

TOOLS + TIDBITS

for volunteerism

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NEED STATEMENT

Volunteers are essential to expanding the capacity of 4-H programs; however, Extension professionals often need additional professional development and practical, research-informed tools to confidently recruit, engage, and manage volunteers. Based on national survey data conducted by the 4-H Program Leaders Working Group Volunteerism Committee (2020), most Extension professionals are not aware of the Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency (VRKC) taxonomy. Additionally, topic areas of need identified through previous assessments of professional development offerings included the following:

1. Club Management
2. County-Level Volunteer Engagement
3. Volunteer Organization
4. Project Judging

Therefore, the Southern Region Volunteer Specialists designed a four-part webinar series focused on volunteerism in 4-H to meet the ever evolving needs of Extension Professionals, spread awareness of the VRKC and associated resources, and expand networks for resource sharing.

APPROACH

Using a previously established successful approach (Franks et al., 2025), the *Tools + Tidbits for Volunteerism* professional development series of online sessions was offered by a collaboration of ten Southern Region Volunteer Specialists that contributed to the creation and delivery of content. Outreach and recruitment efforts were coordinated through networks of the Southern Region Volunteer Specialists.

Participants pre-registered via Zoom, with the option to sign up for any or all four sessions, and received reminder emails ahead of each session. Each 60-minute session used a flipped classroom model, emphasizing real-world application, peer exchange, and participant-led discussion. Networking was a key component, with attendees encouraged to connect beyond the scheduled sessions. All sessions were recorded, and accompanying materials were made available on Google Drive for participant access (see QR code).

Each session included a post-session reflective evaluation and optional digital completion badge. Descriptive summary statistics with frequencies and percentages used to analyze participation data and post-reflective evaluation responses to assess program reach and reported impacts.

References:
4-H PLWG Volunteerism Committee. Annual Update Report. 2020.
Franks, Meggan; Culp, Ken; Knoepfli, Karla; Burns, T. Ashley; and Wade, Breanna (2025) "Ignite the Spark: A Multi-State Collaboration for Engaging and Retaining 4-H Volunteers." *Journal of Youth Development*. Vol. 20: Iss. 4, Article 9.



RESULTS

Table 1. Participation in *Tools + Tidbits for Volunteerism* professional development.

	Tool Focus	Registrants	Live Attendees	Badges Issued
Session 1 Aug. 29, 2024	Club Management	151	127	24
Session 2 Sept. 26, 2024	County Engagement of Volunteers	186	55	23
Session 3 Oct. 24, 2024	Volunteer Organization	201	46	13
Session 4 Nov. 14, 2024	Judges / Judging	213	52	25
	TOTAL	751	280	85

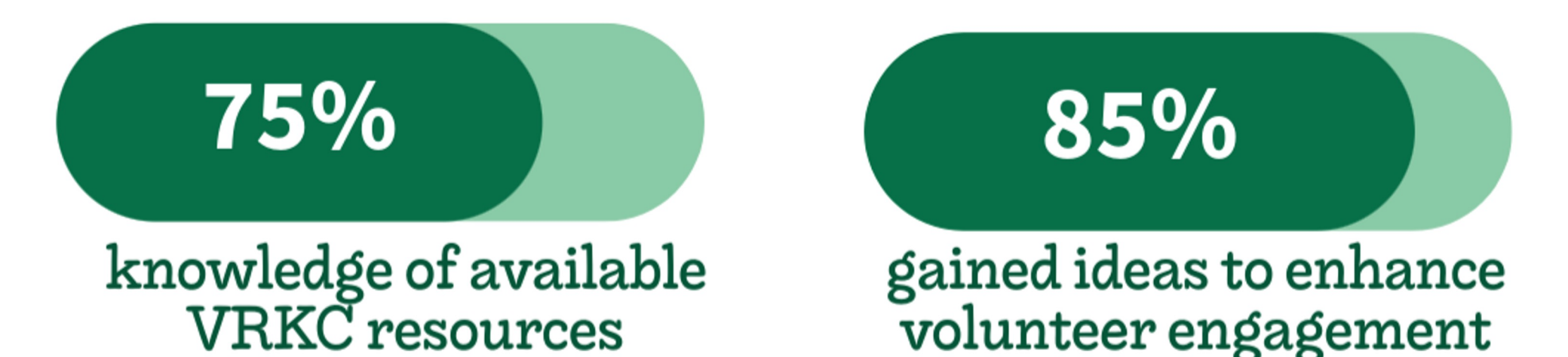
Participants highlighted several key takeaways:

- Valuable resources and practical tools
- Interaction with Southern Region professionals
- Breakout sessions that promoted collaboration
- Youth voice as a central theme
- Volunteer engagement strategies



Figure 1. Image representation of four individual, session-completion and one series-completion digital badges that were issued following *Tools + Tidbits for Volunteerism* professional development.

KNOWLEDGE CHANGE



AGREEMENT



Figure 2. Respondents (n = 75) report knowledge change (percent of respondents indicating increase in concept) and agreement (combined responses of strongly agree and somewhat agree on 5-point Likert scale) following *Tools + Tidbits for Volunteerism* sessions.

CONCLUSION

The *Tools + Tidbits for Volunteerism* series successfully enhanced professional capacity among 4-H professionals. Participants reported increased confidence, new strategies, and actionable resources to empower volunteers and strengthen youth development programs. The flipped classroom model and intentional networking fostered a collaborative learning environment that extended beyond the sessions. The strong response to VRKC resources and youth development-focused judging strategies reflects a growing interest in structured tools and intentional youth development practices.

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