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.

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.