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|  | **Planning the 4-H Club Year *Resources and Practical Wisdom Updated in 2017 with input from Elaine George, Experienced 4-H Volunteer Leader*** |

The new 4-H program year begins in October and is a busy time with enrollment, county recognition events, new members, project leader recruitment and more. Spend some time planning for the entire year now for long-term benefits. **The involvement of youth in this process is crucial for increasing member commitment, participation and for youth development.** This document is provided to help club or group leaders *start* thinking of ways to make the coming year the best one yet.

**Why do you want to be a 4-H volunteer leader?**The answer to this question will help you know if you can be a successful co/leader of a 4-H club, project or program. As you reflect on whether you want to step up to become a 4-H volunteer, ask yourself what 4-H mean to you and how much time you can give as a dedicated co/leader right away.

**What are the benefits to being a 4-H volunteer leader?**Volunteering for 4-H is a great way to spend free time. You can help young people by sharing your individual talents and experiences together. Through volunteering, you can see youth grow through their accomplishments. As a volunteer, you can give youth opportunities to learn new skills, gain self-confidence and contribute to their community. Working together and having a great time is what 4-H and volunteering is all about. Youth and adults gain new knowledge, share ideas, develop leadership and self-confidence, decision making, gain responsibility and enjoy many fun activities.

**Who will support me in my volunteer role?**Volunteers should work closely with the county youth staff who are responsible for the county 4-H program. Staff provide resources, training and county-specific timelines for all county clubs. Communication should happen throughout the year between club leaders and county 4-H staff and amongst volunteers. Volunteers are key in helping staff identify program and volunteer needs. Consider working with local 4-H staff to identify possible co-leadership models and countywide project groups.

**What are the first steps?**  
The first step is for adult volunteer applicants is to enroll in the 4HOnline system beginning October 1st. Returning volunteer applicants should update their 4HOnline volunteer profile annually; new volunteers must set up a new profile and answer YES to the volunteer question. Alternatives are available for those volunteer applicants without internet access. Talk to your local 4-H staff right away to get it done soon!

***Resources***

* *The Missouri 4-H website* [*http://4h.missouri.edu*](http://4h.missouri.edu) *has a downloadable Club Leader Kit with detailed re-enrollment (returning) and (new) volunteer enrollment instructions and materials.*
* *4HOnline enrollment and event registration website* [*http://mo4honline.com*](http://mo4honline.com)
* *4HOnline help guides are located in the Club Leader Kit mentioned and at* [*http://4h.missouri.edu*](http://4h.missouri.edu)

**The most successful volunteers work with 4-H staff to build a youth and adult team focused on:**

1. Organization
2. Communication
3. Delegation
4. Recognition
5. Dedication
6. **Organization**

Being a 4-H club leader, or co-leader, is a big job that requires strong organizational skills. Thanks to practical wisdom shared by 4-H club leader Elaine George, the following calendar can help you plan.

**Late summer and September**

* ***Required:*** *Update annual club paperwork prior to 1st club meeting, including the Event Risk Management Plan, LG638, and the Name and Emblem Request, Y633.*
* Distribute or view online *Clover* catalog at <http://4h.missouri.edu> to view projects, events, dates.
* Work with county 4-H staff and experienced volunteers to recruit adult and junior project leaders.
* Obtain or coordinate ordering of 4-H project literature (See *Clover* catalog for ordering information.

**October (Beginning of the “4-H Program Year”)**

* All adult volunteers and members begin to enroll in 4HOnline at <http://mo4honline.com> on October 1st.
* Elect and install youth officers. Consider having youth speak on why they want the role and their background as it relates to the office they want to hold. Provide new officers with guides listed below.
* Plan the entire 4-H year with the officers, including officer meetings held a few days or immediately before monthly club meetings. Use the pre-meeting to review duties, club meetings and improvements.
* Assign officers’ special duties before club meetings in addition to their usual officer duties.
* Set and hold club meetings, encouraging one parent or responsible person to attend the club meeting with the 4-H member. The 4-H club meetings are not baby-sitting services. Here are some ideas for club programs and fun activities. Remember, kids “vote with their feet”- make sure meetings include fun!

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| Education Topics for Programs | **Club Fun** |
|  Parliamentary Procedure   Career Night   Environmental Program   Project Workshops or Skill-a-thons   Character Education Games/Activities   Couch Potato Challenge   Effective Communication with Others   Goal Setting   Public Speaking Tips & Ideas   Dealing with Peer Pressure   Money Management   4-H Awards Available   Team Building Activities   Safety Programs (online, bicycle)   4-H Judging Contests – Giving Reasons   Preparing Exhibits for Fairs and Shows   Time Management   Challenge/Wilderness Survival   Visit by County Office Holder   Community Service – Grants available |  Backwards Meeting   Halloween Party   T-Shirt Night   Ice/Roller Skating   Family Potluck/Picnic   Costume Party   Family Camping Trip   Mystery Trip   Hayride & Bon Fire   Trips (e.g., Zoo, Botanical Gardens or Science Museum)   Amusement Park   Pro-Sports Event   Art Museum/Institute   County government   Bowling   Swim Party   Winter Party (skating, sledding)   Parade/Float   Dance or Club “Talent” Night   Lock-in |

Promote and host a “New Families Welcome Meeting” and provide snacks, a warm welcome and everyday language that helps them begin learning about the exciting, yet big, world of 4-H opportunities including county and state events and opportunities (Community service projects, State Teen Conference, State Teen Congress, project specific events such as Poultry Day, Robotics Challenges.

Hold a project leader volunteer training. Give them project members list, project meeting report form, project leader attendance and completion record forms.

Encourage project leaders to meet with their project groups soon so the kids do not get discouraged. Talk with county staff to explore option of offering or finding countywide projects.

***Resources***

* *Officer Guides*(So You are a Club Officer Series Y783, Secretary Book Y671, Club Meeting Report Y676 and Treasurers Book Y672.)
* *Planning and Structure, a Quality Matters Toolkit –*<http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteers.aspx>
* *Voice and Engagement, a Quality Matters Toolkit –*  “ “
* *Welcoming, Engaging and Encouraging, a Quality Matters Toolkit –* “ “
* *Monthly Club Meeting Calendar Samples (LG779) –*[*http://4h.missouri.edu*](http://4h.missouri.edu)

**November**

* Ask all families (adults and youth) to sign up for at least one standing committee and two county events.
* Host a fundraiser (e.g., holiday babysitting service, gift-wrap services, drive through BBQ, etc.)

***Resource***

* *Treasurer’s Book, Club Management -*<http://4h.missouri.edu/resources-and-forms/>

**December**

* Focus on community service. Ideas: Santa Breakfast, holiday dinner for senior citizens, make holiday ornaments, adopt needy families, deliver food baskets for those in need or sponsor a house decorating contest.

**December (Continued)**

***Resources***

* *4-H Community Service Grants -* <http://4h.missouri.edu/foundation/community-service.aspx>
* *Assorted service-learning opportunities -* <http://4h.missouri.edu/service/opps>

**January-April**

* Encourage project leaders to hold most of their meetings in these months before summer activities start or people go on vacations.
* Have youth do demonstrations at all club meetings starting in January.

***Resources***

* *4-H 201: Fostering, Growing and Sustaining 4-H Clubs –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteer>
* *Assorted project leader resources –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/resources-and-forms>
* *Essential Elements: Key Ingredients for Success –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteer>
* *Assorted demonstration resources* ***–*** <http://4h.missouri.edu/resources-and-forms/#Demonstrations>
* *Reflection, a Quality Matters Toolkit –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteers.aspx>

**May, June, July**

* Hold another fundraiser. Examples include hosting a garage or consignment sale, bake sale, car wash, create and sell 4-H cookbooks, hold a seed/plant sale, hold a chili dinner or pancake breakfast, etc.
* Prepare for county fair or other achievement events. Note: check with your county staff to identify any specific criteria for county fair or similar event participation. Most counties have established criteria.
* Project leaders send members list of those who are ineligible to exhibit at the fair to the extension office.
* Do another club community service project
* July - Start working on the club or program scrapbook. Ask all project leaders to submit pages about their project to the scrapbook committee.

**August**

* Host a meeting where youth reflect on the program year experience and fill out award forms.
* Host an end of the year celebration planned by the youth (e.g., swimming party).
* Contact current project leaders to see if they would be willing to lead (or co-lead) the project again for the next year. Consider offering or seeking county-wide project groups.
* Work on all end of the year reports and submit to the extension office.

***Resources:***

* *Reflection, a Quality Matters Toolkit –*<http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteers.aspx>
* *Missouri 4-H resources and forms -* <http://4h.missouri.edu/resources-and-forms/>
* *4-H Youth Services to Communities form -*<http://4h.missouri.edu/doc/LG760FILL.pdf>

1. **Communication**

Clubs should strongly consider identifying a volunteer or volunteer team to communicate all the great things happening in 4-H throughout the year. Here are a few strategies that have worked for the most successful 4-H club leaders.

* How do you communicate with new 4-H families? Does your club welcome new families or do they just get in their cliques of friends and talk; ignoring the new families. This will not help the club grow. Instead, extend a warm hand of friendship and fellowship and sincerely make each person feel welcome and a vital part of your club. A warm heart, an open mind, and a ready smile; what more could you ask for in a 4-H friend.
* Keep everyone informed and involved. Parents and other responsible adults are an important part of a club success. The 4-H member needs their support.
* Send a newsletter every month before the club or program meeting. Put scheduled local and county events in the newsletter.
* Use Google calendar for the club and project meeting dates. County and state event deadlines.
* Use other communication resources such as school flyers, city hall newspaper, etc.
* Use a family file folder system at every monthly club meeting. Put information in these folders for each family to pick up on their way into the meeting.

***Resource***

* *Welcoming, Engaging and Encouraging, a Quality Matters Toolkit –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteers.aspx>
* *Name and emblem request -* <http://4h.missouri.edu/club-management.aspx>
* *University of Missouri Identity Standards: Social Media -* <http://identity.missouri.edu/social-media/index.php>
* *Your county Extension office -*<http://extension.missouri.edu/directory/Places.aspx>

**3. Delegation**

With so many 4-H activities and opportunities, the ability and willingness to delegate to others will make the difference between a short-term, burnt out volunteer leader and a busy, but excited volunteer leader.

Here are 10 reasons 4-H club leaders should delegate:

1. Delegating frees up your time and energy to perform at a higher level.
2. Delegating lets you see more clearly what kinds of tasks or projects REALLY could use your direct attention.
3. Delegation shares responsibility with others working in your immediate group and fosters team building. Make sure the objectives of the responsibilities are clear.
4. Delegation lends a new dimension on how things can be done. The end product of getting people’s ideas and input, can lead to interesting results.
5. Delegation builds others’ skills and esteem. Let others have an opportunity at a task previously performed by someone else. Delegating reflects a high level of trust in others’ skills.
6. By appropriating delegating, you can simply get more things done in a lesser period of time.
7. Delegating reduces delay. It demonstrates the ability to manage with an eye toward getting tasks into action and not letting them wait their turn on an already full plate.
8. Delegating creates greater efficiency if tasks are delegated to and performed by individuals with more expertise than you have. There is no need to spend time “reinventing the wheel.”
9. Delegating can help work to get accomplished on time.
10. Skillful delegation creates a win-win situation for all involved. Everyone feels needed and a part of the team.

**Secrets to Successful Delegation**

The most 4-H effective leaders rely heavily on their ability to delegate. As a leader, your time should probably be spent providing direction rather than trying to control or complete each project or committee. No leader can do it all by him or herself. You have to learn to depend on others within your club to help you achieve your objectives. When you are delegating remember these secrets to success.

**1. Know Your Members**

Choosing the right person for the project or committee is the first step in delegation. In order to make this decision, you must know the skill level of each member in your club. Which projects can they handle independently? Which projects can they handle with little guidance or access to additional resources? What are their interests? Members enjoy challenging and interesting tasks.

**2. Establish Objectives**

Clearly communicate your objectives to each member involved in the project or committee. Your objective should be concrete, measurable and concise. Write them down and review them yourself. Remember your role is to direct. Give your members direction by letting them know exactly what you expect and what their role is. Given information, members will work more independently.

**3. Give a Deadline**

People view projects with deadlines as important. Be specific, strict and realistic when establishing deadlines. Without deadlines, members will not feel responsible for completing the task.

**4. Develop a method of reporting**

Establish some type of reporting system so you know exactly what is going on. Decide the best method of reporting (meeting, email, written report) and a time line for reporting the status of the project (weekly, monthly, quarterly). Members should know what information should be reported.

**5. Focus on results**

Let go of details; empower youth to take care of the day-to-day details. Share your key concerns.

**6. Keep a log of projects**

It is important that you know which projects are taking place and who is responsible for each one and the status of each one. The easiest way to monitor this is to keep a written log. At a glance, you have valuable information and can follow up accordingly whenever and wherever needed.

**7. Encourage creativity and independence**

Do not try to solve every problem. Instead, ask members to bring ideas for solving the problem. Teach others to be problem solvers. Give plenty of feedback and encouragement.

**8. Follow-up**

Never assign a project and forget about it until the deadline. Always communicate with your members and do not forget to listen. Check in to ensure the project is on track.

**9. Provide resources**

Do your members have all resources to complete the project successfully? Resources include time, equipment, supplies, space and labor.

**10. Rejoice and review**

Once the project is completed, gather the committee together to celebrate the success of the project. Demonstrate to the committee how their work has affected the success of the club. Discuss particular challenges faced during the course of the project and review the solutions used to overcome them. Recognize the members at the club meeting for a job well done.

**4. Recognition/Appreciation**

* Make recognition something you do at every club meeting. Specific encouragement goes a long when you notice youth for their accomplishments, help or kindness demonstrated, etc.
* Send thank you notes.
* Write an article about 4-H youth or volunteer achievements and submit to your local paper.

**5. Dedication**

Leaders commit themselves to a 4-H group and need to do their best so **each youth** will feel proud they belong to your club or program. Leaders have to want to be successful before youth will follow.

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| **A Few Words on Conflict**  Let parents, project leaders and 4-H members know at the beginning of the year that the club will not tolerate arguing, fighting, name-calling or any type of not getting along. Some feel that parents have more problems than 4-H members do. Most of the time youth can work it out themselves if parents let them. Parents or members can be asked to leave if they cannot work out their differences and continue to cause problems in a club. Club leaders are not to serve as referees to adult arguments. A club leader’s responsibility to the club is to have a relationship with all members, parents and project leaders so they can come to me to help solve their differences or get the help they need. The 4-H program is not a good fit for arguing adults who cannot get along, it is to help youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, develop attitudes that will enable them to become self-directed, productive members of society.  ***Resource***   * *Reframing Conflict, a Quality Matters Toolkit –* <http://4h.missouri.edu/volunteers.aspx> * *Is Competition Good or Bad?* ***–*** <http://4h.missouri.edu/doc/is-competition-good-or-bad.pdf> |

**Other Helpful Resources**

The following documents are part of the “Letters to Leaders” series. They are available on the Missouri 4-H website as downloadable PDF documents at <http://4h.missouri.edu>

***Letter 1: What is 4-H?* (PDF) (LG901)** – This page document provides a brief overview of the organization, youth-adult partnerships and elements of our programming and projects.

***Letter 2: Getting Started with a 4-H Club*** (PDF) **(LG902)** This document provides answers questions about club size, recruitment of youth and adults, club meeting locations, project materials and more.

***Letter 3: Planning and Conducting 4-H Club Meetings*** (PDF) **(LG903**) This document helps leaders with considerations of club officers & committees, goal setting, planning, agenda items, and involving parents.

Letter 4: Leadership & Teaching Techniques (PDF) **(LG904)** This document provides leaders with guidance on youth-centered approaches to their work in 4-H as well as suggested ways to help youth learn as well as what to do when youth aren’t acting at their best.

***Letter 5: 4-H Activities*** (PDF) **(LG905)** This document helps leaders learn more about planning for and creating Club, County, Regional, State and National activities with and for youth. This may include fairs, camp, scholarships, conferences and even international opportunities.

***Letter 6: Opportunities for 4-H Leaders*** (PDF) **(LG906)** This document provides leaders with context for the opportunities as leaders to grow and lead as volunteers in the 4-H program.