

Helpful Hints from Past Application Judges

Lapeer County 4-H Awards Program

12/14/17

10 General Application Tips:

1. **MAKE AN ACTIVITY/ACCOMPLISHMENT LIST** - Always make a continual list of activities you've done (in and out of 4-H) and any special notes (i.e. leadership roles) no matter how small they may seem. It is so easy to forget, but getting it down on paper reminds you and the world of your awesomeness☺! This is important not only for our county awards application, but for larger applications, such as college applications, scholarships and résumés. Our program is designed to prepare you to manage those tasks with ease and confidence in the future as you will have already done it in a safe environment with adults, who care about your growth and success in life. If you put in the work now, you will thank yourself later.
2. **BE THOROUGH-TOOT YOUR HORN!** - Read directions completely and noting carefully what is being asked (which can be more than one thing in each question), then answer the question thoroughly, so that the judge can see that you've given a good amount of thought to the answer. Points will be lower for incomplete answers that weren't thoroughly thought through. If it says "describe" and "explain," please do not list items, but explain what you learned in them or how it applies. This is one of the judges' biggest pet peeve – a list without further explanation. More information is always better!
3. **BLANKS MAKE US SAD** - Never leave a section blank. Always try to think of something that could apply, even if you need to ask family, leader or other 4-H'ers to come up with activities you've done in the past that would apply. Sometimes it's hard to remember everything, but others may remember! With enough effort and help from others, you most likely will surprise yourself of how much you've really accomplished. For example, if a question asks about leadership experiences, that can be holding an office, leading a project to completion or how you helped younger members of your club. Define the key word(s) and then see how your experiences apply. If you truly have no experience for a specific question, state this, however, note what you would like to do to work on gaining knowledge or experience that would apply for next year's application, such as research trainings, groups or books you'd like to read, etc.
4. **PUT YOUR THINKIN' CAP ON** - Think outside the box and get creative! There are many experiences where you've learned something or were a leader without realizing it. Go through past record books, on 4honline that shows your past awards and activities, talk with your parents, leaders, other 4-H members or recall specific books or magazines you have read (give titles, and names), experts you have personally spoken to (e.g. a veterinarian, specific farmer), a specific DVD you watched, etc.

5. **BE AN ORIGINAL** - Try not to use information written for another award or project as a short cut, because it typically falls short in answering the specific question you are being asked. On the same note, please do not turn in the same answers year after year. Believe it or not, judges remember them☺! Each county award application and project medal application should be newly written, with updated information annually.
6. **GO ABOVE AND BEYOND WITH EXAMPLES-** Many of the questions ask for 3-5 examples to discuss regarding a particular knowledge area. It is very important to give at least 3 examples. Refer to #4 above if you're having difficulty coming up with 3. It is advisable to have 4-5 if you really want to be competitive.
7. **PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD** - Please proofread your application multiple times as well as by another person, who knows grammar and spelling well. Don't rely on the computer to be 100% accurate with spellings and grammar. Neatness, spelling and grammar count towards the score.
8. **PROCRASTINATION IS A BAD HABIT** - Waiting until the last minute can cause a lot of stress on you and your parents and/or leader, who want to see you succeed. Leave enough time for you to work on the application(s), set it aside, and come back to it for final revisions and submission on time. They will not be accepted after the deadline of January 2 by 5pm, meaning they need to be in our hands by then, not postmarked, so please leave enough room so that you're not scrambling and stressed out at the last minute.
9. **NAME ON MAIN PAGE ONLY** - These applications are meant to be anonymous for the judges. When an application is received, the applicant's main information page (Section II) is removed and assigned a number for identification on the application. Please leave your name out of any of the answers in the application. If a name is found, however, it is blacked out before a judge gets it. Judges that are not volunteers or parents of current 4-H'ers and generally do not know any 4-H'ers in the program. Anonymity just provides a second level of security for fairness.
10. **INK, PLEASE!** - Ink, if handwritten, is preferred, rather than pencil. Pencil smears and may not be legible by the time multiple judges read it. Your work should look professional and neat. Writing a draft in pencil on a separate sheet of paper, then writing the final draft in ink on the application works much better. If you're worried about messing up on the application, make a copy of it beforehand – less pressure!

The Lapeer County 4-H Awards applications are aligned to resemble the state awards application, so that when you are ready to apply for state awards, you'll already be versed in the process and have some of the answers partially formulated. You're welcome☺. There is good guidance on specific questions on the [4-H State Awards Overview and Instructions](#) found on the [Michigan 4-H State Awards webpage](#). Below is the County Awards questions and where they correspond in the state awards, including page number of description in the Overview:

County Awards

My 4-H Story

Learning Experiences

Project Content Knowledge and Skills**

Leadership Experiences

Life Skills

4-H Citizenship/Community Service**

State Awards

Your 4-H Story (pg. 8)

(not in State Awards)

Project Content Knowledge Q4 (pg. 7)

4-H Leadership Experiences Q7 (pg. 8)

Life Skills Q1 (pg. 7)

4-H Citizenship/Community Service Q8 (pg. 8)

*Project Content Knowledge means what a youth has learned within that specific project.

4-H Citizenship/Community Service – this means citizenship and/or community service in 4-H. The application states 4-H Citizenship **and Community Service, which does NOT mean the community service can be done outside of 4-H activities. Next year, we will replace the “and” with “/” for more clarity.

Just as a reminder, here are the requirements on the application:

Members must adhere to the following criteria:

- Award forms must be completed by the 4-H member only.
- Applications may be typed or handwritten. If typed, must use Times New Roman or Arial 12 point black font.
- You must answer all the questions in complete sentences. Do not leave anything blank. If you do not have experiences to discuss in a section, please state this.
- Do not change the format of the application. Additional pages may be added for the project summary section only. All other sections must be answered in the space allowed.
- Applications must have all required signatures before submitting.
- Grammar, spelling and neatness will be taken into consideration during scoring.

This is intended to be a “living” document, meaning, it can continue to be added to and/or revised as time goes on. If anyone has any great tips or advice, please feel free to forward those on to george92@msu.edu to be added. As always, if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact the 4-H office for support. I will also post on Facebook for you to comment with questions about either awards applications. I will answer and then everyone can see the conversation. We hope this helps you and will inspire you to complete the County Awards Application/Project Medal Application or go for it and complete the State Awards Application!

Good luck and we're looking forward to reading about the amazing things you've learned and done in 4-H!

Kathy George
4-H Program Coordinator