

MODULE 1 – WHAT IS 4-H?

PRIMER FOR 4-H SHOOTING SPORTS INSTRUCTORS



**Promoting Positive Youth Development through
Comprehensive Education,
Life-Long Recreation, and
Healthy Competition**



National 4-H Shooting Sports



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Table of Contents

TOPIC	PAGE
Introduction	4
What is 4-H?	5
Organizational Structure	6
History of 4-H	7
What are the Four H's?	7
The 4-H Pledge	8
Using the 4-H Name and Emblem	8
Mission Mandates	8
Roles and Accountability	9
References	10

Introduction

4-H is a Community¹

“4-H is delivered by Cooperative Extension System - a community of more than 100 public universities across the nation that provides experiences where young people learn by doing. Kids complete hands-on projects in areas like health, science, agriculture and citizenship, in a positive environment where they receive guidance from adult mentors and are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles. Kids experience 4-H in every county and parish in the country—through in-school and after-school programs, school and community clubs and 4-H camps.”

Overview of what will be covered in this module:

1. What is 4-H?
2. Organizational Structure and History
3. 4-H Program Fundamentals
4. Mission Mandates
5. Roles and Accountability



What is 4-H?¹

4-H is America's largest youth development organization – empowering over six million young people nationwide each year with the knowledge and skills to lead for a lifetime. 4-H believes in the power of youth. 4-H recognizes the valuable strengths and real influence that every child possesses to improve the world around us.

4-H provides:

1. “Hands-on” learning experiences
2. Safe, supportive environments
3. Guidance from caring adult mentors
4. Encouragement towards leadership roles
5. Accessibility for all youth

The 4-H team comes from every corner of America through an amazing network of over 3,500 4-H professionals and more than 500,000 dedicated 4-H volunteers who operate under the direct supervision of those 4-H professionals.

4-H, Why's it important?²

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is a longitudinal study that began in 2002 and was repeated annually for eight years, surveying more than 7,000 adolescents from diverse backgrounds across 42 U.S. states.

4-H members are:

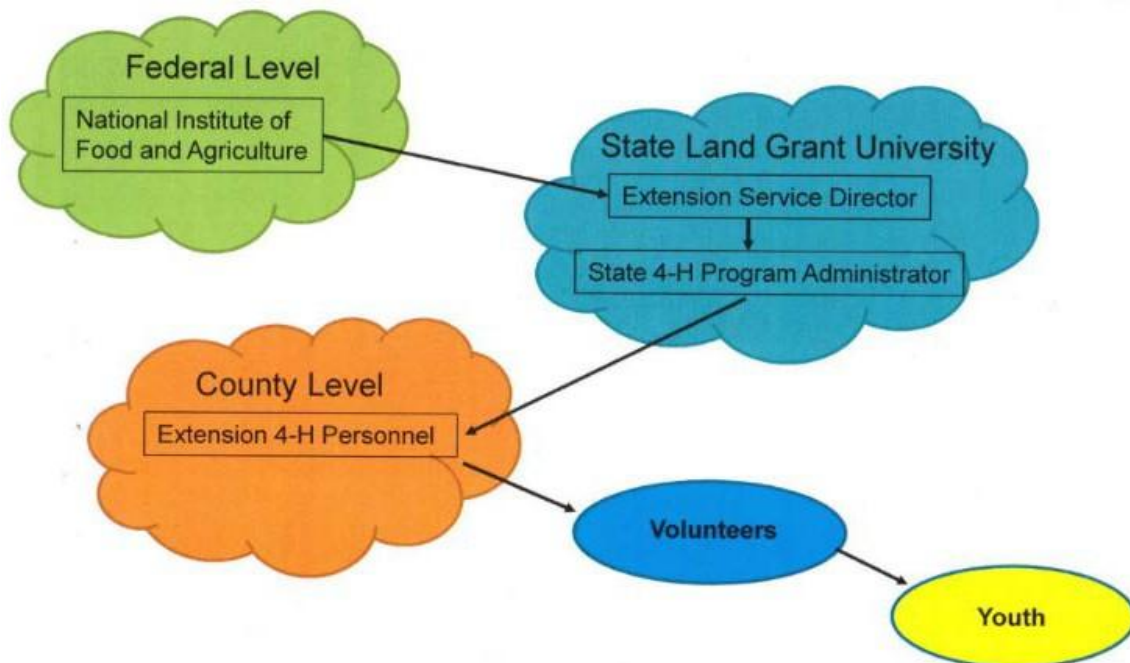
- Nearly 4X more likely to make contributions to their communities,
- About 2X more likely to be civically active,
- Nearly 2X more likely to participate in science programs during out-of-school time,
- About 2X more likely (Grade 10) and nearly 3x more likely (Grade 12) to take part in science programs compared to girls in other out of school time activities, and
- Nearly 2x more likely to make healthier choices.

Organizational Structure³

Extension programs, including 4-H, are the result of a unique three-way partnership at the federal, state and county levels. Federal oversight comes from National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) which is a division of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These priorities channel through the Land Grant University System to respective state institutions.

At the state level, responsibility for 4-H is routed through the Cooperative Extension Service director to the respective State 4-H Program Administrator. This position provides oversight and establishes basic parameters for all 4-H programs within the state or their jurisdiction.

However, to most effectively reach youth, the State 4-H Program Administrator delegates local 4-H program leadership and management responsibilities to the county/parish Extension 4-H Educators. Those individuals then work with authorized volunteers and other appropriate resources to deliver high-quality educational youth programs



History of 4-H¹



In the late 1800's, universities realized they could achieve greater acceptance of new technology by introducing these concepts to youth on a small-scale basis. Thus, in 1902, A. B. Graham started the first youth program in Clark County, Ohio. Considered a precursor to 4-H, these clubs focused on corn production and growing/processing of tomatoes.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created the Cooperative Extension Service within USDA, launching nationalization of 4-H. Extension has expanded to more than 100 land-grant universities and over 3,000 county offices, combining federal, state and county resources and personnel to meet local research and educational needs.

Evolving to meet society's changing needs, 4-H today is tackling issues from global food security and sustainable energy to childhood obesity and food safety. Reaching beyond traditional agriculture and family sciences, 4-H engages in a multitude of STEM opportunities, improving our ability to compete in key scientific fields and more effectively address the challenges of the 21st century.

What are the Four H's?

William Danforth⁷, in his book *I Dare You*, believes youth have a four-fold life to live: a body, a brain, a heart and a soul . . . these are your living tools. To use and develop them is not a task It is a golden opportunity." Note that each "H" of the 4-H clover aligns with one of those tools.

- **Head** – empowers youth to learn how to think, plan and reason
- **Heart** – promotes concern for others, accepting responsibility, developing positive attitudes
- **Hands** – encourages development of useful, helpful physical skills
- **Health** – engages youth in promoting personal health and productive use of leisure time

The 4-H Pledge⁴

The 4-H pledge, adopted in 1927, is a tangible reminder for all 4-H participants and their families as to the real purpose of this dynamic program. Start each meeting, activity, and/or event with the 4-H Pledge. From time to time, after reciting the pledge, ask youth what one of the specific lines means to them – and what they are committing themselves to do. This brings the 4-H Pledge to life.



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.

Using the 4-H Name & Emblem⁵

The USDA first used the term “4-H Club” in 1918; U.S. Congress approved the four-leaf clover emblem in 1924. The name and emblem is one of only five federal marks, having protections and standards exceeding those of trademarks and copyrights. [Note: the other federal marks include the Presidential seal, the Olympic rings, Smokey Bear and the Red Cross emblem.]

Use of the 4-H Name and/or Emblem requires authorization from either county, state or federal Extension 4-H personnel, depending on the intended use. Strict specifications exist regarding appropriate graphic representation of the 4-H emblem. Under 18 U.S.C. 707, unauthorized or inappropriate use is subject to criminal penalties, fines or imprisonment. Check with your local Extension personnel before finalizing or distributing materials to insure proper compliance.

Mission Mandates³

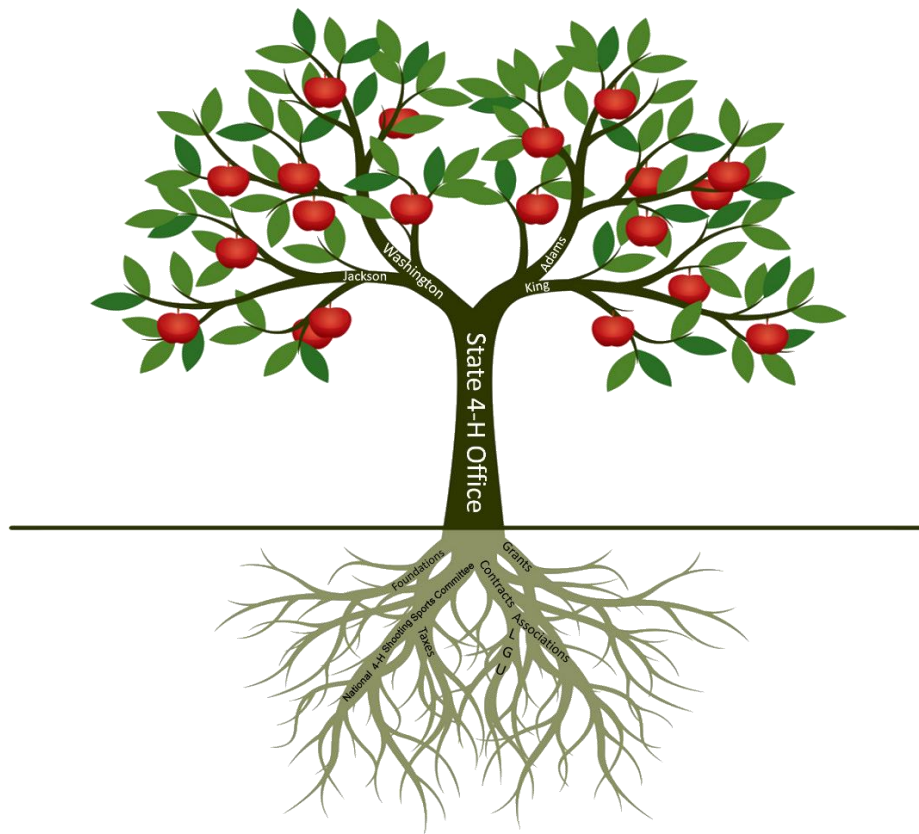
Three national 4-H mission mandates exist to provide guidance to all 4-H programs. Look for ways to incorporate each into the various 4-H programs you offer. They are:

1. **Science** - Focuses national emphasis on STEM and empowering youth for the future.
2. **Healthy Living** - Targets national health crisis and emphasizes positive nutrition and lifestyles.
3. **Civic Engagement** - Promotes greater community awareness and engages youth in service to others.

Roles and Accountability⁶

Just as within any successful team or organization, there are processes and hierarchies that must be observed to insure peak performance. During the power point presentation, you may recall starting with the tree trunk (State 4-H Office), primary branches (counties) and secondary branches (clubs). The leaves (volunteers) provided energy that ultimately help develop the high-quality fruit (members). Finally, you'll remember the tap root represents the Land Grant University system's research based information and best practices. The vast root and rootlet system are the various funding sources that support a healthy tree.

As 4-H Shooting Sports instructors, it's essential that you operate within the scope of your assigned duties while providing an organized, safe and supportive environment for youth. Just as the tree can exist without a few unproductive secondary branches, leaves or fruit, the opportunity to participate in the 4-H program is a privilege – not a right. While 4-H is inclusive of all, it cannot let anyone's inappropriate actions jeopardize the safety of others.



References

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7. Danforth, W. H. (2006). *I dare you!*. Cosimo, Inc..

2025 Changes to Module 1 Primer

1. Added Curriculum Authorization statement to page 2 and updated contact information.