

Washington County 4-H Leaders
Association:
The Impact of Board Service

2016



A report summarizing data collected from past members of the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board.

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The Impact of Service on Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board Members

The Washington County 4-H Leaders Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides leadership and support for the Washington County 4-H program. The organization is governed by a board composed of eight youth and eight adults. These individuals are enrolled youth members or adult volunteers in the 4-H community club program. They are elected to the board and can serve up to two consecutive two-year terms.

The Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board provides leadership in the following areas:

- Conducting supplemental county level programs for youth
- Coordinating county level recognition
- Representing 4-H Youth Development to the community
- Advocating for 4-H Youth Development
- Providing input on new 4-H Youth Development opportunities and youth and volunteer needs
- Organizational planning
- Policymaking & policy enforcement related to the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association
- Fundraising to support 4-H educational programming

Board members have the opportunity to participate in skill-building activities and leadership training during their terms.

Evaluation Objectives:

4-H Youth Development Educator Brianna Stapleton Welch conducted an evaluation of exiting board members to assess the impact of their time spent serving on the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board. The primary questions guiding the evaluation were: Did the board members have a chance to grow their leadership skills? Did they gain a broader understanding of youth development and the needs of Washington County youth?

Evaluation Methods:

Stapleton Welch created a retrospective pre-post survey and sent it to the exiting board members. These were youth and adults who had completed at least one two-year term on the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association board and who did not run for re-election. They were asked to complete the survey anonymously and return it to the UW-Extension Office.

Sample Size:

The survey was distributed to 16 youth and adults exiting the board from 2015 through 2016 (eight board members received the survey each year). Five board members responded in 2015 and four board members responded in 2016.

Quantitative Data Collected:

Table 1: % of Board Members Reporting Change

N = 9 of 16 4-H Advocacy & Support	% Reporting No Change	% Reporting Positive Change
I understand and support the mission of 4-H Youth Development and can talk about it with people who are not familiar with 4-H.	22% (2)	78% (7)
I am knowledgeable about the scope of programs offered by Washington County 4-H.	11% (1)	89% (8)
I act as a goodwill ambassador for Washington County 4-H.	55% (5)	45% (4)
I know how the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association operates and what it supports.	11% (1)	89% (8)
I am aware of the challenges that affect the Washington County 4-H program.	0% (0)	100% (9)
I understand the changing youth population in the county and the need to adapt the 4-H program to better serve all Washington County youth.	11% (1)	89% (8)
N = 9 of 16 Leadership Skills	% Reporting No Change	% Reporting Positive Change
My contributions can make a difference in the Washington County 4-H program.	45% (4)	55% (5)
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	22% (2)	78% (7)
I can effectively share ideas with others.	55% (5)	45% (4)
I can be a resource to other people in the Washington County 4-H program.	45% (4)	55% (5)

Table 2: Average Response to Each Indicator

N = 9 of 16 4-H Advocacy & Support	Average “Before” Program	Average “After” Program	Net Change
Scale: (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree			
I understand and support the mission of 4-H Youth Development and can talk about it with people who are not familiar with 4-H.	2.67	3.67	+1.00
I am knowledgeable about the scope of programs offered by Washington County 4-H.	2.56	3.67	+1.11
I act as a goodwill ambassador for Washington County 4-H.	2.78	3.11	+0.33
I know how the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association operates and what it supports.	1.89	3.67	+1.78
I am aware of the challenges that affect the Washington County 4-H program.	2.00	3.22	+1.22
I understand the changing youth population in the county and the need to adapt the 4-H program to better serve all Washington County youth.	2.11	3.89	+1.78

N = 9 of 16 Leadership Skills	Average “Before” Program	Average “After” Program	Net Change
Scale: (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree			
My contributions can make a difference in the Washington County 4-H program.	2.67	3.22	+0.55
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	2.56	3.44	+0.88
I can effectively share ideas with others.	2.67	3.33	+0.66
I can be a resource to other people in the Washington County 4-H program.	2.67	3.44	+0.77

The most notable net changes were in two areas: the respondents’ understanding of how the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association operates; and the respondents’ understanding of the youth population in Washington County and how 4-H adapts to better serve all Washington County youth. Of the leadership skill categories, the most notable net change was in respondents’ increased ability to see issues from multiple perspectives.

Qualitative Data Collected:

Respondents were asked to answer open-ended questions about the impact of their board service. The following quotes are highlights selected from those responses.

What positive or valuable experiences and skills did you gain from being a member of the board?

- *I learned how to audit a checkbook.*
- *Being on the board has helped my skills speaking to a group.*
- *I met so many people and had so many experiences that have impacted me and will impact me for the rest of my life.*
- *I overcame my reluctance to volunteer for more than just being “on the board” by getting more involved at meetings.*
- *Learned better skills for working with others, particularly older youth, learned listening skills, learned skills for encouraging others.*

Did Washington County 4-H Leaders Association use your talents effectively while serving on the board? Why or why not?

- *Yes, I am not a “program” person, by my business experience was used effectively.*
- *Absolutely! There were a lot of committees and volunteer opportunities to choose from, and it seemed to just work out that we were all able to choose service opportunities that worked well with our skill sets.*
- *Yes the Leaders Board used my talents to their fullest and even brought out more talents that I didn’t know I had.*

What did you enjoy about your time on the board?

- *The people I got to know, meeting new 4-H families.*
- *What I enjoyed the most was the people and the experiences offered.*

- *Getting to know board members from different parts of the county and with different perspectives on 4-H.*
- *Got to meet other adults + youth that are valuable to our county and brought back things I learned from their meeting to my club.*

Respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for improving board operations. Based on their suggestions, the following changes have been implemented:

- The committee selection process has become more interactive and board members have the chance to learn about specific committee duties before signing up.
- Youth board members lead an icebreaker activity at each meeting to keep the board meetings engaging and to facilitate interaction among members.

Implications:

Washington County 4-H Leaders Association Board members increase their understanding of the 4-H program and of Washington County youths' needs as a result of their board involvement. Serving on the board also strengthens board members' ability to see an issue from multiple perspectives. This is a valuable skill that youth and adults can apply in other contexts.

The UW-Extension Washington County 4-H Youth Development staff and the current members of the Washington County 4-H Leaders Association board can turn to this feedback to be intentional in board development. Activities and structures that support leadership development can be included in typical board operations. Service on the board is not only valuable for the organization and its mission, but also for the individual board member and his or her own growth as a leader.

