



Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

4-H Club By-Laws: Sample Template

A well-written set of by-laws will provide a club with direction and structure. In addition it can outline the major functions of the group so that the membership knows the expectations. Generally, by-laws comprise all the rules by which a club is governed. By-laws are of such importance that they should not be changed, except after suitable notice is given to the members, and then a vote of the entire membership has taken place. Because of the overall organizational implications associated with by-laws, programmatic rules and regulations are generally held in a separate document and should be maintained separately from the clubs by-laws. Club by-laws shouldn't be complex and hard for the members to understand but instead allow for clarity of the expectations of the group. The following template provides a basic structure and suggested language for 4-H clubs.

Article I- Name

Article II- Object/Purpose- The purpose drives the work of the club. An entire article has been developed to creating an organizational purpose statement: Creating a strong purpose creates a strong committee. 4-H clubs should review MSUE and 4-H vision, mission, and guiding principles as a potential starting point for purpose statements. Clubs may choose to make their purpose more specific in addition to the big picture. (i.e. a leadership club may choose to add specific goals to their purpose around the leadership project area.)

Clubs should also include in their purpose that this club operates in accordance with the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Club Constitution. (all clubs had to sign this constitution to become a recognized club, see your 4-H staff for a copy)

Article III- Members and Leaders – Members-This section can include language regarding the qualifications of members, attendance policies, etc. It is required that all 4-H clubs follow Michigan State University Extension's civil rights policies and assure that our programs are open to all. It is recommended to include the most updated MSUE indicia in this section, the current statement follows:

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

Leaders- This section could explain the role of the leaders and contain a list of the various leader positions along with their responsibilities and/or project groups.

Article IV- Club Reports and Forms – This section could contain enrollment deadlines, cost of dues (if any), membership fee structure, Code of Conduct, etc.

Article V- Officers- This section should outline each office, the duties associated with that office, the process for electing and the timeline of the term.

Article VI- Meetings- If the club functions using a standard meeting date (such as the first Thursday of the month), it should be noted here. It's also wise to add the following language incase alternative meeting dates are determined.

...unless otherwise specified by the membership or 4-H Leader.



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

4-H Club By-Laws: Sample Template

Article VII- Committees- This section should outline any standard committees such as fundraising committee, fair committee, education committee, etc.

Article VIII- Authority- This section can outline the governing documents that organizations can refer to when not otherwise outlined in the by-laws. Roberts Rules of Order is the standard protocol for all parliamentary matters. Using the language “current edition” will allow the organization to follow the most updated procedures without needing to change their by-laws every time a new edition is published. The Financial Manual for 4-H Treasurers or Financial Manual for 4-H Volunteers serve as the reference point for all financial questions not addressed in the by-laws.

Article IX- Restrictions- This section outlines any further restrictions that the organization must function within. For example, all funds raised in the name of 4-H must have a policy in place for their disbandment, project based advisory groups typically turn over property to the county 4-H program. Sample language follows:

Upon dissolution of this club, all remaining funds and property will be turned over to the county MSU Extension Office.

Article X- Amendments of By-laws- There is no one set way to amend by-laws. Each organization can decide for itself how to changes can be made. Always specify the exact requirements for making amendments, and make sure that the rights of all members continue to be protected. **Remember:** By-laws are of such importance that they should not be changed, except after suitable notice is given to the members, and then a vote of the entire membership has taken place.

For further assistance in establishing by-laws for your 4-H club, contact the MSU Extension Leadership/Civic Engagement work team at 4HLeadership@anr.msu.edu.



Michigan State University is an affirmative-action, equal opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.