

Developing diverse leaders: Best Practices in 4-H Healthy Habits Programming

Madeleine deBlois, ScD, Kara Tanoue, MS, DeeDee Avery, MS, MPH, Michele Walsh, PhD
Community Research, Evaluation and Development (CRED) Team

Abstract

The 4-H Healthy Habits program focuses on using a positive youth development framework to promote health and wellness among youth and to train teens to become leaders in their communities as Healthy Living Ambassadors. These Healthy Habits programs have been funded in recent years to focus on reaching youth from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In this poster, we present our mixed-methods work to identify best practices among Healthy Habits programs, particularly when it comes to reaching and retaining youth of color. Case study sites were selected to represent both high-achieving programs, where many teens of color were engaged as Healthy Living Ambassadors, and programs who did not appear to be as successful in engaging youth of color in these leadership roles. We present our approach of assessing diversity and share findings around promising practices for Healthy Habits programs.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach to understanding 4-H Healthy Habits programming successes and challenges

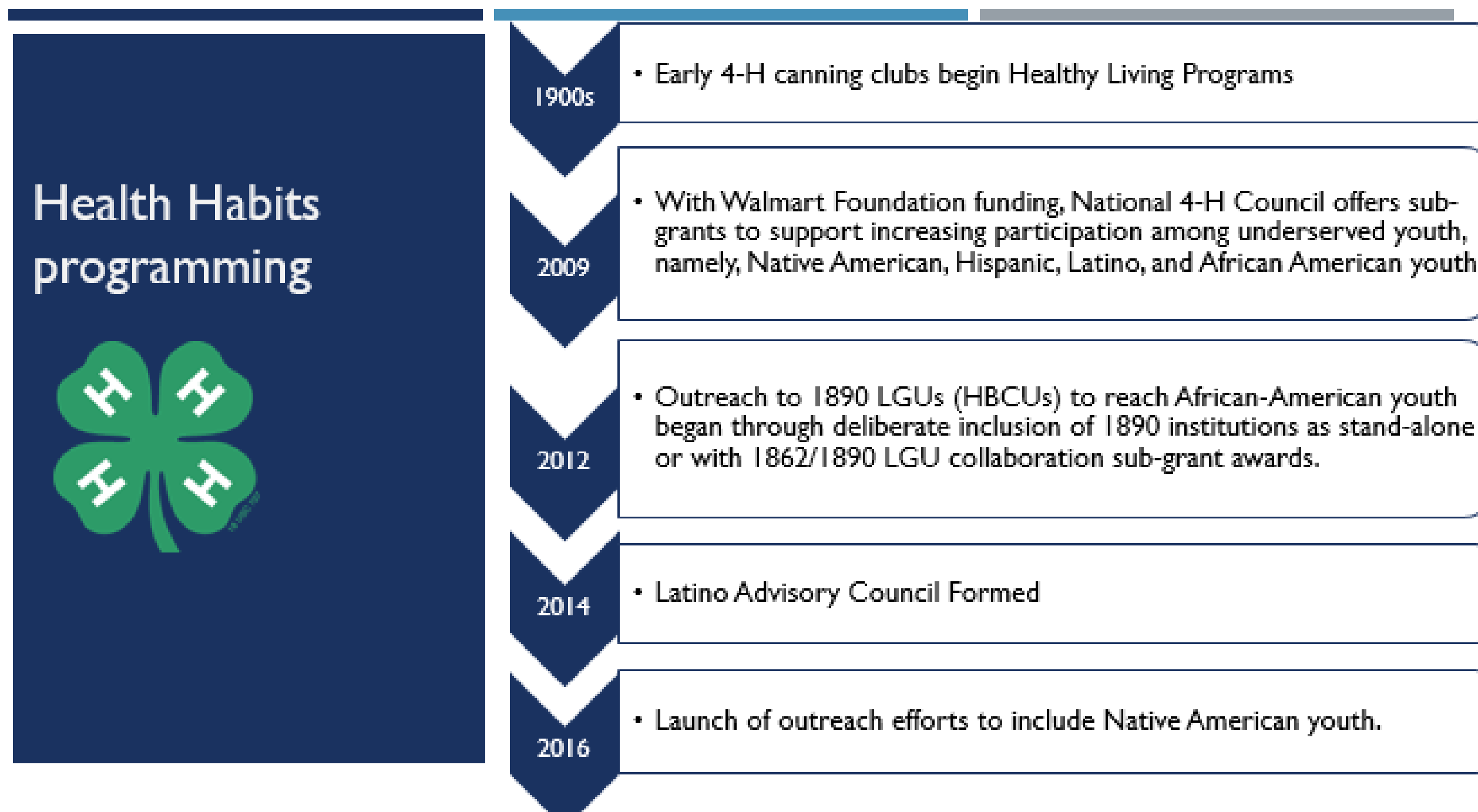
- 6 months
- Common Measures data; 2016-2017 grantee report data
- Qualitative information in grantee reports
- Survey for LGUs active in the Walmart Foundation-funded program within the past three years
- 27 LGUs invited, 14 participated
- 82 staff/volunteers; 78 teen leaders; 75 youth participants
- Subset of 9 LGUs identified as case study sites
- Represent a range of involvement of youth of color in the teen leader programming (i.e., diverse case selection)
- Interviews (17 adults); and focus groups (74 teens)

Strategies for increasing participation among youth of color

- Locate 4-H Healthy Habits programming in areas with high proportions of people of color. National Council should continue to nurture programming in MSIs.
- In communities where people of color are indeed demographic minorities, seek and nurture partnerships with organizations that serve relatively high proportions of youth of color.
- Avoid relying on (or requiring that teen leaders come from) existing 4-H programs as a primary source of teen leaders.
- Advertise the 4-HHLA program in non-traditional places; be creative about marketing tactics.
- Prioritize staff and volunteer candidates with connections to local communities and who are passionate about youth and health.
- Strive to have a diverse staff and volunteer base where youth of all types can see themselves reflected in 4-H leadership.
- Translated materials should be readily accessible and well-publicized.

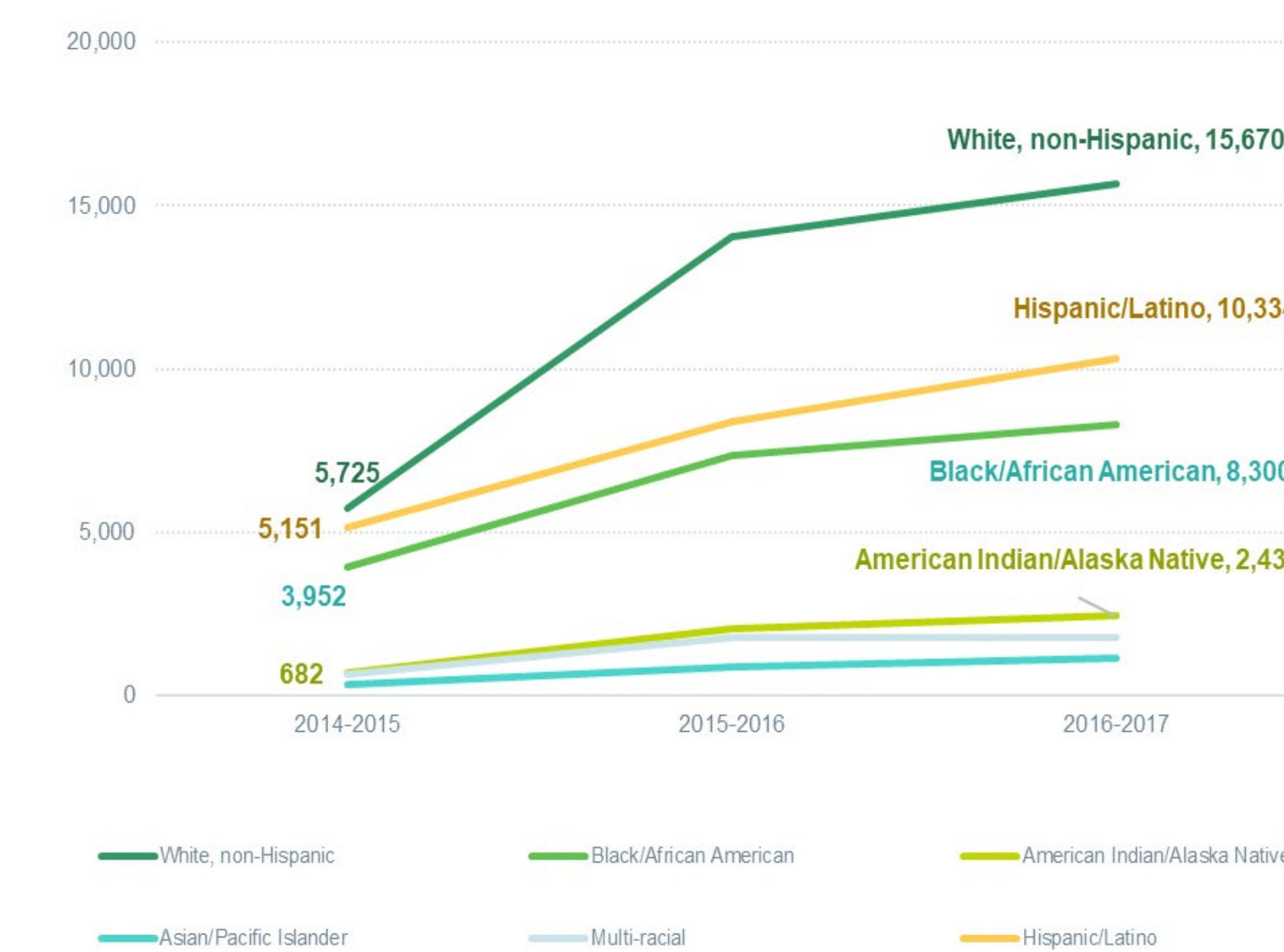
Diversity in youth development programming

- Multiple 4-H frameworks recognize the growing need for programs to take into account the cultural context of the youth they serve and to be culturally-responsive to an increasingly diverse youth population.
- Youth of color are broadly underrepresented in many widespread programs (e.g., 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts).

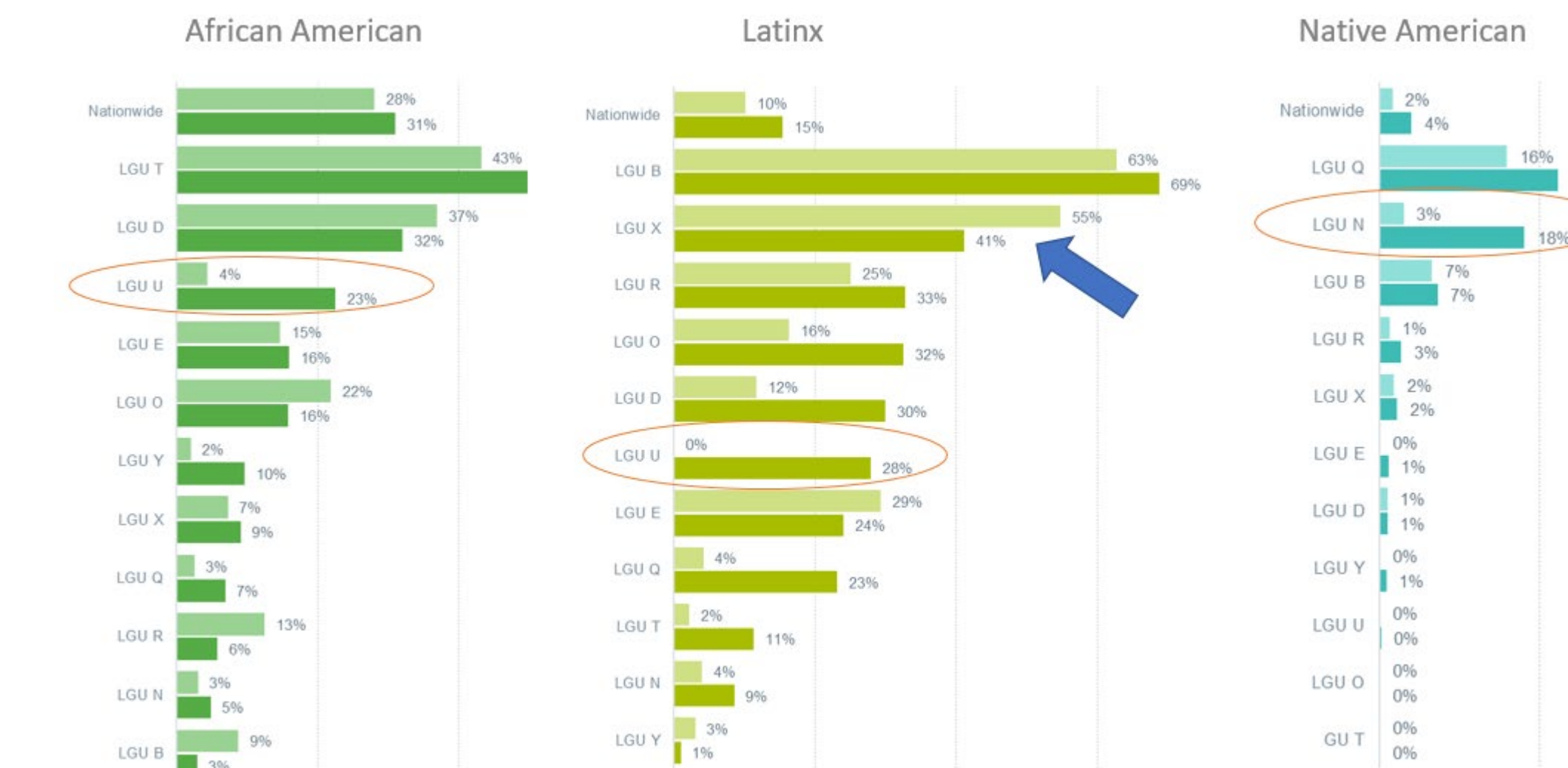


Results

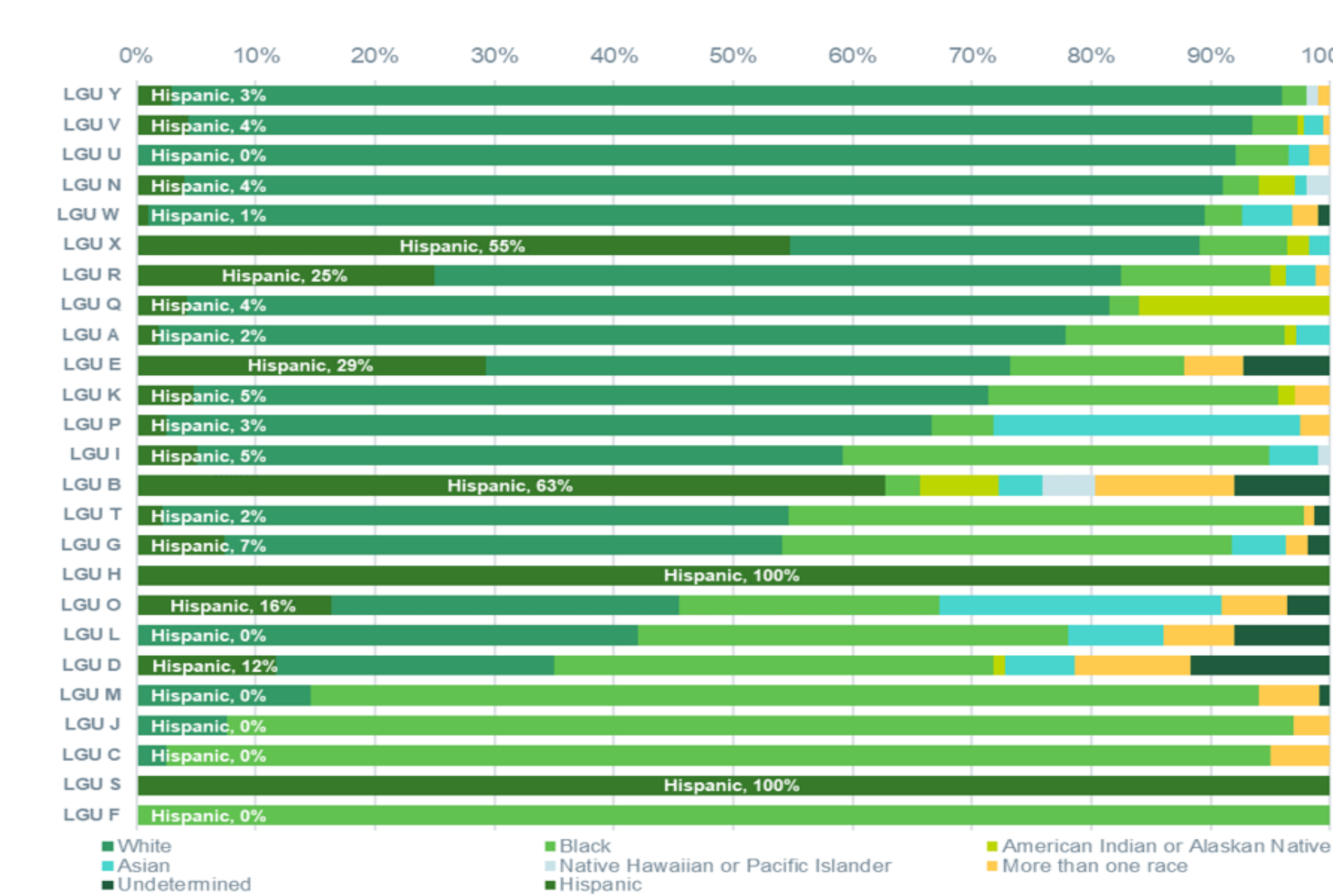
The numbers of Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native youth have more than doubled in the past three years.



Among selected case study sites, 4-H Healthy Habits youth programming tended to include more youth of color than the teen leader component



LGU programs varied greatly in the diversity of their teen leaders.



- Teens generally strongly agreed with statements about the inclusiveness of their programs, including that youth of color are both welcomed and encouraged to be teen leaders.
- 68% of staff reported actively addressing racial or ethnic diversity in their program.
- Some programs reported a "color-blind" approach to their programming.
"In my position I am not looking at 'color' of any youth. My programming is aimed at YOUTH not 'of color.'"

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