



**UF/IFAS EXTENSION GATEWAY:
WORKFORCE PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH POPULATIONS**

Situation Statement:

Individuals ill prepared for employment are more likely to live in poverty. The mean annual earnings of young people with a bachelor's degree is two times higher than the mean earnings for high school dropouts. Communities benefit when its youth are prepared to become productive adults. According to the 2012 research conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (a non-profit group which that links college career placement offices with employers) the top 5 abilities which employers look for, in priority order, when hiring new graduates are: (1) teamwork; (2) decision-making and problem solving; (3) planning, organizing and prioritization; (4) verbal communication; and (5) information processing.

UF/IFAS Response:

4-H serves as an ideal experiential leadership laboratory. 4-H members exercise their abilities in many forms, from serving as club officers to peer mentors. A recent national study conducted by Tufts University found that youth who participate in 4-H have better grades and are emotionally more engaged with their school; are more than twice as likely to be civically engaged and contribute to their communities; are 47% less likely to have risky or problem behaviors; are more likely to pursue careers in science, engineering and technology and are two times more likely to plan to go to college. All of these statistics indicate that youth who participate in 4-H have what it takes to be successful contributing members of society who are prepared for the workforce.

Priority Programs:

4-H Community Club Program. 4-H members can choose from 46 projects that focus on science, engineering and technology, agriculture, food & nutrition, communications, and citizenship/leadership. Youth set goals, keep records and participate in events and activities on a county, state and national level to keep their learning strong.

Communications. 4-H/Tropicana Public Speaking Program: This contest-based program reaches between 75,000-100,000 Florida young people in grades 4-6 yearly. Schools work in partnership with their county Extension programs and Tropicana, Inc. and are provided with classroom lesson-plans, materials and resources to effectively have students participate in a public speaking adventure.

Citizenship/Leadership Education: 4-H Legislature. High School youth work throughout the year developing legislation and learning the legislative process. Youth come together for a week at the State Capitol to refine their skills in debate, legislation analysis, and public speaking.

Healthy Living Education: Florida 4-H addresses the needs of today's youth through education in nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse, safety, and social and emotional wellness through curricula called *Health Rocks; Youth Understanding MyPlate; Eat4Health; and Steps for a Healthy Teen.*

Science Education: In a nation facing a shortage of scientists the 4-H Science program encourages young minds to investigate, explore, and make their own discoveries. Projects cover environmental sciences and natural resources, animal sciences and wildlife, plant sciences and forestry, vet science, computers and robotics, and more. Youth involved in Florida 4-H science programs are able to apply science, engineering, and technology skills to their projects; develop science literacy workforce skills, and pursue education and careers related to science that results in a workforce that creates a viable economy and communities for Florida. Curricula examples include: *4-H Embryology; School Gardening; Weather & Climate; and Robotics.*