



# Landmark Gift Task Force

## Year 3 Progress Report

12.10.2025

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### Landmark Gift Overview: An Investment Plan for 4-H's Future

In February 2022, National 4-H Council (Council) announced receipt of a transformational unrestricted \$50 million gift from philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott. Representatives from all levels of Extension, the National 4-H Council Board of Trustees, and Council staff collaborated over a period of eight months to develop a recommendation for effectively deploying this gift.

A Landmark Gift Task Force was formed by the National 4-H Council Board of Trustees in February 2022. Led by Board Vice Chair and former President, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Dr. Juliette Bell, the Task Force was charged to:

*"Develop specific recommendations on the use of funds from MacKenzie Scott's unrestricted gift to maximize Council's sustainable support of Cooperative Extension's 4-H program and ensure Council's financial health."*

Through conversations with Extension representatives and Council Trustees, **increased access to 4-H programming** emerged as a clear priority. Three core principles guided the planning process and resulting investment recommendation:

- **Transformative:** Investments will have a lasting impact on 4-H's ability to grow and reach new audiences in innovative ways.
- **Comprehensive:** Investments will positively impact and encompass all of 4-H.
- **Sustainable:** Investments can be sustained long into the future, and can be leveraged to attract more attention and resources for 4-H.

The Task Force also worked to balance competing objectives—to produce **both immediate impact AND ensure the health of the program for future generations**. Two foundational strategies emerged that were intended to help shape 4-H today and into the future:

1. Expanding the capacity and capabilities of 4-H professionals and volunteers
2. Expanding relevant programs and experiences that reach today's youth and families.

After conducting a number of listening sessions and a system-wide survey, the Task Force recommended (and the Board approved) an initial \$10 million investment in three critical priorities over the next three to five fiscal years. This report represents the initial three years of this investment period.



Over the past three years, Council's fundraising success made additional investments possible. With Board approval, Council matched an additional \$7 million from increased fundraising and its operating budget to maximize the impact of the Landmark Gift investment. The remaining \$40M from the Gift was placed in a long-term reserve fund managed by the Investment Subcommittee of Council's Board. Investment returns from the remaining principal will be available to fund future investments in Extension priorities.

The following table shows the original recommendation and the actual and budgeted investments for fiscal years 2023 through 2026 (ending June 30, 2026):

Investment	2023 LGTF Recommendation	Actual	Council Match	Total Investment
Workforce Capabilities and Program Optimization (including PYD research and training)	\$5.4 Million	\$5.0 Million	\$0.0 Million	\$5.0 Million
Upgrading National Youth Events	\$2.3 Million	\$2.5 Million	\$6.0 Million	\$8.5 Million
CLOVER Hybrid PYD Platform	\$2.3 Million	\$2.5 Million	\$1.1 Million	\$3.6 Million
TOTAL:	\$10.0 Million	\$10.0 Million	\$7.1 Million	\$17.1 Million

The original process and recommendation can be found [here](#).

## Investments and Outcomes: Inspiring a generation of youth to be **BEYOND READY**

Perhaps the most important outcome from the Landmark Gift recommendations was the start of a national conversation about the critical importance of more youth having access to 4-H's proven outcomes. And this conversation could not have been timelier.

Because the data are clear—America's largest generation is at risk. Youth ages 5-18, a combination of Gen Z & Gen A equaling 72M kids, is exhibiting alarming levels of negativity about themselves, their confidence in the future, and their ability to find contentment in life.

- 53% of Gen Zs report feeling lonely, and 52% feel they're failing at life
- 30% of youth are chronically absent—double the pre-pandemic levels
- Teen math and reading scores have seen the largest decreases in 50 years

Pair this with how fast the world is changing and the considerable number of pathways forward for youth today—2 or 4-year college, apprenticeship programs, work, and military service—it's no wonder they are reporting being overwhelmed. **The bottom line? Youth assets and strengths go untapped—and many young people are not realizing their full potential.**



But a high-quality 4-H experience can be the solution. In partnership with Tufts University, 4-H measured the impact of our programming on youth over the last 20 years in a longitudinal study—and the results are impressive. Compared to their peers, 4-H youth are:

- **3x** more likely to give back to their communities,
- **2x** more likely to make healthy choices, and
- **2x** more likely to report living life with intentionality and purpose

In February of 2024, 4-H program leaders from across the country came together at their national meeting to build a bold new future with a bold goal—to grow from 6M to 10M kids who are healthy, productive and engaged.

Together, 4-H leadership focused on four strategies to intentionally move us from 6M to 10M youth by the year 2030:

Strategy	Tactics	Enrollment Growth
Teen Retention	Retain teens through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade.	1 Million
Internal Partnerships	Create cross-Extension and cross-campus partnerships.	1 Million
External Partnerships	Partner with schools, homeschool coalitions, military, and other non-profit youth organizations.	1 Million
Virtual Engagement	Leverage CLOVER by 4-H to reach new youth, removing barriers of time, travel, and place-based requirements.	1 Million
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4 Million</b>

Extension's leadership boldly accepted this charge, realizing that 4-H, as the largest youth organization operating in every county/parish in the country, has the responsibility to impact a generation of young people. And the Beyond Ready initiative was born.

### **Workforce Capabilities and Program Optimization**

The Landmark Gift investments helped to make 4-H's Beyond Ready initiative a reality. Built by Cooperative Extension with support from Council and USDA-NIFA, the initiative has engaged and aligned the entire 4-H system around increasing academic and career readiness, investing in 4-H educators, and mobilizing a vast network of educators, volunteers, youth and alumni.

Why 10 million? 4-H believes it can create a Ready Generation with this growth. If 10% of a population can shift a belief, and 20% of a population can shift behavior (like buckling your seatbelt or recycling), by reaching 10M youth, we can shift the trajectory of this generation.



Through investments from the Landmark Gift, the components of a system-wide initiative began to come together:

- Funds provided turnkey Beyond Ready resources for the entire the Cooperative Extension system, including programmatic leadership in the form of a **Beyond Ready Leadership Team**, led by Lisa Diaz, 4-H Program Leader from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- A number of convenings were also supported, such as a **Beyond Ready Activation Summit** in April, 2025, which increased the system's capacity for growth. The Activation Summit distributed resources, facilitated best practice sharing, and mobilized university teams for implementation of their action plans. Over 150 participants from 53 land grant universities participated, making the session a truly national effort.
- The **National 4-H Index Study**, made possible by Landmark Gift investments, is a nationwide assessment of how 4-H programming influences youth development and readiness for the future. More than 7,000 youth across 38 state 4-H programs were surveyed, providing a national baseline for the Beyond Ready initiative. Key findings included strong alignment with developmental context, with high-quality program experiences directly correlating with readiness outcomes:
  - 84% of youth reported being passionate about their 4-H activities
  - 90% felt safe in 4-H, and 85% felt welcome
  - 95% felt respected by adults

The study was designed and led by Extension educators and demonstrates that 4-H continues to significantly contribute to youth development by fostering sparks, belonging, strong adult relationships, and developing essential work-life readiness skills. Youth report high levels of optimism, responsibility, and engagement, confirming 4-H's unique role in preparing young people to be Beyond Ready.

- New training resources were provided via the **PYD Academy**, which provides learning opportunities to equip 4-H educators with the essential knowledge and skills to plan, implement and evaluate high-quality youth development programs. In 2024, the Academy laid out an action planning framework for 4-H leadership to utilize.

The Academy has trained thousands of educators from more than 60 universities over 25 different learning events. 97% of participants reported that an interest in the Beyond Ready initiative influenced their participation and 99% said the training was valuable for their professional development.



- Outreach for the Beyond Ready initiative launched in 2025 through three **tentpole moments** intended to marshal the 4-H systems collective voice: 4-H Week, Fair, and Signing Season. Marketing tool kits and customizable templates enable easy adoption at the local level. The unprecedented alignment of the system produced unheard of levels of awareness for 4-H, with national, state and local communications all devoted to raising awareness of Beyond Ready:
  - **National Signing Day** highlighted 4-H career pathways and plans. In its first year, signing day produced more than 80 events and garnered 280 thousand social impressions
  - **State and County Fairs** generated two thousand media stories and reached a potential audience of 1.2 billion.
  - **National 4-H Week** was the biggest ever, showcasing our alignment by encouraging the system to act in unison. "Go Green Day" saw dozens of buildings and monuments lit up green, including Niagara Falls, and had the entire system wearing green on social media. "4-H for Good" highlighted community service and 4-H's partnership with the second Wicked motion picture. 4-H Week activities nationwide reached a total potential viewing audience of 6.4 billion.

Overall, top of mind awareness among 4-H Alumni has reached 35%, and branded share of voice for 4-H was the highest of all youth development organizations.

## **National Youth Events**

Like all youth organizations, the teen years are when 4-H sees many kids leave the program because of other interests or busier schedules that contain other after school activities, jobs, and sports. However, we also know this is an age when kids need us most.

Modernization of Youth Events and Experiences is now a key growth strategy aimed at teen retention. From the investment of the Landmark Gift, **IGNITE by 4-H**, 4-H's national teen conference, has provided a new platform for engaging and retaining teens.

- For four days, teens from all over the country come to D.C. to collaborate, connect, and cultivate a passion for expanding their minds and their world—immersing themselves in hands-on workshops, experiences, activities in key programming tracks of Agriscience, Animal Science, Community Accelerators, Healthy Living, and STEM to find their spark. Most recently, 4-H leadership approved integrating its long-standing civic engagement program—Citizen Washington Focus—into the available tracks.
- A planning and design team of Extension educators has built a relevant and engaging teen experience, utilizing evaluation, feedback and participation from youth—in fact, now, 75% of all workshops are led by teens.
- Overall attendance has increased from 900 participants in 2023 to 1,631 participants in 2025, with 54 states and territories represented. Significant subsidies and scholarships support the event attendance—more than **\$4M in scholarships** have been awarded since 2023—allowing youth from all corners of Cooperative Extension to benefit from this life-changing experience.



## **CLOVER by 4-H Hybrid PYD Platform**

Originally conceived during the pandemic as a way to continue reaching youth with 4-H youth development activities, CLOVER has expanded to more than 260 online interactive activities for youth ages 5–18 and has been repositioned as a tool to extend 4-H educators' capacity, making it a key component of the Beyond Ready growth initiative.

- **New CLOVER content** is constantly being created and upgraded by Extension educators, and now includes interactive content and gamification, where youth can earn rewards and customize their experience as they explore CLOVER. A chartered national working group of 4-H Educators has led design and gathered wider Extension feedback.
- The updates to CLOVER made possible by the Landmark Gift have made it a more valuable tool for 4-H educators. This has included **adjustments to the membership model**, with paid subscriptions removed entirely, improved user experience for youth and adults, and an increase in content contributed by university educators.
- Most recent surveys indicate that **64% of 4-H professional, volunteer, and educator respondents are familiar with CLOVER**, and **35% use it at least once a month**, citing their trust in LGU-backed content. Respondents also cited CLOVER as a tool with which they can present educational content that they themselves do not have expertise in.
- New features being added as a result of educator input involve a **Youth Resume Builder** populated with awards, recognition and projects, as well as **digital pins, badges, and certificates** for completion of CLOVER activities.

## **Landmark Gift Investments have acted as a catalyst for growth.**

The successful deployment of the Landmark Gift, particularly in the form of the Beyond Ready initiative, has enabled additional fundraising and brand awareness opportunities at the national, state and local levels, which has further increased investment in shared priorities.

- Leveraging the system-wide alignment around Beyond Ready empowered state 4-H foundations to raise an additional \$37M—**raised by and for Cooperative Extension**. In addition, the Beyond Ready initiative has helped LGUs establish new partnerships to support enrollment growth and program awareness. As an example, Kansas State 4-H Youth Development and the Kansas 4-H Foundation created a partnership with Flora Food Group to support Kansas 4-H Discovery Days, a college-and-career oriented experience for Kansas 4-H teens. This partnership was initiated through Council's outreach and subsequent collaboration with the Kansas 4-H Foundation.
- At the national level, the Beyond Ready workforce development initiative has enabled National 4-H Council to raise an additional \$38M, which has helped to modernize infrastructure, technology, and expand fundraising capacity—all which will be sustained long into the future and leveraged to attract even more attention and resources for 4-H.





- Council's total spending year-to-date against Landmark Gift Task Force recommendations—including investments in staff capacity and technology infrastructure—has exceeded \$25 million, made possible not by tapping into the Landmark Gift principal, but by leveraging the impact of the \$10 million program investment to fundraise beyond expectations.

## **Conclusion**

In three short years, the impact of the Landmark Gift is already evident, and has successfully achieved the objective of producing immediate impact on 4-H program relevance, brand awareness and reach. In addition, the remaining funds, held as an endowment, will continue to produce returns that will support the health of the program into the future.

Moreover, the process of collaboration between national partners, LGUs, and 4-H development professionals—in developing the original recommendation and in planning and executing the Beyond Ready initiative—has strengthened relationships and cohesion system-wide.

The ultimate return on year-to-date investments and those of the future is unknown at this early stage, but indications are positive that a healthy and relevant 4-H program will extend its 100-plus year record of supporting generations of youth who are healthy, productive, and engaged.

## Financial Appendix

Figures include actual and budgeted spending for National 4-H Council Fiscal Years 23-26 (March 2022 through June 2026)

Program Areas	Activities	Actual (\$000)	Council Match (\$000)	Total Investment (\$000)
Workforce Capabilities and Program Optimization	Beyond Ready Initiative Development	\$385	\$0	\$385
	Beyond Ready Leadership Team	\$387	\$0	\$387
	Beyond Ready Activation Summit	\$125	\$0	\$125
	PYD Academy Training Development	\$857	\$0	\$857
	PYD Academy Program Expenses	\$1,878	\$0	\$1,878
	Research: Common Measures, Qualtrics, Hart Research	\$928	\$0	\$928
	Beyond Ready Creative Development	\$167	\$0	\$167
	AI and Career Pathways Capacity (budgeted)	\$300	\$0	\$300
	<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>\$5,026</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$5,026</b>
Upgrading National Youth Events	Ignite by 4-H Program Expense	\$2,500	\$1,800	\$4,300
	Scholarships and Grants		\$4,200	\$4,200
	<b>Total Youth Events</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$8,500</b>
CLOVER Hybrid PYD Platform	<b>Total CLOVER Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$1,117</b>	<b>\$3,617</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,026</b>	<b>\$7,117</b>	<b>\$17,143</b>





## Landmark Gift Task Force Members

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