

Merced County 4-H Grows Committee

Strategic Plan of Action (2026–2027)

Executive Summary

The Merced County 4-H Grows Committee was convened to expand equitable access to 4-H Youth Development Program (YDP) opportunities under conditions of limited staffing, time, and financial resources. Through a structured, multi-meeting planning process, the committee identified priority communities, barriers to participation, and scalable strategies for program growth.

This Plan of Action outlines a high-leverage, partnership-driven expansion model that:

- Prioritizes underserved communities (Livingston, Delhi, Planada, Beechwood–Franklin)
- Expands beyond traditional club delivery
- Utilizes youth, volunteers, and partners to extend capacity
- Aligns with state and UC ANR strategic priorities for equity, access, and community impact

1. Context and Need

Recent enrollment trends show fluctuations and recent declines in youth participation, indicating the need to:

- Re-engage communities not currently served
- Adapt delivery methods to better meet community needs
- Build sustainable systems for growth

The committee's work is grounded in:

- The 4-H Beyond Ready Framework (youth outcomes: healthy, productive, engaged)
- The Thriving Model (sparks, belonging, relationships, engagement)
- UC ANR's commitment to equity, inclusion, and community-based solutions
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2. Key Findings from Committee Process

Priority Communities

- Livingston
- Delhi
- Planada
- Beechwood–Franklin

Key Barriers

- Limited awareness and understanding of 4-H
- Language and cultural disconnects
- Over-reliance on traditional club models
- Limited local volunteer infrastructure

Program Design Insights

- High interest in:
 - Creative expression
 - Short, hands-on activities
- Need for:
 - Flexible entry points
 - Family onboarding/orientation
 - Clear expectations

Strategic Insight

Expansion must be relationship-based, culturally responsive, and structurally flexible, not simply an extension of existing club models.

3. Strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Expand Geographic Reach

- Focus on establishing programs in identified communities using flexible delivery modes.

Priority 2: Strengthen Outreach and Recruitment

- Develop culturally responsive, relationship-based outreach systems.

Priority 3: Implement Meaningful Diversity Training

- Ensure all volunteers and partners are equipped to serve diverse populations.

Priority 4: Build Sustainable Delivery Systems

- Leverage teens, volunteers, and partners to expand capacity.

Priority 5: Establish Continuous Evaluation and Improvement

- Implement simple, actionable evaluation processes tied to outcomes.

4. Implementation Strategy

4.1 Delivery Model Shift

Utilize multiple 4-H delivery modes:

- Afterschool programs
- Short-term (SPIN) clubs
- School enrichment programs

This reduces barriers and accelerates entry into new communities.

4.2 Partnership-Based Expansion

Primary growth mechanism:

- Schools
- Community organizations
- Faith-based groups

Aligned with UC ANR's emphasis on collaborative, community-based engagement

4.3 Youth and Volunteer Capacity Model

- Expand teen leadership roles
- Utilize volunteers in defined, task-specific roles
- Integrate youth as outreach ambassadors

Aligned with county operating procedures emphasizing youth and volunteer leadership

4.4 Program Design Model

Programs will:

- Begin with low-commitment entry experiences
- Emphasize sparks and belonging
- Transition participants into deeper engagement pathways
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5. Evaluation Framework

Quantitative Metrics

- Number of new communities served
- Enrollment growth in target areas
- Demographic representation
- Number of partnerships established

Qualitative Metrics

- Youth sense of belonging
- Parent understanding and satisfaction
- Partner feedback

Annual Review Process

- Conduct parity and access review
- Adjust strategies based on findings
- Report outcomes to Administrative Oversight

6. First-Year Implementation Timeline

Phase 1 (0–3 Months)

- Finalize partnerships in 2–3 communities

- Develop outreach materials (bilingual)
- Recruit teen outreach team

Phase 2 (3–6 Months)

- Launch pilot programs
- Conduct family onboarding sessions
- Begin evaluation tracking

Phase 3 (6–12 Months)

- Expand to additional sites
- Refine programming based on feedback
- Conduct annual evaluation and reporting

7. Sustainability Strategy

- Build long-term partnerships
- Develop local volunteer pipelines
- Institutionalize teen leadership roles
- Align programming with strategic plans and funding opportunities

APPENDIX A: Detailed Action Plan Matrix

Goal Area 1: Geographic Expansion

Objective	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline	Resources	Success Indicators
Launch programs in priority communities	Identify and secure host sites (schools, orgs)	Staff + Committee	0–3 months	Partner relationships	2–3 sites secured
	Pilot SPIN/afterschool programs	Staff + Volunteers	3–6 months	Curriculum, volunteers	Programs launched
	Expand to additional communities	Committee	6–12 months	Partnerships	Increased reach

Goal Area 2: Outreach

Objective	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline	Resources	Success Indicators
Increase awareness	Develop bilingual materials	Staff	0–3 months	Translation support	Materials distributed
	Conduct community presentations	Teens + Staff	Ongoing	Youth leaders	Attendance at events
	Build partner referral system	Committee	Ongoing	Partner network	Referral increase

Goal Area 3: Diversity Training

Objective	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline	Resources	Success Indicators
Deliver annual training	Identify training partners	Committee	0–3 months	Community orgs	Partner secured
	Conduct training sessions	Staff	Annual	Facilitators	Participation rates
	Integrate into onboarding	Staff	Ongoing	Training materials	Volunteer readiness

Goal Area 4: Sustainable Systems

Objective	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline	Resources	Success Indicators
Expand teen leadership	Create teen outreach team	Staff	0–3 months	Youth leaders	Team formed
	Train teen instructors	Staff	3–6 months	Training modules	Teens active
	Define volunteer roles	Committee	Ongoing	Role descriptions	Volunteer retention

Goal Area 5: Evaluation

Objective	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline	Resources	Success Indicators
Track program effectiveness	Develop simple metrics	Staff	0–3 months	Data tools	Metrics in use
	Collect feedback	Staff + Partners	Ongoing	Surveys	Feedback collected
	Conduct annual review	Committee	Annual	Reports	Adjusted plan

APPENDIX B: Alignment Summary

This Plan of Action aligns with:

- **4-H Strategic Plan 2023–2028**
Focus on access, equity, and meaningful engagement
- **UC ANR Strategic Vision 2040**
Emphasis on thriving communities and partnerships
- **4-H Delivery Mode Framework**
Supports diversified program delivery
- **Beyond Ready Framework**
Prepares youth for life and work through holistic development