



Organizing a 4-H Shooting Sports Club

*By Larry Barker, Extension Field Specialist &
NH 4-H Shooting Sports Coordinator*



Experience with establishing and servicing shooting sports programs suggests that a successful approach to building a strong program involves 10 major steps.

1. Identify a key leader or leaders in your county.

Conservation officers, hunter training instructors and officers in local gun clubs are a good place to start. If you have no personal knowledge of these people, contact local sporting goods dealers, outdoor writers, conservation officers or even police agencies. Be sure to ask contact people if they have any additional suggestions of interested people, even if they prove not to be interested personally. In general, it is best to look outside the present corps of 4-H leaders to recruit shooting sports leaders. This expands the leadership base and recruitment potential. Remember, interest in kids, not targets, is a key to locating good shooting sports leaders.

2. Identify a group of potentially interested persons in cooperation with your key leader(s).

These people should meet the criteria listed above and represent a broad range of shooting disciplines. If at all possible, several major components of the shooting sports curriculum should be represented by at least one person. Key disciplines include archery, hunting, wildlife, muzzleloading, pistol, rifle, and shotgun. If possible, subdivide further to

have representatives for trap, skeet, silhouette, position rifle, hounds, pointers, retrievers, bow hunting, etc., at the initial meeting. The more inclusive the group is, the broader your support base will be. Remember, asking a person to work with young people in one of his or her interest areas is not an imposition. It is a very strong compliment.

It is important to remember the New Hampshire 4-H policies for staffing with volunteers.

3. Invite the large group of potential leaders to an initial meeting to discuss organizing a county shooting sports project.

Be prepared to discuss the philosophy, content, purposes and objectives of the program. Assistance from the state coordinator or a leader from a successful county program is extremely valuable.

4. Meet with the people that want to form a county team(s) that will be trained to implement the program.

This team will learn to implement the shooting sports curriculum when they attend a training workshop. The group can benefit from having a preliminary discussion of the county's potentials before they attend the training session.

5. Attend a training workshop.

Accompany at least one full team to the workshop. It is recommended that the Educator attends the training. If the Educator does not attend, there will be no bond of common knowledge between the Educator and his or her committee. If a partial team attends, the members will become very frustrated and the program content will be limited by the training of the people present. If your county does not have a full team, join another county to produce a cooperative complete team. Do not assume these people will not attend a workshop for any of the traditional reasons.

Shooting sports leaders are different!

It is important to remember that NH requires leaders to apply and to attend a formal shooting sports leader training before working with youth.

6. Develop a county (or multi-county) plan.

This process will start with the training session. Continue to refine the plan as soon as the team returns from training. Do not let more than a couple of weeks pass. The excitement and confidence built at the workshop may fade or become modified if too much time elapses from training to implementation.

7. Develop the necessary support for the program: human, financial, and material.

Your state coordinator will have extensive training in this area. Equipment and facilities are not limiting factors if a little creativity is applied.

8. Set the county plan in motion by recruiting leaders and youth.

Be prepared to have moderate success in the first attempt and try to keep the size of the group manageable. Be alert for opportunities to recruit volunteers during the course of the program. Be sure to involve new volunteers quickly in activities appropriate to their interests and abilities.

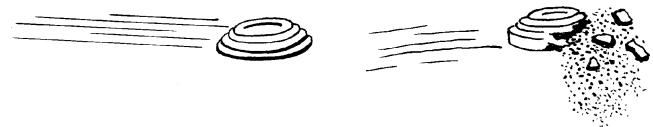
9. Let the volunteers run the program.

The Educator needs to maintain some presence, but the program should belong to the volunteers. The committee is where Educator oversight will be demanded, expected and desired. Consider the evaluation process while the program is being planned, run and critiqued. Encourage immediate debriefings of the leaders after each segment of the program is completed. Those comments should mold evaluations in the future.

10. Draw advanced participants in the program into junior leadership and coaching roles.

This program like other 4-H programs needs to have advancement opportunities for the participants. The second generation leadership will come from youth involved in leadership roles while they are members.

From start to finish, the process of developing a local shooting sports program should take a minimum of three to six months. Later programs become increasingly easier, and a flow of new leaders develops naturally. New approaches and ideas develop for more advanced programming. Capitalize on the availability of the leaders and young people to further develop the county program. Be sure to share new ideas and approaches with your state coordinator so they can share them with others in the state. Your innovation may hold the key for success in another area.



Adapted from Ronald A. Howard, Jr., 4-H and Youth Development Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

Revised 2016