

SECTION Y - DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE YOUTH

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the 4-H youth development program is to create helping relationships to enable youths to become responsible, productive citizens. 4-H creates learning experiences where youth can build their self-esteem becoming competent, coping and contributing members of a global society. Instilling positive values like citizenship, teamwork, and leadership in our youth does this. The 4-H staff along with volunteers help our young people learn how to live, make a living, make our communities better, and become lifelong learners.

The Robeson County 4-H program touches the lives of more than 7,000 youth a year. These youth come from a variety of economic, social and racial backgrounds. This means we must offer a variety of learning opportunities so each youth will be able to gain what they need to gain the life skills necessary to become successful members of their community and world.

SITUATION STATEMENT

Robeson County is a diverse county made up of almost 124,000 people, with the population fairly evenly divided between Native American, Black, and Whites. The Hispanic population in the county is increasing rapidly. The primary audience of the Robeson County 4-H program is youth ages 5-19 which make up 29 percent of the population, or 36,000 people. According to North Carolina statistics, 22 percent of the county population lives below the poverty level, resulting in at least one-fourth of the youth involved in 4-H coming from limited resource families. Approximately 13 percent of the total county student body is now being home schooled while a large population is attending private schools. Traditional 4-H programs and activities have not targeted these audiences in the past. Due to economics and social conditioning only 11% of the total county population goes on to complete a higher degree of learning after high school. These are just some of the challenges faced by the Robeson County 4-H staff while trying to devise appropriate programming that will help a variety of youth gain the life skills they need to be successful adults.

State and county funds provide the 4-H staff basic office support for programming delivery. Many of the youth in the county would not be able to participate in many 4-H youth activities, especially those outside the county, without additional financial support. United Way of Robeson County historically has provided between \$22,000 and \$25,000 annually to enhance 4-H youth activities, and to provide cash incentives and scholarships for youth excelling in 4-H activities. In addition, the Robeson County 4-H program is currently coordinating a \$105,000 YO! (Youth Opportunity) grant administered by the Lumber River Council of Governments. This grant is expected to continue until the 2005-06 fiscal year. This grant is designed to provide and support 4-H programming and positive learning experiences for high school aged youth residing in five (5) disadvantaged census tracts within the county.