



**NATIONAL 4-H**  
COUNCIL

7100 Connecticut Avenue  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815-4999

P: 301.961.2800  
[www.4-H.org](http://www.4-H.org)

## Primary Messages

### **WHAT: What 4-H and Microsoft are doing together:**

**Headline:** National 4-H Council and Microsoft launch 4-H Tech Changemakers to equip young people with the digital skills and resources they need to make a positive impact in their communities.

- Through this partnership, 4-H youth leaders are working with educators, community members, and Microsoft to identify challenges their communities face, and to implement plans to address those challenges using digital skills or technology.
- Tech Changemakers is part of Microsoft and National 4-H Council's combined efforts to bring more economic opportunity to communities through the power of technology, connectivity and digital skills.
- Together, we'll equip 4-H teens to serve as leaders in their own communities, helping the community see what's possible when you learn to create with, not just consume, technology.
  - For example, one group in Washington is planning to bring digital skills training to immigrant communities to help them better access resources online and to connect with their children's education. Another group in Maine is exploring developing mapping tools to help reduce food insecurity by connecting local farms and gardens with food banks.
- In its first year, the program is active in eight communities across six states: Machias County in Maine, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties in Michigan, Cass County in North Dakota, Mecklenburg County in Virginia, Grant County in Washington, and Outagamie and Brown Counties in Wisconsin.

### **WHY: Stating the problem:**

**Headline:** 4-H and Microsoft believe in empowering youth to lead community change using technology. But without access and training, people are at risk of being left behind.

- The rapid transformation of our economy is driven in part by the pervasive use of new technology that is creating both challenges and opportunities for communities across the country.
- According to Code.org, Computing jobs are the number one source of new wages in the US. There are 500,000 current openings *in every industry and every state in the US*, and these jobs are projected to grow twice the rate of other jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that the average salary in a job that requires IT skills – whether in manufacturing, advertising,

retail or banking – is more than 50 percent higher than the average private-sector American job.

- In the United States alone, there are over 500,000 open computing jobs, which are projected to grow twice the rate of all other jobs, yet last year less than 43,000 computer science students graduated into the US workforce.
- Estimates indicate that only 40% of U.S. schools teach computer programming.
- These challenges can be especially acute in rural communities and in less urban areas where populations are more widely spread, sometimes making it more expensive to scale programs and services.

## HOW: How we get there:

**Headline:** 4-H Tech Changemakers are working through a collaborative, multi-step process, involving leadership training, community outreach, and digital skills development to help them lead community projects.

- 4-H Tech Changemakers will work hand-in-hand with Microsoft as it leads the charge to bring digital skills and opportunities to communities across the U.S. as part of its TechSpark program. Launched in 2017, Microsoft TechSpark aims to help ensure digital skills and opportunities are accessible in smaller communities outside of major metropolitan areas. The program works closely with local partners to accelerate economic growth through regional internet connectivity, digital skills development, career skills development, nonprofit support, and digital business transformation.
- 4-H Tech Changemakers harnesses the power of youth leadership to help communities and individuals build the skills they need to unlock opportunities and fuel positive change. 4-H youth are engaging a broad range of community members and organizations to ensure their projects align with community priorities, and to foster relationships that can help them meet their goals. Over the course of their projects, 4-H youth will:
  - Conduct community-based digital needs assessments;
  - Work with mentors and community stakeholders to determine goals and priorities;
  - Develop action plans to leverage technology to help solve a community challenge;
  - Implement action plans with the help of volunteers, community leaders and community organizations;
  - And evaluate individual and community impact.
- In addition to driving positive change in their community, each team of youth leaders and volunteers will develop critical technology skills themselves—improving their ability to thrive and contribute to their local economy.
- University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension is a key partner in developing resources for 4-H teens and educators to implement programs in their community.
- The initiative kicked off in July of 2017 and will run through June of 2020. Additional communities may be added in years two and three of the initiative.