



4-H – Fact Sheet

The following information has been assembled by the National Scouting and Youth Services Committee to assist chapters with their interaction with the 4-H youth organization.

The 4-H program in the United States is a youth organization administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative Extension System with the mission of "engaging youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development." The program is reportedly the largest school youth program in the U.S., with over 7 million members and 500,000 teen and adult volunteers. 4-H also exists in more than 80 countries worldwide but there is no international 4-H organization. The program is open to participation by youth, age 5 and in Kindergarten to age 19.

Though administered nationally through the USDA Cooperative Extension Service and the state offices of the Cooperative Extension Service, there are other related organizations that assist in the delivery of the 4-H program including the National 4-H Council. The National 4-H Council serves as the national, private sector non-profit partner of 4-H and the Cooperative Extension System. The National 4-H Council focuses on fundraising; brand management; communications; legal and fiduciary support to national and state 4-H programs; and operation of the full-service National 4-H Youth Conference Center, and the National 4-H Supply Service.

The 4-H program began in the United States around the start of the twentieth century. The seed of the 4-H idea of practical and "hands-on" learning came from the desire to make public school education more connected to country life. Early programs tied both public and private resources together for the purpose of helping rural youth. Through this effort to educate youth, it was found that new agricultural technology could be shared with adults. In 1914, when the United States Congress created the Cooperative Extension Service, boys and girls clubs involved with agriculture, home economics and related subjects were included as a part of the charter.

The four "H"'s symbolized in the name stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

4-H is a community of young people across America learning citizenship, leadership, and life skills. 4-H programs are focused in three expansive mission mandates: Science, Engineering, and Technology (4-H SET), Citizenship, and Healthy Living. The overall 4-H program goals are to educate youth in arts and sciences, and to encourage fellowship and service opportunities. 4-H presently offers learning experiences in more than 200 subject matter areas. Some of these subject matter areas include: health, family life, photography, aerospace science, bicycles, natural resources, safety, horticulture and nutrition.

The 4-H program utilizes four primary delivery methods to educate youth. These methods include community clubs and school enrichment, special emphasis, and camping programs. The organization is often associated with summer camps, county fairs and state fairs.

Many colleges and universities have 4-H clubs. Collegiate 4-H is an organization that provides its members with a sense of identity on campus, enriches their lives through group projects and recreation, and develops confidence and leadership skills. Clubs provide service and support to their local and state 4-H programs, such as serving as judges and conducting training workshops. They are also a service and social group for campus students.

There are a number of ways to volunteer within the 4-H program. These include:

- Community Club Advisor- Advise a diverse group of 4-H members enrolled in a variety of projects.
- Project Club Advisor - Share your skills, talents and special interests in a single project area.
- Cloverbud Advisor - Lead children, in grades k-12, through hands-on learning activities.
- School Enrichment Volunteer - Teach a short-term 4-H curriculum to a class of school children.
- Short Term Volunteer - Teach a special interest program, and/or assist a 4-H group with a special project.

In all instances, the way to become involved in volunteering with the 4-H program, whether as a group or individual, with either direct youth involvement or "behind-the-scenes" activities, is by contacting your local Cooperative Extension Service Office. To locate your local Cooperative Extension Service Office visit: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/index.html>

The following are links for additional information on the 4-H Program:

- Collegiate 4-H Program: <http://www.collegiate4h.org/>
- National 4-H Council: <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/>
- National 4-H Headquarters: <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>
- Volunteering in 4-H: <http://www.4hvolunteersusa.org/>