

# We Decide



## A Guide for Group-determined Projects



**OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**EXTENSION SERVICE**

4-H 0227L  
Reprinted July 2000

## What are Group-determined Projects?

A group-determined project is one that allows an adult or teen volunteer and group of youth to select, plan, develop, and evaluate their own project.

### **The project:**

- May take a different direction or expand upon an existing project
- May be one not currently available through the Oregon State University Extension Service

### **The members, parents, and leader:**

- Establish the objectives or goals they wish to attain
- Determine the method(s) to carry out the group program
- Determine the way(s) to measure accomplishment toward the goal

### **The leader:**

- Provides leadership for the group
- Identifies needed resources—written material and/or people

### **The member:**

- Purchases written materials and items needed for the project

### **The parent:**

- Shows interest and enthusiasm for the project selected and the 4-H group
- Assists the child by providing project materials, supplies, and guidance
- Supports the leader by providing transportation and refreshments when needed, and assisting with club activities

### **Oregon State University Extension Service:**

- Will provide general 4-H materials, record sheets if practical and needed, and non-subject matter leader training
- Will provide opportunity for members of the group to participate in activities that complement club goals and personal development of youth and adults

---

*Duane P. Johnson, Extension specialist, 4-H youth development; Oregon State University.*

## Why Group-determined Projects?

There are many reasons for encouraging youth to plan and organize a group-determined project for themselves. The following reasons are most pertinent:

- Each young person has individual abilities, interests, needs, background, and home situations. No single list of projects can satisfy all youth.
- There are many resources available in a community. Youth should be encouraged to explore and investigate educational offerings in the community.
- Young people often are more motivated to carry out group-chosen projects than those determined by others.
- Young people want the opportunity to do things as a group but they need and want the ideas, suggestions, and friendly guidance of adults.
- An important part of learning is to assume responsibility through opportunities to make decisions and set goals.
- Appropriate learning experiences are those methods, ways, tasks, procedures, and activities that enable the group and each individual to reach educational goals set for the group with adult help.
- Youth are more secure when they are able to use their unique abilities and can develop their potentialities.

As you help 4-H'ers develop group-determined projects, it will be up to you to ask questions and help them evaluate their project. These responsibilities are similar to other 4-H clubs, but there are a few things you need to remember:

- There are no specific requirements for the project. Each group determines which area they want to undertake and complete.
- There are limited written materials available from the Extension Service to assist in carrying out the selected program.
- There is no specific record for these projects. Some projects may not be designed so that a record would complement the learning, while for others a record will have value. You will need to encourage the group to evaluate their accomplishments.
- There is a planning guide attached to this manual to assist you in planning and conducting the club to meet different needs, skills, knowledge, and interests of the group. This guide is designed to assist you in planning with your group.

## Goals of 4-H

The goals of 4-H include helping boys and girls develop leadership, character, and effective citizenship.

Club activities such as business meetings conducted by members, community service projects, committee work, social activities, and group recreation provide a real-life laboratory for leadership and citizenship development. 4-H opens the door to expanded horizons through county and state activities for its members.

4-H is learning by doing. The member learns patience, responsibility, initiative, and dependability. Members will learn to set goals and develop standards for themselves.

The key to the success of a 4-H club is you, the 4-H leader. This guide is designed to stimulate ideas and provide a general framework for the club's yearly program. In the final analysis, judgment of the needs and interests of club members will determine specific topics to be included in each meeting and the yearly program.

## Working with Young People

Each 4-H member has needs, interests, desires, strengths, and weaknesses that affect his or her behavior. Regardless of how that behavior appears to you, it is reasonable to the member. While each member has a different personality, all youth share some common needs:

*They want to belong.* Belonging to an identifiable group provides an opportunity for young people to make friends. Belonging and being accepted in a group gives them a feeling of personal worth. To avoid the isolation of some members, or the forming of cliques within the club, as a leader you might observe the relationships between and among members.

*They want to achieve.* Young people want to know that their efforts are worthwhile and appreciated. Because the rate of achievement of members varies, evaluate each member's efforts in all areas of 4-H, not just the project, so that the member will be recognized for accomplishment in relation to his or her ability. Challenge the high achiever, but at the same time, provide opportunities for recognition of less advanced members.

*They want adventure and new experience.* Young people are active. They want to do new things.

They are searching for someone to pattern their behavior after, someone who really leads the way. As a leader, you can provide new and creative experiences. Variety in the club program will help meet this need, and activities in addition to project work should be emphasized.

*They want to be independent.* While this may seem troublesome, it is essential to growing up. You can help them learn to make decisions and be responsible to themselves and to the group. Although they may make errors, these mistakes will contribute to the development of judgment and are less costly than mistakes in later life.

*They want love and affection.* Affection or love is essential in personality development. All youth need to know they are wanted regardless of their shortcomings. Keep in mind both the group and the individual. By providing encouragement, showing interest in each member and the group, and listening to their problems as well as triumphs you will help meet this need for affection.

## Objectives of 4-H Projects

The program is designed to help 4-H members:

- Develop inquiring minds and eagerness to learn
- Develop leadership, initiative, self-reliance, sportsmanship, responsibility, and other valuable character traits
- Develop a positive attitude toward self and others
- Strengthen the ability to make decisions and solve problems
- Use time wisely in attaining a balance in life—work, leisure, family, community, and self
- Increase skill, patience, and knowledge in their project
- Improve skills in communication and self-expression
- Prepare for citizenship responsibilities by working together in groups, supporting community projects and activities

This program can also help members achieve the aims of their 4-H pledge.

### ***I pledge:***

My head to clearer thinking.  
Working with the project provides mental relaxation from school studies and stimulates quick thinking and alertness.

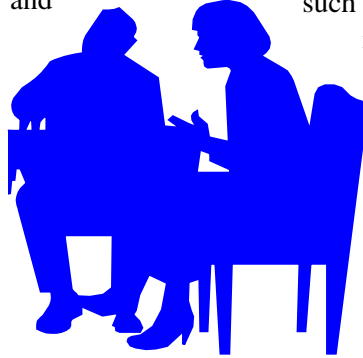


*My heart to greater loyalty.* The close bond that develops between young people planning and working together in a common interest is conducive to a deepening sense of loyalty and consideration for others.

*My hands to larger services.* Skillful hands are a must. It is the touch of the hands on the project that telegraphs the 4-H member's wish for accomplishment.

*My health to better living.* Out-of-door and indoor activities affect every nerve, muscle, and organ of the body in a healthful way.

*For my club, my community, my country.* Associations and varied activities in 4-H provide many opportunities for young people to prepare themselves for active participation in the social and economic life of their community.



## **The Leader's Role**

Responsibility as a leader is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is the key position in the 4-H program. If you enjoy working with young people, you will find working with the 4-H program to be a most satisfying experience.

The leader's job has many sides: Organizer, advisor, and teacher. In addition to those outlined in various 4-H leaders handbooks, specific responsibilities include:

### **As an organizer:**

- Get the club formed
- Enroll club members
- Secure project material for members
- Help plan yearly program
- Keep members informed of educational activities and encourage their participation
- Involve parents in the club's program

### **As an advisor:**

- Assist members and parents in selecting projects
- Help club officers plan and conduct meetings
- Provide guidance to members of committees for club activities or special projects
- Counsel with junior leaders
- Help members see how they can become active in improving their community

### **As a teacher:**

Teach subject matter

Keep abreast of developments in the subject matter area so these may be taught to members

Help members plan and present demonstrations

Conduct tours or other club activities to reinforce teaching efforts

By the example you set, you will indirectly teach such values and behaviors as punctuality, responsibility, respect for others, the dignity of work, and constructive use of leisure time.

### **Selecting a project**

Young people need and want guidance in order to decide on a group-determined project. You will want to *listen*, *watch*, and *ask questions* in order to assist the group to discover their own interests and potentials. You will need to consider:

What does the group talk about with friends (interests, problems, enthusiasms, difficulties)?

What are group members presently interested in doing?

What are their activities in school and in the community?

What abilities or potential does the group seem to have?

What do members of the group want or wish they could do?

### **Setting goals**

After selecting the project, group members should list specifically what they want to learn before they set up definite goals. Give help to the group in developing clearly stated goals that will serve as a guide for the year's work. Questions one might ask are: What do we need to learn in order to carry out this project? What skills do we need to develop? What changes in attitude or behavior do we need to make? Following is an example of a group interested in ham radio operation:

*Knowledge:*

To learn the Morse Code

To learn what a person needs to do to obtain an operator's license

*Continued on page 7*

# How do You Develop and Lead a Group-determined Project?

Based upon interests and abilities, have the club member list ideas for projects:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

Considering time, resources, family situation, and help available, narrow possibilities down to a few realistic ideas:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Have the club member pick the one idea he or she will develop as a project:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Project Planning Guide

This outline is to be used as a guide for the development of group-determined projects. Whenever such a project is developed, the volunteer leader of the group must recognize that very limited subject matter resources are available through the Oregon State University Extension Service and that resources will need to be identified and obtained from other sources.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer leader of the group to complete this guide and submit it to the county Extension office for approval.

Name, topic, or area of work \_\_\_\_\_

Leadership \_\_\_\_\_

Name

Phone

Address

Other leadership and resource people available \_\_\_\_\_

Resource and reference materials available (list titles and sources) \_\_\_\_\_

Materials and equipment available to club \_\_\_\_\_

Materials and equipment to be required of members \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Objectives (Goals)</b>	<b>Learning Experiences</b>	<b>Possible Procedure/Task Activities</b>	<b>Possible Resources</b>
Skills, knowledge, attitudes this project will develop.	That will enable members to achieve objectives.	Technique, method.	Who, what people, equipment?

4-H Project Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 County Extension Agent

### *Attitudes:*

To enjoy talking, via shortwave radio, with many different people

To feel that we can help others in case of an emergency

### *Skills:*

To be able to send and receive messages by code and by voice

To discover sources of information

### ***Developing the project***

The leader needs to provide:

Warmth

Support

Encouragement

Understanding

Be alert for information that would help the group, but do not structure the work so much that it takes the responsibility of planning and choosing from the group.

### ***Methods***

You will want to decide specifically how to meet your goals. Find out what you and the group need to do. Where can you get help? What resources do you need? Where are the resources located? What learning experiences will help in accomplishing your goals?

### ***Project description***

Now that you have thought about the project, goals, and methods, we suggest you use the form provided with this book to write a description of the project. In the outline you will need to discuss the project, goals, learning experiences, methods, procedures, tasks, responsibilities, and activities.

### ***Evaluating the project***

Evaluation should be carried on continuously throughout the project. The group will want to ask, How well am I doing in terms of the goals that were set? Where should we go from here?

If the project adapts itself, members may want to plan a display, exhibit, activity, presentation, or report on the work done in their group-determined project.

Sharing with others can help your members summarize, analyze, and further determine what they have accomplished in their project. Some ways of sharing might be:

- Give individual help to others
- Participate in workshops, programs, and meetings working on this subject
- Erect exhibits, window displays, or bulletin boards that will be seen by many people
- Give presentations to other audiences
- Participate in tours and field trips

If the project adapts itself, members may want to keep records of activities and growth in the project. Members also may want to take pictures of the learning experience and activities of the club.

### ***Test your plan***

In carrying out your project plans, and to further develop your project, you may wish to do some of the following:

- Review your plan with other adults and the county Extension agent
- Ask people for help—orally or by letter
- Write for literature and materials
- Go to libraries. What books, magazines, or pamphlets give information related to the project?
- Visit persons and places where information can be obtained on the project
- Clip information from newspapers and magazines
- Watch for help from radio and TV programs
- Ask to be included in meetings, tours, and related activities
- Try out, experiment, investigate; do things that will aid learning



---

This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—*without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status*—as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

---

Reprinted July 2000.