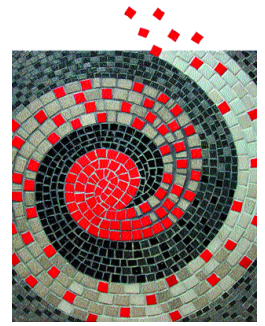


# Create an Apprenticeship Program



Arlinda Nauman  
University of Idaho Extension

**“Apprentices working with mentors gain self-confidence and greater ability to do their jobs, particularly in the area of leadership and seeing the larger picture of youth development and Extension.”**

Barbara Abo  
Idaho YDPA Mentor

## LEARNING TO LEAD

With budget constraints limiting their ability to offer salaries that are competitive with other states, the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System has had difficulty finding qualified candidates who are willing to move to Idaho to fill their positions. As a result, they have adopted a “grow our own” approach that allows youth workers who are interested in advancing to Specialist and/or administrative roles in youth development programs to take up to three years to complete the degree required for the position. As administrative staff get to know county youth workers, they begin to assess workers’ desires and potential leadership abilities to become Educators or Specialists. Those youth workers are then sponsored in the “Learning to Lead” training program where they learn the skills needed for advancement. Several Idaho Specialists have been nurtured and hired to work at the state level through this approach.

## TARGETED LEARNING

Idaho is a part of the National 4-H Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Certificate Program (YDPA), which is an education and training program for youth workers incubated by the Department of Labor. Through a structured apprenticeship program, which includes instruction and on-the-job training, youth practitioners develop the skills they need to effectively serve youth in their communities. Those who have

participated in the YDPA program have come back to Idaho equipped to provide professional development training for other 4-H youth workers throughout the state. Training topics are selected by participants because the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension believes offering professional development opportunities that staff see as valuable is essential to keeping them motivated. In addition, time is scheduled during the training for participants to share information about programs they are conducting that are successful in addressing goals in the Idaho Strategic Plan for 4-H Youth Development. Sharing successful program ideas provides participants an opportunity to receive internal recognition and appreciation, and promotes the building of relationships within the organization.

YDPA participants also have learned skills that help them recognize when competent youth workers are becoming discouraged, and how to mentor, support, and encourage them. Early career youth workers are paired with mentors who are experienced 4-H educators. A face-to-face meeting between the mentor and youth worker is held once a month, and they are encouraged to have phone conversations on a regular basis between monthly meetings. They also participate in trainings together with other mentoring pairs, which gives them the opportunity to interact with 4-H staff throughout the state. By networking with others in the state, many youth workers have chosen to stay in Idaho because of the encouragement and appreciation expressed by their colleagues.

***The University of Idaho Cooperative Extension** serves nearly 48,000 youth throughout the state in predominantly rural areas. They employ 48 full-time and 20 part-time frontline youth workers. The ethnic makeup of the staff is 86% white (non-Hispanic/Latino), 8% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian-American, and less than 1% African-American. They offer flexible work schedules and scholarships to help youth workers attend professional development opportunities.*

