Nebraska 4-H Afterschool

4-H is the premier youth development program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Originating in the early 1900’s as “four-square education,” the 4-H’s (head-heart-hands-health) seek to promote positive youth development, facilitate learning and engage youth in the work of their community through the Cooperative Extension Service to enhance the quality of life. For more than a hundred years, 4-H has been dedicated to creating research based learning opportunities for youth that broaden skills and aspirations nurturing the full potential of youth. (4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet)

4-H AFTERSCHOOL DEFINITION:
Educational programs offered to youth outside of school hours, usually in a school or other community center and incorporating 4-H curricula. (Nebraska 4-H Policy Handbook) 4-H afterschool is designed to combine the resources of 4-H with community-based organization that provide afterschool programs which address community needs (National 4-H Afterschool).

(For 4-H clubs that meet in the after school; time see the 4-H clubs document.)

Purpose of 4-H Afterschool:
4-H afterschool seeks to increase the quality and quantity of afterschool programs which provide a safe environment for expanded learning opportunities. To accomplish this the focus is on improving the ability of program staff to offer high quality care, education, and developmental experiences for youth. Extension offers training materials and support to help program staff increase their ability to use positive youth development principles, and to help providers access quality 4-H program activities. (Starting 4-H Clubs in After-School Programs)

4-H Afterschool Membership:
Membership in 4-H Afterschool is open to all who participate in afterschool programs.

Structure of 4-H Afterschool:
- Are offered during the times children and youth are out of school and their parents/guardians are in need of safe, healthy, caring and enriching environments that offer expanding learning opportunities for their children. They include before-and after-school hours, teacher in-service days, school holidays, summer months and weekends.
- Reach children and youth from kindergarten to twelfth grades.
- Engage children and youth in long-term, structured and sequentially-planned learning experiences and partnerships with adults.
- Are designed on principles of youth development, address the interests of children and youth and help develop their physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills and abilities. (Increasing the Quantity of After-School programs)
Program Management and Implementation of 4-H Afterschool:
Certain key elements need to be in place to ensure consistency, including:

1. Communication between the local Extension office and the community based afterschool program leadership is open and responsive.
2. Membership and leadership shows diversity.
3. Leadership responsibilities are shared among adults, youth, and children in program decision making.
4. In youth adult partnerships, individual interests, abilities, and assets are recognized, and strengths and weaknesses among program leaders, youth and children are balanced.
5. The program's leadership is willing and able to be flexible and adaptable to individual situations.
6. Clear expectations established by youth and adults contribute to positive youth development.
7. A healthy balance exists between cooperation and competition among youth and children.
8. An atmosphere that encourages the active participation among youth and children within and outside the program.
9. A clear understanding of the program's purposes, goals, and expectations is held by children, youth, parents/guardians and volunteers.
10. An experimental learning model is used for educational programs.
11. Accomplishments and contributions of adults, youth and children are recognized by leaders and peers. (Starting 4-H Clubs in Afterschool Programs)

4-H Afterschool Professional Competencies:

4-H afterschool should follow the National AfterSchool Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals and the Nebraska School-Age and Youth Development Core Competencies

Content areas include:
- Child and Youth Growth and Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
- Interactions with Children and Youth
- Youth Engagement
- Cultural Competency and Responsiveness
- Family, School, and Community Relationships
- Safety and Wellness
- Program Planning and Development
- Professional Development and Leadership

4-H BEST PRACTICES:
- Uses experiential learning—learning by doing—as a primary teaching approach.
- Shows evidence of fostering the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development.
- Includes planned opportunities to learn and apply life skills such as leadership, citizenship, community service and public speaking.
• Provides experiences to develop in-depth knowledge about science, engineering and technology; leadership and citizenship; healthy living; agriculture literacy; and college and career readiness.
• Provides programs, curricula, and procedures that are based in research and are developmentally appropriate.
• Provides participants and volunteers access to resources of land-grant universities and to county, state, and national 4-H opportunities.
• Fosters youth-adult partnerships that encourage active involvement and participation by youth and adults.
• Provides safe and healthy physical and emotional environments.
• Offers projects in a wide range of subject matter areas relevant to the Land Grant University knowledge base to meet youth needs and interests.

4-H ROLE IN AFTERSCHOOL
• Train afterschool workers on topics such as positive youth development, experiential learning, ages and stages of development, inquiry based learning, service learning and youth-adult partnerships.
• Provide programming for children and youth in the afterschool hours.
• Serve as a community leader to establish, deliver and sustain quality learning environments in the afterschool hours.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING
How do I report youth participating in afterschool on the ES237?
Refer to the Access 4-H Definitions pdf at http://4h.unl.edu/Access_4-H
Additional resources to be developed.

ESTABLISHING AND SUSTAINING AN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM
How do I start or sustain an afterschool program?
What resources are needed?
• Make connections with area schools and community organizations that conduct afterschool programs.
• Determine community needs and help address them in program planning.
• Work with community partners to establish a 4-H club or 4-H programming in the afterschool activities. Be flexible to ensure the best working relationship while still maintaining the values of 4-H.
• Implement 4-H curriculum into afterschool activities.
• Utilize the expertise of 4-H staff to recruit and train afterschool workers and volunteers, conduct educational programming, and conduct program evaluation.
• Once started, ensure youth have an active role in the leadership and activity planning.