

OHIO 4-H VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



**THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY**
EXTENSION



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2023: The Ohio 4-H Community Club & Volunteerism Design Team

2016: The Ohio 4-H Community Club & Volunteerism Design Team

2006: The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Handbook is based on the 2006 edition of the Ohio 4-H Clubs Advisors Handbook web version prepared by Patty House, 4-H Educator.



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Who We Are

About OSU Extension

Our Mission

We create **opportunities** for people to explore how **science-based knowledge** can **improve social, economic, and environmental conditions**.

Our Vision

Ohioans have the **knowledge** and **resources** they need to **actively engage** in creating conditions in which they **thrive**.

In Extension, we value:

- **Teamwork** and **partnerships**
- **Integration** of **science** and **local knowledge**
- **Respectful community engagement**
- **Credibility, honesty, and integrity**
- **Innovation, flexibility, and adaptability**
- **Relevance** and **responsiveness**
- **Leveraging resources**
- **Lifelong learning**
- **Diversity** in all of its forms
- The **contributions** of **all people** toward achieving **organizational** and **societal goals**



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WATCH: [What is OSU Extension](#)

About Ohio 4-H

The Ohio 4-H program is part of a greater Extension organization. Whether you are a first-year 4-H volunteer or returning for your 50+ year to lead your 4-H club, you will be asked questions that require you to look inside the 4-H organization.

Beyond the 4-H Pledge you recite at every club meeting, you will need to share how 4-H is a community of young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills through group experiences. 4-H is education beyond the classroom where every youth can discover their interest and talents while excelling to their highest potential.

The 4-H motto, "To Make the Best Better," is put into action by making a positive difference in 4-H members' lives through club meetings and numerous other youth opportunities.

WATCH: [Join 4-H Trailer](#)

Exploring the Four H's

Head, Heart, Hands, and Health serve as a friendly reminder of the 4-H mission to create positive environments in which diverse youth and adults can reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens.

The 4-H club serves as the primary outlet for developing the life skills and 4-H values centered within each "H." Knowledge of the entire 4-H organization structure will enable youth to access programs beyond the club and tap into more than a century of positive youth development experiences from OSU Extension's 4-H program.

Mission, Vision, and Values of Ohio 4-H

- Dynamic 4-H clubs develop plans to incorporate positive youth development experiences in line with the Ohio 4-H mission and vision statements.
- The goal of 4-H is to help young people develop to their fullest potential. 4-H believes we can help our nation, state, and communities by giving the opportunity to youth for positive development.
- Following the 4-H motto, "To Make the Best Better," and staying true to our core values accomplish this goal.

Ohio 4-H Mission

- Empowering young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime.

Ohio 4-H Vision

- Ohio 4-H will reflect the diversity of the state by the end of the decade, reaching at least 1 in 5 youth.

Ohio 4-H Values

- Positive youth development is the focus of everything we do.
- Partnerships with other organizations, schools, and businesses are essential to successful youth development.
- Volunteerism is fundamental to our work.
- Strength is attained through diversity across the entire range of 4-H experiences.

What Should I Know about the 4-H Organization?

1. A general knowledge of [4-H History](#)
 - 4-H was founded in Clark County, Ohio in 1902 by Mr. A.B. Graham when he organized young people in an "out-of-school education program." His idea of youth agricultural clubs quickly expanded to multiple Ohio counties and set the foundation for what we recognize today as 4-H clubs and the overall 4-H organization.
 - While youth agricultural clubs were initially focused on agricultural projects and research, 4-H has expanded in content areas and continues to promote life skills through an array of project areas, community service, leadership, and citizenship.
 - 4-H can be found in all fifty U.S. states and internationally in more than eighty countries around the world.

2. The [4-H Fundamentals](#)

- 4-H Emblem: four-leaf clover with an “H” in each of the four leaves
- 4-H Colors:
 - green (nature’s most common color, represents youth, life, and growth)
 - white (symbolizes purity and high ideals)
- 4-H Motto: “To Make the Best Better”
- 4-H Pledge

4-H PLEDGE

I pledge my **HEAD** to clearer thinking,
 my **HEART** to greater loyalty,
 my **HANDS** to larger service,
 and my **HEALTH** to better living,
 for my club, my community,
 my country, and my world.



What You Should Know About the 4-H Emblem

The 4-H emblem . . . your club’s seal of excellence and a proud American mark recognized worldwide. The 4-H clover is a highly valued emblem within our country’s history. As such, it was granted a very unique status; it is in a category similar to the Presidential Seal and the Olympic emblem. It is protected by the federal government and is under the responsibility and stewardship of the Secretary of Agriculture. The “18 USC 707” marking that appears along the right lower leaf is coding that protects the use of the 4-H clover emblem.

Your club’s insignia should always include the official 4-H emblem. Never alter the shape of the 4-H clover or cover any portion with writing or images. The code, “18 USC 707,” must appear along the outside of the lower right leaf. There are federal guidelines that outline exceptions to this design. You may find the following resources helpful as you determine the best ways your club can use the emblem. Contact your county 4-H Extension professional when you have questions about the proper use of the 4-H name and emblem. [4-H Name & Emblem Guidelines](#)

The 4-H Thriving Model

Your contribution to the Club as a volunteer is critical to delivery of the 4-H program, which is committed to positive youth development (PYD). The 4-H Thriving Model, the theory of change for positive youth development, connects high-quality program settings to the promotion of youth thriving. That’s where you come in.

High-quality 4-H program settings provide youth a place to belong, matter, and explore their personal spark. These components, along with strong relationships with caring adults and supportive peers, help ensure that 4-H programs provide a nourishing developmental context—a place where youth feel a sense of belonging and can grow. High-quality 4-H programs contribute to PYD through the intentional promotion of social, emotional, and cognitive learning. This process is described by seven indicators of youth thriving.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Academic or Vocational Success
- Civic Engagement
- Employability & Economic Stability
- Happiness & Wellbeing

DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES (Positive Youth Development)

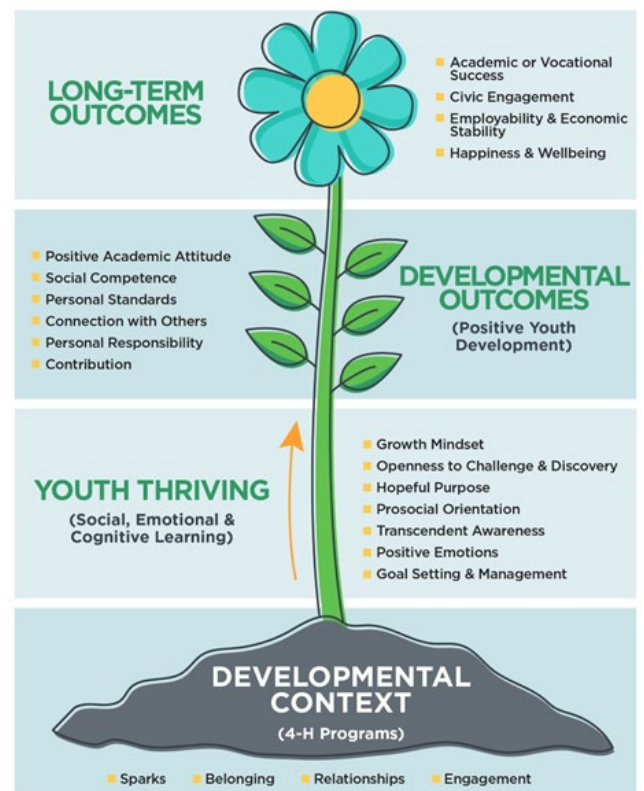
- Positive Academic Attitude
- Social Competence
- Personal Standards
- Connection with Others
- Personal Responsibility
- Contribution

YOUTH THRIVING (Social, Emotional & Cognitive Learning)

- Growth Mindset
- Openness to Challenge & Discovery
- Hopeful Purpose
- Prosocial Orientation
- Transcendent Awareness
- Positive Emotions
- Goal Setting & Management

DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT (4-H Programs)

- Sparks
- Belonging
- Relationships
- Engagement



Youth who experience high-quality program settings with these key social, emotional, and cognitive skills achieve key positive youth developmental outcomes. They are then also more likely to achieve long-term outcomes marked by vocational or academic success, civic engagement, employability and economic stability, and happiness and well-being.

For more information on the [Alignment of Positive Youth Development](#) with the 4-H Thriving Model and more details, please go to helping-youth-thrive.extension.org.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Many people used to believe children and adolescents were problems that had to be fixed. Positive youth development, at that time, was seen as the absence of risky behavior. Today we know all youth need support, structure, and opportunities to learn. Positive youth development learning experiences will help them to realize their full potential. PYD builds on young people's strengths and recognizes their unique contributions. The focus is on promoting the social, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of young people. PYD approaches help young people maintain safe and healthy behaviors and redirect others to engage in healthier, more positive actions.

The diagram contained in Tufts University Professor Richard Lerner's *The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*, shows how 4-H can impact youth through positive development outcomes which result in becoming contributing adults. See the full report of the study at <https://4-h.org/about/research/4-h-impact/>

Learning the 4-H Way

Every minute of 4-H club time counts, and each 4-H learning experience can lead to new knowledge and skills. You can help every member "learn the 4-H way" through projects, skillathon, judging, quality assurance, field trips, camp, fair, community service, and many other fun, hands-on experiences. We believe the 4-H slogan, "Learn by Doing," is mastery of knowledge and skill in action is the 4-H way. Today, educators refer to this as the experiential learning process, which is represented in the model below.

Teaching the 4-H Way

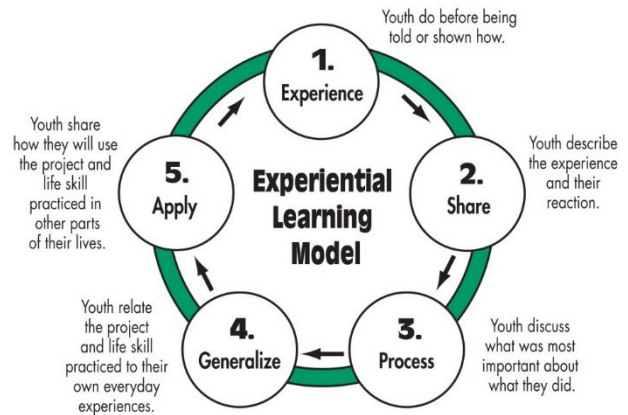
Your 4-H members' project success results from the skills and knowledge taught in your club and county programs. Are you providing hands-on project learning experiences for members on a regular basis and not just preparing them for judging or project completion? Mastery of knowledge and skills is important, but it is critical to strengthen life skills, including decision-making, communication, leadership, responsibility, time management, creativity, and initiative, just to name a few.

Teaching the 4-H way allows you to:

- Use multiple senses to increase members' learning and mastery.
- Focus on learning from the member's perspective—hands-on and minds-on.
- Engage members in scientific discovery, investigation, exploration, and research of the project & self.
- Reduce behavior problems by actively engaging members in learning; and
- Enjoy the fun of learning and teaching members!

How Can You Help Members Learn the 4-H Way?

- Assist members in selecting 4-H projects, participate in meaningful experiences, and set realistic goals. Visit [Project Central](#) to preview Ohio 4-H project books and resources.
- Use a variety of non-formal teaching methods to lead and train members in project and life skills.
- Encourage members to attend learning experiences that include camps, workshops, clinics, public speaking events, quality assurance, sportsmanship, and safety programs—as well as many others.
- Prepare members for positive 4-H project evaluation experiences including skillathon, project judging, contests, fair exhibitions, shows, sales, and more.
- Actively involve members in planning and conducting significant community service experiences and service-learning projects to benefit their local communities.



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"
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Volunteerism

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers like yourself train, mentor, and provide individuals consistent sequential learning experiences. There are many different volunteer opportunities within OSU Extension.

Note: Prior to assuming any of these volunteer roles you must complete the Ohio 4-H Volunteer selection process outlined below. To continue serving as a 4-H volunteer, you must maintain good standing with both the county and state 4-H program.

Ohio 4-H Volunteer Selection Process

Adults serving members of vulnerable populations (minors, elderly, and/or disabled) in an unsupervised capacity with potential for ongoing/sustained contact with clientele and/or including opportunities for financial, overnight, and transportation responsibilities will:

1. Complete a volunteer application, in its entirety (including three non-family reference contacts of which a minimum of two must be completed and returned) and submit to the appropriate OSU Extension office.
2. Receive, at the time of application or change of position, a written volunteer position description outlining the responsibilities.
3. Read, agree to, and sign the OSU Extension Volunteer Standards of Behavior form annually.
4. Complete an interview with the appropriate OSU Extension professional.
5. Submit to a criminal history fingerprint background check at the time of application and every four years thereafter.
6. Participate in an orientation and annually required volunteer training.

4-H Volunteer Positions

If you are currently volunteering in a 4-H club setting, you are most likely serving in one or more of these roles:

- **Organizational Club Volunteer** – Serves as the primary liaison between 4-H professionals, extension staff, volunteers, members, and families.
- **Project/Resource Leader** – Provide a variety of 4-H project related learning experiences: Coordinate and conduct educational activities related to projects. Monitor progress towards project completion. Prepare members for knowledge assessment of projects, including but not limited to judging, skillathon, and/or exhibition. Inform members of project requirements and deadlines. Provide constructive feedback to members, parents, and families.
- **Program Volunteer** - Provide a variety of 4-H project related learning experiences: Refer to county specific responsibilities.

- **Activity Volunteer** – This volunteer coordinates club activities such as community service, fund raising, trips and tours, promotional activities, recognition programs, family nights, and more.
- **Cloverbud Volunteer** – This role focuses on providing non-competitive experiences that meet the special needs and interests of youth 5 through 8 years old. Support and work in partnership with 4-H professionals, volunteers, and members in conducting meaningful educational experiences to help youth grow and reach their fullest potential.
- **Club Financial Volunteer** - *Serve* as the primary liaison between 4-H professionals, extension staff, volunteers, members, and families when reporting club finances.
- **Certified Master Clothing Educator Volunteer** – A master clothing educator works with, and under the direction of, an Extension professional to plan and conduct classes related to clothing activities. Such activities include volunteer and member training at the local level, assisting with other activities, and supporting the 4-H clothing program.
- **Camp Staff Volunteer** – Serve as the Camp Staff at county 4-H Camp. Major responsibility includes being available at all times to the campers, counselors and assisting other staff.
- **Camp Nurse** - Serve as the Camp Nurse at county 4-H Camp. Major responsibility includes being available at all times to the campers, counselors and assisting other staff. Must have specific medical qualifications.
- **Shooting Sports Volunteer** - Serve as the primary liaison between State Shooting Sports Coordinator, 4-H professionals, extension staff, club volunteers, club instructors, members, and families in the delivery of 4-H Shooting Sports Programs and updates. Volunteer positions include Club Coordinator Volunteer, County Coordinator Volunteer, County Assistant Discipline Instructor Volunteer, and Certified Instructor Volunteer for Shooting Sports disciplines.
- **County 4-H Advisory Committee Member** - Support and advise 4-H professionals about the current and future needs of county youth, volunteers, and families in order to promote and foster involvement in 4-H Youth Development Programs.
- **PetPALS:** Serve as a 4-H club project leader to youth enrolled in the 4-H PerPALS program. Help recruit and teach youth ages 8-19, with pets, to become 4-H PetPALS, conducting animal assisted activities.

Teen Leadership Opportunities

If we are to successfully keep teens in 4-H, we must invite them to play an active role in the program. 4-H teens are leading their peers as teen/junior leaders in clubs, as youth representatives on committees, and in key leadership roles as camp counselors, junior/teen leaders and CARTEENS facilitators.

Youth volunteer experiences teach teens valuable life skills:

- Decision-Making
- Leadership Capacity
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Interpersonal Relationship Building

Encourage a teen in your club to apply for one of the following youth volunteer positions. Check with your county 4-H professional(s) on availability of teen volunteer opportunities and specific requirements (age, years in schools, etc.).

For additional opportunities and information, visit <https://ohio4h.org/families/just-teens>

- **Camp Counselors and/or CIT's (Counselor-In-Training)** - Youth ages 14 through 19 serve as part of the camp staff to assist in planning, coordinating, and conducting camp experiences. After 24 hours of annual training, counselors supervise campers, teach fun hands-on activities, and help campers make friends.
- **CARTEENS Facilitator** - Youth with a driver's permit or license teach teen offenders sentenced to CARTEENS by the juvenile court. Facilitators lead groups discussions, role-play traffic situations, conduct interactive traffic-related games, and engage in formal conversation with a law enforcement officer.
- **Teen Leadership Council (TLC)** - TLC is a statewide group of 4-H teens and young 4-H alumni that provides a youth stakeholder perspective in planning, implementation, and evaluation of Ohio 4-H programming. In the process, council members develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations needed for future success.
- **Committee Member** - 4-H member 14 years and older can serve as youth representatives on 4-H committees. These teens are actively involved in planning, conducting, and evaluating 4-H programs organized by committees. Committees available for service may include 4-H Advisory Council, project-related committees, and 4-H Endowment Board. Contact your county 4-H professional(s) to learn more about your county's 4-H committee structure and responsibilities.
- **Food and/or Fashion Board** - Teens with experience and interest in the food and clothing projects work with Extension staff and adult volunteers to develop programs for members in these areas. Activities may include workshops, clinics, camps, judging activities, and more.

- **Junior or Teen Club Leader** - 4-H members ages 13 and older can assist 4-H club advisors, teach younger members project skills, and lead various club activities. Club advisors should meet annually with club teen leaders to plan their role(s) in the 4-H club.
- **Teen or Junior Leadership Program** - Teens ages 14 and older can assist with planning countywide 4-H events and community service as they explore and build their leadership skills. Contact your county 4-H professional(s) to learn about your county's teen or junior leadership program.
- **Shooting Sports Junior Leader** - Assist the certified Shooting Sports Instructor with specific discipline related tasks in which the Junior Leader has been trained to do at the state level training workshop. Must ALWAYS work under the DIRECT SUPERVISION of a certified Instructor in the discipline you are assisting with on the range.

Volunteer Education and Development

To better serve youth and their families, volunteers must participate in annual volunteer development and educational opportunities. By participating, volunteers will sharpen their skill set to effectively perform duties. Volunteers are encouraged to:

- Seek volunteer roles that are mutually beneficial to the individual and the organization.
- Take on a new volunteer role to help fill a gap, offer a new program, or expand current programs;
- Participate in volunteer development educational opportunities to enhance skill and knowledge and stay current with policies, procedures, and subject matter; and
- Encourage others to become more involved in 4-H as volunteers!

Opportunities for Volunteer Education and Development

- **Use the Ohio 4-H Volunteer Handbook.** Mark this website: <https://ohio4h.org/volunteerhandbook> as a favorite for easy access to the most current information to ensure a successful volunteer experience. Share the link with other county volunteers.
- **Participate in county volunteer training programs.** The County 4-H professional provide ongoing volunteer development opportunities through county updates, workshops, clinics and meetings. Check with your county Extension professional for volunteer development opportunities and required training expectations.
- **Read the county newsletter(s), 4-H emails, and/or visit the county website.** Stay current and up to date with the latest rules, guidelines, and programs. Volunteers will learn club management tips, access experiences for club youth and yourself, and discover new ways to “Make the Best Better!”
- **Join Volunteers across Ohio at the [Ohio 4-H Conference](#).** Mark your calendar for the second Saturday in March. Choose from more than 100 educational, hands-on workshops presented in five concurrent sessions. Do forget to check the event website for registration materials, fees, and details.
- **Learn about [North Central Region Volunteer Opportunities](#).** Join other volunteers across the 12-state North Central Region to learn cutting edge information that will help volunteers work effectively. The NCR Volunteer webpage offers volunteer E-forums broadcasted from local county Extension offices and other virtual resources.
- **Teach at a regional or state events.** Submit a proposal to teach a session or workshop at the Ohio 4-H Conference, North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Forum, or regional programs across Ohio. Contact your county 4-H professional(s) to express interest.
- **Serve on a regional or state committee.** Share your expertise with others by serving on camp boards, state project committees, and Ohio advisory and support committees. Ask your county 4-H professional(s) for the application process for state committees.

How Can You Volunteer Outside the County?

You can become involved with the Ohio 4-H program by serving on a variety of regional and state program committees. Some of the opportunities available include the following:

- Serve on 4-H Camp Boards or as a camp volunteer

- Serve on state 4-H project-related committees
 - [State Dog Committee](#)
 - [State Horse Committee](#)
 - [State Shooting Sports Committee](#)

- Serve on state 4-H event committees
 - [Ohio 4-H Conference](#) Planning Committee
 - [4-H Foundation Board](#)

Contact your county 4-H professional(s) to learn more about applying for these unique volunteer experiences.

Volunteer Recognition

OSU Extension celebrates all volunteers for their service. Your sense of volunteer pride and appreciation may come from a tender note from a parent, a community member, a smile from a child after accomplishing a new task or receiving your first volunteer certificate or pin. Many counties hold a volunteer recognition event honoring volunteers for years for service. Milestones for years of service (1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35) and those 40 years and over receive special recognition at the Ohio 4-H Conference. Other forms of volunteer recognition are county specific. Check with your county 4-H professional(s) for details.

You may nominate yourself or a fellow volunteer (teen or adult) for one of Ohio's 4-H Volunteer Awards. Recognition occurs at the Ohio 4-H Conference in March. Check with your county 4-H professional(s) about county nominations and deadlines. For more information including award applications and award descriptions visit the [Ohio 4-H Conference website](#).

Additional volunteer recognition opportunities may be available at the county level. Some of the previous awards are also available on the county level. Examples of county recognition opportunities include scholarships to various volunteer training events, such as Ohio 4-H Conference, trip awards, committee service recognition, recognition events, promotion to new roles, and placement on special committees.

What is a 4-H Club?

4-H clubs are a group of young people guided by club volunteers engaged in positive youth development experiences. The [Ohio 4-H Charter Checklist](#) includes specific requirements for organizing a 4-H club. A well-rounded 4-H club focuses on goal setting, community service, public speaking, leadership, decision-making, fundraising, teambuilding, social and recreational activities, and a variety of hands-on learning experiences. Successful 4-H clubs empower members to be decision-makers who influence 4-H programming on the club, county, state, and national levels. Other resources for volunteers may be found on the National 4-H website at 4-h.org.

How Do You Get Started?

Starting a new 4-H club, taking over the management of an existing club, or even joining the leadership of a current 4-H club means accepting the 4-H club volunteer challenge to make a positive difference in young people's lives. You are not alone in meeting this challenge; 4-H Extension professionals and resources like the *Ohio 4-H Volunteer Handbook* will assist you in acquiring the tools to successful club management.

4-H COMMUNITY CLUB DEFINITION:

The Club will work with youth to help them grow into productive, contributing members of society. The Club will offer fun, active opportunities for personal learning and growth through club meetings, projects, hands-on learning, leadership opportunities, fairs, and activities. The club...

- Meets a minimum of six times throughout the year (for a minimum of six total hours).
- Enrolls at least five members from at least three families each year. At minimum, three of the five club youth must be at least 8 and enrolled in 3rd grade, or age 9 and above regardless of grade level for Parliamentary Procedure to be followed.
 - ◆ Youth are expected to affiliate with the 4-H program in their county of residence. However, in some circumstances, it is appropriate for a youth to participate in a county other than their county of residence. This can be done with the approval of the 4-H professionals in both the county of residence and the county of request via a [Across County Line Membership Policy and Request Form](#).
 - ◆ Project Members (Age 8 and 3rd grade as of January 1 or age 9 to 19)
 - Elected officers annually
 - Handle money
 - Members enroll in at least one project each year from the [Family Guide](#)
 - ◆ Cloverbud Members (Age 5 and Kindergarten age as of January 1 to project member eligibility)
 - Does not hold an officer position and does not handle money
 - Learning experiences are developmentally-age appropriate and intentionally designed
 - The Cloverbud program is an activity-based program which uses noncompetitive activities and [OSU's Cloverbud resources](#).
 - ◆ Is advised by approved volunteers [who have been issued a club charter and have constitution/by-laws] and/or OSU Extension professionals. Chartered annually with approved constitution/bylaws

SPeial Interest (SPIN) CLUBS

Clubs meet throughout the year for a brief time, focused on a specific topic.

- Age 5 and Kindergarten as of January 1 to age 19
- Meets for a minimum of six contact hours (best practice is a series of meeting dates not less than 1 hour per meeting)
- At least five members from at least three different families
- Are advised by approved volunteers (who have been issued a SPIN club charter) and/or OSU Extension professionals
- Does not have elected officer youth positions, constitution or bylaws
- Does not handle money
- Learning experiences are intentionally designed to be carried out by SPIN club members at the same time

How Can You Develop and Manage Your 4-H Club for Success?

1. Determine your club's structure, including type and scope of project(s), membership size, learning experiences, and number and location of meetings.
2. Complete the [Ohio 4-H Club Constitution](#) with your club members. You may also want to complete the optional [4-H Club Bylaws Template](#) to establish the rules that your members will follow to govern club meetings and activities.
3. Secure an IRS Employee Identification Number (EIN): [IRS EIN How-to Instructions](#)
4. Promote, recruit, enroll, and re-enroll membership to start or expand your 4-H club. [Visit Ohio 4-H Membership Guidelines](#) on the Ohio 4-H website.
5. Elect officers, appoint committees and train the youth leadership to assist your club in planning and conducting the club's yearly program. Visit the [4-H Officer Resources](#) page on the Ohio 4-H website.
6. Establish a club treasury and open a club checking account. Visit the [Finances page](#) on the Ohio 4-H website for more information. Follow all Ohio 4-H expectations for fundraising, document all income and expenses and submit a Yearly Financial Summary and Inventory List.
7. Develop a yearly club program plan with your officers and club volunteers and communicate to club members. Build your own club team, plan your yearly club meetings and conduct a [club self assessment](#).
8. Conduct meetings members want to attend by including a balance of business, education, and social activity based on the [4-H Club Meeting Wheel](#) for an example. Explore additional resources for successful meetings in the [Grab & Go Meeting Tool Kit](#) & [Meetings at a Glance Worksheet](#).
9. Enroll as a volunteer annually via 4-HOnline and assist participants to do the same.
10. Evaluate and celebrate your club's success.

4-H Club Structure

Clubs begin with a caring adult who has an interest in helping youth and in teaching them specific skill sets. Skills taught may focus on a specific project or on a specific membership age, such as Cloverbuds or teens. Consider these questions to begin to frame your 4-H club:

What is your club membership makeup?

To have an Ohio 4-H club, you need to have at least five youth members from three different families. Your club will need to conduct a minimum of six regular club meetings per year. Additionally, clubs must be chartered and have a club constitution. [Link to documents below.](#)

- 4-H Club Charter Checklist
- 4-H Club Constitution
- 4-H Club Bylaws Template

What is your club focus?

4-H clubs offer a wide variety of opportunities for members to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations needed for adult success. Clubs come in a variety of forms and there is not a one-size-fits-all option. Clubs can choose to focus on specific projects, age groups, or interest areas. Or, they can provide a wide array of options for members. Club volunteers help determine the focus based on the perceived interest of members or on expertise club volunteers can contribute to the learning experience of members.

When and where do club meetings happen?

When:

- Clubs may choose to meet weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly.
- Clubs may meet year-round or have a defined start and end date for regular meetings.
- Clubs must have a minimum of 6 meetings during the year according to the national minimum requirements.
- Check with your local OSU Extension for any specific county guidelines related to meetings.

Where: Some common locations include the following:

- Homes or farms
- City/town halls or community centers
- Fire departments
- Libraries
- Schools
- Businesses

Regardless of the meeting site, choose accessible locations that are 4-H friendly, and do not limit participation due to fear of physical or emotional harm or because the membership is not comfortable with the chosen site. Discuss potential meeting site(s) with your Extension Professional.

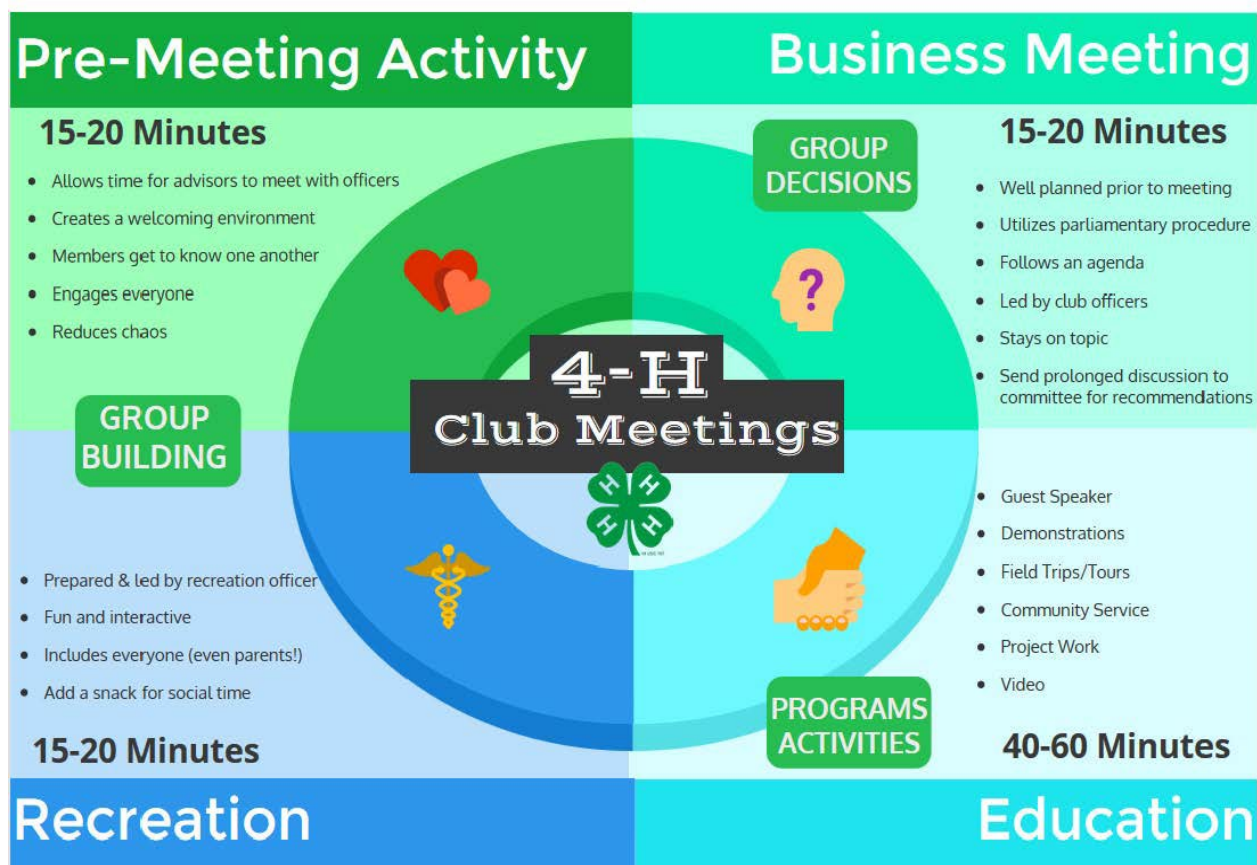
Chartering Your Club

1. Clubs are required to complete and submit the [Ohio 4-H Charter Checklist](#) annually.
2. 4-H clubs are part of an IRS group tax exemption number in Ohio and must adopt a [Club Constitution](#). Each club is required to file a signed constitution with their county Extension office. The constitution remains in effect and does not have to be reapproved every year.
3. Each club may create its own set of operational bylaws, as long as the added rules do not conflict with the club's constitution. [Club Bylaws](#) may include any additional club rules, guidelines, expectations, or policies not listed in the constitution: dues, committees, achievement requirements, record books, project books, evaluation, fund raising, club trips, etc. Creating bylaws is a great way to start developing leadership, decision-making, and communication skills among your members. Consider these documents your 4-H club's guide to successful operation. If your club develops and adopts bylaws, a copy must be filed with the county Extension office. Your club bylaws should be reviewed with the club annually. This enables your club's operation to change to reflect the members' needs. Club bylaws should be simple and easy to follow for members and volunteers, and everyone in the club should be involved in developing them. If your club makes changes to its bylaws, a copy should be forwarded to the county Extension office to be placed in your club's file.
4. What are the important points to include in any 4-H club constitution and bylaws?
 - **Name of 4-H Club**—Select a club name with your membership. Be creative and use common sense. Avoid names that may connect the club to a business, reference race, gender, sexual preference, or religion and/or could be perceived as discriminatory. Your county 4-H Youth Development Extension professional must approve your club's name as part of the Ohio 4-H club charter.
 - **Membership**—Club and volunteers may not discriminate in membership but may set guidelines and limits. Guidelines and limitations may include ages of members accepted, maximum membership, enrollment process, and attendance requirements to stay an active member in good standing.
 - **Meetings**—A list of meeting dates, times and location should be included. Also, include reorganization meeting and/or achievement meeting dates.
 - **Officers**—List the officers and their duties, including the election process (use of nominating committee, open floor, etc.).
 - **Committees**—Outline who makes up the executive committee and list standing committees. Examples of standing committees may include recognition, fundraising, community service, fair exhibit, policies, program planning, etc.

Planning and Conducting Meetings

Follow these steps to fun, hands-on, active and “I want to be there” 4-H club meetings:

1. Involve your club officers, teen leaders and club volunteers in planning club meetings. Dynamic 4-H clubs have a great yearly plan filled with fun and activities.
 - Brainstorm ideas for club activities, events, and programs. Use the Design Your Own 4-H Clover Activity at a club meeting to get all members’ input. Committee members can use these ideas to develop the club’s yearly plan. Choose activities that reflect the interest, needs, and ages of all members.
 - Plan the club’s yearly program and create a club yearly calendar. Make sure club meetings are a balance of business, education, and recreation. Use the 4-H Club Meeting Wheel to help you plan well-balanced meetings that include:
 - 15-20 minutes of business (25%)
 - 30-45 minutes of hands-on learning (50%)
 - 15-25 minutes of recreation and social activities (25%)



- Provide a copy of the club program to all families in your club and to the Extension Office.
 - Inform 4-H members and families will be more likely to participate, be less likely to miss meetings, deadlines, and programs, and generally be happier 4-H participants. Avoid club volunteer headaches and heartaches by writing and distributing a 4-H club calendar/program to all families.
 - Well-planned club programs reduce misunderstandings, lack of follow-through, and disappointment of members and families. Club ownership begins with members involved in making, not just participating in, club plans.
- 2. Allow members to lead the club. Encourage them to assist with fundraisers, serve as officers or committee members, plan community service, make decisions, or teach skills. Let the officers run the meetings. Be sure to prepare meeting agendas, schedules, and programs with officers. Help guide and train officers so they can successfully carry out their duties. It is often helpful to meet with your officers to review the agenda and any special items before the meeting.
- 3. Build 4-H club spirit by including get-acquainted and team-building activities, committee work, and/or group projects in your meetings. Display the flags and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge at the start of every meeting.
- 4. Use parliamentary procedure to conduct effective, efficient, and democratic meetings. Don't forget to start and end on time. Refer to the Parliamentary Procedures Resources of the [Ohio 4-H Officer Resources Page](#).
- 5. Review member behavior expectations and Ohio 4-H Code of Conduct. Use your club meetings to teach respect, sportsmanship, and good citizenship. Use effective discipline strategies to promote positive outcomes and use the problem-solving model to deal with challenging member behaviors.
- 6. Share important information with the membership. Highlight upcoming event dates, deadlines, and opportunities in the club, county, and state from the County 4-H newsletter, calendar, and county and Ohio 4-H websites to stay current. Create your own club newsletter, email list or social media to communicate with club families and members. Contact your county 4-H professional for help in planning and conducting effective club meetings. A variety of "learning the 4-H way" experiences should be included in your 4-H Club's program plan for the year. Here are some activities you and your 4-H club may choose to include.
 - Community service (Service projects are oftentimes a requirement. Check your county's guidelines.)
 - Field trips, tours, guest speakers
 - Public speaking opportunities
 - Social and/or recreational activities
 - Health and/or safety activities
 - Promotion and/or recruitment initiatives
 - Project learning opportunities
 - Team building and/or leadership exercises
 - Skillathons and project judging
 - Quality Assurance, Equine EquiSTEP
 - Fair exhibition
 - 4-H camp
 - Cloverbud camps and events
 - Kick off or end of year events

When Should Your Club Raise Funds?

Your 4-H club may need to raise funds to conduct educational programs and activities. Do not let fundraising get in the way of positive youth development through fun learning experiences.

Use these guidelines and [Ohio 4-H Finances Webpage](#) before starting your club fundraisers:

- Have a specific purpose for raising and using the funds.
- If charging club dues and/or activity fees, list the exact amount in your 4-H club bylaws and include how dues/fees will benefit the membership.
- Contact the county Extension office and discuss your fundraising plans with the county 4-H Extension professional. There may be a specific process for club fundraising approval in your county.

Managing Your Club's Funds

Accurate financial management is critical for 4-H clubs regardless of the amount of money your club raises or spends. Establish a checking account for the 4-H club if you plan to collect money or pay the bills.

Refer to [The Quick Glance Guide](#) is an Ohio 4-H club financial management tip sheet for a snapshot of what you need to know about managing club funds.

Follow these simple steps to open your club's checking account and manage club funds:

1. Open the account in the club's name, not an individual's name using the EIN (employer identification number) obtained by completing the SS-4 form. Do not use a personal social security number instead of obtaining an EIN. This form is to be done online via the IRS website with the assistance of the 4-H Professional.
2. View the [Example of completed SS-4 Form](#) to obtain an EIN.
3. A checking account must have two signers on all accounts. The treasurer and a club volunteer should serve in this role.
4. Send bank statements to a non-check signer. After review, give statements to the treasurer to read at a club meeting and the organizational volunteer to keep with financial records.
5. Approve all expenditures at a club meeting before paying the bill. Keep accurate records and give a treasurer's report at each meeting and record in the meeting minutes.
6. Keep receipts and invoices with financial records.
7. Document all income. File a copy of the receipt of cash and list all checks and cash in the *Treasurer's Handbook*, available on the Ohio 4-H website [Officer Resources](#) page.
8. Audit treasury records and club's account annually and fill in the yearly audit certificate in the back of the *Treasurer's Handbook*. The audit findings should be reported at a club meeting and recorded in the minutes. Use recommended [4-H Club/Affiliate Audit Procedures](#).
9. Spend money raised for intended educational purposes to limit carryover funds. Consult your county Extension professional about appropriate usage of club funds.

10. File an [Ohio 4-H Club/Affiliate Yearly Financial Summary](#) form and a club inventory list form at the end of each year with your county Extension office.
11. The club checkbook should be retained by a club volunteer outside of the meeting.
12. Contact your county Extension professional and refer to the [Club Disbanding or Dividing or Department Guidelines](#) document to answer questions regarding dispersal of club funds under situations such as disbanding, dividing, or departing.

Membership in Clubs

How Do You Enroll Your 4-H Club Membership?

Youth must enroll annually. Youth may join a 4-H club anytime, however after a county's enrollment deadline for participation in county level events, such as contests, Junior Fair, State level events and for awards may be limited. Obtain enrollment information and materials from your county Extension office. The 4-H enrollment process may ask the member and his/her parent/guardian to provide the following information:

- Personal and demographic, residence
- Club and projects enrolled
- Offices and/or committees
- Parent/guardian contact
- Photo release
- Code of Conduct

Members who wish to enroll in a county program outside of their county of residence, must request and complete an [Across County Lines 4-H Membership Form](#). Members only need to complete this form once unless special circumstances warrant a future request. Talk with Extension professionals in the county of residence and county of request to confirm procedure.

Returning volunteers must also re-enroll each year with the county 4-H program. New 4-H volunteers must complete the multi-step 4-H volunteer selection, screening and orientation process and be accepted as a 4-H volunteer, before being included as part of the 4-H club leadership team. All 4-H volunteers must be rescreened (BCI fingerprint background check) every four years and must attend an annual training to maintain their volunteer status with OSU Extension.

Why Elect Officers for Your 4-H Club?

4-H clubs led by youth provide essential leadership, communication, and decision-making skill development for its members. Members who hold 4-H officer positions are more likely to choose to participate in other leadership roles at school and later in the community as adults. Today's club officers may be tomorrow's township trustees, local mayors, city council members, school board members, fair board members, and other elected or appointed community leaders. You can find more resources and information on electing officers by viewing the [Tip Sheets for 4-H Officer Elections](#):

- Why Are 4-H Club Elections Important? (2020)
- Campaigning for a 4-H Club Officer Position (2020)
- Election of Officers (2021)

Holding a 4-H club office enables members to:

- Enhance leadership skills by learning and performing officer duties.
- Learn and use basic parliamentary procedure to conduct effective meetings.
- Learn how to manage a group's finances and document club's business activities.
- Develop teamwork skills to accomplish common club goals and expand problem-solving and decision-making skills through planning and conducting club meetings and activities.
- Improve communication skills—written and oral—by leading, speaking, sharing, and giving direction to the club.

What Officers Can Your 4-H Membership Elect?

Small clubs may want to elect only the primary officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Clubs with a large 4-H membership may choose to elect a full slate of officers (including, health and safety officer, historian, community service, etc.) and even elect assistants for some of the officers. Review [4-H officer duties](#) and responsibilities with the club membership before holding the club's election. Install officers after the election using one of the 4-H officer installation ceremonies.

How Can Committees Help Lead?

Committees provide every 4-H club member the opportunity to help lead and direct club activities. Not everyone can be elected to hold an office or be a committee chairperson, but all members should serve on a committee. Each club will need to determine the committees necessary to carry out their club's goals. Create committees to carry out big club tasks like managing a community service project or club fundraiser, developing the club's recognition program, designing the club's fair booth, or planning an overnight field trip.

Don't Forget to Train Your Officers and Committees

- Check with your county Extension office about 4-H officer training opportunities.
- Meet with your club officers and committee chairpersons to review duties and expectations of holding a 4-H office.
- Actively involve these individuals in developing your club's yearly program plan.
- Visit the [Officer Resources](#) page on the Ohio 4-H website.

What Can You Do To Promote Your 4-H Club?

Regardless of the 4-H promotion and recruitment methods you choose, please review the section, "What You Should Know About the 4-H Emblem" (and refer to the included links on page 6), to understand proper use in your promotional efforts. Clubs completing the Ohio 4-H Club Charter are authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem within the guidelines.

- **Design a 4-H club flyer or use your county's 4-H club recruitment information.** You and/or your members may distribute the flyer(s) in target community locations.
- **Make 4-H club posters.** Have members make posters at a club meeting to promote your 4-H club. Display posters in businesses and community centers after seeking approval from owners and managers.
- **Write 4-H news releases.** You or the club reporter can write news releases for the local newspaper to share information about your club, upcoming meeting times, and more.
- **Develop a 4-H club social media account (closed group).** Many clubs enjoy sharing their 4-H events and activities via a 4-H club website or Facebook. Is there someone in your club who would enjoy developing a website for your 4-H club? Be sure to review the [social media considerations](#).
- **Create 4-H club spirit items.** Following the [Ohio 4-H and National 4-H guidelines](#) for proper use of the 4-H emblem, you and your members may enjoy creating a club logo to use on club shirts, hats, tote bags, banners, and more. Wearing your club's spirit wear at community festivals, at the fair, and at other public places is a great way to get the 4-H image out and into the community.
- **Participate in a county 4-H promotional effort.** Contact your county 4-H Extension professional and ask about potential county 4-H recruitment and promotional programs. Opportunities may include presentations in schools with classrooms and parent groups, feature 4-H news inserts, promotional events at local malls or businesses, talks with civic organizations, PSAs on radio stations, displays at the county fair and many others.

Communicating Your Club's Activities

Sharing with Your 4-H Families

Do not assume 4-H club youth are going to take home information to their parent/guardian and family members. Use one or more of these tips to communicate with your 4-H families:

- Hold parent information meetings to cover essential 4-H information. Be sure to distribute the club's constitution, bylaws, and member expectations/code of conduct to all families and first meeting.
- Encourage adult family members to attend meetings and club activities.
- Send home important dates and information in writing.
- Check with your county 4-H professional about county-specific guides for parents.
- Create a club calendar/schedule and distribute to families.
- Write a club newsletter or information letter and send to families.
- Create a club list to send e-mails or texts to keep families up to date.
- Use a secure social media platform, group messaging app or email to communicate with families.

Sharing Information with Your County Extension Office

Part of your club's success depends upon your ability to get information to and from your county Extension office: club's enrollment, event registrations, fundraising forms, volunteer hours, and other club activities. You have a responsibility to get required information to your county Extension office by the established deadlines. Here are some of the items you should expect to submit:

- Enrollment and re-enrollment forms for members/volunteers
- 4-H event registrations (county, regional, and state events)
- Fair entry forms (local, county and state)
- Volunteer hours
- Club learning experiences (community service, fundraising, quality assurance/EquiSTEP, health and safety programs, etc.)
- [4-H Club Chartering Checklist](#)
- [Ohio 4-H Club/Affiliate Yearly Financial Summary](#)
- Document any IRS communication.
- Reports on special club activities (Your county may have additional guidelines for reporting club activities.)

Records Retention

Ohio 4-H collects a great deal of information and data about those involved in the youth program. Some records must be maintained by the county office, while others, such as club financials, can be held only by the volunteer leaders of that entity. Per OSU Extension Business Office policy, county offices are not to handle 4-H club or committee funds. The following retention record timeframe is recommended for committees and clubs as they keep their own records as it will enable them to comply with university policy. In addition, it is good financial practice to keep accurate fiscal records of 4-H club payments and deposits. These records are to be maintained with the Organizational Volunteer.

Series Title	Description	Retention	Disposition	Notes
Banking Records	Including records of deposits, periodic statements of balance, canceled checks (including access to checks imaged under the authority granted in Check21) and reconciliation documentation.	CR+4	Destroy-Secured	
Budget planning	Budget Planning File	ACT+1	Destroy-Secured	Active = while budget is current
Receipts, invoices, packing slips	Records related to payment or receipt of financial obligations	CR+4	Destroy-Secured	
Annual Financial Summary Reports	Consolidated year-end report of financial documentation showing assets and liabilities, broken down by major funding areas	CR+4	Destroy	Review for continuing historical value
Financial Audits, external	External Audits	CR+4	Archival Review	Review for continuing historical value

CR+ (The retention period starts counting from the record creation date.)

Disposition Method Options:

- Destroy-Secured (Contains restricted information. Destroy by shredding (most common), incineration, pulping, or secure electronic destruction)
- Destroy (Contains no restricted information and may be destroyed in trash or recycling bin, or via electronic destruction)
- County Archival Review (Records may have value to county's 4-H history and should be reviewed by local historical society for possible permanent preservation)

Working With Youth

Who is in Your 4-H Club?

Each member in your 4-H club is unique and special, coming to the club with characteristics, needs, and interests reflective of his/her age, project knowledge, skill level, and support network. Your 4-H club may include Cloverbuds and teens, first-timers and veteran members, leaders, and followers. The volunteer's challenge is to create a club environment where all youth are "green and growing." Whether there are just five or more than thirty youth, volunteers are helping each youth to become a competent, caring, contributing, and capable citizen.

Why Do Members Join 4-H?

Whether you were a 4-H member or are brand new to the 4-H program, you will need to be able to answer this question to be a successful 4-H volunteer. Fun, friends, camp, fair, projects, and new experiences are some of the common reasons youth give for why they join 4-H. If you probe a little deeper, members may share answers such as, "to develop leadership skills, to be part of a team, or to make a difference in my community." However, what these reasons have in common is the opportunity for members to grow individually and as part of a group—the 4-H club.

How Do Members Benefit From The 4-H Club?

Your club's ability to meet members' individual and group needs and interests can be the catalyst for member self-motivation, initiative, and creative expression. Research has shown that self-motivation, when coupled with challenge, is an effective way to encourage youth initiative. Many believe developing initiative helps youth solve problems, achieve goals, and overcome life's challenges. Some even consider initiative to be the foundation for leadership, creativity, altruism, and civic engagement. How are your 4-H club experiences helping to shape member's lifestyles, daily decisions, and career choices?

How Can You Support Successful 4-H Members?

- Sharpen your volunteer skills in the developmental needs of youth and learn how age influences your club experiences and members' outcomes.
- Increase [4-H teen participation](#) by creating experiences that meet specific developmental needs.
- Tap your members' potential by encouraging their participation in 4-H's world of [awards and opportunities](#) at the local and state level. Check with your local Extension office for local awards and opportunities.
- Support special-needs members by understanding and meeting their specific programming issues. Refer to "[The Winning Plan](#)".
- Understand the differences in member requirements for Cloverbud and project members to plan meaningful club experiences for both.

Program Criteria

PROGRAM CRITERIA	CLOVERBUDS	PROJECT MEMBERS
<p>What is the age eligibility? (Age determined as of January 1st of the current year.)</p>	Age 5 AND in Kindergarten through 2nd grade	Age 8 AND in 3rd grade or age 9 or above regardless of grade level through December 31 st of the year a youth turns 19.
<p>What is the learning focus?</p>	Activity-centered, short 5-to-15-minute activities on varied topics	Project-centered, time commitment dependent on project selected, club activities challenge and support member project-learning
<p>Who directs the learning process?</p>	Leader-directed	Member self-study, member- and leader-directed
<p>What is the basis for the learning experiences?</p>	Activity manual taught by leaders	Project manual used by members, supplemental resource handbooks, and teaching aids
<p>What animal experiences are possible?</p>	Small animals in a group setting handled by a leader, no large animal experiences allowed	Small and large animals as selected by the member and parent/guardian
<p>What are the evaluation criteria?</p>	Non-competitive, equal recognition, participation	Competitive, achievement, participation
<p>What camping experiences are available?</p>	Day camp and overnight camping experiences with Cloverbud-age members only.	Day camp and multi-night camping experiences, county, regional, and state opportunities.

How Can You Support Youth with Special Needs?

You may have a member(s) in your 4-H club who is differently abled. Regardless of the disability (physical, mental, developmental, etc.), it is imperative to work with the child and his or her parents/guardians to set goals and modify experiences to meet the child's needs. Being sensitive to the concerns of the parent and child is important to help them feel included.

Types of Special Needs

- Physical—Visual or hearing impaired, spinal cord injuries, trauma injuries related to an accident, certain medical conditions or illnesses.
- Mental—Conditions associated with below or above average intellectual functioning.
- Developmental—Learning disabilities and emotional disorders.

Use The Winning 4-H Plan to Ensure a Positive Experience for Youth with Disabilities

- Have parents or guardians share information with your county Extension professional to help the 4-H organization better prepare for the special needs member's participation in project judging, skillathons, camp, fair and other 4-H opportunities.
- Learn about the child and the need. Talk to the parents or guardians and research the special need on the Internet, at the library, or through a local support group to learn how to support them.
- Treat each child as a special child, regardless of special need. Recognize each child's skills, abilities, talents, and needs.
- Recognize positive behaviors and give lots of positive reinforcement. Make expectations realistic.
- Help the total club membership appreciate and understand the disability of its members.
- The Winning 4-H Plan resources and forms can be accessed by contacting your county Extension professional.

Your goal is to provide a positive enriching experience for every 4-H member. Encourage all parents to explain disabilities under health considerations when completing their child's 4-H enrollment in 4-H Online.

You can find more information online about the Winning 4-H Plan at: [Winning 4-H Plan](#)