

UPHOLDING THE 4-H MISSION

4-H Program Management Domain

How Did 4-H Start?

4-H began in 1902, when boys' and girls' agricultural clubs seemed to organize simultaneously in several different places in the U.S. These early efforts were associated with rural schools or Farmers' Institutes organized by agricultural colleges to bring the latest scientific information to farmers and their families.

Smith-Lever Act

Later, in 1914, the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act, formally establishing Extension work on a cooperative among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant colleges, and counties in each state. Funds were included for youth programs that, in 1924, became known as 4-H.

4-H in the Late 1900s

In the 1950s, 4-H underwent several changes, and programming became more focused on life skill development and helping youth become contributing, productive, and self-directed members of society.

What 4-H Looks Like Today

Today, 4-H provides nonformal, research-based educational programming for children and youth and has an expansive reach, serving youth in rural, urban, and suburban communities. On the national level, 4-H is administered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

4-H members tackle national and global issues, from food insecurity to childhood obesity and food safety. From agricultural and animal sciences to rocketry, robotics, environmental protection, and computer science, 4-H programming enables youth worldwide to take on the leading challenges of the 21st century.

What is the 4-H Vision?

From the 2018 4-H Strategic Plan¹:

“A world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change.”

What is the 4-H Mission?

From the 2018 4-H Strategic Plan¹:

“4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.”

The mission of 4-H is to provide meaningful opportunities for all youth and adults to work together to create sustainable community change. This mission is accomplished within three primary content areas: civic engagement and leadership, healthy living, and science. Individual states may have additional mandates or developed supplementary components to their program's mission.

Uphold the 4-H Mission

Upholding the mission is the foundation of every 4-H volunteer's service. This includes your work with youth in project meetings, club activities, and events and your service in leadership roles at the county, state, and national levels. You are a critical partner in 4-H who helps teach and deliver programs to youth. Through your service, 4-H youth development reaches its mission.

To uphold the mission and perform your essential roles, you receive training and support that increases your confidence and competence, helping you to complete your service. This support includes orientation, training, ongoing support from Extension professionals, and recognition for your years of service. Suppose you have questions about your role or need supplementary information beyond what your local Extension professional provides. In that case, numerous virtual 4-H training opportunities and knowledge are available at 4-H.org and the USDA-NIFA site. Your state or local program's webpage may also have volunteer opportunities and training.

4-H Name and Emblem

The 4-H name and emblem are protected; that is, individuals and groups must have permission to use them and must use them correctly. This is much like many national brands that have correct and incorrect usage. However, the 4-H name and emblem have additional protection under federal statute Title 18, U.S. Code 707². The use of the 4-H emblem is given to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, who has delegated the authority to the Division of Youth and 4-H housed at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. As a 4-H volunteer, you must receive permission and guidance from your state on when and how you may use the 4-H name and emblem. The NIFA document cited in the resource section explains the use of the name and emblem and provides examples of how they are to be used. For more information on obtaining permission to use the 4-H Clover, contact your local 4-H professional.

References

- ¹United States Department of Agriculture. (2018). Strategic plan: 4-H youth development: A 2025 Vision. National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
- ² United States Department of Agriculture. (2019) *4-H name and emblem use handbook*. National Institute of Food and Agriculture

The original resource 4-H Program Management: Upholding the 4-H Mission (VRKC: Volunteer Research, Knowledge, & Competency Taxonomy) was developed by Sue Pleskac.

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