

# Michigan 4-H Club Development Guide

## Overview



4-H clubs are the foundation of every successful 4-H program. As the primary delivery method of 4-H, clubs provide volunteers and members with unlimited opportunities for learning, relationship building and fun. 4-H clubs can take many shapes. We hope this document will assist 4-H staff and middle management volunteers with their efforts to expand the number of 4-H clubs in Michigan counties and communities so more young people can be involved, as well as expand their efforts to improve the effectiveness of existing clubs.

The purposes of this publication are to:

- Outline the role and structure of 4-H clubs in Michigan 4-H Youth Development.
- Establish a common understanding of the definitions, measures and outcomes of 4-H clubs.

- Develop recommendations for action steps that can be taken to strengthen, support and expand 4-H club programming in local communities.
- Provide guidelines and common expectations for volunteers and staff.

Use this publication as a framework for developing a club program that best meets the needs of the communities. Step-by-step instructions and sample agendas should be considered guidelines and not the only method for starting and supporting 4-H clubs in your county. However, each component of this process is important to the long-term success of clubs and should not be excluded.

## Introduction

### Michigan 4-H Youth Development's Vision and Mission Statements

The **vision** of Michigan 4-H Youth Development is to mobilize volunteers and communities to meet the needs of youth.

Our **mission** is to create nonformal, educational opportunities to help youth thrive in a complex and changing world.

### Philosophical Statement

#### “This We Believe”

- **4-H is an educational component of the land-grant system.** (In Michigan through Michigan State University in East Lansing)
- **4-H is an exciting partnership of private and public people and organizations.**
- **4-H is human development oriented and builds life skills.** (A positive self concept, good interpersonal communication skills, practical skills, problem-solving abilities, leadership abilities, understanding and aiding one's community, respect for personal health and the environment and an eagerness to learn)
- **4-H is not an organization – but an educational concept.**
- **4-H is built on volunteer involvement.** (Of adults and teens)
- **4-H involves participants in decision making.**
- **4-H builds participant ownership.**
- **4-H is family oriented.**
- **4-H clubs provide the most complete educational environment.** (But there are other ways of obtaining educational information and experience)

## The Goal of 4-H

The ultimate goal of 4-H is positive youth development.

Our commitment to the young people and parents who seek community-based learning opportunities – and to the volunteers and organizations who become our partners in positive youth development – is that 4-H will:

- Help young people explore their interests through fun, engaging, hands-on learning experiences led by committed adults in their local communities.
- Give youth and adults opportunities to experience the benefits of working together to reach common goals.
- Help young people achieve through knowledge, success and friendships that last a lifetime!

In 4-H we are committed to helping young people:

- Connect with positive adult role models and make new friends in safe learning environments.
- Take the lead in what they do and how they develop.
- Set the pace for their own learning.
- Recognize, understand and appreciate diversity.
- Become active citizens through their service and leadership.

All of which provides an environment in which they can develop skills that help them succeed.



### What Does 4-H Offer?

For youth, 4-H offers fun learning opportunities through 4-H clubs, after-school programs, and local, state and international events. For older teens, 4-H offers opportunities to set goals, develop strategies to reach those goals, and lead by sharing their skills, knowledge and talents to make their communities stronger. For adults, 4-H offers research-based support and training in age-appropriate learning methods and materials to help plan activities and projects for young people in safe, nurturing environments.

## Michigan 4-H Youth Development Guiding Principles Put Into Action in Your 4-H Club

The purpose of the 4-H Guiding Principles is to provide direction for MSUE 4-H Youth Development's learning materials, program planning, implementation, evaluation and priority setting so that 4-H'ers get from their 4-H experience the skills and opportunities they need for positive growth and development. For a concise handout and reference list, visit <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/downloads/4-HGuidingPrinciples.pdf>.

### 1. Youth develop positive relationships with adults and peers.

When put into action, this principle means that volunteers and members are available and accessible to each other for information, guidance and support. It means that both adults and youth develop relationships that help them feel like they belong and are connected. The activities and experiences of the group are shared and they serve to build trust and foster honest and open communication.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Email is used to foster communication between volunteers and members. Clubs can create an online discussion group to ensure everyone is connected to everyone else.
- If a club has multiple adult volunteers, match specific children to specific adults to ensure consistent contact and that no youth is overlooked.
- Older youth can mentor younger members.
- Laugh with children and have fun with them.
- Provide time during meetings for young people to talk about things in their lives.
- Help youth develop trust with and among peers to follow through (start to finish) with projects and goals.

### 2. Youth are physically and emotionally safe.

Both 4-H staff members and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure that young people involved in 4-H youth development programs participate in environments that are physically safe and structured, yet flexible enough to encourage honesty, trust and respect among 4-H members and the adult volunteers working with them.

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This means that feedback is provided in constructive ways to address situations, behaviors and emotions. Positive risk-taking is encouraged to ensure young people try new things. Rules, expectations and consequences are clear, consistent, and appropriate for the age of the child and are applied fairly. And activities and programs are held in environments that maximize the safety and well-being of the youth we work with.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Risk management plans are in place at the club, county and state levels.
- Children are always appropriately supervised.
- Clubs and counties are encouraged to develop severe weather policies and ground rules for meetings.
- Locations for meetings are identified that are familiar and where children are comfortable.
- Children can share and communicate without restriction yet with respect.
- Safety becomes a priority for activities and discussions.
- Guidelines for behavior of members, parents and volunteers are made and enforced.
- Accommodations are made for physical and learning needs.

### **3. Youth are actively engaged in their own development.**

When put into action, the goal of this principle is for youth to increase their personal competence and sense of well-being. A variety of opportunities and experiences are offered that encourage youth and the adults working with them to explore, discuss and reflect on ethical values, personal interests, strengths and accomplishments.

These opportunities have purpose and meaning – they foster a young person’s positive sense of self and view of the future. They also provide opportunity to recognize youth for both their participation and their achievement.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Young people have leadership roles in their clubs and in their county 4-H program.
- Young people set project or activity goals and personally assess the results at the end of their project.
- Youth determine what the club does and then have opportunities to lead meetings and experiences.

- Youth learn from each other.
- Youth think for themselves and are not afraid of their answers and choices.

### **4. Youth are considered participants rather than recipients in the learning process.**

When put into action, this principle means that youth are provided a variety of opportunities, in different contexts, that respect the way they learn and encourage their active participation in what and how they learn. Young people share the decision-making, planning and implementation of their learning experiences. Young people and adults also work together to overcome barriers to participation such as cost, scheduling and transportation.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Young people choose the programming they want delivered.
- Youth have the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions before and after activities.
- Adults facilitate, not dictate.
- Youth are given choices and get to feel the impact of those choices.
- Young people personally own their project.

### **5. Youth develop skills that help them succeed.**

This principle ensures that young people in 4-H have “hands-on” opportunities to learn and develop the skills they need to be successful as adults. Youth identify, develop, practice and are able to speak about their skills. Young people develop skills by setting challenging, yet realistic goals that are supported by their peers, their adult and older teen volunteers, their families and their communities.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Staff and volunteers use research to define the skills youth need to succeed, then promote 4-H opportunities that specifically help youth get there.
- Club leadership empowers youth to teach each other.
- Success levels are according to ability and desire. There would be no pass/fail or badges needed to be earned.
- 4-H alumni are utilized as mentors to current youth members.
- Participation in the state 4-H awards process, which develops resume writing and interview skills, life skills, a positive work ethic and provides recognition for a young person’s success is encouraged.

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- Junior leadership opportunities are offered and encouraged.

### **6. Youth recognize, understand and appreciate multiculturalism.**

It's important that young people respect differences among groups and individuals of diverse backgrounds. 4-H should help youth develop skills that help youth foster social justice in their communities. They should explore and value their own diverse abilities, skills, interests and cultural backgrounds and explore diverse people, places and ideas. It is equally important that young people and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities and interests are valued and included in planning, decision-making and leadership opportunities.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Youth are aware of and encouraged to participate in city, state and international exchanges.
- Staff and volunteers create opportunities for county share/aware and other cultural sharing.
- Clubs incorporate into club meetings themes that feature learning about and understanding different cultures (for example, customs, holidays, foods, interests, etc.). During these meetings, children learn from guest speakers, literature and reading.
- Clubs find opportunities to recognize each young person as diverse and unique and use those opportunities to appreciate that uniqueness.
- Clubs provide opportunities for youth to teach and learn from each other.

### **7. Youth grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership.**

The outcome of this principle is for young people to feel included and involved in their clubs, their communities and our world. This acknowledges that youth have significant roles to play and important contributions to make as stewards of our future. Youth are provided with experiences that help them become competent as caring leaders and citizens and recognize their role as stewards of their communities. This means that youth are informed about local and global needs, issues and opportunities.

Youth are also provided meaningful opportunities to help make decisions that affect their communities and to also use their time, energy, and skills to benefit their communities and the people who live in them.

For volunteers and youth in clubs, this means:

- Youth serve on county 4-H councils and committees, and as representatives of the club and county at events.
- Youth are mentored by county commissioners and city council members and use these opportunities to learn about and get involved with county and city government.
- Youth plan and execute community service projects.
- Citizenship and service activities are part of the 4-H club programming structure.

## Who Is Involved in Michigan 4-H?

4-H Youth Development programs are located in all 83 counties in Michigan. Each year, thousands of youth and adult and older teen volunteers from major cities, suburbs, towns and rural communities participate in 4-H. Nationally, 4-H youth programs involve more than 5 million young people from all 50 states and many U.S. territories.

Michigan 4-H Youth Development programs are designed with respect for the physical, cognitive (thinking), social and emotional development of youth. When parents and caregivers entrust their children to the care of others in organizations such as 4-H, these organizations must hold themselves to a high standard of accountability for the positive development of those young people.

Our goal is to provide age-appropriate youth programs that are mentally and physically safe, developmentally appropriate and educationally focused.

Michigan 4-H Youth Development programs are open to young people aged 5 through 19. "4-H age" is determined by a young person's age as of January 1 of the 4-H program year (which runs from September 1 through August 31). Once a young person passes 4-H age 19, he or she can stay involved in 4-H activities as a volunteer or resource person, but not as a 4-H member. For more information see the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Participant Age Policy at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/downloads/4-H-Age-Policy.pdf>.

The programs offered by Michigan 4-H Youth Development are designed to provide youth with a variety

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of experiences. The section below describes the types of opportunities available to various age groups. As you will see, the variety of opportunities increases as children mature.

### 4-H Cloverbud Members (Ages 5 to 8)

Many county 4-H programs offer programs for children aged 5 to 8 (called “4-H Cloverbuds” by Michigan 4-H Youth Development). Like 4-H activities for older youth, 4-H Cloverbud programs are designed to be safe, age appropriate, educational and fun. A key difference, however, is that 4-H Cloverbud activities have a noncompetitive focus. While 4-H Cloverbud programs for 5- to 8-year-olds have a different name, young people in this age range are full 4-H members.

Effective programming with this age group is activity-based, cooperative, fun, experiential and varied. 4-H participation at this level is considered introductory and less project focused than programs for older 4-H’ers. It allows youth members to experience a variety of learning opportunities.

For more information about 4-H Cloverbud programs, visit Five- to Eight-Year-Olds: Youth Development Programs for School-Aged Children at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/5to8year.html>.

### 4-H Members (Ages 9 to 13)

4-H programs are offered in all Michigan counties for youth aged 9 to 13. These activities are designed to be safe, age appropriate, educational and fun. Most counties offer noncompetitive and competitive opportuni-

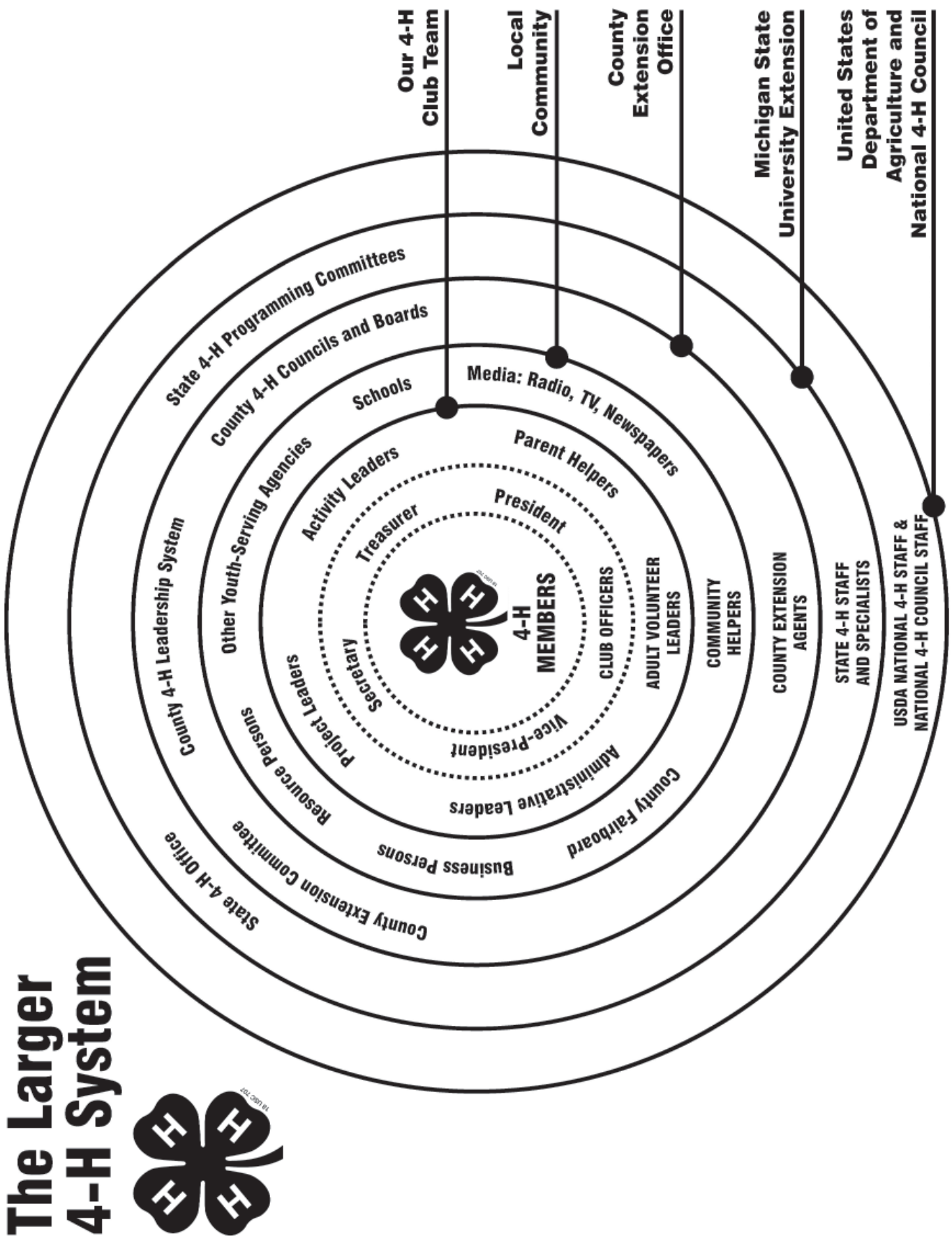
ties (that is, events in which participants’ efforts are judged, ranked or placed) for young people in this age group. 4-H participation at this level can be focused on specific projects with an emphasis on developing and improving skills. 4-H experiences for youth aged 9 to 13 allow for development of positive self-image, allow for more responsibility and decision-making, encourage independence in thought and learning, encourage teamwork and friend-making skills, and encourage thinking, planning and doing to create positive futures. At age 11, youth can also start participating in programs like 4-H Exploration Days.

### 4-H Members (Ages 14 to 19)

4-H experiences for youth aged 14 to 19 are designed to help them increase and maintain their knowledge of self and their self-esteem, increase their independence, increase their responsibility and complex decision-making skills, enhance their goal-setting and goal-reaching skills, build strong relationships and improve interpersonal communication skills. Youth in this age group can now attend workshops at Kettunen Center, serve as teen leaders in their clubs and serve on county, regional or state programming committees.

## The Larger 4-H System

Figure 1, “The Larger 4-H System,” on the following page, illustrates the relationships between 4-H members, clubs and all of the organizations and entities – in communities, counties, the state, and the nation – that support this delivery method in the Cooperative Extension System.



# The Larger 4-H System



## The 4-H Pledge

### I pledge:

- **My head** to clearer thinking,
- **My heart** to greater loyalty,
- **My hands** to larger service,
- **My health** to better living,  
For my club, my community, my country and  
my world.

Usually, the pledge is said at the opening of a 4-H meeting. Members should do more than “mouth” the words. In repeating the pledge, a member should:

- Raise the right hand to the forehead when speaking line one.
- Place right hand over the heart when speaking line two.
- Extend hands with palms upward when saying line three.
- Drop hands at the sides for the remainder.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to involve members in the discussion and meaning of the pledge. This will help assure that when your members give the pledge, it will be said with meaning, understanding and purpose. Look at the pledge and its meaning by examining some key thoughts under each “H.”

### I pledge:

- **My head** to clearer thinking  
*4-H:*  
Helps you learn to plan before you take action.  
Lets you learn things you can use as an adult.  
Lets you make decisions.
- **My heart** to greater loyalty  
*Through 4-H you:*  
Make many friends.  
Learn about trusting and respecting others.  
Learn about people who are different from you.  
Learn about values.
- **My hands** to larger service  
*4-H:*  
Is learning by doing.  
Is learning to complete tasks.  
Is serving your community.  
Is helping others.



- **My health** to better living  
*4-H:*  
Encourages activities that are fun and healthy.  
Teaches about protecting the environment.  
Promotes wise use of leisure time.
- For my club, my community, my country and my world  
*Through 4-H you:*  
Learn to be a good citizen.  
Learn about community relationships.  
Learn that you are part of a larger group and that you belong.  
Learn about 4-H across the nation and around the world.

### 4-H Emblem

A four-leaf clover with the letter “H” on each leaflet. This emblem – symbolizing the four-fold development of head, heart, hands and health – is protected under federal law.

### 4-H Motto

To make the best better

### 4-H Colors

4-H colors are green and white.