



4-H Youth Development Program Committee Handbook

4-H Youth Development Program Committees

This handbook is a guide for both Extension staff and committee members as they consider their individual roles and the functions of the entire committee. Its intent is to encourage consistency in 4-H Youth Program Committees statewide.

4-H Mission Statement

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

The mission is best accomplished through long-term, extraordinary learning experiences and building capacity for those who work with youth.

4-H Youth Committees

Role of 4-H Youth Committees

The 4-H Youth Committee is a committee appointed by the County Extension Council. It is an active volunteer group which works in cooperation with Youth Program Specialists and County Extension Staff to provide leadership to the county 4-H program.

The 4-H Youth Committee works to meet the developmental and educational needs of youth and is responsible for program integrity. Program quality includes assurance that the 4 Basic Needs of youth are met through 4-H programming incorporating the Essential Elements.

Functions of 4-H Youth Committees

A. Program Assessment and Planning

1. Plan and develop a county 4-H program based on the needs of youth and the county.
 - a. Identify characteristics of youth living in the county (age, racial, and ethnic characteristics; social and economic situations; place of residence; etc.).
 - b. Identify needs, interests, and attitudes of youth in the county.
 - c. Be aware of state and national issues that impact and relate to youth in the county.
 - d. Identify youth-serving programs and organizations in the county (focus of the program; audience served; potential for cooperation in programming; and how to avoid duplication of services).
2. Determine program priorities to decide which educational program efforts will be continued, which will be discontinued, and which new ones will be developed.
3. Develop County Action Plan.

B. Affirmative Action

1. Follow civil rights laws and requirements relating to Extension 4-H Youth Programs.

2. Help develop, plan, and implement programs to support affirmative action guidelines relating to Extension 4-H Youth programs
3. Assist Extension 4-H staff to provide a balanced county 4-H Youth program that complies with civil rights legislation.
4. Help review existing policies and procedures and help develop new policies and procedures to ensure compliance with civil rights legislation.

Reference Extension HR Diversity and Civil Rights web page

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/hr/Diversity>

C. Program Implementation

1. Assume responsibility for carrying out county action plan to meet the goals of program growth and development.
 - a. Provide active leadership to the county 4-H program.
 - b. Recruit volunteers to support the program.
 - c. Develop community partnerships.
2. Develop sub-committees to carry out 4-H program growth and volunteer development program priorities.
3. Provide support and adherence to state and national 4-H policies. Ensure county policies are aligned with and consistent with principles and practices of positive youth development.

D. Program Evaluation

1. Evaluate the 4-H program yearly to help plan future programs and determine activities. This includes evaluation of the 4-H Youth Program Committee itself.
2. A variety of program opportunities should be available to all youth.
3. Share evaluation results with others who influence continuation of the 4-H program.

E. Public Relations

1. Inform people in the community about the benefits of 4-H program participation.
2. Serve in an advocacy role with community leaders, government officials, business people, schools, and/or media representatives, and encourage their support of the 4-H program.
3. Provide a strong link between target audiences in the county and Iowa State University Extension.
4. Help new and under-served youth and families develop an awareness of the 4-H program.

F. Financial Support

1. Work with Extension 4-H staff and County Extension Council to ensure an adequate budget for support of 4-H Youth programs is included within the County Extension district operating fund.
2. Help raise additional funds to support the county 4-H Youth program.

3. Assist Extension 4-H staff as needed to ensure compliance by 4-H clubs and affiliated groups with 4-H and Extension Financial Guidelines.

Effective and Efficient Committees

A motivated committee is vital to assure the 4-H program remains effective and efficient. Effectiveness is doing the right thing; efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness means making the right choices that help fulfill the goals of the 4-H program. Efficiency is carrying out the programs or activities to make the best use of human and financial resources.

Committee effectiveness will be enhanced by:

1. Meeting the needs of both committee members and the 4-H program. If the committee functions only to meet the committee's needs, the group becomes just another 4-H activity rather than a leadership and management asset that benefits the 4-H program as a whole.
2. Clearly defining and staying within assigned functions.
3. Encouraging members to share equally in committee decisions. One person or a small group should not be allowed to control the committee in order to satisfy their needs or a particular goal they have in mind for the 4-H program.

Membership and Selection

Factors to consider in forming an effective and efficient committee of youth and adults:

1. *Age* – One-third of the 4-H Youth Committee membership should be youth. As members of the target audience, their input helps plan a meaningful program.
2. *Racial and ethnic diversity*
3. *Gender diversity*
4. *Geography* – All geographic areas of the county should be represented.
5. *Experience* – Previous involvement in the 4-H program may be advantageous, however, limiting the membership to only those with previous experience excludes potentially valuable committee members.
6. *Socio-economic status diversity*
7. *Interests and affiliations* – It is beneficial to recruit members with a variety of interests and contacts (business people; media representation; educators; etc.).

Some advantages of having a 4-H Youth Committee representing many different interests are: (1) it blends a wide range of input and problem identification; (2) it encourages a broader knowledge base; (3) it helps legitimize actions of the county 4-H program to a larger group of people; and (4) it leads to more contacts with county resources.

A suggested committee size is 10 to 15 members. Recruitment is the responsibility of the County Extension Council, County Extension Staff, and the 4-H Youth Committee. The County Extension Council officially appoints all committee members.

Term limits ensure that many people are able to take advantage of leadership opportunities, encouraging creativity and continued new ideas. County Extension Councils who do not have a policy for rotating 4-H Youth Committee members are encouraged to establish one and share it with all current and new committee members during recruitment.

Organizing for Effective Work

Officers

Each 4-H Youth Committee needs a chairperson to lead meetings and represent committee interests between meetings. Each committee determines officers needed for effective leadership. A minimum of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary is recommended.

Duties of the officers include:

1. Plan the agenda for 4-H Youth Committee meetings, and share it with members before the meeting.
2. Make sure an accurate set of minutes is recorded and sent to each committee member.
3. Contact subcommittees to see how they are functioning.
4. Establish and maintain expectations for involvement and meeting decorum.
5. Communicate 4-H Youth Committee decisions to the Extension council and other appropriate groups.
6. Meet as an executive committee to make urgent decisions when a meeting of the larger 4-H Youth Committee is not possible or is not necessary.

Meetings

Meetings need to be held monthly with members receiving an agenda in advance of the meetings. Meetings are covered by the open meetings law which requires posting a notice with the meeting agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Scheduling times for the beginning and the end of a meeting, and adhering to this schedule, shows respect for committee members. A comfortable room arranged so everyone can easily see and hear encourages participation. Name cards placed in front of each member help new members become a part of the group.

Subcommittees

Each 4-H Youth Committee should determine what sub-committees are needed. Standing committees continue from year to year; however, ad hoc committees disband after the task is accomplished. A written job description should outline the group's task, responsibility, criteria for membership, and an expected timeline for action. Examples of sub-committee tasks are: (1) 4-H recruitment and retention; (2) new clubs; (3) recruitment of volunteers, (4) fairs.

Standing and ad hoc sub-committee members need not be members of the 4-H youth committee, but each sub-committee should be co-chaired by one youth and one adult from the committee. All sub-committees report directly to the youth committee.

Role of Each Committee Member

Individual members have responsibilities to help the committee function effectively. Each committee member upholds the values of Iowa State University Extension and the 4-H youth program.

In addition, each county committee member assumes the following responsibilities:

1. Members become acquainted with state and county 4-H programs and the ways they best serve youth.

2. Members have an understanding of youth needs and issues.
3. Members are open to reaching youth through a variety of programming structures.
4. Members attend committee meetings regularly and participate in committee meetings.
5. Members serve on sub-committees to study, plan, implement, and evaluate programs.
6. Members contact businesses, organizations, and individuals to promote and advocate for the 4-H youth program.
7. Members help report the successes of the 4-H program to the community.
8. Members complete commitments in a timely fashion.
9. Members share concerns and ideas.

Relationships Between Extension Youth Program Staff and 4-H Youth Committees

Committee persons plan, implement, and evaluate program activities based on community assessment and the county 4-H action plan. The staff member provides overall program leadership and serves as a committee resource for program and policy development. Extension professionals are capacity builders: they encourage volunteer leader development by assisting the 4-H Youth Committees with their responsibilities. In order for the Youth Program Specialist and county extension staff to provide quality program leadership and management, they must act in partnership with the 4-H Youth Committee. Each will have its own perspective on how to accomplish goals that improve the 4-H program. Each will have their own values, needs, and approach to their work.

Because the staff and committee need each other to fulfill their roles, they gradually gain confidence in each other as they effectively work together. The growth leads to mutual trust. Once trust has developed, differences are managed without developing into a conflict. Differences are a natural part of a working relationship and can be resolved with minimum discomfort. However, building trust will help the committee and staff when dilemmas arise and hard decisions must be made.

Complimentary Tasks of 4-H Youth Committee, Youth Program Specialist and County Extension Staff

The 4-H Youth Committee:

1. Speaks for and represents the people of the county in making program decisions.
2. Helps identify the educational needs of the youth in the county based on positive youth development principles and the 4-H mission.
3. Helps provide program direction, implementation, and evaluation.
4. Creates good will and community capacity for 4-H among the citizens of the county.

5. Helps obtain resources (includes volunteers, monetary and in-kind resources), identifies financial leaders, and gains public support.
6. Works with Extension staff to establish county policies and procedures based on the principles of positive youth development.
7. Supports the 4-H youth program's county, state, and national policies.
8. Partners with Extension staff to come to a joint solution when dilemmas arise.

The Youth Program Specialist and County Extension Staff:

1. Listen to the concerns of the people in the county and assist the 4-H Youth Committee with necessary analyses of situations.
2. Provide background data, serve as a link to Iowa State University, and provide research-based information for use by the 4-H Youth Committee. County and regional staff also communicate identified needs to state staff assisting with program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
3. Plan educational programs based on positive youth development in partnership with the 4-H Youth Committee and build capacity by partnering with county volunteers.
4. Use resources as effectively as possible.
5. Work with 4-H Youth Committee to establish county policies and procedures based on the principles of positive youth development.
6. Support the 4-H youth program's county, state, and national policies.
7. Work in partnership with the county 4-H Youth Committee to come to a joint solution when dilemmas arise.

Working Relationships

County Extension Council

The County Extension Council is legally responsible for the County Extension Program. Therefore, the 4-H Youth Committee is responsible to the Council. The Council confirms or makes committee appointments and identifies situations that require study for programming alternatives. The Council also approves the program and county specific policies as developed by the Youth Program Specialist, County Extension Staff and the 4-H Youth Committee. The Council may appoint a council member to also serve as a 4-H Youth Committee member. The Extension Council should receive a quarterly report of 4-H program activities and a detailed report of committee activities at least once a year from the chairperson or selected representative of the 4-H Youth Committee.

Youth Program Specialist

Each Iowa county has a 4-H Youth Program Specialist serving them. This person provides leadership for the 4-H youth program. This professional works in partnership with County Extension Staff and the County Youth Committee.

Iowa State University Extension staff serve as resources for the 4-H Youth Committee as it works on programs. Committee members and staff should support and encourage interdisciplinary programming efforts.

County Fair Board

County Fair Boards have an important relationship with 4-H. The Fair Board (1) determines the dates of the county fair; (2) provides and maintains safe fairgrounds and buildings for exhibits and activities; (3) supports 4-H project exhibits and activities through approved trophies, ribbons, and premiums; and (4) provides security during all fair related activities.

The county fair provides the setting for various 4-H activities that carry out some of the program objectives established by the 4-H Youth Committee. The committee has the responsibility to oversee 4-H programming at the county fair. This includes establishing county 4-H fair policies that are in line with state policies and based on positive youth development.

The County Extension Council and the County Fair Board should develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to achieve a positive working relationship and effective communication that supports the 4-H Youth Program and the county fair experience. See the [The County Fair Task Force Report](#), October 2008, for more information, guidelines and a sample MOU.

County 4-H Council

Most counties have a County 4-H Council that consists of older youth. 4-H council participation provides youth with leadership experience. It also allows 4-H youth to contribute to the entire county 4-H program.

The activities and work of the County 4-H Council relate to the purpose and function of the 4-H Youth Committee. Communication between the two groups is essential and benefits both groups as they complete their work. Adult committee members learn about the needs and interests of youth while youth learn leadership skills. Youth also gain a sense of program ownership by being involved in the decision making process.

Opportunities for building this linkage between the two groups may include, but are not limited to: (1) appointing youth members common to both the county 4-H council and the committee; (2) designating one or more adult committee members to serve as advisor(s) for the County 4-H Council; (3) designating County 4-H Council representatives to attend the committee meetings and report on County 4-H Council activities; (4) providing recommendations made by the committee for review and discussion by the county 4-H council and vice versa; and, (5) holding joint County 4-H Council and committee meetings for common business matters, the two groups can then break into separate planning meetings for business relevant to only one group.

Volunteer Partnership

Volunteers who serve on the 4-H Youth Committee will spend considerable time working toward improvement of the county 4-H program during their term. Their skills, expertise, knowledge of the community and contacts with others are critical for a successful program. A strong partnership between staff and volunteers benefits everyone—4-H youth, volunteers, staff, and the local communities.

References

Thanks to the Extension staff who were the original authors and coordinators of the **4-H and Youth Program Development Committee Handbook 4-H 113** in 1988: Roy E. Hougen, Judith H. Isaacson, and Evelyn Jones Beavers.

4H 11	Program Governance
4H 14	Participation Policy
4H 3020A	The Iowa 4-H Youth Development Experience
4H 3020B	Essential Elements of the 4-H Experience
4H 3036B	Iowa 4-H Youth Development Plan: How we achieve our mission

Youth Committee Tools:

- Effective 4-H Youth Committees – A Checklist for Success
- Goals of 4-H Youth Committees
- How to Work with Youth on 4-H Youth Committees
- Sample Job Description – 4-H Youth Development Program Committee
- Bylaws Basics
- Sample Bylaws
- Membership and Member/Officer Training and Support
- <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/working-youth-committees>

Open meetings law:

The intent of the Iowa Official Meetings Open to Public law is to assure that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions, as well as the decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people. (reference: Iowa Code Chapter 21, Open Public Meeting Law <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/E7143A62-BC3B-472F-8F52-06AEBB5933E0/120340/CodeofIowaChapter21OpenMeetings.pdf> and http://www.state.ia.us/government/ag/sunshine_advisories/2003/march.html)

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January 2011

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cathann A. Kress, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.