

Lesson 13A: **Planning the 4-H Club Year**

Procedures for Maintaining Clubs

1. Involving youth and leaders in planning and conducting the meetings
2. Involving club members in preparing a yearly club plan
3. Promoting or marketing the club
4. Helping youth transition to new communities when families move

This is the second of three lessons focusing on maintaining clubs. This lesson addresses efforts to **involve club members in preparing a yearly club plan.**

Youth learn leadership skills by taking part in organizing the club, deciding what the club will do during the year, and writing the rules for group behavior. Young people will have more ownership in the activities and projects they have planned or helped plan and this ownership will increase their level of participation. In addition, the activities will likely be ones that they find interesting, and therefore the club will be more rewarding and fun for everyone. Adult leaders can facilitate this input by involving them in making plans for what the club will do during the coming year.

A well-developed Annual 4-H Club Program Plan gives guidance and direction to club leaders and members. This yearly plan will:

- Clearly state the goals that the club has agreed to work toward.
- Let everyone know what to expect from participation in the club.
- Outline each person's responsibilities.
- Provide each member with specific tasks during the year.
- Give everyone ample time to prepare for meetings and events.
- Promote a balanced experience with a variety of activities.
- Help the group measure how successful they were in reaching their goals.
- Help families to better participate in 4-H events.

Putting the Annual 4-H Club Program Plan Together

Participation in the planning of what will be offered during the year through the 4-H club is an important learning

experience for youth. Most clubs use a three-step method of planning for their year that allows youth to provide input in ways that are appropriate to their stage of development. The first step involves everyone in the club in identifying interests and desires for the club and the activities they would like to focus on during the year. The second step outlines the way in which these interests and goals will be carried out. As a rule the second step is handled by a planning committee made up of older youth and the club leaders. The third step is part of the implementation process and occurs throughout the year. Members and leaders should review their plans quarterly to determine how well the club is doing what it set out to do. This information should be used to make any adjustments that are needed to help the group in this with the assistance of the adult club leaders.

STEP 1. *Determining needs, interests and desires of the entire club*

Each member has different ideas about the club's program and it is important that they have a chance to express them. The activity in this lesson using a 4-H clover results in good program input from all club members. Additional suggestions for getting information from youth and parents include:

- Clover Survey – give each member a worksheet of a four-leaf clover that has one interest survey topic printed in each leaf of the clover. (“I am curious about”, “we could help our community by”, “my hobbies”, “just for fun we could”). Ask members to write or draw their responses to each of the questions in the space formed by each clover leaf. Facilitate a discussion of each survey question and record and post the ideas generated on newsprint. Help the group consolidate and select ideas that could fit into a club's yearly time frame. Collect the worksheets.
- Survey box – decorate a box or container and explain its purpose at an open house, general meeting, activity or event. Have a short form or blank pieces of paper for suggestions to be put into the box for the upcoming 4-H program year.
- Post a wall parking lot or sticky board - Tape a large sheet of poster board or a sticky wall cloth to an area easily accessible to the youth's height. As youth arrive ask them to write on a self-adhesive note or a brightly colored paper at least one thing they would like to do, to learn, or make in the 4-H club this year.
- Technology – ask teens to develop a web-based survey to gather information about interests from other youth – have the survey be creative and interactive.
- Collages – have members create collages suggesting programs,



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activities, and events they wish to participate in during the club year and explain the collages.

- Roll call – During roll call ask members to answer with a suggestion for a club activity, program, goal, etc. No response should be repeated.
- Place responses onto a poster pad for all to see.
- Brainstorming – Divide the club into small groups and make suggestions within the categories of
 - What do you want to learn?
 - What do you want to do for others?
 - How do you want to learn?
 - What do you want to do to promote a healthy lifestyle for yourself and others?

All ideas should be encouraged. Each group may list their ideas for each “H” on a sheet of paper and present the ideas to the group.

STEP 2. Putting the Suggestions into a Plan

The following planning methods have proved successful. However, no one way to plan a 4-H program is the “only” way and you may find other methods of accomplishing this planning process. The key is to be as inclusive as possible in preparing plans for the entire club. It is recommended that a club planning committee be formed. Some club planning committees take full responsibility for preparing the annual plan using ideas submitted to them ahead of time by the club. This model is suitable for a large club. Others function with the help of the entire club. In this case, members are divided into groups, each of which has responsibility for planning a specific part of the club plan (such as time, place, business agenda, educational programs, social/recreational activities and citizenship opportunities). The Planning Committee coordinates the efforts of the group and is responsible for getting their work into a written plan. In either approach, the proposed yearly plan is presented to the membership for approval.

–Select A Club Planning Committee

The membership of the Club Planning Committee should represent the interests of all people in the club. Older members may be efficient planners but may need help in remembering the interests of younger members. The diversity represented within the club should be seen within the committee. This diversity could include race, gender, disabilities, age or national origin. Youth members, parents and volunteers should all have a representative on the committee. The committee may be elected, selected or appointed in accordance with the club’s by-laws or guide-

lines. If a club is small, the entire membership may be on the program planning committee.

The vice president often serves as the youth chair of the planning committee. The youth chair and adult leaders will work with the planning committee to put the suggestions and input from club members into a practical plan for the year.

–Organize the Club Planning Meeting

The planning meeting provides a “hands-on” learning activity in group- process and assures that everyone will have a voice in what the group does during the year ahead. This participation increases the likelihood that the interests of everyone in the club will be addressed at some point in the year and that club members will stay involved. In addition, while deciding how they will make their ideas happen, youth develop skills in planning and management.

Good planning includes participation from all members and leaders on the team. Make sure the time, space and format that you are using for this meeting will encourage total group participation.

Gather information ahead of time to help the group. This might include:

- Ages of members, where they live, and what they do
- Activities and organizations outside the 4-H club in which members are involved
- Information about the community: schools, businesses, and people
- Suggestions on how 4-H can work with other groups to develop a good program and improve the community
- Information on the current emphasis in the county 4-H program, noting the training that is available, county or district events and activities, and emerging areas of interest and support

–Set Goals

Begin the planning process by identifying the club’s goals. Goals state what the club members would like to see the club accomplish during the year.

Goals should:

- be developed from the interests of club members and target life skills development
- be stated clearly so that it is easy to determine whether or not they were reached
- be realistic and achievable and measurable
- meet the developmental needs and interests of members
- promote cooperation and learning



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- promote learning and skill development
- provide individual and group achievement incentives for members
- provide opportunities for community service, leadership and communication

The following are examples of some possible club goals:

In (year)___ our club members will:

- Promote 4-H and recruit new members and volunteers
- Learn more about (health, computers, pets, etc)
- Participate in hands on learning opportunities in (project)
- Participate in (# or names) project educational programs
- Invite parents to share their talents with the members
- Participate in _(# of)_____ community service activities
- Train officers to conduct a monthly business meeting
- Participate in county and state activities
- Complete one project and its record form
- Give a demonstration or public speech on a selected topic
- Enter a photograph or expressive arts work in a contest
- Provide all 4-H club families with a calendar of events
- Recognize members for their accomplishment individually and as teams

-Create Action Plans

Once specific goals are defined, the planning committee must decide upon the kinds of experiences the club will offer to achieve each goal. The actions to be taken may include workshops, speakers, fieldtrips, recreational activities, business meetings, parent's night, recognition events, fundraising activities, and much more. Project work that is offered through the club should support the development of the skills youth have targeted through their goals.

The committee will then outline how these actions will be carried out. For example, to accomplish the goal of developing greater parent involvement, the group may decide to have a parents' night or plan visits with each parent at their homes.

A typical annual 4-H program action plan will include the following kinds of activities

- Meetings that take place on a fixed date every month.
- Educational field trips or presentations by special guests.
- Recreational activities (games, songs, etc.) for each meeting.
- Special events such as parties, dances, or picnics.



- At least one community service project.
- Two or three projects lasting at least two months each.
- At least one opportunity for each member to make a presentation.
- One club recognition activity.
- One promotional activity during National 4-H Week.
- One meeting to plan the program for the following year.

Identify the persons who will be responsible for carrying out the activities selected.

–Write the Yearly Club Plan

Write the plan for the year in simple terms with date, time, place, and the names of those responsible for each offering. Keep good minutes when planning. In considering the plan, the membership should be able to answer these questions with a “yes.”

Does the plan include experiences that involve all members?
Are the planned opportunities interesting and appropriate for all ages?

Can we realistically accomplish what we have planned?
Will the members have fun while learning?

Has the plan taken into consideration the activities outside of the 4-H club that members are involved in that could affect their participation?

Does the plan include opportunities for members to experience leadership, public speaking, service to the community ?

–Approve the Yearly Plan

The completed yearly plan should be presented in simple language and distributed to each member, parent, and leader. It should be discussed and approved by the club membership.

Step 3. Measure Club Success

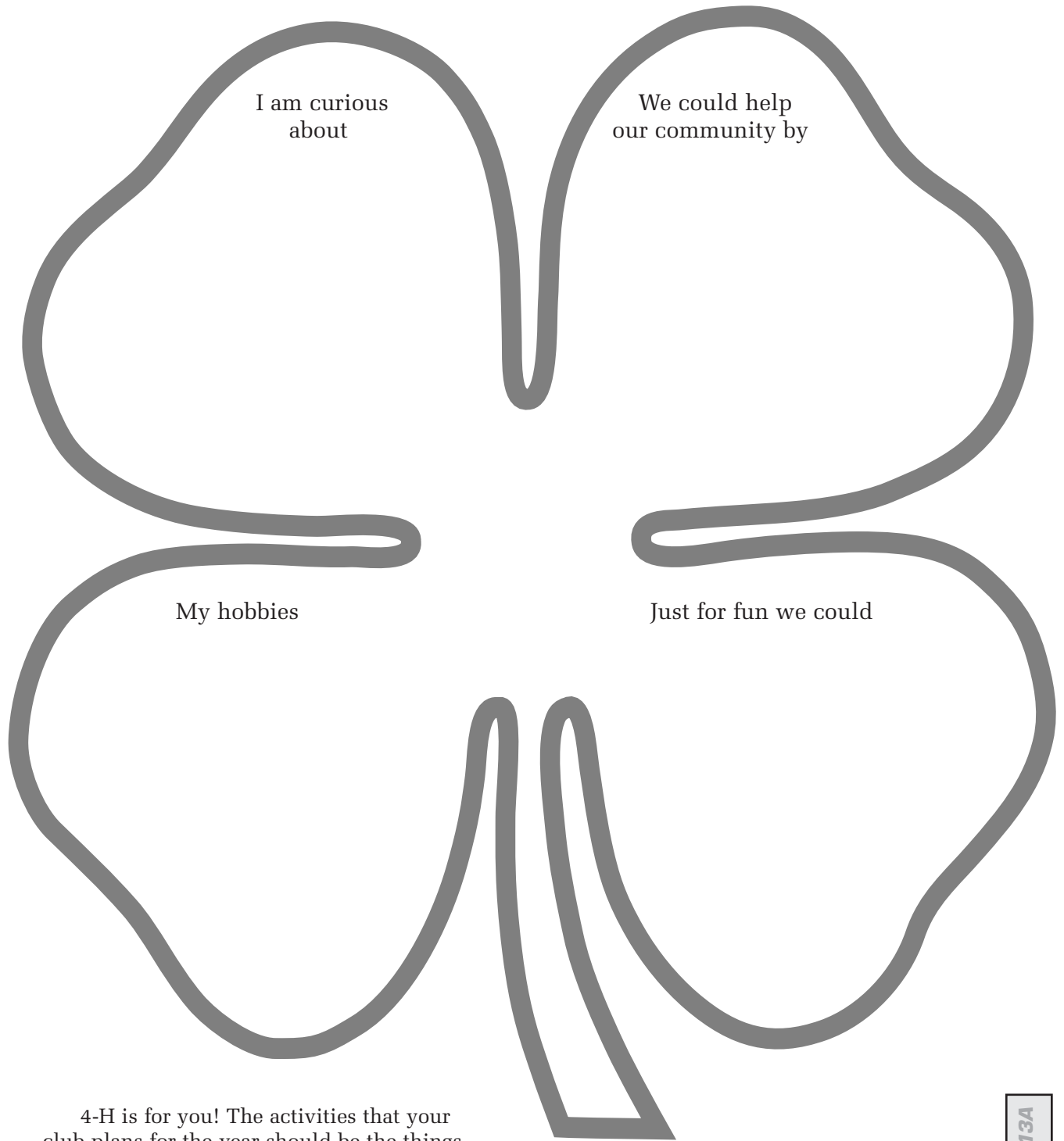
Throughout the year, leaders and members need to review the club plan to determine the progress they are making toward reaching their goals. This review does not need to be lengthy, but must involve all of the members of the group.

The planning process is fairly straightforward. As you implement it with youth and adults, you will want to be aware of the issues and concerns that may surface in the group if conflicts arise. Make sure that the final product has something for everyone in it.

In addition, it is important that club leaders and officers review the structure of the club quarterly to assure that the environment of the club is one that supports positive growth and development. A check -list to use in this review is provided in this lesson.



How to Design your own Clover



I am curious about

We could help our community by

My hobbies

Just for fun we could

4-H is for you! The activities that your club plans for the year should be the things the members of your club want to do. By writing your ideas on this clover you will help the planning committee.

In the upper left hand segment of the clover, write what you would like to find out about this year in 4-H.

In the upper right hand segment, write ideas you have for helping the community

In the lower left hand segment of the clover, list any hobbies you enjoy.

In the lower right hand segment, write ideas for activities that would be fun for you.





Indicators of Successful 4-H Clubs: Check List

- _____ Open communication exists between the local 4-H office and the leaders of the local 4-H club.
- _____ Membership and leadership show diversity.
- _____ Leadership responsibilities are shared among adults, youth and children.
- _____ The club's leadership is willing and able to be flexible and adaptable to individual situations.
- _____ Youth/adult partnerships are supported by:
 - Providing varied opportunities for adults and youth to work together toward a common purpose.
 - Recognizing individual interests, abilities, and assets, and factoring them into the club program plan.
 - Balancing the strengths and weaknesses of members and leaders when helping them select avenues of participation.
- _____ Rules contribute to positive youth development and focus on such fundamental issues as safety and respect.
- _____ A healthy balance exists between cooperation and competition among its members.
- _____ Volunteer and member accomplishments and contributions are recognized

