

Starting the Year Off Right: Tips and Tools for 4-H Volunteers

Meeting Planning Tips

The role of administrative or project leader of a 4-H group can be intimidating. Your roles as both the leader of the group and the facilitator of the meeting can be difficult to balance.

This page provides some tips for planning successful meetings for your group. Keep in mind that 4-H is a youth development organization. Providing your members with opportunities to plan and conduct meetings, with support from caring adults, is your primary responsibility as a volunteer leader.

If you're an administrative leader, you can reinforce this idea with the project leaders who meet with members on a regular basis. If you're a project leader, think about how you can help your members build their leadership, communication, decision-making and team-building skills through planning and conducting group meetings during the coming year. Involving parents is also a good way to manage all of the activities of a 4-H group. Use the ideas on this page to help you be a better leader.

Club Responsibility Checklist

Clear expectations of members, leaders, parents and officers can help your group function more effectively during the coming year. Consider having members, parents and officers complete this checklist at the beginning of the year. It suggests the kinds of measurable criteria that indicate a strong 4-H group. Writing these kinds of goals for your club lets you measure progress by counting what is occurring. Having written goals also makes it everyone's responsibility to work toward a better and stronger 4-H experience.

I Believe Our 4-H Club Will Be Stronger If Each Member:

- Attends and participates in more than half of our business meetings each year.
- Receives printed project materials for each project in which they are enrolled.
- Re-enrolls the following year.
- Completes at least two projects each year.
- Participates in at least one county or state event each year.
- Has a chance to participate in project group meetings for each project in which enrolled.
- Has input to the process of planning the annual club program.
- Can recognize the life skills and choose

experiences that foster development of the life skills.

- Participates in at least six hours of planned learning activities each year.
- Participates in or gives leadership to planned recreation on two occasions each year.

I Believe Our 4-H Club Will Be Stronger If Each Parent or Parent Couple:

- Is helped to understand the parent's role in supporting project work by members at home.
- Receives regular communications about the club program and activities.
- Is invited each year to accept a "helper" or

“leadership” role in the club.

- Receives a personal invitation to attend and participates in at least one meeting each year.
- Is helped to understand the mission of 4-H and of MSU Extension, and is familiar with the concepts of life skills and youth asset development.
- Has input into the process of planning the annual club program.

I Believe Our 4-H Club Will Be Stronger If Each Officer or Teen Leader:

- Sets achievable goals for himself or herself each year.
- Receives guidance in planning for the project or role he or she has accepted.
- Has an experience in which he or she can grow in leadership at a county, state or national event.
- Gives leadership to one or more segments of a club program.
- Meets with a group of other youth leaders for learning and friendship.
- Has a sense of belonging to the leadership team and is committed to the 4-H program.
- Understands the mission of 4-H and MSU Extension.
- Has received printed resources for the job he or she has accepted.
- Has another experienced leader to turn to for help if needed.
- Has clearly identified opportunities for personal growth as part of the commitment to club leadership.
- Can clearly articulate 4-H life skills and youth assets and helps members plan to achieve these.
- Has received training for the job he or she has accepted.
- Has opportunities to assume increasingly

responsible positions with increasing leadership experience.

- Has a clearly identified role (job description) with a written agreement (including clearly defined goals) that is renegotiable each year.

I Believe Our 4-H Club Will Be Stronger If Our Club:

- Holds at least ten meetings of the full club each year.
- Conducts a program planning process in which all members and families are involved.
- Plans a community service activity or project each year.
- Has a program plan for the year with clearly stated, measurable goals for the year and for each meeting.
- Works with members to assure that 80 percent of the projects for which members enroll are completed each year.
- Encourages members to enroll in more advanced phases of projects completed.
- Maintains enrollment next year at the same or higher level.
- Has at least 80 percent of all members attend one county, state or national event each year.
- Involves a range of resource persons from the community in presenting the club program.
- Cooperates with other youth groups as appropriate.
- Provides training for parents to enable them to support project work at home.
- Includes members who are of a minority race or are handicappers or underprivileged.
- Invites all members and families to help evaluate meetings in which they participate and to decide the degree in which the club has met its goals for the year.
- Maintains a ratio of one identified and committed adult leader for each five members enrolled.
- Helps start a new 4-H club.

4-H Parent Interest Finder

As an interested parent, I can help my child's 4-H club in the following ways (please indicate all that apply):

- Be a volunteer leader
- Be an assistant volunteer leader
- Provide transportation
- Provide refreshments
- Provide a meeting place
- Chaperon trips
- Help with activities
- Help with planning
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

The hobbies and skills I'd like to share with the 4-H'ers include (please indicate all that apply):

- Animals
- Collecting
- Communications
- Computers
- Crafts
- Cooking
- Electrical
- Games

- Gardening
- Genealogy
- Health and fitness
- History
- Language
- Model building
- Music
- Organization
- Performing arts
- Photography
- Public speaking
- Science and nature
- Sewing
- Small engine repair
- Sports, martial arts
- Storytelling
- Time management
- Travel or international experience
- Visual arts
- Woodworking
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Additional Resources

The following project materials are available through your county MSU Extension office. They contain more ideas for activities to use now and throughout the coming year.

- 4-H 1068 Group Dynamite Notebook
- 4-H 1009 Peer Plus II Notebook
- 4-H 1468 So You Are President of Your Club
- 4-H 1469 So You Are Vice President of Your Club
- 4-H 1470 So You Are Secretary of Your Club
- 4-H 1471 So You Are Treasurer of Your Club
- 4-H 1472 So You Are Reporter of Your Club
- 4-H 1467 Helping You Help Officers and Committees: Leader Packet
- 4-H 1553 YEA! Youth Experiencing Action: A Community Service Learning Guide
- 4H0348VT Learning From the Heart: Reflections on Child-Centered Teaching Videotape and Viewer's Guide
- 4H0073 All in Your 4-H Club (VHS video)