



# CLUB SELF-ASSESSMENTS

## Intended Audience:

- Adults and youth providing 4-H Club leadership

## Learning Objectives:

Club leaders will:

- Explore the benefits of evaluating 4-H clubs
- Learn self-assessment tools that will work with their 4-H clubs

## Target Essential Elements:

A safe and inclusive environment helps members experience *belonging*.

**Time:** 30 minutes

## Supplies Needed:

- Soft object to toss around the group (e.g., Beanie Baby)
- Marker
- Flipchart paper

## Handouts

- Opinion Lines
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Evaluation

## Do Ahead:

- Make copies of any handouts.

## Sources:

- Created by Jessica Jens, Sauk County 4-H Youth Development Agent, UW-Extension.

## BACKGROUND

The 4-H motto is “to make the best better.” In 4-H, we always strive to do our best and to make the best out of any situation. In order to make our 4-H clubs’ “best” even “better,” it is important to plan and implement a yearly club self-assessment. Don’t worry! Club self-assessments are fun, too!

## WHAT TO DO

Many people do not think in the mindset of evaluating and assessing the activities they pursue. The thought of “assessing” or “evaluating” a 4-H club may be a bit daunting or threatening to you. It’s important that we all recognize the importance of regularly assessing our 4-H clubs.

### Activity: Benefits of Club Self-Assessment

(The more fun you can make this activity, the better. Bring along a soft object to toss around the group.) The object of this activity is to brainstorm the benefits of self-assessing a 4-H club. Why is it important? Give one example of why self-assessments are important and then toss the object to another member of our group. That person gives another reason for or benefit of assessing the 4-H club. After everyone has had a chance to talk, you can toss the object to any other member of the group. We’ll continue until all ideas are shared. (As each member shares an idea, write it on a piece of flipchart paper and keep these ideas visible for the remainder of the program.)



So what are the benefits of assessing a 4-H club? Here are just a few to start with:

- Provides a safe environment for members, parents and leaders to voice their thoughts on all aspects of the 4-H club.
- Highlights aspects of the club that could be strengthened.
- Sets a good example for youth about evaluating activities and striving to “make the best better.”
- Decreases frustration levels by providing a formal opportunity for feedback.
- If done correctly, can be a fun, interactive and educational club program.
- Involves youth leaders in a decision making process.
- Others?

### Assessment Strategies

Let’s take some time now to have a round table discussion about methods you have used.

- How do you know if your club members are happy?
- How do you know if it’s time to change some aspect of the club?
- What system(s) is in place to allow club members, leaders and parents the opportunity to give feedback?
- Have you assessed your club before? If so, how have you done it?

### *Assessment Tools*

In addition to the ideas presented, here are some other self-assessment activities that you can take home with you. (Handouts explaining these ideas are attached to this lesson plan or are available on line.)

1. 4-H Club Feedback Form at [www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/meetings.cfm](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/meetings.cfm): The club checklist was developed in 2004 by the Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership work team. This checklist and others like it are good starting points for self-assessments. There are a number of ways they can be used:
  - Organizational leaders can fill them out, think about the results and develop strategies to improve the club.
  - The Leadership Team, including youth officers, can complete the evaluation, discuss the results and develop strategies to improve weak areas.
  - The entire club, including youth and adults, can complete the evaluations. The results can then be compiled and discussed.
  - When compiling results, it may be worthwhile to keep youth and adult results separate. This way, discrepancies between youth views and adult views can be discussed.

2. Opinion Lines: This is an entire club activity. From a club assessment tool, pick out 3-4 general questions on which you would like club input. Push aside chairs and tables so that there is a large work space. Draw an imaginary line on the ground and label one end “a lot” and one end “not at all.” Read an evaluation line, such as:
  - Youth and adults participate equally to plan, implement and evaluate the club program.
  - Meetings have a balance of education, recreation and business.
  - There are opportunities for family participation, shared youth and adult leadership.
  - Members assist or mentor other members.
  - Members exhibit or demonstrate what they have learned.

Once a line is read, have the group align themselves if they personally believe each statement occurs “a lot” or “not at all” or somewhere in between. Once the group is lined up, facilitate a discussion between members of the group who have different view points. Why does each side believe what they do? Is there any way to improve this part of the club? Why do people have different opinions or views on this aspect?

3. Strengths & Weaknesses: This is another club activity where all members, parents and leaders are involved. Each participant needs a writing utensil, three sticky notes of one color, three sticky notes of a different color, and three stickers or dots to vote with.
  - On one set of colored sticky notes, the participants should think of the “three best things about this 4-H club, not about 4-H, but about this 4-H club.” The participants should write one “best thing” on each sticky note. Direct the participants to stick them on one section of the wall.
  - On the other set of colored sticky notes, the participants should think of “three things about this 4-H club that could be improved.” Remember, the 4-H motto: “To Make the Best Better.” Maybe these things are already good, but just could use some improvement. The participants should write one “area of improvement” on each sticky note. Direct the participants to stick them on another section of the wall.
  - Ask for some youth volunteers. The volunteers need to clump the answers together in categories. Chances are there are some similarities within all of the sticky notes. When the volunteers are complete, there should be general categories of “best things” and “areas of improvement.” Have each volunteer group report what he or she has discovered in their consolidation efforts.
  - On sheets of flipchart paper, list the top five or six areas of improvement that were mentioned the most.

- With their stickers or dots, the participants will now have a chance to vote on which area of improvement is most important to them. They may choose three different areas and give each area one vote, or they can put all three of their votes on the same area. It's up to them.
- Tabulate the votes and discuss the results. Suggest that the club puts the areas of improvement that received the most votes as agenda items for future meetings. This will give the club an opportunity to discuss the area of improvement and create an action plan for improving the situation.

## **TALK IT OVER**

### **Reflect:**

- Why should 4-H clubs regularly assess themselves?
- What might a club learn about their organization through a self-assessment?

### **Apply:**

- What will you do with the information presented to help your club become more effective?
- Who could help you implement a self-assessment program in your club?

## **ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY**

### **Enhance:**

- Before you get into teaching the lesson, it's a good idea to start out with a "mixer" activity. Even if the group members know each other, these types of activities are good for getting people talking and more receptive to the upcoming discussion. If you decide to add this activity, your lesson will be over 30 minutes long. Here's one idea called "Silent Introductions": Ask the participants to find a partner. Preferably, they should pick a partner that they know little about or would like to get to know better. Ask each pair to find a quiet spot in the room. Once the pairs are positioned in the room, instruct the group that the goal of this initiative is to get to know the most information as possible about their partners. Once the activity is over, people will introduce his/her partner and what they learned about him/her. Sound good? Great! Oh yeah . . . and you cannot talk. No verbal communication is allowed in this activity. Ready, set, go!
- Practice a Self-Assessment Technique: If time allows, you can do a "mock evaluation" with the group using one or more of the self-assessment approaches discussed in this lesson. Try evaluating something weird, like the meeting room or the hallway decorations.

## **EVALUATION**

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation in the handouts can be modified to meet your needs. An alternative to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection discussion under "Talk It Over." Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion. Remember to share the evaluation results with 4-H Youth Development Extension staff in your county.

## **ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS**

- Minnesota 4-H Club Management "Making 4-H Club Programs Better Survey" at [www.fourh.umn.edu/downloads/4HMG/toolkit/Toolkit-3-Club-Survey.pdf](http://www.fourh.umn.edu/downloads/4HMG/toolkit/Toolkit-3-Club-Survey.pdf).
- New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series "What Makes a Good 4-H Club Meeting?" at [www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/249-250.pdf](http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/249-250.pdf).
- Wisconsin 4-H Community Club Central at [www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/).

***Finalized by the Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership Work Team on September 2005.***



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## Opinion Lines

### Activity Description:

This is an entire club activity used to self-evaluate your club. All members, leaders and parents participate together in this hands-on activity to evaluate the club on a number of items.

### Part 1:

From a club assessment tool, pick out 3-4 general questions on which you would like club input.

### Part 2:

Push aside chairs and tables so that there is a large work space. Draw an imaginary line on the ground and “label” one end “a lot” and one end “not at all.” Read your chosen evaluation lines one at a time. Examples include:

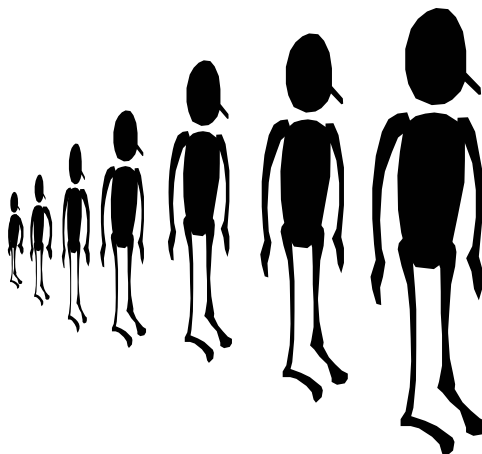
- Youth and adults participate equally to plan, implement and evaluate the club program.
- Meetings have a balance of education, recreation and business.
- Opportunities for family participation, shared youth and adult leadership.
- Members assist or mentor other members.
- Members exhibit or demonstrate what they have learned.

### Part 3:

Once a line is read, each person should decide if they think the statement occurs “a lot,” “not at all,” or somewhere in the middle. Once they have made their decision, they should line up on the imaginary line to demonstrate their opinion.

### Part 4:

Once the group is lined up, facilitate a discussion between members of the group who have different viewpoints. Why does each side believe what they do? Is there any way to improve this part of the club? Why do people have different opinions or views on this aspect? Take notes and use this information to “Make the Best Better!”



## Strengths and Weaknesses

### Activity Description:

This is another club activity where all members, parents and leaders are involved. Each participant needs a writing utensil, three sticky notes of one color, three sticky notes of a different color, and three stickers or dots to vote with.

### Part 1:

On one set of colored sticky notes, the participants should think of the “three best things about this 4-H club, not about 4-H, but about this 4-H club.” The participants should write one “best thing” on each sticky note. Direct the participants to stick them on one section of the wall.

### Part 2:

On the other set of colored sticky notes, the participants should think of “three things about this 4-H club that could be improved.” Remember, the 4-H motto: “To Make the Best Better.” Maybe these things are already good, but just could use some improvement. The participants should write one “area of improvement” on each sticky note. Direct the participants to stick them on another section of the wall.

### Part 3:

Ask for some volunteers. The volunteers need to clump the answers together in categories. Chances are there are some similarities. When the volunteers are complete, there should be general categories of “best things” and “areas of improvement.” Have each volunteer group report what he or she has discovered in their consolidation efforts.

### Part 4:

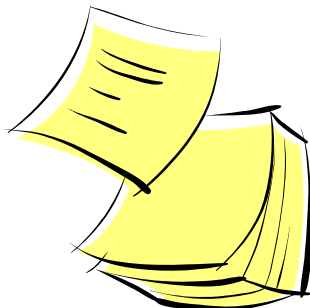
On sheets of flipchart paper, list the top 5-6 areas of improvement that were mentioned most often.

### Part 5:

With their stickers or dots, the participants will now have a chance to vote on which area of improvement is most important to them. They can choose three different areas and give each statement one vote, or they can put all three of their votes on one area. It’s up to them.

### Part 6:

Tabulate the votes and discuss the results. Suggest that the club puts the areas of improvement that received the most votes as agenda items for future meetings. This will give the club an opportunity to discuss the area of improvement and create an action plan for improving the situation.



## Club Self-assessments

### Evaluation

**Please rate the following:**

How useful will the presented information be in helping you increase adult involvement in your 4-H club?

Not very

A little

Not sure

Some

A lot

How many new ideas did you learn?

0

1-2

3-4

5

5 +

How valuable was this program to you in regards to your role as an organizational leader?

Not very

A little

Not sure

Some

A lot

**What will you do as a result of this program?**