



## **Welcome to Wisconsin 4-H.**

Starting a 4-H Club is important work. Here are answers to the most frequently asked questions about starting a 4-H club. If you are a new leader in an ongoing club, you will find this information useful, too.

## **What are the requirements for a 4-H club?**

The University of Wisconsin-Extension (UW-Extension) grants 4-H Club Charters. This formally recognizes a club's affiliation with 4-H, and grants that club the permission to use the 4-H club name and emblem. To be a chartered 4-H Club in Wisconsin, the following must be met and maintained:

- Club Name
- Five or more youth from at least 3 families
- Adult leadership that has been approved through the Youth Protection process
- An educational plan which meets the purposes of the 4-H program
- Youth involvement in leadership and decision making
- Meet on a continuing basis and have operating guidelines.
- Open to any youth eligible for 4-H membership, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, disability, ancestry, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status.

## **Frequently Asked Questions on Starting a New 4-H Club:**

- What are the requirements for your new 4-H club?
- How big should a 4-H club be?
- How are 4-H members and volunteers recruited?
- Where does a 4-H club meet?
- How often will a 4-H club meet?
- Is the 4-H club name important?
- How does a group enroll as an official 4-H club?
- What about project materials?
- Are there enrollment fees for 4-H membership?
- What about insurance?

## **How big should a 4-H Club be?**

4-H clubs must have at least five members. There is no maximum number. This often depends on the number of youth that are interested and the number of volunteers involved in the club and how they share the leadership. What is most important is that 4-H members have opportunities for learning and leadership.

Teen leaders can serve in club leadership roles. Having a meeting space that support the size of the club and is accessible for all members is important. Recruit additional

leaders as the 4-H membership grows.

## **How are 4-H members and volunteers recruited?**

It is easy to recruit new 4-H club members. If there are exciting things happening in the club, the word will get out. Start with your own children and other youth you know and their friends. You can contact your local schools or community organizations for potential members. Your local UW- Extension Office may have the names of young people who want to join a club in your area. The county 4-H Youth Development Staff also may have a recruitment program or other ideas for recruiting new club members. Youth are eligible to join 4-H from 1st through 13th grade. Some counties allow Kindergartners to join. This may vary from county to county.

## **How are 4-H members and leaders recruited?**

It is important to recruit other adults to help with 4-H club leadership. Parents of 4-H members are often willing to help. Other possibilities include senior citizens, 4-H alumni, friends and local experts or people with a special area of interest they can teach. UW-Extension has initiated a screening process for any volunteers involved directly with youth. This procedure includes

completion of the Wisconsin Volunteer Application, background checks and a Youth Protection Orientation. Make sure you discuss the volunteer screening process and leader training and support with your county 4-H Youth Development Staff before organizing a 4-H club.

Older youth leaders can also serve in club and project leadership roles. This is a valuable learning experience for both youth leaders and 4-H members.

### **Where do 4-H clubs meet?**

Where the 4-H club meets will probably be determined by the size of your club and available local meeting places. Consider school buildings, churches, fairgrounds, town halls, community rooms, etc. Many community groups and other organizations are willing to allow their facilities to be used for 4-H activities. Facilities used for 4-H club meetings and activities should be accessible so all 4-H members and leaders can attend.

### **How often does a 4-H club meet?**

The decision on how often your club meets should be determined by the needs and composition of the 4-H club and its members. Although a 4-H club should meet a minimum of six times a year, it is recommended that they meet ten or more times a year. Many 4-H clubs meet monthly, but you might want to consider meeting more frequently than that, especially if you have a club of young members. Frequent

meetings can benefit a club by helping to maintain a high level of enthusiasm and keeping the members more involved. Some 4-H clubs alternate formal meetings with less formal project sessions or social activities.

### **Is the 4-H club name important?**

Each 4-H club is a unique group of individuals who work together toward common goals. It gives members a sense of belonging. A 4-H club name can reflect the interests of the club members, relate to the project area the club members participate in or the geographic area where members live. Allow all the members to participate in selecting a name for the club. 4-H does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap. Therefore, please be sure that the club name selected reflects that all are welcome to membership. Consider whether potential club members might shy away just because of a misleading name. "The Sewing Susan's" would discriminate against or discourage boys from participating. "The Clever Clovers" might be a better idea. Help members understand that the name they choose will be used to identify their 4-H club at the community, county, state level and beyond. Trendy names may not stand the test of time.

Work with your local 4-H Youth Development Staff to have the name selected by the club approved. An approval process insures the appropriateness of a name

and avoids the duplication of an existing 4-H club name.

### **How does a group enroll as an official 4-H club?**

Your county UW Extension Office has the necessary club charter application. A charter is required for every 4-H club so it recognized as 4-H group and can use the name and emblem. The charter must be renewed annually. The office will also have enrollment forms for members and leaders. Official enrollment is necessary for participation in any 4-H activity and for you to have the rights and protection of a 4-H volunteer.

The 4-H year begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year. All continuing 4-H members and leaders must re-enroll every year. New members may join 4-H at any time during the year, but counties may have deadlines for enrollments in order to participate in specific activities. It is beneficial to both the 4-H club and its members to enroll early in the year to gain the most from the 4-H experience.

### **What about project materials?**

Each county UW-Extension office will have copies of enrollment and project guides for use by 4-H club members and leaders. Once member and leader enrollments are submitted, members and leaders should receive 4-H project literature. Costs for project literature may vary from county to county. County 4-H Newsletters provide updates on county wide project activities, events and leader training.

### **Are there enrollment fees for 4-H members?**

There is no fee for members to participate in 4-H.

However, most counties do have a minimal enrollment assessment to offset specific activities and expenses. This varies from county to county and club to club. Some clubs may decide to pay for the cost of supplies and activities by assessing a small fee per member, while others may fund their needs by working together on a fund-raising project.

If you are aware of a young person who wants to join 4-H but is unable to contribute to local assessment fees, contact your county 4-H Youth Development staff. Each county association and club should have a process to waive membership assessments for youth that are unable to pay

If your club chooses to hold a fund-raising project, be sure to check with your 4-H Youth Development Staff about fund-raising guidelines and policies. Fundraisers must have a purpose, voted on by the membership and follow legal fundraising guidelines. Your local 4-H Youth Development Staff may also have information as to the

kinds of activities that have been successful fund-raisers in the past.

### **What about insurance?**

The safety of 4-H members and volunteers is critical. County 4-H Leader's Associations or Federations in cooperation with their local Counties need to provide accident insurance coverage for all 4-H members and leaders. This is purchased coverage. In addition, all 4-H volunteers need to be covered by liability insurance coverage. How liability insurance coverage is handled varies from county to county.

To learn more about insurance, contact your local 4-H Youth Development Staff to learn about the insurance coverage available in your county.

### **In conclusion**

UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development programs give young people a chance to learn new skills, gain self-confidence and contribute to their communities. 4-H youth development educators and volunteers create real world experiences that teach leadership and citizenship skills.

For additional resources, check out the Wisconsin 4-H web site.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/>

When youth are active in 4-H youth development programs, they gain a stronger sense of who they are and where they fit in our communities. They acquire a commitment to democracy and a passion for public work. They learn the democratic arts of negotiating differences and finding agreement. Adults who get involved learn to respect and value the contributions of youth. We all gain stronger, better-connected communities.

4-H is a community of young people who gain leadership, citizenship and life skills

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Adapted from Mary Jo Williams, State 4-H Youth Specialist, Letters to New Leaders: Letter 2, Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs

1. How can I use the information in this letter?
2. New ideas to use in our club:
3. Other people who could help us and how they might help:
4. Questions to ask University of Wisconsin-Extension staff and other leaders:



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