



Characteristics of Beyond Ready 4-H Clubs

4-H clubs are the foundation of every successful 4-H program. They provide volunteers and youth with unlimited opportunities for learning, relationship building and fun. 4-H clubs can take many different forms. They can be single project clubs, afterschool clubs, in-school clubs, or community clubs. Regardless of the structure, the primary purpose of 4-H clubs is to support the development of each youth participant's full potential. The club structure is designed to help volunteers and members build significant and lasting relationships.

CORE REQUIREMENTS OF A BEYOND READY 4-H CLUB

- At least five youth from two or more families.
- Two or more Gold-level screened adult volunteers.
- Youth-share responsibility for decisions and club operations (often through elected officers).
- An organized, educational and fun program planned by youth, volunteers, and parents.
- Six or more gatherings per year.
- Share learning experiences and opportunities for members beyond the local club.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN A STRONG 4-H CLUB

Foster Sparks (developing an interest or skill that inspires a sense of direction).

- Youth are exposed to a variety of project areas and experiences.
- Active participation in learning is encouraged.
- Youth are connected with knowledgeable, passionate adults.
- **Life skills supported:**
 - Learning to learn; practical project-based skills; marketable skills; self-esteem; self-motivation
- **Success indicators:**
 - Youth actively participate in their learning.
 - Youth have opportunities to make decisions about their projects.
 - Youth participate in public events that enhance their learning.

Promote Belonging (a sense of security, connection and feeling valued).

- Leaders know each youth's name and individual needs.
- Youth voices are heard and valued in meetings.
- Opportunities are provided for family and club member social interaction.
- **Life skills supported:**
 - Social skills; communication skills (public and interpersonal); nurturing relationships; positive interactions with peers and adults; accepting differences
- **Success indicators:**
 - Youth have opportunities for social interaction with peers and families.
 - Club members are recognized and appreciated in multiple ways.
 - Youth feel included and connected to their club community.



Support Developmental Relationships (a trusted relationship with a caring adult that fosters youth development).

- Interactions are positive between youth and adults.
- Connections are made with community members who advocate for youth.
- **Life skills supported:**
 - Responsibility and self-management; conflict resolution; nurturing relationships
- **Success indicators:**
 - Youth have supportive relationships with leaders and other adults.
 - Clubs regularly assess individual progress and group goals.
 - Youth experience mentorship and encouragement from multiple adults.

Encourage Engagement (active pursuit of individual learning and development).

- Involvement in club events, activities and county/state opportunities is promoted.
- Mastery of skills is supported.
- Youth leadership opportunities are encouraged.
- **Life skills supported:**
 - Decision-making; leadership; teamwork; self-responsibility; cooperation
- **Success indicators:**
 - Youth serve in leadership roles within the club.
 - Youth are involved in community activities that provide service to others.
 - Youth consistently take part in planning, organizing and evaluating club experiences.

Promote Awareness (young people are aware that they were engaged in a 4-H program).

- The 4-H flag is displayed; the American and 4-H pledges are recited and 4-H resources are used.
- The club recognizes its place within county, state, and national 4-H and understands the role MSU Extension and the land-grant system play in supporting youth opportunities.
- Community involvement is woven into club culture.
- **Life skills supported:**
 - Community service/volunteering; service learning; concern for others; communication
- **Success indicators:**
 - Youth and volunteers routinely display or reference 4-H symbols (flag, clover, pledge) during meetings and events
 - Youth can describe how their club helps or contributes to the community.

Additional support: For more guidance on building Beyond Ready 4-H clubs, contact your county 4-H staff member or visit the Michigan 4-H Youth Club Development website at extension.msu.edu/4h.