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Building a 4-H Program

A Guide for Experienced Leaders

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As 4-H club leaders we are concerned about making a maximum contribution to youth, while making the best use of our time. The satisfaction we receive from doing a job well

stimulates us to go on to better performance. This folder is prepared to give you assistance with program planning so that we may "make our best better."

The Value of Planning

The success or failure of a 4-H club depends largely on the program. As a 4-H leader you should strive to help the club develop a meaningful program. A planned program is a step in this direction. Planning can mean—

- the kind of 4-H program that 4-H members, leaders, and parents want. It helps all to reach their goals and enjoy their 4-H experiences.
- a well-rounded program, one that has a balance between project work, business, service, recreation, activities, and events.
- all members of a club can help to determine what the club program will be.
- all members can be provided an opportunity to participate in the program during the year.
- members, leaders, and parents have time to prepare for meetings and events.

- parents and others are informed about the 4-H club and its activities.
- your job as a leader is made easier. There are fewer frustrations. You can concentrate more on the development of your club members and less on the mechanics of getting the job done.

It takes time to assist club members in planning their program, but anything worth doing is worth planning. The rewards will be satisfying.

Timing program planning

To be effective, planning should be done at the beginning of the 4-H club year. The club program will be more likely to include all of the things you and the members wish to do if it is planned early in the club year. Planning of the club program should follow closely the election of officers.

Who Does the Planning

A committee, usually with the vice president as chairman, may be responsible for "pulling the program plan together," but everyone who will be a part of the total program should have some part in planning. This includes all members, leaders, parents, and others who will assist in the conduct of the program. The part each will play in planning depends on his age,

ability, and involvement in the program. The program will be more interesting for all concerned if it is their program. It will be their program if they have a part in planning it.

4-H club members learn by doing, not only project skills but the many skills of everyday living. By participating in program planning, they will learn how to work with others, to

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respect others' ideas, and the steps involved in outlining and planning to get a job done. Older 4-H members are more capable of making decisions and carrying a major role in planning.

Parents should also be involved in planning the program for the 4-H club. If parents take part, they will understand more fully what the club is trying to accomplish and can assist their children with their various assignments. If parents participate in 4-H club activities, it will be easier to involve them in the planning. If parents are not active, you as a leader will have to exert some extra effort to include them in the planning process. You may want to visit their homes or call a special parents' meeting. Remember that if we inform parents, plus ask them, we will get cooperation. Involving them in the planning is one step in achieving their interest and cooperation.

Your role as a leader in planning the program will vary with the age of the club members and your personality. With younger members you will do most of the planning in cooperation with their parents, and the club

members will choose from among the alternatives that you have determined.

During the teen years you will be on call as an adviser. You set the ground rules and the framework with the help of parents, and let them plan within that area. The parents of teen members should not in most cases be active in the actual planning process, but they need to be behind the scenes with support and encouragement.

One of the most difficult jobs that you as a leader have is to adjust the role you play to fit the ages of the various members of your club and to change your role as members grow older. It is your responsibility as a leader to see that the program is planned to include the interests of the 4-H'ers as well as those items you see as their needs which they might not as yet recognize. This does not mean that you must do all the work. Besides including the members and their parents in the planning, get the help of other people in your community. It will take ingenuity on your part to discover ways to involve these people in the program.

Where to Begin

The first step in program planning is to study the situation. Club members should be involved in this study. The study is necessary before the goals for the year can be developed. By examining the situation you will see where improvements in previous programs can be made and what parts of the program need most emphasis. Here are some factors to consider:

- Study your 4-H club.
- Consider the members. What are their ages? Do they live in town or on the farm? What do they like to do? Do they belong to other organizations?
- What can 4-H club work do for them?
- Study last year's club program. If you have worked with this group before, it is well to take a look at their plan for last year. What did the members learn, what experiences did they have, have their interests changed, what new learning experiences can 4-H provide which will

help them develop? If you have not worked with this group, it will be well to read through the project outline to get in mind the work that the club members need to accomplish and to develop some ideas and understanding about kinds of experiences that would be meaningful to the group in relation to its project. Couple this with a study of the plan the club used last year.

- Study your community, its size, its school, its businesses, and its people. How can you work with these groups to build a strong club program and a better community?
- Study the county 4-H program. See what project materials and other literature are available from the county Extension office. Note what training meetings will be held for leaders, junior leaders, and members and what county-wide activities are being planned for 4-H club members.

Establishing Goals

The next step in program planning is to establish goals for the club. Goals are statements of what you, your 4-H club members, and their parents would like to see the club accomplish. What kind of a program does your club group really want? What are the 4-H members' goals? What are the parents' goals? What are your goals as a leader? The goals set by the 4-H club should be based upon a study of the situation.

After goals have been established, ask yourself the following questions:

- Can every member of the club accomplish these goals?
- Do they meet the needs and interests of the club members?
- Do they provide for individual achievement on the part of each member according to his ability?
- Do they promote cooperation with other members of the club?
- Do they teach active and worthwhile community participation on the part of every member of the club?
- Are the new goals an improvement over last year's goals?

Determining and Selecting Alternatives

The third step in planning the club program is to list possible activities (such as tours and parties) and programs that the club might undertake. These activities and programs should be related to the goals. Items you will want to consider in this list are: activities and programs at the regular meetings; special activities and programs the club would like to conduct; and participation in activities and programs in local, community, county, and state events.

Once the alternatives have been determined, the plan can be developed.

Regular club meetings should be outlined in detail—date, hour, and place of the meeting; items that should be covered in the business meeting, including topics for roll call; topics for discussion and the person or persons responsible for them. Persons responsible for recreation and refreshments should also be indicated.

Special activities and programs the club would like to conduct during the year should be included in the plan. Such activities and programs might include observations of national holidays, parents' night, parties, and fund raising events such as bake sales, box socials, or baby sitting to earn money for the International Farm Youth Exchange program. Perhaps the group would also like to participate in a talent program or put on a play.

Will the club participate in community-service activities to fill some of its goals? These activities should be included in the plan for the year. Teach club members to be responsible citizens and give them pride in having worked for the improvement of their community. There are many activities the club might undertake in this area. Visit with community leaders, county Extension agents, or local government officials to get ideas for projects that might be undertaken.

The program should include all county and state events in which the club members would like to take part. Your county Extension agent can provide you with information about these events. There will be some events that the entire club cannot or will not take part in as a group. It is your responsibility as a leader to keep the individual members informed about the events in which they are eligible to participate.

One national event in which your club can participate on a local level is National 4-H Club Week. This week falls in October. Your club can help with newspaper stories, posters, radio and TV appearances, special meetings, and window displays. This is the week set aside for us to share with our friends the story of 4-H club work. Some clubs have undertaken special activities during National 4-H Club Week, such as visiting local businessmen to

express appreciation for their support of the 4-H club program. Others have visited the county court and expressed appreciation to them. There are many activities that can give club members an opportunity to tell the 4-H story.

Other national events include National 4-H Club Congress held in Chicago and National 4-H Club Conference held in Washington, D. C. Your county Extension agent or community leader can give you details about these programs.

Recording and Using the Plan

The club plan should be recorded. This may be done in the manner which seems most appropriate to you and your club.

See the chart below for column-heading suggestions.

A plan such as this will help you to arrange the activities and programs you have selected in a logical sequence throughout the year. You will have meetings that build one on the other rather than a series of isolated meetings. Members and parents can tell by studying the plan what the program for the year will include,

and they will be able to determine their responsibilities. The plan also tells that meaningful teaching is going on in the club; that real learning experiences are available in an organized fashion for the 4-H members.

As time draws near for each meeting, those who have responsibilities for the meeting will want to prepare a more detailed plan. A detailed plan for regular meetings saves time and effort and serves as a check list to see that all members are participating and are prepared for their responsibilities.

CLUB PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR

Date and hour of meeting 19.....	Place	Business meeting Business to be discussed. Roll call topic.	Project work Demonstrations, judging, records, talks (give names of persons responsible).	Club activities Health, safety, recreation, community service, and members in charge.	What to do before next meeting. What to bring to next meeting.

Program planning does not stop when the program plan is completed and has been adopted by the club. Clubs should discuss and revise their plan continually. In fact, it will be unusual if the club does not find it necessary to make some adjustments in their program as the club year progresses. New opportunities often present themselves which would add meaning to the club in regard to some of their special programs or activities. When such opportunities present themselves, changes should be made. At other times you may find that your club members have not been able to accomplish in the time allotted some of the activities they have undertaken. In this case it might be necessary to plan some extra meetings or to eliminate some of the program and activities that remain on the schedule.

Remember

Remember that a good program is flexible and will allow for change as time goes on.

Remember the steps in program planning:

1. Study the situation.
2. Establish the goals.
3. List possible alternatives.
4. Choose the best alternatives.
5. Develop a program plan.

This is a process for planning a 4-H program. Now it is up to you as a leader to try your hand at it with the cooperation of the club members and their parents. A good plan for your club should improve your program and make everyone feel that it is their program. Each member should learn and grow through the program planning experience just as they do through their project experience.

Remember, it takes time to plan, but the time is well spent and will pay great dividends, and ultimately you may find that it has saved time as well as frustration.