

## Volunteer Training Module VI WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN 4-H

### Section 1

[4-H Delivery Modes](#)  
[4-H Clubs Where to Begin and How to Manage](#)  
[Factors Involved in the Success of a 4-H Club](#)  
[Activities and Special Programs for Youth](#)  
[Other 4-H Delivery Modes](#)

### Section 2 - Opportunities for 4-H Leaders

[Local and County Activities for 4-H Leaders](#)  
[Opportunities at the State Level](#)  
[Opportunities at the Regional and National Level](#)  
[4-H Volunteer Job Descriptions](#)

### Section 3 - Opportunities for 4-H Members

[Local and County Activities for 4-H Members](#)  
[Opportunities at the State Level](#)  
[Opportunities at the Regional and National Levels](#)

After completing VI you will learn:

- How to organize and manage a 4-H Club
- Recognize that youth involvement is only limited by one's own imagination
- Know who and what the 4-H organization is
- Determine the areas and levels of volunteering
- Determine how you can participate
- Opportunities and activities available to 4-H youth and adults at the local, county, state, and national levels

## SECTION 1

It is often said, “It is easier to build a child than to mend an adult.” With this in mind, the focus of 4-H is to develop in youth and adults the life skills necessary to be contributing members of society. In 4-H, volunteer leaders encourage youth to gain knowledge and learn together as a team. 4-H members learn decision-making skills and develop within themselves a sense of self-responsibility through project work, community service, and participation in an assortment of club, county, state and national activities and events. The 4-H volunteer is the backbone of this youth development program.

### Who Can Belong to 4-H?

Membership in 4-H is open to youth in kindergarten who have reached their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday (before January 1 of the current 4-H year), through those in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade or who have not reached their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday (before January 1 of the current 4-H year). Special Education youth, older than nineteen, may enroll with the approval of the 4-H County Educator. 4-H strives to foster in each member and leader an appreciation of the uniqueness and self-worth of each individual. An adult volunteer must be at least 18 years old and not enrolled as a 4-H member.

### 4-H Delivery Modes

4-H in Washington State takes on many different forms, depending on the needs of the local communities and counties. No matter what form 4-H takes, the end goal is to teach the 70,000 plus 4-H youth in Washington the life skills necessary to be contributing members of society. The 4-H Youth Development Program is delivered to youth in Washington State through the following methods:

### 4-H Clubs-Where to Begin and How to Manage

#### Organized 4-H Clubs

Clubs are the traditional model of an organized group of youth, led by an adult, with a planned program carried on throughout the year. 4-H clubs may meet in any location and typically have elected officers and a set of rules approved by the membership to govern the club.

- *Community clubs* typically meet in the evenings or on weekends and offer self-chosen multiple learning experiences and activities.
- *In-school clubs* meet during school hours and have officers and planned activities beyond school enrichment.
- *4-H After-school clubs* are organized within child care settings and include officers and planned activities.
- *Military 4-H clubs* are organized by the Armed Forces, often on military installations, and principally for the military dependents

## **Factors Involved in the Success of a 4-H Club**

### **Recruiting 4-H Members and Additional Adult Leaders**

The size of a 4-H club is determined by both the project focus of the members, and the expertise and ratio of leaders to youth. Limit your first group to a number that you and your co-leaders feel comfortable with. Recruiting members is seldom hard to do. Your local County Extension Office can assist you, as they will often keep a list of youth wanting to join a club in your area. When recruiting new members and leaders, we must be certain that programs are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation which are contrary to laws and to the purposes and policies of Extension, WSU and the USDA.

### **Volunteer Application**

Those adults who wish to work with youth in the 4-H program must fill out a WSU Extension volunteer application (also known as a 4-H Leader enrollment form) and the Washington State Patrol criminal background check permission form. They must also sign a volunteer behavior and expectations agreement and meet with a member of the county extension staff. Participation as an Extension/4-H volunteer is contingent upon successful completion and staff review of all four of the above components.

All new leaders must complete appropriate training during their first year based on your counties requirements. Most counties require all leaders to continue educational training on a yearly basis.

### **How to Enroll 4-H Members**

Your local county Extension Office has the necessary enrollment forms for you to complete and submit to their office. Each county has a due date for enrollments.

### **4-H Fees and Leader Liability Coverage**

Washington State 4-H members currently do not have to pay dues. However, counties and individual clubs may charge fees for insurance (\$1 per member, \$2 for horse club members) and for costs associated with conducting the 4-H program. Enrolled 4-H leaders have limited liability coverage through Washington State University when leading a 4-H group or activity.

### **Projects**

“Hands-on” (or experiential) projects and activities are the strength of the 4-H Youth Development Program. 4-H leaders must always remember that the “youth comes first” and that the life skills and self-confidence developed through a successful project are always more important than the actual project. As a result of successfully completing a project, the youth should have developed a feeling of capability and self-worth, as well as meaningful relationships with adults and other youth. Each WSU Extension Office can provide a computer disk, EM2778-CD, “4-H

Publications and Projects”, which contains most of the publications and curriculum materials for the seven project areas: animal science, engineering & technology, environmental stewardship, expressive arts, family living, interdisciplinary, plant science, and social science.

Additional information on 4-H projects is available on-line at <http://4h.wsu.edu/EM2778CD/index.htm>

## **Activities and Special Programs for Youth**

### **4-H Special Interest Programs and Day Camps**

During short-term special interest programs and day camps, youth learn about a specific subject for a designated period of time. The learning activities are taught by Extension staff or trained volunteers. Special interest activities and day camps are not part of the school curriculum and are not restricted to members of 4-H clubs.

Examples of 4-H Special Interest programs and Day Camps include:

- 4-H Challenge activities.
- 4-H programs presented to other youth groups such as Scouts and Campfire.
- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Programs (EFNEP) for youth.
- Horseback riding programs for disabled riders.
- Natural Resource and Sewing Day Camps.

### **4-H Overnight or Resident Camping Programs**

Many counties or regions conduct resident camps where youth learn such important life skills as problem solving, decision-making, communications, and cooperation while experiencing a variety of activities. These experiences involve being away from home at least one night in a camp-like environment and are not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs. Additional information regarding 4-H overnight camping programs in your area is available from your local Extension Office and from the Washington State 4-H website at <http://4h.wsu.edu>

### **4-H School Enrichment Programs**

These innovative educational programs utilize Extension trained volunteers (Master Gardeners, 4-H Leaders, etc.), educators and teachers to share their personal interest and knowledge with children in a formal classroom setting. School enrichment programs are short-term and often use 4-H materials to enhance and supplement existing school curriculum.

Examples of 4-H Enrichment Programs include:

- Talking with TJ.
- Urban Gardening.
- Ag in the Classroom.

- Vermiculture/Worm composting.
- Science Experience and Resources for Informal Education Settings (SERIES) activities.

### **4-H School-aged Care and After School Programs**

Many County Extension Offices have partnered with local school districts to offer youth development activities on a regularly scheduled basis after school. After school programming is a commitment beyond short-term special interest and school enrichment activities and involves a formal partnership between a local school district and Extension. A combination of fees, local funding and grant money is often used to help defray the cost of the after school programming. A primary purpose is to provide childcare for youth while parents are working or unavailable. Your local Extension Office can give you information on after school programming in your area. Additional information is available on-line at [www.4hafterschool.org](http://www.4hafterschool.org).

### **Other 4-H Delivery Modes**

In Washington State, 4-H is also delivered to youth by the following methods:

- 4-H Individual and Family Learning Programs, where self-directed learning occurs with limited adult involvement except for parents (or mentors).
- 4-H Instructional TV and Video Programs, where youth learn through Extension via television or satellite broadcasts.

4-H is flexible and designed to meet the needs of each individual youth. Your county may be offering 4-H in additional creative ways. Check the Washington State 4-H website: <http://4h.wsu.edu/staffdir/index.html> for additional information on 4-H in your county

## SECTION 2

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR 4-H LEADERS

Being a part of the 4-H Youth Development program means not only that you help young people learn and have fun, but also that as a volunteer, you find the best way to support 4-H with your volunteer efforts. The following opportunities are available to 4 -H leaders at the local, county, state and national levels:

#### Local and County Activities for 4-H Leaders

##### **Club Leader**

For 4-H volunteers that like to work directly with children, being a local club leader is an excellent opportunity to work with and be able to have a positive influence upon youth.

**General/Organizational Leader** assumes primary responsibility for a club/group, serves as a liaison between the club and your local 4-H office, keeps track of paperwork and may be responsible for delivery of one or more projects.

**Project Leader** leads a specific project or curriculum with a club/group.

**Activity Leader** gives leadership to an event or activity within a club or short-term group.

**Resource Leader** serves as a source of expertise, an advisor or in another resource capacity to a club/group.

**Junior and Teen Leaders** are older, experienced 4-H members who can complement the leadership team in a club. They can be responsible to teach skills that they have learned to younger members. They also serve as positive role models and mentors to younger 4-H members.

##### **Leader Training**

4-H leaders in Washington State are required to participate in new leader training conducted by local Extension Office staff during their first year of serving as a leader. Most counties also require continuing leader training on a yearly basis for all leaders.

Additional 4-H Volunteer Leader Information is available on-line at <http://4h.wsu.edu/volntr/LdrEd.htm>

## **County 4-H Activities**

Consider becoming a member of a planning committee or a volunteer organizer of one of the many county 4-H activities, such as: Super Saturday, fair superintendent or assistant, judge's clerk, contest coordinator, fundraising committee, workshop director, CE office volunteer or summer camp staff. 4-H leaders are the key to a successful 4-H program. Leaders who take an active part in county 4-H activities not only help the program succeed, but find they become more effective leaders while developing their own skills.

## **County 4-H Leaders Council and Advisory Committees**

Many counties have an organized group of leaders, who meet on a regular basis to discuss the county 4-H program, review 4-H activities, conduct 4-H program fundraising, and provide program advice to the county staff. This group may be called the "County 4-H Leaders Advisory Committee," the "County 4-H Leaders Council," or the "County 4-H Leaders Association." Participating on your county Leaders Council will help your understanding of the 4-H program and allow you to affect change as well. Contact your county Extension Office for more information on 4-H leadership opportunities in your county.

## **Scholarship assistance**

Some counties have limited scholarship assistance available for leaders who apply for area, state, regional, or national workshops. Information is available at your county Extension Office.

## **Opportunities at the State Level**

### **State 4-H Leaders Forum**

There are a number of statewide 4-H activities in which volunteer leaders may become involved. One of these is the State 4-H Leaders Forum. This is an educational activity held annually for adult leaders and older youth involved in leadership positions. The Forum features workshops that focus on general leadership skill development and specific 4-H project areas.

### **State Development Committees, State 4-H Advisory Board and Fair Boards**

The Washington State 4-H staff works through **Development Committees** in many project areas. These advisory committees assist the staff with project curriculum development and activity planning. The membership on these committees is usually composed of county Extension staff, volunteer leaders, and older 4-H members.

### **The State 4-H Advisory Board**

<http://4h.wsu.edu/volntr/sab/sablist.html> meets to give advice to the state 4-H staff on policy issues, review recommendations made by state development committees, and provide guidance for program direction.

### **The State 4-H Fair Board**

<http://4h.wsu.edu/volntr/sfb/sfblist.html> meets several times yearly to plan and carry out State Fair activities, too. Contact your county Extension Office regarding how you can become involved in statewide planning activities.

### **State 4-H Fair**

<http://4h.wsu.edu/statefair/index.htm> offers many opportunities for volunteer 4-H leader involvement. Volunteering as a judge's clerk is an excellent way to find out what judges are looking for in 4-H exhibits. Hosts and hostesses serve for a few hours in the 4-H exhibit building, greeting the public and answering questions about 4-H. Volunteer show chairs and vice-chairs (superintendents) plan, organize, and conduct many of the shows and activities that take place during State Fair. Talk to your county Extension staff about how to get involved in these opportunities.

### **Judges' workshops**

The State 4-H staff coordinates judges' training seminars, which are also good workshops for resource leaders. Judges' workshops are usually open to all volunteer leaders. County Extension offices receive announcements about upcoming judges' workshops.

## **Opportunities at the Regional and National Levels**

### **Western Region 4-H Leaders Forum**

Each year a Western Regional 4-H Leaders Forum is held in one of the 13 Western states, usually in February or March. The program features three days of informative seminars and meetings, tours, and an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other 4-H leaders from across the West.

### **National 4-H Council and Conference Center**

The National 4-H Council <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/> provides grants, establishes programs/initiatives, designs and publishes curriculum and reference materials, and creates linkages fostering innovation and shared learning. The goal of the National 4-H Council is to advance the 4-H youth development movement at the national, state and local levels. The National 4-H Conference Center <http://www.4hcenter.org/> located near Washington, DC is available for 4-H leaders to stay with their families while visiting the nation's capital. Reservations must be made in advance.

## 4-H Volunteer Job Descriptions

It is important for volunteers to have a clear idea of their responsibilities as a 4-H leader. A well-written **Job Description** will clarify your role as a volunteer, and help match your talents with the various needs of 4-H in your area. A volunteer job description should include:

- **Position Title-** with a general description of a position.
- **Time Requirements-** is it a short-term or an ongoing position?
- **Supervisor or Mentor-** who will supervise and/or help you in this position?
- **Position Responsibilities-** the job description should include the duties of the position, as well as any special requirements.
- **Qualifications-** what qualifications does the position require?
- **Training-** Find out the type of training available and when it will be provided. Are you expected to receive additional training in the future?

Examples of volunteer job descriptions are available at your local Extension Office, and from the Washington State 4-H website <http://4h.wsu.edu/voldesc/>

## SECTION 3

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR 4-H MEMBERS

Youth involvement in 4-H is limited only by one's imagination. The following are opportunities available to 4-H members at the local, county, state and national levels.

#### Local and County 4-H Activities

Most counties in Washington have a 4-H Website  
<http://4h.wsu.edu/staffdir/counties.html>

#### Community Service/Service Learning

One goal of 4-H is to help members become caring citizens of their communities. Therefore, every club is encouraged to complete a **community service project** on a yearly basis. Many clubs choose community service projects that are related to the individual interests and project work of the club members. Examples of community service/service learning projects include:

- Visiting retirement centers and nursing homes with small animal projects or holiday treats.
- Environmental projects such as cleaning up trash, planting flowers and shrubs, and building and maintaining nature paths.
- Coordinating special community-wide events, such a petting zoo, for young children.

As your club members grow and mature, they may decide on a long-term project to be developed or repeated over several years.

#### Recognition Activities

Many clubs have a special **recognition activity** at the end of the 4 -H year, when they acknowledge each member of the group for his or her achievements during the year. Usually, families and friends are invited, giving the club leader an opportunity to explain the club activities and goals.

#### Social Events

In addition to regular meetings, field trips, and special activity days, some clubs also plan **social events** such as family potluck dinners, picnics, swimming parties, trail rides, and campouts. This is a good way to involve 4-H members in planning and carrying out their plans.

## **Project Workshops**

Many counties schedule workshops in various project areas (such as Super Saturdays or Marvelous Mondays which are a series of workshops in a day, large animal clinics, small animal workshops, family living activities, horse clinics, dog obedience training, and computer building workshops). These workshops are often also offered in neighboring counties, or on a regional or statewide basis.

## **Contests**

4-H offers a wide variety of contests for youth to become involved in, ranging from livestock and small animal judging or “bowls”, to fashion revues and skill-a-thons. Find out from your county Extension staff the contests that are held in your area. These contests provide educational opportunities for both 4-H members and leaders. Also, many 4-H members find that competition motivates them to *"Make the Best Better."*

## **Public Presentations**

Individual 4-H members, on their topic of choice, give illustrated talks and demonstrations. 4-H members are encouraged to begin giving demonstrations at an early age in order to develop their level of proficiency and self confidence. Presentations usually are shorter (3 to 5 minutes) for younger members and longer (10 to 20 minutes) for senior members. Additional information about county demonstration days and other public speaking opportunities is available from your local Extension Office.

## **Exchange programs**

4-H sponsors excellent exchange programs, providing an opportunity for older 4-H members and their families to gain a broader understanding of the United States and the world. Some counties participate in a Japanese exchange program by hosting Japanese youth, or by having members visit Japan as part of an exchange group. Contact your county or state office for information on being a host family or an exchange participant, or visit the State 4-H website at <http://4h.wsu.edu/international/>.

## **4-H Summer Camps**

Day or residential summer camps are offered in many counties and focus on a variety of topics and activities. Ask your local Extension Office about 4-H camps in your area, or visit the Washington State 4-H website at <http://4h.wsu.edu/kidstuff/camps.htm>.

## **District Rally**

Approximately 2-3 days at a residential location in the Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, or Southwest portion of the state. This is an event planned by and for Intermediate and Senior youth to address project and social issues via workshops, speakers and activities.

## **Leadership Opportunities**

4-H provides many opportunities to develop one's leadership skills at the local and county level.

Opportunities include:

- Serving as an officer in your local 4-H club.
- Chairing club or committee meetings.
- Serving as a Junior or Teen Leader of 4-H.
- Serving as a County Ambassador.

Many counties also have youth representatives on their local Fair Boards and Leader Councils.

## **Opportunities at the State Level**

### **State Fair**

4-H members' exhibits that qualify at the county level may be sent to the State Fair, held each September in Puyallup, for judging and display. Intermediate and senior contest participants and animal-science exhibitors who qualify at the county level are also eligible to participate at State Fair. Contests at State Fair may include fashion revue, food preparation, presentations, and selected judging and identification contests. 4-H members may also apply to do volunteer work at State Fair. Additional information is available on-line at <http://4-h.wsu.edu/statefair/>.

### **State 4-H Conference**

4-H members and non 4-H members who have completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade participate in workshops, listen to inspirational speakers, and enjoy various recreational activities during this annual event held each June at Washington State University in Pullman. Information on the current year's Teen Conference is available on-line at <http://4-h.wsu.edu/conferences/teenconf/>.

### **Know Your Government**

KYG is for senior 4-H members interested in knowing more about the Washington State political system. Interested members focus on specific aspects of government and receive training at the local level prior to holding a conference at the State capitol in Olympia. KYG is held during the winter, while the Washington State House and Senate are in session. County oriented KYG, promoting youth/local legislator interaction, may be offered in your county as well. Check with your local Extension Office for eligibility requirements and specific program plans for each year. Information on the current year's Know Your Government Conference is available on-line at <http://4-h.wsu.edu/conferences/kyg/>.

## **Scholarships**

4-H members are encouraged to apply for scholarships and other financial aid to assist them in pursuing higher education. Scholarships are available to 4-H members at the local, state and national levels. Many counties also have scholarship assistance available for 4-H members applying to attend 4-H summer camps, special workshops, or college. Contact your county Extension Office for scholarship information in your county. Additional information is available at <http://4-h.wsu.edu/kidstuff/scholar.htm>.

## **Leadership Opportunities**

4-H offers many leadership opportunities for older members at the State level. These include:

- State Ambassadors
- State Fair Board
- State Advisory Board
- Know Your Government Planning Committee
- Participating in Collegiate 4-H

Additional information is available at <http://4h.wsu.edu/kidstuff/opportun.htm>.

## **Opportunities at the Regional and National Levels**

There are several regional and national 4-H seminars and conferences for senior members (grade 9 through 12). Inclusive of the Western Regional 4-H Leaders Forum, National 4-H Conference, National 4-H Congress, and Washington Citizenship Focus; as well as subject matter competitions, and interstate and national exchanges as host or exchange representatives. Information on these programs is available through your county Extension office.

*Some information in this module was adapted from the New Jersey 4-H Leaders Series <http://nj4h.rutgers.edu/volunteering/lts/>; and the "Welcome to the World of 4-H Basics for New Leaders" website, <http://4h.wsu.edu/volntr/LdrEd.htm>.*

## MODULE VI

### Self Assessment

1. Who can belong to 4-H?
  - a. Anyone
  - b. Adults
  - c. Youth ages 5-19
  - d. All of the above
  
2. Where do you find the necessary enrollment information for a youth member or volunteer?
  - a. USDA
  - b. Library
  - c. University of Washington
  - d. Local county extension office
  
3. Where do you find 4-H project information?
  - a. Local county extension office
  - b. EM2778-CD, CD from WSU
  - c. Online at <http://4h.wsu.edu>
  - d. All of the above
  
4. Youth involvement in 4-H is limited by one's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Wallet
  - b. Number of club meetings
  - c. Ability to attend meetings
  - d. Imagination
  
5. What are the types of volunteer leaders?
  - a. General
  - b. Project
  - c. Activity
  - d. Resource
  - e. All of the above

## Module VI

### Self Assessment Answers

1. d. All of the above
2. d. Local county extension office
3. d. All of the above
4. d. Imagination
5. e. All of the above

---

Module VI Updated (October 2007) by Marilyn Anderson  
Snohomish County Program Assistant  
Original (2003) by Mark Heitstuman, Asotin County Extension Director