

# 4-H Club Meeting & Program Planning



## Planning: The Key to Success

Most 4-H leaders, members and their parents are busy people who are involved in a variety of family, school and community activities. 4-H has much to offer, but busy people must choose the opportunities that best fit their needs and schedules.

Planning a yearly calendar (Toolkit 1c) will help everyone integrate 4-H activities with the rest of their personal commitments. An online word document is available through the 4-H website.

Adults and youth should work together to develop the yearly plan. The older the youth, the greater role they should play in this process.

For new clubs, some advance planning will need to be done by the adults to determine resources available and to narrow the options for youth to consider. This generally takes place at the initial organizational meeting of a new club. Refer to *Starting New 4-H Club Guide*, available in new 4-H Club Starter Kit or from your Regional Extension Office, for details.

A 4-H club needs to decide:

- How often to meet.
- When and where to meet, how formal or informal they want to be in carrying out club business.

- What they want to do at their club meetings.
- Estimate the money needed to run the club.

As a club, think about why members are involved. Plan your club program to meet the needs of the youth.

An effective planning process will create a well-balanced program and provide 4-H members with opportunities for personal development. Each member should be encouraged to voice his/her interests, goals and opinions. A well-planned program will:

- Provide opportunities for each person to assume responsibility.
- Include a variety of activities.
- Identify the preparation needed for meetings and events.
- Provide for timely communications.
- Avoid calendar conflicts.

While the planning method must be suitable to the characteristics of the club, an effective planning process will:

- Give each person a part in the decision.
- Facilitate both cooperation and compromise.
- Provide practice planning skills for members of all ages.

## When and How Do We Plan?

Most clubs plan their programs and elect officers in September or October. Clubs that operate only part of the year need to plan as soon as possible.

## What Are Goals?

Goals are simply statements of what you want to accomplish—what you want to do, what you want to learn. A goal is like a road map; it helps you decide how to get to where you want to go (Toolkit 4). Goals have three parts that allow us to measure and check our progress. They are:

1. Action—How?
2. Result—What?
3. Timetable—When?

While members will also have individual goals, club goals should reflect what is important to the group as a whole. These goals provide the foundation for the rest of the club plan. Club goals should:

- Be realistic.
- Meet the needs and interests of the club members.
- Promote cooperation.
- Provide individual achievement opportunities.
- Provide community and service participation.

## What Will You Do to Meet These Goals?

Once the goals are agreed upon, it is important to survey all club members on how the goals are going to be met. Examples of acceptable methods of surveying include:

- Using a suggestion box.
- Writing ideas on large pieces of paper taped on the walls.

- Collages.
- Roll Call (give ideas when name is called).
- Brainstorming.

When everyone's ideas have been presented and the group is ready to discuss them, it is helpful to have these items handy:

- School calendars.
- County 4-H calendar.
- 4-H project lists.
- Information about service-learning.
- Information about field trip opportunities.
- Information about community celebrations, festivals and events.

Everyone should be allowed to ask questions and voice his or her opinion about the plan. Conflicts in schedules and other concerns can be addressed at this time. After the plan has been discussed and revised as needed, members should vote to approve and adopt it as their yearly 4-H program.

Prior to adopting a plan, all participants should be able to say "yes" to the following questions:

- Does the program involve all members?
- Is the program interesting to all ages?
- Is the plan realistic?
- Does the plan include activities for learning and service and just for fun?
- Did you consider county 4-H events?
- Is someone responsible for each task?

## How Do We Ensure that the Plan is Successful?

Through communications and check-ups!

- Provide each family with a program book with detailed information on club meetings, dates, times, locations, and agenda items.
- Call club members to encourage their involvement.
- Club newsletters.

## What If the Plan Isn't Working?

As the year progresses, changes may be necessary. You may spot lagging interest, more pressing needs or opportunities. The club should review the progress, and if necessary, amend the club plan.

## How Should 4-H Club Meetings Look?

Your imagination is the limit! Club gatherings can look however you would like. They can change in format. As a club, think about why members are involved and stay involved. What are they looking for? Then plan your club gatherings to meet those needs.

Focus on parts that meet the club's needs for each meeting. Some meetings may focus entirely on project work to help members accomplish their goals and learn new skills.

Remember 4-H should be fun! Celebrate accomplishments or just take time to focus on recreation once in awhile. It's a great way to build a club team. Field trips and service-learning, etc. can put spice into your club, providing opportunities for youth to plan and organize while having fun. Contact your local 4-H Program for resources. Whether your meetings are formal or

informal, the agenda needs to be well planned in advance. The *4-H Club Meeting Outline* can be used as a resource (Toolkit 5).

Hold business meetings when they are needed (and keep them short and to the point to prevent boredom). The business portion should last no more than 15-20 minutes and could include:

1. Call to order
2. Flag pledges
3. Roll call/attendance
4. Reading of the minutes
5. Treasurer's report
6. Committees reports
7. Unfinished business
8. New business
9. Announcements
10. Adjournment

If your club has no business to discuss at a particular meeting, your agenda might be as simple as:

1. Call to order
2. Flag pledges
3. Roll call/attendance
4. Announcements
5. Adjournment

Refer to Toolkit 6 or samples of six club meetings that can be adapted to your club needs.

