Youth, Family, and Community Theme

Issue Statement

The strength and future of Alaska is in its youth, families and communities. Many Alaska youth lack basic life skills and opportunities necessary to be productive members of their communities. This deficiency of positive life skill development is likely to lead to problems with the future growth and development of the state.

Many families face difficulties in providing for their daily needs. Alaska has some of the highest rates in the nation of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and violence against women, teen pregnancy and suicide.

Community development is enhanced through civic participation and active leadership of youth and adults, which is lacking in many communities. All communities whether urban or rural strive for growth, cultural vibrancy, self-reliance and local governance, however, a general lack of understanding of the processes in place for local participation often results in political and economic decisions being made in the urban areas of the state.

Goals

1. **Strengthen positive youth development in Extension’s outreach to families and communities.**

2. **Teach life skills to adults and families and prepare them for success in the home, workplace and community.**

3. **Strengthen the health and resiliency of Alaska’s communities.**

**Goal 1:** Strengthen positive youth development in Extension’s outreach to families and communities.

**Objective 1:** Increase the number of 4-H and youth development experiences for Alaska youth and their families.

**Strategy 1:** Establish and maintain informed programming groups (e.g., advisory councils) in each district or locality as appropriate, with balanced representation of the communities actively involved in planning, implementing and evaluating programs.

**Strategy 2:** Identify and build partnerships and coalitions with other agencies, organizations and institutions to address youth issues and extend coalition-building assistance to localities.

**Strategy 3:** Adapt current processes of involving caring adults without compromising safety of youth.

**Strategy 4:** Provide a variety of training options and ongoing support for adults in working with youth.
Strategy 5: Promote the value of 4-H and positive youth development across the state through increased marketing efforts such as an enhanced web presence and other contemporary communication tools.

Objective 2: Increase youth access to research-based curricula and programs that emphasize positive youth development through the essential elements of 4-H: mastery, independence, generosity and belonging.

Strategy 1: Identify, adapt and create curricula and programs that emphasize positive youth development through the essential elements of 4-H.

Strategy 2: Develop surveys and evaluations that document the need for and measure the impact of programming.

Strategy 3: Partner with Extension colleagues and others in developing local, regional and state learning experiences emphasizing positive youth development in all Extension programs.

Goal 2: Teach life skills to adults and families preparing them for success in the home, workplace and community.

Objective 1: Provide opportunities to families to attain healthy living.

Strategy 1: Identify, develop and create programs and curricula on healthy living.

Strategy 2: Help adults and families develop life skills by identifying and engaging in lifelong learning opportunities.

Strategy 3: Identify integrated and multistate opportunities that increase Extension’s effectiveness in delivering family programs.

Goal 3: Strengthen the health and resiliency of Alaska’s communities.

Objective 1: Increase citizen participation in developing and sustaining healthy communities.

Strategy 1: Provide technical assistance and/or skill training in facilitation, planning, needs assessment and project evaluation.

Strategy 2: Provide small cities, villages and unincorporated communities with technical support and training in resource development, project management, technology, public policy and public administration.

Strategy 3: Partner with local, state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance awareness of opportunities and resources that strengthen community resiliency.
Objective 2: Increase work-force readiness of youth and adults (See Goal 2, Economic Development).

**Strategy 1:** Provide training opportunities on the basics of getting and keeping a job.

**Strategy 2:** Help communities develop mentoring, job shadowing and other relevant opportunities to apply life skills to the work environment.

**Strategy 3:** Collaborate with public and private sectors to provide hands-on experiences (work and volunteer opportunities) to build work-force skills.

Objective 3: Engage with local government leaders and others, especially in underserved areas, to develop leadership and capacity-building programs for youth and adults.

**Strategy 1:** Increase Extension’s capacity to help communities develop and retain leaders and engage citizens.

**Strategy 2:** Increase citizen participation in identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating community development activities.

**Strategy 3:** Help identify and build upon existing community assets for positive community engagement.

**Strategy 4:** Collaborate with organizations to offer youth mentorship/internship experiences in leadership and governance.

**Strategy 5:** Increase awareness of the benefits and value of involving youth in community leadership.