

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Idaho's 4-H Learn, Engage, Act, Develop, Summit (LEADS) builds youth leadership

### AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development LEADS provides youth with the foundation they need to achieve long-term positive development outcomes in their communities.

### The Situation

Positive Youth Development (PYD) can profoundly impact youth through an environment that fosters a sense of belonging. Idaho's 4-H programs provide youth the opportunity to explore their Sparks (or passionate interests) alongside supportive peers and adults. However, 4-H professionals found that youth had limited opportunities for leadership roles and ways to increase engagement in their communities.

### Our Response

Held over a weekend in the fall, 4-H LEADS is open to youth in grades eighth through 12 from all delivery modes (Club, Camp, Afterschool, In-School, Military Partnership, Juntos, etc.). This new program promotes Sparks, Belonging and Relationships while empowering Youth Voice to Lead to Change within their 4-H club, school and/or community. With an emphasis on leadership development, the program provides learning and teaching opportunities for teens in the areas of agricultural sciences, health & well-being, STEM and expressive arts.

The objective of LEADS is to challenge youth in supportive ways to encourage them to learn, grow and improve their leadership skills through various



4-H youth participate in an AgRobotics class to help lead classes in their counties. Photo by Mike Knutz.

workshops ranging from drones and robots to art and fomenting change in the community. Youth from across the state formed a steering committee to plan out the format of LEADS and ensured topics and activities were of interest to participants.

### Program Outcomes

For three days, dedicated volunteers and UI Extension 4-H professionals worked directly with youth to help positively impact youth participation by giving them the opportunity to lead. LEADS was planned with youth voice and choice in mind. By working with other motivated participants, youth chose their areas of interest and took what they learned to implement in their counties and community. To determine if LEADS was successful and a quality program, we used the 4-H

Thriving Model evaluation instrument which identifies and predicts specific factors influencing program quality. Data was collected from 53 of 75 youth who participated. The Developmental Context Instrument measures the extent to which youth experience spark, sense of belonging and developmental relationships with adults in the program.

Data is determined as follows:

- Very low-quality experience = 1.0 to 2.2
- Low quality experience = 2.3 to 3.5
- Moderately quality experience = 3.6 to 4.8
- High quality experience = 4.9 to 6.1
- Very high-quality experience = 6.1 to 7.0

According to the data in Table 1, LEADS was perceived as a very high-quality program with an overall developmental context score of 6.13 which is a significant predictor of Youth Thriving and Positive Youth Developmental Outcomes.

While all 4-H youth programs provide quality experiences for youth, LEADS was ranked the highest quality of the statewide teen programs.

This can be attributed to youth taking charge of their own learning. Here are how some of the teens responded to their workshops.

- “I liked the opportunity to lead.”
- “We were able to learn about making real change.”
- “It was really interesting and interactive.”

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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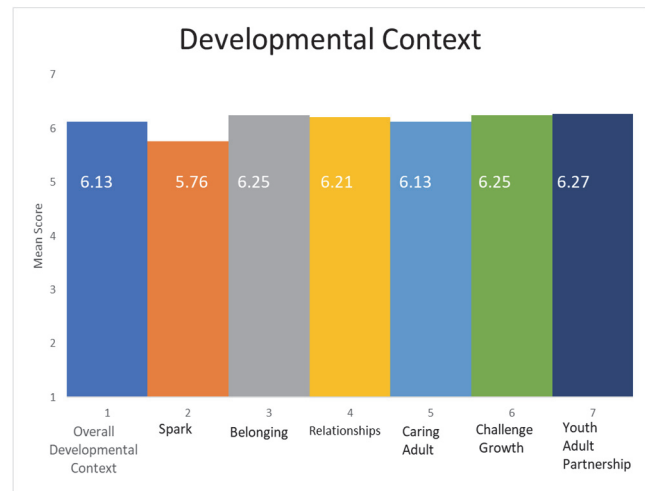
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- “I can help with problems in my community.”
- “The workshops all had interesting topics.”

Table 1. Youth responses LEADS mean score.



## The Future

Given the success of LEADS and the high impact scores, we plan to continue LEADS next fall. Additionally, to increase leadership opportunities, we will incorporate sessions that allow for youth teaching and facilitation.