

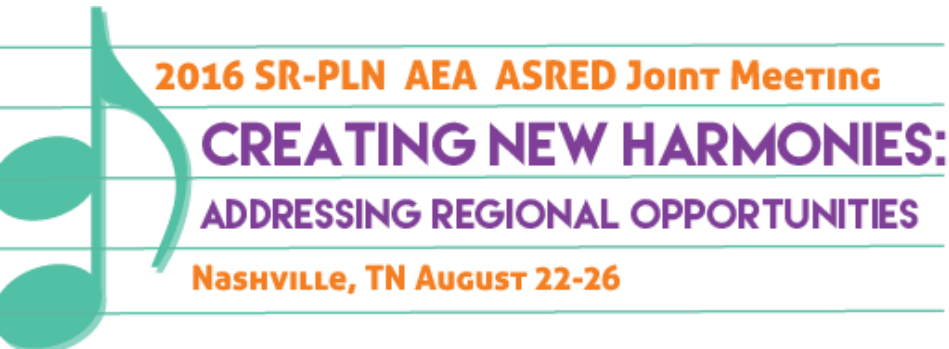
# Preparing Today's County Extension Agent to Lead the 4-H Youth Development Program

Chris Boleman [cboleman@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:cboleman@ag.tamu.edu)

Jeff Ripley [j-ripley@tamu.edu](mailto:j-ripley@tamu.edu)

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Related to the Work of Which PLN Committees:  
4-H Youth Development  
Mid-Managers



# Purpose of This Project

- **Compare what states are doing to develop new County Extension Agents working in the 4-H Program (the most difficult and demanding of all program areas)**
- **To do this, we sought ideas of other states so we can learn from each other.**



# Long Term Goal

- **Potentially develop a new joint regional effort for Mid-Managers and 4-H Youth Development State Leaders to share information and learn from each other.**



# The Dilemma

<b>The Goals</b>	<b>The Reality</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Grow 4-H to include new, innovative projects &amp; programs</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Traditional mindset of current program</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Grow volunteer base to new areas</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Managing what is already in place (taking a great deal of time to do)</b></li></ul>



# Background

- **“Traditional” 4-H Clientele expectations and needs of a 4-H Agent sometimes are difficult to change.**
- **However, the employees we hire do change and are willing to grow the program through new projects and new audiences.**
- **County Extension Agents also must adapt to their roles, responsibilities, and expectations to meet the needs of the community (which may differ from long term volunteers).**



# More Background

- 4-H programs and projects continue to evolve over time as youth interest change.
- 4-H Management - Child protection management, volunteer empowerment, camping rules
- *Traditional – FCS and livestock*
- *New – STEM, technology, and Robotics*



# More Background

- **Hiring practices and employees today may have less background with 4-H.**
- **Therefore, strategies to train are critically important to ensuring the appropriate 4-H Agent is placed in the right position to be successful.**



**So, how do  
we respond?**





# Who is Involved in 4-H Onboarding?

- **4-H Faculty (State Office and District / Regional 4-H Specialists)**
- **Peer Agent Mentors**
- **Regional Specialized Agents**
- **District Extension Administrators**
- **Regional Program Leaders**



# Various Strategies to Onboard

- ***“One – on – one”* support in the first few days of employment led by a specialist**
- **Annual statewide onboarding training for all new CEAs**
- **4-H Specialist do it all, no DEA involvement**
- **Peer Mentors (tenured CEAs work with new CEAs)**
- **Online Training (Lync from Specialists to new hires)**
- **Set of face-to-face trainings in the first 18 months**



# The Pyramid



Growth

Survival

Coaching

Intro

# Priority Training - Intro (What We all Do in States)

- **Mandatory (Common Themes)**
  - **Child Protection**
  - **Volunteer Management**
  - **General 4-H Management**
  - **Calendars**
  - **4-H 101**
  - **4-H Fundamentals**
  - **4-H Recordbooks**



# Priority Training - Coaching

- **One - on - One**
  - Learning the county
  - Who to count on
  - Volunteer strength areas
  - What projects are popular
  - Ensuring those projects are covered



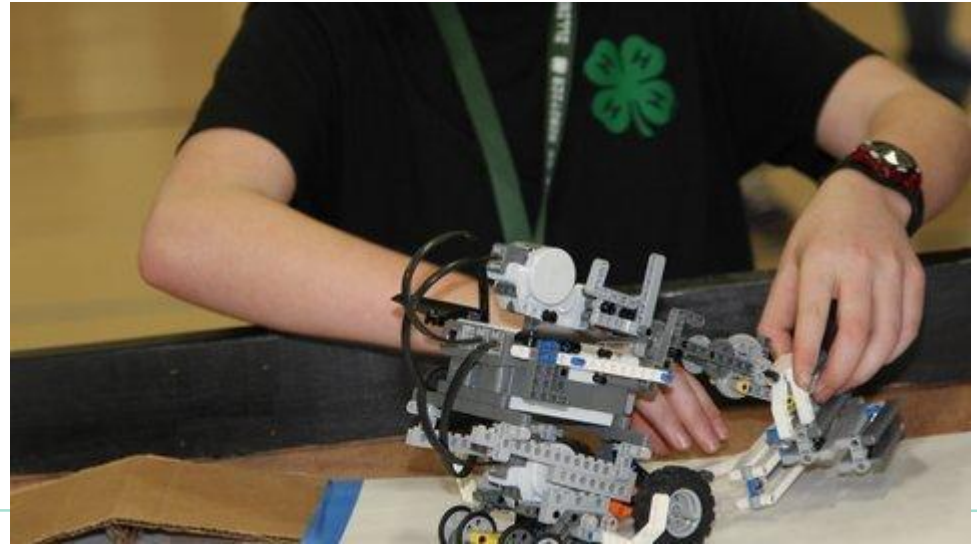
# Priority Training – Survival

- **Non Management Areas that CEAs need to survive:**
  - **4-H Livestock 101 – Beef, sheep, swine, horse, goat, dairy, judging teams, etc**
  - **4-H FCS 101 – Consumer decision making, foods & nutrition, clothing, etc.**



# Priority Training – Growth

- **Some New(er) and Innovative Projects**
  - **Archery**
  - **Science**
  - **Photography**
  - **Robotics**
  - **Ect**



# What Does it Mean?

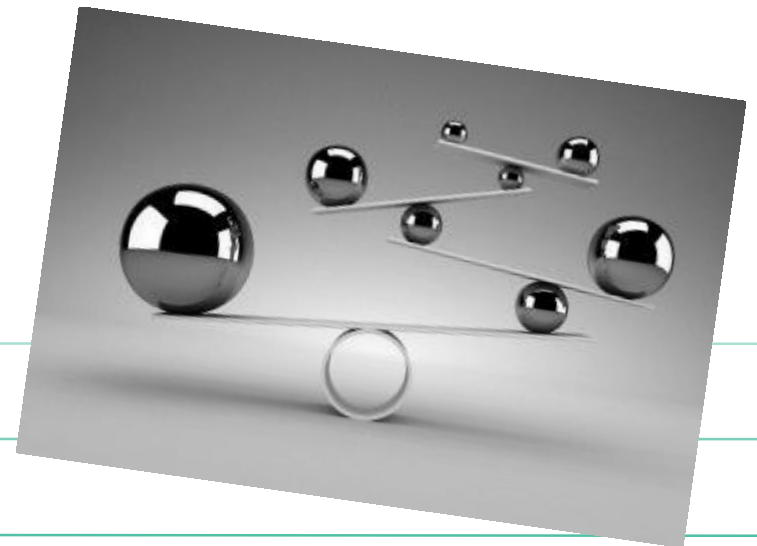
- **Managing / Leading a County 4-H Program takes time and diligence**

*Are we putting new agents in the best position to be successful?*



# The Balance of Project Growth

- Spend time training on what is traditionally expected.
- New programs / projects that youth are most interested in these times might not be getting the attention needed for long term growth and stability.



# Summary & Next Steps

- **State 4-H Programs appear to have similar problems**
- **Mid – Managers and 4-H Leader Group work together to develop consistent new agent resources**



# Next Steps 2

- **Is there potential to at least share resources?**
- **Make a proactive plan to ensure there are resources for some of the new projects so new Agents are comfortable working with volunteers to implement**



• **THANK YOU!**

