



## **How to Start a 4-H Club**

A wonderful resource for new volunteers is a CD called 4-H 101: Starting New 4-H Clubs. Contact your county office to order one after you have become an official 4-H Volunteer.

### **Key Ideas**

- How to recruit 4-H members-and how many should we have?
- How can I enroll my members?
- What type of club should we choose?
- What is all of this about projects?
- Are there dues for 4-H members?
- What about insurance?
- Where will our club meet?
- How often will our club meet?

### **How to Recruit 4-H Members, and How Many Should We Have?**

First of all, how many members? 4-H clubs should have at least five members from 2 or more families. Some suggest that 6 to 10 members per adult leader is an optimum number. Some clubs have as many as 70 youth. However, it depends on the age of the members in your club. It also depends on how many other leaders will be working with you. Limit your first group to a number with which you and your co-leaders feel comfortable!

Recruiting members is seldom hard to do. Start with a contact to your county Extension staff. They usually have names of people who want to join a club in your area. Your county Extension staff may have a recruiting program or other ideas for recruiting new club members. You can always write newspaper articles, recruit at schools or church, or just talk up the club to parents and children you know.

Because 4-H receives federal and state funds, we must be certain our programs are made available to all people equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, veteran's status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability.

You may find it helpful to recruit some other adults to help with club leadership as co-leaders, assistant leaders, or program leaders. Interested parents, 4-H alumni, or friends are often willing to help. This gives the leader much needed assistance and also provides continuity for club meetings in case of the leader's absence. To provide a safe environment for youth enrolled in 4-H, a child protection policy is in place. Your extension staff will know what type of helpers may need to complete the child protection process.

### **How Can I Enroll My Members?**

Your county office of UNH Cooperative Extension has the necessary enrollment forms for you to complete and submit to the office.

New Hampshire uses a computer-based enrollment system, which means the forms must be filled out completely and accurately. Be sure to check the codes listed.

All 4-H members must re-enroll every year. Each county sets a due date for enrollments. It's a good idea to enroll as soon as possible so you and your members remain on the mailing list to receive notices of all events and activities. Most counties also have a deadline for project enrollment additions and changes in order to be eligible to participate in state and county fairs and other activities.

After your club enrollment has been submitted to your county Extension office, you can request a membership card for each member. Many counties have a pin or badge for first-year members and other recognitions for second- and third-year members. Your county Extension staff can tell you how and when these are available.

### **What Type of Club Should We Choose?**

**4-H** clubs are groups of youth and adults who meet on a regular basis, chartered by the county Extension office. Leadership is jointly provided by youth and adults where there is a planned educational program, and the club meets at least 6 hours in any given year and plans to continue meeting from one year to the next. The target audience is 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

4-H clubs are expected to:

- build youth and adult partnerships,
- set annual club goals and evaluate progress toward those goals,
- plan an educational, experientially based program,
- be involved in community service activities, and
- keep records of their activities.

**Community Club** is a program initiated and facilitated by youth and adult volunteers in the context of a community (i.e. neighborhood, township, city). These types of clubs aim to engage youth and adults in both individual and group activities that foster learning and development in a variety of subject matter areas (i.e. food and nutrition, wildlife, beef, visual arts, etc.).

**Project Club** is a program focused more deeply on specific subject matter (i.e. shooting sports, horse, and photography). Project clubs can operate within any school or community setting or as part of any of the other club types. Meeting schedules may vary within a short-term or year-long schedule.

**Afterschool Club** is a program offered to youth following the school day. Afterschool clubs are often divided by age groups. Afterschool clubs aim to complement the learning and development that occurs during the school day and to extend learning during non-school hours. They are often a part of a broader after-school initiative and may have a wide variety of partners and resources that support the program operation. This club type is often facilitated by paid staff and /or volunteers. The schedule complements the school calendar.

**Site-based Club** is designed to reach underserved youth in the communities where they live with year long programming. This could be a public housing site or neighborhood with a community center that can serve as the hosting location.

Clubs can be divided out by ages as well. When doing this consider social, intellectual, emotional and physical growth, as well as the interest of the members.

## **What is all of this about Projects?**

A part of 4-H is learning life skills through specific content. Check with your county Extension office to review a variety of curriculum materials. Some resources are listed on the 4-H web site. You may also find materials at the 4-H Mall <http://www.4-hmall.org/>

Ask your county Extension staff how you receive materials. The 4-H Foundation of New Hampshire helps provide curriculum to support volunteers through each county office.

University of NH Cooperative Extension has a cost-recovery program for all publications, including 4-H materials. Usually, leader materials are provided free to each volunteer leader, but most member materials have a cost. Most counties pass this cost on to the 4-H club or member. You might talk with your 4-H club as well as the county Extension office about paying for the cost of publications.

## **Are There Dues for 4-H Members?**

Some clubs may decide to pay for local club program costs by assessing a small fee per member or by working together on a fundraising project. Special events such as camps and events may also have registration or entry fees connected to them. If a leader feels a family cannot afford the amount, county foundations or the State 4-H Foundation will be able to assist with this fee. No child will be denied access to the 4-H program.

## **What About Insurance?**

4-H leaders automatically have liability insurance coverage through the University of New Hampshire when leading a 4-H group or 4-H activity as soon as they are officially enrolled in the 4-H program. However, accident insurance is not automatic. If you choose, your 4-H club can apply for accident insurance. A number of companies offer accident insurance coverage for youth groups. The American Income Life Insurance Company and the Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company offer accident coverage plans. This insurance covers you and your 4-H members from the time you leave home until you return home from any 4-H activity. Insurance is also available for special activities or events on a per-day basis.

Forms for each of these plans can be obtained at your county office of UNH Cooperative Extension. They should be sent directly to the insurance company by the 4-H leader.

## **Where Will Our Club Meet?**

Where your club meets will probably be determined by the number of members. Meeting places could be public school buildings, churches, fairgrounds, etc. Most schools, communities, and other groups are willing to let their facilities be used for 4-H activities.

## **How Often Will Our Club Meet?**

There are several possibilities in choosing a day and time for club meetings, such as:

- once a week, after school (this works well for elementary age members)
- once every 2 weeks, after school or on a weeknight
- once a month, on a weeknight
- once a month, on a Saturday or Sunday (sometimes this works best for clubs with members of a wide age span)
- other variations, limited only by the needs of your club members.

It is required that a 4-H club be involved in at least six hours of educational programming during the year, more if desired or needed. This provides continuity for the club as well as time for development and accomplishment of individual and club goals.

Some projects can be taught on a short-term or seasonal basis. Members can enroll at any time during the year. Some clubs start at the beginning of the school year but may plan to meet later for a shorter period of time, perhaps for a 3- or 6-month time period.

### **Enrollment Guidelines**

The club educational program can be general or offer a specific topic of interest. Youth may be of all grades or a focused grade group.

A 4-H Club and its members will:

- Build youth and adult partnerships.
- Set goals and evaluate progress toward those goals.
- Plan a fun experiential-based program where youth learn skills in leadership, citizenship, and communications, personal life management and project work where all youth
  - Attend meetings/workshops/camps, etc
  - Complete a service project
  - Demonstrate learning by giving a presentation or demonstration before a group
  - Keep records of activities and evaluate experiences.

4-H adult volunteers will:

- Complete a volunteer application and background screening.
- Foster and promote the four needs of youth and the five outcomes of the 4-H experience.
- Promote positive youth development environments for youth that emphasize youth strengths.
- Provide appropriate supervision of activities/meetings/field trips, etc.
- Develop working relationships with a variety of community partners.

**Action Steps**

- ◆ With the other leaders, develop your member recruitment plan.
- ◆ Decide on the leader and member materials you will need to order.
- ◆ Decide how potential club and/or project costs will be handled.
- ◆ Meet with members, parents, and other leaders to discuss where the club will meet and how often.
- ◆ Talk with your county Extension staff about insurance coverage.
- ◆ Attend scheduled leader training(s), as appropriate.

**Reference Materials**

*4-H Enrollment Form*

Accident insurance flyer from American Income Life

**How can I use this information:**

1. New activities to plan into our club program:

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2. Other people who could help us and how they might help:

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3. Questions to ask UNH Cooperative Extension staff and other leaders:

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