

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

State 4-H Office

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4-H Program Planning

4H-007-99

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A good 4-H club/group doesn't just happen. Careful planning is necessary for any successful undertaking and is a very important process in 4-H. A well-planned program gives direction to the 4-H group and enables each person to know and prepare for his/her responsibility. Follow these seven steps to help guide the members through an effective program planning process:

1. Select a program planning committee;
2. Set goals;
3. Brainstorm or survey members;
4. Plan the program;
5. Approval by the group;
6. Assign responsibilities;
7. Evaluate.

The Program Planning Committee

Developing and organizing ideas into action can be done efficiently by a program planning committee. The purpose of this committee is to: 1) Collect facts; 2) Analyze and evaluate these facts; 3) Develop a plan for the club year; 4) Help carry out that plan; and 5) Evaluate how effective the plan was at its conclusion.

The committee should consist of a variety of people, including youth of different ages, males and females, officer(s), volunteers, and parents. The committee might be 6-10 members, depending on the size of the group. If the group is small, the program planning process may be completed by the total group.

Setting Goals

1. The first step in setting goals is to review the group's situation.
 1. What are the ages of the members? Where do they live? Do they belong to other organizations?
 2. Look at last year's program evaluation. What 4-H activities were successful, educational, and fun?
 3. Where will 4-H meetings, programs, and activities be conducted? Will there be a change?
2. After reviewing the group situation, set some goals. Goals are statements of what the members, volunteers, and parents would like to see accomplished. You can identify these goals through group discussion, surveys, or planning committees. Some examples include:
 1. Every member will participate in a community service activity.
 2. Every member will present a talk and/or demonstration at a group meeting.
 3. Every member will participate in at least one county 4-H event.

For each goal set, there should be special emphasis by the group to accomplish that goal.

Brainstorm or Survey Members

Brainstorming is a good technique for generating new ideas. Brainstorming is the unrestrained offering of ideas or suggestions by all members of a group. Ideas should be recorded for all to see on a flip chart or chalk board. No evaluation of ideas takes place until the brainstorming session is completed. Topics for brainstorming should relate to the club's goals and may include: educational programs, social activities, fund-raising projects, and community service.

Another way to generate ideas is to have members answer written, open-ended survey questions. Examples of survey statements include:

- ! I want to learn more about ...
- ! Just for fun we could ...
- ! We could help our community by ...
- ! We can make money by ...
- ! I would be willing to help with ...

Plan The Program

The committee should keep the group's goals in mind as they select activities and events best suited to the 4-H members. Review the survey or notes from the brainstorming and goal setting sessions. Ask the committee the following questions:

- ! Which activities will interest all ages represented in the group?
- ! What community service project(s) would the group most likely support?
- ! What community events are happening in which the group may want to participate?
- ! What countywide activities are scheduled that our 4-H members should be aware of?
- ! What types of clinics or project workshops are needed?

A planning committee member should serve on each committee to help plan the activities that have been chosen. Once the program is planned, the committee should review their work to be certain that their plan accomplishes the following:

- ! The plan meets the needs and interests of all of the 4-H members.
- ! Has both educational and fun activities planned.
- ! Allows the opportunity for everyone to get involved.
- ! The goals established by the 4-H club were all met.
- ! Allows for the opportunity for growth and achievement by the members.

Group Approval

Once the plan is completed, a calendar should be developed which lists all the planned activities for each month. It should then be presented to the 4-H club membership for approval. Once voted on, all the members and parents should receive a copy of the planned programs.

4-H Member Assignments

All 4-H members should be responsible for one or more activities on the planned program. Have them sign up for the task they feel most comfortable completing.

Club officers or 4-H volunteers should check periodically to see how things are progressing. They should also present reminders at each meeting as to important dates, deadlines, or the need for assistance by parents and other helpers for upcoming events.

Evaluation

Evaluation should be ongoing and can be conducted through discussion questions, open-ended statements, and questionnaires. The following are ideas for an end of the year review.

Discussion questions:

- ! Were the club's goals met?
- ! What was the most educational activity?
- ! What was the least successful activity? Why?

Examples of open-ended statements:

- ! I learned the most this year about...
- ! My (most/least) favorite activity was...
- ! I need more information about ...

Summary

Completing 4-H program planning may take some time, but the result will be beneficial to the membership. Members will feel ownership in the 4-H program and will want to see the activities be successful. A well-planned 4-H program will give direction to both the 4-Hers and the volunteer. Once you know where you want to go, "How do we get there?" becomes much easier.

References

BLAST! Module 5. Teaching 4-H Club Program Planning. The Ohio State University.

Learning Through Leadership: Lesson 12 4-H Program Planning. The Ohio State University.

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