



Share Your Story

2026 Virginia 4-H Youth in Action Awards
Program Guidelines

[Nomination Deadline: Sun., Nov. 2, 2025](#)



About the 4-H Youth in Action Awards Program

Every 4-H'er has a story, and those stories are worth telling! Sharing the story of your 4-H member could earn him/her a \$500 mini-grant, and a scholarship to Virginia's State 4-H Congress!

The program recognizes four confident young leaders in our core pillar areas of **Agriculture, Civic Engagement, Healthy Living, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics)**, giving pillar winners the chance to share how 4-H changed their lives and how they have used the skills they gained in 4-H to change the lives of others.

Awards & Recognition

Each of the four Pillar Winners will receive:

- A \$500 mini-grant to develop a significant community project.
- Recognition at a formal award ceremony.
- A full scholarship to attend Virginia 4-H State Congress June 16-19, 2026 in Blacksburg, VA.
- An opportunity to be featured as the Virginia 4-H Youth Spokesperson for their pillar area.
- An opportunity to represent Virginia 4-H for one or more national events for their pillar area.
- Support and mentorship to apply for the 2027 National 4-H Youth in Action Awards.

Awardees agree to comply with the requirements on the application and the Pillar Winner agreement sent by the State 4-H Office at the time of selection.

Selection Process

The 4-H Youth in Action Award selection process includes the following:

1. **Online Application:** 4-H members in any or all of the pillar areas. Complete and submit the online nomination found at <https://forms.gle/sMm6VhKCidCFZCED7>. Applications should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on Sunday, November 2. You will receive a confirmation email when your completed application is received. You must include a letter of reference from your Extension Agent, or the VCE employee in charge of 4-H programming in your county/city. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. If you are unsure of your status, contact Chad N. Proudfoot, State 4-H Organizational Specialist, at CNProudfoot@vt.edu
2. **Finalist Selection:** A selection committee will review all applications, conduct virtual interviews, and select finalists for each pillar. Those not selected will receive an email indicating their status. Finalists may be asked to participate in a virtual conversation to discuss the awards the last week of November.
3. **Pillar Winner Selection:** Finalists will be reviewed by a selection committee and will be notified of their status by the State 4-H Office by December 5, 2025.

Pillar Areas

In the application, you'll be asked to share your 4-H member's story of leadership focusing around one or more pillar areas. The work within the pillars may be a key project, program, or 4-H experience, or it may center around a series of activities in which he/she served as a leader. Read the pillar descriptions below to

choose the best fit for this work. The selection committee will consider applications across any appropriate area.

It is expected that all applicants will have engaged in leadership and service that may be considered to be Civic Engagement, but each applicant should designate the pillar(s) that best represent the overall focus of their 4-H experience. Leadership in 4-H Camping may be represented in any area.

4-H Youth in Action: Agriculture Pillar

In Agriculture programs, 4-H'ers experience activities that range from farming & raising animals to growing crops & other resources. Topics that may be covered in this pillar include, but are not limited to:

- **Animal Science** – responsibility, proper care, & nutrition
- **Veterinary Science** – animal nutrition, examinations & treatment, infectious diseases
- **Biotechnology & Sustainability** – producing healthy, plentiful, & environmentally responsible products
- **Plant Science & Forestry** – plants, insects, water, soil, tree identification, forest evaluation
- **Food Security** – growing and/or raising food to ensure reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious foods

4-H Youth in Action: Civic Engagement Pillar

In Civic Engagement programs, 4-H'ers experience activities encouraging youth to engage others around important causes or issues to the community. Topics that may be covered include, but are not limited to:

- **Community Action** - service learning, community youth development
- **Communication & Expressive Arts** - artistic expression, communication
- **Civic Education & Engagement** - history & cultural heritage, civic & social responsibility, government principles, promoting quality of life, and advocacy

4-H Youth in Action: Healthy Living Pillar

In Healthy Living programs, 4-H'ers learn about healthy eating, physical fitness, and developing & maintaining positive relationships. Topics that may be covered in this pillar include, but are not limited to:

- **Health, Nutrition & Fitness** – eating right, physical fitness, being active, good hygiene
- **Social & Emotional Well-Being** – alcohol/tobacco/drug use prevention, bullying prevention, stress management, encouraging good decision-making skills

4-H Youth in Action: STEM Pillar

In STEM programs, 4-H'ers learn about Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics through hands-on activities and projects. Topics that may be covered in this pillar include, but are not limited to:

- **Environmental Science & Alternative Energy** - alternative energy, conserving energy, limiting humanity's impact on the environment, natural science
- **Engineering & Technology** – rocketry, computer science, technology, engineering, mathematics

Application Requirements

1. General Information & Eligibility Requirements

- Be 4-H member** of any type of 4-H program in the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Be between ages 15-18.** Applicants must turn 15 by the application deadline and should not have turned 19 before January 1, 2026.
- Submit personal and contact information.** Please provide the personal contact information for the nominee, including email address.

2. Short Answer Questions

Each applicant will respond to short-answer questions regarding their 4-H story and pillar area leadership. This work should provide benefit to others & require significant leadership. Each question includes sub-questions which are not required, but may be helpful points to cover.

- Describe how 4-H impacted you.** (*How did 4-H change or improve your life? What have you learned about yourself? Has your 4-H experience helped you overcome something challenging in your life? Did 4-H help you define their interests/passions, or gain any skills?*) **Great submissions will provide clear examples of how 4-H has impacted the applicant!**
- Describe a project, program, 4-H activity or series of activities in the pillar area in which you demonstrated leadership. Detail how the leadership in this pillar has improved or influenced your community.** (*What motivated you to be a leader? What was your leadership role? When & where did your work occur? Is it on-going? What steps did you take in your work? Did teamwork play a role? What or who benefitted? What are the long-term effects of your work?*) **Great submissions will provide clear examples of leadership in the pillar!**

3. 60-Second Video

Please provide a **60-second video** answering the following prompt:

- Finish this statement: **“4-H has inspired me to....”** and address how 4-H has encouraged or inspired you in your work in the pillar area.

The video should:

- Be 60 seconds or less and feature only the applicant speaking (no other speakers or visuals).
- Be recorded with a simple recording device/smart phone. No special equipment or editing expected.
- Be either uploaded to YouTube & be viewable by anyone with the link OR be uploaded with the online application. If uploading to the application, the video should be 10 GB or less.

4. Photos

Upload three individual photos. **Two should demonstrate the applicant's work in the pillar and one should be a headshot.** Photo montages will not be reviewed. File formats accepted include JPG, GIF, or PNG. Photos should not exceed 100 MB each.

5. Reference Letter

Each application must include a reference letter written by the local Extension Agent, or the Extension employee administering 4-H programs in the county/city. This letter should be uploaded with the application. Letters written by club leaders, volunteers, parents, etc. will not be accepted.

Award Timeline

Date	Action
November 2, 2025	Online nomination closes
Throughout November	Review of applications by selection committee, and virtual interviews (via Zoom)
December 3, 2025	Award notifications sent to all nominees. All nominees will be notified via email. No phone or email inquiries, please. Pillar winners announced to the 4-H Field, externally to local community & media at a later date in connection with VCE Marketing & Communications.
January 21, 2026	<i>An Evening with Virginia 4-H</i> recognition event. All winners must participate.

Questions?

We're glad you're interested in applying for the 2026 Virginia 4-H Youth in Action Awards! We know that the application is an extensive process, if you have questions please contact:

Chad N. Proudfoot, 4-H Organizational Specialist, CNProudfoot@vt.edu

We look forward to seeing your 4-H Youth in Action submission by November 2, 2025!

<https://forms.gle/sMm6VhKCidCFZCED7>

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