

# Planning A 4-H Club Program

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**A guide for leaders**

4-H 02401 July 1979  
Oregon State University Extension Service

Welcome to the role of 4-H leadership! As a new 4-H club leader, you may wonder where to begin. Experienced 4-H leaders tell us the most helpful task a new leader can do is develop a program plan. This guide will help you chart a direction with your club members. As a leader expressed in using the first draft of this guide, "Planning needs to be stressed. It has helped me a great deal."

A plan is like a road map: it provides direction toward a goal. The 4-H club program plan lists what the club plans to do, when it plans to do it, and who is responsible for each part. The written plan can also communicate with parents and members.

## Why Plan the Program

Planning the program to meet the needs of those involved promotes participation. Good 4-H club meetings don't just happen—they occur when everyone takes part. Planning will benefit you and your club because it can result in:

- sharing commitment and responsibility in the club program. If everybody invests in the planning process, they will demonstrate greater interest and commitment to carry out the program. It then becomes the "club's" program.
- communicating activities and dates to members and parents.

- teaching boys and girls to plan ahead, cooperate, and compromise. This gives security and permanence to the club.

- preparing for meetings and activities by arranging for visual aids, speakers, and other resources in advance.

- providing continuity from one meeting to the next rather than a series of isolated meetings.

- meeting needs and interest for members, leaders, and parents.

- providing a balance between project work, activities, recreation, and service.

- involving parents in the program.

The 4-H club leader, 4-H members, and their parents plan the club program. Your role as a leader in planning depends on the age and experience of the members. Younger members are less prone to plan than are older ones. If the members are younger, ask their parents to help identify several program alternatives. The 4-H'ers can then choose from the two or three alternatives. With older club members, set a general framework within which you feel comfortable and let the members make plans within this framework.

Planning soon after the club is organized channels initial member enthusiasm and expectations into concrete club goals. Expect some changes because a planned program usually needs adjustments to accommodate new interests and circumstances. Some leaders make plans for a year; others plan for several meetings, evaluate, and then plan more. As one leader advises, plan attainable goals in a short period so you can achieve the goals and so members (especially younger ones) will not get discouraged.

# Steps in Program Planning

## Analyze the Situation

Consider the following questions to help meet the needs of those involved (feel free to make your own notes).

- How many members are there? (A reasonable ratio is 1 leader for 5 to 10 members).
- Is there a great distance between members' homes?
- Is there a wide range of grades and/or skill levels among members? If so, can they be grouped to focus on needs and interests? Can junior leaders possibly assist?
- What county activities are available?
- What are other factors to consider?

If the club met last year, consider evaluating both individual and club activities. Then ask yourself, "what did we like, what didn't turn out so well and needs improvement, was everyone involved, and what did we learn?"

## 2 Identify Program Goals

Identify targets or goals the club wishes to achieve. Goals are statements of what the members, leaders, and parents want to accomplish individually and as a club. Don't set too many goals. You need to concentrate on just enough so that it's a challenge to reach them.

One leader suggests that members list and discuss their individual goals (i.e., what will we need to do as a group to help individuals achieve their goals?). This approach gives the group a general direction.

Set goals that can be accomplished, are realistic and measurable, meet the needs and interests of club members, promote cooperation, and provide for individual achievements.

Do you, as a 4-H leader, have some goals that can be met through involvement in the 4-H club? List them below and blend them with member and club goals.

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## Goal setting exercises

Helping individual members state their project goals is sometimes a challenge. Some leaders help members identify goals by asking them, "what are some things you would like to be able to do in this project or club when we conclude that you can't do now?" Members are more motivated when they identify their own goals and assume responsibility for accomplishing their goals. The 4-H project leaders' guides and members' record forms can aid you in helping members set their goals.

In identifying club goals, incorporate member goals. Members, parents, and leaders have ideas about what they would like to accomplish as a club, and they need a chance to express them. Surveys give members a chance to share ideas and be an important part of the group.

There are many interesting ways to survey the membership at general meetings. A few of these are described below. (These ideas can be used at any time during the year for feedback from the members.)

**Fish bowl (large group).** Several people (about six) sit in a circle of chairs in the middle of the room and talk about the things they would like to do or have done in 4-H. The rest of the members listen to what is being said. Only the people in the circle talk. Any member outside the circle who wants to participate in the conversation must tap one of the people in the circle on the shoulder and take that person's place. Appoint someone to write down what is being said for use by the planning committee.

**Sub groups (large group).** Let everybody have a part in setting the goals by dividing them into groups of three. Each group has 10 minutes to write down all the ideas for everybody to see. Discuss the possibilities and eliminate the ones

that do not meet the group needs right now. Vote on the remaining alternatives; those receiving the most votes become the goals of the group. Have someone record the list of goals for future use.

**Suggestion box (large or small group).**

Decorate a suggestion box and bring it to the meeting; explain its purpose. Ask people to put suggestions for meeting topics in the box.

**Sharing ideas (large or small group).** Tape a large piece of paper to the wall. As people arrive, ask them to write at least one thing they would like to do in 4-H club during the year. Using magic marker or crayons in many colors makes it an enjoyable activity.

**Rank order (small group).** At the first meeting everyone sits in a circle. One volunteer acts as the recorder and writes down all ideas. Start the wheels turning by offering several goals; then encourage members to say what they would like to aim for. All ideas are good ideas at this stage of the game. When possible ideas are out, look over the list and discuss the pros and cons of each one. Then each member privately rank-orders (numbering in order of choice—1, 2, 3, 4 . . .) his/her first choices of goals. Tally the results, discuss which ones will be group goals, and then record goals decided.

## Priming the pump

Since it may be difficult for beginning club members to decide what they want to do, we are including goals that might “prime the pump” for your club:

- to make every member feel important in the club.
- to develop greater family participation by encouraging club member’s parents to attend two meetings during the year.
- to participate in community functions and/or to plan a Community Pride program.
- to enable every member to receive parent and leader assistance.
- to hold 10 or more regular meetings.

- to have an average of 80 percent attendance of club members at regular meetings.
- to organize a club activity pertaining to health, nutrition, recreation, safety, grooming, or other areas relating to club projects and to members.
- to encourage each member to present a topic at a club meeting.
- to encourage each member to hold an office or a committee responsibility.
- to present three programs other than 4-H items at meetings.
- to tour at least one point of interest.

## 3 Plan the Program

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The next step is to plan activities, meetings, or programs that will help reach the individual and club goals. Since the direction is already set by the goals, ideas are limited only by the members’ imagination.

One way to plan your program is to first have the group identify activities which will help them reach their goals. Some goals of a puppetry group might be to make one puppet per member, to put on a puppet show for younger brothers and sisters, to meet other people, and to share with and help each other.

Possible activities which would help members accomplish these goals:

- attend a puppet show as a club. Ask the performers to explain about making puppets or scripting.
- demonstrate making a puppet by members to other members.
- secure a puppetry kit filled with ideas for different kinds of puppets, staging, and scripts from your county Extension office.
- develop a puppet show.

Project leader guides are designed with many club meeting activities for leaders and members to consider. After making a list of possible activities, get out a calendar and assign meeting activities to convenient dates. This creates a flexible plan for the program.

Continue on page 6.

## 4 Record the Program

A program is most effective when it communicates to those involved. Develop a written plan that has meaning to you, the members, and their parents. The 4-H Club Planning Worksheet in this publication is designed for such use. Record the goals established by the club by listing them at the top of the Worksheet.

Good planning is the beginning of a successful club program. Planning gives people the opportunity to accept specific responsibilities at the beginning of the year and ensures that tasks will be shared. Make sure that one person (member, parent, or resource person) is responsible for each task. Each job will get done if people follow through. Be sure the person responsible receives encouragement and support.

Perhaps you will want to make copies of your club's program plan so that each member may share it with his/her family. When the meeting date approaches, develop more details so the club members know what they need to do before the club meeting.

## 5 Evaluate the Program

As the leader, you need to continually ask, "How are we doing?" Planning alone is not enough. People must follow through with their responsibilities. Check with people to see that the plans are carried out and that details are communicated to others. You and/or the planning committee can help ensure that things happen by:

- providing each family with a calendar of club events.
- encouraging them to post it for everyone to see.
- announcing dates at meetings and in newspapers.
- checking with other people to see that the job is done.
- evaluating progress. You need to make sure that people are doing their jobs and that your plan is still appropriate. At some time during the year you may need to modify your plan.

At the end of the year, evaluate the total program. Record your evaluations for next year. We hope you and members of the club will be pleased with the answers to the following questions:

- Were the club goals met?
- Was the attendance at meetings and activities good?

- Were members involved in activities?
- Did parents take part in activities?

The process of evaluation can be a learning experience. Asking the question, "Why were the club goals met or not met?" can stimulate a meaningful self-analysis.

## Tools to Help in Planning

This list will help you develop an effective program plan; many are available from your county Extension office.

- 4-H project literature (including record forms)—many contain meeting outlines you may wish to consider
- *4-H Organizational Guide for Club Leaders* (4-H 0241L)
- *4-H Club Planning Worksheet* (4-H 0240). One copy is included in this publication.
- *4-H Record Keeping/A Teaching Tool for the Leader* (4-H 0211L)
- List of county program dates, such as field days, camps, and fairs in which your members might want to participate
- List of possible activities in which the club may participate, such as tours, parents' activities, picnics, and parties
- "Steps in 4-H Program Planning"—a slide tape for planning committees, officers, etc.
- Newsprint and felt pen
- List of audio-visuals

This guide has been developed by Alan Snider, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth, Oregon State University, with assistance from a number of Extension staff. Materials have been adapted from "Steps in 4-H Program Planning," by Barbara Halpin George and E. J. Lueder, University of Wisconsin Extension and "Planning A 4-H Club Program," by Ruth Brasher, formerly of Oregon State University.

4-H seeks the participation of all youth regardless of race, sex, handicap, or national origin.



