

# What DO 4-H Leaders DO



To be successful in any job, people must know what is expected of them. Based upon those expectations, people then need the information and training to enable them to complete the job successfully.

## Leaders' Roles

What is expected? The discussion that follows is limited to the most common roles of leaders. There are many other roles that volunteers can fill to support the 4-H program.

The club organizational leader provides the overall leadership for the club. As the title indicates, this person is an organizer and not the individual who does everything.

Organizational tasks for a successful 4-H Club leader are:

- Conducts an organizational meeting to inform youth of the opportunities available in 4-H and to get their enrollment forms completed.
- Oversees election of officers.
- Meets with officers before each meeting to plan an agenda that includes a lot of member participation.
- Provides information to parents about 4-H projects and activities and encourages their involvement.
- Guides the club in planning a program for the year. The program should include: annual goals, educational programs for each meeting, social events, school support projects and community service or service learning activities.
- Recruits other volunteers to serve as activity leaders (assists with or is responsible for at least one activity).
- Coordinates transportation for parish contests or activities.
- Recruits project leaders to teach six lessons to a small group of 4-H members.
- Keeps the 4-H agent and school leadership informed of the club's activities.

## Ideas for Accomplishing the Job

Conduct an organizational meeting to tell members about the opportunities available in 4-H and to get member enrollment forms completed.

To inform members of the opportunities, you will need a copy of the parish 4-H calendar, which lists all parishwide activities. Depending on your experience, you may need to have a conference with your 4-H agent to discuss the calendar and become familiar with each activity. You should explain to the club members what you expect of them.

## Ideas From Leaders

Hold a pre-enrollment meeting to acquaint beginners with 4-H. Give them a letter that tells them and their parents of club expectations, rules, dues and opportunities.

You may want to consider conducting two organizational meetings at the same time, one for parents and one for club members. Parents can volunteer for duties ranging from project leaders to head of transportation, wherever their talents lie. Members are given a handout made by the leader that has the calendar of meetings and other pages that are blank at the time. Page 1 is for officers, Page 2 is educational activities (two per month), Page 3 is community service or service-learning activities (two per month), Page 4 is project talks (two per club meeting), Page 5 is demonstrations (two per club meeting) and Page 6 is project activities.

During the organizational meeting, Pages 1-5 are filled out; members volunteer for Pages 2-5.

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## Other Ideas

Tell parents about 4-H at an open house. Use parent volunteers to help with enrollment. Try to recruit other teachers to be project or activity leaders by giving teachers a 4-H T-shirt and asking them to wear it on club meeting days. Sign up returning members in May. Sign up new members in September at a meeting with parents. Send out a summary of what each project involves before the organizational meeting.

## Conducting Election of Officers

Peggy Adkins, University of Tennessee Extension staff, offers these suggestions for elections: Let members divide into two or three political parties. They can invent their own party names and nominate a slate of officers. Each officer nominated might even select a campaign manager to help with a big pre-election campaign.

Some clubs have nominations at one meeting, campaigns with posters and speeches between meetings, and elections at the second meeting. Another option might be to have volunteer-coordinated elections by secret ballot a day or a week after the nominating meeting. Many clubs nominate and elect at the same meeting.

An introduction of the explanation of the club election process might be to share information about people who do not have the opportunity to vote in their country. A letter from someone who has recently lost or gained the right to vote can be effective. Take advantage of any current event that emphasizes the importance of voting and the privilege we have in being able to vote.

Elections by secret ballot can save time if adult or teen volunteers count ballots while the other phases of the meeting continue.

Raising hands really takes a while if the group is large! Members seeking office could “file” for an office by a certain deadline, as local candidates do. Therefore only genuinely interested members will run.

Find, borrow or ask a senior clothing member to make an “Uncle Sam” costume. Let “Uncle Sam” explain the election procedure and conduct the election. George Washington, Abe Lincoln or any political celebrity could do just as well if “Uncle Sam” is not available.

## Ideas From Leaders:

All interested candidates are given job descriptions for their offices and are informed briefly of the expectations associated with positions. They must have their parents’ permission because it is an added responsibility possibly affecting schoolwork. Prospective officers must give short speeches, and secret ballots are used.

A club with members of all ages elects the following officers: president, two vice-presidents (one older and one younger), secretary, two treasurers (one older and one younger), three reporters (one for each paper), four community resource development chairmen (two older and two younger), four education chairmen (two older and two younger) and two telephone chairmen (one older and one younger). Elect officers in May for the next year to ensure some experience. Have students write a paper on why they would like to hold a particular office and vote by secret ballot.

## Other Ideas

Train your officers to take their jobs seriously and to perform their duties capably. This is absolutely vital. Impress on them the honor and the responsibility of being an officer.

Meet with the club officers at least one week ahead of the meeting to plan the agenda. Give them important information, announcements and suggestions for making the meeting special.

Strategize creative ways to meet in small groups rather than masses! Classroom meetings enhance parental involvement, enthusiasm, leadership opportunities and practical teaching methods. Active teaching methods are much easier to use in small group settings.

Have lots of busy club committees. Officers usually don’t have as many between-club responsibilities as they would like. Committees can help plan program segments, service projects, or even club award ceremonies.

## Working With Officers

Provide officers with guidance to vary the program each month. For instance, on a planning sheet, list learning activities like panels, speakers, contests, workshops, films, or skits on one side of the page and let officers list important topics (with suggestions from you, of course) on the other side of the page.

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A specific program idea for one meeting is to invite the oldest relative of a club member to one meeting for an interview. Invite all club members to write questions for the guest, and you can screen them.

Announcements are a vital part of each meeting, but sometimes they are a boring part. Make announcements memorable by distributing pretend “free tickets”; having them make notes on their elbows; hiding reminders in their shoes; letting members tape notes to each other’s backs; pulling symbolic items from a sleeve, a box or an unusual bag; doing a mock news report; or using riddles to stimulate interest in an announcement. Commercials are good, too.

Remember your purpose. We all learn more by doing than by listening. Take every chance to involve youngsters in active learning. The more interaction with the information, the more they learn. Branch out with volunteer help to have short workshops.

## Other Ideas From Leaders:

When planning meetings, remember the younger the group, the more leader-directed.

The leader helps by outlining or listing information that should be included in reports. The 4-H member writes the report in his or her own words. The leader may need to help the president and officers practice a mock meeting. Motions and business are often written and distributed to the general membership to help teach members how to participate and to encourage participation. For younger groups, a practice meeting for the general membership is advised.

Every meeting should include something fun. Have a recreation officer in charge of a game, puzzle or skit. The length of time for this is determined by the amount of business at that particular meeting. After-school parties and field trips make 4-H fun and pull the group together.

Provide information to parents about 4-H projects and activities.

## Parent Involvement:

Invite parents to club meetings. If parents or grandparents come to a meeting, they will likely become more supportive of 4-H activities.

A short note to a parent indicating that a child is scheduled to “perform” at a meeting is an excellent way to get parents to come. The performance may be a project talk, demonstration or having a part in a skit.

Do all you can to ensure that club members get the 4-H newsletter in their parents’ hands. Reproduce any information that would help parents to be able to help the child.

## Make sure parents know:

- What 4-H is and the opportunities it offers.
- What is expected of their son or daughter.
- The leaders’ names and their responsibilities.
- The time, place and topic of the 4-H meetings.
- Provide ideas of ways to help 4-H members.

Often we think only of benefits to members, but 4-H also contributes to the growth of parents and leaders. Help parents feel involved from the beginning.

Invite parents to attend and help with the organizational meeting. When you ask parents for help, clearly describe what is needed. Be sure the parent sees meaningful and challenging aspects to the responsibility.

## What can parents do to help?

All parents can help children select, finance and manage their 4-H projects. The younger children need a lot of help. Parents can hold project meetings in their homes to help a small group of members to complete the project. Parents have lots of different skills. Conduct a survey to learn about them and then include them as their skills dictate.

## Ideas From Leaders:

Ask parents to attend meetings and provide them with a copy of the parish newsletter and the club newsletter. Make parents aware of 4-H websites and social media so they can stay updated on 4-H program activities and events. Send a note or an email to parents asking, “What are some of your interests or talents? Share them with us.”

Allowing young people to have a part in planning their programs and activities is one way to strengthen 4-H. People support and take part in activities they help to develop. Being a part of the planning process helps the member to feel that the club’s program belongs to them. If the club is small, the whole club should plan the program. If not, then the club should select a planning committee representative of all groups in the club.

## The first step in the planning process is to select a planning committee.

The committee should be diverse enough to represent all groups in the club plus parents, leaders and officers. Taking

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a survey of members' needs and interests is the next step. This can be done with a suggestion box, brainstorming session, having members answer roll call with a suggestion for an activity, or other methods you may be familiar with. The third step is to have the committee meet to actually plan the program.

In the committee meeting, start with goals for the club and then look at suggested activities that will accomplish those goals. After the plan has been developed, present it to the club for approval. Make sure all club members understand the plan before asking for their approval. The next step is to allow parents and members to volunteer for responsibilities. Make sure people understand what needs to be done for the different activities. Depending on the age of your club members, it may be good to have an adult and a 4-H member for each activity.

The final step in program planning is to evaluate. Ask, "How are we doing?" This should be done throughout the year, and the plan should be modified as needed.

## **Ideas From Leaders:**

Watch the newspaper, church newsletter, social media and TV news programs for meaningful community service projects. Nursing home visits and cleanup campaigns get old; try to help the club members recognize other opportunities for service in the community.

Ideas for programs include using a calendar to check for presidents' birthdays, uncommon holidays, or other special days or weeks that could lead to a worthwhile educational program or project.

Other ideas for community service activities may come from chambers of commerce, tourist commissions or police juries. Let these groups know that 4-H'ers would like to be a part of solving some real community problem.

Ask for suggestions from teachers (school needs), ask your school principal or PTA president for ideas, contact local government for ideas or establish a student public relations committee. It would be great if members made the contacts.

Recruit other volunteers to serve as activity leaders (assist with or are responsible for at least one activity). Activity leaders may perform many different tasks to help the club, such as coordinating a community service project, accepting responsibility for a field trip, providing leadership for a club social, and helping with or accepting responsibility for any specific club activity.

## **When recruiting activity leaders, remember to be as specific as possible.**

It's a lot easier to get a "yes" if you ask, "Will you coordinate our club trip to the police jury meeting on November 3rd?" instead of asking "Will you help with the 4-H Club this year?" Depending on the activity, consider writing a job description for a particular job so you will be able to tell the person exactly what you want him or her to do.

## **Ideas From Leaders:**

Parents have contacts at their jobs, church, clubs or community. Use their contacts to locate speakers for educational programs or community service projects.

ASK, ASK, ASK. Send out a parent/volunteer interest list (include phone number, interests and availability); put together a directory of all volunteers and phone numbers; survey local service organizations, like Knights of Columbus, VFW, Red Cross, Kiwanis, etc.; form a community service advisory committee for your club and meet when needed.

## **Community Service and Service-Learning**

The most recent research on positive youth development emphasizes the value of community service and service-learning. Service-learning entails a longer commitment of six weeks or more. Youth provide service on a weekly or every other week basis. The youth plan their activities with the recipients of their services and with time for reflection and discussion built into the project.

Community service and service-learning can be done in schools. Introduce a reading buddies program or plant and maintain school grounds. Or, it can be done after school or on weekends. Adopt a grandparent in a nursing home, work in a soup kitchen, maintain an elderly couple's home (inside and out) or help out at an animal shelter or in an after-school setting for children. Many schools, senior citizens' homes, soup kitchens, after-school programs and animal shelters have volunteer coordinators who can plan and help coordinate the work of youth volunteers.

Coordinate transportation for parish contests or activities. Recruit a parent to serve as the transportation coordinator and have a list of possible helpers.

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## On Project Leaders

Recruit project leaders to teach six lessons to a small group of 4-H'ers. The following general information about project leaders may be helpful.

If I have only fourth and/or fifth grade students and they all take the same project, do I still need project leaders? Yes! This will provide small group help to your club members.

How many do I need for my club? Enough so every child may have some small group help. A group of eight to 12 is recommended.

Why are project leaders important? When learning takes place in small groups, children may learn much more than just the subject matter being taught. That is, they get to have personal contact with a caring adult and the opportunity to work with other children in the group.

Who can serve as a project leader? There is no one answer to this question, but some possibilities are: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, retired people, other adults and junior leaders. Where can I get a prospect list? One place would be from your 4-H'ers. Others might be the school secretary or other teachers.

## What approach should I use in recruiting?

Use a job description and to be specific. Common sense and research tell us that the more specific we are in our requests, the greater the chances of getting a prospective volunteer to say "yes."

Is it acceptable for the organizational leader also to serve as a project leader? It is acceptable and fairly common. It is, however, not advisable, simply because it leads to early burnout of that leader.

What kind of support will the organizational leader have to provide to enable a project leader to complete six or more lessons successfully? This will vary with different project leaders. At least make a few phone calls to see if the project leader needs anything is a good way to start. The organizational leader should try to provide whatever help is necessary to help the project leader to be successful.

Project lessons are available for all fourth through sixth grade projects and many seventh through eighth grade ones as well. Ask your 4-H agent. Children learn so much more when given the opportunity to actually do something as compared to just listening. This is much more possible in small groups. Sell your school principal on the idea of short project meetings to replace life skills teaming offered to many classes. Bring in several volunteers and have each of them work with five to eight children on their projects.

## 4-H Definitions

**LSU AgCenter.** One of the eight campuses of the LSU System, the AgCenter is made up of the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station and the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. The experiment stations conduct research, and the extension service takes the information from those experiments to the people of the state.

**Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.** This educational organization's objectives are to help people acquire knowledge, solve problems, make sound economic decisions and plan for the future. The Extension Service includes faculty members stationed on the campus of LSU in Baton Rouge and agents in each parish. This organization conducts the 4-H program.

**Agent.** An individual employed by the Cooperative Extension Service to provide educational opportunities for 4-H Club members. Extension agents also work with adults.

**Project.** A subject area in which a 4-H member has an interest and in which he or she conducts a series of learning activities. 4-H offers more than 40 projects with project books available for members to use in learning.

**Demonstration.** A "show and tell" speech where a club member shows others how to do something. (Example: bake a cake, groom a steer, make a terrarium, etc.)

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**Record Book.** A summary of learning situations and activities that a 4-H member has participated in during the year. It is kept for a year and includes written reports, photographs, news clippings, etc. It is not a scrapbook, however.

**State 4-H Office.** The headquarters for the 4-H Youth Development Program. It is located in Knapp Hall on the LSU-Baton Rouge campus.

**Adult Leader.** An individual who volunteers to assist with some aspect of the 4-H program; may be a club leader, project leader, activity leader, resource leader, etc.

**Organizational Club Leader.** A volunteer who organizes and supervises the operation of a 4-H Club. This person assists in planning club meetings and activities and provides leadership for the club's members.

**Activity Leader.** A volunteer who takes leadership for specific club or parish activity, such as a field trip, community service project, or club social.

**Junior Leader.** A teenage 4-H member who volunteers to assist younger 4-H members in certain aspects of their 4-H Club work.

**Project Leader.** A volunteer who works with a small group of 4-H members to help them complete one project.

**Members.** Youth who are in fourth through 12th grade who are actively involved with their 4-H Club and enrolled as an official member.

**Slogan:** "Learn By Doing."

**Motto:** "To Make the Best Better."

**Symbol:** A green four-leaf clover with a white "H" in each leaf.



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