

Using Partnership to Optimize Reach of 4-H and Increase Workforce Development in Underserved Communities

Maryland 4-H has offered summer internship programs in three counties each with distinct demographics. This type of opportunity has been piloted in rural, urban and suburban communities. The effectiveness of the experience is enhanced by strong partnerships and youth who are willing to grow. Although all of the participants were not 4-H members at the time of application, many have become members of the organization. Youth who participated in the program reported positive gains in the areas of academic preparation, career readiness, and goal setting. In addition, a positive correlation was indicated between internship participation and the attainment of career skills and potential paths. Community partners contributed fiscal, human or social capital investments to the program. Future studies will include longitudinal changes in skills of participants post high school as well as measure youth skill attainment from the Site Mentors' perspective. The investigators are currently seeking fiscal support in order to scale the project and include more Maryland counties.

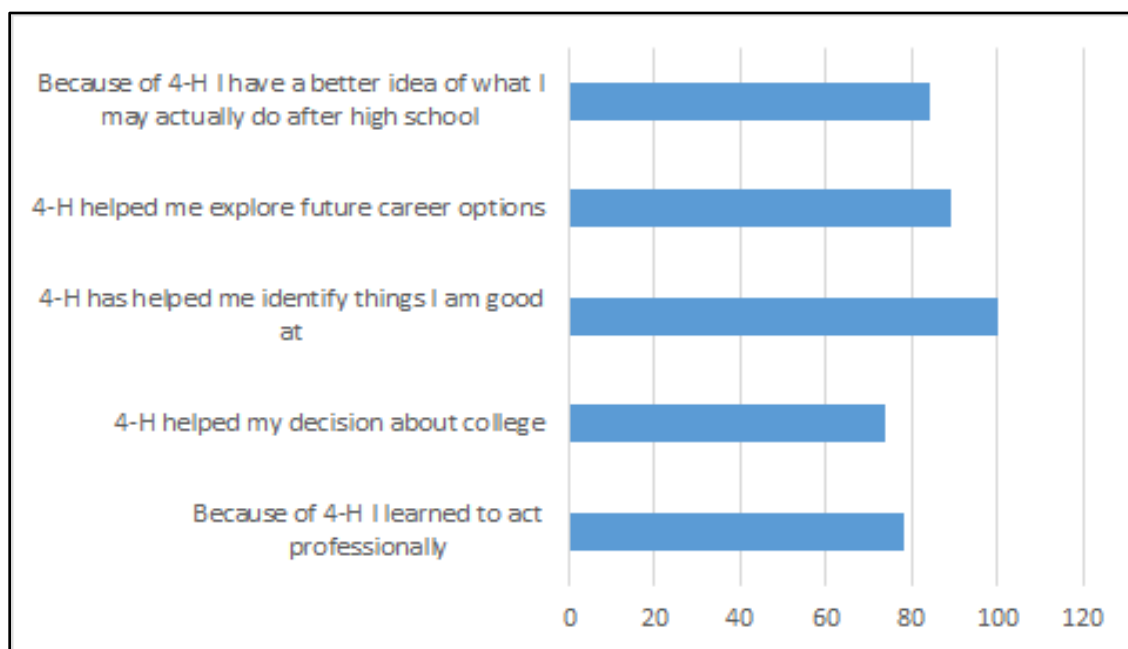


Chart 1: Results of quantitative study. Data was collected using Common Measures 2.0 Protocol (n=19).

Results from youth reflections report positive experiences after participating in the internship program. When asked “What has been the most important thing you have learned by being involved in a 4-H internship program?” youth stated the following:

- “I gained information and experience you can’t get in school.”
- “How to hold a job and professionalism”
- “Leadership and Public Speaking”

- “I’ve learned about my love for engineering and passion for robotics”
- “How much education is important for college”
- “That there is always room for improvement and that it is okay to ask for help”
- “How much that you learn by doing”

Specifically in Howard County, 4-H collaborated with Workforce Development to create an internship program in the summer of 2022. Through this partnership, youth between the ages of 16-24, were able to learn and develop employment skills that they will be able to utilize as they pursue their individual career interests. During the time they were interns with 4-H, the youth experienced 4-H Day Camp and the Howard County Fair. Howard County 4-H plans to continue to grow this partnership in 2023

