

4-H Teen Leadership



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4-H Youth Development

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Welcome to 4-H Teen Leadership

What is a leader?

Leadership is the ability to take charge and lead others in the right direction. Leadership skills can be learned and developed by anyone.

Leaders need to understand varieties of leadership styles, skills and qualities and know in which situations to use them. They acquire trust by being people of good character and they achieve power by empowering others.

4-H offers youth the opportunity to learn about leadership skills and practice them at the same time.

What is a 4-H teen leader?

For the purpose of using the 4-H Teen Leadership materials, a 4-H teen leader will be defined as a young person who is:

- ▶ Between the ages of 13 and 19 years old by January 1 of the program year.
- ▶ Learning and developing leadership skills.
- ▶ Using his or her knowledge, skills and abilities to set and meet goals.
- ▶ Getting others involved in projects or activities.
- ▶ Practicing and applying leadership skills in various settings.
- ▶ Reflecting on his or her leadership experiences.

What are the overall objectives of 4-H teen leadership?

The overall objectives of 4-H teen leadership are to:

- ▶ Achieve a broad understanding of the meaning of leadership and the qualities of a leader.
- ▶ Understand and practice ethical character.
- ▶ Participate in team building by working in groups and encouraging involvement by every individual.
- ▶ Develop follow-through and responsibility.
- ▶ Improve written, verbal and interpersonal communication skills.
- ▶ Gain confidence and self-respect.
- ▶ Practice and acquire leadership skills.

What does a 4-H teen leader do?

Teens can develop their leadership skills in many ways and places. They can attend 4-H workshops and conferences, and events such as 4-H Exploration Days, 4-H Capitol Experience and 4-H Citizenship Washington Focus.

Most importantly, teens can personally develop leadership skills in their communities and clubs by putting what they have learned into action. Often teen leaders take on additional responsibility in their clubs, work closely with adults and 4-H staff members, serve on committees or councils, help younger 4-H'ers in their project areas and complete community service-leadership activities.



Annually, 4-H teen leaders choose to complete teen leadership activities. (See “Examples of 4-H Teen Leader Activities and Projects” on page 8 for suggested examples of teen leader activities.) Through 4-H teen leadership, teens gain practical skills by achieving goals they have defined.

How can a teen in 4-H get involved with leadership?

- ▶ Mentor other youth.
- ▶ Provide leadership for a project.
- ▶ Teach others.
- ▶ Organize, implement and evaluate service-learning projects.
- ▶ Engage in 4-H teen leader clubs, teen clubs and service clubs.
- ▶ Serve as a camp counselor.
- ▶ Be a club officer.
- ▶ Become a member of a council, board or committee.
- ▶ Join county, state and national committees.
- ▶ Attend leadership training and then use those skills in leadership roles.
- ▶ Identify and address community and statewide issues.
- ▶ Advocate for and promote 4-H.

What can teens get out of being involved in a 4-H teen leadership project?

Through this structured 4-H project, teen leaders will gain a wide variety of skills to help them become leaders that are successful in communication,



teamwork and organization. Teens will need the skills they gain through the 4-H teen leadership project in their future education, employment and community membership.

Teens in a 4-H teen leadership project will:

- ▶ Learn new skills.
- ▶ Feel involved in the community.
- ▶ Take on new responsibilities.
- ▶ Achieve personal growth and development.
- ▶ Receive individual recognition through possible scholarships, state and county level awards, banquets, pins and certificates.
- ▶ Develop youth and adult partnerships.
- ▶ Increase youth voice.
- ▶ Have an impact on the lives of other 4-H members and serve as role models.
- ▶ Complete a 4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide, resume or both, outlining their skills and accomplishments.

What are examples of life skills teens may learn and practice during a 4-H teen leadership project?

- ▶ Responsible citizenship
- ▶ Planning and organizing
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Decision making
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Conflict resolution
- ▶ Critical thinking
- ▶ Character
- ▶ Resiliency
- ▶ Marketable skills
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Nurturing relationships

(Hendricks, 1998)

To learn more about 4-H Life Skills, visit http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/life_skills_resources.

References for “Welcome to 4-H Teen Leadership”

Hendricks, P. A. (1998). *Developing youth curriculum using the targeting life skills model* (Rev. ed.). Ames, IA: Iowa State University.



4-H Teen Leader Guidelines

General expectations of the 4-H teen leader program

A 4-H teen leader will:

- ▶ Have completed at least one year of experience in the project area in which he or she will serve.
- ▶ Attend trainings and workshops available to teens to increase leadership skills.
- ▶ Be a resource person and an example for other members.
- ▶ Evaluate his or her goals and continue developing leadership skills each year.
- ▶ Share experiences, skills and knowledge with others in the club, county or both.

Recommendations for the 4-H teen leader program

A teen leader should:

- ▶ **Choose an adult advisor to assist with leadership goals.** An adult advisor meets regularly with the 4-H teen leader to answer questions and assist the teen in planning, implementing and reflecting on the 4-H teen leadership project. Working closely with the adult advisor, teen leaders can follow through more carefully with their goals for leadership skills development.
- ▶ **Regularly attend club meetings and programs.** 4-H teen leaders must be present at most or all club meetings for their project areas. 4-H teen leaders work with adult advisors and peers to find programs, trainings and events to further develop leadership skills. This also sets an example of the expectations for other members.
- ▶ **Assist with planning and leading club meetings.** 4-H teen leaders can work with the club leader and other 4-H teen leaders to take an active role in the leadership of club meetings.
- ▶ **Document 4-H experiences.** Through the *Michigan 4-H Member's Personal Portfolio* (4H1192), available on the Michigan 4-H website (http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/members_personal_4_h_record_book_4h1192), 4-H teen leaders will want to keep track of all community service, leadership and training activity hours.
- ▶ **Work with other 4-H members.** Assist the 4-H club's members at meetings; spend extra time getting to know them and set an example for them.
- ▶ **Complete two or more teen leader activities.** 4-H teen leaders choose from the provided list of examples of teen leader activities. (See "Examples of 4-H Teen Leader Activities and Projects" on page 8.)

Relationship building

4-H teen leaders work with:

- ▶ 4-H leaders.
- ▶ 4-H staff members.
- ▶ 4-H adult advisors.
- ▶ 4-H members.
- ▶ Community members.
- ▶ People in other youth-serving organizations.
- ▶ Other teen leaders and peers.



Some characteristics of leaders

People who are strong leaders generally are:

- ▶ **Well prepared** — They set aside time to prepare for things ahead of time. They practice their skills so they're ready for anything!
- ▶ **Group minded** — Leaders are guided by the wishes and needs of the group. They listen and understand the ideas of each individual. They pay attention to what the person is saying, not who is saying it.
- ▶ **Understanding** — People have ups and downs, reasons for feeling the way they feel and acting the way they act. Leaders try to understand people and listen to what they say. They recognize that things might not always happen the way they want them to.
- ▶ **Poised** — Leaders try not to let little things get to them. They maintain composure.
- ▶ **Responsible** — Leaders live up to their word and potential.
- ▶ **Cooperative** — Leaders know how to work with others and enjoy doing so.
- ▶ **Fun** — They enjoy the simple things and weave them into their work.
- ▶ **People who have vision** — Leaders help the people in their group learn and think about the future.
- ▶ **Clear** — They express themselves clearly. Leaders know what they want and how to get there.
- ▶ **Neat** — Leaders appear professional in speaking, writing and demeanor.
- ▶ **Goal oriented** — They strive always to achieve their goals and set them high!
- ▶ **Open to advice** — They listen to others' compliments, ideas and criticisms, and then



do their own thinking about how to implement them.

- ▶ **Courteous** — Leaders are respectful and polite. They know what is appropriate and when.
- ▶ **Resourceful** — They research opportunities and resources available to their community. Leaders know about people, places and events of interest to a wide variety of needs. Resourceful leaders can suggest things to people that will help them reach their goals.
- ▶ **Creative** — Leaders think about new ways to do things and aren't afraid to challenge something they think needs improvement. They bring their own ideas to the table.
- ▶ **Confident** — They know what they're capable of and play it up. Leaders make it a point to be around others who inspire confidence in them and encourage them to do more of what they are good at.
- ▶ **People who follow through** — Leaders decide on which goals they would like to accomplish and are accountable for following through with their plans. They ask adults and peers to keep them on track with their goals and to evaluate their progress.

The section "4-H Teen Leader Guidelines" was adapted from:

Calhoun County Michigan State University Extension Program. (1999). *4-H leadership project area: Project description*. Marshall, MI: Author.

Ingham County Michigan State University Extension Program. (1991). *Project guidelines for working with teen leaders*. Mason, MI: Author.

Ionia County Michigan State University Extension Program. (n.d.). *Ionia County 4-H teen leader project guidelines and project book*. Ionia, MI: Author.

Kent County Michigan State University Extension Program. (1997). *Kent County 4-H teen leader project*. Grand Rapids, MI: Author.



4-H Teen Leadership Project Description

What is a 4-H teen leadership project?

A 4-H teen leadership project is an experiential learning activity that is a more structured way for 4-H'ers to discover what makes a leader successful and to continue to practice the skills they are learning.

4-H teen leaders who want to complete a 4-H teen leadership project are taking on a new step in their personal leadership development. The 4-H teen leadership project allows a 4-H teen leader to take action in a specific area. A project may be a club-based learning opportunity or a community-based service-learning activity that involves identifying, designing, implementing and evaluating a community-based project to address a community issue. The project could take place over the course of a single 4-H year or more.

The project allows teens to actively participate in planning and to practice leadership tasks. Through the project, the teens become role models for younger members and make a difference in their clubs, communities and world. They practice citizenship skills that they can use now and in the future.

4-H adult volunteers, staff, parents and community members can advise and work with and be resources for teen leaders to complete the specific project.

How do teens complete a 4-H teen leadership project?

- ▶ **Complete a community service-learning project.** 4-H teen leaders must lead an activity or series of activities, which benefit an individual or group within or outside the local club. Teens should talk and meet regularly with a 4-H adult advisor throughout the year to discuss the 4-H teen leadership project. For a list of examples of teen leadership projects, see “Examples of 4-H Teen Leader Activities and Projects.”
- ▶ **Complete a 4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide.** The “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” is used to keep track of all the work completed during a 4-H teen leadership project. It is included in this document on pages 11-18.



Examples of 4-H teen leader activities and projects

As a teen leader, you can:

- Work with a 4-H leader to plan and conduct special activities.
- Teach a skill at your club meeting, a 4-H Afterschool program, 4-H workshop, summer recreational program or another place that welcomes volunteers.
- Facilitate ice breakers, get-acquainted or recreation activities to regularly enhance your club meetings.
- Promote 4-H to local schools, community organizations and media. Work with your 4-H club and leader to make displays, give demonstrations and help others learn how to give effective demonstrations.
- Determine what is needed in a community and organize club members to plan and organize a community service or service-learning project.
- Based on the club's budget needs, help a group plan and organize a club fundraising activity. Brainstorm creative ways to get the funding a group needs.
- Be a mentor to a younger or new 4-H club member. Introduce them to others, welcome them at meetings, involve them in club activities, be sure they are enjoying their 4-H membership, and most of all, develop their skills and help them to explore their interests.
- Become an active member of a county or teen council, youth advisory committee or other group outside 4-H. Find a creative way to share your experiences with other 4-H members.
- Become an active member of the 4-H Council, State Youth Leadership Council or other statewide planning committees.



- Send letters to elected officials about a topic that concerns you. Organize an event to raise awareness of this topic to generate energy and action. Present your findings to a local governmental board.
- Do volunteer work with a social service organization. Help get other youth interested in volunteering with the same organization so that you can ensure further volunteer involvement after your service is completed.
- Assist an adult 4-H club leader with a specific project area.
- Serve as a club officer.
- Be creative and insightful; design your own project based on the needs of your community and resources available to you.



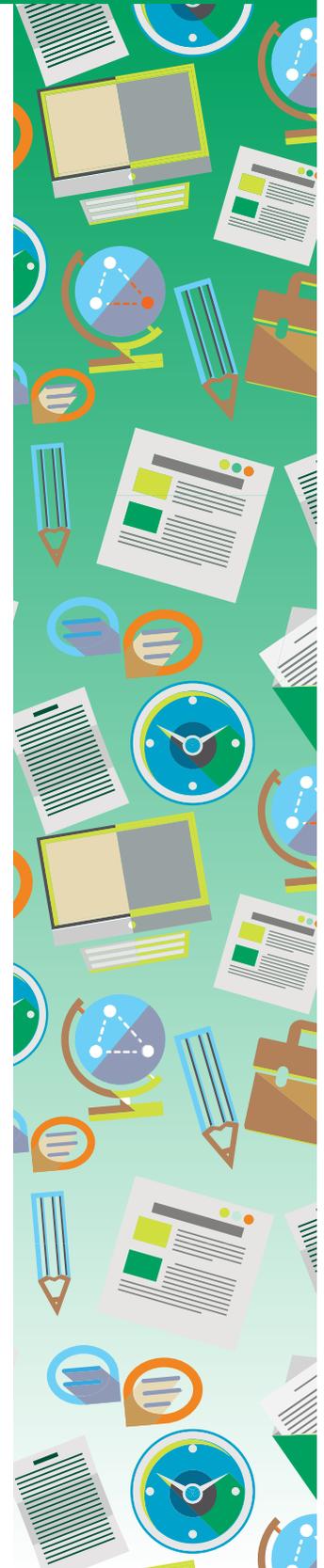


4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide

Introduction

The “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” helps teen leaders who are planning a teen leadership project to build planning and organization skills. It shows teens some of the common practices leaders use to help organize and develop their thoughts into action. The 4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide will help the teen leader and adult advisor work through the steps of planning, completing and evaluating a service project, as well as facilitating communication within the team. Teen leaders doing the teen leadership project will be expected to: complete the “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” (with five steps and cover page).

All documents in the “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” should be typed, if possible. They should look as professional as possible. Teens who have been teen leaders in previous years, or who have completed other teen leadership projects, should complete a new “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” for each new year of leadership, but are encouraged to keep all materials together from previous years. Add any previous records up to the current year.



The Teen Leadership Project Guide — Steps 1 to 5:

The five steps included in the “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” follow:

Step 1, Needs Assessment:

Teen leaders should look at the needs of their club or their communities and decide how to address those needs with their project.



Step 2, Project Planning:

Teen leaders should reflect on what they would like to accomplish over the 4-H year while completing their teen leadership project.



Step 3, Project Implementation and Progress Check-In:

This section asks questions for the teen leader to consider while their project is in motion. After some initial goals have been completed, teen leaders assess how the original goals are being implemented and what progress has been made.



Step 4, Project Reflection:

The reflection should be completed at the end of the project year. Teen leaders reflect upon what they have learned through their leadership project. Teens also evaluate the completion of their goals, and get final feedback from their advisors about how to be more effective in accomplishing future goals.



Step 5, Celebration:

Teens are encouraged to look back at their successes and growth as teen leaders. Celebrating accomplishments when finishing a project can help teens to identify why doing the project was worthwhile, acknowledge those who helped and encourage them to continue in future efforts.

The “4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide” section was adapted from:

Mark, C., Chang, B., & Reiter, M. (September 2003). *Community Based Service Learning 101* [online course]. East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development.

Mark, C. (2000). *YEA (Youth Experiencing Action): A Community Service Learning Guide*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development.



4-H Teen Leadership Project Guide

Name: _____

Club(s): _____

Address: _____

County: _____

Email: _____

4-H age as of January 1, 20____: _____

Number of years as a 4-H teen leader: _____

Number of years in project for which you are a teen leader
(for example, dogs, archery, robotics, community service): _____

4-H club leader, 4-H adult advisor, other people who helped me with this
project:

Date Project Completed: _____

Teen Leader Signature: _____

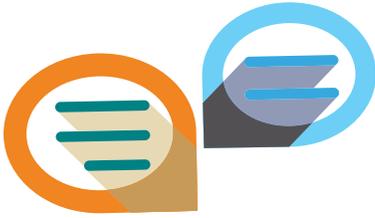
Date: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

4-H TEEN LEADERSHIP PROJECT GUIDE

Step 1: Needs Assessment



A needs assessment is a process for determining needs or gaps between current conditions and desired conditions.

Identify issues in one or both of the following categories (community needs or club needs) to help you begin to compile ideas for your teen leadership project.



Community Needs:

What are some issues being faced by people in the community where I live (neighborhood, county, state or other areas)? Who is affected by these issues? What groups or organizations are working on these issues in my community?

What community needs surfaced from the issues identified?

How could I address some of those needs with a project?

Club Needs:

**What are some issues being faced by members or leaders of the 4-H club, project or both?
Who is affected by these issues?**

What club or project needs surfaced from the issues identified?

How could I address some of those needs?

What inspired me to pursue a 4-H teen leadership project this year?

What are (at least three) specific life skills (http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/life_skills_resources) that I **have** to help me serve the community, club or both through my 4-H teen leadership project?

What are (at least three) specific life skills that I **want to develop** by serving the community, club or both through my 4-H teen leadership project?

4-H TEEN LEADERSHIP PROJECT GUIDE

Step 2: Project Planning

Setting goals allows you to identify needs, resources and skills you would need to be successful in reaching your goals. The resources might even be people. You don't have to work alone to achieve your goals.

For help with setting your goals, refer to SMART goal resources such as the following:

eXtension. (2017). *What are SMART goals?* <http://articles.extension.org/pages/11229/what-are-smart-goals>

Traugott, J. (2014, August 26). *Achieving your goals: An evidenced-based approach.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Extension: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/achieving_your_goals_an_evidence_based_approach

An action plan may help you to get organized and to develop a time line once you have brainstormed what is needed to complete the project.

Fill out the following action plan to help you get your project organized:

Action Plan

List the goals and tasks as well as who is responsible to complete them, what resources are needed and when the tasks need to be completed.

Goal 1: _____

What are the tasks to be completed?	Who will do them? (This may be you. Copy this list for others if working with a team.)	What resources are needed?	When do the tasks need to get done?



Make sure that you set SMART goals. These are goals that are:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**ttainable
- R**ealistic
- T**imely

Goal 2: _____

What are the tasks to be completed?	Who will do them? (This may be you. Copy this list for others if working with a team.)	What resources are needed?	When do the tasks need to get done?

Ask yourself the question: what problems might I run into? List those possible problems below:

Who can I ask for help?

What trainings can I attend to increase my skills?

4-H TEEN LEADERSHIP PROJECT GUIDE

Step 3: Project Implementation and Progress Check-In

Copy this page and use it as a guide when discussing your project with your advisor throughout the duration of the project. Your advisor and you can determine how often to meet together.

What responsibilities have I taken on so far in my teen leadership project?

What are some of the goals I have reached so far with my project?

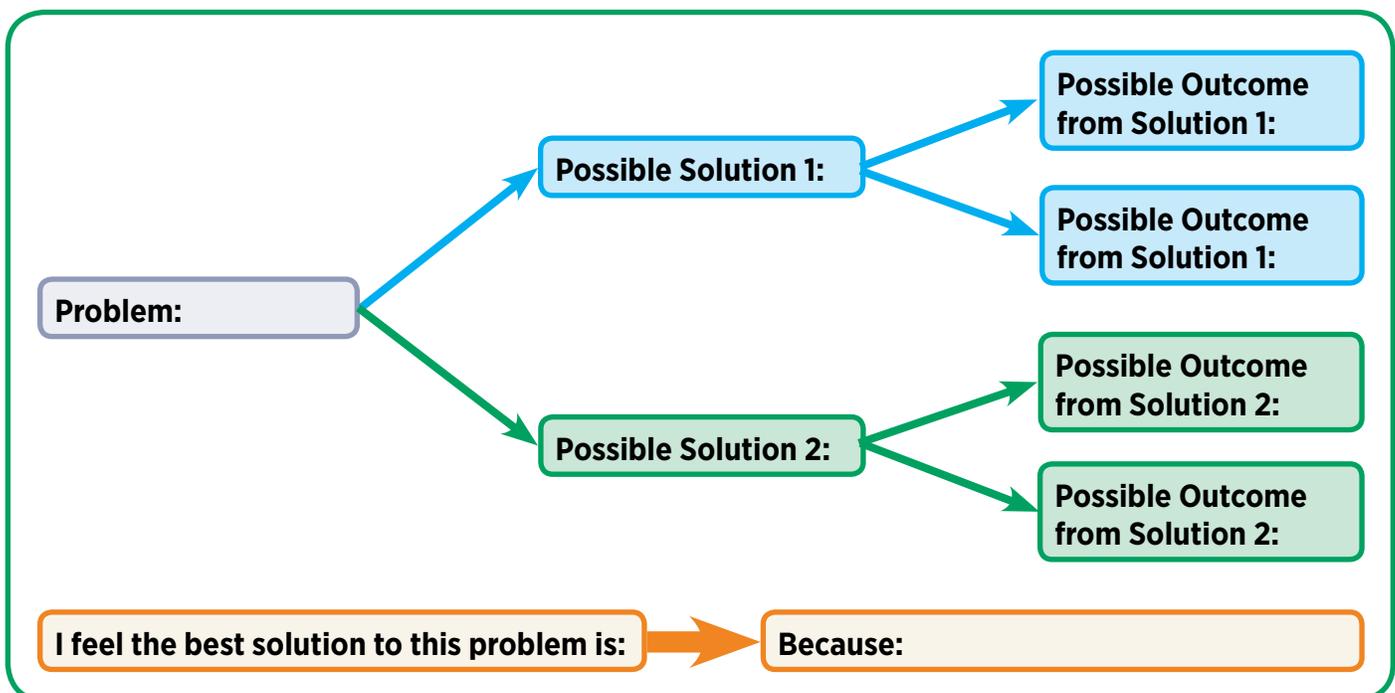
What have been some of the positive impacts that my leadership project has had so far?

What are some of the mistakes or problems that I have been having?
How might some of these problems be resolved?

If you run into problems, try using Figure 1 to help you map out a solution.

What will motivate me to finish the project and follow through with my goals?

Figure 1. Mapping problems and their possible solutions.



4-H TEEN LEADERSHIP PROJECT GUIDE

Step 4: Project Reflection



What project goals was I able to complete?

What or who has been helpful to me when completing my goals?

How have I improved in the life skills I was hoping to gain through this project?

What other knowledge or life skills did I gain through this project?

How has my leadership project helped me to develop leadership skills?

If I do a similar project in the future, what would I do differently as a result of what I learned completing this project?

Are there goals from my plan that I did not achieve?



Do I have plans to continue to work on these goals?

Are there other projects that I identified that could be done as a result of this project?

4-H TEEN LEADERSHIP PROJECT GUIDE

Step 5: Celebration

Now that you have concluded your project, consider your accomplishments, no matter how big or small. It's important to recognize and commend these accomplishments and your growth as a leader as well as what you have learned and who have helped you.



- ▶ Think about planning a party or get-together for those people or groups that you helped during your project, your peers who helped you to carry out the project and the adult advisor who helped you with each step.
- ▶ Ask yourself and others how they feel overall about the project and the experience.
- ▶ Ask the people you worked with throughout the project to write down some comments for you. Read and keep those comments as a record of your project.
- ▶ Write thank-you notes to those who helped you in your project.
- ▶ Submit photos and a story to the local 4-H staff, newspaper or both.
- ▶ Compile a photo slide show or presentation to share with your club, 4-H council, community, county commissioners and others.

Extended Opportunities for Teen Leaders:

You can also:

- ▶ Enter your teen leadership project in your local fair. (This may include an interview or talking with the judge.) – check with your county for availability
- ▶ Apply for a county, state or national award.
- ▶ Apply for scholarships.
- ▶ Write a college application essay using information from your 4-H teen leadership project.
- ▶ Write an article about your project and submit it to your 4-H staff and local newspaper.

A valuable action step is to translate your teen leadership project into career skills by putting them onto a resume.





Resume Writing Tips for Teen Leaders

Much information is available for help with writing a resume. The truth is it can all be a little overwhelming! You may have had experience writing a resume before or currently be required to work on a resume for school. If you have not, you probably will need to work on a resume in the near future. The following tips should help you learn about writing a resume and including your leadership experiences. Your 4-H advisor is available to give you advice and feedback about completing it.

- ▶ Resumes are about reflecting your work and your experience, but not necessarily your personality. There are many representations of who you are, however, your resume lets the “professional you” shine through.
- ▶ Though there are many guidelines about what a resume is supposed to look like, it is the information that counts.
- ▶ The way your resume looks can show that you have skills with computers and that you know how to portray yourself in a positive and professional light. Take this into account as you work on your resume.
- ▶ Gather all of the information you will need to complete your resume first. Get the information about hours of service you have completed, the dates you completed them and the leadership roles you have taken as well as whom you helped.
- ▶ For references, list names and contact information of people who helped you with your development and could reference your positive qualities as well as talk about the work you did. Think of people who witnessed your growth in leadership and know about your strengths as a leader.

Some helpful points:

- ▶ Keep your resume to one page.
- ▶ Use bullets instead of paragraphs. Start all bullet points with an action verb.
- ▶ Use one-inch margins.
- ▶ Make headers and contact information larger.
- ▶ Double check for spelling and grammar. Have someone else read your resume to make sure it reflects your very best.
- ▶ In describing what you do in 4-H, use present tense verbs for jobs you currently do (example: assist 9- to 12-year-olds with woodworking skills), and past tense verbs for jobs you used to do (examples: served as president of Spurs 4-H Club, edited 4-H newsletter, co-taught a session at Explorations Days).
- ▶ List important leadership roles you have taken on, both within and outside of 4-H. Did you serve on any 4-H committees? Did you help plan an event? Have you taught younger members project skills? Explain the skills you learned from those activities.
- ▶ Your leadership experiences can also be useful in interviews for jobs or scholarships. All of the life skills you have learned and practiced in your 4-H teen leadership project can be valuable skills in the workplace. Use examples from your project when answering questions about challenges you have dealt with, time management skills and ways you have contributed to a team effort.



Additional Resources:

Michigan State University Extension. *Resumes and portfolios*: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/resumes_and_portfolios



For 4-H Advisors Working With 4-H Teen Leaders

The adult advisor (volunteer leader or staff member) plays an important role in the success of a teen's leadership development. At any point in the process, an advisor can serve as a coach or mentor as well. The working relationship between the adult and teen is as important as the completion of the project that the teen leader chooses. Teens need the support of a caring adult who challenges and supports their activities and guides them in the process.

The 4-H adult advisor plays a critical role in the 4-H teen leader program.

Why do we have teen leaders?

Teen leaders are important to the 4-H program because they:

- ▶ Relate well with their peers and with younger 4-H members.
- ▶ Have fresh ideas and perspectives to share.
- ▶ Have the energy to increase the number of club activities and events.
- ▶ Are capable of and willing to accept responsibility.
- ▶ Provide new perspectives on decision making and community issues.
- ▶ Are innovative, creative, energetic and enthusiastic.

Responsibilities of the adult advisor to the teen leader

The adult advisor should:

- ▶ Serve in a supportive role while encouraging the teen to lead all steps of the process.
- ▶ Consider the jobs to be done, and the competencies and aspirations of the teen leader. Decide with the teen on the responsibilities and leadership activities that he or she will carry out. Together set goals and develop a plan for providing leadership in the 4-H youth program. Be specific when outlining and agreeing upon responsibilities so that both the teen and advisor clearly know what is expected.
- ▶ Help the teen leader set goals and develop a plan of work early in the project season. Set a meeting time to discuss the needs of your 4-H club and community, and help determine the greatest needs of the 4-H teen leaders, the club, the members and the community.
- ▶ Keep the teen leader informed throughout the year of club, county, district and state events in which he or she may participate. Encourage attending any meetings, workshops, clinics or other events, which have a bearing on the project.
- ▶ Set meetings to encourage the teen leader to carry out and follow through with each step of the project plan or leadership goals. Communicate often with the teen leader, offer suggestions when appropriate and discuss making changes from the original plan of responsibilities, if necessary. Help equip the 4-H teen leader with the necessary leadership skills and make the teen leadership project a great learning and sharing experience for the teen.

- ▶ Connect teen leaders with others participating in the teen leadership project area or with similar goals.
- ▶ Encourage participation in exchange trips and statewide activities.
- ▶ If appropriate, nominate and encourage the teen leader to participate in awards programs.
- ▶ Be available and ready to assist teens in career planning or furthering their project interest area. Be knowledgeable about resources available to teens in a wide variety of areas. Be ready and willing to refer teens when needed.

Tips for success in working with teens

Effective youth leadership programs encourage high expectations and confidence in youth and demonstrate respect for youth. Having someone who respects and believes in them is an excellent motivator for enabling young people to develop the confident attitudes and aspirations, which are characteristic of successful leaders. Those who work with youth leadership development programs should convey and demonstrate with every action, word and deed that they respect, have confidence in and have high expectations of each program participant. While programs may do this in various ways, they can only do it if they embody a genuine respect for young people: for what they know, for whom they are as individuals and for their potential (Ohio State 4-H Youth Development, 2005).

Teens are already leaders in many ways and feel they should be respected and treated as such. Teens see themselves as young adults. They want to take on new responsibilities and acquire new knowledge. Keep in mind these tips when thinking about how to relate to teens.



Ten tips for working with youth

1. Share the responsibility of leadership. Provide guidance, but avoid total control.
2. Listen carefully to youth and try to understand their perspective.
3. Provide meaningful roles and assignments for youth.
4. Share all work activities, even tedious ones.
5. Treat young people as equals and develop a partnership relationship.
6. Keep youth informed about activities, even when problems occur.
7. Be energetic and excited about activities. Have a positive, open attitude.
8. Make activities fun and challenging.
9. Be clear about the levels of authority for you and back their decisions when they fall within the agreed upon guidelines.
10. Serve as role models for the youths and be fair and consistent in your actions.

(University of Nebraska Extension, 4-H Volunteer Information Series, 2008)

Developmental stages of teens

As an adult advisor, you will be working with 4-H members and teen leaders. You will have an important role in helping teens grow and develop. Start where members are in their development and encourage them to grow physically, socially, intellectually and emotionally. Each individual grows and develops at their own pace, but there are some characteristics that each age group may share. These characteristics and their implications for you as a volunteer may be helpful to consider when working with teen leaders.

Ages and Stages of 4-H Youth Development

Teen Characteristics	Implications for Volunteers
Physical: Most have overcome the awkwardness of puberty, but some boys are still growing at a fast pace. Many are concerned with body image.	Avoid comments that criticize or compare stature, size or shape.
Social: Strong desire for status in their peer group.	Establish a climate that is conducive to peer support.
Social: Interested in coeducational activities. Dating increases.	Allow teens to plan coeducational and group oriented projects or activities.
Social: Often want adult leadership roles.	Provide opportunities for teens to plan their own programs.
Social: Want to belong to a group, but also want to be recognized as unique individuals.	Place emphasis on personal development whenever possible.
Intellectual: Reach high levels of abstract thinking and problem solving.	Put youth into real-life problem-solving situations. Allow them to fully discover ideas, make decisions, and evaluate outcomes.
Intellectual: Developing community consciousness and concern for the well-being of others.	Encourage civic projects that are a service to others.
Intellectual: Increasing self-knowledge; personal philosophy begins to emerge.	Allow time and plan activities for youth to explore and express their own philosophies.
Intellectual: Need life planning guidelines as they are beginning to think about leaving home for college, employment or other reasons.	College visits, field trips to businesses, and conversations with college students or working adults can be helpful activities.
Emotional: Feelings of inferiority and inadequacy are common.	Encourage youth by helping them to see their positive self-worth.
Emotional: Gaining independence and developing firm individual identity.	Give teens responsibility and expect them to follow through. Provide opportunities that help teens explore their identity, values, and beliefs.

Used with permission from University of Missouri-Columbia Extension (Tomek & Williams, 1999).

Additional Resources

For additional training and information about working with teens, visit The Search Institute. The Search Institute (<http://www.search-institute.org>) provides materials, videos and other resources that 4-H leaders and volunteers can use to develop their skills and knowledge about working with youth.

“For 4-H Advisors Working With 4-H Teen Leaders” is adapted from:

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Other References for “For 4-H Advisors Working With Teen Leaders”

- Tomek, J. & Williams, J. J. (1999). *Ages and stages of 4-H youth development (LG782)*. Columbia: University of Missouri Extension.
- University of Nebraska Extension. (2008). *4-H volunteer information series: Ten tips for working with youth*.





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