



As volunteers, having a strong understanding of the Iowa 4-H mission, and foundation can lead to stronger club programs, recruitment of 4-H members, and retention. Knowing and utilizing the research-based concepts, tools, and curriculums are essential for Iowa 4-H volunteers and strong, continued growth of the program.

Understanding the 4-H Principles

Utilizing the 4-H Equation, volunteers working with youth focus on the four youth needs: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

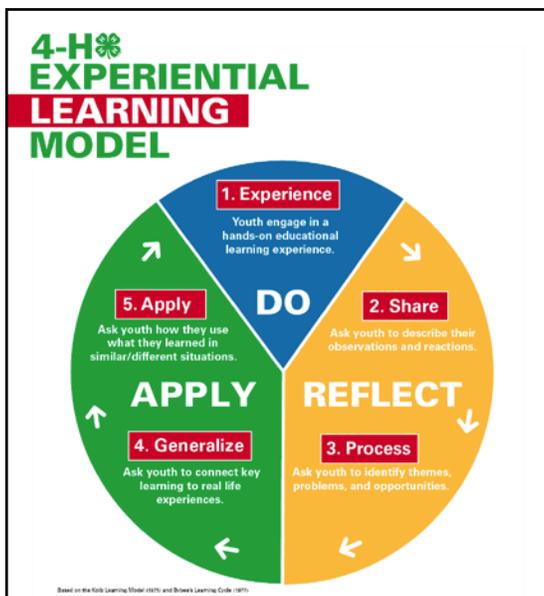
Introduce youth to the concepts of the 4-H Equation, Experiential Learning Model and 4-H Priorities.



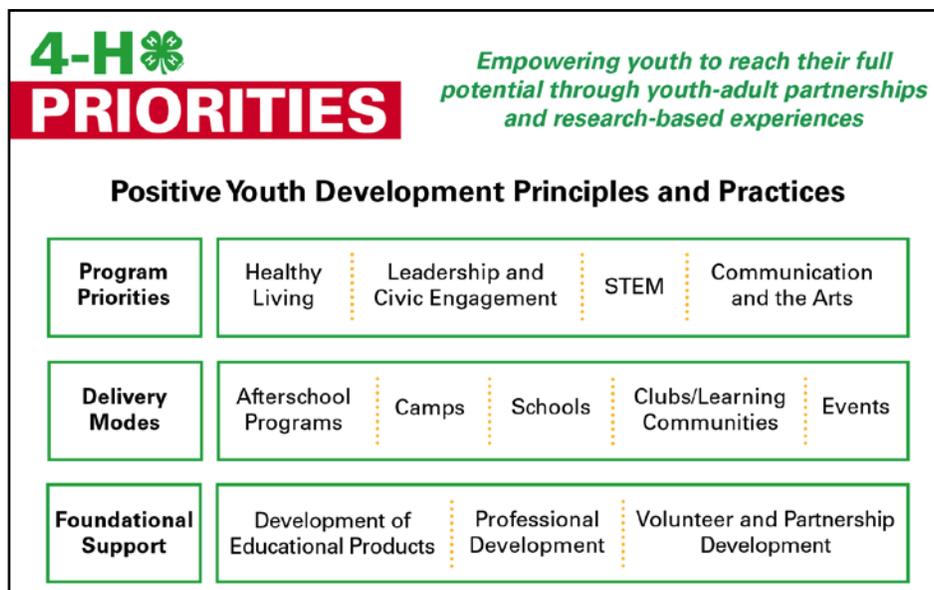
- Encourage youth to identify areas of interest and link them to 4-H Program Priorities & resources.
- Encourage Civic Engagement projects that youth show interest in.
- Maintain strong communication with county youth staff to have up-to-date information on local and state opportunities for the youth.
- Apply the four youth needs to club activities when possible, encouraging youth to grow and support one another in these areas.

Research-based information supporting the benefits of 4-H that can assist volunteers with recruitment and retention can be found in the "[4-H Study of Positive Youth Development](#)."

Research shows that early age enrollment in 4-H can increase the likelihood of remaining in the program until senior year, allowing more opportunities to gain from the positive impact of the 4-H program. The Clover Kids program is an opportunity for early age enrollment reaching youth in grades K-3.



Knowing more about the ages of the youth you are working with can assist in recruitment and retention. Volunteers have access to Ages & Stages resources on the Volunteer Resources webpage <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/volunteerresources>.



Ideas for Recruitment

As a 4-H volunteer, you represent the 4-H program and play an instrumental role in promoting 4-H. Talk with your county staff about ways you can work together to promote 4-H. Ideas may include:

- Working with community school districts to distribute or share information about 4-H clubs and programming opportunities, 4-H curriculums, etc.
- Working with your county to hold an open house, showcasing your 4-H club.
- Volunteering with after-school programs or helping to start after-school programs.
- Consider ways 4-H can partner with other youth-centered programs.
- Share county marketing materials with community members.
- Work with your county youth staff to stay updated on current programs and ways to reach new audiences while meeting the needs of youth being served.

Ideas for Retention

As a volunteer, allow flexibility in the structure of the club program to make room for youth (particularly older youth) to explore outside interests while maintaining membership in 4-H, such as Civic Engagement and extracurricular after-school activities:

- Incorporate career exploration into club activities.
- Communicate with your club youth about their school activities.
- Discuss how youth can incorporate 4-H service learning into other community or school programs.
- Encourage older youth to lead or organize 4-H activities at their school.
- Encourage mentoring and workshop opportunities for youth.