



WHAT IS A 4-H CLUB?

4-H is the premier youth development program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Originating in the early 1900's as "four-square education," the 4-H's (head-heart-hands-health) seek to promote positive youth development, facilitate learning and engage youth in the work of their community through the Cooperative Extension Service to enhance the quality of life. For more than a hundred years, 4-H has been dedicated to creating opportunities for youth that broaden skills and aspirations nurturing the full potential of youth.

4-H CLUB DEFINITION:

A 4-H Club is an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences.

4-H CLUB PURPOSE:

The purpose of a 4-H club is to provide positive youth development opportunities to meet the needs of young people to experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity—the Essential Elements—and to foster educational opportunities tied to the Land Grant University knowledge base.

4-H CLUB MEMBERSHIP:

4-H Club membership is open to all youth beginning at age 8 or 4th grade (with actual enrollment date determined by the state) and open to all young people as determined by each state but not to exceed beyond the age of 21. 4-H Club membership is open to all youth without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, or public assistance. All 4-H members must be enrolled in the 4-H club each year.

STRUCTURE OF A 4-H CLUB:

- ✓ Enrolls at least 5 youth members from at least 3 families.
- ✓ Conducts a minimum of 6 regular club meetings per year, with many holding 9-12 regular meetings throughout most or all of the year, and often supplemented by project meetings, camps, fairs, and other 4-H learning activities.
- ✓ Selects youth officers or youth leaders to provide leadership to the club.
- ✓ Meets in any location—a home, community center, military installation, library, public housing site, school, afterschool program, and/or many other places.
- ✓ Adapts to and supports mobility of youth and parents—linking them to 4-H programs in other counties and states.
- ✓ Meets interests and needs of youth in same-age or cross-age groupings and using single project or multiple project formats.
- ✓ Is advised by adult staff or volunteers who have been screened and trained.

WHAT IS A 4-H PROJECT?

A 4-H Project is a planned sequence of age-appropriate and research-based learning opportunities. As a result of long-term active engagement in the project, the youth gains knowledge and develops skills based on planned goals and identified outcomes. 4-H project work is guided by trained adults who help youth set goals and provide access to appropriate curricula and resources.

(continued)



National 4-H Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov



THE EDUCATIONAL AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES OF A 4-H CLUB:

- ✓ Uses experiential learning—learning by doing—as a primary teaching approach.
- ✓ Must have programming that shows evidence of promoting the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development.
- ✓ Includes planned opportunities to learn and apply life skills such as leadership, citizenship, community service and public speaking.
- ✓ Provides individual project experiences to develop in-depth knowledge about science, engineering and technology; citizenship; and healthy living.
- ✓ Provides programs, curricula, and procedures that are based in research and are developmentally appropriate.
- ✓ Provides members and volunteers access to resources of land-grant universities and to county, state, and national 4-H opportunities.
- ✓ Fosters youth-adult partnerships that encourage active involvement and participation by youth and adults.
- ✓ Provides safe and healthy physical and emotional environments.
- ✓ Offers projects in a wide range of subject matter areas relevant to the Land Grant University knowledge base to meet youth needs and interests.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR A 4-H CLUB:

A 4-H Club:

1. Selects its own club name. Club names must (for additional information please see the Fact Sheet on Naming 4-H Clubs/Units at <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>):
 - a. Be specific to the 4-H club or organization either through a unique name or by identifying the county or location. Not be overtly religious or represent the beliefs of one denomination over another;
 - b. Not imply that membership is limited or exclusive; and
 - c. Not be offensive or generally seen as demeaning to any group protected by equal opportunity regulations.
2. Develops a set of by-laws or rules approved by the members to govern the club.
3. Develops an annual educational plan.
4. Keeps records of their meetings and finances.
5. Complies with applicable state, Land Grant University and National 4-H Headquarters' policies.

CHARTERING 4-H CLUBS:

A 4-H club must be chartered by National 4-H Headquarters at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the appropriate State 4-H Program office in order to be recognized as part of 4-H, authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem, and to be eligible for tax exempt status. State 4-H offices should maintain documentation on the issuance of Charters to 4-H clubs in their states. The decision whether or not to charter a potential club or group is at the discretion of the State 4-H Program office and will not be reviewed by National 4-H Headquarters.

4-H NAME & EMBLEM:

The 4-H Name & Emblem is officially protected by the United States government under Title 18 U.S. Code 707. The situations in which it may be used, the manner in which it may be displayed, and the text style and colors required for its reproduction are all specified. 4-H clubs must meet these standards when using the 4-H name and emblem. Guidelines for using the 4-H Name and Emblem can be found on the National 4-H Headquarters website at <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>.

FISCAL & TAX ISSUES FOR 4-H CLUBS:

Chartered 4-H Clubs may be granted an exemption for paying taxes on income generated by the club in the name of 4-H and intended to benefit the club or 4-H overall. If the club raises funds, it must have a federal EIN number for the club and accounting systems in place for the funds and needs to request inclusion under the federal 4-H tax exempt status. These clubs are also required to electronically file a 990-N with the IRS each year, even if they do not raise funds in that year. Information on 4-H tax exempt filing requirements and applications can be found on the National 4-H Headquarters website at <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>.

(continued)



National 4-H Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov



RISK MANAGEMENT:

Risk management policies and procedures for 4-H clubs are established by each state 4-H program. Issues concerning risk management, including liability and accident insurance are not the responsibility of National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES, USDA and must be addressed locally.

OTHER DELIVERY METHODS IN 4-H PROGRAMS:

- ✓ School Enrichment
- ✓ Afterschool Programs
- ✓ Day Camps and Residential Camps

OTHER PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

Kindergarten-3rd Grade Programs (Cloverbuds, Cloverkids, etc.):

Some states offer age-appropriate programs designed especially for children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. These programs require more adult supervision and cooperative learning rather than competition. Guidelines for Kindergarten-3rd grade programs can be found on the National 4-H Headquarters website at <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>.

Collegiate 4-H:

Collegiate 4-H clubs are student organizations based on university campuses nationwide. These clubs provide opportunities for members to develop leadership skills, engage in meaningful group projects, enjoy social activities with their peers, have a sense of identity and community on campus, provide service and support to local and state communities and 4-H programs, and for many, facilitate 4-H members' transition to 4-H volunteers or extension professionals. For more information, visit <http://www.collegiate4h.org/>.

Families, Independent Members, and Others:

For many youth, their exposure to 4-H experiences and learning materials comes through activities conducted either within their family or as independent members. While 4-H encourages participation in club settings to promote friendships and interaction with other youth and adults, for some youth, this is not always possible. Families and independent members are welcome to participate as part of the 4-H experience, however, the IRS and National 4-H Policies prohibit 4-H families or independent members from inclusion under the 4-H General Exemption Number as a tax-exempt entity, and from raising funds for their specific family group or members.

The 4-H Club Name and Emblem are held in trust by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture for the educational and character-building purposes of the 4-H program and can be used only as authorized by the statute and according to the authorization of the Secretary or National 4-H Headquarters. Within each state, the State 4-H Program Office and Cooperative Extension Service has the designated authority for state and local 4-H youth development programs. Each State 4-H Program Office determines appropriate policies and practices in accordance with federal regulations, state and local policies, and university regulations. Please consult your State 4-H Program Office for more specific requirements or information related to 4-H youth development programming within your state or local area.

Revised September 2008



National 4-H Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

