Greetings!

The New England 4-H Council met this week to review opportunities for the 2021 fair. Donna Woolam, ESE Director of Agriculture and Education shared she has spoken to the Department of Public Health in West Springfield, and they feel ESE should not utilize the Moses dormitory due to density and distancing issues that will still resonate due to COVID. The Moses cafeteria will be available at this time for takeout meals only. Not having on-site housing in the dorm created extensive conversation. Various project committees started having discussions and some key points for consideration going forward included:

1. Where and how 4-Hers could be housed, including but not limited to hotels, campers, tents, other school or university dorms nearby.
2. Who would chaperone youth and when during the program would chaperones have custodial care of participating 4-Hers, when would parents have custodial care of their teens?
3. Unknown’s about the budget. In the past ESE has allocated $120,000 to New England 4-H programming, but with no fair in 2020, that number is not available at this time. Will states have to contribute funding above what they currently raise to cover participant expenses if ESE can’t financially assist? Can the ESE Foundation assist in raising money for 4-H to partner with ESE?
4. Timing of 4-H programming
   A – if a New England 4-H Fair evolves outside of the Big E, when is space available at the ESE, what dates may be most advantageous for all states, should it be a long weekend or should it be weekday to avoid conflict with other New England fairs.
   B – if programming remains during the Big E, what does that look like in terms of number of days
5. What kind of new, competitive 4-H events programs besides livestock can be developed. These may include a poultry show, rabbit show, creative arts, food, textiles, robotics/other technology events, public speaking and video production, dance and fitness competitions. Offering non-farm youth a chance to experience ESE expands the outreach of the exposition.
6. Can a new program addressing workforce preparation and career development evolve with job shadowing ESE staff and other professionals be implemented
7. Can a 4-H ambassador program for the Big E be developed?
8. Can the age of participants be addressed and go below 12?
9. Can these just be open 4-H events where any 4-Her can come, bring any number of animals?

The Council determined that alternative options for having 4-H participate and engage with the Eastern States Exposition needed to be explored. It was determined that two committees should begin meeting to see what viable alternatives may be, and an additional committee on Minor Protection and Risk Management should also meet to address this issue. We need to have some concrete guidelines to ESE/New England 4-H Council by January 15 so their Board of Directors can review and determine what they believe is feasible.

With the above taken into consideration, state offices should poll their volunteers and youth to see who would like to serve on the committees below. Project committee chairs should turn in names via their state office. Deadline to submit names/emails is November 23
to Bonnie Burr and Donna Woolam. We will select chairs and chairs should begin meeting ASAP. Sub-committee work will be helpful once you get started.

1. New England 4-H Fair/Not held during the Big E
2. Hold project competitions/other activities during the Big E
3. Minor Protection and Risk Management

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