



DESIGNING 4-H PROJECT EXPERIENCES: PLANNING PROJECT MEETINGS

Intended Audience:

- 4-H youth and adult project leaders

Learning Objectives:

Project leaders will:

- Understand the importance of providing members with opportunities to design their own project experience
- Explore techniques for helping members identify and prioritize project experiences
- Work with members to develop a plan for the project year that includes opportunities to exhibit their completed projects, evaluate their experience, and celebrate their accomplishments.

Target Essential Elements:

Participating in designing their own project experience increases members' sense of *independence* as they set their own goals and make decisions about their project work.

VRKC Taxonomy:

Volunteers will increase their expertise in *educational design and delivery* as they develop skills in *implementing* learning opportunities that effectively promote positive personal development.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Brainstorming Activity

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Sticky dots for voting

BACKGROUND

To get the most from their project experience, members need to be actively involved in choosing their projects, setting their project goals, and making decisions about when and what they will do to accomplish those goals. Today we will learn about planning as an important second step on the road to a successful project adventure.

WHAT TO DO

Introduction

Project work can be defined as a series of educational experiences designed in partnership with members to help them achieve their goals. Once members have set their goals, or identified their “destination,” you can guide them in making a plan to achieve those goals. The plan can have individual and group components, should include opportunities for members to engage in hands-on active learning, and should incorporate a variety of teaching techniques. A good plan includes an opportunity for evaluation and celebration, so encourage members to participate in a final “wrap up” meeting where they can share what they’ve learned, complete their records, and celebrate their achievements.



Activity: Brainstorming

Pick a project. Work with leaders to brainstorm a list of learning activities related to that project. Before getting started, review the brainstorming “ground rules” from the handout “A Way to Stimulate Discussion: Brainstorming.” Record the participants’ ideas on flip chart paper. Encourage them to list as many project activities as possible. As noted in the handout, quantity counts! Be sure to include everyone’s ideas. One way to do this is to ask participants to make their own list first, and then ask for an idea from each list until everyone’s ideas are recorded on the master list.

When the list is complete, take a few minutes to discuss each activity. Clarify each and group together any that are the same. You may add to the list during this stage, but do not eliminate any of the ideas.

Distribute five sticky dots to each leader. Ask them to “spend” their dots by voting for their favorite ideas. Voting has no rules. They can use all or several of their dots to vote for their favorite activity, or they can use one dot per good idea. When everyone has finished voting, tally up the results. The activities that receive the most votes are those that can be worked into the group’s project plan. Note: Leaders may want to encourage members to try some of the other activities from the list on their own or with their parents or project helpers.

Activity: Fitting It All Together

Discuss how the ideas receiving the most votes from the “Brainstorming” activity would fit together as a plan for a project group’s next several (3-5) meetings. Encourage volunteers to make the plan for their group in partnership with members or the project’s leadership team and to incorporate a variety of teaching techniques into the final plan. (See the lesson “Implementing 4-H Project Experiences – Teaching Methods” for more information.) Reference the “Project Meeting Planner” handout for use with members in planning their upcoming meetings.

- Handout

Fitting It Together Activity

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Handout

Handouts

- A Way to Stimulate Discussion:
Brainstorming
- Project Meeting Planner
- Examples
- Evaluation

Do Ahead:

- Have supplies and handouts ready.

Sources:

- Developed by Carolyn L. Belczyk, 4-H Youth Development Educator, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program.
- “Designing 4-H Project Meetings,” Jeanne Baum, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Outagamie County, UW Extension.
- “Reflection Activity Ideas for Community Service & Service Learning Projects,” Jessica Jens, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Sauk County, UW-Extension.
- “Strengthening 4-H Project Leader Support” UW-Extension work team, January 2001, whose work provides a foundation for this project leader training series.

Encourage leaders to include plans for a final “wrap up” meeting where members can share what they’ve learned, complete their records, and celebrate their achievements. Discuss with leaders why such a meeting is important, and record a list of ideas for the meeting.

Such a meeting should give members an opportunity to *reflect* on their project experience and to feel good about what they’ve achieved. Did they meet their goals? Why or why not? What did they learn? Do? How did they do at the county fair or in other project exhibit experiences? Remind leaders that members are successful if they worked towards their goals and learned from the experiences!

Encourage leaders to help members record their experiences in the project records. Leaders should include project helpers or other family members in the final meeting and provide opportunities for members to showcase their project work and accomplishments and share with others something new they learned or some unique experience they had during the project year. Leaders should end the meeting with a celebration, serving refreshments and distributing completion certificates or small rewards to members. Model this by giving participants a mint to symbolize that project leaders are “worth a mint,” or a bag of M & M’s to symbolize that project leaders are “Magnificent and Marvelous.”

Closing

Once members have set their goals, or identified their “destination,” it’s up to the project leader to guide them in making a plan to achieve those goals. The plan should have individual and group components, should include opportunities for members to engage in hands-on active learning, and should incorporate a variety of teaching methods. And remember, a good plan includes an opportunity for evaluation and celebration.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- Why is it important for everyone to contribute ideas during a brainstorming session?
- How can we keep members from criticizing or making fun of each others’ ideas during brainstorming?
- How can we incorporate members’ ideas into our project plans for the year?
- Why is it important for members’ to reflect on their project work and celebrate their successes at the end of the project year?

Apply:

- How will you and the members of your project leadership team incorporate members’ goals and learning activity ideas into a plan for the year?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance:

- Encourage leaders to think about the project skills that members want to learn and to plan their project meetings so that these skills are presented *sequentially*, so that concepts and skills are introduced in an appropriate order.
- *Reflection* is a key component of experiential learning. Through reflection, participants process what they’ve learned and process how this applies in other parts of their lives. Conduct a reflection exercise with the participants from “Reflection Activity Ideas for Community Service & Service Learning Projects,” by Jessica Jens, or try the following “Photo Cube Reflection” activity: Ahead of time, write six different reflection questions on pieces of card stock, and insert one into each side of a plastic photo cube. Have participants sit in a circle and take turns tossing the cube (or a die) into the center. Participants must answer the question that lands on top. Use two cubes (or dice) to double the fun. Participants must answer both questions that land up. Give them a “pass” if they roll doubles. (If the same question lands up on both dice.) Following are some sample reflection questions to use with this lesson:

- What did you like best about today's lesson?
- What did you learn from this lesson?
- What didn't you like about this lesson?
- What will you take home from this lesson and use with your project group?
- What would you suggest that we do differently next time we teach this lesson?
- What are some other project leadership topics you'd like to learn more about?

Leaders will see how asking similar questions about project work at the final wrap-up meeting, using this or a different reflection activity, will help members process their project work and will help them plan even more effective project meetings in the future.

Simplify:

- No time for brainstorming? Have leaders develop project meeting plans from the goals written by project members.

EVALUATION

- It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation provided at the end of this lesson plan can be modified to meet your needs. An option to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection question discussion. Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

- "Making the Most of Your Projects," ACTcc061, Wis. 4-H Community Club Central, <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/pubs/showdoc.cfm?documentid=4089>.

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A Way to Stimulate Discussion: Brainstorming



Brainstorming is a procedure for generating many spontaneous and diverse ideas in a short period of time. The aim of brainstorming is to stimulate creative and innovative solutions to a problem. It is an occasion for free association of ideas and for opening up new avenues of thought. Here are some reasons why brainstorming helps problem-solving groups become more creative:

- It stimulates full participation of all group members.
- It reduces the need to look for the “right” idea; all ideas, even the outlandish, are encouraged.
- It is fun, interesting, and stimulating.

To ensure success in a brainstorming session, follow these ground rules:

- Don’t criticize while brainstorming.
- The wilder the idea, the better. Even offbeat, impractical suggestions may suggest practical ideas to other members.
- Quantity counts. The more ideas, the greater the chance for a good idea.
- Build on the ideas of others. Pool your creativity. Feel free to improve on a previous idea or to combine several ideas.
- Choose a person to record all ideas on easel paper briefly and accurately. Ideas should be recorded for everyone to see.

Be sure to stop all criticism, whether stated or implied by voice or manner. Everyone must feel completely free to express any ideas. The result of this process should be a list of creative new ideas.

Following brainstorming, lead a brief discussion to clarify and define ideas. Group similar ideas together. Additional ideas may be added during this discussion, but do not delete any ideas.

Provide each participant with an opportunity to vote on the importance of an item. Members may record their votes directly onto the easel paper using sticky dots, or they may write their five favorite ideas on a 3" x 5" card in rank order of importance. If asking members to rank their choices, assign each ranking a number (5 for most important, 4 for second most important, etc.). To tally the vote, total the numbers for each idea. The ideas receiving the highest scores are the favorites.



**Wisconsin 4-H
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PROJECT MEETING PLANNER

Statement of Purpose:

Use this tool when working with the leadership team to establish a broad outline for each of the year’s project meetings. List general objectives and activities for each meeting.

Date of Meeting		Time	
Place			

Objectives for the meeting:

(What will members learn or what skill will members practice as a result of this meeting?)

Example: Members will learn and practice how to correctly measure dry and liquid ingredients.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

	Things To Do	Who is Responsible?
Activities for Early Arrivals		
Project Activities		
Wrap Up	<p>Clarify what members need to work on or do at home with their project helpers before the next meeting.</p> <p>Share next project meeting date/time/location with members and project helpers.</p>	



Examples

Following are examples of how other leaders have applied the key principles from this lesson in real life situations.

4-H Project Example #1: Clothing

4-H Project Leader Training Concept: Designing 4-H Project Meetings



How we taught this concept:

For the first project meeting we identified items that could be sewn, such as clothes, pillows, accessories, costumes, doll clothes, etc. Each of the project leaders shared simple items to "make and take."

At clothing project meetings we discussed what to do on a tour at a clothing store and fabric store. Practicing sewing techniques on scrap fabric helped members improve skills. Also, we gave members things to work on at home. Before the fair or clothing revue is a great time to practice judging and discussing their project.

After the fair we had a project show with family members or guests. We talked about what members liked and didn't like and asked what they might want to do next. Some of the members needed help with record books. We gave each member a fabric plaque.

4-H Project Example #2: Dog

4-H Project Leader Training Concept: Designing 4-H Project Meetings



How we taught this concept:

For the first meeting we asked each member to tell us about their dog and what they wanted to learn and do. We made scarves for each of the dogs with 4-H fabric and pinking shears.

At each of the meetings we practiced dog obedience and included one thing they wanted to learn. Some things were making dog treats, comparing dog food, questions to ask the vet, body parts, and teaching dog tricks.

After the fair we had a dog parade with our family and guests. We talked about what was easy and hard, what we liked and didn't like, and how that happens at school too. We finished with food treats for people and dogs.

Examples prepared by:

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Designing 4-H Project Experiences: Planning Project Meetings Evaluation

1. Please rate the following: How useful will this information be in working with members and members of the project leadership team to design a project meeting plan for the year? Circle one response.

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. Please answer the following: Do you feel better prepared to design a plan for meetings that meets the needs and goals of project members?

Yes No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?