


# LESSON 9

**Criteria for 4-H Club Programming** 

- A 4-H club:
  - enrolls at least 5 members from at least 3 families
  - conducts a minimum of 6 regular club meetings per year, supplemented by other activities
  - typically includes a time for a business and educational program and for social/recreational interaction during the meeting.

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**Criteria for 4-H Club Programming** 

- A 4-H club
  - typically elects officers or youth leaders
  - meets in any location (community center, military base, schools, libraries, etc.)
  - adapts to and supports mobility of youth and parents, linking them to 4-H programs in other counties and states.
  - meets interests and needs of youth
  - is advised by screened/trained adult staff or volunteers

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**Criteria for 4-H Club Programming** 

- A 4-H club:
  - includes opportunities to learn and apply skills such as leadership, citizenship, community service and public speaking
  - provides individual project experiences in science, citizenship, and healthy living
  - provides programs, curricula and procedures based in research, which are developmentally appropriate

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### Criteria for 4-H Club Programming



- A 4-H club:
  - provides members and volunteers access to resources of land-grant universities and to county, state and national 4-H opportunities
  - uses experiential learning as a primary teaching approach
  - fosters youth-adult partnerships that encourage active involvement and participation by youth and adults
  - provides safe and healthy physical and emotional environments

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### Typical Policies of 4-H Clubs



- A set number of members with completed enrollment papers.
- Club is organized with youth officers.
- One or more appointed and trained club volunteer leaders.
- An official club name is chosen.
- Club rules are established.

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### Typical Policies (cont'd)



- At least 6 regular meetings plus project meetings are scheduled.
- A written educational plan for the club program is on file at county 4-H Office.
- A copy of the club enrollment is kept on file with the county 4-H Office.

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### Enrollment Policies for 4-H Members



- Enrollment of members, volunteers and leaders is required each year and is done through the county 4-H Office.
- New members joining throughout the year must submit enrollment papers immediately to county 4-H Office.
- Other forms such as code of conduct may also be submitted each year.

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### Enrollment Policies for 4-H members (cont'd)



- Eligibility for competition and some project involvement are determined by birth date or grade in school.
- Contact your county 4-H Extension professional for specific policies.

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### Enrollment Policies for 4-H Volunteers



- Volunteers must also complete enrollment forms each year.
- Screening and training prior to serving as an official 4-H volunteer leader are usually required.
- Position descriptions are provided for volunteer leaders.

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### Fiscal Policies for 4-H Clubs



- 4-H clubs do not pay taxes on income generated by the club.
- Some states have membership dues to cover insurance or other specific costs.
- Liability and accident insurance varies in each state. Contact your county 4-H Extension professional for information about insurance coverage in your state.

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### Reporting Policies of 4-H Clubs



County 4-H programs report data through their states to 4-H National Headquarters at USDA, including.

- Demographic summary of members and volunteers
- Number of clubs in the county
- Information about the 4-H programs

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## LESSON 9

### CHARTERS: THE KEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION HANDOUT

#### 4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet



## CHARTERS: THE KEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

4-H Charters, either in certificate or letter form, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture's designated representative are the only documents that officially recognize a 4-H Club and authorizes its use of the 4-H Name and Emblem for the conduct of 4-H Youth Development programs. The official 4-H Charter, issued by USDA, is obtained from the 4-H National Headquarters—USDA in two formats: certificate version (most widely used), and a letter version.

As formulated under Federal regulation Title 18 U.S.C. 707, "The Cooperative Extension Service, land-grant institutions, local 4-H Clubs and groups **recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture**...are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem." 4-H Charters issued by USDA are the only documentation of that recognition. State and local charters that do not include a USDA signatory, are not considered official 4-H Charters.

State 4-H offices are expected to maintain documentation on the issuance of 4-H Charters to 4-H Clubs within their respective states. Charters should be issued when establishing a 4-H Club. For those 4-H Clubs that have been long established and verification of a valid Charter is not available, issuance of a new 4-H Charter is necessary.

Affiliated 4-H Organizations (such as Foundations, Councils, Camps, etc.) obtain their official recognition and authorization to use the 4-H Name and Emblem through a Memorandum of Understanding / Agreement between the organization and the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office.

4-H Charters are agreements. It is an agreement by the club with 4-H National Headquarters-USDA on the proper use of the 4-H Name and Emblem. And it is an agreement by the club with the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office to follow and abide by all state and local 4-H policies, procedures, and other requirements.

4-H Charters are agreements within the context of the overall 4-H Program. 4-H Charters do not qualify a 4-H Club as a legal entity according to state government and business policies and definitions. 4-H Charters do not allow a recognized 4-H Club to share their rights and privileges, like the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem, with any other person, group, or business. A 4-H Charter is required for any 4-H Club to use the 4-H Name and Emblem.

#### Examples of Frequently Asked Questions:

- Q. How can I obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter?
- A. State 4-H Offices may obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter, in the official formats, through the 4-H National Headquarters—USDA. Contact the Headquarters at [4HNE@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:4HNE@nifa.usda.gov).
- Q. Is there an expiration date on the Charters?
- A. No. The USDA 4-H Charter, once issued, would be valid for as long as the 4-H entity receiving the 4-H Charter existed. If the 4-H entity disbanded, separated into multiple entities, or changed its name, a new charter would need to be issued. States may elect to use an expiration date on the USDA 4-H Charter prior to issuance, however, USDA does not mandate the use of an expiration date. Additionally, even with a change in the USDA designated representative, the USDA 4-H Charters remain valid until new ones are made available from the 4-H National Headquarters—USDA. However, 4-H Charters may be revoked at any time by the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office for failure by the club to meet any aspect of the agreement.



4-H National Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C.  
20250  
[www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov)



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# LESSON 9

## WHAT IS A 4-H CLUB? HANDOUT

### What Is a 4-H Club?

A 4-H club is an organized group of youth who meet regularly for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences. The 4-H club's purpose is to provide positive youth development opportunities to meet the needs of young people to experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity and gain in-depth knowledge and skills.

4-H club membership is open to all youth ages 8-18 without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public assistance, veteran or military status or sexual orientation. Some states offer age-appropriate programs designed especially for children in kindergarten through third grade. These programs require more adult supervision and cooperative learning than competition. Visit [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov) for K-3 program guidelines (or refer to Lesson 5).

All 4-H members must be enrolled in the 4-H club each year. Member enrollment must be kept on file in the local/county 4-H office. **It is critical that 4-H members and leaders identify themselves and their club programs with 4-H.**

#### 4-H Club Criteria

##### Structure

A 4-H club:

- enrolls at least five members from at least three families.
- conducts a minimum of six regular club meetings throughout most or all of the year,
- supplemented by project meetings, camps, fairs, and other 4-H learning activities. A regular
- meeting typically includes a business meeting led by youth officers, an educational program,
- and time for social/recreational interaction.
- typically selects youth officers or youth leaders to provide leadership to the club.
- meets in any location—a community center, military base, school (either during school hours or
- after school), library, public housing site, place of worship, and/or many other places.
- adapts to and supports mobility of youth and parents, linking them to 4-H programs in other
- counties and states.
- meets the interests and needs of youth in same-age or cross-age groupings using single project
- or multiple project formats.
- is advised by adult staff or volunteers who have been screened and trained.

##### Educational and Youth Development Principles

A 4-H club:

- includes planned opportunities to learn and apply life skills such as leadership, citizenship,
- community service and public speaking.
- provides individual project experiences to develop in-depth knowledge about science,
- engineering and technology; citizenship; and healthy living.
- provides programs, curricula and procedures that are based in research and developmentally
- appropriate.
- provides members and volunteers access to resources of land-grant universities and to county,
- state and national 4-H opportunities.

## What Is a 4-H Club? (Continued)

- uses experiential learning—learning by doing—as a primary teaching approach.
- fosters youth-adult partnerships that encourage active involvement and participation by youth and adults.
- provides safe and healthy physical and emotional environments.
- offers projects in a wide range of subject matter areas to meet youth needs and interests. (A **4-H project** is a planned sequence of age-appropriate, research-based learning opportunities. 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. 4-H project work is guided by trained adults who help youth set goals and provide access to appropriate curricula and resources.)

### Program Management and Implementation

A 4-H club:

- selects a club name.
- develops a set of rules approved by the members to govern the club.
- develops an annual educational plan.
- keeps records of their meetings and finances.
- complies with 4-H National Headquarters and state land-grant university policies.

### Chartering

4-H clubs must be chartered through the United States Department of Agriculture to be authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem and eligible for tax exempt status. State 4-H offices should maintain documentation on the issuance of charters to 4-H clubs in their states.

### Name and Emblem Usage

The 4-H Name and Emblem are officially protected by the United States government under Title 18 U.S. Code 707. Situations in which it may be used, the manner in which it may be displayed, and the specifications for its reproduction are all online at [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov). 4-H clubs must meet these standards when using the 4-H Name and Emblem.

### Fiscal Requirements

4-H clubs do not pay taxes on income generated by the club. If the club raises funds, it must have a federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) for the club and accounting systems in place for the funds. 4-H clubs must keep financial records of income and expenses. Some states require 4-H members pay membership dues, while other states do not. Some counties assess fees to cover costs of insurance or other specific items.

### Risk Management

States are responsible for providing liability and accident insurance coverage to protect members and volunteers.