



UW-MADISON EXTENSION

# Designing 4-H Project Experiences: Planning Project Meetings

Activity Plan – Wisconsin 4-H Leader Training Series

## **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
- Handout

## **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 these 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.

### 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-Madison Division of Extension
- "Reflection Activity Ideas for Community Service & Service-Learning Projects," Jessica Jens, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Sauk County, UW-Madison Extension
- "Strengthening 4-H Project Leader Support," Extension work team, January 2001, whose work provides a foundation for this project leader training series

### ***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.

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 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 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.