

4-H Advancement Program

Leader Guide

Experienced leaders say that planning a yearly program based on the needs, interests, and goals of the members makes for a successful 4-H club. Interests and goals must reflect the different age and skill levels of each 4-H member.

Advancement programs:

- Provide ideas and suggestions for the club's program of the year.
- Provide ideas for club activities.
- Supplement and broaden members' experiences.
- Are a tool to divide members into interest and ability levels.
- Serve as a tool to motivate self-learning.
- Provide guidelines to help members set realistic goals.
- Provide opportunities for leaders to assign junior leaders to work with younger members.
- Encourage older 4-H'ers to continue in 4-H through new experiences.
- Provide recognition for work well-done.

Advancement programs are tools leaders use to bring about planned, systematic, and self-motivated learning by members. The programs give leaders ideas for club meetings and activities based on the readiness and learning level of members. When used with the project leader guide, leaders can create new experiences each year for the members. Steps are written so there is a planned learning and developmental sequence for each member.

Advancement programs guide members in setting their goals for the year based on their interests, abilities, and resources. The program aids 4-H members in moving at their own

speed by encouraging self-learning. Junior leaders and older and experienced 4-H members may present material to the younger members.

Advancement programs are available to Horse, Meat Animal (beef-sheep-swine), Dairy (dairy cattle and dairy goats), Rabbit, Poultry, Dog, Clothing, Archery, Geology, Entomology, and Gun Safety participants. Advancement programs can be developed for other projects by leaders and members.

How to Use the Advancement Program in Planning

Present the advancement program at the beginning of the 4-H year. Copies of the advancement program for each member are available from your county Extension office. Some advancement programs are separate publications, while others are in project manuals. Order them when you order member materials. Ask parents to become familiar with the advancement program and assist as needed.

Review what was done last year. Before deciding on specific things to include in the club program, review what the members and club did previously. A review will allow discussion on, "What did we do," "What did we like," "What needs improvement or expansion," and "Was everyone involved?"

Review what interests exist in this year's club. Members, parents, and leaders have ideas about what they would like to do. Encouraging members and parents to express their interests, needs, and goals allows them to feel important and committed to the final club program.

Share county/statewide special programs. Tell your members about activities available to them through your county or the state. Share your special interests with members and parents. This allows members and parents to react to new ideas and helps determine if the ideas should be part of your club program.

Develop the club program. If the club is small, all the members may be involved. If the club is larger, a special committee may identify the club goals and program. Base goals on the club situation this year—range of grades, levels of achievement, and interests of each member, parent and leader. Design the club program to meet the needs and interests of each member.

Establish goals to:

- Meet the interests and needs of youth.
- Provide for individual achievement for each member.
- Be within range of accomplishment for each member.

If your club has a wide range of grades, interests, and abilities, divide the club into small groups (based on grades, interests and abilities) to work with a junior leader. This enhances the learning and satisfaction of all members.

Advancement Program Steps

The steps are written so there is a planned learning sequence for all members. All members should start with step one. The advancement program is designed so a 4-H member may advance as fast as he or she desires based on interest, effort, and ability. A fourth or fifth grade 4-H member may take two or three years to complete step one; an eighth or ninth grade member may complete one or two steps in a year.

Members should work on one step at a time. There are, however, times when a member may accomplish an activity in another step before completing the step on which he or she is working. You need to recognize that if there is considerable difference in the advancement within the club, members may be working on several levels of the program at one time.

Much of the information you and your members need to complete advancement steps can be found in project materials. In advanced steps, members will need to refer to other references.

Advancement programs are a record. Encourage members to keep the advancement program with their records. This record allows you and the member to evaluate the 4-H experience, review progress, and establish goals for the future.

On completing an option, the member fills in the date and has you, the junior leader, or parent initial the record. You should then arrange for a review of the experience.

Members gain valuable training and experience when they are interviewed by persons other than the club leader. This prepares them for job interviews and real life experiences. You may want to arrange for an advancement chairperson or committee to review each member after he or she has completed the step requirements. Be sure to schedule the interview shortly after the member is ready.

The review is an excellent opportunity to involve parents in club activities. Several parents can serve on the committee and two or three of them can conduct the interviews. The interviewers should be familiar with the 4-H program, its objectives, and the project area.

The advancement chairperson or committee should approve the advancement only when they are satisfied the member is ready to continue on to the next step.

Advancement certificates. The 4-H Advancement Certificates are available from your county Extension office. When a 4-H member has completed a step, request an Advancement Certificate from your county Extension agent, who will send the certificate to you. Fill out and present to your 4-H member.

Earning an advancement certificate deserves recognition. When members have completed a level of advancement present it to them at a club meeting. Recognize these members at an achievement meeting or other community event if there is not a long time period between completion of the advancement step and the public meeting.

Cooperate with your county Extension agent for newspaper and radio releases on the members' achievement. Recognize junior leaders, parents, and co-leaders who have assisted by letting them hand out the achievement certificates to the 4-H member.

Members' Viewpoint

Advancement programs:

- Make projects more interesting.
- Help members learn more about their projects.
- Help members develop skills.
- Allow members to advance according to their ability and interest.
- Provide new, enjoyable experiences.
- Help prepare members for participation in certain activities and events.
- Provide recognition for work well-done.
- Provide incentive to members to stay in a project over a longer time period.

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