

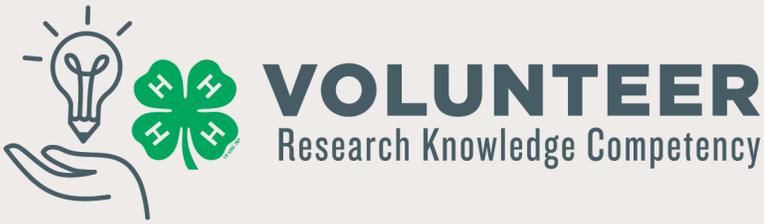
An Overview

What is the VRKC?

The Volunteer Research and Knowledge Competency (VRKC) taxonomy is a foundational resource for 4-H volunteer development. It is based on research conducted with 4-H volunteers, professionals and volunteer specialists, which identified 28 competencies that **volunteers** are believed to need in order to serve the 4-H program (Culp et al., 2010).

The six domains listed in order of importance and frequency of use as determined by the study include:

- 1.) **Communications** - the ability to create, deliver and interpret information effectively through formal and non-formal means.
Skills include: speaking, listening, writing, non-verbal, information delivery and dissemination, marketing and public relations, and use of technology.
- 2.) **Organization** - the ability to engage others in planning, providing and delivering positive 4-H youth development programming in your community.
Skills include: planning and organizing, time management, parent recruitment and involvement, delegating tasks to parents, service to the community and marketing and publicity.
- 3.) **4-H Program Management** - ability to understand and follow appropriate policies, procedures and safety guidelines when acting on behalf of Extension.
Skills include: organization and structure of Extension, upholding the 4-H mission, risk management/risk reduction, liability awareness and reduction, club management, behavior management, record keeping, financial management and computer skills.
- 4.) **Educational Design & Delivery** - the ability to plan, implement and evaluate research-based learning opportunities that effectively promote positive personal development.
Skills include: use of age-appropriate activities, utilization of multiple teaching strategies, understanding of differences in learning styles, knowledge of subject matter, team building, application of experiential learning and program evaluation methods.
- 5.) **Positive Youth Development** - the ability to intentionally and appropriately apply the principles and best practices that result in the positive development of youth.
Skills include: developing life skills, leadership, understanding ages and stages of youth development, empowerment of others, practicing youth-adult partnerships, ability to motivate and encourage youth and appreciating diversity.
- 6.) **Interpersonal Characteristics** - the ability to develop effective relationships, work competently with individuals and groups, and express empathy and understanding for others.



Characteristics include: care for others, a compassionate nature, acceptance of others, honesty, ethics and morality, patience, ability to develop and strengthen relationships and flexibility.

VRKC Resources (lesson plans and other materials) designed to support these domains and specific skills are available on the 4-H.org website.

How to use the VRKC Resources:

Visit the Professional and Volunteer Development Resources on 4-H.org

Log into My Profile → Professional and Volunteer Development → Scroll down to Volunteer Development → Click on “Learn More” → Select the VRKC Model and Lesson Plans from the list of tabs on the top.

What you will find:

- VRKC Taxonomy
- VRKC Lesson Plans organized by domain
 - Communication Skills
 - Organizational Skills
 - Positive Youth Development
 - Educational Design and Delivery
 - 4-H Program Management
 - Interpersonal Characteristics:

The VRKC and supporting materials are designed to help strengthen the identified skills. Each lesson plan contains information about the skill, 2-3 training activities, a reflection and evaluation piece and is accompanied by a slide deck for presentation purposes. Additional resources are in development by the Program Leaders Working Group: 4-H Volunteerism Committee.

How to use:

VRKC can help to reach your volunteer development goal. They are ideal to use with a variety of audiences including:

- 4-H Agents/Educators
- Approved 4-H Volunteers
- Episodic 4-H Volunteers
- Youth 4-H Volunteers
- Partners and collaborators
- Other volunteer audiences



VOLUNTEER

Research Knowledge Competency

4-H agents and specialists can access and utilize the VRKC resources to provide high-quality professional development opportunities such as:

- Use select activities from a lesson plan for a grab and go training
- Incorporate lesson plans or activities at a face to face volunteer training or meeting
- Create passive professional development - a short, concise “blurb” about a topic essential to volunteers
- Design a training webinar or series
- Focus annual volunteer plan or volunteer conference around VRKC skills
- Conduct a needs assessment to help identify the specific VRKC needs of your volunteers

References:

Culp, K.; McKee, R; Nestor, P. (2010). [_Volunteer Research and Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development.](#) Available at: [4-H.org](#)

VRKC Fact Sheet Series provided by

Program Leaders Working Group: 4-H Volunteerism Committee

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