributing members of their communities in partnership with caring adults. By serving with adults on council, you are fulfilling what the “hands to larger service” of 4-H is all about.

You may be asking what does a youth council representative do, and what do you need to know? You may also have questions about if you are the best person for the position, and how well you will do. This packet is designed to address your concerns and answer your questions! 4-H staff and council leaders have selected you for this position. They believe in your abilities and are there to support you!

Youth representatives keep councils informed of the views and opinions that young people have on a variety of topics related to 4-H and MU Extension. As a young person, you already know a lot about issues affecting youth, and can speak from your own perspective, as well as that of 4-H club members, friends, and peers. With your voice at the table, the County Extension Council will have a fuller perspective, be more informed about programs like 4-H, and make better decisions to serve the youth of the county.

As you go through this packet, we trust you will grow your skills as a leader, gain new insights on your position, and be better prepared for a successful experience as an Extension Council Youth Leader!



“Everyone is new to an organization at some time, so don’t be afraid to join in the discussion and ask questions! You have been selected to serve because you have a contribution to make, and it will be welcomed!”

In this packet:

- Understanding Extension
- What is your “job”?
- Code of conduct
- Who are you?
- Who do you represent?
- Find facts & data on youth in your county
- Seeking advice?
- State event opportunities
- Effective council characteristics



Understanding Extension

The goal of University of Missouri Extension is to extend knowledge and problem-solving to the people of Missouri across our state. This is accomplished in many ways you see happening around you – by giving kids the opportunity to go to summer 4-H camp, conducting a grazing clinic for farmers, and helping senior citizens learn how to cook healthier meals.

Educational programs like these are offered because the people who serve as members of your County Extension Council help identify the educational needs of your county. Council members give voice to which programs are needed most in the county. They work with county government leaders to ensure funding is budgeted to keep the County Extension Office open to the public to call or visit. They work with the University of Missouri to ensure your county has faculty, staff, and volunteers to run programs like 4-H, and to help people solve problems they face in their business or workplace, on the farm, or at home.

By becoming a member of your County Extension Council, you have joined a highly dedicated team that is helping to provide “everyday” education to improve the lives of all Missourians !

Membership

Each of Missouri’s 114 counties has a County Extension Council, which is established by state law. The council is a part of the county government, just like offices located in the county courthouse. The council’s annual budget is set by your county commissioners. Members of the Council are elected to serve by the citizens of the county, at an annual election. Some members are not elected but appointed because of a specific group or area of the county they represent. Leaders you will often find serving on councils include agriculture, business, schools, local agencies, and citizens active in the local community. Youth who serve on Extension councils are appointed to their positions.

“When you get your agenda, study it and see how you can contribute. If there is any item on it you do not understand, ask the chairman, staff, or any member of the council.”

Leadership

Each council has a president (or council chair), vice president (or vice chair), secretary, and treasurer. These leadership titles and duties will sound very familiar to those of your 4-H club.

Committees

Councils have several standing committees made up of members who carry out essential functions of the council, such as nominating new candidates and members, planning and maintaining a yearly budget, conducting fundraising, and organizing Council events, just to name a few. Youth can serve on committees along with other council members.

Meetings

Each council sets its own meeting and agenda, including the day, time, and location. Councils typically meet once a month or every other month in a central public meeting space. Meetings vary in length, depending on the items of business to be conducted. Normally council meetings will last 1-2 hours, and will be facilitated by the council chair. Council meetings are open to the public, and can be attended by members of the public. Meeting minutes also become part of the public record.

From time to time, a committee may need to discuss sensitive issues about people or situations. All council members are expected to handle information they learn with ethics and responsibility. Some information may not be appropriate to share, post, or talk about elsewhere. Members should be aware that what they say and do reflects back on MU Extension. If you have questions or concerns about any matter, please ask your council chair, CES, or county 4-H staff for guidance.

Benefits of Serving:

- Increase your skills in leadership, group decision making, and communication.
- Meet and network with community leaders.
- Have a positive influence on your community.
- Fulfill an important leadership role to list on your resume or college application.



What is your “Job” on Council?

As a council member, you will work with the officers of the council, your fellow council members, and Extension staff to meet the educational needs of residents of the county.

Responsibilities

As a youth representative, you are responsible for being informed about council business and ready to participate in council meetings. Although state statutes do not allow council members under voting age (age 18) to vote, you can have your opinions recorded by the council secretary in the meeting minutes, and influence council decisions by advising the group on what you and other youth in the county think about the decisions being made.

You will serve a one or two-year term and may serve two consecutive terms. Ask your council leaders about the term of service for youth members.

Accountability

County Extension Council Youth Representatives are accountable to all county residents, but especially the youth.

Time Commitment

Council Extension Council Meetings are held once a month or every other month, usually in the evenings lasting about 2 hours.



“Adults may not be aware of all of the capabilities of young people. You may have to show them!”

Code of Conduct

Extension Council Youth Representatives are “high profile” leaders of University of Missouri Extension and Missouri’s 4-H program. Everything they do during their term reflects on MU Extension and 4-H.

Because the name and reputation of these entities is so valuable, the youth of past Missouri State 4-H Councils have created a Code of Conduct that youth council members commit to living by during their terms. The same standards apply to youth appointed to serve on County Extension Councils.

Print the Code of Conduct using the PDF link at the bottom of: https://extension2.missouri.edu/catalogsearch/result/?q=all&mpp=24&ext_magento_category=ECYL%20resources

Please print, read, sign, and return the Code of Conduct to your County Engagement Specialist or Extension Chair!

Who Are You?

Being an effective leader starts with self-awareness, discovering who you are and what you have to offer. The more you understand yourself and your abilities as a leader, the more you will know how you can contribute as a youth representative to the council.

Your Personality

Do you consider yourself more of an introvert or an extrovert? Are you naturally shy, or do you find it easy to meet people, start conversations, and share small talk with others?

Are you a person who has strong opinions and quickly voices those views, or do you tend to mostly keep your views to yourself?

Your Background

Were you raised on a farm, born in a suburb, go to school in a metropolitan area? What are your 4-H projects, past times, or favorite activities? What do you value, and what influences have your family and friends had on how you understand the world, view people, approach conflicts, or solve problems? Your answers to these questions help define who you are, and the unique perspective you will bring while serving on the council.

Your Skills

What skills do you already possess, or can you bring to benefit the Extension council?

- ⇒ Are you familiar with club officer roles and their responsibilities?
- ⇒ Can you follow a meeting agenda?
- ⇒ Do you have a handle on how to use parliamentary procedure during meetings?
- ⇒ Do you enjoy taking digital photos or writing about events?
- ⇒ Have you ever kept financial records for a 4-H project, or worked with a budget?
- ⇒ Can you think of questions to ask after you’ve listened to a talk demonstration?

If your answer to any of these is ‘yes’ you already have more skills for being a council representative than you may think!

While some of the business that Extension councils conduct may seem new or strange to you, you will likely catch on fast. 4-H club and council meetings have likely prepared you well to follow along and contribute to Extension Council meetings!

Your Leadership Style

Just as each person has a different personality and background, you also have a leadership style which you tend to prefer, which shapes how you think and act in leadership roles. The following activity is designed to help you better understand your own style compared to others, so that you can operate from that strength as a leader!

- ⇒ Which of the following animals would best describe your leadership style? LION, ELEPHANT, DOLPHIN, OR GOLDEN RETRIEVER
- ⇒ Identify at least 5 characteristics to justify why you picked that animal.
- ⇒ Which of the animals do you think you would work best with and what are 3 characteristics about that animal that make it easy for you to work with?
- ⇒ Which of the animals do you think you would work the least effectively with and what are 3 characteristics about that animal that make them more difficult for you to work with?
- ⇒ How do we work together if we all have different styles of leadership?
- ⇒ What is more important when working with others: others having the same leadership style as you, or different styles?



Write down your thoughts here!



“Criticism doesn't necessarily mean condescension or that an adult doesn't value your contributions. It may mean the adult is treating you the same way he/she would an adult colleague. Disagreement does not mean disrespect.”

Your Group Roles

In any group setting, whether it is a school class, 4-H club, or our family, we each have certain group roles we tend to take on. We may have roles that we often occupy when working in groups, and roles we tend to avoid!

Picture in your mind a fisherman. As you look over the list of things a fisherman uses to catch a fish, ask yourself:

How is each thing like a role that a person plays in a group setting? Which of these is the most like you? Which is the least like you?

- ⇒ Hat – thinking, coming up with ideas
- ⇒ Eyes – observing what is happening, seeing the possibilities
- ⇒ Ears – listening, hearing what the community is saying
- ⇒ Mouth – speaking, representing the team's work to others
- ⇒ Feet/Waders – keeping the team grounded and connected
- ⇒ Hands/Pole – reaching out, doing the work
- ⇒ Bait – attracting others to the work, creating “the hook”

Going through this list of group roles and determining which one or ones you tend to occupy may be enlightening as you prepare to work with others as a youth representative on council!

Your Goals as a Youth Rep

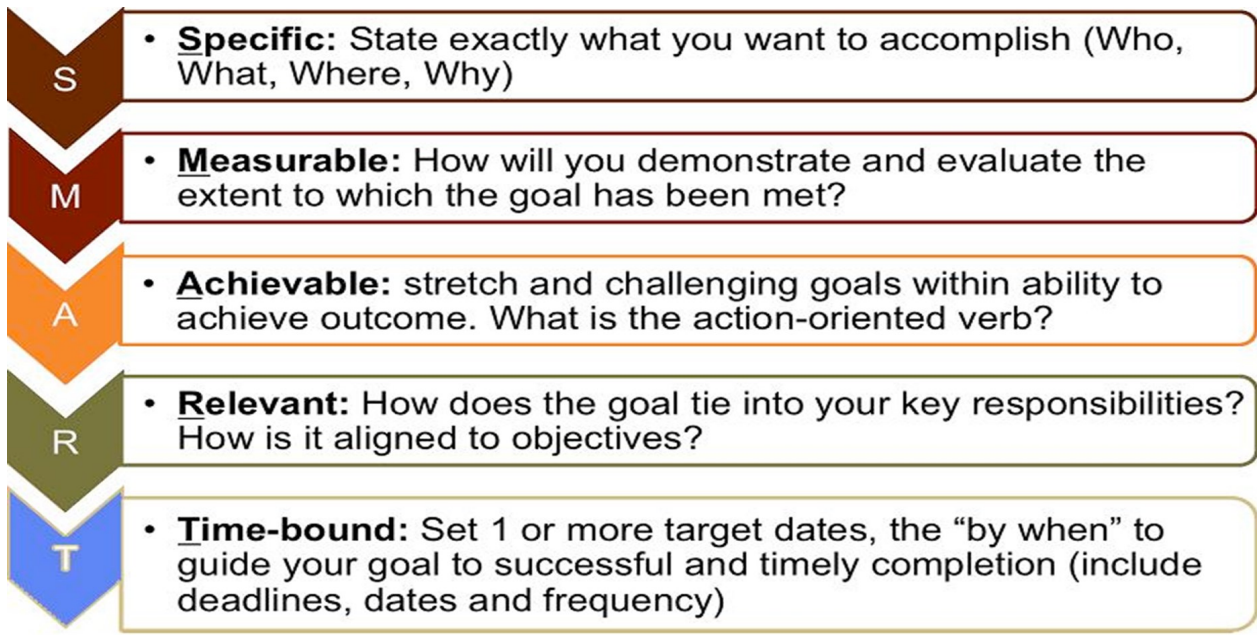
If you could summarize in a few sentences what your goal will be while serving as a youth representative, what would you say? If you have not had time to think about it, consider: When you finish your term on council in a year or two, what would you hope to have accomplished?

- ⇒ To have accurately represented the views and opinions of all youth in the county to the council?
- ⇒ To have raised awareness of 4-H on council, why it is important, and how it is impacting youth?
- ⇒ To have gained knowledge of the community/county and stronger connections to adult leaders?
- ⇒ To have a sense that the future of 4-H in the county is brighter because you have shared your voice and perspective to the council?
- ⇒ The confidence that you could come back at a future point and serve as an adult Extension Council member?

* Select 1 or 2 of the goals above or create your own. REMEMBER MAKE IT A **S.M.A.R.T.** GOAL!

Here is an example!

My Goal: To raise council awareness of 4-H by reporting on the county 4-H program and inviting council members to attend at least one 4-H event or meeting by the end of the year to give them insight on how 4-H benefits the youth.



Write down your goal here!

Now that you have set a S.M.A.R.T goal for yourself as a youth representative, reflect on what steps or actions you can take to accomplish your goal.

Who Do You Represent?

4-H

Most youth representatives like yourself are 4-H members, and have been invited to serve on council because of your track record as a leader in 4-H. (In some cases, youth who have not been involved in 4-H serve on Extension councils.

Any young person is eligible to serve, based on the needs of the council.) Because 4-H is the youth development program of the University, your role on council involves being a voice for the 4-H program in your county. Give some thought to how you can stay informed about the local 4-H program. Which of these methods would give you the best information to feed back to the Extension council?

- ⇒ Visit local 4-H club meetings and ask members about their projects and activities?
- ⇒ Interview the county 4-H staff?
- ⇒ Attend the county 4-H council meeting, take notes, and give a report to the Extension council?
- ⇒ Memorize the county 4-H newsletter before each council meeting?
- ⇒ Participate in county and regional 4-H events?
- ⇒ Post a question on a county 4-H Facebook page.
- ⇒ Invite all county 4-H members to answer an online survey of questions you create.



“Don’t hesitate to comment on suggestions or ideas raised by others, but be sure to do so in a constructive manner.”

Extension

Above all, as a youth representative on council, you represent what University of Missouri Extension is and does in your county, 4-H and beyond. This means you can have a voice and an opinion on every matter that comes before the council, not just 4-H or youth issues. As a young person, you may find that you are more informed on, or have a stronger opinion about, 4-H and youth issues, than other matters the council discusses. This is okay! Council members will tend to look to you for comments and insights on youth topics, because they see you as a direct source of information about young people.

School

Some youth representatives have been selected to serve based on where they live in the county, or what school or school district they are from (perhaps you are one!). Ask your 4-H staff or council leaders if this is the case. If so, you will always want to keep in mind that you represent the voices of all the students in your school or district. This may influence or change what you think about certain matters of council business. What would be some methods for finding out information from your school to represent on council?

- ⇒ Interview the school principal or superintendent and student club or organization leaders and ask them to identify the most important issues in education that 4-H and Extension can address.
- ⇒ Visit with students who aren’t in leadership roles, who may not feel like they are included, or their opinion does not matter.
- ⇒ Ask teachers, coaches, and afterschool staff to provide perspective on what they see as the most important matters facing students from your school.

Youth of the County

One thing is certain of all Extension Council Youth Representatives; you are a spokesperson for other young people throughout the county, especially those in your same age bracket (14-17 & 18-25), and both 4-H members and non-4-H members. When you think about it, that is an awesome privilege and responsibility – to stand in for and represent what is in the best interests of all other young people in your county. They are counting on you to be knowledgeable, stay informed, speak up, let their voices be heard, and ensure good decisions are made which may impact them for years to come!

State Event Opportunities

Statewide events provide opportunities for youth on Extension Councils to meet other youth leaders, learn more about 4-H and Extension, and expand their reach beyond the county!

Youth Civic Leaders Summit

The Summit offers teams of teens ages 14-18 and adults opportunities to learn about leadership and teambuilding, youth voice and engagement, while making new friends and having fun with peers from Missouri and other states!

Highlights include youth and adult speakers, a Team Talent showcase, outdoor challenge course and recreation, team planning and networking, and mini-grants for team projects. The Summit is held on the first weekend in March at Windermere Conference Center near Camdenton, Missouri

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/programs/missouri-4-h/4-h-opportunities/4-h-camps-and-conferences/4-h-youth-civic-leaders-summit>

Seeking Advice?

Adult Guides

As a youth representative, you will be paired with an adult 4-H staff or Extension council member who will explain things further and answer your questions. If you do not know who this adult guide is, ask your Extension council leaders.

Other Counties

Over 60 Extension Councils in Missouri have formally added youth and young adults as members, and can share experiences and advice with your county. Contact the ECYL in a neighboring county to share your experience and methods of contribution. See the contacts at the end of this packet for more information on how to connect with other youth on Extension councils.

- ⇒ Open Minded—the ability to carefully weigh the pros and cons of a discussion before reaching a decision.
- ⇒ Self-Assurance—being confident in the decisions you make without letting others' opinions change your own.
- ⇒ Enthusiasm—genuine interest in and about the goals of the council/4-H and the ability to communicate that interest and enthusiasm to others.

Summary

Hopefully this has given you a deeper insight into what your role is as an Extension Council Youth Leader and answered most of your questions. If you have more questions or would like more information, please contact the members of your local Extension Council for guidance.

As a youth representative, you play an important role in keeping councils informed of the views and opinions young people have on a variety of issues. Because of your role, the County Extension Council has broader representation from all citizens in the county, is more informed about how programs like 4-H improve the lives of youth, and is better able to make decisions that positively impact youth in the county.

All Things Missouri

[All Things Missouri](#) is a gateway for interactive mapping, reports, and insights into issues facing Missourians. This website is a great resource to learn more about your county, region, and state and address the three grand challenges (economic opportunity, healthy futures, and educational access and excellence) as determined by MU Extension. The portal is designed to support community leaders in accessing, analyzing, and visualizing data to inform better and more data-driven strategies. All Things Missouri's goal is to support a variety of sectors – business, industry, local and state organizations, nonprofits, governments, researchers, and Extension staff – understand community needs and allocate resources. Challenge your Extension Council to use this resource at their next meeting!

Characteristics of Effective Extension Councils

Regardless of their age, Extension council members who have certain traits in common are sure to be effective in their roles.

- ⇒ Vision—the ability to envision the future and to consider the long-term effects of decisions.
- ⇒ Knowledge—knowledge of youth, 4-H, and what is happening in the county.



Credits

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For More Information

Youth/Adult Partnerships

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/programs/missouri-4-h/4-h-opportunities/4-h-prog/4-h-youth-adult-partnerships>

Extension Council Youth Leadership

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/programs/missouri-4-h/4-h-opportunities/4-h-prog/extension-council-youth-leadership-projects>

Council Leadership Training Modules

<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/ecyl.aspx>



Notes



Extension Council Youth Representative Code of Conduct

Extension Council Youth Representatives are “high profile” leaders of University of Missouri Extension and Missouri’s 4-H program. Everything they do during their term reflects on MU Extension and 4-H. Because the name and reputation of these entities is so valuable, the youth of past Missouri State 4-H Councils have created a Code of Conduct, below, that youth council members commit to living by during their terms. The same standards apply to youth appointed to serve on County Extension Councils.

This Code of Conduct reflects the standards, guidelines and expectations of all youth council members.

As an Extension Council Youth Representative, I will...

1. Obey the laws of my community, state and country, and I accept responsibility for knowing them.
2. Stay 100% free from drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, and will not stay in the presence of others who are using drugs.
3. Attend all Extension Council meetings and all 4-H events that I have volunteered for, unless otherwise excused in advance by an Adult Advisor to the Extension Council.
4. Take responsibility for my choices and accept the consequences of my actions. I know that I can be dismissed from the Extension Council immediately if I fail to uphold the first three expectations above.
5. Work cooperatively and respectfully with the youth, adult staff, and volunteers of 4-H and University of Missouri Extension.
6. Seek training for my council role which will help me work more effectively with youth and adults.
7. Be trustworthy and reliable in carrying out responsibilities I’ve accepted.
8. Look out for safety and well-being of others, and act quickly to report anything which threatens it.
9. Accept that I am a role model, and use etiquette expected of an Extension Council member, including:
 - Abstaining from public displays of affection that are not appropriate for the places I am in.
 - Dressing respectfully, and in a way that’s appropriate for the task at hand.
 - Keeping my language appropriate to the environments I’m in, and avoiding profanity.
 - Showing up on time or early to council meetings and events.

University of Missouri, Lincoln University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Local Extension Councils
Cooperating

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/ADA INSTITUTIONS