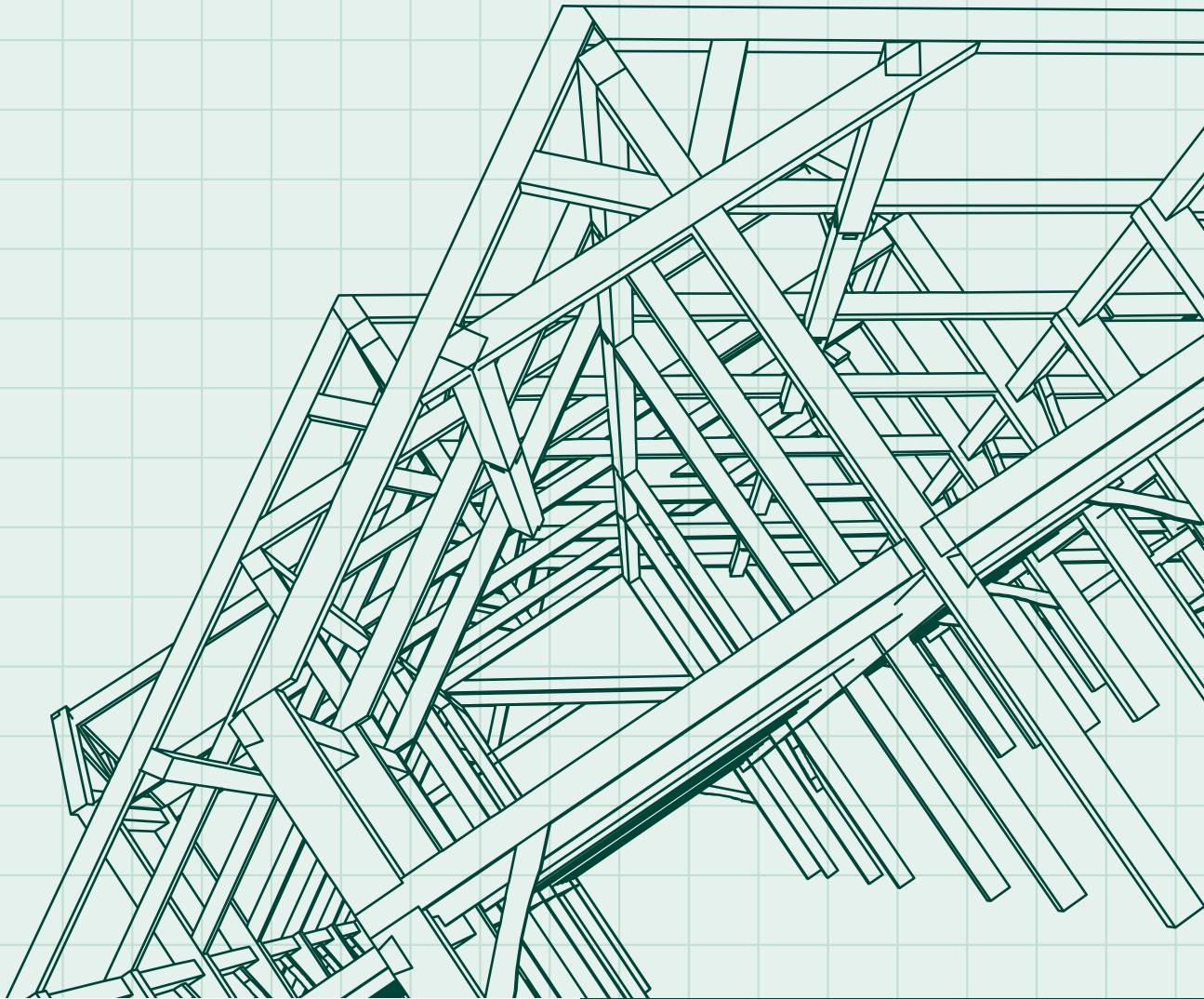


# 4-H Program Quality Framework

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OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY | 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



County: \_\_\_\_\_

Educator: \_\_\_\_\_



## Oklahoma State University | 4-H Youth Development

The county Extension office works as a team of Extension professionals and volunteers to provide dynamic program leadership for the 4-H youth development program resulting in a measurable positive impact on enhancing the life skills of youth, adults and volunteers. This work fulfills the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service mission statement “to develop science-based educational programs to help Oklahomans solve local issues and concerns, promote leadership and manage resources wisely” and the Oklahoma 4-H program vision: We make Oklahoma better by creating opportunities for youth to develop leadership, civic engagement, and life skills, empowering youth to be productive citizens.

Volunteer engagement, club management and 4-H program delivery are integral pieces in 4-H program retention and expansion.

This framework is based on the **4-H Professional Research, Knowledge and Competencies (PRKC) Model** [\[https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resources/4-H%20PRKC%202017%20Guide.pdf\]](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resources/4-H%20PRKC%202017%20Guide.pdf) and focuses on the following components of the 4-H program:

- Youth development
- Youth program development
- Volunteerism
- Access, equity, and opportunity:
- Partnerships
- Organizational systems

The model of 4-H program development and management is supported by the following tools provided to Extension professionals:

- Oklahoma 4-H for Century III – A Leadership model for 2000 and Beyond
- Volunteer Engagement and Management System Manual
- Club Management and Program Delivery System Manual
- Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Core Competencies

## 4-H Program Quality Framework

Below are the expectations for a high quality 4-H program. Items highlighted in **BOLD** indicate the minimum requirements of the program. Examples of goals and programming are included after each section.

### 1. **Club Management and Program Delivery** - The 4-H Club, Project/Special Interest Clubs, SPIN/Project Groups, School Enrichment, and outreach programs are integral for delivering positive youth development opportunities.

- ☐ **Each year, 4-H clubs complete the Oklahoma 4-H Charter Renewal process.** Extension educators work in partnership with club leaders to ensure minimal expectations are met, or a success plan is created.
- ☐ **The county establishes and communicates clear goals for both recruiting new 4-H members and retaining current ones.** These goals include a defined plan for tracking progress and evaluating the effectiveness of retention strategies. (i.e. Tracking attendance at club and project group meetings.)
- ☐ **Clubs follow OCES, university, state, and federal policies** (e.g., membership policies, youth protection standards, safety protocols, participation guidelines, non-discrimination policies, and financial practices)
- ☐ **Offer training for members, parents, and volunteers to help support strong, healthy, and successful 4-H clubs and project groups.** [e.g. 4-H On TRAC [Taking Revitalization to All Clubs], club management, leadership development for officers, project planning, etc.]
- ☐ **Regular communication with volunteers(s) and club officers to consider club health, growth, and successes** [i.e. club visits, telephone calls, newsletters, social media, email, etc.].
- ☐ **Collaborate with schools to conduct school enrichment programming or train school staff to incorporate 4-H curriculum into the classroom.**
- ☐ County educator(s), 4-H volunteers, and community leaders develop and implement plans to start new 4-H clubs, SPIN clubs, and local/county project groups to expand opportunities for youth engagement and retention.
- ☐ Clubs and county 4-H program provide a variety of outreach efforts to bring 4-H programs to new youth and families who have not been involved before.
- ☐ Volunteers use age-appropriate activities and ensure a safe youth-to-adult ratio when working with Cloverbuds.

#### Example Goals:

- With support from a team of local volunteers and 4-H members, plan and carry out a 4-H recruitment event in two different communities each year with the goal of increasing membership 5%.
- In cooperation with a team of local volunteers and 4-H members, plan and carry a long-term club retention plan for two clubs each year with the goal of retaining 75% of the membership.
- Host an Open House or similar event in strategic community locations—such as libraries, business, farmers markets, school, church, Boys & Girls Clubs, or YMCAs—to promote 4-H and recruit new families, members, and volunteers, with a goal of increasing county membership by 5%.
- Meet with the club leader(s) of each chartered 4-H club twice a year.
- Use the 4-H On TRAC (Taking Revitalization to All Clubs) planning process to help each club create a monthly program that is fun, well-organized, and educational.

- Publish four quarterly newsletters featuring educational content along with timely activities and event dates, locations, and guidelines. Follow up with coordinated social media posts and news releases.
- Develop school enrichment brochure/catalog to distribute to all schools.

#### **Example Programming:**

- In July, host an educational leadership program for local club leadership treams and their club leaders to strengthen youth-adult partnerships, encourage goal setting, and promote self-responsibility amount members and families.
- Present a club program for youth and parents at club meetings this year, focusing on developing and documenting 4-H project work.
- Each year, deliver a 4-H curriculum-based in-service training for teachers in schools. Provide ongoing support throughout the year and evaluate the program's impact on both youth and educators.

2. **Volunteer Readiness and Education** – **We strive to cultivate a culture of adult and teen volunteer leadership that supports positive youth development providing meaningful 4-H experience in their communities and at the county level.** Extension educators use the ISOTURE model—Identify, Select, Orient, Train, Utilize, Recognize, and Evaluate—as the framework for engaging, managing, coordinating, and supporting the work of volunteers.
  - ☐ **New volunteers must complete all OCES and 4-H certification requirements within 90 days of applying.** This includes the Extension volunteer application, Working with Minors (WWM) and Respecting Civil Rights training, New Volunteer Orientation, and a background check. (Requirements may be subject to change.)
  - ☐ **Returning volunteers must be re-enrolled and complete a review of the Working with Minors (WWM) and Civil Rights training by December 1 each year. Additionally, all volunteers are expected to complete four (4) continuing education units (CEUs) annually** [CEU may include topics such as Positive Youth Development (PYD), subject matter training, role expectations, club management, leadership, etc.]
  - ☐ **Develop and communicate an annual continuing education plan for adult and teen volunteers, with details such as dates, topics, descriptions, and location.**
  - ☐ **The volunteer base reflects the community’s demographics.**
  - ☐ Maintain existing volunteer base with an ongoing plan for volunteer attrition, volunteer recognition, and evaluation.
  - ☐ Provide meaningful opportunities for teens to serve on county committees alongside adult volunteers, ensuring youth voice is included in planning and decision-making.
  - ☐ Episodic volunteers—such as helpers, judges, and fair helpers—receive a position description, appropriate orientation or training, and complete the Non-Certified Adult Volunteer Risk and Release of Claims and Publicity Release (Form 5: Statement of Understanding).
  - ☐ Volunteers are encouraged and supported in actively participating in training opportunities at the county, district, state, and regional levels to strengthen their skills, build confidence, and increase their impact within the 4-H program.
  - ☐ Have a structured plan to conduct exit interviews with volunteers to improve future volunteer experiences.

### Example Goals:

- Conduct a monthly review of volunteer records in ZSuite, update training completions, and communicate with volunteers to support their progress in completing enrollment and continuing education requirements.
- By July, publish the annual continuing education calendar for adult and teen volunteers, including key details such as dates, topics, session descriptions, and locations to support planning and participation.
- Schedule one face-to-face New Volunteer Orientation session each fall and spring, with the option for one-on-one meetings as needed to accommodate individual schedules and ensure all volunteers are prepared to serve.
- Identify the continuing education needs of volunteers for the next program year through observation, volunteer meetings, and a formal survey.
- Develop and implement a volunteer engagement and management process for one county event, empowering volunteers by delegating the planning and execution of responsibilities under the guidance of the Extension educator.

### Example Programming:

- Conduct six bimonthly volunteer continuing education sessions throughout the year, using insights gathered from the previous year's observations, meetings, and survey results to ensure relevance and impact.
  - Develop a timely communication and marketing strategy to increase participation in annual continuing education: i.e. promotional calendar, marketing materials, launch targeted outreach 6 weeks prior to first session, and track engagement metrics and adjust messaging to improve participation.
3. **Engagement and Sustainability - Strong advisory groups, youth and adult leadership teams, and active committees are essential for planning, delivering, and evaluating 4-H programs and events at the club and county levels. Sustaining volunteer engagement requires effective training, ongoing support, and strong organizational management provided by the Extension educator and 4-H club leader.**
- ☐ **Adult and teen leadership groups** (such as Parent-Volunteer Association, volunteer councils and 4-H youth councils) **and local club officer teams are equipped, supported, and engaged to play an active role in planning, running, and reviewing local and county 4-H programs, activities, and events.**
  - ☐ **County staff actively foster youth-adult partnerships, ensuring that youth voices are not only welcomed but meaningfully integrated into program planning and decision-making at both the local club and county levels.**
  - ☐ **Teens have leadership roles in their 4-H clubs, serving as mentors and role models for younger members.**
  - ☐ Specialized program and project committees—such as those for public speaking, food science, livestock, horse, shooting sports, fair, camp, and day camp—provide focused leadership and guidance for planning and implementing specific events, activities, and initiatives.
  - ☐ Adult and youth volunteers are provided with meaningful growth opportunities to develop their leadership skills by serving on advisory groups, boards, leadership teams, and event committees at the district, state, and regional levels.

### Example Goals:

- Actively involve the Parent-Volunteer Association/Council in the oversight of the 4-H program by establishing county-level committees, participating in budget development, and engaging in regular monthly meetings—ensuring shared leadership and community-driven decision-making.
- Maintain year-round, intentional engagement in identifying and recruiting individuals for the Program Advisory Committee who reflect the county’s demographics and geographic diversity. Purposefully seek out new voices and fresh perspectives to ensure the committee provides meaningful guidance on how 4-H programming can best meet evolving community needs.

### Example Programming:

- Conduct a series of Youth-Adult Partnership trainings for Club Leaders, Project Leaders, Teen Leaders, and Volunteer Council members.
- Conduct a four-part training series with the Teen Leader club to build skills in planning and leading programs and workshops. (i.e. Building Leaders for Tomorrow, Teen Action and Growth, Picture Perfect YOUTH, etc.)
- Meet with PVA [Parent-Volunteer Association] officers to plan business meetings. Including informal education that will foster ownership and long-term impact of the organization.

4. **Quality Learning Experiences- Quality learning experiences at the county level foster positive youth development by supporting 4-H members, volunteers, clubs, and project work—while emphasizing strong communication skills and meaningful service-learning opportunities.**

- ☐ Learning experiences are designed to reflect youth interests and support local club project groups and individual project work through project leader training, “project” related programming, clinics, etc.
- ☐ Intentionally design learning experiences that build knowledge and skills by applying 4-H educational models such as life skills development, experiential learning, and the 4-H Essential Elements.
- ☐ The impact of learning experiences is measured and reported using appropriate evaluation tools.
- ☐ Clubs encourage each member to develop a range of communication skills—which can include writing, public speaking, visual displays, graphic design, digital media, and print technologies.
- ☐ Clubs conduct at least one service-learning project.
- ☐ Learning experiences are planned, delivered, and evaluated in partnership with adult and youth volunteers.
- ☐ Members are supported and encouraged to participate in service-learning projects and communication opportunities at the county, district, state, or national levels.

### Example Goals:

- As a result of intentional learning opportunities, participation in the county communication contest will increase by 5% allowing youth to apply and showcase what they’ve learned.
- Offer at least one workshop for each major livestock species—Beef, Sheep, Goats, and Swine—to support learning for 4-H youth, parents, and volunteers.
- Through a series of trainings, prepare Teen Leaders to deliver the *Picture Perfect YOUTH* program each month at the Boys & Girls Club, building their confidence and teaching skills while engaging new audiences in meaningful learning.
- As a result of intentional learning opportunities, clubs planning and conducting a service-learning

project will increase by \_\_\_\_ %.

- Partner with 4-H and community volunteers to plan and conduct a series of summer food science workshops and evaluate impact.
- Work with a team of youth and volunteers to develop and implement a plan that encourages 4-H members and clubs to participate in State 4-H Service Projects, setting “their” goal of raising raise \$\_\_\_\_ for Change 4 Change and collect \_\_\_\_ lbs. of aluminum tabs for Ronald McDonald House.

### Example Programming

- Master Sewing Volunteers will plan and deliver \_\_\_\_ workshops.
- Partner with 4-H and community volunteers to plan and conduct a series of summer food science workshops and evaluate impact.
- Conduct Public Speaking workshops for \_\_\_\_ 4-H clubs.
- Conduct a series of targeted trainings for adult and teen project leaders to build their skills and provide resources for leading local 4-H project groups and/or club programming, with a focus on developing specific communication skills.
- Conduct service-learning training with adult and teen project leaders in each club so they can assist the club in planning and conducting a “service-learning” project that meets a community need.

5. **Recognition** - **Recognition is an essential part of the 4-H experience, celebrating the growth and accomplishments of youth and adults.** County programs actively apply the National 4-H Recognition Model—emphasizing cooperation, participation, standards of excellence, self-set goals, and competition—to ensure recognition is meaningful, inclusive, and motivating.

- ☐ **Timely information about award and recognition opportunities is shared with members, families and clubs through newsletters, news releases, websites, and social media to increase awareness and participation.**
- ☐ **Project Recognition:** An annual 4-H activity/event/showcase/contest is held to highlight and celebrate members’ growth and accomplishments in a specific project area—such as public speaking, Interior Design & Construction, STEM, or food science—providing youth with an opportunity to showcase what they’ve learned and created through their 4-H project work.
- ☐ **Achievement Program:** An annual event (e.g., Banquet, Reception, Achievement Night) is held to recognize the accomplishments of 4-H members, clubs, and volunteers.
- ☐ **Volunteer Recognition:** An annual activity/event is held to recognize adult volunteers for their service.
- ☐ **Individual Recognition:** Members and volunteers are recognized for special accomplishments through social media, newspaper, electronic communication, or personal letters/cards, as appropriate.
- ☐ **Stakeholder Involvement:** Elected officials, OSU Extension administrators, and other stakeholders are invited to support recognition efforts by attending events or providing certificates, resolutions, or other acknowledgments, as appropriate.

### Example Goals:

- Work with volunteers to create a new 4-H project recognition activity in a specific area where one is needed or has been lost.
- Annually recognize a Volunteer of the Year and/or Lifetime Volunteer of the Year at the county level and submit the honoree for the Oklahoma 4-H Salute to Excellence awards.
- Collaborate with teen leaders to plan and conduct a volunteer recognition program during National Volunteer Month in April.

- Develop and publish a county handbook that includes rules and guidelines, calendar of dates, special awards, score sheets with *standards-of-excellence*, etc.
- Provide youth participants with a certificate or other form of recognition at the conclusion of educational program/service-learning activity for their *participation and cooperation*.

**Example Programming:**

- Provide project work training for youth and adults that emphasizes goal setting, staying focused on *self-set goals* and adjusting goals as needed to complete quality project work.
- Offer a series of volunteer trainings on the 4-H Recognition Model and how to apply them in 4-H programs and project work.
- Host a fun, social event to recognize county adult volunteers—such as a picnic, game night, or appreciation dinner.
- County 4-H Achievement Banquet/Awards Program.

**6. Communication & Marketing - A clear and consistent communication and marketing system is in place to regularly engage members, families, volunteers, and the community through tools like ZSuite, newsletters, calendars, email lists, websites, and social media.**

- ☐ **The data management system is regularly updated to support timely and accurate communication with youth, parents, and volunteers.**
- ☐ **A 4-H newsletter (print or electronic) is consistently published and distributed at least quarterly to members, parents, and volunteers, providing a timely calendar to encourage participation.**
- ☐ **An annual program calendar is developed and distributed to clearly communicate key dates, locations, and events—enabling families to plan their schedules.**
- ☐ **A county website and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X) are maintained and used to communicate with 4-H participants and families.**
- ☐ **Regular news releases are shared with local media to promote 4-H activities and events.**
- ☐ **A clear marketing plan is in place to promote 4-H programs, supported by the creation and distribution of promotional materials (e.g., flyers, brochures, rack cards) to raise awareness and support recruitment.**
- ☐ **Staff are accessible and responsive to volunteers, members, and parents through in-person meetings, phone calls, and email communication.**
- ☐ The county 4-H program actively participates in community events such as youth fairs, parades, back-to-school nights, and other local gatherings to increase visibility and engagement.
- ☐ The 4-H program maintains a presence on local advisory boards and community organizations (e.g., YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, libraries, Parks and Recreation) to strengthen partnerships and community connections.
- ☐ Staff regularly refer to and use available resources (e.g., OCES website, Hub, 4-H Weekly News, *Focus on Youth*, Extension News, etc.) to support effective communication, program delivery, and to keep clientele well-informed.

**Example Goals:**

- Develop and implement a 4-H social media plan using Facebook, Instagram, and X to share program updates.
- Involve youth in creating and managing social media content to encourage youth voice.
- Actively use ZSuite features—such as the Mailjet, calendar, announcements, shared files, etc.—to communicate with families.



- Publish a quarterly newsletter in January, April, July, and October.
- Send bi-weekly email updates to parents and volunteers.
- Create and distribute a “Volunteer Voice” newsletter for club leaders that includes educational content, program updates, and key information to support their roles.
- Submit timely news releases to local newspapers to promote 4-H events, community service, and achievements.
- Regularly update and maintain the county 4-H website with current information, documents, and resources.

#### **Example Programming:**

- Coordinate a visible 4-H presence at key community events such as county fairs, local festivals, the library, and school open houses to promote the 4-H program and recruit new volunteers.
- Deliver presentations to civic groups (e.g., Rotary, Lions Club, PTA) to raise awareness of 4-H opportunities and community impact.
- Use social media scheduling tools to plan and distribute consistent content across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X.

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