



4-H Project Leader's Guide



You are a Marion County 4-H Project Leader!

A project leader is a *Very Important Person* in the world of 4-H. As a leader you will:

- ◆ help members learn skills they will use throughout life
- ◆ Help members set and reach goals
- ◆ Serve as a role model

What is a Project Meeting?

A project meeting is a series of three or more planned learning experiences within an area of interest. "Learn by Doing" is a basic philosophy of 4-H, and project meetings provide this experience.

Project meetings are aimed at planned goals that can be attained and measured, and are summarized yearly by record keeping.

Why are Project Meetings Important?

- ◆ They provide a supportive caring *non-parent* adult in the life of a child.
- ◆ Youth become engaged in hands-on events and activities that focus on learning and sharing what they have learned with others.
- ◆ The reporting and self-evaluation of a project gives youth an opportunity to record/report their goals, activities and accomplishments in the project.

How to Get Started

- Collect names and contact information from the club leader about the members enrolled in the project.
- Hold a short initial meeting with members, perhaps before or after a club meeting, to discuss what they would like to learn during the year. Also decide how many meetings should be held, as well as when and where. Plan to hold a minimum of three 1½ to 2 hour long meetings.
- Help the members set group goals and their own individual goals. The individual goals should reflect the number of years the 4-Her has been in the project. It is also a good idea to try and include some citizenship and leadership goals.
- Gather project curriculum resources. There are project curriculum notebooks available for check-out from the Extension office. Also available for only \$2 each are individual project books for many of the projects. Visit the Marion County website at www.marion.ksu.edu and go to the Project Resources link on the 4-H page. There you'll find a list of what is available for each project. You'll also find some links to sites that could provide you with additional assistance in the project.
- Review the project literature to select the lessons that will help the 4-Hers meet their set goals. Many of the project curriculum notebooks have a separate booklet for the leader. They contain many lesson plans that are "ready to go," and can really help you plan your project meetings.
- Get started soon in the new year. The more meetings that are held, the greater the scope of the learning experience. Don't wait until a month or two before the fair to begin. The focus of the project should be to help the 4-Her learn and grow in the project; not just to make or prepare an item for exhibit at the fair.
- Keep a record of the goals, number of meetings held, subject of meeting and who attended.

What Should Happen at a Project Meeting

Plan activities that will help the 4-Hers meet a goal or some steps in meeting a goal. The meetings can include demonstrations, activities, simple quizzes, guest speakers, tours or field-trips, and any other activity that will help the 4-Her learn in the project.

Make sure there are plenty of opportunities for hands-on learning. Allow them to practice their new skills to promote a sense of mastery and accomplishment. Make the meetings fun!

At the end of each meeting have the 4-Hers reflect on what they have learned. Ask them what they liked best, what was the hardest to do, what would they do differently next time.

Handling Project Costs

Depending on the activities there may be expenses that need to be covered. Many leaders estimate the costs for the meeting and ask the 4-Her to bring that amount to the meeting. Sometimes members and leaders can solicit donations/supplies from area businesses. For example, a clothing leader might ask a local quilt shop to donate fabric remnants for practice on making seams and seam finishes.

Ensure the Safety of Youth in Your Care

As you prepare for a project meeting think of the possibilities for harm to a 4-Her that might occur during the meeting. Make plans to avoid or reduce these safety risks.

Here are some examples of what you could do:

- For a food meeting make sure to have a first aid kit in case of cuts and burns.
- When cutting boards at a woodworking meeting provide safety goggles.
- Talk to the 4-Hers about what they should do to avoid a dangerous action.
- In groups of more than ten youth ask a parent or older teen member to help with the meeting.

The Role of Record Keeping

Keeping records of project work is not an extra task, but rather an essential part of 4-H work. A good record book is a measuring stick of the 4-Hers accomplishments and progress in the project. Few 4-Hers enjoy record keeping, but it is a skill and habit that can benefit them throughout their lives.

Please keep track of when meetings were held, what was covered and who attended. This information can be shared with the 4-Her at the end of the 4-H year as they complete their project record books. You'll also need it to complete the project leader report.

Project Work and the County Fair

Many 4-Hers, and parents, see the fair ribbon as the ultimate reward of project work, and many project meetings revolve around making or preparing for the fair exhibit.

As a project leader you can help ensure that the end result of project work is to develop blue-ribbon kids, not blue ribbons earned! At the end of the 4-H year the 4-hers should feel proud of their accomplishments regardless of the color of the ribbon earned.

Responsibilities of Project Leaders

There are certain things we expect from our project leaders. They are:

- Complete an initial VIP to be approved as a registered 4-H volunteer in Marion County
- Complete and turn in a yearly renewal form by November 15
- Complete and turn in a project leader agreement form each year by November 15
- Hold a minimum of three project meetings during the year
- Complete an end of the year report by October 1

Sources: *4-H Project Leader* from Missouri 4-H, *The 4-H Project Meeting Design Kit* from California 4-H, *I'm a Project Leader: now what?* From University of Wisconsin 4-H.

Created by Nancy Pihl, Marion County Agent January 2012