# Youth at Legislative Briefing

Center for Youth Development

## Objectives

### Participants will:

- Understand the public and private values of Extension programming
- Understand legislative jargon and processes
- Research legislators, their committee involvement, and party positions
- Prepare and refine a personal 4-H story to share with legislators

### Time:

- 90 minutes

### Group Size:

- 10-20 youth

### Materials:

- Name tags – one per youth
- Folders with copies of Agenda, Know Your Senator & Representative Worksheet, Representative worksheet, Public Speaking Tips, Power Point, several sheets of lined paper – one per youth
- Laptop computer – one per youth, or have them bring own
- PowerPoint presentation and projector
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Muffins, juice, snacks
- Large poster paper
- Sticky note pads – 5 pads

## Background

Having found value in participating in the Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) and Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) conferences, Nicole Pokorney, Extension Educator, was interested in finding ways to share learning about the public value of Extension with youth involved in Extension programs. To pilot a potential program, a select group of the current Minnesota 4-H State Ambassadors was identified to participate as part of University ofMinnesota Extension's Legislative Action Day. Youth are a very important component of Extension's work in the state, but have historically not been involved in this event.

Intended Outcomes and activities of the Legislative Briefing Youth Session:

- Learn about issues facing Extension in the upcoming legislative session;
- Increase awareness of Extension initiatives around the state;
- Visit with elected officials to advocate for Extension and 4-H programs;
- Engage with other youth leaders to learn about the importance of civic engagement and youth voice.

## Set up

All Legislative Briefing accommodations and scheduling will come from the Dean's Office. Prior to session, invite members of the Dean's Office to stop by and welcome the youth. Have youth participants bring their own laptops, or acquire laptops – one per participant.Facility will need wireless internet accessibility. Create a welcoming environment by prepping all materials and setting up PowerPoint to display Welcome slide (Slide 1.) Put all copies in folders and have them ready for youth to pick up as they arrive. Put sticky note pads and writing utensils around tables. On large poster paper, write, "YOUTH EXPECTATIONS" and hang on the wall. Hang several other poster papers on wall to use for listing answers throughout the session.

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## Procedures

1. Welcome youth as they arrive. Begin by handing out name tags, allowing youth to write their name. Have youth pick up folders with handouts and invite them to have a light breakfast.

2. (Slide 2) Say, “The University Legislative Briefing gives 4-H youth and adults the opportunity to learn about the University of Minnesota and meet with their legislators and government officials to positively promote the impacts of Extension. We welcome you to the youth session of the Legislative Briefing! In your folders, you will see several documents. Please take out the PowerPoint handout. There is room for you to take notes throughout the session. In our time together, we want to make sure you, as participants:

    - Understand the public and private values of Extension programming;
    - Understand legislative jargon and processes;
    - Research legislators, their committee involvement, and party positions; and
    - Prepare and refine a personal 4-H story to share with legislators

3. (Slide 3) Say, “Please take out the agenda. This agenda is primarily developed at the Dean’s Office for this event. The highlighted areas are when we will be together as a youth group.” Go over the agenda and ask if there are any questions.

4. “There are expectations of you as youth participants at this University event. We, as adult leaders, expect that you will fully participate in all activities, including meals. We would like for you to challenge yourself, be engaged in reflection, help us to evaluate the experience, and of course, have fun. We want to know your expectations, also! On the sticky notes, please write an expectation per sticky note that you have of this learning experience. When you have written them all, please place them on the large poster paper on the wall. We will revisit these at the end of the event in our reflection time.” Allow youth to complete activity.

5. (Slide 4) Say, “We are going to dive right into the session. 4-H is part of the Extension Center for Youth Development, which is part of the University of Minnesota. How we receive funding and dollars to effectively run our programs is highly important. When we visit the legislators, we will be discussing the private and public value of our programs. Private value is important to those that participate in it. Why are 4-H and the University of Minnesota important to you?” Allow youth to share answers. Share why they are personally important to you, if needed. List reasons on poster paper.

6. (Slide 5) Say, “Now, we are going to explore why our programs are important to those who do not directly involved with them. Who might this be? Why are Extension and the programs important to them?” Allow youth to think and share answers. Write these reasons on the board.

7. (Slide 6) Say, “These are great reasons for us and others to support the University of Minnesota Extension programming. Our work here at the Legislative Briefing is to share those reasons to the legislators that make the funding decisions to our state. Throughout today, you are going to craft a statement that you will give when you meet the legislators. In your folder are several pieces of lined paper and pens and pencils are available on the table. At this time, we are going to explore these questions and begin to write your public value statement. What is one sentence that you would tell someone that was not involved in 4-H why they should support the program.”

    Allow youth to discuss the questions and work on the statement. Give the youth time for sharing what they are writing and editing. When all feel that they are to a final stage, have each participant share their sentence to the group. Allow youth to give feedback to each other. “We will continue to work on the statements and develop a larger personal story in our time together.”

8. Break for 10-15 minutes.

9. (Slide 7) Display the website, http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/faq/faqtoc.aspx?subject=18. Say, "I want you to have a common understanding of some of the terms that you will hear throughout the Legislative Briefing and visits. You may remember some of these terms and definitions from your classes at school." Go over some of the more commonly used terms from the list, allowing questions and clarifications.

   Have youth turn on laptops and direct them to the website shown on the slide, http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/. Have youth take out the worksheet, Know Your Senator & Representative. Say, "A very important piece in sharing your story is to know your audience. We are going to take some time to explore your represents you and where you're from. Using the worksheet, Know Your Senator and Representative, use the website to find out more about them." Allow time for youth to complete the activity. If more than one youth is from a district, then they can work together.

   When all have completed the worksheet, use the following questions for reflective discussion:

   - What did you learn about your legislators?
   - What did you have in common? What are some differences?
   - What did you learn about your legislators that will help in sharing your story?
   - What do you foresee may be some barriers to fully supporting the University and Extension?
   - How can you craft your story differently according to their interests, priorities, or other information?

   Say, "Now look at your public value statement again. Take some time to edit it that you know your audience." Allow time for youth to ask questions and edit statement.

10. (Slide 8) Say, "Now we're going to put it all together for your story that you will share with your legislators. You may only have 2-3 minutes to talk when you do your visits, so you want to be able to get your message out precisely. Take out a new piece of writing paper. I want you to take some time and write down your story of why 4-H is so important to you. Do you have an experience that really defines who you are? Are there characteristics or skills that you gain in 4-H and how? Are there adults or others that have guided you throughout your 4-H career and what have they meant to you? Take time now to write this story."

    Be available for youth to ask questions. When all have finished writing, have them share their story to the group.

11. Say, "Now we are going to incorporate your public value statement into your personal story." Allow time for youth to complete this activity. "This afternoon and evening, you will hear more from the Dean and the University President about the request for funding and specifically how to ask for the funds. This will also be added to your story. For now, we will continue to edit what you have written into a concise speech. Allow time for writing and sharing.

12. Say, "The last important step is to practice! Please take out the Public Speaking Tips handout from your folders." Go over the sheet, allowing for questions and discussion. "We are going to perform mock visits. Pretend that I am your legislator. I can only give you 5 minutes out of my very busy day. By using everything that we've done so far today, practice sharing your story with me." Have youth go in pairs to perform this activity. Allow for feedback from other youth and time for questions.

13. (Slide 9) Use the following reflection questions for program and learning evaluation:

    - What did you enjoy about your experience at the Legislative Briefing event?
    - What are the areas you think need improvement?
    - What was challenging, but a good learning opportunity?
    - In what areas did you not feel prepared going into the legislative visits?
    - What would be your learning statement from this experience?

Authored by Nicole Pokorney, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development, 2014.

# KNOW YOUR SENATOR

Senator's Name: _____

District#: _____

Political Party and Position Held in Party:_____

_____

Length of Service in Minnesota House/Senate: _____

Other Elected Positions Served in the Past:

_____

_____

House/Senate Committee Assignments:

_____

_____

_____

Special Interests or Priorities:

_____

_____

Important Recent Bills Voted on and How he/she Voted:

_____

_____

_____

Interesting Biographical Information:

_____

_____

# KNOW YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Representative's Name:

_____

District#: _____

Political Party and Position Held in Party:

_____

_____

Length of Service in Minnesota House/Senate: _____

Other Elected Positions Served in the Past:

_____

_____

House/Senate Committee Assignments:

_____

_____

_____

Special Interests or Priorities:

_____

_____

Important Recent Bills Voted on and How he/she Voted:

_____

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_____

Interesting Biographical Information:

_____

_____

# Public Speaking Tips

## BODY LANGUAGE

When meeting someone new, shake their hand and introduce yourself (My name is X and I'm from X District. I am in 4-H in X County). During conversations/presentations, stand up straight, don't fidget, and keep hands out of pockets. Crossed arms can communicate defensiveness and opposition. Fidgeting can communicate boredom or lack of attention. Smile! A blank facial expression can indicate disinterest and even hostility.

## MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT

Eye contact communicates that you are interested and attentive to the person you are talking with. If speaking to a group, make eye contact with a new person in the group every three seconds so everyone feels engaged by you.

## SPEAK WITH CONVICTION

Enthusiasm about your subject says you really believe in what you are saying. This will persuade your audience more effectively.

## LISTEN

Communication is a two-way process; getting your message across depends on understating the other person.

## TAKE YOUR TIME

Speak slowly and clearly. Many people get nervous when speaking in public and unconsciously speak fast, rushing words together and becoming unintelligible. Enunciate your words.

## KEEP IT SHORT

Practice telling your story and getting to the point as quickly as possible. It's easy to get off track as you tell a story and you may forget your key messages in the moment.

## USE EXAMPLES

People understand your message best when it's illustrated with specific examples. (I learned valuable life skills vs. I learned public speaking skills when I presented on X topic to X groups).

Adapted from: Huckaby, W. (2011). Minnesota 4-H State Ambassador Orientation