

Guidelines for 4-H Project Work

The 4-H Project is a key source of knowledge-based learning in 4-H. A project is a “semi-structured educational experiences in an interesting area chosen by the 4-H member.” The project group would follow a “learn by doing” concept which is the motto of 4-H. Through 4-H project work, a member develops knowledge of a subject area, positive attitudes toward self and others and life skills for daily living.

Delaware 4-H has over 85 project areas that can be chosen by members that help to meet a wide range of interests. Members may choose to be part of one project area, two project areas or any number of project areas. There are no limits, but 4-H member should choose their number of project areas based on their time, ability and commitment to being actively engaged in each project group chosen. Parent support of 4-H project work is an important ingredient of a member’s success.

For many project areas, curriculum manuals that are developed by various universities are available from the County 4-H Office. However, other resources can certainly be used to assist in the delivery and coordination of a 4-H project group. These resources could be various types of printed work in the designated project area, internet resources, knowledge and expertise of the project leader or other volunteers in the club or even knowledge and expertise of community members who can be solicited to work with, share or present information to the group. Project group meetings can consist of hands-on activities, speakers, tours or other types of presentations. The project group provides for both group as well as individualized learning, and work can be done as a group at a designated setting or can also be completed by the individual member at home or other locations.

Project work helps members to:

- Develop their knowledge, skills and problem solving abilities.
- Examine and study career opportunities.
- Develop favorable self-image and self-worth. Development of project skills and abilities increases the member’s self-confidence and self-esteem.

Project groups meetings should be:

- Flexible – so that all members can take part.
- Meaningful – so that all members can learn.
- Useful – so that members feel the importance of the meeting and can relate what is learned.
- Interesting – so that members develop a motive for learning. Don’t be afraid to have a surprise at meetings (something unexpected).
- Individual – so that members return home with a feeling of accomplishment and achievement.
- Unified – so that members learn through mental, physical and emotional means.

Project Goals should:

- Be realistic and measurable
- Meet the needs and interests of the project group members
- Provide individual achievement opportunities for each member.
- Be clear and understandable.

Other important concepts of 4-H Project work:

- Project Leaders should have a guideline for your project group.
- Project members should be allowed to progress to and learn at different levels each year. Members should be able to build on prior learning and learn at a pace that is appropriate to their personal age and level of development.
- Project Groups can set their respective meeting times. Groups can meet weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc. It is encouraged that project groups meet a minimum of 4-6 times a year. Project work may be better suited to be completed in a specified time frame so groups could have more concentrated meetings during a specific time period versus all throughout the year.
- Project Leaders should take into account any county and state planned events or activities which pertain to your project area when planning your calendar.
- Project group members should be encouraged to participate in County and State Judging Contests if one is available for the respective project group.
- Project leaders should encourage and assist members to keep records of project work activities and to submit project book record to the county level annually.