

What Is a 4-H Club?

4-H is the premier youth development program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Originating in the early 1900's, the 4-H's (head-heart-hands-health) seek to promote positive youth development, facilitate learning, and engage youth in the work of their community through the Cooperative Extension Service to enhance the quality of life.



4-H CLUB DEFINITION

A 4-H Club is an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff for a progressive series of educational experiences.

Clubs may engage youth from many age groups or focus on a particular age group. Gathering places should include schools, community centers and other accessible public spaces. Meeting schedules may vary; some are seasonal or align with the school year and others operate with a year-long schedule. Some clubs are small with youth from the neighborhood, while some are larger, drawing youth from all over the county or city. All clubs aim to engage youth and adults in both individual and group activities that foster learning and development.

4-H CLUB MEMBERSHIP

4-H membership is open to all youth beginning in 5K (five-year-old Kindergarten) through one year beyond high school graduation and not to extend beyond the age of 19 as of December 31 of the enrollment year. Youth may enroll at any time of the year.

STRUCTURE & EDUCATIONAL FOCUS OF A 4-H CLUB

- Has five or more youth from at least three families
- Is advised by adult staff or volunteers who have been screened and trained
- Features youth involvement in leadership and decision-making
- Meets on a continuing basis
- Has an educational plan which meets the purposes of the 4-H program
- Keeps records of their educational experiences and finances
- Abides by the policies and guidelines of the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development programs
- Recognizes and celebrates the accomplishment of members
- Has written operating guidelines, bylaws or constitution approved by the members to govern the club
- Is open to any youth eligible for 4-H membership, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, disability, ancestry, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status

WHAT IS A 4-H PROJECT?

A 4-H Project is a planned sequence of age-appropriate and research-based learning opportunities related to a specific topic. As a result of long-term active engagement in the project, the youth gains knowledge and develops skills based on planned goals and identified outcomes. To demonstrate skills learned through a 4-H project, a youth might exhibit something that they created or learned in the project at a county fair, festival, or other public event.

CHARTERING 4-H CLUBS

A 4-H club must be chartered by National 4-H Headquarters at the U.W. Department of Agriculture and the Wisconsin 4-H Program Office in order to be recognized as part of 4-H, and to be authorized to use the 4-H Clover emblem.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management policies and procedures for 4-H clubs are established by Wisconsin 4-H and implemented by the county UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development staff and volunteers. Liability insurance is provided for enrolled and screened 4-H volunteers, and accident insurance coverage is provided for enrolled youth members and adult volunteers.

CLOVERBUD PROGRAM

Youth in 5K – 2nd grade participate in the Cloverbud program which is designed to meet the developmental needs of this age group. This does not include pre-kindergarten or four-year-old kindergarten youth. Cloverbud program members are not allowed to exhibit animals at public events nor participate in shooting sports activities.

Sources:

4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet: [“What Is a 4-H Club?”](#) (2011)

Minnesota 4-H: [“Basic Facts About 4-H Clubs”](#) (2018)

Wisconsin 4-H: [“4-H Delivery Methods and Enrollment Guidelines for Staff”](#) (2018)

[Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Policies](#) (2018)

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