Nebraska 4-H Clubs

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 CLUB DEFINITION:
A 4-H Club is an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or 4-H staff for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences.

4-H Club Purpose:
The purpose of a 4-H club is to provide positive youth development opportunities to meet the needs of young people to experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity—the Essential Elements—and to foster educational opportunities tied to the Land Grant University knowledge base.

4-H Club Membership:
4-H Club membership is open to all youth beginning at age 8 (as of January 1) and open to all young people but not to exceed beyond the age of 19 (as of January 1). 4-H Club membership is open to all youth without regard to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran’s status, marital status, religion, political affiliation or socioeconomic backgrounds. All 4-H club members must be enrolled in a 4-H club each year.

Structure of a 4-H Club:
• Enrolls at least 5 youth members from at least 3 families.
  Is advised by adult 4-H staff or volunteers who have been screened and trained in accordance with the Nebraska 4-H Policy and Procedure Handbook.
• Conduct a minimum of 6 regular club meetings (virtual or face-to-face) per year, with many holding 9-12 regular meetings throughout most or all of the year, and often supplemented by project meetings, camps, fairs, and other 4-H learning activities.
• Selects youth officers or youth leaders to provide leadership to the club.
• Meets in any location—a home, community center, military installation, library, public housing site, school, afterschool program, and/or many other places.
• Helps youth and parents/guardians adapt in cases of mobility—linking them to 4-H programs in other counties and states.
• Meets interests and needs of youth in same-age or cross-age groupings and using single project or multiple project formats.

Program Management and Implementation of a 4-H Club:
A 4-H Club:
  1. Selects its own club name. Club names must (for additional information please see the Fact Sheet on Naming 4-H Clubs/Units at http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/):
     a. Be specific to the 4-H club or organization either through a unique name or by identifying the county or location. Not be overtly religious or represent the beliefs of one religion or denomination over another;
     b. Not imply that membership is limited or exclusive (for example the 4-H Country Girls would imply that only girls can join the club); and
     c. Not be offensive or generally seen as demeaning to any group protected by equal opportunity regulations.
  2. Develops a set of by-laws or rules approved by the members to govern the club.
  3. Develops an annual educational plan.
  4. Keeps records of their meetings and finances. (Add link to financial information for clus)
  5. Complies with applicable state, Land Grant University and 4-H National Headquarters’ policies.

4-H CLUB TYPES & QUALITY STANDARDS:
What does a quality experience look like?

1. Community clubs typically meet in the evenings or on weekends and offer self-chosen multiple learning experiences and activities.
   Example: Traditional 4-H Club.

2. In-school clubs meet during school hours, but have officers and planned activities beyond school enrichment.
   Example: 4-H clubs established in the club period available in some schools.

3. 4-H after-school clubs are hosted in afterschool settings designated by a formal afterschool program. They have officers and planned activities.
   Example: Groups with officers at Community Learning Centers

4. Military 4-H clubs are organized by the Armed Forces, often on military installations, and principally for military dependents.

Quality Standards for clubs:
• Club meetings are held at least 6 times per year.
• Club officers are elected.
• 75% of club members complete a 4-H project each year.
• The organizational leader attends at least one leader training each year.
• New leaders attend new leader orientation.
• Club planning is done by club members and meetings are run by club officers.
• Sequential and varied learning experience matching all skill levels of club members is provided.
• Each member of the club does an in-club demonstration or presentation every year.
• Club financial audits must be submitted to the Extension Office at the end of each year.
• Yearly service learning projects/community service projects are completed.

Club of Excellence Criteria:
• To receive the designation as a Nebraska 4-H Club of Excellence, clubs must:
  • Have at least five members from at least three different families.
  • Recite the 4-H Pledge at meetings.
  • Meet at least six times per year.
  • Choose/elect youth officers.
  • Have youth serve in leadership roles.
  • Have one club project, related to curriculum, which they do together.
  • Have adult role model involvement.
  • Be facilitated by organizational and project leaders who have successfully completed the volunteer screening.
  • Have members who perform a presentation or public speaking at the club level or above.
  • Complete one community service project.
  • Have members who participate in county, district or state events.
  • Celebrate member and club achievements.

If the Club meets all the requirements, they will get a certificate and a seal the first year and an additional seal in subsequent qualifying years.

4-H BEST PRACTICES
What are 4-H Club 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.

Ideas for 4-H Staff Involvement with 4-H Clubs:
• Offer educational programs during club meetings.
• Attend a club meeting to share a new opportunity in 4-H.
• Organize an after-school club.
• Host a club during lunch at the high school once a month.
• Offer a community club night where all clubs in the county meet together for an educational program. Rotate responsibilities between clubs of educational program, hosting, and refreshments.
• Utilize community gatherings to recognize 4-H club members (i.e. senior awards night, parades).

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING
How do I report youth participating in clubs 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 A 4-H CLUB
How do I start a new club?
What resources are needed?
More information to come.