



4-H Family Handbook



 | University of Idaho Extension



4-H Family Handbook

Created by:

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Acknowledgements:

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Cover photos courtesy of the National 4-H Council.

CONTENTS

Welcome	3
Section 1: What is 4-H?	3
Section 2: 4-H Clubs	9
Section 3: 4-H Club Meetings	10
Section 4: 4-H Projects	13
Section 5: 4-H Parents and Members	15
Section 6: Who's Who in UI Extension 4-H Youth Development	17

This book belongs to the _____ family.

We are members of the _____
_____ 4-H club.

Our club leader is _____ .

Welcome to the exciting world of 4-H!

We are pleased to have you and your child involved in 4-H and encourage you to truly make 4-H a family affair. As the parent of a 4-H member, you will have the opportunity to be actively involved in helping your child and other children to learn and grow. Taking an active interest in your child's projects and activities will dramatically affect their overall sense of accomplishment.

When questions about 4-H arise or you need additional information, please visit with your child's club leader or the local University of Idaho Extension office staff.

SECTION 1: WHAT IS 4-H?

What is the primary objective of 4-H?

The philosophy of 4-H is to strengthen the mental, physical, moral, and social development of boys and girls, thereby helping them to develop into competent, committed, and self-assured adults. The main objective is the personal development of youth through participation in projects, events, and other wholesome activities.

4-H helps youth develop a variety of abilities they can use every day—what we refer to as “life skills.” All our educational programs are designed to ensure that youth develop the confidence, competence, and desirable personal characteristics to become:

- Critical thinkers
- Adaptable to change
- Organized managers
- Self-motivated
- Caring human beings
- Socially articulate
- Responsible citizens
- Connected to others in the community

4-H is intended to *supplement, not replace*, other learning experiences young people may have through other institutions.

Who can join 4-H?

4-H is open to any boy or girl ages 5 to 18 regardless of whether they live in the country, on a farm, in small towns, or large cities.

4-H is for everyone, regardless of race, color, creed, age, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public-assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identify/ expression, or parental status.

4-H then and now

What we recognize today as 4-H began around 1900 as a means of reaching parents with improved farm and home practices. Educators had discovered that while most adults were reluctant to experiment with new advances in technology, they were willing to allow their children to do so on a limited basis. Once adults observed the positive results their children achieved, they moved quickly to accept and then implement these innovations.

The first organized 4-H clubs were small groups covering a single topic such as corn production or canning tomatoes and other garden crops. Then came World War I and the “food for victory” campaign. Following that war, “keep them on the farm” became the primary objective. Food production was emphasized again during World War II.

Today our objective is the personal development of boys and girls. We provide a wide variety of learning opportunities in which all youth can participate and an activity for every interest.

Each of the 50 states and over 60 countries offer 4-H programs or their equivalent. In addition, 4-H has established partnerships with the US Army and now has programs available on most installations around the world.

4-H beliefs

- The 4-H member is significantly more important than his or her project.
- Project work is one of the best devices for developing young people. To “learn by doing” is fundamental in any sound educational program and is a primary characteristic of the 4-H program.
- 4-H’ers should be their own best “exhibit.” This includes their personal manners, attitudes, and courtesy as well as appropriate dress and physical appearance.
- No award is worth sacrificing the reputation of a 4-H member or volunteer.
- Competition is recognized in 4-H as a human trait, but competition requires careful planning and safeguards when used as an educational tool.
- A blue-ribbon 4-H’er with a red-ribbon exhibit is more desirable than a red-ribbon 4-H’er with a blue-ribbon exhibit.
- Every 4-H member needs to be noticed, to feel important, to achieve some degree of success, and to be praised.
- It is the responsibility of 4-H volunteers and staff to guide 4-H members in learning how to think, not what to think.

What can you do in 4-H?

Many learning opportunities are available for members in 4-H:

- **Project Work.** Project work helps members gain knowledge and skills and learn to take responsibility for their decisions. By working on projects at home, members can develop stronger relationships with their parents. (Parents: Be supportive and help guide your child; don't do their work for them.)
- **Oral Presentations.** The process of demonstrating and explaining how to do something to an audience is called an oral presentation. Members gain personal confidence in their public speaking skills, which is one of the first steps in developing personal leadership abilities.
- **Record Keeping.** Keeping accurate records is an essential life skill. Members are required to keep records on every project in which they are enrolled to help them evaluate and learn from their 4-H experiences and develop business-oriented skills.
- **Recreation.** Members learn to enjoy life, balance work with leisure time, and develop social skills through their interactions with others. Recreation can also provide opportunities to teach leadership skills.
- **Contests.** Through their participation in contests, members can learn cooperative and competitive skills along with standards of excellence. Awards may be provided in recognition of their efforts.
- **Exhibits.** Members may choose to exhibit their project results at the county fair or some other public setting. Exhibiting 4-H projects enables the public to learn what 4-H'ers are doing, helps members learn how they can improve their work, and gives members a sense of pride and accomplishment.
- **4-H Camp.** Many counties provide 4-H camping experiences where members take part in educational activities and spend time with other campers.
- **Service Learning.** Developing a sense of compassion toward others and a willingness to participate in activities which benefit other individuals or the community is what service learning is all about.
- **4-H Ambassadors.** The 4-H Ambassador program develops leadership and public speaking skills in older 4-H members, enabling them to become more effective 4-H advocates within their communities and counties.



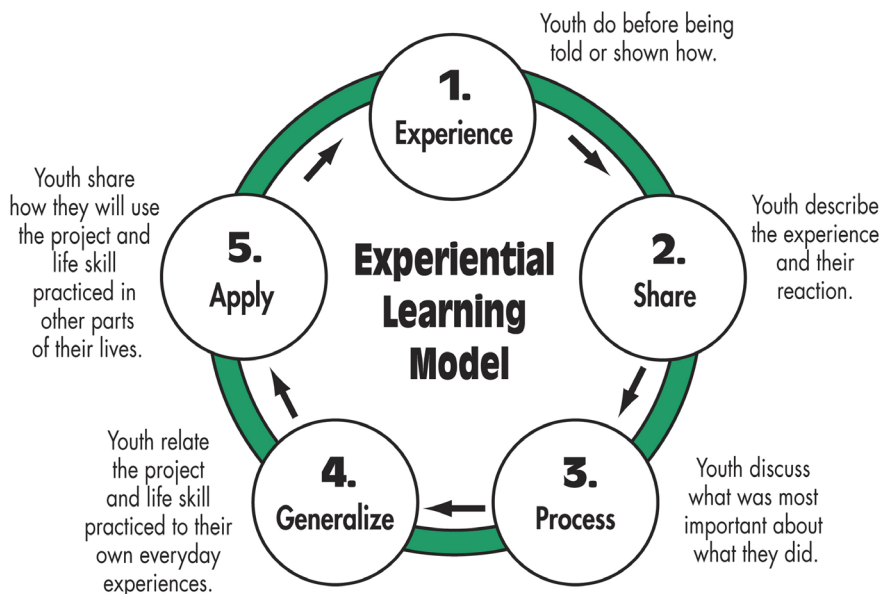
Showing off livestock projects at the fair. Photo courtesy of Blaine County 4-H Program, Kathi Kimball.

- **4-H Exchanges.** Exchanges are arranged with clubs from different counties or other states. Exchanges help 4-H'ers develop a broader knowledge about people and living situations and provide the chance to create lasting friendships. Some international exchanges are also available.
- **Recognition and Awards.** Youth are recognized and rewarded in a variety of ways for work they do. These may range from acceptance by peers and volunteers to ribbons, certificates, trips, and scholarships. Accomplishments in both cooperative and competitive settings are recognized.
- **Fundraising.** Members will be asked to contribute to club fundraising efforts. The skills learned in these fundraising activities add to the member's leadership and organizational skills and may influence career choices. While 4-H is assisted with some public funds, private funds are essential to the operation of the 4-H program.
- **4-H Club.** In club meetings, 4-H members learn how to conduct effective meetings utilizing parliamentary procedure. They also learn about the value that committees play in accomplishing club goals and gain cooperative skills through social interaction with club members.

Learning by doing

The concept of “learning by doing” has been the core of how 4-H teaches youth since its beginning. With guidance from adult volunteers, youth gain useful skills through hands-on experiences, and they learn how to live with others and to serve their community and country by practicing these skills in real-life situations.

This concept has been put into an official model, the “experiential learning model.” The approach allows youth to experience something with minimal guidance from an adult—to discover answers versus being told the answers. Presented with a question, problem, or situation, youth are challenged to explore for the solution themselves. This process is called “experiential learning” because it is based on learning from experiences.



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"
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Who administers the local 4-H program?

The University of Idaho Extension educator and staff in your county are responsible for overseeing the 4-H program, which includes making decisions related to local policies and procedures. The UI Extension office in your county is a great resource, and you will want to be in contact with the office staff when you have questions.

UI Extension is part of the Cooperative Extension System, an undertaking by the United States Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant universities, and local county governments. The Cooperative Extension System carries up-to-date information from land-grant university classrooms and laboratories to the people in every state and devotes careful study and research to the problems they face. UI Extension specialists support the work of county Extension personnel.

University of Idaho Extension provides instruction and practical, research-based information in agriculture, home horticulture, natural resources, health and nutrition, food safety, financial management, youth development, and community development to all citizens. In addition, the university's resources can be requested to provide assistance in finding solutions to major issues within a community.



Photo courtesy of Erika Thiel. Quote from Marie von Ebner-Eschenback obtained from BrainyQuote.com.

4-H Facts

4-H is open to any boy or girl, ages 5–18, regardless of whether they live in the country, on a farm, in small towns or large cities.

4-H is an informal educational program, led by volunteers, that supplements what youth learn at home or in school.

4-H is a research-based youth development program, conducted in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant university, and your local county government officials.

In 4-H, your child will learn a wide variety of valuable life skills, including:

- Responsibility
- Citizenship
- Leadership
- Communication
- Sportsmanship

The 4-H program is the largest out-of-school program in the nation with nearly 7 million members. 4-H programs are found in over 60 countries around the world.

SECTION 2: 4-H CLUBS

Authorized 4-H clubs consist of a group of boys and girls, 4-H officers, and one or more certified volunteer supervisors. Clubs are frequently organized within a neighborhood, a school, a business, or other location. The club size should be suitable to the age of the members, meeting place, and leadership available. Clubs are encouraged to conduct at least one community outreach (service learning) project annually to benefit underprivileged individuals or other groups within their community.

In addition to community 4-H clubs, youth may opt to participate in 4-H special interest groups/project clubs that focus on one specific topic, school enrichment activities, or after-school programs.



The youngest 4-H'ers: Coverbuds, ages 5 to 7.
Courtesy of the National 4-H Council.

4-H program year

The 4-H program year begins October 1 and runs through September 30 of the following year.

Age for membership

Membership age is based on the individual's age as of January of the current 4-H year. Youth 5 to 7 years of age are eligible to participate in the noncompetitive division called Cloverbuds. Members ages 8 to 18 may participate in all aspects of 4-H, including competitive events.

4-H motto

"To Make the Best Better"



4-H emblem

The 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white letter "H" on each leaf, standing for **Head, Heart, Hands, and Health**. The United States Congress has established specific restrictions regarding use of the 4-H emblem. Check with your local University of Idaho Extension office for specific regulations.

4-H colors

The 4-H colors are green and white. Green is nature's most common color and represents life, springtime, and youth. White symbolizes purity.

4-H Pledge

I PLEDGE

*My head to clearer thinking,
My heart to greater loyalty,
My hands to larger service, and
My health to better living,
For my club, my community, my
country, and my world.*

The 4-H Creed

*I believe in 4-H club work for
the opportunity it will give me to
become a useful citizen.*

*I believe in the training of my HEAD
for the power it will give me to think,
plan, and to reason.*

*I believe in the training of my HEART
for the nobleness it will give me to be
kind, sympathetic, and true.*

*I believe in the training of my
HANDS for the ability it will give me
to be helpful, useful, and skilful.*

*I believe in the training of my
HEALTH for the strength it will give
me to enjoy life, resist disease, and
work efficiently.*

*I believe in my country, my state,
and in my community, and in my
responsibility for their development.*

*In all these things I believe, and I am
willing to dedicate my efforts to their
fulfillment.*

SECTION 3: 4-H CLUB MEETINGS

What are the purposes of 4-H club meetings?

Each 4-H club meeting should help youth:

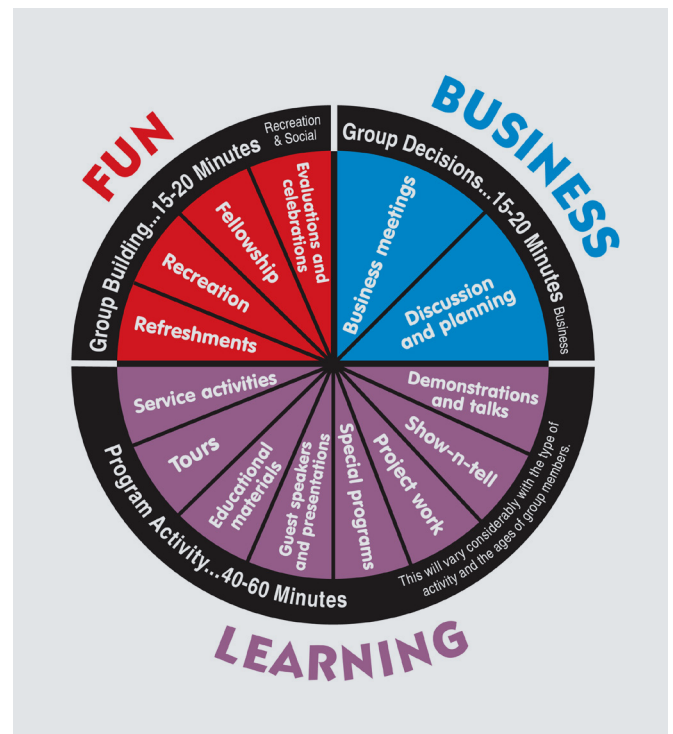
- Acquire new information
- Learn to use leisure time creatively
- Develop social skills
- Acquire leadership and citizenship traits
- Learn to conduct meetings

Meetings enable 4-H members to learn and practice decision making and leadership skills in a group setting by using the knowledge and skills acquired through 4-H. Each member is expected to attend all club meetings. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend meetings with their children. Your involvement demonstrates support for 4-H members, keeps members informed on club activities, and enables you to assist volunteers as requested. Remember, 4-H is a family affair!

What is a club meeting like?

Each 4-H meeting normally lasts 1 to 1½ hours and includes business, educational programs, and recreation (see the meeting planning diagram on the right). Clubs may meet monthly or at any time determined by the club members. Meetings may include a variety of the following items:

- **Business Sessions.** The business portion of the meeting should be short and snappy. It is a small democracy in action with members learning how to conduct meetings effectively, work with others through committee assignments, and cooperate with others in making decisions.
- **Educational Programs.** This part of the meeting helps members learn more about subjects of general interest to the membership. 4-H teaching is unique—it is “learning by doing.” Generally, the educational program includes talks and demonstrations by the members. Outside speakers may also present programs.



The 4-H Meeting Wheel. Courtesy of North Dakota State University.

- **Demonstrations.** Demonstrations allow members to show other members some of the things they have learned using the actual articles to “show and tell” the steps they took to complete the finished product.
- **Illustrated Talks.** Illustrated talks differ from demonstrations in that the member uses charts or other visual aids to tell about the given subject rather than physically demonstrating steps.
- **Project Talks/Speeches.** Through talks, members share information or an experience related to one of their projects and may use props/visual aids. In speeches, members speak about a topic without using any visual aids.
- **Recreation.** The recreation portion of the meeting distinguishes the 4-H meeting from other educational activities. Recreation may include challenges, group singing, relays, guessing games, singing games, active games, and quiet games.
- **Refreshments.** Some clubs serve refreshments at meetings, although this is not essential. Usually different families serve as hosts each month, providing members experience in selecting, preparing, and serving the refreshments. Emphasis should be placed on selecting simple, inexpensive, nutritious refreshments and how to serve them. Parents should help by giving suggestions and guidance.



4-H horse project members, Idaho County. Photo courtesy of Lorie Palmer.

Do meetings just happen?

Effective meetings require advance planning. Successful clubs get ideas from the members, and then they utilize creative thinking and initiative early in the club year to develop an annual club plan for meeting schedules and educational programs.

Usually, the initial program planning is done by the club officers with guidance from volunteers and club parents. This plan is then presented back to the entire club for review, modification, and approval. The specific content will vary from club to club.

Who conducts meetings?

The officers elected at the beginning of the 4-H year are responsible for conducting meetings. Organizational volunteers or the club officer advisor should work with the officers to help them develop leadership skills and assist them in developing agendas. Most clubs normally elect a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter/historian. Other officers may be elected depending on the individual club (such as recreation leader, song leader, etc.).

Who provides club leadership?

Adults and teens provide guidance and serve as coaches for club and project work. Parents are usually the best source of adult volunteers—but not the only source. Parents of former 4-H'ers, retired people, and other young adults are often willing to help the 4-H'ers. Teens may take on key leadership roles with younger members under the supervision of authorized volunteers.

Occasionally, members and parents become so focused on the project and subject matter that they forget the importance that club meetings play in the overall personal development of the member. Leaders play an integral role in helping families focus on the importance of well-rounded youth involvement within 4-H.



Rock hounds, Elmore County. Photo by Kim Kovak.



Growing gardeners—Potlatch Kids' Co-op 4-H Afterschool Program. Photo by Kaitlin Moroney, University of Idaho.

Helpful Information from 4-H Members and Adults

“If I had only known” from a MEMBER

- I can go to any county activity listed in the 4-H newsletter.
- I should have read the 4-H newsletter EVERY month.
- Keeping records of your involvement in 4-H activities, speeches, demonstrations, school/community/church, and other organizations for reference makes it so much easier when applying for awards and trips.
- ANY of my friends can join 4-H. You do not need to own an animal to be a part of 4-H.

“If I had only known” from an ADULT

- I would have sent a calendar with my child to meetings to mark down club/county 4-H events.
- I keep a drawer/shelf/box for ALL 4-H newsletters, mailings, and record books for easy access.
- Parents, guardians, and grandparents are encouraged to attend and participate in 4-H events with their youth. Everyone's help is needed to make the program strong. 4-H is a family organization.
- The county Extension office can obtain slides, copies, videos, etc., for project leaders to use at project meetings.
- I would have read my 4-H newsletter and called the Extension office, club or project leaders, and other 4-H parents with questions, however small I think they might be.

SECTION 4: 4-H PROJECTS

Why projects?

Projects are one of the teaching tools that help youth develop positive life skills and knowledge about a topic. It is essential to recognize that although the focus of a project may appear to be subject-matter knowledge, the development of the individual is the most important purpose of 4-H.

What are projects?

Projects are a series of hands-on experiences where members are actively involved in learning both subject matter and personal development skills, such as decision making, communication, problem solving, teamwork, etc. And of course, they are designed to be FUN.

Over 50 project areas provide an array of educational experiences. Most projects have several phases so that a member may advance to more difficult and challenging activities as they develop their knowledge and skills. A wide variety of interests and activities attract members regardless of their place of residence, economic status, or race.

What are 4-H projects designed to do?

- Create a sense of ownership
- Give a feeling of achievement
- Strengthen family and community ties
- Provide members the opportunity to:
 - » learn project skills
 - » develop and understand project knowledge
 - » develop good attitudes
 - » assume responsibility
 - » participate in healthful competition
 - » make meaningful decisions
- Provide leisure-time activities
- Encourage members to explore career opportunities and discover what educational training they require. Through these experiences, members get a taste for the work and responsibilities involved in a field.



4-H Robotics: Learning STEM (science, technology, engineering, math). Photo courtesy of University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development.

How do you select projects?

Projects are selected early in the 4-H year when enrollment is completed. To increase the opportunity for members to succeed and have a positive experience, it is important that families fully understand what is expected of the 4-H member before enrolling in a project.

For new or younger members, it is generally wise to limit enrollment to just one or two projects to ensure sufficient time to successfully complete them. Older, experienced members are usually able to complete several different projects, including ones that are more difficult.

When selecting a project consider:

- Does the project meet the needs and interests of your child?
- Is the project appropriate based on the age and ability (physical and mental) of your child? Will it challenge him or her educationally?
- How much time does your child have and how much time does the project require? During which season of the year will most of the project activities be accomplished?
- Is the project acceptable to you as parents and does it fit into your family's needs and situation?
- How much will the project cost?
- Is adequate space and equipment available at home?
- What are the opportunities for youth to learn about owning and managing resources related to the project?
- Does your club have a volunteer(s) to help with the project? Are you willing to become a project volunteer if necessary?

How is project work accomplished?

Members complete projects in a variety of ways, including taking part in activities and events such as:

- Local club project meetings
- Demonstrations/talks at club meetings
- Tours
- Family activities or work at home
- Exhibiting at shows or fairs
- Record keeping

Project leadership is provided by authorized adult and teen volunteers.



Idaho 4-H youth delegates in the Oval Office with President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack during National 4-H Conference. Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

SECTION 5: 4-H PARENTS AND MEMBERS

Parents make the difference in 4-H!

Parents and families play a critical role in the success of the 4-H program. Youth join 4-H to belong, to do things with their friends, to meet new friends, to have fun, to be recognized as a person, and to achieve. It is much easier for youth to succeed in 4-H and continue to grow when they have your support and understanding.

The volunteer can do only so much; children need the support of their parents.

You are encouraged to attend both club and project meetings with your child. It is essential that parents serve as effective role models by helping youth keep commitments, assisting them to think through decisions, and seeing that they continue working toward achieving their goals.

4-H is truly a family affair. Youth need adult guidance to encourage and direct them in their character development. As a parent, you can be a project volunteer, activity volunteer, camp chaperone, or a club volunteer. All parents are encouraged to assume some responsibility within the local 4-H club because everyone has busy schedules. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Why parents need to be involved

Research has repeatedly shown that parental participation in 4-H has many benefits, including:

- 4-H'ers do better work when they receive more personal attention from parents and volunteers.
- Parents can encourage a “learn by doing” approach when they support their child in activities.
- Families are strengthened when parents and children participate together in areas of common interest.
- 4-H clubs become stronger and more vibrant when parents take an active role in 4-H.



4-H Afterschool garden, Worley. Photo by Iris Mayes.



Idaho military family together at camp. Photo by Mark LaMoreaux.

How to be a 4-H MVP (Most Valuable Parent)

- Learn what 4-H is all about. Stay informed on what is happening in your club and county.
- Show a genuine interest in 4-H and your child.
- Attend 4-H meetings and activities with your child; encourage your child to participate in 4-H events.
- Make 4-H a priority in your home—read your 4-H mail promptly, and mark 4-H activities on your calendar.
- Provide encouragement and help in your child's project work with record keeping, demonstrations, judging, and completion of attempted work—without doing the work yourself.
- Provide transportation to local club meetings, activities, and county-wide events.
- Provide a meeting place for a project group. Assist volunteers by providing refreshments or other help.
- Share your special talents by volunteering to lead a project.
- Help members select, finance, and manage their projects. There are minimal costs required for project literature and materials.
- Help volunteers conduct project work.
- Help volunteers locate and secure other qualified adults to assist with project work or 4-H activities.



Canyon County 4-H volunteers serving pancakes at the Buckaroo Breakfast 4-H fundraiser. Photo courtesy of Idaho Press-Tribune.

Remember: 4-H members are the focus!

The 4-H program utilizes the “learning by doing” approach as we work to develop the potential of each 4-H member. This means that 4-H members and their families must assume a high level of responsibility for their own learning and involvement in program opportunities.

To get the greatest benefit out of 4-H, members need to:

- Attend and participate in all club and project meetings
- Support and work on club-level activities and events
- Participate in county, district, state and/or national activities and events that enhance project learning
- Keep up-to-date on project-related work
- Exhibit pride in being a 4-H member

SECTION 6: WHO'S WHO IN UI EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



The University of Idaho campus in Moscow, home to the state 4-H office. Photo courtesy of University of Idaho.

Local/Club level

4-H member—Any young person who participates in a UI Extension-sponsored youth educational program. Cloverbuds is for youth 5 to 7 years of age as of January 1, while youth ages 8 to 18 participate in the more-advanced, competitive program. Each member completes an annual enrollment form.

4-H organizational volunteer—The adult(s) responsible for overseeing the local 4-H club operations, including enrollment, scheduling officer meetings, etc.

4-H project volunteer—The adult or teen responsible for providing subject-matter guidance within a given project area of the local 4-H club.

Teen volunteers—Youth who assist the adult volunteers. They should be viewed as assets to the 4-H program. Each 4-H club is encouraged to involve youth as valued partners within their organization.

4-H resource volunteer—This person is willing to share a specific skill or talent with youth from one or more groups, but has chosen not to lead the organization or project.

Middle manager or key volunteers—Adults who assist local 4-H club volunteers and/or Extension personnel in a specific 4-H project or activity area.

County level

4-H volunteers' association—A committee composed of volunteers and older teens that serve in an advisory role to local Extension personnel. They may assist in assessing the needs, interests, and concerns of the county's youth and assist the Extension staff in responding with educational programs relevant to those needs. Membership usually includes all 4-H volunteers within the county.

County 4-H foundation—Some counties have this nonprofit organization working

to provide additional resources for the 4-H program. The foundation receives monies from private sources, raises funds for special activities, and sponsors scholarships.

Extension personnel—University of Idaho Extension educators, program coordinators, and program assistants are paid professionals who manage local 4-H program operations and establish local policies and procedures. Personnel are either UI or county employees.

State level

4-H Youth Development specialists—These members of the University of Idaho faculty have responsibility for the 4-H program on a statewide basis.

University of Idaho—As a land-grant university, the University of Idaho has responsibility for taking education to the people of the state through University of Idaho Extension. The 4-H Youth Development program is part of UI Extension.

Idaho 4-H Endowment—This nonprofit organization works to provide additional resources for the statewide 4-H program. It sponsors scholarships and funding for programs and provides special activities.

Idaho 4-H Volunteer Association—This group consists of volunteer and Extension representatives from each of the four district volunteer associations. It maintains and strengthens the 4-H program on a statewide basis by providing input and recommendations on educational needs to the state 4-H program director and assists with communication linkages, recruitment, and evaluation.

Idaho 4-H Advisory Board—These youth, adult volunteers, and county Extension personnel review existing operations and provide program/policy recommendations to the state 4-H director.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Barbara Petty, Director of University of Idaho Extension, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83844. The University of Idaho has a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, disability or status as a Vietnam-era veteran.

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