

TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S 4-H
COUNTY GOVERNMENT GUIDE: A NEEDS
ASSESSMENT

By

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ASSESSMENT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The responsibility for who will educate today's youth is shifting. Where the parents, schools, and the community once contributed an equal share to the teaching of our youth, a deficit is now occurring (Schlink, 2000). Sandra Day O'Connor, retired Supreme Court Justice, said "public schools have pretty much stopped teaching government, civics and American history. I truly don't know how long we can survive as a strong nation if our younger citizens don't understand the nature of our government. That is something you have to learn. It just isn't handed down in the genetic pool," (Hentoff, 2006 n.p.).

The 4-H County Government Guide (the guide) is one document focused on youth education. First produced in 1982 to help educate Texas youth about county government in Texas, the guide was produced as a cooperative effort of the V.G. Young Institute of County Government and Texas 4-H Association. The Texas Association of Counties was also involved with providing technical information.

The Texas Legislature created the V.G. Young Institute of County Government in 1969 as a part of Texas Cooperative Extension and The Texas A&M University System. The main focus of the Institute is to provide continuing education programs to elected county officials across the state. The Institute hosts continuing education seminars for

county judges, commissioners, tax assessor-collectors, treasurers, clerks and district clerks. The Institute provides assistance for regional county judges and commissioners associations for planning their yearly meetings (V.G. Young Institute of County Government, 2006).

As a part of Texas Cooperative Extension and The Texas A&M University System, the Institute has many valuable resources to help in planning educational programs. The Institute collaborates with the Lower Colorado River Authority to assist in the curriculum and program planning of the LCRA's Texas Leadership Institute. The Institute also provides publications about county government and serves as a reference for county government in Texas (V.G. Young Institute of County Government, 2006).

The 4-H program began in the late 1800's and the early 1900's as a way to teach America's youth about agriculture and nature. Since the time the guide was created, the focus of 4-H has changed by broadening its scope to include life skills. As such citizenship and leadership skills have become a part of 4-H educational programs (4-H History Timeline, n.d.).

4-H Youth Development is the non-formal, educational program for youth of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of the U.S.

Department of Education and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It has gained a national reputation for its work with youth throughout the past century. 4-H is unique in the non-formal youth development field because it is a partner with the land grant university system and has access to

the most current knowledge and research provided by those universities related to youth development (4-H 101 Handbook, 2000, p. 9).

With access to university resources, 4-H and Institute materials should stay current to disseminate accurate information. However the guide has not been updated since 1982. There have been major changes in society and social expectations since the last update of the guide. These changes need to be taken into consideration in regard to the guide. Curriculum planners view their task of providing for the educational needs of students as a primary concern. The educational needs of students shift as our society changes and as we learn more about the physical and sociopsychological aspects of child growth and development (Olivia, 1982).

The guide was originally created to ensure young people would have a chance to be involved and learn about the county in which they live.

Just as youth learn “basic classroom subjects” at an early age, they can also be involved in real-life learning experiences in the community and county where they live. Since most people do not become aware of or involved in government matters until middle age, there is much concern about apathy, lack of civic leadership, cooperation and involvement in the community. Earlier, more meaningful educational involvement for young people will help correct this situation (Texas Cooperative Extension, 1982, p. 1).

County government issues are rarely written in published textbooks and are not consistently taught in high schools. This means information about county government is

even harder to find. The guide should be a reliable source for youth to learn about county government (Texas Cooperative Extension, 1982).

American youth participation in political endeavors has been declining. In a survey by Harvard University's Institute of Politics, it was found that only 14 percent of college students had participated in a government or political organization during the last twelve months (Political Empowerment, 2004). According to a survey by the National Center for Leadership and Citizenship, only 26 percent of students in the United States have proficient skill, knowledge and disposition for democratic participation (Lennon, 2006). In another survey by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 52 percent of local political party leaders strongly agreed "the lack of political engagement by young people is a serious problem" (Shea, 2004, p. 5).

Although Texas ranks second in the nation for the number of voters, the voter turnout for young people has been declining (2004 Election Voting Age Population by State, 2005). Texas youth have followed the national trend of declining participation in voter turnout. The number of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 voting in Texas has declined since 1990, and has been below the national average of voters in this age group (Lopez, Marcelo & Sagoff, 2006). Nationally, youth voting has declined by 5 percent since 1972, while Texas's youth voting has declined by 7 percent (Change in Youth Voting, 2004). Only 17 percent of young voters participated in the 2002 election (Lopez, Marcelo & Sagoff, 2006).

According to the 1994 National Association of Secretaries of State New Millennium Survey, the most important determining factor of whether young voters will participate in elections is their level of education (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2000). Although the Cooperative Extension System began as a way to educate farmers, the Cooperative Extension System, through county extension agents, also educates youth and adults. Texas Cooperative Extension Agents use the 4-H County Government Guide as a tool to educate youth about county government. Their input is valuable to determine the elements needed to have a current and resourceful guide.

The Problem

The Texas Cooperative Extension 4-H County Government Guide is out of date and needs to be revised to ensure accurate delivery of information. The specific elements needed to update the guide were unknown.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine usage of the 4-H County Government Guide by Texas Cooperative Extension Agents.
2. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of the most important topics to be included in the 4-H County Government Guide.
3. To determine the best format and designed supplemental materials for delivery of the 4-H County Government Guide.
4. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of youth involvement in county government activities.

Definitions

4-H – part of the Cooperative Extension System, a non-profit program operated through each state's land grant university. The Extension System's staff operate 4-H offices throughout the counties of each state. In 4-H, youth learn life skills they will benefit from forever. Most 4-H programs center around three areas, leadership, citizenship, and life skills (Essential Elements, n.d.)

Civic - the study of the way in which a local government works, and of the rights and duties of the people who live in the city (Landau, 2007)

Citizenship – willingness and ability to engage in public discourse and evaluate the performance of those in office (Milner, 2002)

Democratic – characterized by free and equal participation in government
(Encarta World Dictionary, 2007)

Need – a gap – between the real and ideal conditions – that is both acknowledged
by community values and potentially amenable to change (Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter
and Ferguson, 1996)

Politics – the art or science of government (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary,
2007)

Social Studies – the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to
promote civic competence (Texas Social Studies Framework, 1999)

Texas Cooperative Extension - an educational organization provided by the U.S.
government, the state government through Texas A&M University, and county
government. Extension serves every county in Texas. The information offered by
Extension is provided by scientists and researchers at Texas A&M and other universities,
and it is made practical and relevant by Extension educators (Texas Cooperative
Extension Web site, 2007)

Texas Cooperative Extension Agent – employee of Texas A&M University who
delivers programs and information from Extension to the public (Texas Cooperative
Extension Web site, 2007)

Youth Development – an ongoing process through which young people attempt to
meet their needs and to develop competencies they perceive as necessary for survival and
transition to adulthood (4-H 101 Handbook, 2000)

Scope and Limitations

The study is limited only to the content of the 4-H County Government Guide produced by the Texas Cooperative Extension's V.G. Young Institute of County Government in 1982.

Logical Assumptions

This study assumed all participants are aware of the 4-H County Government Guide and have some knowledge of its contents. This study also assumed all Texas Cooperative Extension agents have access to and use a 4-H County Government Guide. The study assumes Texas Cooperative Extension Agents want the current 4-H County Government Guide updated.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Information is needed to update the current 4-H County Government Guide, so it can be a useful resource for Texas Cooperative Extension Agents. Civic education can help inform youth, if the approach to education is fitted to their evolving needs and realities (Center for Communication and Civic Engagement, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

Finkel (2003) identified three areas as essential to democratic citizenship. The first area, “civic competence”, includes knowledge of politics, skills to participate in the democratic process and awareness of ability to influence government (Finkel, 2003 p. 138). The next area was identified as observance of democratic processes. The final area consisted of actual participation in democracy, which education promotes (Finkel, 2003).

Civic knowledge is important to society, according to Galston (2004). Increased civic knowledge leads to increased support of democratic practices, increased political participation, promotes understanding of democratic processes and decreases distrust among citizens. A base knowledge of civics increases the likelihood citizens will learn more about politics. Civic knowledge allows citizens to make their own informed decisions. Education can also modify citizens opinions on current issues (Galston, 2004).

In his book *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey (1916) emphasizes the importance of education for the continual survival of society. People and animals are

different from inanimate objects because they respond and learn from stimuli. In order to have a productive and continuous society, citizens must learn about their government (Dewey, 1916). All citizens have an ethical obligation to uphold their society. Each generation must do their part to ensure the freedoms Americans possess are maintained and passed to the next generation (Galston, 2004).

Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter (1820) to William C. Jarvis, “I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education” (The Safest Depository, 1995, n.p.).

Political engagement is only part of being politically involved. Youth must be educated about politics, so they can be effective participants (Galston, 2004). Civic education is a way to prepare youth to be American citizens. This involves teaching youth to be responsible decision makers and seek knowledge in the world around them. Youth must also be encouraged to make decisions about how they will participate in the political system (Meizlish & Bernstein, 2003).

Government Education

The main focus of early civic education in America was to instill pride in the democratic system and in America (Heater, 2004). Civic education began in early America as a way to assimilate or “Americanize” children in schools. Teachers taught

students about democracy and American law and government. Immigrants saw this as a way to for their children to learn about America (Mirel, 2002, p. 51).

Although these issues are still important parts of civic education, youth have distrust in government that began during the Baby Boomer generation. During this era, youth became disappointed with the government for the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandals (Greenberg, 2002). The Baby Boomer generation also saw the assassination of political leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy, which led this generation to become more disengaged from civic involvement (Putnam, 2000).

The next generation, Generation X, became more disengaged in civic participation. This generation put more interest into materialism and gaining wealth (Putnam, 2000). The Generation X also perceived the government as the problem for the state of society. Currently, American youth do not perceive they receive benefits from the government as it is currently arranged (Greenberg, 2002).

The DotNet generation (ages 15-26) was found to be less enthusiastic about civic education than older generations, but in a survey by Kurtz, Rosenthal and Zukin (2003) 79 percent of DotNet generation surveyed said civic education is an important topic to teach. However, this survey also found 82 percent of respondents could identify the hometown of the television show the Simpson's, but only 48 percent could identify the political party of their state's governor (Kurtz, Rosenthal & Zukin, 2003). Youth separate themselves from other sectors of society by having vigor and new insights, but they often lack expertise and experience to use them effectively (Westheimer, 2006).

There are other factors that have a negative effect on political knowledge and participation but, the education being provided to current generations is not doing the job it once did (Milner, 2002).

Although the lack of participation in government and civics is seen as a problem, the subject remains a low priority for many schools. Part of the problem with educating youth in schools about local government is there are no standards in the educational community as to what students need to learn about local government (Damon, 2006). Schools continue to withdraw from beginning new civic education programs. If schools continue to exclude civic education from their curriculum, the future of public education is daunting (Mirel, 2002).

Another problem with government being taught in schools is the focus on negative events. High schools are criticized for their social studies teachers emphasizing the negative aspects of American history and culture. They are not teaching students to appreciate American establishments (Levine & Lopez, 2004). Although it is important to learn about past failures, educators should highlight positive events in history for students. By emphasizing positive events, students will have reasons for caring about society (Damon, 2006).

Civic education and local government are often left out of school curriculum to ensure students learn about state and national government. Local government is especially important to students because it is the level of government in which young people will have the greatest opportunity for actual participation, both during their youth

and as adults (Hamilton & Zeldin, 1987). In a study of 14-year-olds in 28 countries, Torney-Purta and Richardson (2004) found youth were more likely to be an informed voter if they were educated about civics, the individual's confidence in their ability to participate in government and shown the importance of elections and voting through a curriculum. Finkel (2003) found students who were exposed to more civic education were more likely to participate in politics (Finkel, 2003).

Niemi and Junn (1998) found high school seniors have an operational knowledge of national government, but are not well-informed about state and local government. Also, students learn certain facts from their civics classes, but do not understand the concepts of the facts they are learning (Niemi & Junn, 1998).

The Texas Education Agency discusses social studies as an important topic because of its role to educate students. "All school subjects contribute to the development of citizens, but social studies is the one school subject that has citizenship education as its overarching goal" (Texas Social Studies Framework, 1999, p. 3). Teachers making citizenship education important in their social studies classes make it a valuable part of the school's curriculum (Texas Social Studies Framework, 1999).

Unfortunately, county government education is often overlooked when educating youth about the three levels of government – federal, state and local. Many textbooks are written about federal and state government, but little is available about local government. Yet, local government is more accessible and visible,

and has the most immediate effect on the everyday life of an individual than any other level of government (Texas Cooperative Extension, 1982, p. 1).

Youth should not only be taught about government, but also why they need to know about it, so they can understand the processes and components of it.

Part of this weakness is the result of the educational system that does not provide adequate civics curricula that teach youth the structural process of government and the political realities which shape that process. Youth need to be taught the reasons why involvement is necessary to develop a strong civic society, and the value that their input can bring (Haid, Marques & Brown, 1999, p. 57).

Another problem schools face with civic education courses is the lack of consistency in the topics covered in the classes taught on civic education. Although there are some classes taught in many schools, such as American History, there are elective classes taught on various civic topics. These variations make it difficult to assess the actual topics being taught. Every state has its own standards for teaching government and civics in schools. There are no country-wide standards for teaching this subject. County government is a subject that is limited to a state because of the specific laws and governing bodies that govern counties within the state (Niemi & Junn, 1998). It is important to determine if students have needs particular to a state or region (Olivia, 1982). Local areas should work with policy leaders to determine the best educational requirements for their area (Gimpel and Lay, 2006). Once these needs are determined policies and practices should be put in place to ensure equal education.

The standards for the state of Texas include standardized testing of students through the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. This test evaluates student's knowledge of social studies in the 8th, 10th and 11th grades (State Policies: Citizenship Education, 2007). According to the Grade 8 TAKS Social Studies Information Booklet (2004, p. 5), the objectives of the social studies portion of the test are as follows:

Objective 1: The student will demonstrate an understanding of issues and events in U.S. History.

Objective 2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of geographic influences on historical issues and events.

Objective 3: The student will demonstrate an understanding of economic and social influences on historical issues and events.

Objective 4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of political influences on historical issues and events.

Objective 5: The student will use critical-thinking skills to analyze social studies information.

School is an important place for learning to occur, but it is not the only place. Students have been found to learn better outside of the classroom, where they learn by doing (Gregoire, 2004). Service-learning gives students a chance to learn outside of the classroom and discover problem-solving, team-work, critical thinking and other civic skills (Miller, 2007). Gimpel and Lay (2006) found that even in areas with low education

rates there were still politically active citizens. These citizens received information from areas other than schools (Gimpel and Lay, 2006).

“Local government can often appear more remote than national politics and international events” (Demaine, 2004, p. 207). The decline in local and national politics and the public visibility of these events will bring a renewed interest into citizenship education (Demaine, 2004).

Cooperative Extension and 4-H

Schools operate in the context of many competing influences. Commenting on the situation in the United States, but a point with general applicability, Stephen Macedo and his colleagues argue that schools’ citizenship efforts need to be put in a broader framework. They argue schools are not the cause of the current situation of civic education, and cannot be expected to solve the problem (Stoker, 2006). 4-H is able to teach the skills schools cannot precisely because of the voluntary and low-risk nature of non-formal programs (Astroth, 1996).

The Cooperative Extension System is in an optimal position to meet the needs of youth. The collaboration between the Cooperative Extension System and the land-grant university system is a solid basis for providing information for youth programs. Extension staff provides expertise in obtaining information and advising about local community needs, resources and stakeholders. The reputation of the Extension System also plays a role in community investment in programs, which is important to maintaining the program (Goldberg, Spoth, et. al, 2001).

Extension educators are uniquely situated to work as partners in their communities to develop quality educational programs outside of the traditional school environment. While the lines of responsibility continue to shift as society changes, this shift provides Extension educators with an excellent opportunity to meet with young people living in their communities, to work with them, and to develop their values through program development (Schlink, 2000).

The National 4-H program has 7,090,920 youth members, 1,054,221 of these are from Texas. Currently, 12,714 4-Hers participate in citizenship and civic education programs in Texas. The majority of these students participated in citizenship and education or community service projects. No youth participants were reported in service learning projects for the state of Texas (4-H Youth Development Statistics, 2005).

The 4-H program teaches skills for youth to be productive adults. In a study of 4-H alumni, 4-H alumni attributed their total life skill development to 4-H programs rather than other youth development clubs (Maas, Wilken, et. al, 2006.).

In a study by Gregoire (2004), it was found that New York youth who participated in 4-H activities had an increased opportunity for mastery, had more opportunities and were involved in more service to others, were engaged in learning and were given a chance to see themselves as active participants in the future. The study found youth discovered confidence in themselves by being able to participate in 4-H activities. It was also found youth in the study participated in more service toward their community. Through service to their community, youth learned new skills, had a sense

of belonging in the community, saw a role for themselves and learned to care about the community. The youth were also engaged in learning. A few study participants identified citizenship activities, including trips to Washington, DC, as a way to understand how government works and how to make changes happen (Gregoire, 2004). Pennington and Edwards (2006) found Oklahoma 4-H Key club alumni perceived a more profound impact on their civic engagement as adults than they did from “other” sources (Pennington & Edwards, 2006).

4-H professionals are responsible for the outcomes of working directly with youth to help individual youth achieve the skills they need. They must know the specific competencies to target for individual youth and identify the means by which those skills are learned (4-H 101 Handbook, 2000).

Extension agents are charged with the task of working with 4-H youth. They guide youth and teach them to become productive members of society. In this process, they are also change agents. They take what is and find what it could be. Agents cannot be stagnant in their ways, but lead youth to become more productive members of society (Teague, 2001).

The National 4-H has identified five competencies as important to teach youth to help them become productive adults. One of the areas identified as being important is “citizenship competency.” This competency includes understanding of the history and values of one’s nation, community, race, ethnic and cultural heritage, and the desire to be ethical and to be involved in contributing to the broader good (Essential Elements, n.d.).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is a needs assessment of Texas County Extension Agents regarding the 4-H County Government Guide. Surveys have shown there is a decline in the participation of youth in government activities (Political Empowerment at the Local Level, 2004; Lennon, 2006; Shea, 2004). Education has been found as the most important factor in youth participation in elections (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2000). The guide was developed to educate 4-H youth about county government issues. The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government.

The focus of this study was to determine the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents, including the most important topics to be included in the guide, the best format for the presentation of the guide to be in and the factors that would entice them to use the guide more frequently.

Problem

The Texas Cooperative Extension 4-H County Government Guide is out of date and needs to be revised to ensure accurate delivery of information. The specific elements needed to update the guide were unknown.

Institutional Review Board

Research conducted on human subject by an employee, a staff member or student of Oklahoma State University must obtain approval to conduct their research to ensure the rights and welfare of the human subjects involved in the study are protected. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Compliance and the Institutional Review Board approved the research proposal for the needs assessment of the 4-H County Government Guide. The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board approved the research approval for this study on December 5, 2006 and the application number is AG0651 (see Appendix A).

Texas A&M University Office of Research Compliance requires that research conducted by university employees or students or research conducted on Texas A&M University staff must be approved by their office. The Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects Protection Program, Texas A&M University reviewed the research proposal submitted to Oklahoma State University regarding this study, and honored the exemption granted by Oklahoma State University on January 10, 2007 (see Appendix B).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government. The researcher for this study conducted a survey to determine the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents regarding the 4-H County Government Guide.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine usage of the 4-H County Government Guide by Texas Cooperative Extension Agents.
2. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of the most important topics to be included in the 4-H County Government Guide.
3. To determine the best format and designed supplemental materials for delivery of the 4-H County Government Guide.
4. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of youth involvement in county government activities.

Research Design

The research design for this study is a needs assessment. A needs assessment is an eclectic form of applied social research. Organizations use needs assessments to determine the current situation. Needs Assessments also gather data that is used to determine changes that need to be made to existing programs or policies (Reviere, Berkowitz, et. al., 1996).

The purpose for conducting needs assessments is to produce information (Johnson, Meiller, et. al., 1987). Needs assessments are tools. They are designed to identify what a particular group of persons lacks to achieve more satisfactory lives. Data acquired from needs assessments are necessary to help organizations make educated decisions in planning programs and allocating resources. (Reviere, Berkowitz, et. al.,

1996). The needs of an individual and the needs of society are often the same. Education that is beneficial to an individual can be just as beneficial to society (Olivia, 1982).

There are two types of needs assessments data, which are called primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to data collected for the needs of the researcher. Primary data collection includes surveys, interviews and focus groups. Secondary data is based on information that has already been collected. This type of data is usually broader and can be generalized (Reviere, Berkowitz, et. al., 1996).

Needs Assessments are often conducted incorrectly and are not always valid because of researcher error. Agencies often conduct this type of research without proper guidance, and collect invalid data. To minimize this weakness, it is best to consult an expert in the field or learn about the methods of conducting a needs assessment (Reviere, Berkowitz, et. al., 1996). Testing the questions asked in the needs assessment to ensure they are gathering the correct data can also strengthen a needs assessment (Soriano, 1995)

Another way to minimize the chance of error in conducting a needs assessment is to collect three types of data. Demographic data allows the researcher to learn the characteristics and general problems of a population. Informant information is information gathered from front-line service providers. Participants should also be asked to give their opinion. Opinions are usually obtained by face-to-face interviews, but in this study were collected through open-ended questions (Neuber, Atkins, et. al., 1980).

Validity

A panel of experts including faculty from the Texas Cooperative Extension's V.G. Young Institute of County Government, Texas Cooperative Extension's 4-H Youth and Development Office and the Texas A&M University Department of Agricultural

Leadership, Education and Communication reviewed the survey instrument. The review of the instrument was conducted to establish face and content validity.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the questions on the survey instrument collecting scaled data. The coefficient is the measure of internal consistency for the survey instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated post-hoc. The coefficient for this study was .78. Nunnally (1978) indicates .7 as an acceptable reliability coefficient (Nunnally, 1978).

Population

The participants for this study were Texas Cooperative Extension Agents. A list of these agents was obtained from the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. All agents were sent an email about the survey. The total number of agents surveyed was 600. All 600 agents were contacted to participate in the study. Permission to survey these agents was obtained through Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board and Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board.

Procedures

Participants for this survey were selected on the basis of their employment. All participants were employees of Texas Cooperative Extension. At the recommendation of extension experts, an introductory email and two follow-up emails were sent to participants by email. Two follow-up emails were sent to increase the response rate. The recommendations of extension experts were followed to increase participant awareness of the survey and to comply with Texas Cooperative Extension administrators.

Participants and their District Extension Administrators were sent an email describing the survey (see Appendix E). Each extension agent was then sent a letter with the link to the survey (see Appendix F). The email surveys were sent through the Texas Cooperative Extension's email system. After clicking the link to the Web site, agents were taken to the survey Web site hosted by the Texas A&M University Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication on Zip Survey Software.

Survey Instrument

A survey instrument (see Appendix E) was developed with questions concerning perceptions of the 4-H County Government Guide, elements of the guide and demographic information of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents. The survey was reviewed by a panel of four experts (see Appendix C). Each expert had at least three years experience with county government or 4-H. The survey was then put online, and a link to the survey was sent to 10 randomly selected people (not included in the survey population) to test the mechanics of the survey.

The online survey instrument had a simple design. The instrument did not use bold or flashy colors or graphics. According to a study by Dillman, Tortora, Conradt and Bowker (1998), online surveys that are plain in their design help reduce respondent error. More complex surveys may require specialized software, long download times or high internet browser power. These factors make it difficult for participants with limited technology to participate in the study.

An email was sent to District Extension Administrators on January 24, 2007 informing them about the survey and to encourage extension agents in their district to participate in the survey. An email was also sent to Texas Cooperative Extension Agents

stating the purpose of the study and when they would receive the study. The following day, January 25, 2007, an email was sent out with a link to the online survey. Agents were able to click on the link for the survey, and answer the survey questions online. Emails reminding participants to participate in the survey were sent on February 5, 2007 and February 21, 2007 (see Appendix G). The reminder email contained a link to the online survey.

The first part of the survey asked questions about training and program support. This section included questions about the frequency of use of the guide in their county. The next section of the survey was program results. This section asked about the level of participation in county government events in the agent's county. The last section of the survey asked demographic questions of the agents.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected by sending out an electronic survey to all Texas Cooperative Extension Agents through Zip Survey Software. Survey participants were sent a link in an email to the survey. When participants clicked on the link, they were taken to the survey. When participants completed the survey, results were sent to a database and analyzed. Responses were analyzed by the percentage of participants answering the question. Survey participants were asked to give additional information on questions 4, 6, 9, 11 and 14. Responses from these questions were collected and coded.

The Zip Survey Software collected data from respondents, but did not give a detailed report of each respondent. Due to the lack of information given, the researcher was unable to look at non-respondents or early versus late respondents.

Survey questionnaires are used to learn about the distribution of characteristics attitudes or beliefs. The researcher must rely on the participants to be honest in their responses on the survey questionnaire (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Survey questionnaires gather a large amount of data inexpensively from a large number of people (Kathwohl, 1998).

The strengths of conducting surveys are accuracy, generalizability and convenience. The accuracy of the survey can be measured by quantification and replicability. Results of surveys can be generalized, within the limits of error. Surveys allow for quick statistical analysis and are easy to administer compared to other methods of data collection. Survey research lacks, though, in its ability to determine complex relationships (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

Electronic questionnaires are a relatively new form of data collection. The advantages to electronic questionnaires are a higher response rate, less cost to administer, less time consuming and the researcher has more control over the questionnaire (Selwyn and Robson, 1998).

Email allows researchers to send information to multiple people in one action, which saves the researcher time (no manual labor to mail surveys) and money (no postage). There are many types of email software that allow the sender to know who has received and opened their email, which helps researchers determine who has received the survey. Validity can be compromised by email surveys because the researcher cannot always guarantee anonymity to participants. Electronic surveys sent by email have a higher response rate when the researcher sends a request for information before the survey is sent out (Selwyn and Robson, 1998 and Dillman, Tortora, & et. al.1998).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study assessed the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents regarding the 4-H County Government Guide. Youth participation in government has been declining for years (Heater, 2004; Greenberg, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Schools are not providing adequate civic education to meet the needs of youth (Haid, Marques & Brown, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the elements needed to update the guide to educate about civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government.

4-H and the Cooperative Extension System are able to reach youth across the country. 4-H is able to educate youth in a manner unlike schools. The atmosphere of 4-H provides a unique opportunity for 4-Hers (Astroth, 1996). The Cooperative Extension System is in an optimal position to provide educational information. Through

land-grant universities, Cooperative Extension System receives research-based information to use in educational programs (Schlink, 2000).

This study assessed the needs of Texas County Extension Agents through a Web-based survey instrument. The survey instrument was based on the current 4-H County Government Guide. The instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts (see Appendix C). An introductory email (see Appendix F) was sent to Texas County Extension Agents and District Extension Agents explaining the survey and encouraging their participation. An email containing the link to the online survey was sent to all of the agents. Two reminder emails (Appendix G) with the survey link were also sent. The population of the study was comprised of 600 Texas County Extension Agents. The response rate for the study was 24.2 percent.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine usage of the 4-H County Government Guide by Texas Cooperative Extension Agents.
2. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of the most important topics to be included in the 4-H County Government Guide.

3. To determine the best format and designed supplemental materials for delivery of the 4-H County Government Guide.
4. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of youth involvement in county government activities.

Population

The participants for this study were Texas Cooperative Extension Agents. A list of these agents was obtained from the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. All agents (n=600) listed on the Texas Cooperative Extension Agent list serve were sent an email survey.

Response Rate

The survey instrument became available to Texas County Extension Agents on January 25, 2007. It remained online until February 28, 2007. The population for this survey was 600 agents. One hundred and forty-five agents responded to the survey. The response rate for this study was 24.2 percent.

Findings Related to Training and Program Support

The first question on the survey instrument asked participants if county government is a topic that should be addressed through 4-H curriculum (see Table 1). The response rate for this question was 95.9 percent (n=139). Of the Texas Cooperative Agents who responded to this question, 87 percent answered the question yes, while 13 percent answered no.

Table 1

County Government Addressed Through 4-H Curriculum

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	121	87.0
No	18	13.0

Survey respondents were asked if county government was currently being taught in their county through the 4-H program (see Table 2). The response rate for this question was 96.6 percent (n=140). Eighty-five percent of the respondents to this question answered no and 15 percent answered yes.

Respondents answering the question yes were asked to list other educational resources they use to educate youth about county government. Seven respondents listed local elected officials and courthouse visits, three respondents listed online materials, one participant listed the life skills and leadership entrepreneurship character development program and one participant listed other materials from the V.G. Young Institute of County Government as educational resources.

Table 2

County Government Taught in county 4-H Programs

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	21	15.0
No	119	85.0

Agents were asked to identify the audience the 4-H County Government Guide was used for in their county (see Table 3). Survey participants were allowed to select all answers that applied to their county (n=149). The responses are sorted by grade levels in school. High school freshmen, sophomores and seniors were ranked as the grade levels with the most responses with 11 percent of the votes for each level. The 5th grade, 6th grade, 8th grade, high school juniors and other groups were selected by nine percent of the respondents. The 7th grade was selected by eight percent of the respondents. Third grade and 4th grade had the least percentage of responses with six and seven percent respectively choosing these grade levels.

Respondents answering “other” to this question were asked to explain what they meant. Four respondents listed an adult audience and one listed pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade as audiences with which they use the guide.

Table 3

Audience Using the 4-H County Government Guide

Grade in School	<i>n</i>	%
3 rd	9	6.0
4 th	11	7.0
5 th	13	9.0
6 th	13	9.0
7 th	12	8.0
8 th	14	9.0
High School Freshman	16	11.0
High School Sophomores	16	11.0
High School Junior	14	9.0
High School Senior	17	11.0
Other	14	9.0

Survey respondents were asked about the frequency of their use of the 4-H County Government Guide (Table 4). The response rate for this question was 84.1 percent (n=122). The highest ranked answer to this question was that the agent was aware of the guide, but did not use it with 45 percent of the respondents selecting this answer. Thirty-four percent of the respondents to this question were not aware of the guide. Yearly use of the guide received 17 percent of the responses. Less than five

percent of the respondents to this question chose bimonthly (two percent), monthly (two percent) or quarterly (one percent).

Following this question, survey respondents who chose “other” were asked to explain what “other” meant to them. Ten respondents listed more time to implement and be involved with the program, nine respondents listed more awareness of the guide, two respondents listed having the guide relate to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test, the standardized test given to Texas youth by the Texas Education Association, and two respondents listed having youth and adults interested in their county would entice them to use the 4-H County Government Guide.

Table 4

Frequency of use of the 4-H County Government Guide

Frequency	<i>n</i>	%
Bimonthly	1	1.0
Monthly	2	2.0
Quarterly	2	2.0
Yearly	21	17.0
Aware if Guide-do not use it	55	45.0
Not aware of County Government Guide	41	34.0

Texas Cooperative Extension agents were asked what would entice them to use the guide more often (Table 5). Respondents were asked to check all of the answers that apply to their preferences. Training programs on how to utilize the guide received the most responses with 23 percent of the respondents choosing this option. Online activities (pdf formats) and online interactive activities were both selected by 18 percent of the respondents. Fifteen percent of respondents selected more planned county activities. The fewest percent (13 percent) of respondents selected the revised format and other.

Respondents to this question who answered other were asked to explain what they meant by selecting other. Most of the respondents to this question listed combining sources as an enticement to use the guide. Six respondents listed a notebook and online

activities package, five respondents listed a notebook and cd-rom package, two respondents listed online activities and cd-rom package and one respondent listed a package with online activities, a notebook and a cd-rom package would entice them to use the guide more often.

Table 5

Enticements to use the 4-H County Government Guide More Often

Enticement	Rank	<i>n</i>	%
Training programs on how to utilize the guide	1	52	23.0
Online activities (pdf formats)	2	40	18.0
Online Interactive Activites	3	40	18.0
More planned county activities	4	33	15.0
Other	5	30	13.0
Revised format	6	28	13.0

The survey instrument asked Texas Cooperative Extension agents to indicate their preference for the format of the guide (see Table 6). The response rate for this question was 84.1 percent (n=123). The cd-rom format had the highest percentage (34 percent) of the respondents. Thirty-two percent of respondents chose the online format. Twenty-four percent of the respondents selected the notebook format, which is the format the current guide is in. The least percentage (11 percent) of respondents chose other.

Table 6

Format Preference for Guide

Format	<i>n</i>	%
Notebook	29	24.0
CD-Rom	42	34.0
Online	39	32.0
Other	13	11.0

Agents were asked to list the types of resources they would like to have to effectively use the guide. Respondents listed eight resources they would like to present the guide. Fact sheets were listed most frequently (n=35). Seventeen respondents listed outlines and 15 respondents listed pamphlets as resources they would like to have. Power point presentations were listed by eight respondents, packets for school teachers that meet TAKS guidelines and online activities were listed by five respondents each. Other activities listed by one respondent each were promotional materials for commissioners court members and promotional materials for youth.

Survey respondents were given a list of topics about county government (see Table 7), and asked to rank them in importance by selecting one of the following choices: not important at all, of little importance, moderately important, important or very important. The topics county history, who's in charge, sources of county funds, county budgets, county expenditures, law enforcement, judicial courts of Texas, elected officials and political parties, types of elections, filing for an elected office, election process, election ballot and voting in an election were all found to be important. Role of the commissioners court and voter qualifications and registration topics were ranked as very important.

Table 7

Importance of Topics to Teach County Government to Youth

Topic	Percent Selecting Important or Very Important	Rank
Role of Commissioners Court	94%	1
Voting in an Election	89%	2
Who's in Charge	89%	2
Election Process	88%	3
Voter Qualifications and Registration	87%	4
Election Ballot	82%	5
Sources of County Funds	78%	6
Elected Officials and Political Parties	77%	7
Law Enforcement	77%	8
Types of Elections	76%	9
County History	70%	10
Judicial Courts of Texas	70%	10
County Budgets	62%	11
Filing for an Elected Office	60%	12

Steps Leading to a Trial	60%	12
County Expenditures	58%	13

Texas Cooperative Extension Agents were asked to select the three topics related to county government they perceived as the most important (see Table 8). The response rate for this question was 89.7 percent (n=390). The topic found to be the most important (n=89) was the role of the commissioners court. County history and who's in charge were selected by 12 percent of respondents. Other topics of importance included voter qualifications and registration, the election process and voting in an election with each of these topics having 8 percent of the responses respectively. The following topics each received 5 percent or less of the responses to the question: law enforcement (five percent), county budgets (four percent), judicial courts of Texas (three percent), steps leading to a trial (two percent), types of elections (two percent), county expenditures (one percent) and election ballot (one percent).

Table 8

Most Important Topics to Teach County Government to Youth

Topic	<i>n</i>	%
County History	47	12.0
County Budgets	16	4.0
County Expenditures	3	1.0
Elected Officials and Political Parties	22	6.0
Election Ballot	5	1.0
Election Process	32	8.0
Filing for an Elected Office	0	0
Judicial Courts of Texas	12	3.0
Law Enforcement	20	5.0
Role of Commissioners Court	89	23.0
Sources of County Funds	22	6.0
Steps Leading to a Trial	6	2.0
Types of Elections	9	2.0
Voter Qualifications and Registration	30	8.0
Voting in an Election	31	8.0

Findings Related to Program Results

Texas Cooperative Extension agents were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of how their county related to each statement (see Figures 1-6). Each statement asked the respondents to choose a level of agreement to the statement.

The first statement in the program results section of the survey said "I have noticed an increased interest in county government in 4-Hers using the 4-H County Government Guide" (see Figure 1). The response rate for this statement was 84.8 percent (n=123). Eighty percent of the respondents had no opinion on this statement. Of those agents expressing their level of agreement to the statement 11 percent agreed, six percent disagreed, two percent strongly disagreed and one percent agreed.

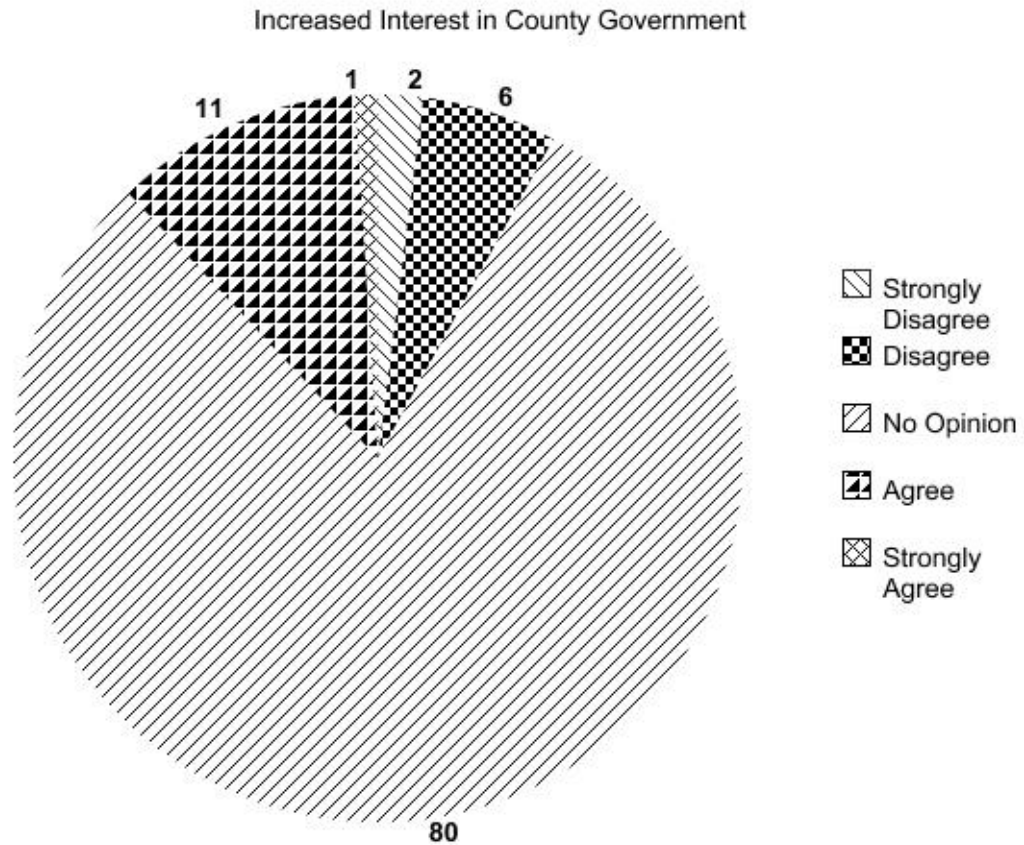


Figure 1. Increased Interest in County Government

The next statement in the program results section of the survey said “I have noticed 4-Hers are more motivated to learn about county government after using the 4-H County Government Guide” (see Figure 2). The response rate for this question was 84.1 percent (n=122). A majority (82 percent) of respondents to this statement had no opinion. Sixteen percent of the respondents agreed with the statement. Less than 10 percent of the respondents disagreed (six percent strongly), disagreed (three percent) or strongly agreed (one percent) with the statement.

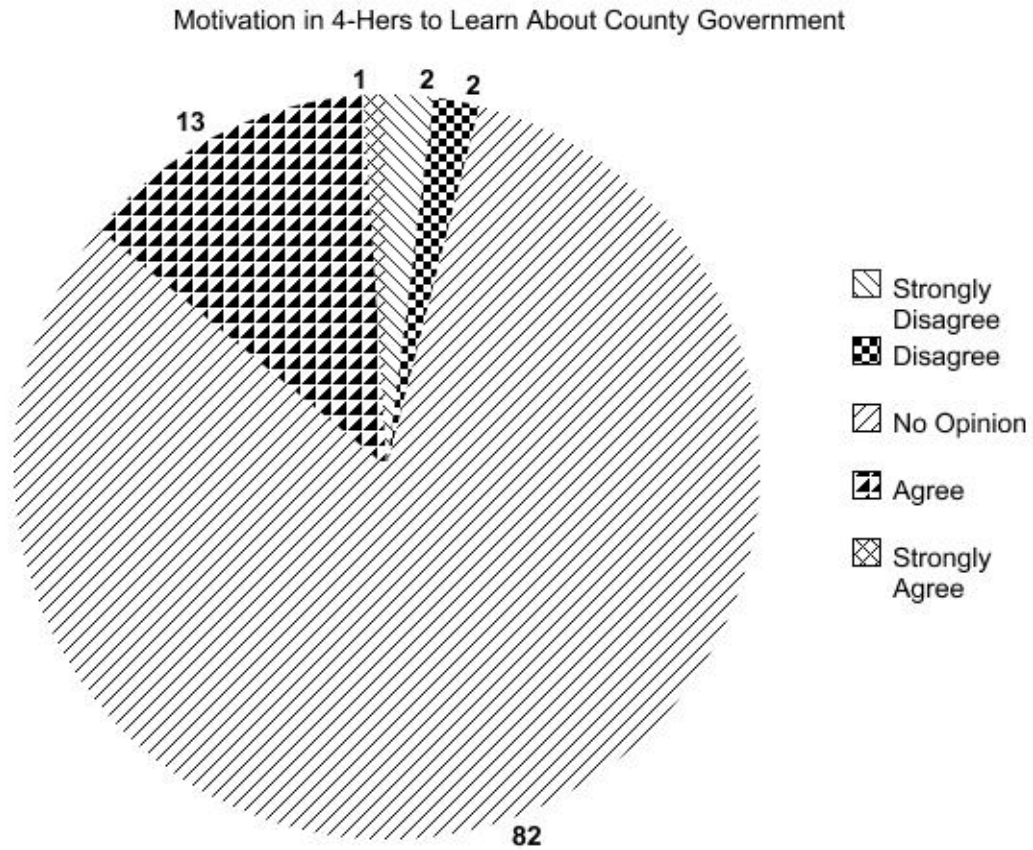


Figure 2. Motivation in 4-Hers to Learn About County Government

Survey respondents were given the statement “4-Hers using the 4-H County Government Guide seek more volunteer opportunities to volunteer in county government” and asked to choose the response that most reflected their perceptions (see Figure 3). The response rate to this statement was 84.1 percent (n=122). Eighty-eight percent of the respondents to this question had no opinion about the statement. Of those agents expressing their level of agreement to the statement, nine percent agreed. The remaining responses (strongly agree, disagree and strongly agree) each received two percent of the respondents respectively.

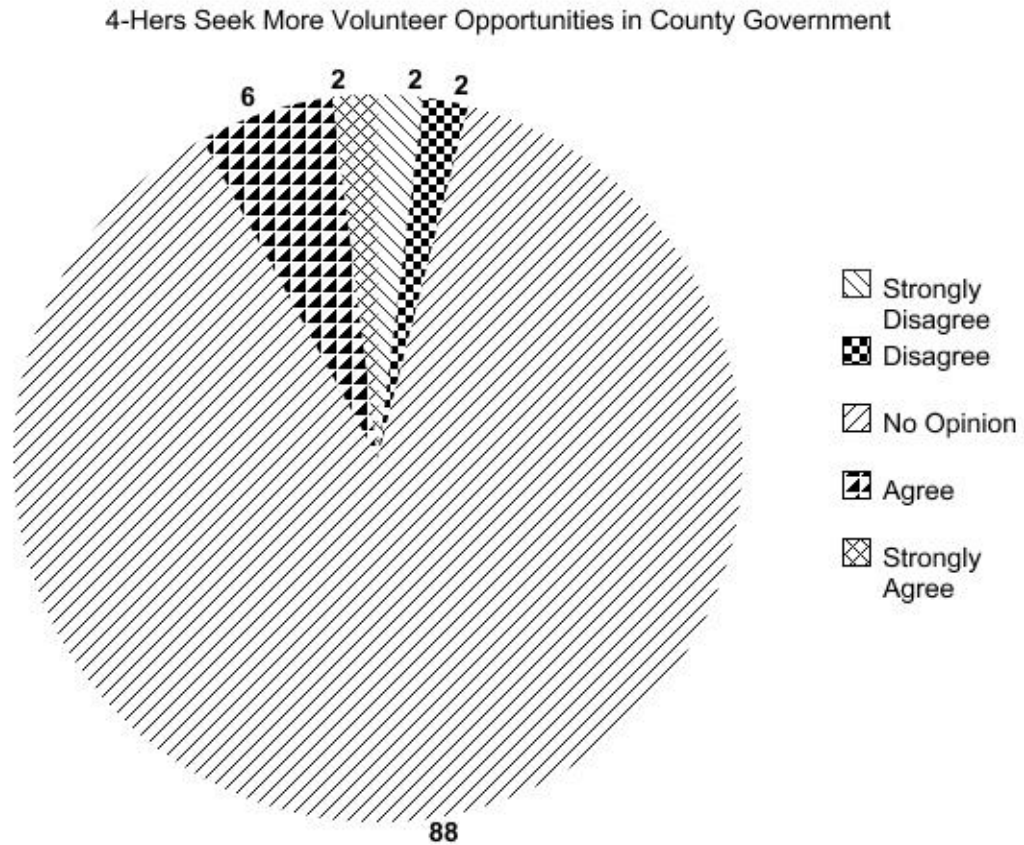


Figure 3. 4-Hers Seek More Volunteer Opportunities in County Government

Respondents to the survey were asked to assess their level of agreement to the statement “I have noticed enhancement in youth’s knowledge of county government in youth who use the 4-H County Government Guide” (see Figure 4). The response rate to this statement was 83.4 percent. A majority of respondents (83 percent) did not have an opinion on this statement. Eleven percent of the respondents agreed with the statement. Each of the following levels of agreement were selected by two percent of the respondents to this statement: strongly agree, disagree and strongly agree.

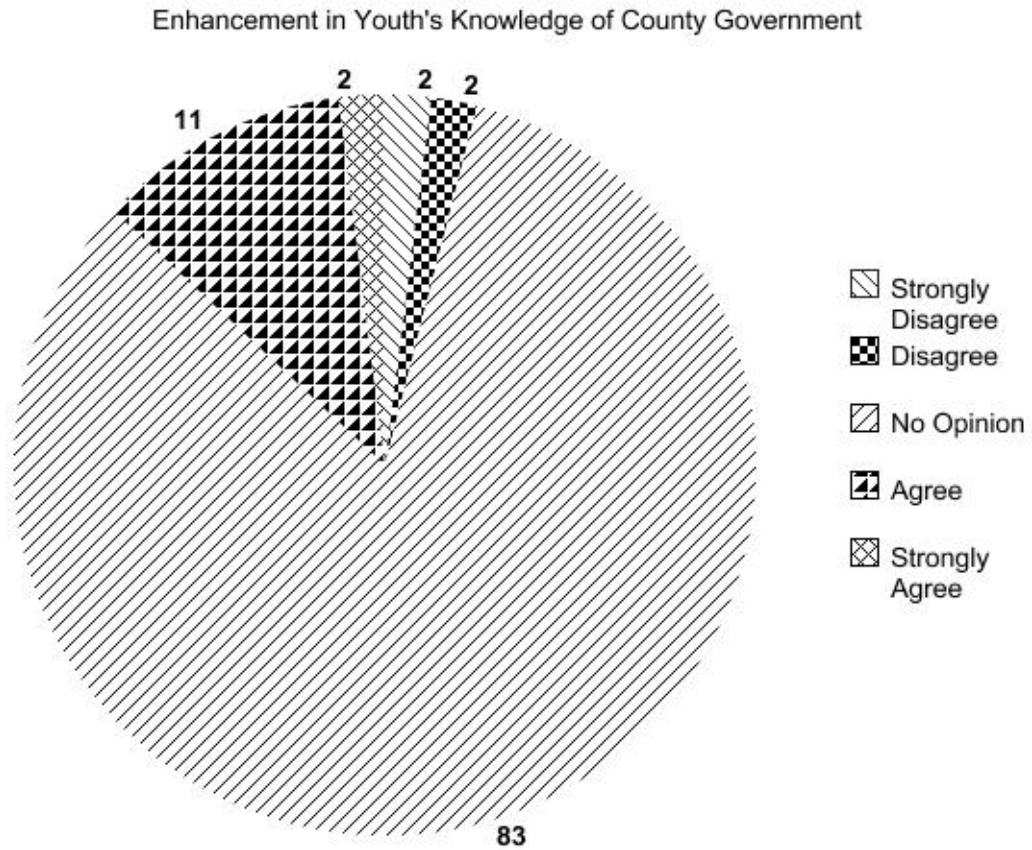


Figure 4. Enhancement in Youth's Knowledge of County Government

Survey respondents were asked their perceived level of agreement to the statement "I would be willing to help implement a county government program in local schools" (see Figure 5). The response rate for this statement was 84.1 percent (n=122). Forty-nine percent of the agents responding to this statement agreed to it. Of the remaining levels of agreement, seven percent strongly agreed, four percent strongly disagreed and three percent disagreed.

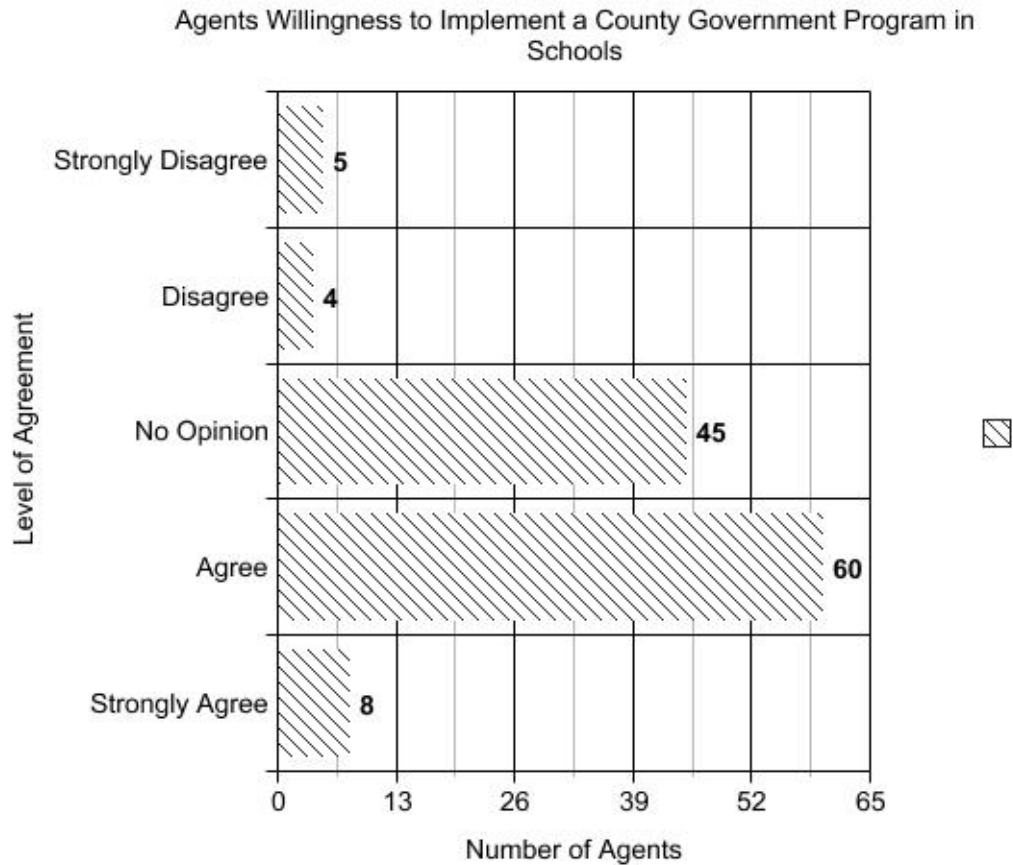


Figure 5. Agents Willingness to Implement a County Government Program in Schools

The last statement in the programs result section of the survey stated “The county I work in participates in activities related to county government during county government week in April” (see Table 14). The response rate to this statement was 82.1 percent. A majority of respondents (54 percent) to this statement had no opinion about the statement. Twenty-two percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, 13 percent disagreed with the statement, eight percent strongly disagreed with the statement and three percent strongly agreed with the statement.

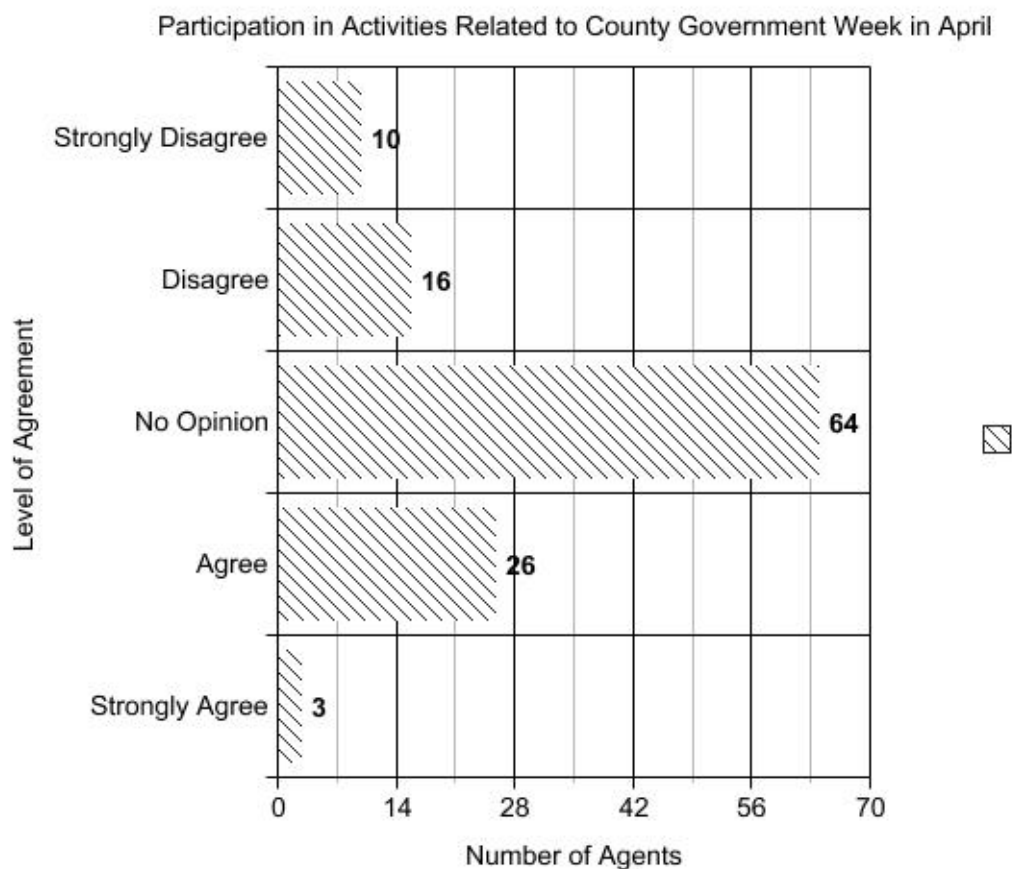


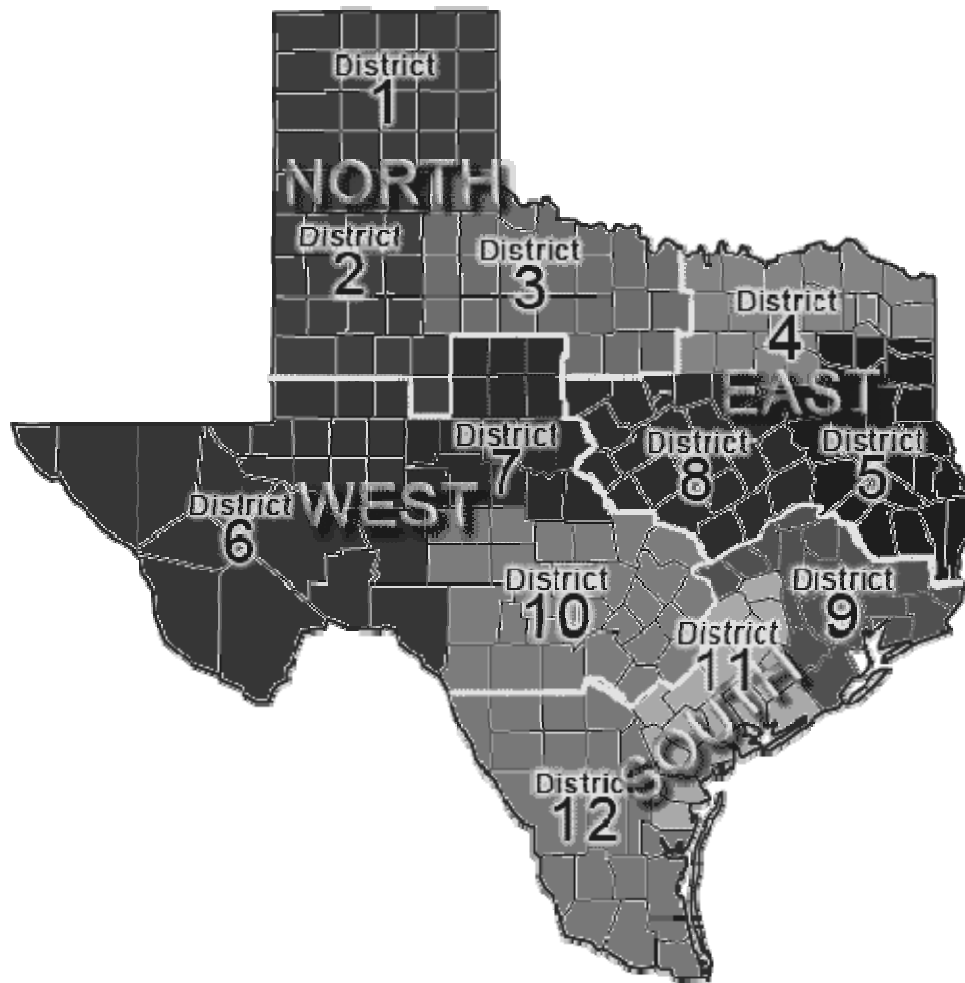
Figure 6. Participation in Activities Related to County Government Week in April

Findings Related to Demographics

Texas Cooperative Extension agents have specializations. In this study, 40 percent of the agents specialize in Family and Consumer Sciences, 34 percent of the agents specialize in Agriculture and/or Natural Resources, 22 percent of the agents specialize in 4-H and Youth Development and four percent of the agents were specialty agents or their title was not listed in the options. The mean age for agents in this study was between the ages of 36 and 40. The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to more than 65. Nineteen agents did not respond to the age question.

Respondents were asked how many years they have worked for extension. The average number (n=10) of years agents had worked for extension was 15.25. The

average number (n=10) of years the agents have worked in their current job is 5.8. Agents from 4-H districts (see figure 7) 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 were represented in the responses. The educational backgrounds of the respondents ranged from high school graduates (three percent), agents with a bachelor's degree (33 percent), agents with a master's degree (63 percent) and agents with a doctoral degree (one percent). Nineteen respondents chose not to answer the question about education.



Map retrieved from <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/people/map.htm>

Figure 7. Map of 4-H Districts in Texas

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The 4-H County Government Guide was created in 1982 to educate Texas youth about county government issues. The guide was distributed to all county extension agents. Since the initial release of the guide, it has not been updated. Educational materials should be updated to ensure they are recent and meet the needs of society (Olivia, 1982).

Youth participation in government activities has been declining since the baby boomer generation (Greenberg, 2002). The trend of low participation in government activities has continued to the current generation (Putnam, 2000). Although there is a trend of low participation in county government, schools are not providing adequate county government education. Also, there are no state-wide standards for teaching county government, making it difficult to assess the classes that are taught (Niemi & Junn, 1998).

4-H and the Cooperative Extension System are able to reach youth across the country. 4-H is able to educate youth in a manner unlike schools. The atmosphere of 4-H provides a unique opportunity for 4-Hers (Astroth, 1996). The Cooperative Extension System is in an optimal position to provide educational information because of its access to land-grant university research and resources.

This study assessed the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents relating to through a web-based survey. The population of this study consisted of 600 Texas

Cooperative Extension Agents. The response rate for this survey was 24.2 percent. The results of the survey were analyzed by Zip Survey Software.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government. The researcher for this study conducted a survey to determine the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension Agents regarding the 4-H County Government Guide.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine usage of the 4-H County Government Guide by Texas Cooperative Extension Agents.
2. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of the most important topics to be included in the 4-H County Government Guide.
3. To determine the best format and designed supplemental materials for delivery of the 4-H County Government Guide.
4. To identify Texas Cooperative Extension Agents' perceptions of youth involvement in county government activities.

Population

The participants for this study were Texas Cooperative Extension Agents. A list of these agents was obtained from the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. All agents were sent an email survey.

Major Findings

In this study, the majority of the respondents were not aware of the 4-H County Government Guide, but do perceive county government as a topic that should be covered by 4-H curriculum. The guide is currently used on a wide range of audiences. The most important topics in the current guide are the role of the commissioners court and voter registration and qualifications.

Respondents were asked to give their opinion of the results of 4-Hers using the guide. Most respondents chose the answer “no response” to these questions. Agents who responded did agree with the statements. Many agents agreed with the statement that they would help implement a county government program in their local school.

In this study, respondents worked with Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture and/or Natural Resources, 4-H and Youth Development and in specialty or their title was not listed in the options. The mean age for agents in this study was between the ages of 36 and 40. The average number of years agents had worked for extension was 15.25. The average number of years the agents have worked in their current job is 5.8. Agents represent seven 4-H districts. The educational backgrounds of the respondents ranged from high school graduates to agents with a doctoral degree (1 percent). Nineteen respondents chose not to answer the question about education.

Conclusions

This study found there are many Texas Cooperative Extension agents who are unaware of the 4-H County Government Guide. The study also found the majority of respondents to the survey believe county government is an important topic for 4-H to address through their curriculum. Many agents were willing to assist in implementing county government programs in their local schools. Schools are not adequately teaching government issues in the classroom (Texas Cooperative Extension, 1982 & Haid Marques & Brown, 1999). These agents may be able to use the guide as a teaching tool to take to local schools. There are agents who believe this is an important topic, but guide will need to be adapted to meet the needs of the agents.

Respondents to the survey recommended new formats for the guide to be produced. The guide should be produced in multiple formats to allow 4-Hers and agents more access to the information. The age level for the information in the guide should be listed, so the information can be taught correctly. The Internet and cd-rom formats were found to be the preferred new formats for the guide. Also, training programs for agents to learn how to use the guide were found to be important to agents. The format should be designed to be used as frequently as the agent can use it. There should not be a strict timeline to completing activities or education provided in the guide.

The topics covered in the current guide were mostly found to be important topics to educate 4-H youth about county government. A survey by Torney-Purta and Richardson (2004) found students are more likely to be an informed voter if they are educated. The most important topics were found to be the role of the commissioners court and voter registration and qualifications. Voter education was found to be the most

important determining factor of youth participating in elections (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2000). The least important topic was found to be filing for an elected office.

Most of the respondents had no opinion to the survey questions regarding the effects of the guide on 4-H youth. This could be attributed to the high rate of respondents who were unaware of the guide. Respondents to this question who had seen results, perceived mainly positive results from using the guide. The findings are similar to the findings of Gregoire (2004) in a study of New York 4-Hers. Gregoire found 4-Hers participating in government activities saw themselves in a more active role in government.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the summary of findings and conclusions. The 4-H County Government Guide should be updated and produced in multiple formats to meet the needs of Texas Cooperative Extension agents. The guide should include Internet activities and cd-roms accessible to agents and 4-Hers. Also, agents should be able to request or print a hard copy of the guide.

The updated format of the guide should be easy for agents to use. There should be training on how and when to use it. Training should be held in conjunction with the New Employee Orientation held every year for new Texas Cooperative Extension personnel. The training should be taught by Institute faculty and 4-H specialists. Also, agents will need to know approximately how much of their time they need to devote to the program, so they can evaluate their schedules to make adjustments to include time for using the guide.

Topics in the guide should include all topics in the current guide. The updated guide should emphasize the topics the role of commissioners court and voter registration and qualifications.

Once the guide is updated, it should be reviewed periodically to ensure it has accurate information. The Texas legislature convenes every two years. The guide should be reviewed after each legislative session to ensure new laws and practices are included in the guide. As technology continues to change, the format of the guide should be reviewed at the same time. The rapid changes in technology make it important to keep the guide current.

Another study should be conducted assessing agents' perceptions of the results of the updated guide. The results of this study should be compared to this study to determine the use and importance of the updated guide. A study should also be conducted to determine the perceptions of 4-Hers who use the updated guide. This study should also determine the needs of 4-Hers. The guide should be updated again after the results of these studies are found.

The guide should be evaluated for its potential to reach other audiences. Participants in the study listed a wide range (pre-kindergarten through adult) of audiences they use the guide with to teach county government. There is a potential to educate more than just 4-Hers with the guide. Research should be done to determine the needs of different populations.

The possibility of teaching the county government through the guide in local schools is also a possibility. Many respondents indicated they would be willing to assist in implementing a program in their local schools. This project could be modeled after the

Ag in the Classroom project. This project teaches youth about agriculture through local schools with teacher cooperation. The program has seen success in raising the agricultural literacy of participating students (About Agriculture In The Classroom, 2007).

Concluding Comment

County government is an important topic for youth to learn. There is a lack in the amount and quality of county government education. County government education is important because this level of government affects the lives of everyone, and an educated population makes educated decisions.

The 4-H program has the resources of the land-grant university system to produce quality educational products. These resources should be used to ensure students receive the education they need to be productive citizens. An updated 4-H County Government Guide will be an asset to the entire population of Texas.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A--OSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2006
IRB Application No AG0651
Proposal Title: 4-H County Government Guide Needs Assessment

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 12/4/2007

Principal Investigator(s)

Marsha Broesche
1900 FM 2780
Burton, TX 77835

Cindy Blackwell
444 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, December 18, 2006 Protocol Expires: 12/4/2007
IRB Application: AG0651
Proposal Title: 4-H County Government Guide Needs Assessment

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt
Modification

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s):

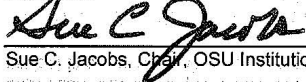
Marsha Broesche
1900 FM 2780
Burton, TX 77835

Cindy Blackwell
444 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office **MUST** be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB

- ☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

Signature:


Sue C. Jacobs, Chair, OSU Institutional Review Board

Monday, December 18, 2006
Date:

APPENDIX B—TAMU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



Office of Research Compliance

Academy for
Advanced
Telecommunication
and Learning
Technologies

Center for Information
Assurance and Security

Comparative Medicine Program

Institute for
Scientific Computation

Integrative Center for
Homeland Security

Microscopy Imaging Center

National Center for
Foreign Animal and Zoonotic
Disease Defense

Office of Distance Education

Office of Graduate Studies

Office of Proposal Development

Office of Sponsored Projects

Professional Development Group

Technology Commercialization
Center

Texas A&M University
Research Park



Texas A&M
University

1186 TAMU

1500 Research Parkway

Suite B-150

College Station, Texas

77843-1186

979.458.1467

FAX 979.862.3176

Memo

To: Marsha Broesche
From: Human Subjects' Protection Program
Date: 3/29/2007
Re: IRB Protocol #2006-0718

The Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects Protection Program, Texas A&M University has reviewed the above referenced protocol and will honor the exemption granted by OSU. Therefore, you have no further obligation to our office.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Brittanie Burda
Senior Office Associate
Human Subjects' Protection Program
Website: researchcompliance.tamu.edu
E-mail: BBurda@vprmail.tamu.edu
Office: (979) 458-4067

APPENDIX C--LIST OF PANEL OF EXPERTS

Rick Avery
V.G. Young Institute of County Government
Texas Cooperative Extension
7607 Eastmark Suite 104
College Station, TX 77840

Chris Boleman, PhD.
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication
Texas A&M University
117 Scoates Hall
TAMU 2116
College Station, TX 77843

Toby Lepley, PhD.
V.G. Young Institute of County Government
Texas Cooperative Extension
7607 Eastmark Suite 101
College Station, TX 77840

Stacy Morris
V.G. Young Institute of County Government
Texas Cooperative Extension
7607 Eastmark Suite 104
College Station, TX 77840

APPENDIX D--SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Your views of the quality and effectiveness of the 4-H County Government Guide are extremely important. Your response to the following questions will help us better meet your needs as an extension agent. Thank you for your support of the 4-H County Government Programs.

Training and Program Support.

1. Is county government a topic that should be addressed through 4-H curriculum?
☐ YES
☐ NO
2. Is county government currently being taught in your county through the 4-H program?
☐ YES
☐ NO
3. If yes, do you use the 4-H County Government Guide?
☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ NA
4. If yes to #2, do you use any other educational resources? Please list all other resources below.
5. With what types of audiences are you using the 4-H County Government Guide? (Check all that apply)
☐ 3rd Grade
☐ 4th Grade
☐ 5th Grade
☐ 6th Grade
☐ 7th Grade
☐ 8th Grade
☐ High School Freshman
☐ High School Sophomore
☐ High School Junior
☐ High School Senior
☐ Other
6. If you checked "other", please explain your answer below.
7. How often do you use the 4-H County Government Guide? Choose the one answer that best describes you
☐ Bimonthly
☐ Monthly
☐ Quarterly

- ☐ Yearly
- ☐ I am aware of the 4-H County Government Guide, but do not use it.
- ☐ I am not aware of the 4-H County Government Guide.

Continue

30% completed

4-H County Government Guide Survey

8. What would entice you to use the 4-H County Government Guide more often? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Revised format
- ☐ Online activities (pdf formats)
- ☐ Online Interactive Activities
- ☐ More planned county government activities
- ☐ Training programs on how to utilize the guide
- ☐ Other

9. Please explain "other"

10. In what type of format would you like to see the guide in?

- ☐ Notebook
- ☐ CD-ROM
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Other:

11. Please explain "other:"

12. What type of resources would you like to have to effectively present this information? (pamphlets, fact sheets, program outlines, etc.)

Continue

52% completed

4-H County Government Guide Survey

A Public Survey

13. What type of topics should be included when teaching County Government to Youth? Please click the answer best describes your opinion.

		Not Important at All	Of Little Importance	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
	County History (culture, demographics, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Who's in Charge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Role of County Commissioner's Court	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Sources of County Funds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	County Budgets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	County Expenditures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Law Enforcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Judicial Courts of Texas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Steps Leading to a Trial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Voter Qualifications and Registration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Elected Officials and Political Parties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Types of Elections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Filing for an Elected Office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Election Process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Election Ballot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Voting in an Election	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Please list any other topics that should be included in county government education.

15. Please provide the top THREE most important topics.

- ☐ County History (culture, demographics, etc)
☐ Who's in Charge
☐ Role of County Commissioner's Court
☐ Sources of County Funds
☐ County Budgets
☐ County Expenditures
☐ Law Enforcement
☐ Judicial Courts of Texas
☐ Steps Leading to a Trial
☐ Voter Qualifications and Registration

- ☐ Elected Officials and Political Parties
- ☐ Types of Elections
- ☐ Filing for an Elected Office
- ☐ Election Process
- ☐ Election Ballot
- ☐ Voting in an Election

[Continue](#) 65% completed

4-H County Government Guide Survey

Program Results. Training and Program Support. This section seeks your perceptions of the 4-H County Government Guide and your county's level of participation in county government events.

16. Please check the box that best reflects your thoughts and perceptions related to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have noticed an increased interest in county government in 4-Hers using the 4-H County Government Guide.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have noticed 4-Hers are more motivated to learn about county government after using the 4-H County Government Guide.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-Hers using the 4-H County Government Guide seek more volunteer opportunities to volunteer in county government.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have noticed enhancement in youth's knowledge of county government in youth who use the 4-H County Government Guide.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be willing to help implement a county government program in local schools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The county I work in participates in activities related to county government during county government week in April.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4-H County Government Guide Survey

Demographics

17. What type of County Extension Agent are you?
- ☐ Agriculture and/or Natural Resource
 - ☐ Family and Consumer Sciences
 - ☐ 4-H and Youth Development
 - ☐ Specialty (Horticulture, IPM, Health, Etc.)
 - ☐ Other
18. How many years have you been in Extension?
TOTAL 0
19. How many years have you been in your current position?
TOTAL 0
20. What district do you currently work in?
TOTAL 0
21. What is your age?
- ☐ 20-25
 - ☐ 26-30
 - ☐ 31-35
 - ☐ 36-40
 - ☐ 41-45
 - ☐ 46-50
 - ☐ 51-55
 - ☐ 56-60
 - ☐ 65 or older
22. What is your educational level?
- ☐ High School
 - ☐ Bachelors Degree
 - ☐ Masters Degree
 - ☐ Doctorate

Submit

100% completed

4-H County Government Guide Survey

Your views of the quality and effectiveness of the 4-H County Government Guide are extremely important. Thank you for your support of the 4-H County Government Programs.

APPENDIX E--INITIAL EMAIL TO DISTRICT EXTENSION ADMINISTRATORS

To: Extension Administrators

Subject: 4-H County Government Guide – Oklahoma State University Research

Dear <Directors Name>,

The 4-H County Government Guide is a resource for Texas County Extension Agents to use to teach county government principles to 4-Hers. The guide will be revised this year, and I need input from Texas County Extension Agents to ensure that this guide will be useful as a teaching tool. A survey will be sent to all Texas County Extension Agents on December 1, 2006 to assess their needs in regards to the guide.

The primary purpose of the study is to determine the needs of Texas County Extension Agents in regards to the 4-H County Government Guide. Their opinions will be very important in ensuring the best results of this study. Please encourage the agents to complete this survey

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (979) 845-4572.

Sincerely,
Marsha Broesche
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX F—INITIAL EMAIL TO COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS

To: Texas County Extension Agent
Subject: 4-H County Government Guide – Oklahoma State University Research

Dear <Agent Name>:

The 4-H County Government Guide is a resource for Texas County Extension Agents to teach county government principles to 4-Hers. The guide will be revised this year, and I need input from Texas County Extension Agents to ensure that this guide will be useful as a teaching tool. The guide is still in a hard copy format.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the needs of Texas County Extension Agents in regards to the 4-H County Government Guide. Your opinions are very important to ensure the best results of this study. The results of this study will be valuable in assessing the usefulness of the guide.

This survey will only take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please respond to the questions in terms of your views. Be assured that your responses will be treated anonymously. If you are not the appropriate contact for filling out this information, please pass this note on to the appropriate person.

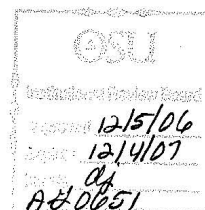
In order to access the online survey, please use your Internet browser of choice and go to:
XXX@XXX

If you have trouble accessing the online version, please e-mail Cindy Blackwell at cindy.blackwell@okstate.edu or Marsha Broesche at marsha.broesche@okstate.edu and we will fax a copy of the instrument for your completion. Your immediate response is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this online questionnaire. Without your assistance it would be impossible to revise the guide to meet your needs. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at (979) 845-4572. For additional information regarding human participation in research, contact the Oklahoma State University Campus Institutional Review Board Office at 405-744-5700.

Sincerely,

Marsha Broesche
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University



APPENDIX G--FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TO COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS

FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL SHOULD LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS (with content changed to reflect the time frame):

Dear _____:

Approximately XX weeks ago I e-mailed you a link to a questionnaire concerning the 4-H County Government Guide. As of this date I have not received your completed questionnaire. If you have recently completed the questionnaire, thank you.

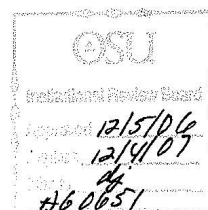
I am writing you again because responses from all county extension agents are significant to the usefulness of this study.

Just in case you lost the original e-mail or never received it, the URL location of the survey is:

Please submit the completed questionnaire as soon as possible. Thanks for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Should you have questions, please contact me at (979) 845-4572.

Sincerely,

Marsha Broesche
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University



VITA

Marsha Lynne Broesche

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S 4-H COUNTY GOVERNMENT
GUIDE: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Brenham, Texas, on October 11, 1984, the daughter of
Marcus and Susan Broesche.

Education: Graduated from Burton High School, Burton, Texas in May 2003;
received Associate of Arts and Associates of Science degree in
Agriculture from Blinn College, Brenham, Texas in May 2005; received
Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Journalism from Texas A&M
University, College Station, Texas in 2005. Completed the requirements
for the Master of Science degree with a major in Agricultural
Communications at Oklahoma State University in July 2007.

Experience: Raised on a cattle farm in Burton, Texas; employed by Oklahoma
State University, New Product Development Center as a graduate
assistant; Texas Cooperative Extension Assistant, V.G. Young Institute
of County Government as an Extension Assistant, 2006 to present.

Professional Memberships: International Association of Business
Communicators, Association for Communication Excellence

Name: Marsha Broesche

Date of Degree: July, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S 4-H COUNTY
GOVERNMENT GUIDE: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Pages in Study: 87

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to identify the elements needed to provide a tool to enhance civic education and engagement, through teaching county government, so Texas Cooperative Extension Agents can effectively educate 4-Hers about county government. Participants in the study included all Texas Cooperative Extension Agents in the state of Texas. Participants were sent an email containing a link to an online survey instrument, which contained questions to rate their perceptions of the 4-H County Government Guide.

Findings and Conclusions: County government was found to be an important topic for 4-H to teach youth in Texas, but most county agents are not currently teaching it to 4-Hers. Most county extension agents were aware of the guide, but do not use it. Training programs and online activities were found to entice county extension agents to use the guide. The most important topic was found as the role of the commissioners court.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Cindy Blackwell
