



Creating a Welcoming Virtual Environment

Creating a welcoming environment in 4-H is critical to the member (and leader, and family) experience. We know that feeling a sense of belonging is a cornerstone in the Essential Elements of 4-H – and includes three components:

- 1) A positive relationship with a caring adult
- 2) An inclusive environment
- 3) A safe environment

Recognizing virtual platforms are not the norm for 4-H clubs and groups to meet, below are a few tips and tricks to try, to ensure your virtual meetings are welcoming, inviting, positive and safe:

Pre-Meeting Tips:

Being online with youth has its own successes and challenges. Be sure to check out the Wisconsin 4-H website for tips (especially around safety and quality) for engaging youth in online learning.

- Find a platform that works for you and your group. Learn the basics of it, and test your technology. Encourage your families to test their technology too!
- Send a welcome or give a call to new members and families. This will allow time for them to ask questions and for you to explain what to expect at the meeting.
- Set the tone, whether virtually or in person, think about how the environment makes people feel welcome. Be excited about the new opportunity to learn and still meet!

During the Meeting:

- Join the virtual meeting a few minutes early. Welcome everyone by name as they join. Consider playing music, asking questions, or using the chat features to quickly engage people as they arrive. Invite your youth leaders or officers to help with this!
- Ask people to change their name on their zoom or other platform. This allows everyone to call them by first name.
- Incorporate fun, easy activities (like a scavenger hunt, find it fast, virtual high five, stretch breaks, etc) every 15 minutes or so.
- Use tools like the chat box to allow everyone's voice to be heard
- Work with members and youth leaders to present, teach, and lead. Most youth are comfortable with technology and they do a great job of teaching others!

After the Meeting:

- Touch base with anyone who was having tech issues, sending out a follow up note to families recapping the meeting and sharing reminders for future events.