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## Welcoming Latino Youth to California 4-H!

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### **Abstract**

The University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) invested close to \$2,000,000 over a period of three years to welcome Latino youth, families and volunteers to 4-H. The counties selected to participate in the pilot program encompass rural, suburban, and urban areas and include: Sonoma, Santa Barbara, Kern, Orange, Riverside, Monterey, and Merced. The objective of the pilot, called UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative, is to develop, deliver, and assess culturally responsive program models to attract and retain Latino youth, families, and volunteers into 4-H. Seven 4-H Program Representatives (equivalent to Extension Educators in other states) were hired to work under the supervision of the county-based Advisors and the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity and Expansion. This effort faced challenges and opportunities while designing the job description and conducting the selection process to ensure success of the program, even though research and promising practices from the literature were used to develop the position description and identify the qualifications of successful hires. This article shares the challenges, opportunities, and successful strategies used. Hiring staff with strong cultural capacities and positioning them in key roles is critical to building a cultural competent organization and addressing structural discrimination.

*Keywords:* youth development, 4-H, job description, recruitment, cultural capacities, cultural competent organization

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## Introduction

The Latino population in the United States represents 17.3% of the total population, with 53.3 million people in 2012 (U.S. Census, 2012). It is the fastest growing population in the United States, increased from 14.8 million in 1980 to 55.3 million in 2014 (Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends, 2016). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010, 2012), the Latino population is expected to reach 28.6% by 2060. The number of Latino foreign born began declining in 2000, and by 2014 only 48.7% of Latino adults were born in another country (from 55.0% reported in 2007). Out of the total Latino adults who were born in another country, only 34% reported that they speak English proficiently. However, 33.2 million Latinos report speaking English proficiently (68% of all the Hispanics ages 5 and older) (Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends, 2011). As of 2014, the poverty rate for Latinos in the United States was 23.6%, compared to 14.8% for the total population (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015).

California is home of 27.8% of the total United States' Latino population (U.S. Census 2010), followed by Texas with 18.7% and Florida with 8.4%. Over half, 52%, of the children in California are Latino (Pew Research Center, 2011) living in households with median annual personal earnings of \$20,000.00, the lowest among major population groups, and 31% of Latino youth aged 17 and younger live below the poverty line (Pew Research Center, 2011). The level of education may be the main reason for the low income as Latinos in California have the lowest education attainment and highest risk and incidence of obesity and diabetes compared to other population groups. However, the economic development of California and the United States will be in the hands of the growing Latino populations, given that they will comprise three-quarters of the growth in the nation's labor force from 2010-2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics – BLS, 2016).

The Latino immigration trends, level of education, income and English proficiency have presented a challenge for the United States, creating a “Latino country” inside the United States. 4-H extension

educators and other education professionals are making efforts to reach and engage Latinos and offer them educational opportunities that are stepping stones to social mobility. However, even with all their efforts, representations of Latino youth in 4-H is still a challenge.

To achieve the goal of engaging Latinos, the first challenge is to support, facilitate, and encourage Latino families to integrate into the American culture and society and at the same time help support youth in developing the skills for a brighter future as American citizens. Cooperative Extension (CE) must play the same key role it played more than 100 years ago when 4-H Clubs were created to encourage parents to adopt new technology in agriculture and food processing, but now supporting Latino families' integration into the American culture and society and at the same time opening opportunities for the youth to achieve their goals.

The UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative delivered through Cooperative Extension believes that 4-H could be part of this change, offering Latino youth an invaluable opportunity to become 4-H members. But, why 4-H? Because 4-H has demonstrated that its members develop skills as responsible citizens, leaders, and integral parts of their communities. 4-H is a nationwide organization that serves more than 5 million members in 90,000 clubs (USDA, 2014; 4-H, 2016). Members of 4-H are 3.4 times more likely to give back to their communities, 2.8 times more likely to make healthier choices, 2.0 times more likely to participate in STEM activities, and nearly 5 times more likely to expect to graduate from college. In addition, 4-H members have better grades in school, are socially more competent, and have a positive vision of their future (4-H, 2016 & Lerner, Lerner & colleagues, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to share the way the University of California Cooperative Extension is facing the challenge of including the Latino population in their 4-H programs, starting with hiring seven bilingual and bicultural Program Representatives (called Extension Educators in other states) to reach and engage the Latino population in seven counties.

## UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative: Development of the Project

### Initial Steps

As a first step, a guiding team of 10-15 academics and staff was developed to help lead and support efforts to build and sustain engagement of Latino youth and families in 4-H – the Diversity Workgroup. The Workgroup commissioned a literature review that synthesized research and practice-based literature with the goal of identifying positive youth development qualities that support U.S.-based Latino youth participation and wellbeing (Erbstein & Fabionar, 2014). As part of the review, the qualifications of youth development professionals were highlighted and formed the basis of the position descriptions for the seven new hires. The Diversity Workgroup also developed several fact sheets from the literature review to help staff and volunteers translate the research into practice that included topics such as promising practices for Latino-serving programs and building partnerships with the Latino community. Other resources developed included a standardized needs assessment to help staff identify how 4-H can best respond to the expressed needs of Latino youth, families, and volunteers while building on their cultural assets. Finally, an assessment was done of how current delivery methods respond to the needs of Latino participants, adaptations to current delivery modes, and an environmental scan to identify innovative programs that have been successful with Latino youth and families that can either be replicated in California or scaled up.

Importantly, a sub-team of the Diversity Workgroup also led statewide efforts to improve intercultural competency of existing 4-H academics and staff to better reach and serve Latino communities in the state. The Intercultural Competence Continuum was selected as the framework and the Intercultural Development Inventory© as the assessment tool. The team received extensive training and offered continuing professional development of staff and academics that included ongoing coaching and feedback, community of practices, and specialized conferences. These efforts are explained in detail in

the Latino Youth Outreach: Best Practices Toolkit (National 4-H Council, 2016).

Strategically, these initial steps were underway for three years prior to the launch of the pilot in order to build the foundation and infrastructure for future success of the pilot.

### Next steps

The two main components of the UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative pilot include: 1) Preparing 4-H academics and staff to better reach and serve the Latino communities in the state, and 2) Developing, adapting, and delivering culturally responsive programming to attract and better serve Latino communities through the 4-H Youth Development Program (YDP). The strategies, lessons learned, and successes will be used to develop a model that can be scaled up across the state.

Seven counties were invited to participate in the pilot: Sonoma, Santa Barbara, Merced, Monterey, Orange, Riverside and Kern. The next steps included: 1) Set the State 4-H 10-year goals (2015-2025); 2) Invite community leaders in the state to be part of the first Multicultural and Community Engagement Advisory Committee to advise on the pilot project; 3) Develop the job description for the new 4-H Program Representatives; 4) Hire seven full-time, career employees who are bilingual and bicultural; 5) Hire a new marketing coordinator; and 6) Develop and deliver trainings for the new positions, including best practices to engage Latino communities in youth development programs. More detail on the state goals, job description for the 4-H Program Representatives, and recruitment and selection of candidates is described below. The team job responsibilities are also discussed and the authors conclude with final thoughts.

### State 4-H Goals

California 4-H state goals by 2025 are:

1. Increase 4-H membership to at least 3% of the youth population.
2. Increase Latino youth participation in the 4-H YDP to at least 50%.

3. Increase the number of 4-H adult volunteers to support growth and Latino adult participation to at least 50% of the total volunteers.

## **Budget**

The UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative received close to \$2,000,000 from the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Funding for the three-year pilot is for seven county-based 4-H Program Representatives (equivalent to Extension Educators in other states), partial funding for a Marketing and Communications coordinator, intercultural competency professional development efforts, travel, general office expenses, production of marketing materials, and a research study to identify barriers to Latino youth participation in 4-H. There was an additional permanent investment from the Division to hire a new Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity and Expansion to lead this effort.

## **Job description**

The job description for the 4-H Program Representatives was designed considering five main responsibilities: 1) diagnosis, 2) training, 3) implementation, 4) evaluation, and 5) dissemination. The primary responsibilities and required qualifications included in the job description are available in the Appendix.

## **Recruitment Strategies**

The recruitment process included state and county efforts. At the state level, the UC ANR office of Human Resources advertised the positions on University of California Office of the President web page (UCOP), the UC ANR web page, America's Job Exchange, and via Twitter. The State 4-H Office also sent out the announcement on national listserves for State 4-H Program Leaders, Volunteer Specialists, and Research Specialists, as well as to all 4-H families.

At the county level, the positions were advertised on Indeed, Craigslist, Facebook, local College

offices, and the county advisors also commented about some informal networks used. According to the applicants, the county-based recruitment sites were the most effective.

## **Results of the Job Search**

A total of 60 applications were received in 6 counties (Santa Barbara already had a staff member who was doing this work and funding was used to support this position). The number of applications received by county is showed in Table 1. There was not a similar proportion across counties between the number of applications received and the number of Latino youth population in the county.

With the guidelines provided by the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity and Expansion each county selected their search committee, the average number of members of the search committee was 6, with a range of 5 to 7. Five out of six of the search committees included a county director, advisor, program representative, volunteer, and community partner as well as the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity who participated in all the search committees.

The applications received were carefully reviewed and evaluated against the job description by the search committee in every county. All the interviews were conducted using the same format: 1) Translation from English to Spanish of a one-page document; 2) A bilingual presentation on one of the following topics: Developing networks and community partnerships, establishing and maintaining cooperative working relationships with Latino communities, and using social media to engage Latino communities in 4-H; and 3) Interview questions developed by the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity and Expansion and reviewed by UC ANR Human Resources.

Some of the interview questions were:

- Describe how you would you create and sustain relationships with Latino youth organizations?
- Describe your experience working with volunteers.
- This position requires working in teams.

Please explain what you value about working on a problem as a part of a team, as well as independently. If possible, use examples.

- What are your strengths and weaknesses as they relate to this position? How do you handle your weaknesses?

Five Latinas and one Latino were hired in 2016 and joined a Latina already working in Santa Barbara. Six out of the seven new 4-H Program Representatives lived in the same county where they were hired.

### **Team Initial Responsibilities**

The initial responsibilities of the 4-H Program Representatives hired included: 1) Get involved with the Latino community in their counties, 2) Develop partnerships with other organizations serving Latinos, and 3) Identify the needs of the local Latino communities.

The initial responsibilities of the marketing coordinator included: 1) Develop culturally responsive and bilingual marketing materials, 2) Develop a comprehensive media communications plan that includes outreach to Latino youth, families, and communities (e.g., Spanish website, Facebook page), and 3) Develop and implement a public notification plan that will contribute more fully to reaching and informing Latino communities on the benefits of 4-H program (USDA requirement).

The initial responsibilities of the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity and Expansion included: 1) Develop assessment tools, 2) Design and deliver trainings, 3) Design monthly evaluation tools, 4) Coordinate the development of toolkits for different delivery modes, 5) Coordinate the assessment and improvement of academic and staff intercultural competence, 6) Lead the Diversity Workgroup, and 7) Convene the Multicultural & Community Engagement Advisory Committee.

So far, the team is learning to work together. The communication among counties has been mainly using discussion boards, email, and monthly online meetings via Adobe Connect. Face-to-face orienta-

tion was conducted in April and another face-to-face gathering was held in October of 2016. All the PowerPoint slides and documents generated in the meeting are shared. Marketing documents have been translated into Spanish, including flyers, meeting posters, and 4-H brochures. A bilingual needs assessment has been designed and will be applied during the first year. The information collected in the needs assessment will be used to select the programs and the delivery modes that will be most appropriate based on the local needs of the youth, families, and communities. Currently, the staff is focused on getting to know the community and the organizations that are already successfully working with Latinos.

### **Final thoughts**

The low Latino participation in 4-H is not a phenomenon only occurring in California; participation of Latinos in 4-H is also limited across at the national level (around 9% in 2013 (Lerner, et al, 2013) while Latinos represent more than 17% of the country's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Many reasons have been identified for explaining the lack of Latino participation in 4-H: 1) Desires and preferences are not reflected in 4-H programming (Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose III, & Rask, 2005; Lamm, Harder, Lamm, Rose III & Rask, 2005), 2) Desire to participate in non-traditional programs (Meeks Baney & Jones, 2013), and 3) Limited access to information about 4-H (Jones, et al, 2013).

Different states are approaching this problem in different ways. For example, Oregon (Hobbs, 2004) and Illinois have hired Latino academics and/or staff members and developed and delivered programs directly with the community. Iowa has the first Latino 4-H State Leader. Florida and North Carolina are implementing different programs designed specifically for Latinos, like Juntos or Jovenes del Futuro. Other states are successful delivering 4-H programs in different modality modes as SPIN Clubs or Afterschool experiences. However, only the state of California is investing close to \$2,000,000 to attract Latinos and other minorities to the 4-H YDP.

California, in addition to hiring the new program representatives, developed a comprehensive, multipronged strategy to welcome Latino youth to 4-H, which includes hiring bilingual and bicultural 4-H Program Representatives who are finding

partnerships, getting involved in the community, building relationships, identifying the needs of the communities, adapting 4-H programs, and marketing their efforts to ensure success of the UC ANR 4-H Latino Initiative.

**Table 1. Number of applications for the bilingual and bicultural Program Representative positions by county.**

A Location	B Number of applications	C Latino youth population in the county*	Proportion B / C
Merced	6	74,919	1 : 12,487
Sonoma	7	100,591	1 : 14,370
Monterey	8	100,539	1 : 12,567
Orange	15	693,952	1 : 46,263
Kern	4	228,529	1 : 57,132
Riverside	20	579,699	1 : 28,985

\*Estimate projection calculated using the 0.9% growth suggested by the Public Policy Institute of California

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## Appendix

### Primary responsibilities included in the job description

1. Diagnose Interests, Resources, and Needs Regarding PYD Programming
  - a) In partnership with county staff, identify communities not being served by 4-H long-term programming.
  - b) Initiate, develop, establish, and strengthen relationships with key institutional networks, community leaders, youth-serving organizations, and other agencies serving Latino youth and families.
  - c) Map, assess, and document key institutional networks (both formal and informal) and programs that are successfully serving Latino youth and families.
  - d) Sustain relationships with Latino youth serving organizations with the purpose of engaging the Latino and/or African American community in developing place-based strategies to reach and sustain the engagement of Latino and low-income youth in the UC 4-H YDP program.
  - e) Assist in conducting a needs assessment to identify the program needs of the Latino population from selected youth serving organizations.
  - f) Assist in identifying barriers to Latino youth and family participation in 4-H, as well as their proposed solutions to them.
2. Training
  - a) Attend trainings offered by the State 4-H Office, county program, or others as identified by the Supervisor.
  - b) Coordinate and deliver trainings for 4-H adult volunteers, club leaders, and 4-H staff to support diversity, inclusion, and positive youth development practices.
3. Implementation
  - a) Collaborate with local communities, county staff, advisors, the Assistant Director for 4-H Diversity & Expansion, and other UC academics and campus faculty (if applicable) on the design and delivery of new, innovative, and culturally responsive programs using a variety of educational methods that respond to the local Latino population interests and needs.
  - b) Assist in the development and implementation of a plan to sustain the programs, including funding and volunteer recruitment.
  - c) Effectively deliver information to the Latino population regarding the 4-H program, including all delivery modes (e.g., community club, afterschool, camp, etc.)
  - d) Respond to clientele requests for specific information, including new club programs
  - e) Collect enrollment and other outreach data as required by the program.
4. Marketing & Public Relations
  - a) Collaborate with the 4-H Communication Specialist on the design and implementation of marketing campaigns targeting the Latino population in the county.
  - b) Recruit multicultural volunteers and club leaders through the community, organizations, and businesses.
  - c) Increase enrollment of Latinos (youth, families, and volunteers) in the UC 4-H YDP.
5. Evaluation
  - a) Document efforts in accessing and establishing relationships with the Latino community.
  - b) Document best practices while reaching and serving Latino youth, families, and volunteers.
  - c) In partnership with county advisor, evaluate program effectiveness using appropriate models.
  - d) Collaborate with advisors and other academics in data analysis.
  - e) Document efforts to sustain the program and make recommendations to improve efforts.
  - f) Make recommendations on successful programs to replicate in other counties.
6. Dissemination
  - a) Collaborate in the development of extension publications such as factsheets, policy briefs, newsletters, and one-pagers.
  - b) Collaborate in the development of pro-

professional development workshops for 4-H personnel and technical reports aimed at youth serving practitioners, and general public based on research findings.

c) Increase 4-H brand recognition in the Latino community through active participation in traditional and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).

d) Participate in community outreach events, community collaborative, and/or educational events to promote the 4-H YDP.

e) In conjunction with the county advisor, participate in academic conferences and forums.

**Required qualifications included in the job description:**

- An associate degree in related areas and/or equivalent experience/training
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in both English and Spanish to conduct programs for Latino youth and families.
- The ability to effectively establish and maintain cooperative working relationships within a diverse multicultural environment, especially the Latino community.
- The ability to develop networks and community partnerships.
- Experience working with traditional and social media.
- Organizational skills and ability to meet numerous established deadlines.
- Computer skills in Windows 7 environment utilizing Microsoft Office 2010 (i.e., Word, Excel, Power Point, and Publisher).
- Administrative skills to manage day-to-day operations (answering inquires, maintaining schedules, generating reports, logging procedures, etc.)