

PROJECT LEADERS

OVERVIEW



Welcome

Thank you for volunteering as a 4-H project leader. We appreciate your time and talents. There are many reasons to become a volunteer. Some people want to get involved in their community. They may have a skill to share. Others were 4-Hers as children and want to share their experiences. No matter the reason, the 4-H program is glad you have joined the team.

This 4-H Project Leaders' guide will help answer some of your questions about your new role. You do not need to read it from beginning to end right now. Just look for the articles that interest you most. Get familiar with the topics for later reference.

4-H

4-H is an educational program for youth in grades Kindergarten through one year after high school. It is available through a partnership of county, state, and federal agencies.

4-H is part of the Positive Youth Development Institute within the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension.

Youth can participate by joining a community 4-H club, taking part in a special interest group, going to camp, attending a sponsored school enrichment activity, or enrolling in a school-age childcare program.

Project Leaders

A project leader is a Very Important Person in the world of 4-H. Youth typically join the 4-H Program to explore a specific project area. A project leader:

- Helps members learn skills they will use throughout their life;
- Helps members reach their goals; and
- Serves as a role model.

As a project leader, it is important to use project area resources. Local 4-H educators at the Extension Office may have resources available to borrow or purchase.

How involved you get and how much time you spend will depend on the county, youth interest, who else is involved, and the project area that interests you. Talk with your local 4-H staff member to learn more about the opportunities available.



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The 4-H Project - A Cornerstone of 4-H

“Learning by doing” is a basic philosophy of 4-H. The 4-H project is an area where learning by doing takes place. Each project has things for members to do, make, and explore. As members gain experience, they may choose to take on more projects.

A 4-H PROJECT:

- Involves something that interests the 4-H member
- Is guided by a volunteer project leader
- Helps the youth reach their learning goals
- Includes some form of record keeping
- Takes place over a period of several weeks or months during a year

Choosing a project is a way for youth to express their independence. Younger children may choose with help from their family. Older youth can begin to choose on their own. Consider these questions.

- Is the project interesting to them?
- Do they have enough time to commit to the project?
- Is the project possible in the community where they live?
- Can their family support them in the project (time, finances, etc.)? Or is there another way to support the youth?
- Do they have access to the tools and equipment they need?

A project may include meetings, field trips, and related activities. The volunteer, with the support of parents, caregivers, and other volunteers, guides the project. However, it is important that the 4-H members do the actual work themselves.

Thriving Model

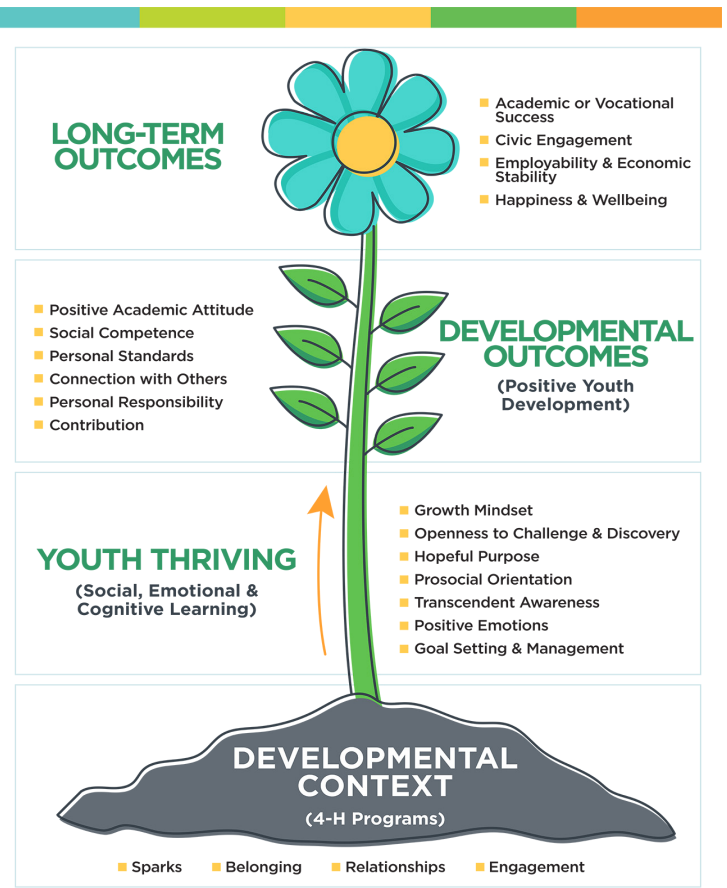
The 4-H Thriving Model says that youth who take part in 4-H programs will thrive. 4-H programs build on three foundational pieces:

- Youth Sparks—All youth have interest, abilities, and strengths. 4-H creates a place for youth to explore their interests and passions!
- Program Quality—4-H offers positive, engaging spaces with hands-on learning opportunities, focused on youth belonging.
- Healthy Relationships with Caring Adults—Youth in 4-H develop relationships with adults who are caring, support their growth, and share power.

Thriving youth are more likely to:

- Set goals for themselves and be motivated to achieve them
- Contribute to their families, communities, and beyond
- Connect with others in positive ways
- Be active participants in the world around them

By focusing on these foundational pieces, Project Leaders can be those caring adults. They can help make sure 4-H programs are high quality and youth are set up for success.[1]



[1] Adapted from <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/>

Essential Elements in Project Learning

Young people need each of the four Essential Elements—Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery—to grow in healthy ways. Here are a few ways 4-H Project Leaders can put these elements into action

BELONGING

- Get to know the youth involved in project meetings
- Invite others to join project meetings

INDEPENDENCE

- Encourage youth to set project goals that challenge them to learn and try new things
- Ask youth to research their favorite parts of the project

GENEROSITY

- Ask youth to find ways to share what they learn with others

MASTERY

- Ask older youth to help lead parts of the project meeting
- Have youth do a short presentation about what they learned in the project

Building Life Skills

4-H builds skills that youth may use throughout their lives. They learn and practice skills to:

- Interact with others
- Understand and manage themselves
- Think creatively and critically
- Act in a way that is healthy and safe

Project work gives age-appropriate opportunities for youth to practice life skills as they grow toward a sense of mastery.

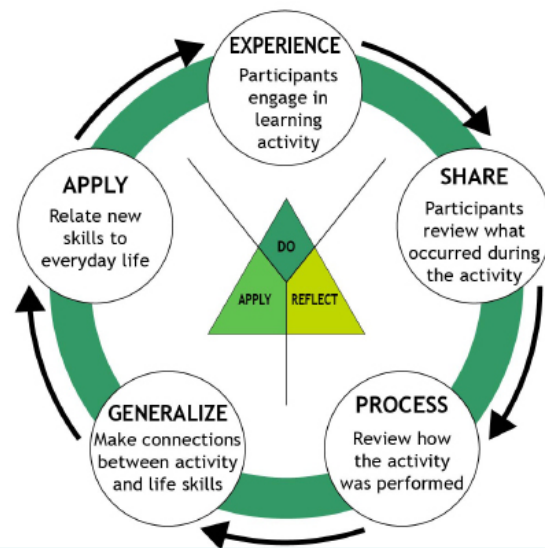
Think about how the project activities may teach life skills. For example, teaching youth to train their dog might help them practice empathy and communication skills. A youth in the Theater Arts project may practice teamwork and social skills. The Life Skills Model can help you plan learning objectives or identify outcomes for projects.



Experiential Learning

In 4-H, youth learn by doing. This means project work is hands-on and engaging. It is part of the Experiential Learning Model, which has three main steps: Do, Reflect, Apply.

This is how true learning really happens. Youth do an activity. They reflect on what happened during the activity. Then, they think about how to apply what they learned in other settings. 4-H Project Leaders can use open-ended questions to bring Do, Reflect, Apply into every project meeting.



Find training and resources about how to use these models at 4-H Foundations <http://4hfoundations.wi4h.org>.

Resources for Project Leaders

4-H ADULT LEADERS

Reach out to other adult leaders in the county. Club leaders can share more about 4-H, provide resources, and suggest where to find more help. Other project leaders may help with ideas for special meetings, guest speakers, or field trips.

COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

County 4-H staff can help clarify project leader roles. They provide support in a variety of ways. Check with 4-H staff about project curriculum to borrow or purchase

4-H WEBSITES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

County, state, and national websites offer many resources, including project curriculum.

- Wisconsin State 4-H website: <https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/>. Go to the Resources tab at the top for:
 - › Volunteer Resources, including a page of Project Leader Resources
 - › Resource Library, including the Media Collection, a lending library of hands-on learning tools to borrow
 - › Wisconsin 4-H Policies, including policies for 4-H Projects & Activities
- County Extension websites: <https://counties.extension.wisc.edu/>.
- Shop 4-H (curriculum and merchandise): <https://shop4-h.org>

COUNTY 4-H NEWSLETTERS/EMAILS

Read the 4-H newsletter or emails whenever possible. They include county events and project-related activities. Project leaders can share information there too.

YOUTH LEADERS

Youth leaders can speak or present about a topic. They can act as mentors for project work. Ask interested teens from other project groups or clubs to help

TRAINING DAYS AND PROJECT EVENTS

Look for training days or project events at a regional or state level. It can help to learn from youth and other project leaders. Visit <https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/> to find opportunities.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Contact local businesses for other resources. They might have videos, pamphlets, and visual aids to loan out. Look carefully at what they share to make sure it is unbiased and educational. When sharing resources with youth, thank the businesses that provided the information.



Find more resources
on the Project Leader
Resource web page:



Youth Characteristics

Youth mature in many ways. Their bodies, minds, emotions, and social skills grow and change. Youth learn new skills, knowledge, and abilities. Over time, they branch out socially and build new or additional relationships.

Development is different for every child. Each young person grows and develops at their own rate. Some youth may learn skills before their peers. Others may change earlier physically or develop slower in other areas.

GRADES K-2

Youth in grades K-2 usually have short attention spans. They begin to learn hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. Reading and writing are new to them. Avoid criticism. Positive feedback and celebrating small successes help youth this age.

GRADES 3-5

Youth in grades 3-5 often have lots of energy. Their attention spans get longer. Try to limit competition. This makes room for exploration. Let them express themselves through activities that are self-directed or cooperative.

GRADES 6-8

Youth in grades 6-8 go through many changes to their bodies, emotions, and social lives. They learn to communicate more clearly and increase skills in many areas during these years. Yet, their emotions often control their actions. They look for acceptance from peers and adults. Many youth this age begin to like competition.

GRADES 9+

Youth in grades 9 and higher are more ready for leadership opportunities. Continue to support them, but let them use their developing skills in adult roles. They begin to fine-tune their interests and explore career options.

Find out more about Ages and Stages of youth and Youth-Adult Partnerships at 4-H Foundations <http://4hfoundations.wi4h.org>.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

“Youth-adult partnerships ... are youth and adults coming together in a positive, mutually respectful environment with the recognition that each group contributes unique strengths to the relationship.”
—University of California 4-H Youth Development Program

Practicing youth-adult partnerships:

- Creates a sense of belonging. Adults listen to youth. Youth begin to take more ownership and responsibility.
- Builds relationships. Adults see youth as capable partners. Youth take more active leadership roles and work alongside volunteers and staff.
- Emphasizes learning by doing. Youth and adults gain hands-on experience learning from each other.

Click on 4-H Volunteers at <http://4hpolicies.wi4h.org>.

HOW TO PRACTICE YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

TIPS FOR ADULTS

- Create youth-adult partnerships. Include youth in planning, teaching, and/or helping others.
- Set clear expectations for youth.
- Help youth reflect on experiences. Remember, everyone has something to learn.
- Create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Give feedback about skill development. Do not criticize the person.

TIPS FOR YOUTH

- Set goals about what knowledge or skills to develop.
- Youth leaders are role models for all other youth. Be a good one.
- Talk with a project leader about current skill level, goals, and sharing skills with others.
- Speak with the project leader regularly. Feedback can help with learning and growth.

First Project Meeting Outline

During the first meeting, make sure to:

1. Do introductions. Give youth a chance to get to know each other.
2. Review project goals and expectations. Talk about skills and knowledge youth will learn during the year. Share project requirements and rules.
3. Use experienced youth and adults in the community as resources.
4. Talk with the group about:
 - › Meeting schedule and timeline
 - › How to participate in special activities
 - › What to bring to meetings and what will be provided
 - › How expenses will be met
5. Make it fun. Use a game, relay, or some other fun and interactive activity to reinforce what youth learned in the meeting.
6. Hand out project materials, answer questions, make assignments.
7. Reflect on the meeting with youth leaders and adult volunteers after it ends. Ask how they felt in their role. Help them think about their part. Be encouraging and supportive.

Developing Project Meeting Plans

After the first meeting, use the goals youth developed to help plan the path through the project curriculum or other resources. Older project youth can help with this.

National 4-H guidelines state that youth should have at least six hours of project learning each year. These six hours can include group project meetings or at-home, independent learning. Try to plan at least five project meetings during each year.

Find out more about
Leading, Learning, and Laughing in meetings
at: [https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/4h-resources/
three-parts-of-a-meeting/](https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/4h-resources/three-parts-of-a-meeting/).

Parts of a Project Meeting

A typical project meeting lasts one to two hours. Make sure every meeting includes Leading (Business), Learning (Education), and Laughing (Recreation). Leading, Learning, and Laughing could look like this:

Laughing & Learning	Interest Getter (15-20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try identification quizzes, judging contests, relay skill games, films or slides, a tour of the host member's project, or guest speakers.
Learning	Skill Session and Discussion (30-50 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth want to learn and practice new skills. This is where to spend most of the meeting time. Be sure to include all parts of the experiential learning model—Do, Reflect, and Apply.
Leading & Learning	Demonstration (10 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask at least one member to give a demonstration at each meeting. Demonstrations help youth apply the project skills they have learned as they teach others new skills. They learn more when they teach others.
Learning	Record Keeping (10-15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow time for members to work on their project records. They can record lessons learned, update project resources, and track progress toward their goals.
Leading & Learning	Summary and Assignments (5-10 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask members to summarize what they learned in the meeting. Plan for the next meeting—where, when, and what to bring.
Laughing	Refreshments and Recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation and refreshments are optional. However, these activities help to keep the meetings fun for all.

Safety

UNDERSTANDING 4-H POLICIES

Find Wisconsin 4-H Policies here: <http://4hpolicies.wi4h.org>. It is important to be aware of all the policies. Pay special attention to the “4-H Projects & Activities” section.

INSURANCE

Insurance may be different depending on the location. Find out more about insurance—including liability, accident, and property.

Click on Insurance at <http://4hpolicies.wi4h.org>

RULE OF THREE

At least three people should be present for programs or communications. The people can be a mix of youth and authorized adults. This helps keep everyone safe by making activities observable and interruptible.

For the Rule of Three, make sure to have at least:

1 authorized adult with 2 or more youth, OR

2 authorized adults with 1 youth.

Make sure the adults are either authorized adult volunteers or a parent/guardian of the youth.

ADULT SUPERVISION

For larger groups, make sure to have enough adult support to keep youth safe. What is the right number of adults? Think about the type of program (day or overnight) and the ages of participants.

This chart lists the number of adults needed for different kinds of programs and age groups. In non-residential programs, youth do not spend the night away from home. Residential programs happen over two or more days; youth spend one or more nights away from home.

Age Group	Situation	Required Ratios* (Adult:Minor)
Age 5-9	Non-Residential Programming	1:10
10+ years	Non-Residential Programming	1:18
10+ years	Non-Residential Programming: All Water Activities, Recreational Sports, and Field Trips	1:10
Age 7-17	Residential or Overnight Programming	1:10

TRANSPORTATION

Youth who take part in Extension programs are responsible for their own travel to and from events. There are a few exceptions. In some situations, volunteers or staff members need to provide transportation for a program.

To transport non-related youth, they must:

- Become an authorized driver
- Get permission from each youth's parents/guardians
- Follow the Rule of Three

FIELD TRIPS

When planning a field trip, tell parents/guardians about the plan in writing. Ask for a signed permission slip for the youth to participate. Work with the local county educator to get access to participant health forms.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- Make sure the location where you hold meetings is accessible for all abilities.
- Make sure there are separate toilet and bathing facilities for different genders during overnight activities.
- If someone requests an accommodation, contact the local educator about helping to meet the person's needs.
- Learn about requirements for safe, accessible, and affirming overnight experiences.

Click on 4-H Projects & Activities at <http://4hpolicies.wi4h.org>

[1] Adapted from <https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/>

Safety (Continued)

SAFETY IN ANIMAL SCIENCE PROJECTS

Animal science projects are very popular in 4-H, but animals are unpredictable. They require extra attention to keep everyone safe.

- Maintain good fencing and/or cages.
- Pick up items that may lead to injury: loose barbed wire, boards with nails, nails and tacks, paint cans, and broken glass, for instance.
- Lock gates, doors, and fences.
- Lock up poisons, pesticides, chemicals, and medicines.
- Practice personal hygiene. Wear proper protective clothing when handling animals.
- Take precautions when handling a sick or wounded animal.
- Practice good animal hygiene by keeping the animals in clean quarters.
- Eliminate pest infestation.
- Horse project members and leaders must wear helmets when mounted.

SAFETY IN OTHER 4-H PROJECTS

The following are some tips to review when organizing your project:

- Keep areas free of things people could trip over (boxes, mops, brooms, tools, etc.)
- Use a safe, sturdy step ladder to reach items on a high shelf.
- Take care with sharp tools (knives, scissors, etc.).
- Follow best practices for food and kitchen safety.
- Prevent falls. Mop up spilled grease or water right away.
- Unplug tools that heat (irons, hot glue guns, etc.) when not in use.
- Repair or discard items with frayed or worn electric cords.
- Label poisons and medications properly. Store them away from children.
- Use tools and machinery correctly.
- Always use appropriate protective equipment and clothing.



Glossary

PROJECTS

Specific area of interest for 4-H members and volunteers. Youth choose to enroll each year. Youth may explore a project on their own, or several members interested in the same subject or topic can form a project group. 4-H project leaders volunteer to guide project groups. A 4-H club can have several project groups.

PRESENTATION

A form of teaching in which youth share what they learned with others. The youth may demonstrate a skill, speak in front of a group, perform a skit, make a video, or use other forms of communication. Encourage each member to give at least one presentation during the year.

JUDGING

An activity that develops a youth's understanding of quality and standards in projects or other areas of 4-H. Youth may talk to a judge and learn from the feedback they get about their project. Or youth may be the judges. They learn to make observations and clearly communicate their opinions.

SHOWMANSHIP

A chance for youth to show what they learned as they present themselves and their project work. It also involves behaving in a positive and supportive manner towards others.

RECORD KEEPING

An activity in which youth record information about their 4-H experiences and projects. A record book is a group of reports and one way youth can keep track of their experience. Youth in some counties may compile a book, portfolio, or other logs to show what they did and learned in their project. They may also reflect on their goals and set new ones for next year.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

An activity, project, or event that youth or group of youth do to help others and support the community. As part of their project work, youth may take part in or lead a community service project or event.

RECOGNITION

A chance to celebrate successes or achievement in project work. Counties offer different types of recognition related to project work. Contact your 4-H Program Educator for more information.





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Credits

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