

The KEYS to Community Program

Knowledgeable, Engaged Youth Scholars

Facilitator's Guide



Program Objectives

1. Develop understanding of county government services.
2. Develop understanding of role of county government officials.
3. Motivate young people to become involved with and informed about county government.

Session Outline

1. Introduction: County Governments and Their Services
2. Board of Supervisors
3. Tax Assessors/Collectors
4. County Law Enforcement
5. Judicial System
6. Chancery Clerks
7. Circuit Clerks

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to help young people understand how their county government operates, what their county government is trying to accomplish, how the actions of government affect their everyday life, and their personal responsibility to local government.

Method of Delivery

The program is designed to be flexible for a variety of delivery methods. Sessions are intended to be presented individually over time (for example, one lesson per week or one lesson per month), with the goal of providing interactive and educational sessions. Each lesson is simply an example of how to cover the topic. Extension agents are encouraged to adapt the lessons to each situation. It is important to remember that lessons should be fun and interactive. Consider incorporating ice breakers and e-moments to each lesson. For examples, please visit: http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf.

Operation of the Program

The Extension agent will assume responsibility for organizing this program. He or she will make contact with necessary speakers and tailor sessions to specific groups. Agents are encouraged to expand sessions to meet the needs of the participants. Agents are encouraged to involve 4-H volunteers to help implement the program.

Suggested Participants

Extension agents are encouraged to work with local 4-H leaders to identify youths ages 14–18 who would benefit from the program. Agents should ensure that a diverse group of participants is selected for the program. Other possible partners to help select participants could include: school guidance counselors, history teachers, community leaders, civic organizations, and elected officials. A sample news release is included in this guide to help promote the program.

Participant Agreement

Extension agents should consider having participants and their parents sign a participant agreement. The standard 4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement, along with Photo Release (Form 807), can be used. Extension agents are encouraged to create a customized agreement for each situation. This agreement will ensure that all parties understand the program and what is expected.

Evaluation and Assessment

An essential element of this program is the completion of a program evaluation and an end-of-course assessment. Agents should administer the pre-evaluation to participants before the start of the program. The post-evaluation should be administered at the conclusion of the final session. Participants will be asked to write a code number at the top of the pre-evaluation. This can be any number the participant chooses, but the same number should be used on the pre- and post-evaluation. (For example, the last four digits of the participant's phone number.)

Agents should also administer the end-of-course assessment after participants complete all seven sessions. Complete evaluations and assessments should be mailed to the Extension Center for Government and Community Development, P.O. Box 9643, Mississippi State, MS 39762 the day after the evaluation or assessment is completed. Individual responses will be combined to evaluate the impact of the KEYS to Community program.

Optional Activities

The flexibility of this program allows agents to adjust the length of each individual session and the overall length of the program. A list of optional activities is included with this guide to provide agents the opportunity to expand the participants' understanding of county government. Agents can incorporate these activities throughout each session or at the completion of all lessons. One option is to have students complete a set number of electives based on their interest in a particular area of county government.

Graduation/Completion Ceremony

Extension agents are encouraged to recognize those who participate and complete the program. Two examples would be: 1) Have participants attend the Board of Supervisors meeting and arrange for the Board President to recognize participants by name and present them with a certificate. 2) Hold a special dinner and invite all county elected officials, participants, and parents. Ask one official to speak on the importance of civic involvement and present participants with certificates of completion.

Sponsorship of Program

The program is designed to be operated at a minimal cost. If sponsorship is needed, consider the following sources:

- Individual Elected Officials
- Board of Supervisors
- Community Banks
- Civic Clubs
- Economic Development Foundations



The KEYS to Community Program

Lesson I: County Governments and Their Services

Objectives

1. Participants will understand the structure of county government.
2. Participants will discover positions within county government.
3. Participants will examine the need for county government.

Interest Approach

Depending on the size of the group, divide students into groups or, as a whole, give them a large flip-chart and markers. Ask students to use the supplies to draw the county outline and list or draw everything they know about the county. Examples: population and demographics, major industries, county officials, tourist attractions, schools, towns within the county, etc. Give students a set amount of time, and then have them share with the group.

Next, explain that this program is designed to give them a better understanding of their county government and how it works. Ask students: "Why is it important to understand how your county government works?" Explain that county government is operated by citizens and that successful counties need young, engaged leaders to be involved.

Suggested Teaching Activities

- PowerPoint: Exploring Your County & Understanding Your County Government
- Invite a member of the local historical society or someone with knowledge of county history to share the history of the county. Make sure to encourage the speaker to include any information about prominent and infamous citizens, the history of the towns and county name, major changes to the county, and any major events that have occurred in the county. Alternatively, you can assign students to research information before the session to share with the group.
- Provide students the opportunity to read **Local Governments and Their Services** and **Political Process and Local Government Administration**.
- Use the **Name that County Official** worksheet to introduce students to various county officials.
 - Answers: D, F, E, C, G, A, B
- What's Happening in _____ County? Before the session, gather as many newspapers, news articles, community profiles, or publications that discuss issues facing the county. Then, ask students to review the material and identify current issues in the county. Have students rank the importance of the issues. Students can also use this information to develop questions to ask future speakers who visit the group and compare how the officials prioritize issues.
- Have students use a computer to play the **County Government Works** online game to gain a better understanding of how a county works: <https://www.icivics.org/games/counties-work>.