



A Guide to Planning 4-H Programs

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A good 4-H club doesn't just happen! Careful planning is necessary for any successful activity and is a very important process in 4-H. A well-planned program gives direction to the 4-H group and helps youth and adults prepare for their responsibilities.

Program planning helps youth: share ideas, acquire new knowledge, develop self-confidence and leadership, participate in decision-making, and prepare for their club responsibilities.

Program planning helps parents: provide support for planned activities, encourage their children to complete responsibilities, and plan family events around club schedules.

Program planning helps advisors/volunteers: provide a balanced club program, prepare for club meetings, divide and delegate responsibilities, and teach members planning skills.

Follow these seven steps to help guide the members through an effective program planning process:

1. Select a program planning committee;
2. Set goals;
3. Brainstorm or survey members;
4. Plan the program;
5. Approval by the group;
6. Assign responsibilities;
7. Evaluate.

The Program Planning Committee

Developing and organizing ideas into action can be done efficiently by a program planning committee. The purpose of this committee is to: 1) Collect facts; 2) Analyze and evaluate these facts; 3) Develop a plan for the club

year; 4) Help carry out that plan; and 5) Evaluate how effective the plan was at its conclusion.

The committee should consist of a variety of people and interests, including youth of different ages with varied hobbies and projects, males and females, officer(s), volunteers, and parents. The number of people on the committee may vary, depending on the size of the club. If your club is small, the program planning process may be completed by the total group.

Setting Goals

1. The first step in setting goals is to review the group's situation.
 - What are the ages of the members? Where do they live? Do they belong to other organizations?
 - Look at last year's program evaluation. What 4-H activities were successful, educational, and fun?
 - Where will 4-H meetings, programs, and activities be conducted?
2. After reviewing the group situation, set some goals. Goals are statements of what the members, volunteers, and parents would like to see accomplished. You can identify these goals through group discussion, surveys, or planning committees. Some examples include:
 - Every member will participate in a community service activity.
 - Every member will present a talk and/or demonstration at a group meeting.
 - Every member will participate in at least one county 4-H event.
 - Our club will meet the criteria to be an Ohio 4-H Club of Distinction. (Reviewing the criteria for Ohio 4-H Club of Distinction will give you additional ideas as

you develop the club program. More information is available at <http://advisorshandbook.ohio4h.org/clubmanagement/evaluatingsuccess.html>

- Establish strategies for accomplishing each goal.

Brainstorm or Survey Members

Brainstorm

Brainstorming is a good technique for generating new ideas. Brainstorming is the unrestrained offering of ideas or suggestions by all members of a group. Ideas should be recorded for all to see on a flip chart or chalkboard. No evaluation of ideas takes place until the brainstorming session is completed. Topics for brainstorming should relate to the club's goals and may include: educational programs, social activities, fund-raising projects, and community service.

Survey

Another way to generate ideas is to have members answer written, open-ended survey questions. Examples of survey statements include:

- I want to learn more about ...
- Just for fun we could ...
- We could help our community by ...
- We can make money by ...
- I would be willing to help with ...

Roll Call

You can also use roll calls to generate ideas about specific activities. For example, each member answers roll call with an idea for a club tour.

Plan the Program

The committee should keep the group's goals in mind as they select activities and events best suited to the 4-H members. Review the notes from the survey, brainstorming, and goal setting sessions. Ask the committee the following questions:

- Which activities will interest all ages represented in the group?
- What community service project(s) would the group most likely support?
- What community events are happening in which the group may want to participate?
- What countywide activities are scheduled that our 4-H members should be aware of?
- What types of clinics or project workshops are needed?

A planning committee member should serve on each committee to help plan the activities that have been chosen. Once the program is planned, the committee should review their work to be certain that their plan accomplishes the following:

- The plan meets the needs and interests of all of the 4-H members.
- Has both educational and fun activities planned.
- Allows the opportunity for everyone to get involved.
- The goals established by the 4-H club were all met.
- Allows for the opportunity for growth and achievement by the members.

Group Approval

Once the plan is completed, a calendar should be developed which lists all the planned activities for each month. It should then be presented to the 4-H club membership for approval. Once voted on, all the members and parents should receive a copy of the planned programs.

4-H Member Assignments

All 4-H members should be responsible for one or more activities on the planned program. Have them sign up for the task they feel most comfortable completing.

Club officers or 4-H volunteers should check periodically to see how things are progressing. They should also present reminders at each meeting as to important dates, deadlines, or assistance needed by parents and other helpers for upcoming events.

Parents can be a very helpful resource in the 4-H club; however, you need to be familiar with Ohio State University Extension volunteer policies before you involve parent volunteers in club activities. For more information, refer to Ohio State University Extension volunteer selection policy at http://www.ohio4h.org/adult/volunteers/selection_tool.html.

Evaluation

Evaluation should be ongoing and can be conducted through discussion questions, open-ended statements, and questionnaires. The following are ideas for an end of the year review.

Discussion questions:

- Were the club's goals met?
- What was the most educational activity?
- What was the least successful activity? Why?

Examples of open-ended statements:

- I learned the most this year about ...
- My (most/least) favorite activity was ...
- I need more information about ...

Summary

Completing 4-H program planning takes time, but will benefit youth, parents, and advisors. Members will feel ownership in the 4-H program and will want to see the activities be successful. A well-planned 4-H program will give direction to both the 4-H members and the volunteer. When you know where you want to go, “How do we get there?” becomes much easier.

Additional Resources Available

Ohio 4-H Advisor Handbook

<http://advisorshandbook.ohio4h.org/>

4-H Club of Distinction

<http://advisorshandbook.ohio4h.org/clubmanagement/evaluatingsuccess.html>

References

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The Ohio State University. Learning Through Leadership: Lesson 12 4-H Program Planning. The Ohio State University.

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1/08—3755