

IOWA 4-H VOLUNTEER PLAN OF WORK COMMITTEE

2005 4-H VOLUNTEER SURVEY REPORT

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Background

A survey to Iowa 4-H Volunteers was distributed to approximately 250 volunteers statewide in January 2005. The intent of the survey was to obtain feedback from volunteers in an effort to develop a more consistent, efficient, and effective statewide 4-H volunteer development system that will meet the needs of youth, families, and volunteers. The survey instrument collected various types of information. The first area requested demographic information (e.g., number of years as a volunteer, profession, volunteer role). The majority of the items examined aspects of leader trainings (e.g., number of trainings attended, topical areas), assessed satisfaction with the quality and content of training, assessed types of support that would be valuable and ways to provide training, and examined if training has helped clubs meet guidelines and expectations. In addition to questions regarding training, the survey considered participation in and helpfulness of the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey and explored volunteers' perceptions of consequences for a club leader if a club is not meeting expectations.

Results

The results section begins with a description of the survey respondents' demographic characteristics. Following this section, the remaining sections consider various content areas. The first section considers themes from volunteer training. The next section examines club leader support items. The following section considers responses to questions regarding the Strengthening 4H Clubs Survey. The next section considers responses to a question regarding consequences for leaders of clubs that are not meeting expectations. Lastly, the results section provides a summary of themes regarding respondents' perceptions of outcomes for 4-H youth.

Demographics

A total of 113 individuals completed the survey, including 64 organizational leaders, 45 co-leaders, 11 project leaders, and seven "other" volunteers (e.g., county fair volunteer, fair superintendent, clothing selection/fashion review superintendent, club leader, chaperone, and horse club volunteer). The number of years individuals have been a 4-H volunteer ranged from 1 to 42, with the mean number of years equaling 9.7. There were 10 individuals who have volunteered for 0-2 years (beginning), 30 individuals who have volunteered for 3-5 years (middle), and 72 individuals who have volunteered for six or more years (experienced).

Seventy-two percent of the respondents ($n = 80$) indicated that they did not have a need for professional development credits. For the 31 individuals who indicated that they needed professional development credits, the needs or reasons listed included: nursing ($n = 7$), teaching license/certification ($n = 6$), continuing education ($n = 6$), insurance agents ($n = 5$),

emergency services ($n = 2$), computer classes ($n = 1$), speech-language pathology certification ($n = 1$), and dental assistant certification ($n = 1$).

When asked how many additional leaders help with club activities, the responses ranged from 0 to 16, with a mean response of 2.2.

The listed professions of the volunteers include multiple categories. Common responses included farming ($n = 14$), teaching ($n = 17$), homemaker ($n = 9$), business owner ($n = 6$), nursing ($n = 8$), and bookkeeping ($n = 7$). Examples of other various professions listed include hotel-restaurant management, social work, 4-H staff, radio announcer, truck driver, and factory worker.

Volunteer Training

Volunteers indicated that they attended an average of 2.07 trainings last year. The distribution of training attendance was as follows: 21.4% of the volunteer respondents did not attend a training, 24.1% attended one training, 25.0% attended two trainings, and 29.5% attended three or more trainings.

The frequency of topics covered in trainings is displayed in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, a majority of the respondents indicated that they received training on fair information and project information. Other common training topics included effective club management, how to work with kids, Eight Essential Elements, and how to involve parents. In addition to the topics listed in Table 1, respondents also provided examples of other training topics that were offered including food and nutrition, fitness, youth and stress, ideas for recreations, ideas for meetings, ideas for youth projects, games, and what makes a good volunteer.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Training Topics by Percent

Topic	<i>n</i>	Percent
Fair information	77	68.1%
Project information	62	54.9%
Effective club meeting management	46	40.7%
How to work with kids	36	31.9%
Eight Essential Elements	34	30.1%
How to involve parents	26	23.0%
Youth and adult partnerships	13	11.5%
Ages and Stages	6	5.3%
Experiential Learning	5	4.4%
How to start a club	1	0.9%

Volunteers were asked to provide ideas for training topics that are most important for new volunteers, volunteers with 3-5 years of experience, and volunteers with more than five years of experience. The responses are provided in Appendices A, B, and C.

Volunteers rated their satisfaction with the training quality and the training content. As seen in Table 2, when combining all respondents, over 87% of the respondents were satisfied with both the quality and the content of the training. The mean scores for each item indicate that, on average, most of the respondents were “satisfied” with both training quality and content. In comparison to the mean of all respondents, the mean satisfaction with the training quality and content is lower for individuals who have been a 4-H volunteer for six or more years.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics of Training Quality and Content Satisfaction by Number of Years Volunteering

Item	Number of Years Volunteering	% Very Dissatisfied	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied	% Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Mean	S.D.
Training Quality								
	0-2 years	-	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	83.3%	3.17	0.75
	3-5 years	-	3.6%	78.6%	17.9%	96.5%	3.14	0.45
	6+ years	10.3%	4.4%	64.7%	20.6%	85.3%	2.96	0.82
	All respondents	6.8%	4.9%	67.0%	21.4%	88.4%	3.03	0.73
Training Content								
	0-2 years	-	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	83.4%	3.00	0.63
	3-5 years	-	7.4%	74.1%	18.5%	92.6%	3.11	0.51
	6+ years	8.7%	5.8%	72.5%	13.0%	85.5%	2.90	0.73
	All respondents	5.8%	6.8%	71.8%	15.5%	87.3%	2.97	0.69

Individuals provided comments regarding the quality of the training. These comments are included in Appendix D. One theme indicates that time is a concern for some volunteers in that it may be difficult to attend training sessions and that volunteers want the sessions to represent a good use of time. As seen in the comments, perceptions of training quality vary, ranging from comments which suggest the quality is low compared to comments that indicate the quality is high. Comments indicate that individuals appreciate content that focuses on practical aspects and that offers volunteers an opportunity to share ideas.

Volunteers also provided comments regarding the training content, which are included in Appendix E. Several comments provide support for the training content, indicating that the content is timely, varied, useful, and practical. Individuals also liked sharing ideas. Two comments offered suggestions for more information on youth development and hands-on ideas.

Volunteers indicated how many training sessions would be beneficial each year. The responses were as follows: 40 respondents (36.0%) indicated one training, 51 respondents (45.9%) indicated two trainings, and 17 respondents (15.0%) indicated three trainings. Three respondents provided other suggestions, including offering 4-6 two-hour trainings or providing training at leaders' meetings.

Volunteers noted ways that they would be willing to receive training. The responses were as follows: 94 respondents (83.9%) indicated face-to-face, 58 respondents (51.8%) indicated Internet, 71 respondents (63.4%) indicated DVD or videotape, and 46 respondents (41.1%) indicated ICN. Two respondents suggested other methods such as newsletters and having an individual visit club meetings and provide suggestions.

Two survey items asked volunteers to indicate if the training they received helped the club meet 4-H expectations and helped the club meet 4-H leader expectations. As seen in Table 3 majority of the respondents (n = 69, 65.1%) indicated that the training they received helped their club meet 4-H club guidelines (i.e., build youth and adult partnerships, set annual goals and evaluate progress, plan educational programs, involvement in community service activities, and keep records of activities). Similarly, a majority (n = 82, 77.4%) responded that the training they received helped the club meet 4-H leader expectations (i.e., participate in training, guide members in planning program, provide supervision, follow expectations for adult behavior, and help clubs meet 4-H guidelines).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Training Impact by Experience

Item	Experience	Yes	Somewhat	No
Do you feel the training you have received by your county has helped your club meet 4-H club guidelines	0-2 years	57.1%	42.9%	-
	3-5 years	64.3%	28.6%	7.1%
	6+ years	65.7%	28.6%	5.7%
	All Respondents	65.1%	29.2%	5.7%
Do you feel the training you have received by your county has helped your club meet 4-H leader expectations	0-2 years	85.7%	14.3%	-
	3-5 years	75.0%	17.9%	7.1%
	6+ years	77.1%	18.6%	4.3%
	All Respondents	77.4%	17.9%	4.7%

Individual comments regarding how training has helped clubs meet 4-H expectations are provided in Appendix F. Several comments indicate that the training provides volunteers with the tools and support that they need. A few comments suggested that training offers assistance in the areas addressed in the guidelines, but that there is a need for more training in goal setting. Appendix G provides individuals' comments regarding how training has helped the club meet 4-H leader expectations. One common response is that the trainings help

individuals know what is expected of them and offer suggestions on how they can achieve the leadership tasks. Other comments indicate that several county offices offer support. Other individuals commented that leadership behavior is influenced more through interactions with other leaders, than through training.

Club Leader Support

Volunteers were asked to indicate what kinds of support would be valuable for club leaders. The responses are provided in Table 4. As seen in Table 4, a majority of the respondents indicated that newsletters, lists of resource people, and Website information are valuable kinds of support.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Support Types by Percent

Support Type	<i>n</i>	Percent
Newsletter	83	74.1%
List of resource people (project or club expertise)	73	65.2%
Website	67	59.8%
Materials on the Web	52	46.4%
List of reference books	36	32.1%
Chatrooms with other leaders across the state	17	15.2%
New Leader Letters	17	15.2%
Videotapes	13	11.6%
Other	4	3.6%

Ideas for support videos included 4-H project ideas, horse topics, a list of hands-on resources, in-person presentations of material, ideas for club meetings through the Internet, livestock handling and showing, more project learning sessions, art and design principles, ideas for fair projects, and clover kid projects. Other ideas for support types included lists of hands-on resources, project learning sessions, and ideas for fair projects.

Strengthening 4-H Club Survey

The survey also asked volunteers to comment on their participation in the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey and the helpfulness of the survey in improving the club climate for youth. A majority of the respondents (92%) indicated that they have not participated in the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey in the past three years. Many individuals ($n = 56$) indicated that they were unfamiliar with the tool or did not know if it had been offered to the club. A few comments noted a lack of time as a reason for not participating in the survey.

When asked to indicate the helpfulness of the survey in improving the club climate, the nine individuals who participated in the survey responded as follows: one indicated that it was not helpful, five indicated it was somewhat helpful, and three indicated it was helpful. Open-

ended responses to a question regarding the helpfulness of the survey offered various perspectives. One individual responded that the club did not receive the results. A few individuals indicated that the size or nature of their club (e.g., art club) made the results less useful. One comment indicated that subjects in the survey were already in place and that the resulting adjustments were minor.

Club Expectations

Respondents were asked to indicate their feelings regarding the consequences for club leaders when a club is not meeting 4-H expectations. Their responses are summarized in Table 5. The most common strategy was to give leaders a warning and provide them with an opportunity to improve.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Leader Consequences by Percent

Consequences	<i>n</i>	Percent
Leader(s) given a warning and an opportunity to improve	55	50.9%
Club given warning charter may be revoked, given an opportunity to improve	20	18.5%
Other	20	18.5%
Nothing	9	8.3%
Replace leader	3	2.8%
Club loses its charter	1	0.9%

The open-ended comments regarding other consequences provide additional possible strategies. First, comments indicate that individuals are sensitive to the volunteer status of club leaders and are hesitant to reprimand volunteers. Many comments suggested that the leader should be notified of concerns and that 4-H staff or mentors be used to evaluate the situation and assist the leader in making positive changes. Others suggested addressing the problem through training efforts.

Recognition Ideas

Volunteers provided ideas for ways to recognize clubs that are meeting expectations. Several comments indicated that it would be nice to recognize clubs at the local, county, and state levels. Suggestions included publicizing the accomplishments in newsletters and newspapers, providing certificates or plaques, using the Banner Club by providing buttons for banners, recognizing clubs at fairs, or providing a pizza party. Others, however, indicated that recognition was not necessary for meeting expectations and that successful clubs will receive recognition as a result of their efforts.

Outcomes of 4H Experience for Youth

Volunteers were asked to indicate their beliefs regarding the outcomes of the 4-H experience for youth. Common responses are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Outcomes of 4-H Experience

Outcome	<i>n</i>
Leadership	40
Communication/public speaking	38
Responsibility	19
Teamwork/cooperation	18
Community service/involvement	16
Set and achieve goals	15
Confidence/self-esteem	15
Record keeping	11
Organization	11
Learn life skills	9
Citizenship	6
Friendship	6
Respect (self, animals)	4
Time management	4
Role modeling	3
Healthy relationships (peers, youth and adults)	3
Competition	2

Summary

- Volunteers indicated that they were satisfied with the quality and content of volunteer training.
- Volunteers indicated that the training they received helped their club meet 4-H guidelines and meet 4-H leader expectations
- Few volunteers participated in the Strengthening 4-H Club Survey and many were not aware of the survey.
- Volunteers recommend that club leaders of clubs which are not meeting 4-H expectations are notified of concerns and are given support in order to improve
- Additional comments or suggestions are provided in Appendix H.