



MAKING 4-H MEETINGS



EXCITING

A Guide for Leaders

It can be a challenge for 4-H leaders to plan exciting and engaging meetings. Variety in activities helps make 4-H meetings educational and enriches the 4-H experience for club members. Active club programs help create interest and provide inspiration and stimulation for members to learn through new experiences. There are many ways to incorporate active, fun learning into the 4-H Club experience.

Some 4-H clubs have monthly business meetings and project meetings in between. Some 4-H clubs have business meetings as a part of project meetings on an “as needed” basis. Some 4-H clubs plan educational field trips and activities (such as tours, guest speakers, family socials, judging activities, etc.) separate from business or project meetings.

How your 4-H Club is organized, and the activities you participate in are determined by school requirements (if it is a school club), the club leaders, members, and parents. You may want to appoint a program planning committee to help develop your yearly club calendar. This committee should be appointed early in the club year.

The 4-H Club Planning Worksheet is a helpful tool and is available from your parish 4-H office.



Examples of 4-H Club programs

When planning 4-H Club programs, be sure to incorporate some variety in learning experiences. New and different experiences arouse interest and attention in youth of all ages. Here are some examples of 4-H Club programs you and your program planning committee may want to consider.

Parents’ night. Ask the parents of your club officers (or others) to be in charge of one program. It may be serious or on the humorous side.

Club exchange. The entire club from one area visits another club. The visiting club usually presents the program. It may be helpful for a new club to visit an experienced club to become more familiar with the club meeting process.

Officer experience night. Let younger 4-H members “hold an office” at one meeting and be coached by club officers and junior/teen leaders. This provides an opportunity for members to try out an office they may want to run for later.

Future 4-H’ers night. Invite prospective 4-H members and their parents to the meeting. Have prospective 4-H members involved as “helpers” for officers, demonstrators, etc.

Community program. Involve local elected officials or presidents of community organizations to introduce them to 4-H with talks, skits, presentations, judging, etc. Ask them to talk about their organizations, too.

Club family picnic or campout. Hold the meeting during a family picnic or campout night with program emphasis on nature and conservation.

Office nomination/campaign/election/installation. Promote citizenship by having members “declare” intentions for various offices, and then “campaign” like a political convention, hold election by ballot, secure a voting booth from parish officials and have officers “sworn in” with an impressive ceremony.

Social events and holidays. Example: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas or Valentine’s Day, with the entire program centered around that holiday’s theme. Be sure to

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invite and involve the whole family. For a citizenship night, you could complete a small group community service project or invite a parish government official to talk about his or her job.

4-H awards trip winners. Invite delegates to National 4-H Congress, the Washington, D.C., trips or judging trips to give a pep talk to your club.

Project tour and club activity. Hold your club's meeting in connection with a project tour, picnic or themed party.

Steps in Program Planning

1. Analyze the Situation

Consider the following questions to help meet the needs of those involved (feel free to make your own notes).

- How many members are there? (A desirable ratio is one leader for six to 10 members.)
- Is there a wide range of interests and/or skill levels among members? If so, can they be grouped to focus on needs and interests?
- Are there other volunteers who could possibly assist and conduct project learning activities between club meetings?
- Is there time during school for project groups to meet or would they have to meet in the evenings or on weekends?
- What parish activities are available?
- What are other factors to consider?
- If the club met last year, consider evaluating both individual and club activities. Then ask yourself, "What did we like? What didn't turn out so well and needs improvement? Was everyone involved? What did we learn?"

2. Identify Program Goals

Identify targets or goals the club wishes to achieve. Goals are statements of what the members, leaders and parents want to accomplish individually and as a club. Don't set too many goals. You need to concentrate on just enough so it is a challenge to reach them.

One leader suggests that members should list and discuss their individual goals. For example, "What will we need to do as a group to help individuals achieve their goals?" This approach gives the groups a general direction.

Set SMART goals. Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely. Do you, as a 4-H leader, have

some goals that can be met through involvement in the 4-H club? List them on the worksheet provided and blend them with member and club goals.

Goal-Setting Exercises

Helping individual members state their project goals is sometimes a challenge. Some leaders help members identify goals by asking them, "What are some things you would like to be able to do in this project or club by the end of the club year that you can't do now?" Members are more motivated when they identify their own goals and assume responsibility for accomplishing their goals. The 4-H project leaders' guides, member project manuals, and record forms can help you help members set their goals.

In identifying club goals, incorporate member goals. Members, parents, and leaders have ideas about what they would like to accomplish as a club, and they need a chance to express them. Surveys give members a chance to share ideas and be an important part of the group.

There are many interesting ways to survey the membership at general meetings. A few of these are described below. (These ideas can be used at any time during the year for feedback from the members.)

Fish bowl (large group). Several people (about six) sit in a circle of chairs in the middle of the room and talk about the things they would like to do or have done in 4-H. The rest of the members listen to what is being said. Only the people in the circle talk. Any member outside the circle who wants to participate in the conversation must tap one of the people in the circle on the shoulder and take that person's place. Appoint someone to write down what is being said for use by the planning committee.

Sub groups (large group). Let everyone have a part in setting the goals by dividing them into groups of three. Each group has 10 minutes to write down all the ideas for everybody to see. Discuss the possibilities and eliminate the ones that do not meet the group needs right now. Vote on the remaining alternatives; those receiving the most votes become the goals of the group. Have someone record the list of goals for future use.

Suggestion box (large or small group). Decorate a suggestion box and bring it to the meeting; explain its purpose. Ask people to put suggestions for meeting topics in the box.

Sharing ideas (large or small group). Tape a large piece of paper to the wall. As people arrive, ask them to write at

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least one thing they would like to do in 4-H during the year. You can use markers or crayons in many colors to make it an enjoyable activity.

Rank order (small group). At the first meeting everyone sits in a circle. One volunteer acts as the recorder and writes down all ideas. Start the wheels turning by offering several goals; then encourage members to say what they would like to aim for as a goal. All ideas are good ideas at this stage. When all possible ideas are out, look over the list and discuss the pros and cons of each one. Then have each member privately rank them (numbering in order of choice-1, 2, 3, 4...) as his or her first choice of goals. Tally the results and discuss which ones will be group goals and then record goals.

Priming the Pump

Since it may be difficult for beginning club members to decide what they want to do, we are including goals that might “prime the pump” for your club to make every member feel important and develop more family participation by encouraging club members’ parents to attend the meeting and give their input.

The goals might be:

- To participate in community functions and/or to plan a community service or service-learning project.
- To enable every member to receive parent and leader assistance.
- To hold at least eight regular meetings.
- To have an average of 80% attendance of club members at all meetings and activities.
- To organize a club activity pertaining to health, nutrition, recreation, safety, career or personal development, or other areas relating to club projects and to members.
- To encourage each member to present a demonstration or illustrated talk at a club meeting.
- To encourage each member to hold an office or a committee responsibility.
- To present three programs other than 4-H items at meetings.
- To tour at least one point of interest.

3. Plan the Program

The next step is to plan activities, meetings or programs that will help reach individual and club goals. Since the direction is already set by the goals, ideas are limited only by the members’ imagination.

One way to plan your program is first to have the group identify activities that will help them reach their goals. Some goals of a project group might be to complete an activity per member, to present a lesson for younger brothers and sisters, to meet other people, and to share with and help each other.

Possible activities that would help members accomplish these goals:

- Attend an activity related to the project as a group. Ask the presenters to explain what they do and why.
- Demonstrate something about the project by members to other members.
- Secure a book or kit filled with ideas for different kinds of activities associated with their project.
- Project leader guides are designed with many activities for leaders and members to consider.
- After making a list of possible activities, get out a calendar and assign meeting activities to convenient dates. This creates a flexible plan for the program.

4. Record the Program

A program is most effective when it communicates to those involved. Develop a written plan that has meaning for you, the members and their parents. The 4-H Club Planning Worksheet in this publication is designed for such use. Record the goals established by the club by listing them at the top of the worksheet.

Good planning is the beginning of a successful club program. Planning gives people the opportunity to accept specific responsibilities at the beginning of the year and ensures that tasks will be shared. Make sure one person (member, parent or volunteer) is responsible for each task. Each job will get done if people follow through. Be sure the person responsible receives encouragement and support.

Perhaps you will want to make copies of your club’s program plan so each member may share it with his or her family. When the meeting date approaches, develop more details so club members know what they need to do before the club meeting.

5. Evaluate the Program

As the leader, you need to ask periodically, “How are we doing?” Planning alone is not enough. People must follow through with their responsibilities. Check with people to see that the plans are carried out and the details are communicated to others. You and the planning committee can help ensure that things happen by:

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- Providing each family with a calendar of club events.
- Encouraging them to post it for everyone to see.
- Announcing dates of meetings in newspapers.
- Checking with other people to see that the job is done.
- Evaluating progress.

You need to make sure people are doing their jobs and that your plan is still appropriate. At some time during the year you may need to modify your plan. At the end of the year, evaluate the total program.

Record your evaluations for next year. We hope you and club members will be pleased with the answers to these questions:

Were the club goals met?

Was the attendance at meetings and activities good?

Were members involved in activities?

Did parents take part in activities?

The process of evaluation can be a learning experience. Asking the question, "Why were the club goals met or not met?" can stimulate a meaningful self-analysis.

Tools to Help You Plan

This list will help you develop an effective program plan; many are available from your parish 4-H office.

4-H project literature (including record forms). Many contain meeting outlines you may wish to consider.

- Facts About 4-H (4-H 2860)
- List of parish program dates, such as clinics, achievement day, camps and fairs in which your members might want to participate.
- List of possible activities in which the club may participate periodically such as tours, parents' activities, picnics and parties.
- Your 4-H Meeting: The Best It Can Be. (4-H 2861).

Check with your local 4-H office or LSUAgCenter.com for available resources.

4-H CLUB PLANNING WORKSHEET

NAME OF CLUB



**CLUB GOALS FOR THE YEAR
OR SEASON**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

NAME OF LEADER(S)

MEETING DATE AND TIME

**WHAT TO DO BEFORE OUR
NEXT MEETING**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

**WHAT TO DO AT
THE MEETING**

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE



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