



NC 4-H CAMPS

Strategic Plan

2023 - 2030



NC STATE

EXTENSION

The future will
always present
challenges -
but with those
challenges come
opportunities.



Welcome

I am incredibly proud of our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers and the positive impact of our work. As a part of North Carolina 4-H Youth Development through North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at NC State University, our 4-H camps and centers provide life changing experiences for youth and citizens from the mountains to coast and everywhere in between.

For more than 90 years, North Carolina 4-H camps and centers have provided youth with meaningful life lessons and unforgettable experiences. 4-H camps strengthen the foundations of the diverse communities we serve, while promoting healthy lifestyles and fostering a sense of social responsibility in future generations.

North Carolina 4-H camps have a rich history of providing educational programming to thousands of youth through hands-on, experiential learning. Camp offerings include a range of physical fitness and recreational adventures like archery, canoeing and environmental exploration, as well as character-building activities that focus on teambuilding, resource management and STEM studies.

Our professionals strive “to make the best better,” encouraging 4-H campers to achieve their full potential through their Head, Heart, Health and Hands. Each 4-H center is managed by a full-time director and supported by program directors, facility maintenance supervisors, food service supervisors and seasonal team members dedicated to providing safe and exceptional facilities, programs and services for our youth.

Our opportunity is now.

For the past three years, our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers team have been working collaboratively together to develop this strategic plan. Our journey began with a team retreat in January 2020 with the development of our vision, mission and values, then continued with our team retreat in August 2022.

As our College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and NC State Extension begin implementing their respective strategic plans, our new NC 4-H Camps strategic plan will help guide our way for the next seven years.

Through our strategic planning, we have **developed four pillars built on seven goals:**

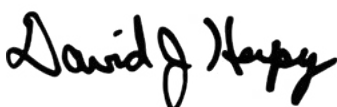
People - We believe that our people are our greatest asset. Therefore, our top priority and focus will be the people on our team and the people we serve. We exist to serve others.

Properties - As state-owned and operated facilities, the safe and efficient operation and maintenance of our facilities is critical for the next seven years and beyond. Maintaining, repairing, and renovating an aging infrastructure will be key to our long-term success.

Programming - With positive youth development as our core mission, and summer camp combined with year-round programs serving school groups and user groups, programming is the way in which we fulfill our mission and deliver our services to the youth and citizens of North Carolina and beyond.

Prosperity - As auxiliary units, our 4-H camps and centers must be able to generate appropriate revenue in order to be fiscally sustainable. This includes a combination of internal funding through receipts based fees, state appropriations, and external funding through donations, gifts, grants, and sponsorships.

There is no doubt that this is a critical time for our camps, our organization, our college, and our future. I look forward to working with our team to implement our plan and providing positive impacts across our state.



David J. Herpy
NC 4-H Camping Specialist



Angela Brisson
NC 4-H Camping Extension Assistant



Introduction

The future will always present challenges, but with those challenges come opportunities. The North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers are looking to the future. This strategic plan is designed to help us meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities the future holds. This plan, developed under the leadership of NC 4-H Camping Specialist Dave Herpy, with input from our camping team, is a collective representation of our mission, vision and values and creates a foundation that will serve our camping system for years to come.

We believe the North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers has a role to play in impacting our youth, our families, our communities, our state, and our society.

With the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic combined with today's challenges of mental health, the North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers are positioned to provide positive youth development experiences for our state's youth. There are few tools as powerful as the camp experience to positively impact the lives of young people. From creating a sense of community and connection, to making new friendships, to learning life skills, our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers provide opportunities to make a difference, one child at a time.

From traditional summer camp experiences to outdoor education school field trips to weekend retreats, our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers provide facilities, programs, and services to meet the needs of our state's youth and citizens.

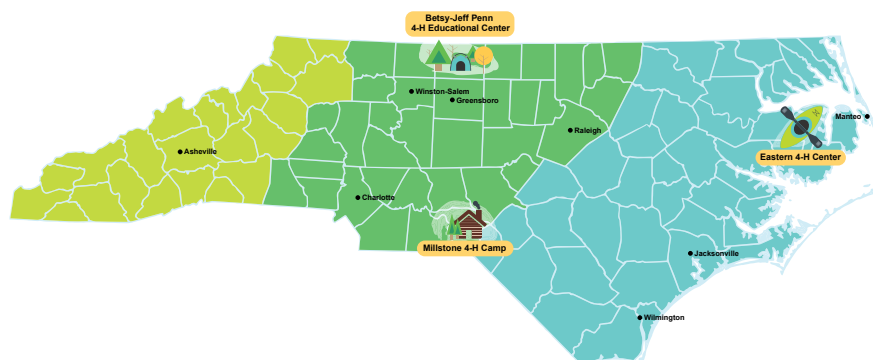
This plan also honors the rich history of our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers.

As we approach the 100 year anniversary of the opening of Swannanoa 4-H Camp in 1929, we honor the history, legacy, and traditions of our 4-H camps over the last century. As such, we recognize each camp's unique brand identity, while embracing the relationship to NC State Extension, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and NC State University.

Our strategic planning process began during a team retreat in Beech Mountain, NC in January 2020 with the development of our vision, mission, core values, and goals, then continued during a team retreat at the Stateview Hotel in August 2022, with the help of NC State's Learning and Organizational Development team and CALS Human Resources team. From there, we laid the groundwork for our strategic plan, based on the feedback and input on our greatest challenges, as well as opportunities for improvement during our 2022 strategic planning process.

During our strategic planning process we identified staff retention as our number one priority. All of the full-time, permanent staff on the NC 4-H Camps team hold a wealth of institutional knowledge, have dedicated years of service to managing and operating a complex and challenging work environment, and represent a collective 100+ years of experience in professional camping. Ensuring that these high-quality staff remain on our team in service to our program is critical to the success of the NC 4-H Camping system and North Carolina 4-H.

The North Carolina 4-H Camps strategic plan is inclusive and dynamic, allowing it to evolve with the system over time. It outlines our strengths, priorities and opportunities for long-term growth and success.





Mission, Vision and Values

Vision

It is our vision to inspire and create productive citizens through lifelong learning opportunities that promote diversity & inclusion for all.

Mission

Betsy-Jeff Penn: Our mission is to provide educational experiences that help develop and promote the life skills necessary for youth to become productive members of society. Our programs empower youth to gain interpersonal life skills, ecological knowledge and community awareness through experiential learning while creating a positive environment that promotes leadership, social and emotional growth for all youth.

Eastern 4-H Center: Our mission is to provide year-round training and education that promotes lifelong learning through outdoor educational and recreation programs for all.

Millstone 4-H Camp: Our mission is to empower youth as they gain interpersonal life skills, ecological knowledge and community awareness through experiential learning. The camp promotes leadership, social and emotional growth, as well as creates a positive environment that influences lives.

Core Values

Caring

We care for each other and for those we serve.

Efficiency

We seek ways to maximize efficiency and minimize waste.

Inclusiveness

We are inclusive and accepting of everyone.

Integrity

We seek to do the right thing.

Respect

We respect each other and everyone else.

Stewardship

We are good stewards of all of our resources.

Goals

Capacity

To increase capacity in enrollment, facilities, programs, people, and services.

Evaluation

To utilize a consistent evaluation tool to measure our outcomes.

Fiscal Responsibility

To maintain and manage our fiscal resources responsibly.

Programming

To develop and facilitate diverse programmatic offerings.

Safety

To enforce and prioritize safety in operation and programming.

Staffing

To attract, develop, and retain top quality staff.

Sustainability

To operate in a sustainable way by focusing on people, planet, and proceeds.



People

We believe that our people are our greatest asset. Therefore, our top priority and focus will be the people on our team and the people we serve. We exist to serve others.

Properties

As state-owned and operated facilities, the safe and efficient operation and maintenance of our facilities is critical for the next seven years and beyond. Maintaining, repairing, and renovating an aging infrastructure will be key to our long-term success.

Programming

With summer camp as our core mission, combined with year-round programs serving school groups and user groups, programming is the way in which we fulfill our mission and deliver our services to the youth and citizens of North Carolina and beyond.

Prosperity

As auxiliary units, our 4-H camps and centers must be able to generate appropriate revenue in order to be fiscally sustainable. This includes a combination of internal funding through receipts based fees and external funding through donations, gifts, grants, and sponsorships.

4 PILLARS BUILT ON 7 GOALS

7 Goals

Goal 1

To increase capacity in enrollment, [facilities](#), programs, people and services.

Objectives

1. Increase capacity in summer camp enrollment.
2. Increase effectiveness and efficiency in facilities.
3. Increase capacity in year-round programming.
4. Increase capacity in services.

Strategies

- a. Mandate summer camp participation for all 101 county extension offices.
- b. Offer additional summer camp weeks by expanding our summer camp season.
- c. Maximize use of existing facilities and eliminate unused facilities by taking them offline.
- d. Increase year-round programming by implementing our strategic marketing plan. Update [strategic marketing plan](#) based on accomplishments and outcomes from the last 5 years.
- e. Develop and implement new and innovative services that meet the needs of local citizens by conducting needs assessments for our local communities and counties.
- f. Increase staffing capacity to support increases in programming as needed.

Goal 2

To utilize a consistent evaluation tool to measure our outcomes.

Objectives

1. Implement a survey instrument for summer camp seasons.
2. Implement a customer satisfaction survey for year-round school groups and user groups.

Strategies

- a. Utilize National 4-H Council's Common Measures 2.0 to evaluate summer camp impacts.
- b. Work with the Evaluation and Accountability Coordinator to analyze and report summer camp data.
- c. Develop and implement a customer satisfaction survey to be used beginning in 2023.
- d. Utilize Qualtrics to develop and host customer satisfaction surveys.

Goal 3

To maintain and manage our fiscal resources responsibly.

Objectives

1. End every fiscal year with a net-zero operating balance for each 4-H center and as an overall 4-H camping system.
2. Prioritize repair and renovation projects based on funding availability and safety needs.

Strategies

- a. Solicit and secure additional external funding through fundraising initiatives and grants.
- b. Develop and implement multiple revenue streams aside from traditional methods.
- c. Conduct annual cost analyses for each 4-H Center and adjust fees accordingly.
- d. Work with the Associate Director of Leadership and Annual Giving on fundraising initiatives; develop and implement a strategic fundraising plan for each camp.

Goal 4

To develop and facilitate diverse programmatic offerings.

Objectives

1. Develop new programs for summer camp and year-round school groups and user groups.
2. Develop and implement new and innovative programming to meet local community needs.
3. Align and implement our 4-H curriculum into our 4-H Centers' programming.

Strategies

- a. Conduct needs assessments for each 4-H Center and develop new programming based on outcomes from those needs assessments.
- b. Follow best practices for camp, environmental education, and outdoor education programming.
- c. Partner with other relevant local, regional, and state organizations to develop and implement collaborative programming that meets the needs of stakeholders.

Goal 5

To enforce and prioritize safety in operation and programming.

Objectives

1. Eliminate accidents and personal injuries by adhering to safety best practices.
2. Reduce near misses for all operational and programmatic functions.

Strategies

- a. Address and resolve all issues identified in our facility safety assessment reports following our 2022 shop safety assessments.
- b. Utilize all required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safety equipment as required by OSHA requirements and ACA camp accreditation standards.
- c. Document, review, and address near misses annually.

Goal 6

To attract, develop, and retain top quality staff.

Objectives

1. Attract and recruit top quality staff with expertise in their areas for vacant positions.
2. Continue to fund professional development opportunities for all staff, including certifications, conferences, and continuing education.
3. Maintain a 90% or better retention rate annually for all full-time and year-round staff.

Strategies

- a. Develop a camp staff career ladder.
- b. Develop and conduct stay interviews with all full-time year-round staff and address any critical immediate issues that could result in staff turnover.
- c. Increase funding for professional development opportunities for staff.

Goal 7

To operate in a sustainable way by focusing on people, planet, and proceeds.

Objectives

1. Ensure healthy work/life balance and boundaries for staff.
2. Develop and implement new sustainability initiatives such as hand dryers, LED lighting, and solar panels.

Strategies

- a. Enforce written guidelines to mitigate burnout of staff.
- b. Research sustainability options for 4-H centers and prioritize implementation based on funding availability.

Conclusion

As we think about the future of our North Carolina 4-H Camps & Centers, there is much to look forward to.

Children need camp now more than ever, especially after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. 4-H camp creates a sense of community and connection that you can't get in a classroom, on a sports team, or anywhere else. With today's constant connection to technology, 4-H camp offers a safe space for children to disconnect from technology and reconnect with each other, surrounded by the peace and tranquility of nature.

4-H camp provides opportunities to make new friends, try new activities, and learn valuable life skills. From communication to independence to leadership to teamwork, 4-H camp provides a learning experience that is unparalleled to any other within our 4-H program. No where else can hundreds of youth come together for a week and leave as different people.

As the first North Carolina State 4-H Club Leader, L.R. Harrill said about 4-H camp, *"You will leave this place a different person. We hope you will be a better person."*



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- North Carolina State 4-H Club Leader, L.R. Harrill