

NATIONAL 4-H CONFERENCE

THE PREMIER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



CONFERENCE PURPOSE & EVALUATION DESIGN

National 4-H Conference is the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's premier Civic Engagement opportunity for youth ages 15-19. The multi-day conference is held annually in Washington, DC, with the intention of increasing youth capacity for leadership, civic engagement, and empowerment to participate in solving complex issues. In addition, the conference capitalizes on youth voices by empowering the use of their thoughts and ideas to influence the direction of partner agencies. For the second year in a row, key experience and quality indicators show that National 4-H Conference has made notable impacts on youth.

A rigorous, multi-year evaluation plan was established to review the conference Theory of Change and Action. Year 2 study findings are summarized below.

IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

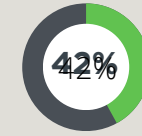
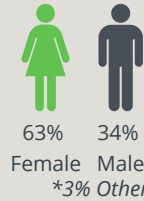
- Youth reported a **large increase in their capacity** for leadership, civic engagement, and an increased level of agency.
- The **Roundtable and Federal Briefings** are the standout activities to delegates.
- Program quality (belonging, agency, and contribution) were positive, with contribution being very positive. Results showed **no difference between groups of interest** (youth of color, gender, LGU type, and number of years in 4-H)
- Funding for military youth and scholarships for attracting new and diverse youth are bringing more delegates.
- Results indicate that the effect size that the conference had on youth interest in Civic Engagement is much higher than in 2022.
- Improvements to schedule flow and balance strengthened overall engagement.

CAREER FAIR

- The Career Fair valued workforce preparation by **exposing youth to federal employment opportunities** and enabling them to **discover career interests**.
- 90%** increased their understanding of federal government careers, and **86%** increased their knowledge of internships

288 YOUTH DELEGATES

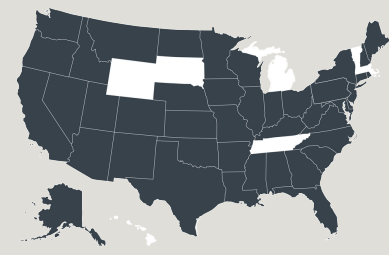
an increase of 34% from 2022



Racial or Ethnic Minority

16.6 AVG AGE

76% >5 YEARS IN 4-H



43 STATES

3 TERRITORIES

4 TRIBAL NATIONS

56 LGUS

44 1862

10 1890

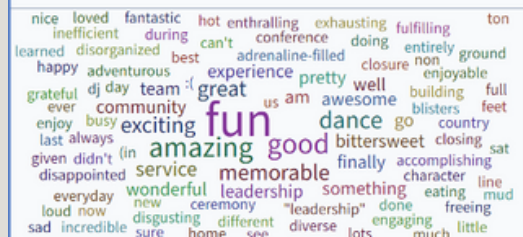
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There was an increase of **9 LGU delegations** and **youth from 7 military service branches** in 2023.

Following National 4-H Conference, **90% will seek out opportunities for civic engagement in their community**, an increase of **33%** from before.

"Fun", "exciting", "amazing", and "good" were the most used words to describe each day.

What is one word or phrase that describes the experience Tuesday?



- The ability to provide **youth voice in federal decision-making** is the cornerstone of the Roundtable experience and was rated very highly by youth.
- **Collegiate Facilitators are critical** to the success of the Roundtable experience and in creating a positive group dynamic.
- **Interest and ability to select Roundtable topics** are key factors in youth engagement and success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Along with the positive impacts reported by youth and chaperones, their ideas have been incorporated into these recommendations to strengthen National 4-H Conference.

OVERALL

- Maintain and strengthen an identity for this conference that is unique from other national 4-H offerings; promote the opportunity for “Youth Voice.”
- Apply Youth-Adult Partnership principles to conference planning and implementation.
- Increase investment in facilitators by ensuring roles, responsibilities, and appreciation of their work are clearly communicated.
- Establish recruitment goals to support representation from various institution types and military programs.



LOGISTICS & DESIGN

- Improve registration timeline and process to reduce errors.
- Strengthen youths’ sense of belonging by ensuring meal offerings accommodate medical and lifestyle choices, increase communication and clarity of dress code, and engagement of Youth Leadership Team.
- Include time for intentional debriefing throughout the schedule, especially in the Roundtable experiences.
- At the Career Fair, add colleges alongside agencies, fewer repeating panels, more handouts, and people to help navigate the event.

COMMUNICATION & PREPARATION

- Chaperones and youth want to receive conference communications further in advance, especially Roundtable information.
- Reduce limitations and errors (data entry errors, use of secondary or parent e-mails, etc.) in the distribution of conference communications to ensure all participants receive pertinent information.
- Determine a method (email, texting program, or app) to send out updates during conference week.
- Improve the on-site chaperone orientation allowing time for Q&A and readdressing of details; consider establishing a chaperone point-of-contact to provide support.



OVERALL I ENJOYED THIS CONFERENCE AND DEFINITELY HAD AN EXPERIENCE WORTH A LIFETIME, AND I LOVED BEING A PART OF SOMETHING GREAT. I WOULD LOVE TO INTRODUCE THIS PROGRAM AT HOME AND HOPEFULLY INSPIRE MORE YOUNG MINDS TO JOIN AND GROW IN THIS PROGRAM.

- YOUTH DELEGATE