Situation

At the heart of the 4-H program are relationships between youth and project, youth and adult, youth and youth, and youth adult and project. Nowhere in 4-H is the relationship more passionate than in the horse program. That passion spills into every aspect of the Spokane 4-H Horse Program, including record books and public speaking.

Two committees of experienced volunteers and the 4-H educator reviewed the concerns and set about redesigning the evaluative system (tools and methodologies) for Horse Project Record Book reviews and Impromptu judging. Borrowing from the educational sector, old review matrices were replaced with an analytic [compared to holistic] rubric.

Common elements...

- Both educational/competitive events are guided by sets of written criteria and are evaluated and ranked by adult volunteers
- Rankings and outcomes are a source of pride for participating youth [and their parents] and impact county awards for 4-H Horse Project youth
  
  *Invite similar approaches to improvement*

- Small groups of volunteers, working with staff members reviewed and improved the scoring tools. The improvements centered on transforming general statements to more carefully described levels of performance presented in the form of “rubrics.”

- Rubric pilot tests included two steps. First, through simulations using “panels of experts” from among 4-H volunteer cadre, and then in full pilots during the annual record book evaluation and Impromptu contest

- All volunteers participating in the full pilot received education on the elements of the instruments and participated in discussions on inter-rater agreement
- Face validity of the rubrics were determined by the volunteers and staff through the layers of pilot testing.
- Reliability of the instruments was determined by calculating an “r” value (Pearson Product Moment Correlation). All products and performances were independently scored by pairs of volunteers

Outputs

- New strategies for developing tools and instruments to support educational events were introduced & mastered by Spokane 4-H program leaders/volunteers
- Two new tools (rubrics)—shown to be valid and reliable—were produced

**Short Term Outcomes**

- Improvement in understanding/acceptance/satisfaction with “judging” of record books and Impromptus was evidenced through a significant reduction in complaint and challenges to judging outcomes
- A greater degree of understanding of performance expectations was evidenced by improvements in the quality of the 4-H record books over time and among intermediate level 4-H youth performances during the subsequent Impromptu educational events

**Intermediate Term Outcomes**

- Acceptance and formal approval by the Horse Projects Committee of both tools/strategies as part of their standard operating procedures

- Greater satisfaction on the part of the event judges in their experience of judging record books and Impromptu Public Speaking.