

impact

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

Youth grow their knowledge of government, and skills in teamwork and speaking

AT A GLANCE

The Idaho 4-H Know Your Government Conference builds important skills for preparing youth to be ready for success in work and life.

The Situation

The National Network of Business and Industry Associations have identified “People Skills” like teamwork, communication and respect as skills all employees need. Youth today need opportunities to build life skills to prepare them to be ready for life and work.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development educators and volunteers work with youth leaders to plan and host the Idaho 4-H Know Your Government (KYG) Conference held over the President’s Day weekend. Youth practice positive social norms like respecting others and acting professionally as they debate bills in the Capitol Hearing Rooms. Likewise, youth in the judicial track, practice positive social norms like respecting others and acting professionally while participating in mock bill hearings held in the Capitol and mock trials at the Ada County Courthouse. Nine University of Idaho Law students (members of the Agricultural Law Society) assisted youth in preparing for their role as judges, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys and witnesses. Over 160 youth in grades 8-11 from across Idaho were supported by 47 adults through the three-day conference in Boise.



2025 youth delegates and 4-H professionals and volunteers pose for a photo on the steps of the Capitol.

Members of Idaho’s Legislature and lobbyist speak to participants in the legislative track about how a bill becomes a law and coach them in persuasive communication while debating the bill. In the judicial track, participants learn legal terms and procedures for bringing a case to court and then demonstrate what they have learned through a mock trial. In addition to increasing youth participants’ understanding of Idaho government, the program aims to improve leadership, communication and prosocial skills.

Program Outcomes

At the conclusion of the conference, youth were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the value of their experience. Of the 160-youth attending, 98 responded regarding their experience increasing some

key life skills. After their KYG experience, 100% reported increased knowledge of government 99% improved their ability to act professionally and be on time

- 98% believe more in their ability to be a successful leader
- 97% are more comfortable with public speaking
- 96% reported a greater interest in helping others in their community.

The bar graph below reports the number of youth and the level to which each statement is true or not after their experience at KYG. Youth had the option of replying: a lot less true, a little less true, somewhat less true, somewhat more true, a little more true, a lot more true. Youth were also given the opportunity to write statements regarding the value and benefits of the conference. The following is a sample of what participants had to say.

“This convention was very beneficial for my knowledge and leadership skills and public speaking.”

“I have really grown as a leader and improved my public speaking skills.”

“I gained experience in sharing how I feel about something to a group of people professionally and effectively.”

“It has taught me more maturity.”

“I learned how to run a proper court case.”

“Reminded me the importance of being kind to adults and peers.”

“I got to meet new people, and it made me think about going to law school.”

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The Idaho 4-H Know Your Government Conference is funded in part by registration fees and largely by the support of the following sponsors and donors: Ag West Farm Credit, Idaho Farm Bureau, Attorneys for Civic Education, Idaho Law Foundation, Idaho 4-H Volunteer Association and the Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau. Donors include: Benewah County 4-H Association, Elizabeth Kohtz Veterinary, Twin Falls County Farm Bureau and William Mauldin.



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