

4-H PYD Academy

4-H Program Leaders Assessment Survey Report

June 1, 2022

Prepared by Mary E. Arnold, Ph.D.

Director, Youth Development Research and Practice

National 4-H Council



About the 4-H Program Leader Assessment

The purpose of this assessment was to gauge the support of 4-H program leaders for a regular PYD Academy series, to explore the potential benefit of a PYD academy to the 4-H system, and to understand any concerns related to undertaking this effort.

The 4-H Positive Youth Development (PYD) Academy series is intended to build and support 4-H professional capacity across the Extension 4-H system in the PRKC areas of Youth Development and Youth Program Development. The PYD Academies will ensure that all 4-H professionals have a consistent, correct, and complete understanding of PYD that is based on the latest research in developmental science and youth development practice. The PYD academies are an output of the PLWG standing committee on Positive Youth Development (PLWG) in partnership with the convening and financial support of National 4-H Council.

The survey was approved by the PLWG, and disseminated through PLWG members to 4-H program leaders in their region. Automatic follow-up invitations from the data collection system were made via e-mail to those who had not yet responded. Reminder invitations were also made by members of the PLWG and Mary Arnold.

Assessment Results Summary

- The results **strong interest** in the national 4-H PYD academy concept, particularly in promoting 4-H as a PYD program, supporting a consistent model of PYD across the 4-H system, and in providing national professional development in PYD for 4-H professionals.
- There is also **considerable perceived benefit** in a national 4-H PYD academy, particularly in providing support for a PYD focus in 4-H, providing consistent onboarding for new 4-H professionals, and ensuring PYD is incorporated into 4-H programs effectively.
- There is **clear support** for an introductory academy for early career professionals, and an academy focused on PYD program planning and evaluation for PYD impact. There was slightly less, but still strong, support for an annual contemporary/critical topics academy for 4-H PYD.
- There is **relevant need** for a national PYD academy based on the current estimated high rates of new educator positions in 4-H and current level of PYD expertise across the 4-H system.
- There is interest in supporting a national PYD academy financially as well as support for National 4-H Council's role in convening and fundraising.

Narrative Responses and Themes

The assessment included four open-ended questions. A summary of themes for each question is presented below. Verbatim responses for each question can be found at the end of this report.

What concerns do you have about moving forward with developing a PYD academy to ensure consistent, complete, and correct professional development for 4-H professionals?

- The cost involved – especially for those LGUs with limited resources for professional development.
- Time available for participation.
- Sustainability – worry that this effort will get started and then be abandoned.
- That the content is translated into practical use for 4-H educators.

- That it may compete with state efforts, both in terms of content and professional development dollars
- Several stated they had no concerns, fully supporting a PYD academy and stating that it is needed.

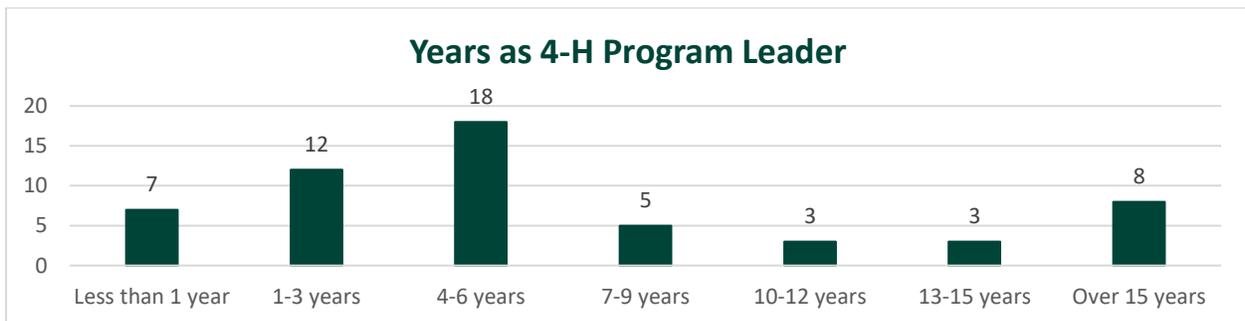
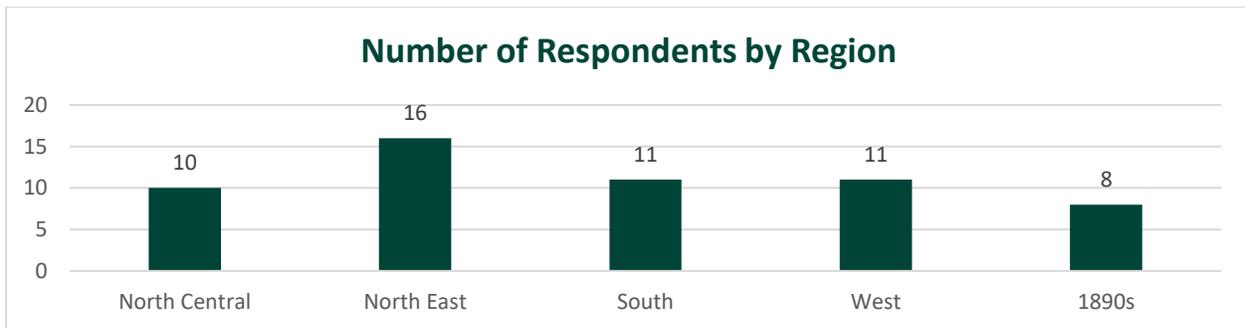
How could the idea of a national 4-H PYD academy be changed or expanded to support the capacity-building needs of 4-H professionals in your state/LGU?

- Many useful ideas were expressed in answer to this question, with a few themes emerging: 1) The potential benefit of a national PYD approach; 2) the usefulness of mentors in capacity-building; and 3) expansion to all who serve youth (e. g. volunteers, other Extension program areas).

Two additional narrative questions related to potential topics and expansion were also included. No central themes were found in the answers to these questions, but the individual ideas expressed are useful. Please refer to the full verbatim text at the end of this report.

Respondent Demographics

Sixty-eight (68) 4-H program leaders were invited to participate in the assessment. Responses were received from 56, for an 83% response rate. Responses were received from all five Extension regions. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents have been program leaders for six years or less.

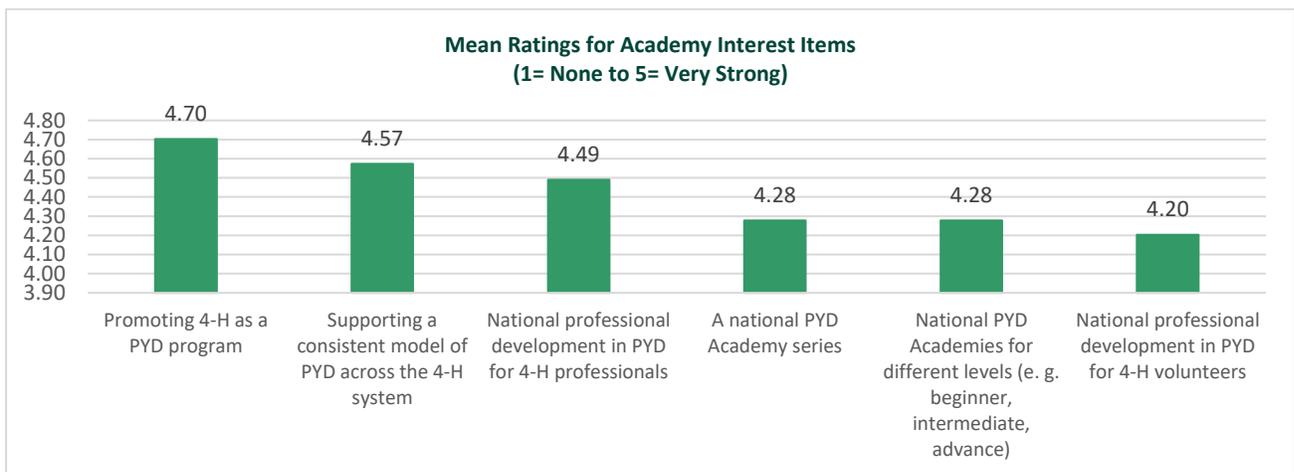
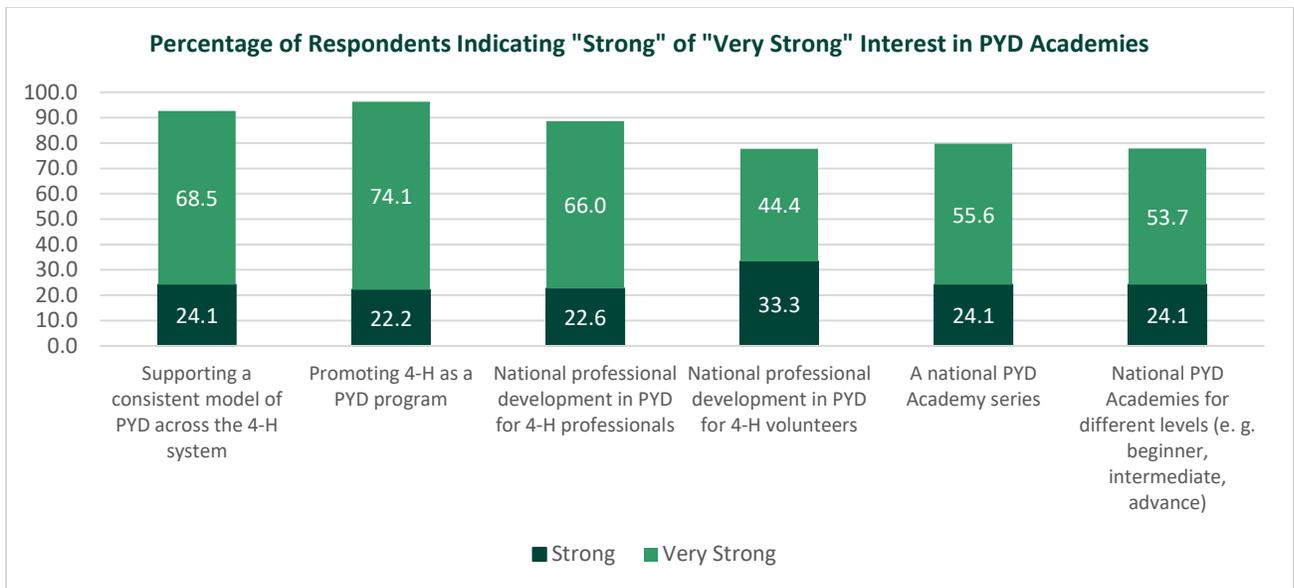


Interest in a National 4-H PYD Academy

Participants were asked to rate their level of interest in the following aspects of a national 4-H PYD academy on a scale of (1) = none to (5) = very strong.

- Supporting a consistent model of PYD across the 4-H system
- Promoting 4-H as a PYD program
- National professional development in PYD for 4-H professionals
- National professional development in PYD for 4-H volunteers
- A national PYD Academy series
- National PYD Academies for different levels (e. g. beginner, intermediate, advanced)

As shown in the graphs below, there is considerable interest in the national 4-H PYD academy concept, particularly in promoting 4-H as a PYD program, supporting a consistent model of PYD across the 4-H system, and in providing national professional development in PYD for 4-H professionals.

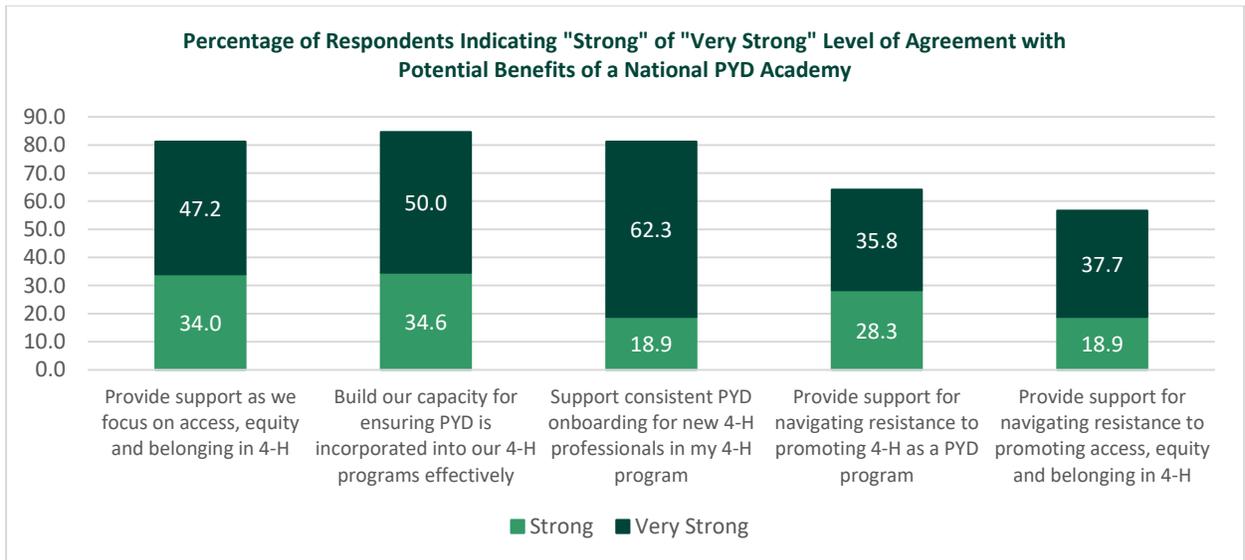
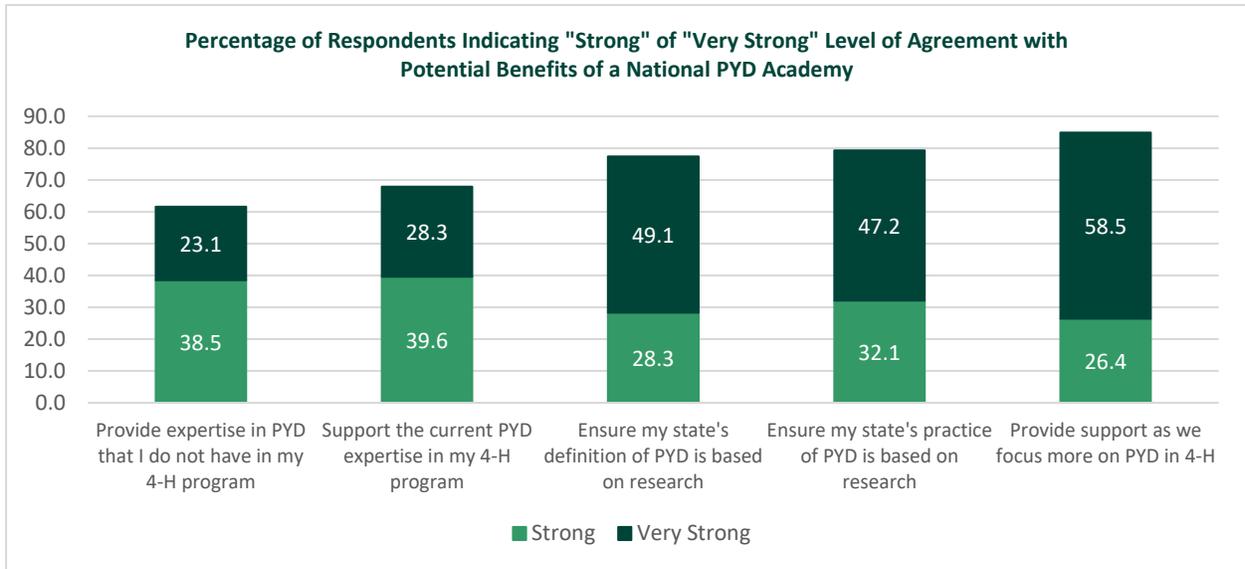


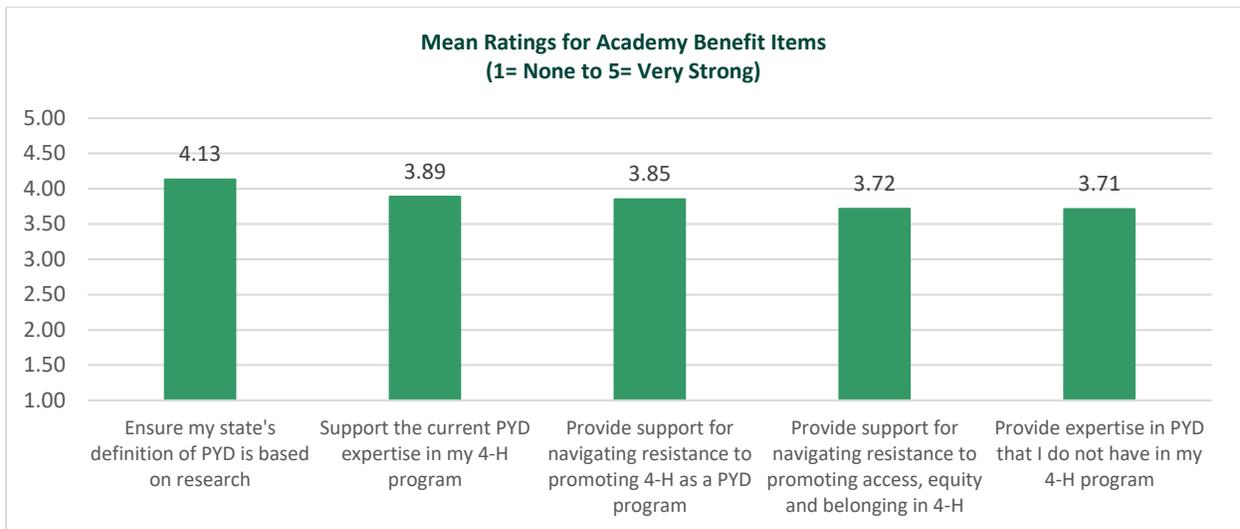
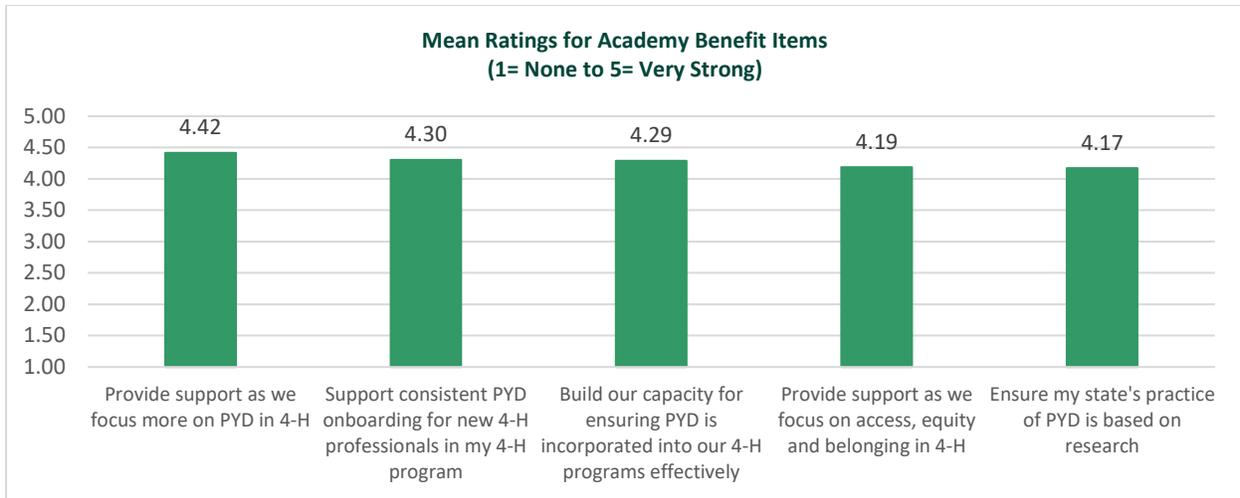
Perceived Benefit of a National 4-H PYD Academy

Participants were asked to rate the potential benefit of the following aspects of a national 4-H PYD academy on a scale of (1) = none to (5) = very strong.

- Provide support as we focus more on PYD in 4-H
- Support consistent PYD onboarding for new 4-H professionals in my 4-H program
- Build our capacity for ensuring PYD is incorporated into our 4-H programs effectively
- Provide support as we focus on access, equity and belonging in 4-H
- Ensure my state's practice of PYD is based on research
- Ensure my state's definition of PYD is based on research
- Support the current PYD expertise in my 4-H program
- Provide support for navigating resistance to promoting 4-H as a PYD program
- Provide support for navigating resistance to promoting access, equity and belonging in 4-H
- Provide expertise in PYD that I do not have in my 4-H program

As shown in the graphs below, there is considerable perceived benefit in a national 4-H PYD academy, particularly in providing support for a PYD focus in 4-H, providing consistent onboarding for new 4-H professionals, and ensuring PYD is incorporated into 4-H programs effectively.



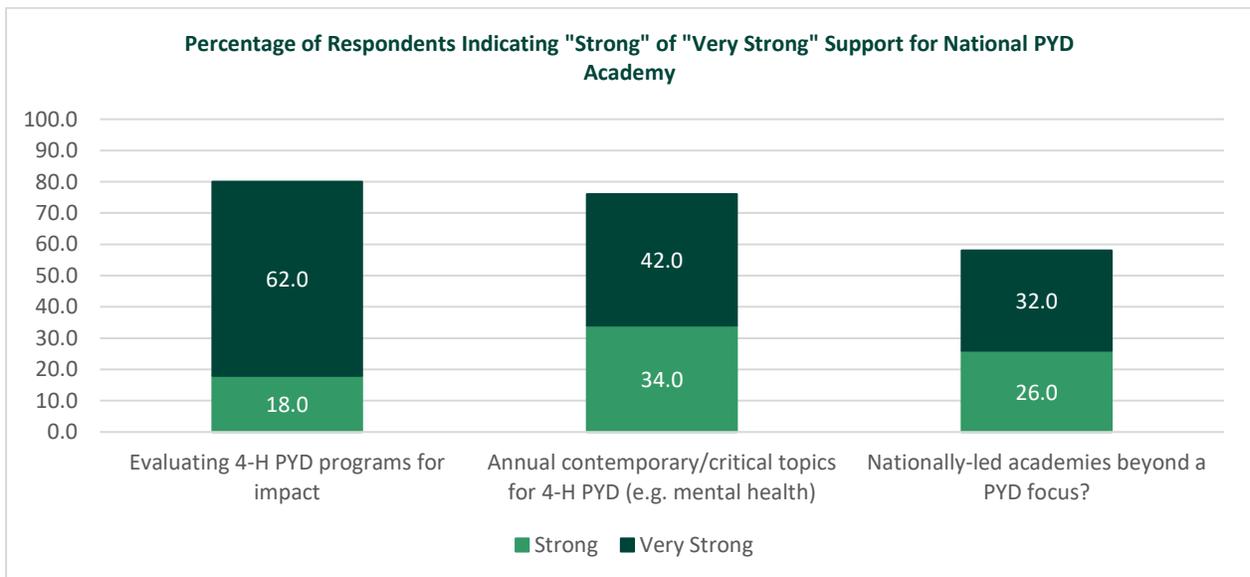
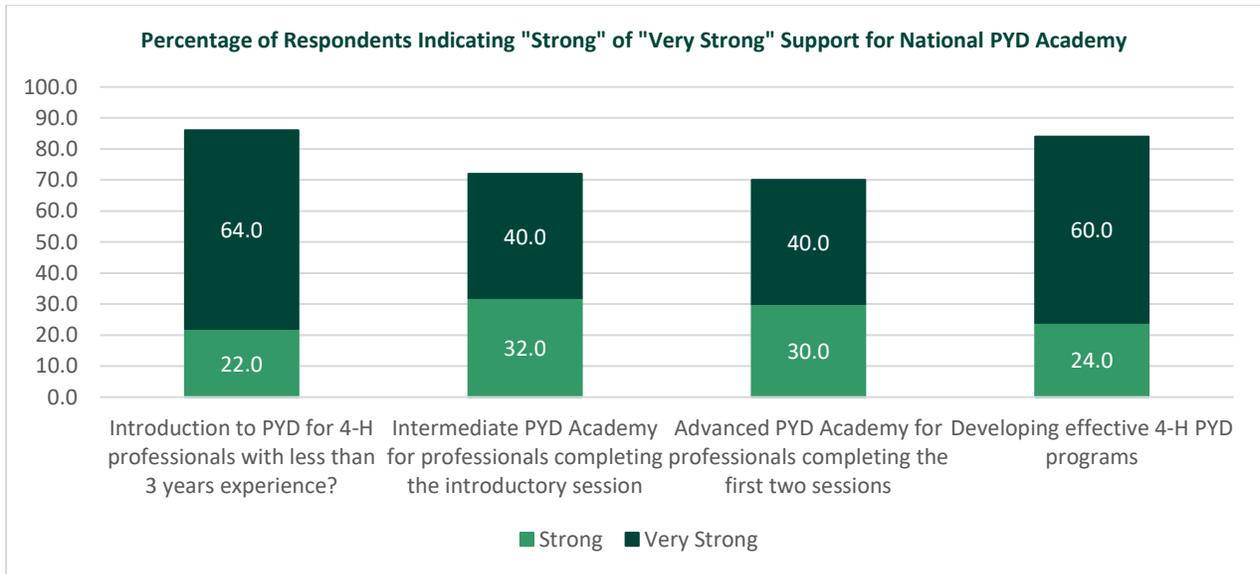


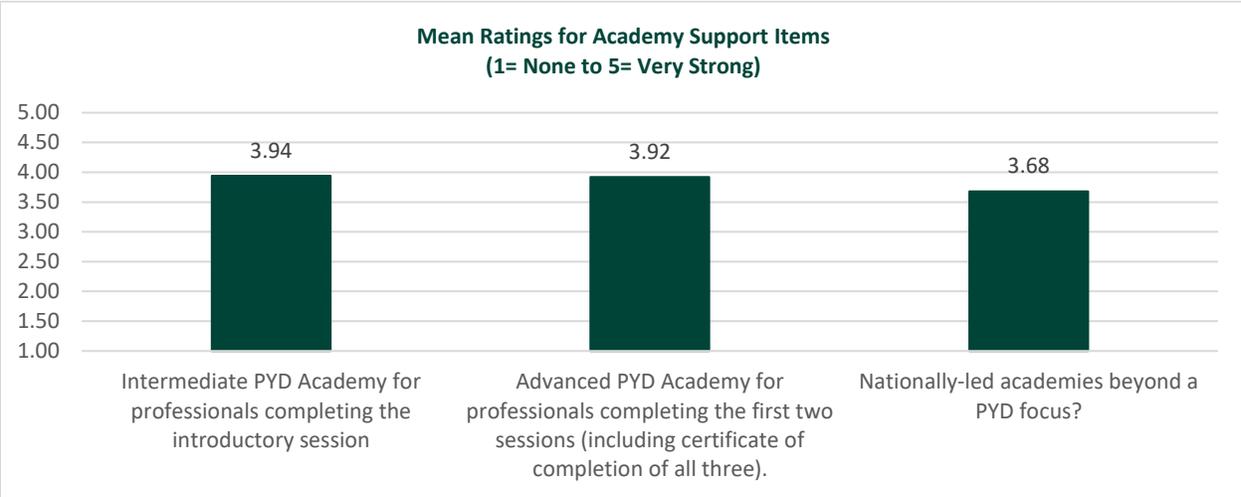
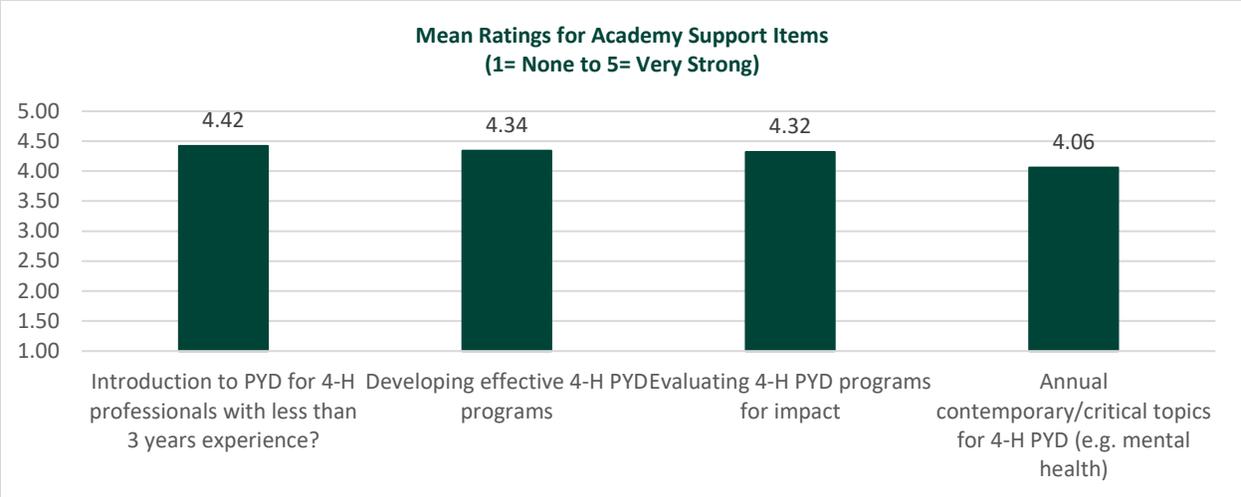
Support for National 4-H PYD Academy Topics

Participants were asked to rate their level of support for potential PYD academy topics/focus on a scale of (1) = none to (5) = very strong.

- Introduction to PYD for 4-H professionals with less than 3 years' experience
- Intermediate PYD Academy for professionals completing the introductory session
- Advanced PYD Academy for professionals completing the first two sessions
- Developing effective 4-H PYD programs
- Evaluating 4-H PYD programs for impact
- Annual contemporary/critical topics for 4-H PYD (e.g. mental health)
- Nationally-led academies beyond a PYD focus?

As shown in the graphs below there is considerable support for a number of potential academy topics, with an introductory academy for early career professionals, PYD program planning, and evaluation for PYD impact topping the list. It is worth noting that there was lower support expressed for nationally-led academies beyond a PYD focus.



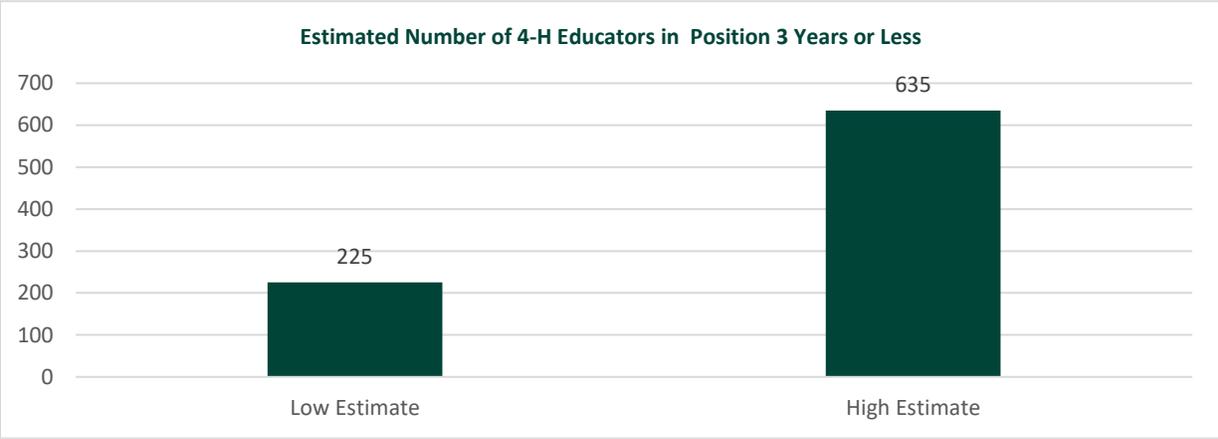
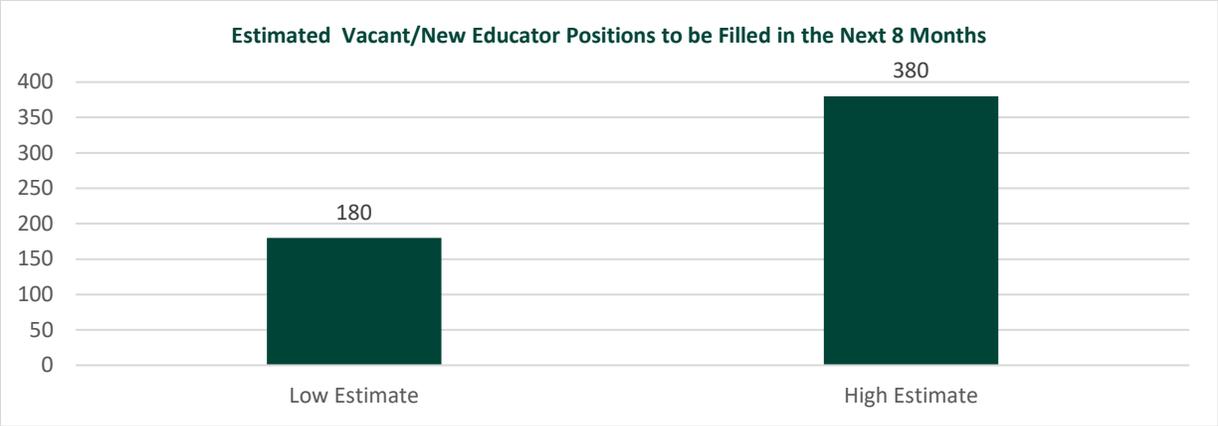


Need for a National 4-H PYD Academy

The potential need for a 4-H PYD Academy was assessed in two ways: (1) an estimation of the number of early career 4-H educators (three years or less) and the number of potential new hires in the next 8 months; and (2) a description of the current PYD available to LGU 4-H programs.

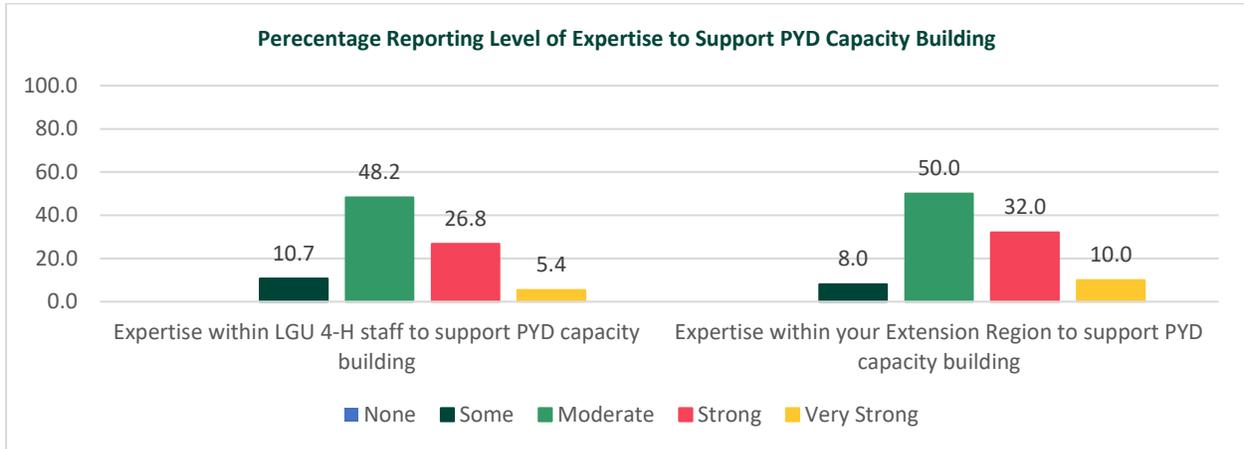
Estimation of New and Early Career 4-H Professionals

Participants were asked to indicate the number of current and anticipated new 4-H professionals using a range for response (1-5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; 20-25; over 25). These responses were then used to calculate low and high estimations.

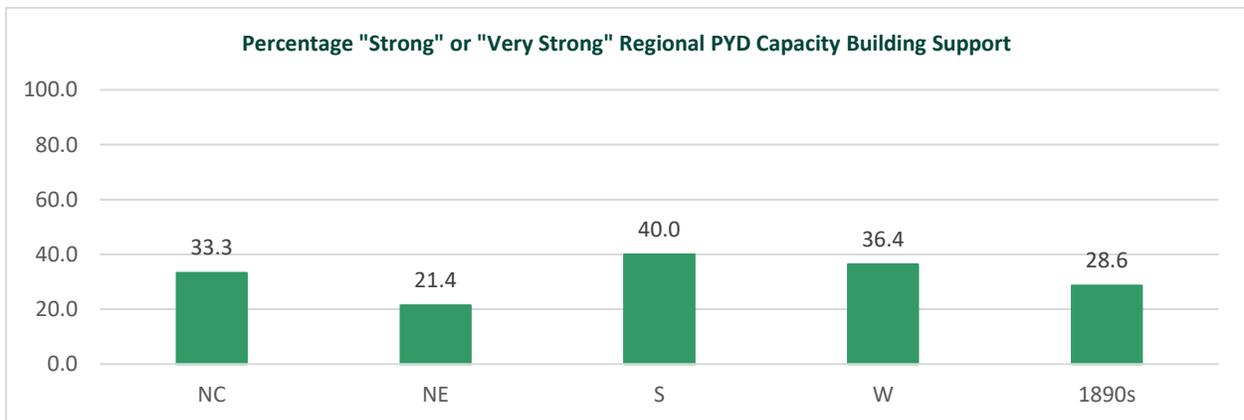


Current PYD Expertise to Support PYD Capacity Building

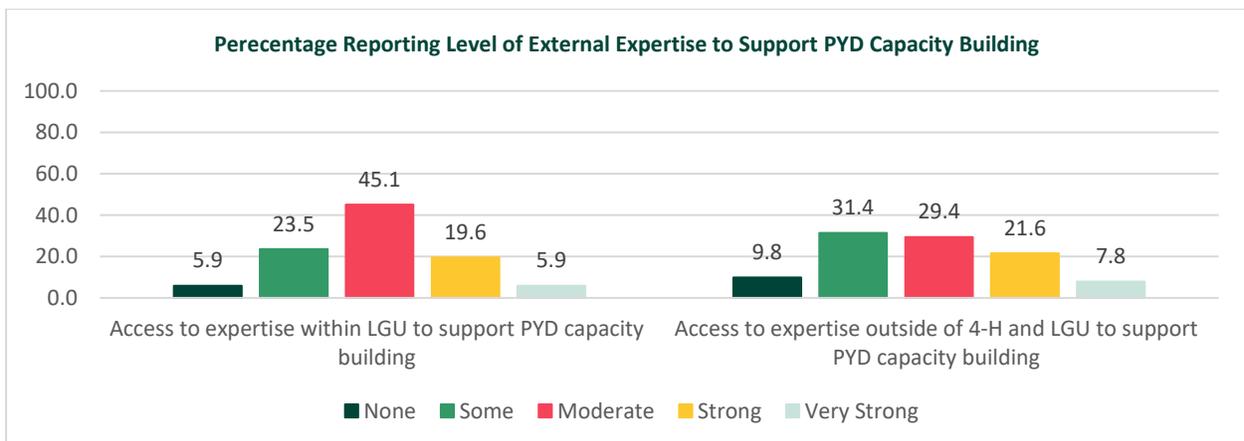
Participants were asked to rate the strength of expertise within their own LGU 4-H staff and their Extension region to support PYD capacity building.



The responses to regional capacity building support were further analyzed by Extension Region.

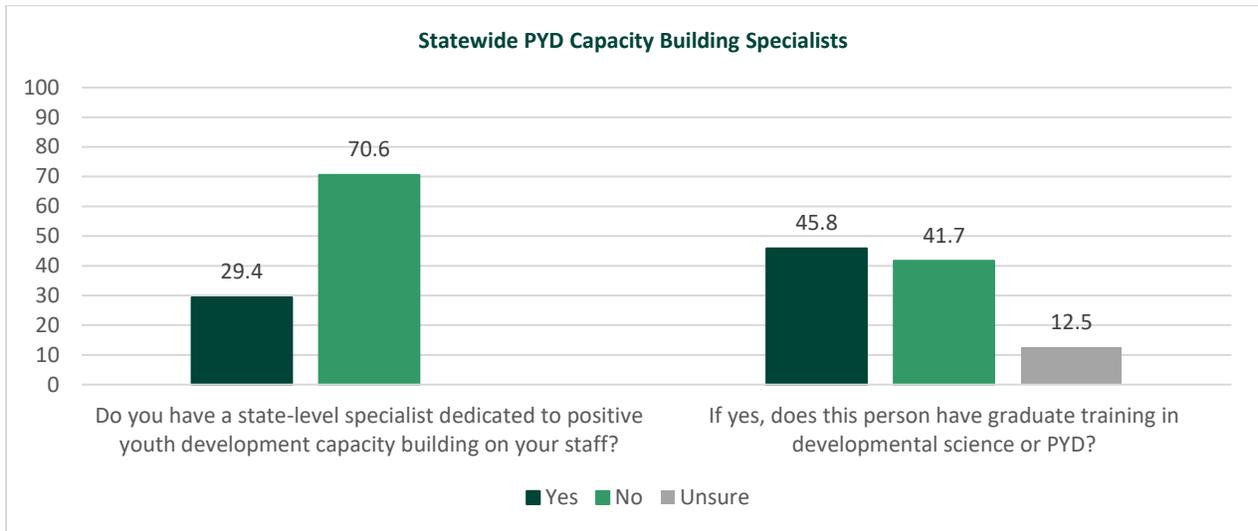


Participants were also asked to rate the level of external support for capacity building available to them from within and outside their LGU.

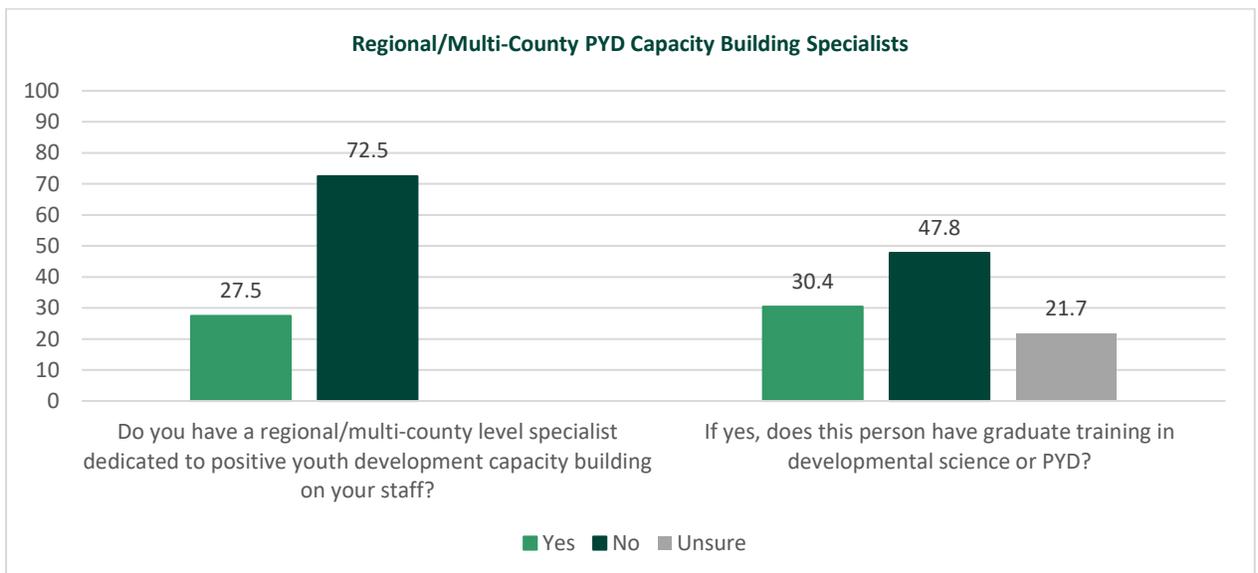


Respondents were asked further about the fit of external expertise to support PYD capacity building. As the graph below shows, the fit of this expertise is rated strong or very strong by only 20% (within the LGU) and 38% (outside the LGU).

Participants were also asked to describe staff dedication and training to support PYD capacity building within their 4-H programs. Only 29% of respondents indicated they have a dedicated PYD capacity building specialist on their staff. Of those only 45.8 percent have graduate training in PYD or developmental science.

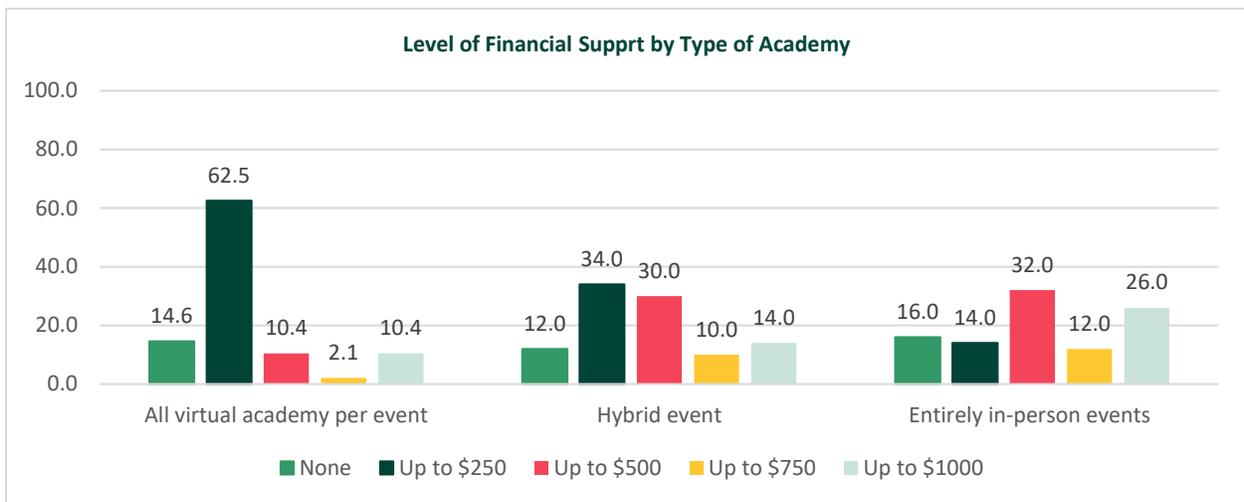


Just over 27% of respondents indicated they have a regional or multi-county PYD capacity building specialists, and of those less than 31% have graduate training in PYD or development science.



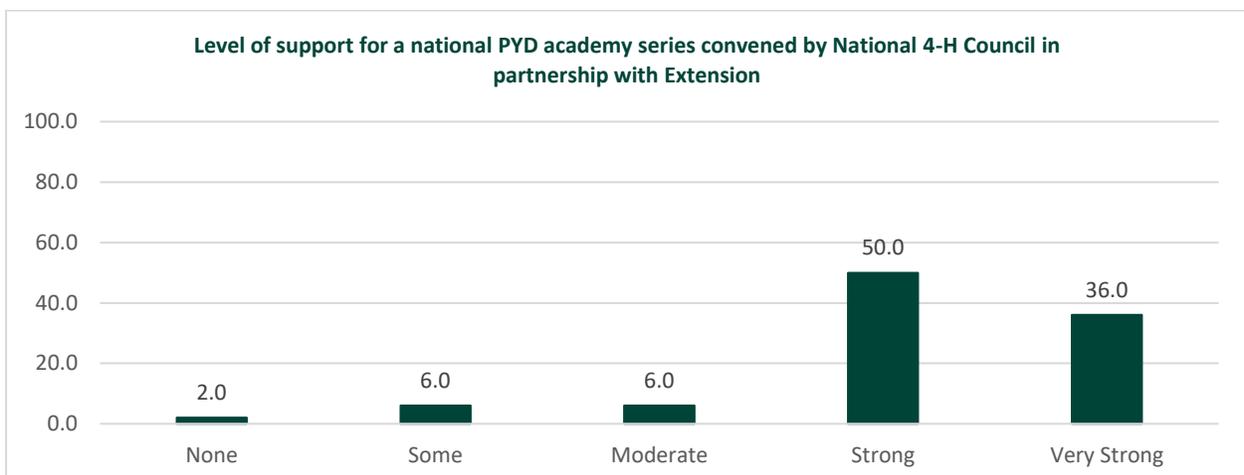
Financial Support for PYD Academy Participation

Participants were asked to indicate the level of investment they would be willing to make to support their 4-H professionals attending an academy. Three types of academies were proposed (1) all virtual; (2) hybrid where there are virtual learning opportunities with an in-person convening; and (3) entirely in-person events. The costs include materials and meals but not travel, which would be additional for in-person events. While these figures need to be examined further in the context of specific academy plans, the general picture is that less than 20% indicate they are not willing to provide any financial support, with a general level of financial support across all types of academies.



Support of National PYD Academy Convened by National 4-H Council

A final question asked participants to rate their level of support for a national PYD academy series that is convened by National 4-H Council in partnership with Extension. National 4-H Council will play a critical role in convening, fundraising, and telling the story of the PYD Academies. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated strong or very strong support for Councils role.



Narrative Responses to Open-Ended Questions

What concerns do you have about moving forward with developing a PYD academy to ensure consistent, complete, and correct professional development for 4-H professionals?

- My concern is that the Thriving Model and topics of discussion usually relate to large 1862 programs that have 4-H Foundations to assist with funding. The 1890s and 1994s are an after thought and are expected to model their programs after those with 20+ staff members when they may have 10 or less with the State Program leader serving in various capacities.
- Cost
- Time constraints
- That we are creating content and programs for 4-H professionals who live in states with little to no political will to embrace inclusive and culturally competent programming; An example can be as non-threatening as mask mandates during the pandemic.
- That the academy will be so expensive that smaller institutions will be priced out of participating
- That some institutions have been doing "youth development" work successfully for years and now are being asked to make a major shift with no financial support to do so.
- More experienced 4-H professionals may be hesitant to attend the training.
- None
- No concerns - very much needed and appreciated
- I have no concerns about the concept or the program. Mary does a fantastic job and is very well thought of in her field. It all boils down to money. We don't have a ton of resources dedicated to professional development.
- I believe state leaders should be asked about content needed or provide state leaders with a survey to send out to county educators to determine needed content.
- Adding to busy staff schedules
- Turnover of new staff
- Financial
- Sustainability. Financial commitment by USDA and ECOP/State Extension Directors to commit to support. Things like this seem to last 3-4 years and dies because the budgets don't have all three partners with "skin in the game". This includes commitments for staffing, expertise, contributing, etc. Partnerships seem to fizzle away when any one of the partners priorities change and their fiscal contributions with those choices.
- None. We need this!!!
- I hope that this will result in a consistent program for training new staff and updating returning staff. There have been many programs in the past that have started off strong and then disappeared. My concern is that this will also be abandoned, although I hope it will not!
- The biggest concern would be the cost. In order to train all new agents the opportunity would need to be feasible and travel as minimal as possible.
- To work across the country it maybe come too generic, to be practical in localized audiences. Or it might become too theoretical and not be equated into practice on the ground.
- Need a mechanism to support implementation of information-
- The ability for front-line staff to be able to understand and apply the PYD concepts to their work.
- We need to engage individuals within the states to assist with the delivery to ensure each state's participation.
- Duplication of effort happening at the state level.

- Keeping the cost low to allow maximum participation across the state Not everyone can attend every year
- We have a small staff with a very limited resources for trainings, and professional development. I have to make sure dollars are spent wisely for training and implementation of programs.
- Having other competing responsibilities that may become scheduling conflict barriers to having the available time to endure lengthy virtual PYD trainings.
- Providing development to mid and later career professionals.
- No concerns. There is energy and capacity right now and the opportunity is great for a paradigm shift due to external factors. Important to seize the moment!
- Time is a big concern for me. Scheduling is always hard but having dates released very early helps. For virtual offerings, having multiple days in row seems difficult now that things are picking up again. More importantly, I would want to see some kind of expectation set between both participants and their SPLs in terms of time committed to this effort throughout the year. By making PYD professional development a priority in the faculty/staffs plan of work and spelling out the number of hours they should be spending on this work/month, we give folks permission to put aside other important tasks/projects and focus on big picture.
- I would like to see follow up pieces back in the state after the academy. It would be great to connect professionals to future professional development opportunities.
- I really like the idea of a scaffolding training plan for beginner, intermediate and advance levels. This type of approach could be a great asset to states, 1890s and 1994. The schedule would need to be well-communicated ahead of time and probably on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- I am grateful for professional development opportunities but my two areas of concern are: - Does this compete directly for dollars and time against NAE4-HYDP - Does this compete directly for dollars and time with state level professional development efforts, especially if academies start focusing on non thrive topics. - I support a universal approach to training professionals in Thrive, program planning, and evaluation using the framework. But, getting into other areas I think that is overreach.
- Perhaps an unclear definition of what a PYD academy is. I'm basing my working definition on a single event (2021) which was fantastic. I am hopeful that further iterations will be as impactful. Also have some concerns related to finding funding for travel relative to the many conferences agents are already pulled towards. I really appreciate having this content heavy training virtual. I also am a strong proponent for either virtual only or in-person only, no hybrids.
- None
- That what is developed clearly provides how to integrate this into their work. Not just theories. PYD to me is not a stand alone...This academy should not be the pain by PowerPoint event. The objectives should be clearly performance based which indicates what the attendee is able to do once they complete the training. Also making sure that the model etc. can be clearly interpreted by varying audiences. We want all involved with youth, volunteers, parents, paraprofessionals to clearly understand this effort.
- Timing of academy and balancing this with other responsibilities. There is never a perfect time, how do we make it work for the most people?
- The amount of new staff and varying levels of understanding of Extension and PYD. Most Educators are still trying to understand their position and role within their county.

How could the idea of a national 4-H PYD academy be changed or expanded to support the capacity building needs of 4-H professionals in your state/LGU?

- For smaller institutions the capacity building should be focused on finding grants that support staffing in order to build capacity. Without additional staff and dwindling volunteer pools it is very difficult to grow programs.
- Career track for beginner to advanced
- Offering PYD professional development in a variety of formats (e.g. online, face-to-face, self-paced modules)
- Have low/no-cost options for smaller institutions to participate - Clear messaging around the "what's in it for me" for professionals who have successfully run youth development programs without the label of 4-H. - Offer mentoring of some type that would either lead into the academy or follow the academy for those who are willing to put the time into learning PYD from professionals who have successfully migrated programs.
- Make this a requirement of all 4-H professionals in our state.
- Don't know
- Adding opportunities for volunteers to participate perhaps condensed opportunity for Extension Administrators, other program area leaders connecting with EFNEP and SNAP-Education and their education with youth to link more closely with PYD SEL, SoLD
- I would love to invite Mary to TN to work with our agents (virtual or FTF) to at least give them a deeper understanding of the THRIVE model and ways to be more effective around PYD and evaluation of PYD programs in 4-H.
- More conservative states need a slower process for DEI practices to be rolled out and accepted.
- Involvement
- They need to be part of a comprehensive on-boarding and/or training program across the country. Our Western 4-H Institute may be able to provide some qualitative data as part of the conversation. If we are going to be a true "system" or "national organization" then the system needs to approach 4-H more collectively and not each LGU for themselves. A standardized, national scope, on boarding need to occur. The other gap that is involved with consistency within 4-H nationally is how LGU's variances in staffing patterns creates chaos on implementation, expectations of employees, expectations of volunteers, and thus families/parents. When staffing is inconsistently applied by each state, inconsistency exists in the application and understanding of application of any effort- in this case PYD.
- I need to work to build the strength of understanding across the board and support within the supervision/administrative team. I think we have the support, but we need to actively use the language so it is common.
- There should be a consistent message all 4-H professionals receive. Within the academy there should be time to have a state break out session to review state specific information related to key topics.
- I looked at it from the expansion side and the fact that it would provide new agents other views of, and for, programming models.
- AT THIS MOMENT, RI NEEDS HELP WITH 4-H VOLUNTEER CLUB LEADER RECRUITMENT. Anything that supports or helps us recruit, retain and train 4-H volunteers would be helpful.
- A more consistent cohort and supportive activities (like reading and discussion groups) could raise the level from what is now easy to dip into or multi-task. We are building our new 4-H colleague training around the PRKC--approaching those program development and management functions from a PYD lens would complement our efforts or even meet our needs.

- Understand how to adapt to a changing volunteer and youth recruitment and programs environment. The "traditional" club format is not working for many. But we lack local funds to adapt to more staff led programs.
- Please remember that many of us do not have county faculty members who lead 4-H programs. Often our delivery is completed by 4-H program assistance and coordinators who may or may not have advanced education. A coordinated effort with National 4-H Council, PLWG, NAE4-HYDP is appreciated. The academy needs to engage all entities engaged with professional development
- Engage Administrators/Directors for LGUs in messaging
- I'm not sure the training needs are different for 1890 staff. I first would have to access the training opportunities have to determine if what is being offered fits our needs.
- Create free online national 4-H PYD Academy 3-D training prerecorded teaching sessions, PDF resources, video resources, interactive PYD teaching virtual modules, access to free online virtual resources and live sessions, that 4-H Program Leaders and their staff can access whenever they have available time to do so.
- Weaving PYD practices and frameworks within what is already in place so that it does not feel like another add on.
- We have begun efforts to create opportunities in our state to support local adoption. I think the work has to be national, state and local to take hold.
- I think the PYD Academy model could strengthen our entire system. I like a multi-tiered approach for early career and additional opportunities for those with more experience. I like the idea of having some kind of mentoring built into the academies and perhaps a formal follow up process (maybe an observational assessment) to assess change / impact.
- Action planning time; coaching time for individuals
- An in-person academy or traveling in person regional academy might help spark interest.
- Research base would be a strength and a great contribution where all would know that development science is the research base for PYD. It would need to link to our current staff development place and potentially replace parts of our staff development model.
- I appreciate the 3 PYD academy pathway approach offered annually. All 4-H professionals should have a common base and the hardest thing about professional development is that you covered a topic and as you add individuals you don't want to repeat but you need to catch new folks up. With that being said, offering key tools consistently and regularly for our professionals adds value. Leaving the state specific and topical issues to states.
- Focus on new staff
- Thinking quickly here...I wonder if a major master trainer concept might not work. Why. Then the capacity to build is placed with a state and can be constantly tapped. We therefore don't have to wait until a national academy is conducted. Also we can build expertise within our organization to help us keep this in the forefront of programming decisions, on-boarding...etc. , as we build relationships with partners..etc. Just my thoughts.

If the PYD Academy offerings are expanded, what are one or two things that you hope will be part of this endeavor?

- Funding for implementation at the 1890 and 1994 institutions.
- Evaluation
- Mental health
- Representation from all regions of LGUs in planning and implementation from the start; not as an afterthought. - Culturally competent program planning - Where does local youth leadership fit into the landscape of a PYD Academy, especially given the mental health challenges faced by K-12 students who were significantly impacted by the pandemic?
- How to measure the impact of the PYD Academy and how to document its effectiveness with funding decision makers.
- Participants understand the importance of PYD in all programming
- Funding dedicated from the Scott endowment
- N/A
- Clear implementation processes to use with county personnel. Curriculum and not just concepts created to support state specialists. How do you broach the subject matter? Clear, logical progression of PYD. Many have trouble wrapping their head around the process in its entirety.
- Consistency Inclusion
- I'll have to contemplate this more.
- 4-H Camp!!!!
- Self-paced educational modules with verifiable credentials post-completion.
- Tools that can truly be used and incorporated into an agents daily work. Opportunity for networking and building a support cohort in PYD from across the country.
- Continued opportunity to hear directly from leaders in the field--I thought the first year was particularly strong with seminal PYD figures each day. We wouldn't be able to bring in such powerhouses to individual state training.
- Building understand what 4-H is as a youth development program.
- Opportunities for Volunteers
- not sure, would have to explore the offering.
- Authentic expertise of PYD teachers who are practitioners, or have served as PYD practitioners who have worked directly with a diversity of traditional 4-H members, generational 4-Hers members, and who have worked directly with underserved vulnerable youth 4-H members or 4-H Participants that are represented in all of the National 4-H Access, Equity and Belongings Committee groups. Rather than having PYD teachers who teach from an evidence-based research, concepts and theory perspective about what will work with youth who they may have never worked with directly, and youth who are in nontraditional 4-H settings such as: incarcerated environments, in housing authority settings, or in residential settings, who are also represented in the National 4-H AEBC groups. Strong, FREE VIRTUAL participation from 1994 LGUs youth program educators/professors, and/or researchers; would be greatly welcome. Instead of speaking about what 1994 LGUs have limited capacity doing, let them teach us what they are doing with their youth they we all may have an opportunity to learn from. How do they best work with you who may experience mental health issues, substance abuse issues, racial inequities, or homelessness.
- Providing development to mid and later career professionals.
- Exploring the connection of mindfulness to support PYD. Positioning Extension/4-H more as a resource to other Youth organizations in PYD, consideration of regional "Hub" LGU's to provide additional support to LGU's in that region.

- I would like to see expanded offerings focusing on community development/partnership building and on volunteer management.
- Tracked sessions and follow ups.
- Again, a scaffolded training experience that people could graduate from level to level. I also would prefer a workshop type of experience that would support the learners' transfer of learning. MN may be interested in piloted parts of the model if there were opportunities to do so. Let's keep this conversation rolling.
- Focus on offering virtual PYD training for our most resistant 4-H volunteer cohorts (e.g., livestock, shooting sports).
- I have expressed my desire to keep PYD academy offerings narrow. However, within that band of "all professionals should get..." a AEBC Committee access, equity, and belonging offering annually would be very valuable for professionals. The effort is universal, it would give shared language to every professional, and would enhance state level efforts around specific interventions and programs.
- Dosage research Civic Engagement research
- NA
- Mental Health and Career Pipeline

What specific additional capacity-building topics would you like to see covered at academies that are nationally-led?

- Access, equity, and belonging led by the AEBC.
- Diversity and mental health
- Strategies for maintaining stability in focus, emphasis on and programming based on PYD even if there are major shifts in federal administration in the coming years.
- We are very short-staffed, and our only state level faculty person is a volunteer specialist. All capacity-building PYD topics are welcomed!
- Volunteer engagement, training, management grounded in developmental relationships, SEL, SoLD
- The aforementioned topics are great. We do a good job (in my opinion) of infusing PYD into everything we do (or we try to, at least) but we lack in evaluation of our programs to demonstrate effectiveness. We have an Extension evaluator and a good evaluation system but I feel that our agents (county staff) as well as our regional and state staff need some help in understanding program evaluation as well as research in terms of why we do it, how we use it to leverage funding, tell our story, etc.
- Focus on 4-H Projects and why they are important and how to tie them all into PYD
- How to make PYD principles user friendly for volunteers.
- Not sure what is intended meaning for “support” is in the above questions (financial, administrative, agent-desire, etc.). I answered it from the perspective of whether or not I would promote it.
- Newer staff or those entering the 4-H world for the first time need to understand the background of the program; what the roots are. That does not mean they should be bound by past programming or methods, but should have an understanding of where 4-H came from. In addition, new staff need to understand the hierarchy of 4-H - who the agencies are and what their roles are (USDA/NIFA/National 4-H Council).
- RI has 2.5 FTE's working in the total (state + county) 4-H program. We need volunteer PYD much more than staff PYD!
- Youth civic engagement/community youth development Culturally relevant pedagogy/program design Inclusive program practice
- 4-H Operations, how do county level staff run a 4-H program ex recruit volunteers etc.
- We need to look at leadership within the 4-H movement. I'm concerned that we may not have individuals who are prepared to fill 4-H Program Leadership roles on the state level.
- Diversifying state/local partnerships with youth serving organizations
- Justice, Equity & Inclusion around racial and ethnic diversity
- Volunteer management Community development
- I would like to see them experience level focused.
- DEI