

Leading a Project Group

Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Development Series



Leading a Project Group

Inside this issue:

<i>Leading a Project Group</i>	1
<i>The Teaching Session</i>	3
<i>Experiential Model</i>	3
<i>The First Project Meeting</i>	4
<i>Project Meeting Checklist</i>	5
<i>Help for You, The Project Leader</i>	6
<i>Program Planning Outline</i>	7

SPIN

New term being used for a project group or a project club. SPIN means "Special Interest."

YOUR ROLE

As a project leader you have an excellent opportunity to help young people grow and develop in a rapidly changing world. The most important qualities of a project leader are:

- A strong belief in the basic worth of each individual as a human being
- A commitment to the personal development of each individual
- The ability to relate to children, parents and other volunteers
- An understanding that leadership can be fulfilling for both adults and youth

YOUR REWARD

The most important qualities brought to the job are caring about young people and the willingness to give of your time and knowledge to help each young person develop his/her potential. You will see many "things" created and planned during your time as

a project leader. The quality of the finished product will always be secondary to how the youth - and you - have grown.

Yes, be assured the experience will allow you to grow along with the 4-H'ers. The experience will be positive, satisfying and even challenging at times. Remember that attitude and enthusiasm are contagious. Enjoy yourself and let the young people know it!

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

A Project Leader's Role

- Isn't mere information giving
- Isn't mere entertaining
- + Is creating a learning environment
- + Is structuring a learning experience
- + Is helping the learner interact with information

Know the Project Objectives:

Become familiar with the project and its objectives.

Project Leader Position Description can be downloaded at <http://4h.okstate.edu/for-educators/volunteer-management-system/volunteer-position-descriptions-2015-revisions>

Obtain the member manuals and leader guides from the County Extension Office, club leader or online.

Organize the Group:

With member/family assistance determine the time and location of the project meetings.

If your group is a single project club or a special interest group, you may decide to elect officers who will conduct any necessary business meetings.

Encourage and Motivate Members:

There are many ways to encourage good project work and to contribute to the personal development of each young person. Ribbons and awards are

“Members should be taught what goals are and how to work toward the goals.”

only one type of reward and not always the most successful.

Be sensitive to the feelings of each member. See that he/she feels comfortable and accepted. Be sure to make time to work individually with each young person. Help the member learn to evaluate his/her progress in comparison to his/her earlier efforts rather than to the work of their peers.

4-H Recognition Model:

The 4-H Program encourages a balanced use of five accepted forms of recognition. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.105 Recognition Model*)

- Participation—praises people for taking part in the experience
- Progress Toward Self-Set Goals—learning to set goals and planning a way to achieve the goals
- Achieving Standards of Excellence—set standards for evaluating a product or skill
- Peer Competition—there are winners and losers
- Cooperation—recognizing people who work toward a common goal



Involving Parents:

Parents need to understand that they are essential to the guidance and support of project work at home. The child must practice what is learned at the meetings.

Invite parents to attend the first project meeting.

Encourage their participation and assistance through education, transportation, refreshments, etc.

Parents need to be involved with determining how much time and money is reasonable for their family situation.

Member Ownership:

As much as possible, involve your members in planning the program. Young people will have a greater commitment to the program if they have been involved in the planning.

The last page of this handout is a Program Planning Outline. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.106 “Planning a Lesson”*).



The number of meetings will depend on the type of project and the goals of the young people. Keeping a simple record of each meeting will help plan future meetings.

If you are the organizational leader for a single project/SPIN club, the club must annually meet all of the guidelines for a Chartered 4-H club. These guidelines are noted on the charter application. Information on chartering and maintaining a charter is available from the County Extension Office.

Records:

Record keeping is one of the most important 4-H life skills taught through project work. “Competition” should not be the motivation for learning record keeping. All youth should set goals and record what they learn as part of the educational process. Record keeping can be as simple as keeping a journal. Spend time teaching youth what to record in their journal—goals, things done to accomplish goals, skills and knowledge learned, special stories that happen

along the way and what they felt in the process of doing the project and completing the goal. Some projects will require more extensive records than others.

Each county has a 4-H project record or medal form, which is completed by the member for medals, honors and recognition. Forms are available through the county office. If competing for awards, it is important to know deadlines and understand any guidelines related to record keeping.

Setting Goals:

Parents and volunteers guide members in setting goals. Members should be taught what goals are and how to work toward the

goals. They should be provided with an understanding that we don't always reach a goal and when we don't, teach them how to determine the reason why and then how to re-set the goal so the goal is obtained.

Group goals, such as citizenship projects should be set with consideration for the group and the individuals' abilities. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.110 Goal Setting*)

Teaching Skills and Life Skills:

Successful 4-H work is a cycle—do, reflect and apply. The cycle is called the “Experiential Learning Model.” All materials and experiences are based on the use of the model. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.118 Experiential Learning*)

A variety of teaching techniques will be needed to keep the interest of all youth. Not everyone learns the same. (See *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.103 “Teaching Techniques,” 4H.VOL.102 “Understanding Boys and Girls” and 4H.VOL.135 Life Skills*)

Participation:

The number one reason for participating in a project group is because the child wants to learn. As a result, they tend to stay enrolled in 4-H longer and have a greater interest in 4-H. This interest tends to spark an interest in participation at other levels of the program. Preparing projects for competition should be secondary to a safe environment for learning.

4-H competitive events are intended to be educational. When a member decides to “compete” the child is putting their skill and

knowledge out there for another to evaluate. As a project leader you need to prepare youth for competitive events.

1. Explain competition and the act of judging. Help them to understand how one can learn from the experience.
2. The quality and level of skill and knowledge put into a project will be much higher so the end product illustrates what the child learned/ mastered.
3. Explain the method of judging being used at the contest. They need to know 4-H exhibits are evaluated against a set of standards or specific criteria.



I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework. ~Lily Tomlin as "Edith Ann"

Experiential Learning Model

This is the “Learn by Doing” aspect of 4-H. Learn by doing means 4-H is teaching participants through the experiential learning process.

1. The participant experiences the activity
2. Shares the results
3. Processes the experience through discussion, reflection

- and analysis
4. Generalizes about the experience by relating it to real life experiences, and
5. Applies what was learned to similar or different situations or practices

Experiential learning is a cycle. Participants do, reflect and apply the information continually

building upon what they have learned. Through both the process and experience participants are developing life skills. (Pfieffer and Jones, 1985)

To learn more about effectively using the model see *Volunteer Development Series—4H.VOL.118 Experiential Learning*.



An Environment for Learning

A major portion of teaching project work will involve education. Educational experiences will include a review, new material, a “hands on” experience and a time for reflection and application. Consider incorporating each of the following in a project meeting.

Progress Reports:

Progress reports give the volunteer an opportunity to check progress since the last meeting. This can be done in individual conferences or group sharing. The purpose for progress reports is to discuss difficulties or challenges encountered and keep youth motivated and focused.

Progress reports can naturally lead to a formalized public speaking opportunity. As youth

become comfortable sharing they formally organize what is learned in the form of a speech/demonstration/working display. (*See Volunteer Development Series, 4H.VOL.104 “Public Speaking”*)

Review Materials:

A review allows the volunteer to determine what is being learned and retained. It also provides a common starting point and leads into new information.

New Information:

Provide instruction, demonstrate and then let the youth experience it for themselves. Take time following the “Do,” “Reflect” and “Apply.”

Activity Period:

In some projects, members will do most of their project

work at home. No matter the project, always include learning activities that stimulate interest and provide variety. Members might:

- Work on a specific project/activity
- Participate in judging experiences
- Take a tour or field trip
- Participate in a discussion group/committee work
- Plan/practice public speaking or other forms of communication
- Update journal/records

Summarize:

Debriefing is important. Review what was learned and how it applies to life. Share what will be done at the next meeting. Give assignments for the next meeting. Consider the members’ age levels, abilities and interests.

Business Session

Sometimes you will need to plan time for a business meeting. If your project is part of a multi-project /community club, contact the President and club leader and ask that a topic be placed on the agenda. In a single project club or special interest group, the group can handle business issues when necessary. Be sure business meetings are well publicized to members.

The First Project Meeting

Plan carefully for your first project meeting. It may be your first contact with the members and their parents. Good beginnings and first impressions will pay off with a high level of interest. The Program Planning Outline and the Project Meeting Checklist on the next two pages should be helpful.

As members arrive, have examples and literature available to peak interest.

Consider an icebreaker or activity to introduce everyone. When possible tie it to the subject matter.

Present an interesting preview of the project work. You might present a demonstration, have an experienced 4-H member tell about the project or have members work on a simple activity.

Briefly introduce journaling and explain the expectation that everyone

set goals for their project. Goal setting should be a joint venture of the member, parent and leader to insure success and commitment.

At the second or third meeting when the child is more familiar with the project and they have discussed it at home, let them record their goals in the journal.

During the first meeting there will be some business

Help for You, The Project Leader



Oklahoma 4-H Literature—
<http://4h.okstate.edu/literature-links/lit-online>

LITERATURE

- 4-H Project Leader's Guide
- 4-H Member's Project Manual/Guide/Literature
- Viable and reliable materials produced by another State 4-H program or organization.
- Cautiously use internet sources as the information may not be research based or may not coincide with the project objectives.
- Use reliable and respected books and magazines. Be cautious using trends, fads and celebrity endorsements that do not coincide with the project objectives.

COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

Contact the Extension Educator(s) in your county Extension office.

PARENT-VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Training may be organized through a club, County Extension Office or at the district or state level. Training gives volunteers an opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas.

TEEN LEADERS

In most project groups, teen leaders will be a valuable addition. Contact your club leader or Extension Educator(s) for information on how to obtain a teen leader for your group.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Parents and other community members are often very willing to share their skills and time with young people. Get to know your parents and their interests. ASK for help. Amazing things happen when you ask!

It may even be that someone does not have the skill but they are willing to learn right along with the kids.

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Program Planning Outline

Program _____

Time _____

Location _____

Date _____

What I want to accomplish:

Materials and equipment needed:

What tasks need to be done in advance:

How will the members participate:

Assignments for next meeting (s):

Business Meeting Agenda: