



4-H ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Independence

INDEPENDENCE can be seen in the 4-H program when members see how their 4-H experiences can shape their future life choices. To go a step further, their vision then transitions into actual future participation. For true INDEPENDENCE youth must develop a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing adults.

Independence is achieved when youth see themselves as active participants in the future.

What does this mean?

- Youth have something to look forward to in the program, in a sense there is a next step. Members can look forward to being leaders in 4-H or other organizations.
- Youth have the chance to try out new things in a safe environment.
- Youth can learn skills in their projects that help them choose a career path.
- Youth set goals and make plans for the upcoming year or years.

What does this look like in a 4-H experience?

- Adults are helping and encouraging youth to set long term goals 5-10 years in the future that are challenging and achievable. Then help them to experience opportunities to realize some of those goals through the 4-H program.
- Youth are given the opportunity to develop ideas and then see them to completion over time.

- Youth in 4-H are encouraged to think positively. Positive environments provide opportunities for youth to see themselves in the future.

Independence allows for self-determination.

What does this mean?

- Youth believe they can influence life's events, rather than life's events having control over their lives.
- Youth feel they have influence when they have choices and get to "call the shots."
- Youth are able to analyze their participation by asking themselves what went well and what they would do differently the next time.
- Youth choose and plan activities, team events, and projects.
- Youth are taken seriously and heard by adults in the 4-H program.

What does this look like in a 4-H experience?

- Youth choose projects and activities based on their changing interest and abilities.

- Youth are given numerous opportunities to set their own goals.
- Your club, project, or 4-H activities provides youth with a safe place to try new things that are challenging.
- Adults avoid the tendency to solve problems for youth but are instead supportive and allow them to come to their own solutions.
- Adults and older member guide youth through processes.
- Older member are paired with younger members giving them the opportunity to use their independence to help others.
- Youth are making the club decisions not the parents or adult leaders.
- Member are given time at 4-H events, meetings, and activities to share their own experiences with others.

As a 4-H leader are you helping or hindering independence in the 4-H experience? Check where you are by referencing the Independence checklist. The checklist will give you ideas on ways to make sure independence is happening in the 4-H projects, meetings, and activities that you are helping lead.