



April 2021



FOURWARD FUND

IMPACT REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a screeching halt.

But 4-H is committed to moving **FOURWARD.** We wanted to continue to build on the momentum of almost 120 years of positive youth development, and be a resource when kids needed us most. That's why we created the FOURWARD Fund in March 2020 — so we could support our Cooperative Extension System partners as they met the needs of kids across the country.

The first FOURWARD Fund grants were awarded in July 2020. And since then, 4-H educators and volunteers have been actively engaging young people in creative and fun ways – giving them continuous access to activities that engage, experiences that inspire, and mentors who empower. We are proud to share these stories with our 4-H family of supporters.

24
Grants Awarded

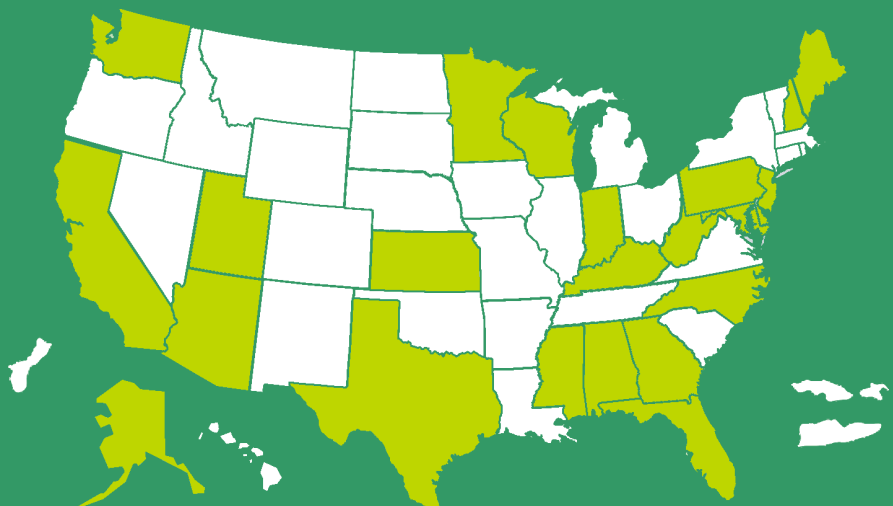
17,395
Estimated Youth
Reached



\$299,000
Awarded

Applications Awarded in 23 States

All applications that met National 4-H Council's eligibility requirements were considered, and the most competitive programs outlined a plan to reach kids from historically underserved, low-income communities with limited access to broadband and other educational resources.



Grant Dispersement Data as of April 2021

542
Donors

TEXAS

Grow, Garden, Grow!

Donations to the FOURWARD Fund powered the 4-H At-Home Garden Series, a program that sparked a passion for gardening in 224 kids from underserved communities in Texas.

With the help of adult volunteers from Prairie View A&M University, 4-H teen ambassadors created a six-lesson video series guiding participants through the fundamentals of gardening. Each video included instructions for a hands-on project, and supply kits were mailed to homes with everything needed to complete the activity.

The program's core message: no matter where you live or how much space you have, you can grow something. Judging by the survey results, participants agree. They not only have a newfound interest in gardening, they may even consider a related field for their career path.

Lessons:



Plants 101



Soil & Water



Flowers



Veggies & Herbs



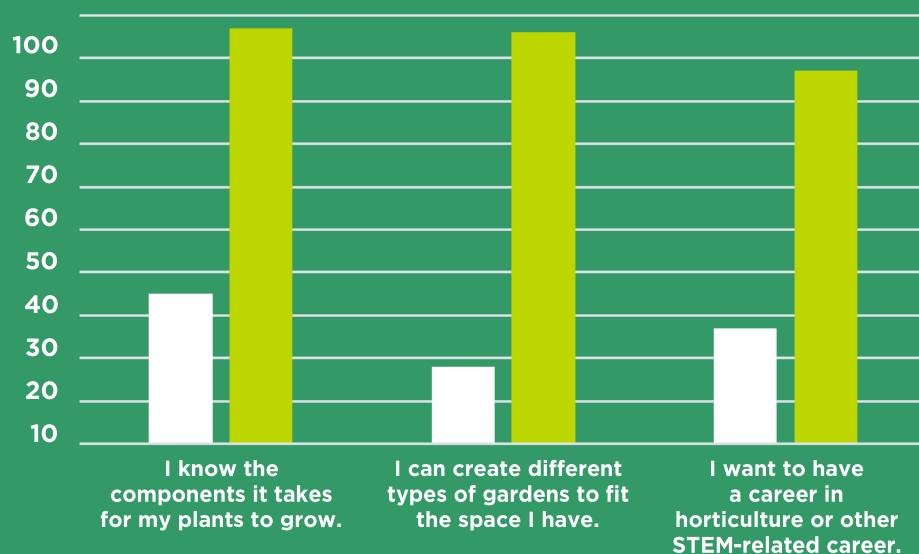
Wildlife in the Garden



Gardening for You



Youth Survey



Youth who took part in the 4-H At-Home Garden Series demonstrated a newfound passion for gardening, including increased knowledge and skills. 144 of 224 participants responded.

■ "Yes" before series

■ "Yes" after series

MARYLAND

Virtual Programming, Real-Life Impact

Through the FOURWARD Fund, University of Maryland was able to engage hundreds of kids in two virtual programs: 4-H Issues Forum and Summer Camp.

Issues Forum

The 4-H Issues Forum is a leadership development event for teens that focuses on social justice issues. In 2020, the issue was access to clean water—brought to life by guest speakers and breakout sessions with experts. The free, one-day event was followed by a challenge to the participants: *identify challenges related to water quality within your community, and develop a plan to meet that need*. With support from the FOURWARD Fund, the forum's 35 participants have been busy in their communities creating rain gardens, advocating for clean water, and educating others about the impact of plastic water bottles.

Summer Camp

"While the idea of taking something known for being technology-free and running it virtually seemed hard," explained 4-H educator Amanda Wahle, "the thought of a summer without camp was harder." Amanda and a team of 4-H educators, volunteers and teen leaders rallied together to build a two-week virtual summer camp that reached more than 250 young people. Thanks to the FOURWARD Fund, participants were able to enjoy engaging content, hands-on activities and real connection.

Participants had access to free online lessons plans, and could also opt for a camp-in-a-box delivery. The boxes included all supplies needed to complete the 50+ camp activities as well as an official camp T-shirt. This allowed the 4-H team to reach more young people, and provide scholarships to those who couldn't afford a typical camp experience—even providing more than \$500 worth of camp supplies to youth in a local homeless shelter.

"I have attended Maryland 4-H camps for the last 28 years and worked with the Maryland 4-H program for almost 10. No one understands the power of camp more than I do. Watching the team of people come together to make the power of camp happen even when all the odds were against us was one of the greatest moments of my career."

– Amanda Wahle,
4-H Youth Development Specialist



"We all learned so much and didn't want it to end! I loved the mix of live events, activities at home, and support videos. You guys proved COVID won't ruin camp plans. My daughter is medically fragile...and she was THRILLED to be able to join in on all of the fun [without COVID concerns]."

– Parent

250
Campers



23
Youth
Scholarships

50-100
Youth Tuned in
Per Live Session



7

Camp-in-a-Box Sets
for Homeless Kids



MISSISSIPPI

Rockets to the Rescue

Through Mississippi 4-H, young people sought to address some of the most pressing challenges of 2020. For example, how might we deliver vital resources like food and medicine in a time of widespread upheaval? Especially to rural, isolated communities?

One solution might be rockets. Youth at Alcorn State University's Science Academy learned about aerospace engineering, including a design for a rocket-like device that could transport food and supplies. The highly relevant STEM programming made possible by the FOURWARD Fund also included hands-on learning about biofuels and computer technology, along with information about careers in agriculture and applied sciences.

“It’s amazing to watch kids’ eyes light up when they see science in action—especially when it’s so hands-on. They learn that science, engineering and technology is not just for scientists and engineers ...it’s for everyone.”

— Tommy Milton,
4-H Youth Educator

The program reached 242 students of color
(many of them from limited-resource communities) and trained 25 teen ambassadors.



KENTUCKY

A Club for Connection

The shift to distance learning has not been easy. In Jefferson County, Kentucky, student engagement dropped off dramatically: nearly 4,500 students, many from disadvantaged communities, never checked in after the first week of online classes.

Moving quickly to change that, leaders in the school district collaborated with 4-H and the Kentucky State Cooperative Extension team to create Club KYSU, a user-friendly, online community platform. Made possible by donations to the FOURWARD FUND, the platform provides culturally relevant activities, workshops, academic resources and social and emotional support. Emphasizing self-care, connection and a sense of belonging, the creators of Club KYSU hope the program will play a role in reducing disparities among young people in some of Kentucky's most vulnerable populations.

Youth Survey



Topics Covered:



Bullying



Mass-Shooting Prevention



Mental Illness



Land-Use Conflict



Policing



Voting

4-H Civic Engagement programs empower young people to make a difference in the world—even during a pandemic, and especially in times of widespread division and unrest. At Kansas State University, the FOURWARD Fund supported one such program that helped youth from historically underrepresented communities develop communication skills needed for healthy civic discourse.

The Stories Matter series, adapted for virtual learning, included an exploration of visual thinking strategies as well as an in-depth conversation boot camp. For example, a leadership group comprised of underrepresented students was able to reach 250 of their peers after being trained as facilitators for all three components of the series. In total, more than 50 young people were trained as facilitators and hundreds of diverse youth were reached through small virtual trainings, school-wide events, and state 4-H events.

KANSAS

Communications Skills for Civic Engagement

NEW JERSEY

Kits for Kids, Fun for Families

During a time of widespread isolation, New Jersey 4-H prioritized *connection*. They wanted to show young people the importance of connecting with family, friends, community, learning, and fun...and found a way to do it safely and effectively.

Through the New Jersey 4-H Connections Project, 4-H educators at Rutgers University developed and distributed activity kits to limited-resource youth and their families across 11 counties. They partnered with 21 sites across New Jersey—including community organization centers, food distribution centers, churches and a library—to distribute 525 activity kits.

The weekly kits contained supplies and directions for hands-on activities that encouraged the whole family to participate. Activities included making bread in a bag, designing a spoon launcher, conducting a bubble experiment, creating a balloon rocket, and more. Youth were also invited to participate in monthly video calls to discuss the activities. In total, 1,200 young people and their families were served through this project.

This new delivery model for positive youth development has had substantial, far-reaching effects. Strengthening partnerships within the community has allowed New Jersey 4-H to reach more kids and create greater access to educational resources and social-emotional support. At one distribution site, staff were so inspired by the impact they witnessed that they decided to establish their own 4-H club!

96%

Of participants
enjoyed the
activities

96%

Of participants
learned
something new

92%

Of participants
cultivated their
interest in science

**“The kits have
been very popular. It has
honestly been a blessing for the
families to receive them.”**

—Distribution Site Volunteer

**“Thank you! Being everything
is virtual, it was a good way to get
families together doing hands-on
activities minus screen time.”**

—Parent



WISCONSIN

Conservation, Connection and Community

Young people dedicated thousands of hours to conservation efforts—and realized their own power to change the world—with help from the FOURWARD Fund.

In collaboration with Upham Woods Outdoor Learning, 4-H program leaders from University of Wisconsin-Madison were able to adapt their 10k Conservation Challenge to meet the needs of remote learners. Through litter patrols, water-quality studies, invasive species pulls and more, youth participants learned by doing. A few small groups also completed in-person conservation projects (with social distancing and other safety protocols in place), including a day of trail-building and kayaking.

In a matter of months, the program recorded more than 2,000 hours of service. In return, the participants—many of whom live in low-income, urban areas or rural communities without Internet access—gained an in-depth understanding of the art and science of conservation.

“I was so excited to see some Indian Pipe coming up while I was pulling Buckthorn and Crown Vetch. It felt like I was making room for something that really should be there. I also found delicious black cap berries. Thanks!”

— Monica L., during a Buckthorn Invasive Species Pull





We're so grateful for the impact our supporters make on young lives, and for their commitment to the positive youth development movement. The FOURWARD Fund helped 4-H reach thousands of kids because of the generosity of our donors, trustees and the following corporate partners:

