

University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension

4-H CLUB LEADER'S MANUAL



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RI 4-H Club Leader's Manual

What Is 4-H?

The 4-H Program's roots are founded in the concept of information transfer, i.e., the transfer of current, valid research-based information and skills to RI 4-H members, families, and communities, to improve their quality of life.

This is accomplished through:

- Access to URI subject matter specialists, and researchers in our home college (College of Environment and Life Sciences) and opportunity to expand to other colleges.
- Access to other research, programs, and curriculum through collaborative Cooperative Extension effort via the national 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System and collaboration with other state university 4-H Programs across the country.
- Trained, dedicated volunteers that help to build communities of learning.

Participation in the 4-H Program is open to all interested youth, regardless of race, color, sex or preference, religion, creed, national origin, or disability. Youth may participate in 4-H through community clubs or groups, agency-based special interest (SPIN) groups, or as independent members.

4-H members complete projects, individually or in groups, in many different project areas. Members focus on learning by doing, applying leadership skills, making a difference in RI communities, and learning to respect and get along with people. They learn life skills including responsibility, decision-making, communication, problem solving, commitment, leadership, and teamwork.

4-H Volunteers are the key to the success of the RI 4-H Program. Many volunteers serve as 4-H Club Leaders working directly with youth in community clubs. Others recruit, train, and help other volunteers or coordinate 4-H events, while others serve as educators in specific project areas.

4-H Delivery Methods

In order to extend the opportunities available in 4-H, we deploy multiple methods of delivering 4-H programs to 4-H Members:

- Community clubs operate in locations throughout the state. Youth enroll individually and pay the annual membership fee. These youth may attend 4-H events and activities outside of their clubs.
- Community groups are a partnership between an agency (school, library, youth group, etc...) and the URI 4-H Program. These youth enroll via a statistical form. No individual information is kept on these members. These youth may not

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participate in 4-H activities outside of their group.

- Independent members do not participate in a club or group, but work independently. These youth enroll individually. These youth may attend 4-H events and activities outside of their clubs.

RI 4-H Mission

To empower youth to develop life skills, to maximize their potential, and to become responsible, proactive citizens who become catalysts for a changing, diverse, and global society.

4-H Value Set

Kids are the focus of everything we do. Youth/adult partnerships are essential to success. Volunteerism is fundamental. Diversity across the entire range of 4-H experiences makes us stronger.

4-H Believes In

Mutual respect and cooperation, Integrity, honesty, giving youth a sense of belonging and that education can be fun and rewarding to make lifelong learners.

4-H Symbols

Slogan: Learn by doing

Motto: To make the best better

Colors: Green and white

Emblem: Four-leaf clover with an "H" on each leaf

4-H Pledge

I pledge:

My HEAD to clearer thinking

My HEART to greater loyalty

My HANDS to larger service

My HEALTH to better living for my club,

My community, my country, and my world

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4-H as a National, State and Local Partnership

This informal educational program is a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (**USDA**), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (**NIFA**) and State Land Grant Universities across the country. In Rhode Island, that is the University of Rhode Island (**URI**). We are part of the Cooperative Extension, which is

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the outreach arm of the URI College of the Environment of Life Sciences (**CELS**). The Deans of this college also serve as the Directors of RI Cooperative Extension.

Privately, the [National 4-H Council](#) provides additional financial support for the 4-H program through resources, curriculum, and grants. You can purchase National 4-H supplies at [Shop 4-H](#).

We also have at the local level the support of the RI 4-H Club Foundation, Inc., whose mission is to support the youth programs of the University of Rhode Island (URI) 4-H Program. 4-H programs focus on learning opportunities for youth aged 5 to 19 years old, in school and in after-school settings, and community clubs. Educational programs focus on science, technology, healthy lifestyles and citizenship. The 4-H Foundation funds these programs, and provides scholarships, awards, recognition and travel opportunities. The Foundation is a non-profit foundation incorporated in the state of Rhode Island. It has 501(c)(3) status which means that people and businesses who make donations may be able to deduct the amount of the donation from their federal income taxes.

To contact the RI 4-H Club Foundation directly, email www.ri4hclubfoundation.org or contact Executive Director Deb Imondi at imondi4@etal.uri.edu.

Members

4-H is open to all youth, 5-18 years of age as of January 1st of the current year, regardless of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex or preference, or disability. There are three main age divisions in 4-H. Cloverbuds: age 5-7 Juniors: age 8-13 Seniors: age 14-18

Note: Cloverbuds participate but do not compete against each other. All cloverbuds get the same recognition when they participate in a class.

4-H Volunteers

4-H Volunteers are people just like you, sharing their talents, life skills and interests! Volunteers are adults that have been cleared by a background check and trained by 4-H Staff.

4-H Volunteers help in many different ways. Rules and responsibilities are developed with each volunteer based on their interests and needs of 4-H. They are supported by curriculum materials with ready-to-use lesson plans; contests, workshops and special events that support project areas; and URI staff, professors and resources.

In guiding youth through 4-H experiences, a volunteer will:

- Serve as liaison between your club members and the 4-H State Office
- Become familiar with 4-H organizational procedures
- Recruit other volunteers and new members

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- Plan club meeting logistics
- Organize your club and help your group plan for the year
- Submit online enrollment forms and complete annual reports
- Facilitate club meetings, encourage youth to participate in leadership roles and take responsibility
- Communicate regularly with parents and encourage participation and cooperation
- Attend meetings, workshops and trainings designed to help you
- Help members gain skills related to their project work and record their work and accomplishments

4-H Projects

4-H members set goals to learn about a specific topic. Learning and practicing this topic will serve as the youth's 4-H project for the year. To complete a project, youth participate in hands-on learning experiences at least 6 times throughout the year relating to their chosen topic. Members can focus on one project, work on different short-term projects, or work in a group individually. Leaders should guide members in selecting projects that are age appropriate.

Keep in mind that projects vary in cost. A member enrolled in a first aid project might use supplies from around the house to complete his/her work. A member who buys and keeps a saddle horse might invest hundreds of dollars into his/her project. Discuss costs with members and their parents before selecting a project. A project should always be realistic to the family situation. Project guides are available on the 4-H website and in print from the 4-H State Office. Some guides may have a fee associated.

4-H is a "learn by doing" program, which means that 4-H members perform their own project work with help as needed. Leaders or parents may tell or show a member how to do something, but members are expected to learn how to perform critical skills for themselves.

4-H Community Clubs

The 4-H program is open to *all youth*. All 4-H groups must abide by this policy. 4-H is a unique opportunity to allow youth to work together on subjects in which they have a common interest. Therefore, all youth must be provided with equal opportunity for:

- Membership in any 4-H club
- Selection of any 4-H project
- Election to any office, committee, or leadership position
- Volunteer adult leadership positions

Minimum Club Requirements for Chartering

Each club must meet the following criteria to be recognized as an official 4-H club:

- Have at least five (5) members in the club, from three (3) different families.
- Hold meetings regularly (monthly recommended, no less than six times per year)

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- Register the club and have all members and volunteers enroll with the RI 4-H State Office
- Have at least two (2) unrelated registered adult volunteers. To apply, adults must be 18 years of age or older and submit a completed online volunteer application, a digitally-signed Volunteer Agreement and a National Background Check. After online registration a volunteer must complete the online training module and quiz.
- Receive a Club Charter once all other requirements are met. The Club Charter identifies the group as eligible to use the 4-H name and emblem and to participate in official 4-H activities and educational programs.

Recommended: Elect officers and plan a program for the year; Encourage teamwork, leadership and responsibility

Club Size

The size of a club is determined by the group preference, meeting space, and available leadership. Studies indicate that clubs with 10-20 4-H members provide the best growth experience. For youth ages 12 years old and up, a youth to adult ratio of 10:1 is recommended. For youth aged 11 and under, a youth to adult ratio of 5:1 is recommended. Example: if a club has 14 youth that are under age 11, 3 volunteers would be recommended.

Club Promotion

After the club membership is filled, a waiting list of potential members must be kept. When an opening in the club membership occurs, the child at the top of the waiting list will then be contacted, in accordance with Affirmative Action guidelines. You may also direct parents to contact the 4-H State Office for information on other clubs in the area or to have their youth join as an independent member.

Meeting Facilities

Space needed for meetings will depend upon project interest and club size. Possible meeting spaces include: A leader or volunteer's home, a member's home (a good way to encourage other parents to be involved), a community building (church, community center, school, etc.)

Meeting Frequency

The number of club meetings is determined by the club and club leader. The minimum requirement is 6 club meetings per year. Some clubs meet every week for only a month or so, while others meet once or twice a month all year long. Some clubs meet for an hour or two after school, in the evening, or on Saturday. This depends on the club members and what they wish to do.

Club Formation

Clubs may be organized at any time of the year. In certain circumstances, members have to be enrolled in a specific project by a certain date to be eligible to participate in project activities. A club is not officially enrolled until all required forms are submitted to

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the URI 4-H State Office. The enrollment portal can be found on the URI 4-H website.

Club Officers

Officers' Handbooks are available on the 4-H website to assist club leaders and members with this important matter. An example club may choose to elect a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. A 4-H club establishes any and all committees and officers that are needed. Club offices should be developmentally appropriate for the age of the club members. For example, Cloverbuds may be elected as "Pledge Leader" or "Snack Leader". Younger officers may be provided with outlines to follow while they learn how to lead.

Club Meeting Structure

Clubs may determine their own meeting structure, however many choose to follow this set procedure:

- The Club President calls the meeting to order and leads the club in both the 4-H and American pledges.
- Attendance is taken.
- A short business meeting follows during which youth vote on all club issues.
- Project work begins

Some meetings may not include a business meeting, and members will only work on projects or go to a special event, workshop or clinic. When planning the program for the 4-H year, be sure to include time for project work, club business, and recreation and social activities.

Members of the club plan the yearly program with guidance from club leaders. If the club is small, all club members may directly participate in planning. If the club is large, members may submit ideas to a committee in charge of planning the club program.

Parent Participation

Keep parents informed – they will be more interested and willing to help if they understand the goals and intent of the club. Effective parent/club communication can be accomplished by:

- Inviting parents to meetings, especially the first meeting
- Meeting in members' homes
- Talking with parents about their child's activities and development through 4-H
- Helping parents understand your job as a 4-H volunteer
- Asking parents about their interests and how they would like to help the club. Make a clear agreement on what parents will do and when they will do it.

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4-H Policies

4-H Name and Emblem Policy

The 4-H name and emblem fall under very specific usage terms set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture. Refer and adhere to the guide "Using the 4-H Name and Emblem" on the 4-H website.

The official 4-H emblem is a 4-leaf clover with the letter "H" in each leaf. Ensure the following:

1. You have obtained the official 4-H emblem and are using it in its entirety.
2. For RI 4-H Club Leaders to use the clover, they should also have text that identifies RI or their club name.
3. Use the whole emblem and the trademark.
4. Keep the emblem upright with no rotation.
5. Do not change the aspect ratio (dimensions) of the original emblem.
6. The stem **MUST** point to the right.
7. Never use the emblem to imply endorsement of any product or material.
8. Do not place text or an image on top of the 4-H emblem.
9. The emblem must be green PMS347 or RGB R=51, G=153, B=102, black, white or metallic gold.



Insurance for 4-H Volunteers

4-H Volunteers, while conducting programs and activities in support of the 4-H Program of the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, are covered by the University Liability Policy as university volunteers as long as their work falls under the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. This provides that volunteers will be relieved of liability for harm caused if:

- The volunteer was acting within the scope of his/her responsibilities
- The volunteer was properly authorized
- The harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer

Low-cost supplemental medical insurance is purchased each year by RI 4-H for all 4-H members and volunteers participating in 4-H events and programs. While these are not

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liability policies, they greatly reduce the possibility of medical expenses not being covered.

Additional event insurance may be warranted depending on the event and public participation. Contact the 4-H Office at least 3 weeks before an event to learn about coverage options.

Personal Medical, Car and Home Insurance

If you are meeting in your home or a member's home, please make sure that you have adequate homeowner's insurance to protect you and your family. Any person providing automobile transportation should be adequately covered on his/her insurance policies for his/her own protection. PLEASE CONSULT WITH A LICENSED INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE COVERED!

Protection of 4-H Youth

When working with youth in 4-H, you are responsible for each member's care and safety. You must carry out this responsibility in terms of your own actions as well as the actions of those you allow to come in contact with youth. Two unrelated authorized 4-H volunteers are required at all 4-H activities. In protecting the welfare of your 4-H members, you should:

- Get to know your members' parents/guardians and encourage them to participate and visit all meetings.
- Establish rules that are fair and consistently enforced
- Be sensitive to the effects of rules on youth in different situations
- Follow the rules yourself and be a good role model
- Be flexible in enforcing rules (sometimes exceptions must be made)
- Do not touch youth in any way that might be considered offensive or misinterpreted by them or others
- Make a point to know who is picking up members from a meeting
- Avoid all situations where you or other adults are alone with one youth
- Make sure all 4-H Volunteers are actively enrolled with the 4-H Office
- Ensure that unauthorized individuals do not have access to youth
- Listen to youth who come forward with allegations and take the matter seriously

If an allegation of abuse is made against a volunteer or parent, that person should be restricted from having contact with children until the matter is resolved.

REPORT INCIDENCES OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT TO 1-800-742-4453, ALSO KNOWN AS 1-800-RI-CHILD. All persons in Rhode Island are required by law (RIGL 40-11-3) to report known or suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families within 24 hours.

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Overnight Event Guidelines

URI 4-H employs the following rules to avoid placing adults and youth in compromising circumstances and to promote a safe environment for all 4-H participants.

- *Overnight Sleeping in Hotels:*
Adults will not share private sleeping rooms with unrelated youth. Youth will be assigned private sleeping space with other youth only. Exceptions may be made in the case of parents who are rooming with their children. Youth will only be placed in rooms with other youth of the same gender, and efforts will be made to place youth of similar age in the same room.
- *Overnight Sleeping in Dorms:*
In assigning these type accommodations, males and females will be separated. Appropriate supervision will be arranged based on youth to adult ratio of not less than 1 adult for every 10 youth. No matter how many youth, at least two unrelated adults registered and cleared 4-H volunteers are required. To the extent possible youth should be grouped by age.
- *Overnight Chaperones:*
In addition to base 4-H volunteer requirements, overnight chaperones must be 21 years of age or older

Note In all instances, unrelated youth should not share beds.**

If a circumstance exists such that the above rules are not feasible then an exception in writing must be obtained from the State 4-H Leader. The State 4-H Leader may require written and witnessed permission forms for the exception from the youth's parent or guardian. The State 4-H Leader will make exceptions for regional and national 4-H trips that are in coordination with other states 4-H programs on a case by case basis. If you are planning to take 4-H members out of state on a 4-H trip please contact the State 4-H Leader with questions or if you need to request an exception.

Privacy

Contact information of 4-H members or volunteers are released to no one beyond the 4-H State Office. This information will only be used for purposes stated in the enrollment forms. Parents have the option (on the member enrollment form) to allow the 4-H State Office to share their child's address with the RI 4-H Club Foundation.

The intent of this policy is to protect 4-H members and volunteers. RI 4-H volunteers serving in program leadership roles may be given limited access to youth contact information to complete their designated role. Violation of this trust is cause for termination of that volunteer relationship with 4-H.

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4-H Club Finances

Club Dues

At this time there is no membership fee to the URI 4-H Office. If a club needs money for an activity, it may charge dues or conduct fund raising activities. Clubs can also apply for a variety of grants. Dues should never be used to keep someone from joining 4-H. The club may decide if dues will be charged and how much.

Handling of Club Funds

Club funds belong to the entire club; club spending must be voted on by the members. Bank accounts containing club funds must have at least 2 volunteers not in the same household on the account. Money left over in a club's treasury when the club dissolves will be donated to the RI 4-H Club Foundation or used for an appropriate purpose voted on by the membership. Keep any business or personal finances separate from 4-H club funds at all times.

Fundraising

Selling handmade or pre-made items at local events is a great way to raise money for club projects. Area stores and shopping centers may allow clubs to set up a fundraising table on certain days. Services like car washing or dog walking can also be great money-makers for club projects. Clubs may also choose to write and apply for grants. In all fundraising activities, it is important to know that URI 4-H is not a 501(c)(3) group, as it is a part of URI a not for profit State Research University, which is a different designation. Please note that if any person would like his/her donation to be tax deductible, he/she must contact the RI 4-H Club Foundation BEFORE the donation is made for instructions on how to properly make the transaction. The RI 4-H Club Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.

If funds are raised in the name of 4-H, all profits must be donated to the fundraising 4-H club or the RI 4-H Club Foundation.

4-H Club Bank Accounts

4-H bank accounts are not required. Contact the 4-H Office if you wish to open a bank account for your 4-H club.

4-H Enrollment

To enroll in the RI 4-H Program, visit the following site: [Zsuite](#). All youth and volunteers are required to enroll and then re-enroll every year.

1. First you will need to set up an account/family.
2. Then you will add members and volunteers to the family.

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3. Please note if you do not reside in RI, but wish to enroll in RI 4-H, you must choose RI and use Providence or RI State County to start your enrollment. You will be given the opportunity to put your out of state address in when you enter the members.
4. Volunteers will need to upload a current National Background Check. In the instructions, there is a link to a paid, instant National Background Check that can be utilized.

Once you are an approved 4-H Club Leader, you will be able to log into the 4-H Zsuite online software to manage your club. To access your club, use the drop down on the left side of the screen in a black bar.

The Zsuite system comes with enrollment specialists that can be emailed to help with difficulties and a help desk library of FAQ sheets.

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Request for Acknowledgement of Donation

(Only for donations requiring 501(c)(3) status in order to be tax deductible: in kind donations valued at \$75 or more and cash donations of \$250 or more)

Requesting 4-H Group _____

4-H Group Contact Name/phone/email _____

Provide the Following Donor Information:

Contact Name _____

Company Name _____

Address: _____

Date of Donation: _____

Donation: _____

Were any gifts or services provided in return for this donation?

Acknowledgement letters will be sent within 7 days of the completed form being received in the RI 4-H Club Foundation office. In order for checks to be processed, they must be payable to RI 4-H Club Foundation, with the 4-H group listed in the memo line or on a separate letter.

Forms should be mailed to: Deborah Imondi, RI 4-H Club Foundation, Inc, PO Box 1925, Kingston, RI 02881 or emailed to: *dimondi4@etal.uri.edu*