



Avoid distractions. People learn best when they are comfortable. Allow participants to be seated when practical. Have a loudspeaker or portable PA system available if needed. Encourage everyone to participate in activities. Handle conduct problems courteously, firmly and promptly. At the end of the program, give participants a chance to ask questions.

3. Review and evaluate

At the next club meeting, review what was learned at the program. Encourage club members to tell what they liked about the program and what they learned that was new. Help them understand the program and how it related to them. This will help to reinforce the learning process.

Have your program planning committee send thank-you letters to the speaker, host and others who helped out. Writing thank-you letters can help club members develop the habit of expressing appreciation. Sometimes letters should be written by each member. Other times, letters can be written by a committee chair and signed by all members. As club leader, you, too, may want to write a special speaker expressing your appreciation. A follow-up news story about the program may be appropriate. Include this story (or the highlights) in the secretary's book or club scrapbook, because it will be helpful in planning future club programs. Also include those things you would like to change or do differently next time. Good 4-H club programs don't just happen automatically. They take discussion, involvement and planning. Work with your members and their parents to develop a variety of interesting, fun and educational programs for your 4-H club. Learning can be fun!

Design your Own Clover!

I would like to learn...

We could help our community by...

My hobbies...

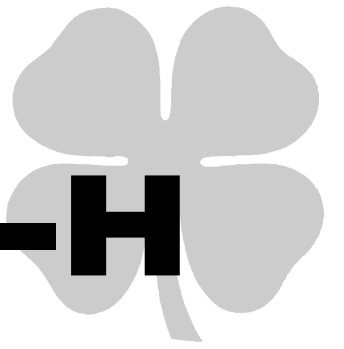
Just for fun I could...

Member _____

Program Planning Adapted from "Planning a 4-H Club Program," Oregon State University Extension Service

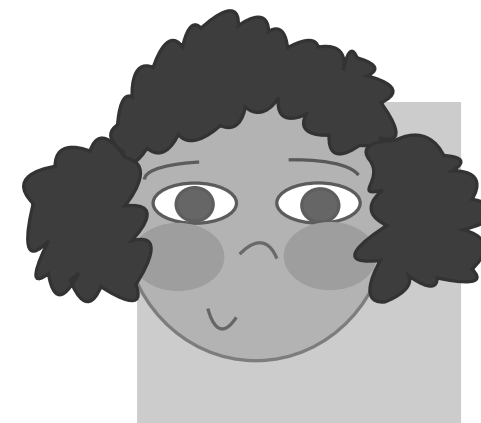
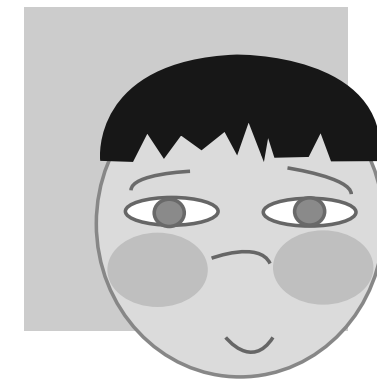
Visit our Web site: www.lsuagcenter.com

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
William B. Richardson, Chancellor
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station
William H. Brown, Vice Chancellor and Director
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service
Jack L. Bagent, Vice Chancellor and Director



Planning a 4-H Club Program

A Guide for Leaders





Welcome to the role of 4-H leadership!

As a new 4-H club leader, you may wonder where to begin. Experienced 4-H leaders tell us the most helpful task a new leader can do is develop a program plan. This guide will help you chart a direction with your club members.

A plan is like a road map: it provides direction toward a goal. The 4-H club program plan lists what the club plans to do, when it plans to do it and who is responsible for each part. The written plan can communicate with parents and members, too.

- providing a balance between project work, activities, recreation and service.
- involving parents in the program.

Things to Consider in Planning

The 4-H organizational club leader, 4-H members and their parents plan the club program. Your role as a leader in planning depends on the age and experience of the members. Younger members are less prone to plan than are older ones. If the members are younger, ask their parents to help identify several program alternatives. With older club members, set a general framework within which you feel comfortable, and let the members make plans within this framework.

Planning soon after the club is organized helps to channel initial member enthusiasm and expectations into concrete club goals. Expect some changes, because a planned program usually needs adjustments to accommodate new interests and circumstances. Some leaders make plans for a year; others plan for several meetings, evaluate and then plan more. As one leader advises, plan attainable goals in a short period so you can achieve the goals and so members (especially younger ones) will not get discouraged.

Special Program Ideas

The "Design Your Own Clover" handout is an idea from South Carolina 4-H. You can give a copy to all members and ask them to put an idea in each leaf of the clover. The planning committee can collect and summarize the ideas and use the results to help plan the club program.

Family "favorite game" night. Have members and their families bring a favorite game to a special club meeting held at night. It's best to have games that can be played at least once in a 30-minute time span. Playing together helps members learn to work together.

Presentation day. Have members who are preparing for parish presentation competition present their demonstrations or speeches. Invite an "outside" judge to give feedback. You also might have a presentation on "How to Give a Demonstration" given by an experienced member.

4-H graduation. Plan an impressive ceremony or a "This is Your 4-H Life" theme for graduating 4-H members,

followed by refreshments. This would be a good time to invite the whole family.

Member initiation. Plan a fun, positive ceremony carried out by junior/teen leaders to welcome new members. Be sure it is positive and that each child is made to feel an important part of the group.

Local club achievement night. Have each 4-H member exhibit the results of his or her project and discuss and encourage enrollment in that project. This activity could be held either in the fall when members are choosing projects or in the spring when members have completed projects.

All-club judging day. Each member in the club brings a judging class representing his or her project. For example, clothing, a class on seams or scissors; woodworking, a class on hammers, fasteners, etc.; beef, a class on halters, brushes, etc. Use official judging cards and have members, leaders, parents and guests judge each class. Talk about the classes and placings. This is also a good way to introduce new projects to 4-H members. Other ideas for fun and educational 4-H club programs:

Suggested speakers for club educational programs

- law enforcement official
- animal breed association representative
- Red Cross representative
- blood bank staff member
- parish health nurse
- Department of Wildlife and Fisheries personnel
- forestry staff member
- volunteer or paid firefighter
- police jury member
- junior leader club representative
- state or parish fair board member
- retired citizen
- probation officer
- service club or fraternal order member
- exchange student
- local business owner

Variety is the Spice... In the 4-H program we work with a wide range of youth from many different backgrounds, and those with different skills and abilities. From research and everyday observations, we can readily determine that a flexible and varied program is necessary to meet the various needs of youth.

As a 4-H leader, determine, with your club, what you want to accomplish (goal setting) and what experiences you are providing to meet those goals. You may need to help your program planning committee understand those goals as they identify programs for the yearly 4-H club calendar.

Other ideas for fun and educational 4-H club speakers: Remember: plan, participate, review and evaluate

1. Plan

Planning is the key to successful 4-H programs. Ask yourself: Is this program necessary? Does it have a purpose? What do we hope to gain? A special program or speaker is a method of teaching, an opportunity to learn. A program that results from the desire to see, do and learn is most effective. A special program should help accomplish the goals of your club.

Who plans a special club program? Remember that interest and learning result from involvement. Therefore, the club members should be involved in planning and making arrangements. For a club of junior members (grades 4-6), leaders and parents may need to make some of the arrangements. For a large club program or activity, you may want several subcommittees to plan and arrange for special set-up needs, food, publicity, etc.

At the meeting before a special program or guest speaker, announce and explain the upcoming program. Members and parents should know what they will see, hear and learn. This stimulates interest and sets the stage for better understanding, appropriate questions and more learning.

Be sure to publicize a special program before it occurs. A news story alerts the community to what 4-H is doing and stimulates interest. You may want to have a phone committee call members to remind families of special programs.

2. Participate

Meet at the scheduled time and place. Check to see that everyone is present and comfortable and that the presenter(s) has what he or she needs.

Be sure to have someone appointed to introduce a guest speaker at the beginning of the program, and thank the speaker at the end. If additional family members are attending, take the time for 4-H members to introduce them to the club. This is important in making family members feel a part of the activity.

Why Plan the Program?

Planning the program to meet the needs of those involved promotes participation. Good 4-H club meetings don't just happen; they occur when everyone takes part. Planning will benefit you and your club because it can result in:

- sharing commitment and responsibility in the club. If everybody invests in the planning process, they will demonstrate greater interest and commitment to carry out the program. It then becomes the "club's" program.
- communicating activities and dates to members and parents.
- teaching boys and girls to plan ahead, cooperate and compromise. This gives security and permanence to the club.
- preparing for meetings and activities by arranging for visual aids, speakers and other resources in advance.
- providing continuity from one meeting to the next rather than a series of isolated meetings.
- meeting needs and interest for members, leaders and parents.