



Helping You Help Youth



PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Volunteer leaders and parents play a major role in creating environments in which positive youth development experiences occur. By leading or guiding club and individual learning opportunities, you share valuable information and experiences with youth as they grow into self-confident, caring, and contributing individuals. A key role that you play is providing a safe and supportive environment for youth to practice life skills as they gain knowledge and learn new skills in a variety of 4-H projects and activities.

Youth development is the process of mental, physical, emotional and social growth in which young people prepare to lead a healthy and productive life. Illinois 4-H is a youth program that provides educational experiences to promote positive youth development.

Projects

A 4-H project is a practical and challenging progression of learning centered around a specific subject. Youth choose and enroll in a subject of interest to them. Projects available throughout Illinois are listed in the current *Illinois Clover* (M90301), and some counties offer additional “county projects.”

Role of the Project Leader

A 4-H project leader is responsible for helping members who are enrolled in the same project. The leader should assist youth through the steps of setting goals, completing the work and evaluating what they have done. All leaders who work with youth are required to complete the *Illinois 4-H Volunteer Application form* (90109).

After the member has enrolled in the project, the project leader, with assistance from the parent, other members and/or other adults, helps the young person decide what he or she wants to learn by doing. The project leader is valuable in providing ideas of what

might be done to achieve goals and helping the member set realistic expectations of accomplishment.

Goals should be written on the project-planning sheet and should contain three parts (shown below with a horticulture example).

- The action, or what I plan to do—plant a garden.
- The result—grow flowers to arrange.
- The timetable—by the August 1, flower show.

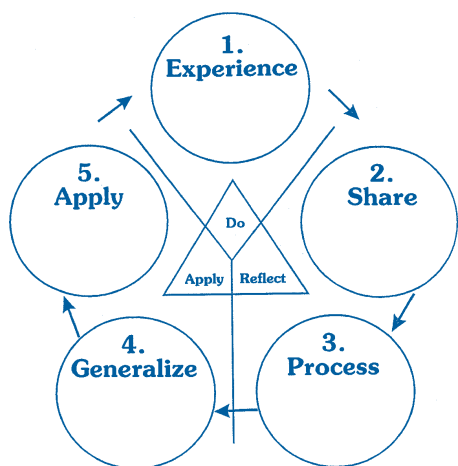
The project leader should encourage each member to set challenging goals, but at the same time make sure the goals are achievable in terms of the member’s age, ability and resources available.

After all members of a project group have decided on their goals, the project leader should help them select activities from the project manual, or provide other group activities to teach them the skills needed to complete the projects. The project leader might do this personally, or arrange for experienced members, parents or resource people to assist with specific parts of the project learning. Demonstrations, tours, field trips, workshops, discussions, videos, games, and contests are examples of common project learning activities. Having a group of youth interested in the same general project area is very important because members can share, help and provide encouragement for each other.

The project leader has the important role of guiding youth through the experiential learning process. Youth may be able to do the activity alone, but the leader helps them process what happened and learn from it. It is a logical way to approach learning. Illinois 4-H takes a “hands on,” “learn by doing” approach. This “doing” method is based on the idea that people learn best by being involved in the learning process, thinking about what was learned and how to apply it to real life situations. The model ties the new information to previous experiences and helps youth remember it for future use. It is usually more successful than just “showing” or “telling” learners.

Guide the youth through the following steps:

Experiential Learning Model



1. **Experience**—doing an activity.
2. **Share**—discussing the results of the experience with others.
3. **Process**—reviewing the experience, examining and thinking about what really has happened.
4. **Generalize**—connect the experience to real-world examples.
5. **Apply**—taking the information that was learned and using it in another situation.

Completing this entire process helps youth gain meaning from what they learn and do. As the leader, you can help them understand the new information and experiences and how to apply what they have learned.

During a series of project meetings, all involved should continually evaluate whether the member needs to set new goals or redefine the original ones. As the project progresses, the project leader should guide the member in giving talks and demonstrations, preparing for exhibits and community service.

At the end of the project year, the project leader should help members record accomplishments, evaluate personal growth, and help the member explore ways to expand on the project area in the next program year. Recognition for project accomplishments should be given throughout the learning experience. This encouragement is important to youth as they overcome challenges and gain new skills.

Activities

Illinois 4-H activities are another way to encourage learning and are comparable to extracurricular school activities. They help broaden the young person's development of skills and appeal to various learning styles. Activities may be conducted at the club, unit, area, state, or national level.

Some activities provide new settings or methods for learning. These include field trips, camps, conferences and exchanges. Others have been created to provide opportunities to apply and reinforce learning related to specific projects in practical situations. Examples include judging contests, bowl team competitions, clothing revues, identification contests, bicycle rodeos and rocket launches.

Clubs are encouraged to conduct activities that help build character and help youth apply life skills in community settings by involving the whole group in common experiences such as communication, leadership, citizenship and community service. In addition, specific activities will help build group cohesion and spirit. These include group recreation, trips, social events, holiday parties and fund raisers.

Role of the Activity Leader

Each club should have a process for deciding its group activities. A program planning committee may research and present possible alternatives, then the members vote on preferences.

An activity leader should be identified for each activity that the club conducts. The activity leader is responsible for helping members plan and conduct the activity. Youth learn how to plan and organize events by working in this safe environment.

The leader should make sure that the committee members understand and agree on the goals of the activity. Is the activity being conducted for fun, to learn a new skill, to develop cooperation among the 4-H families, to raise funds for other club activities or to assist some charitable cause? When the committee is clear on the goals of the activity it becomes easier to plan and determine if the event was successful.

It is not the activity leader's responsibility to plan the activities, rather to guide the members as they plan and implement learning experiences. The leader's role also includes making sure that risk management procedures are followed. This may mean securing accident insurance, health and/or parent consent forms for some activities.

Volunteer Role Description: 4-H Project Leader

Purpose:

To help 4-H members enrolled in a specific project gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes by guiding them as they learn in that 4-H project.

Success Criteria:

Members will enroll in the project; set project goals; work to achieve project goals; share what they have learned through a talk, demonstration or exhibit; and complete project planning sheets, which report and evaluate their own progress.

Responsibilities:

To facilitate youth learning about a project by:

- Assisting with enrollment by introducing the project to all members and parents.
- Helping members establish goals and plan for their project work.
- Conducting project meetings and workshops where members can get hands-on experiences.
- Giving support in planning and carrying out projects to individual project members as needed.
- Encouraging members to complete their project work as planned.

To provide additional support to 4-H members in their project work by:

- Involving experienced youth in the teaching as junior leaders.
- Encouraging parents to support project work at home.
- Helping members identify additional resource materials to extend learning process.
- Assisting members with exhibits, demonstrations, and other sharing activities.
- Helping members complete planning sheets to evaluate their progress in the project.
- Providing recognition for the project accomplishment of members.
- Keeping members informed of other opportunities related to the project.
- Being sensitive to risks, and using risk management strategies related to project work.

To continue your own personal development by:

- Updating your own project skills by attending relevant training.
- Becoming familiar with project literature and sharing knowledge of the project.

To work with other club volunteers in meeting club goals and to keep the entire club informed of the activities of the project group:

- Communicating regularly with other volunteers.
- Helping to identify, select, and support new volunteers.
- Assisting with other activities related to the project, including community service, as appropriate.

Target Dates:

Project leadership can be a short-term opportunity. A variety of options are available, such as: working once a month, once a week, or several times a week for a two- or three-month period, up to one 4-H year (September-August). Volunteers have the option of continuing for additional years.

Time Required:

Two to four hours for planning, working directly with youth, and following up on work for each project meeting. More time can be spent if desired by volunteers and members in the project group.

Resources Available:

- *Getting Started as a 4-H Project Leader* (L90530)
- Member and leader project literature
- Project support materials

Training Opportunities:

- Unit project leader training
- Mentor leader support
- Regional and State volunteer training

Report to:

The 4-H Club Organizational Leader

Volunteer Role Description: 4-H Activity Leader

Purpose:

To help 4-H members learn through their involvement in one or more specific 4-H activities.

Success Criteria:

4-H members will enhance their life skills knowledge by planning, carrying out and/or participating in the 4-H activity.

Responsibilities:

To provide guidance and direction to 4-H committee members organizing the activity by helping them:

- Set goals for the activity.
- Explore alternatives and options.
- Develop a plan.
- Report plans and gain support of other members.
- Organize tasks needed to carry out the plan.
- Secure resources (human, materials, funds, transportation, etc.).
- Identify and assign responsibilities.
- Publicize the activity and inform potential participants.
- Identify and manage risks.
- Recruit other volunteers and plan for supervision.
- Coordinate all aspects of the activity.
- Evaluate the activity.
- Celebrate the successful completion of the activity.
- Encourage/facilitate participation in related activities at unit level and beyond.

To continue your own personal development by:

- Seeking learning experiences in the community.
- Assisting with unit-level related activities.
- Updating your knowledge about specific 4-H activities by reading newsletters and attending relevant training.

To work with other club volunteers in meeting club goals and to keep the entire club informed of things related to assigned activity that involve or impact others by:

- Communicating regularly with other volunteers.
- Coordinating scheduling of activity with other things the club is doing.
- Helping to identify, select, and support new volunteers.
- Supporting projects that may relate to the assigned activity.

Target Dates:

Activities take place throughout the year. Many can be scheduled at a time of year convenient to the activity leader, members and their families. They frequently involve meeting with members several times over a two- to three-month period prior to the activity and once after the activity is completed.

Time required:

Time will vary with the nature of the activity. Two to four hours of planning with members and one hour afterward may be anticipated in addition to the time spent helping them conduct the activity.

Resources Available:

- Unit newsletters and information sheets
- Club committee files or notebooks

Training Opportunities:

- Unit leader training
- Multi-county or Regional training

Report to:

The 4-H Club Organizational Leader



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