



Overview and Instructions for Michigan 4-H State Awards Program & Mark of Excellence Award

Update December 2025

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/StateAwards26/>

Applications will be accepted from March 1 to April 1.

Purpose

The Michigan 4-H State Awards Program provides 4-H members a learning experience where they can develop career skills by using their 4-H experiences to compile a portfolio similar to a professional application while receiving recognition for their 4-H involvement. The application process will help youth build their skills in communication, literacy, record keeping, and marketable skills. The application will require youth to reflect on their past 4-H experiences and provide thoughtful responses. 4-H State Awards recognize youth for their engagement and learning in the 4-H program, focusing on the skills they have gained; not necessarily the past achievements and awards received. Once completed, a 4-H State Awards portfolio may be a useful tool that can be referenced when completing future job, college, or scholarship applications.

This awards program recognizes 4-H youth for engaging in rich learning experiences that result in outstanding knowledge and life-skill development. After participating in the 4-H State Awards Program youth will:

- Learn to better communicate and represent their accomplishments on professional applications, such as scholarships, college-entrance applications, résumés, and cover letters for employment.
- Have more experience and be better able to communicate during job interviews.
- Build long-lasting friendships and establish connections with industry and academic leaders.
- Be encouraged to set new goals, continue building skills and assets, and broaden interests.



**Workforce
Preparation**



**Career
Skills**



Achievement



Networking

Who

Michigan 4-H members currently enrolled in a county 4-H program and are 10 to 19 years of age (as of January 1st current 4-H year) are eligible for the program. The State Awards Recognition Program is divided into five divisions. There is not a limit on how many finalists can come from a county.

Applicants who are 4-H age:	Are eligible for this division
10 to 11 years old	Mark of Excellence Contest
12 to 15 years old	Junior State Awards (state awards application portfolio)
16 to 19 years old	Senior State Awards (state awards application portfolio and interview)
12 to 19 years old	Group Awards (group awards application and presentation)
18 to 19 years old	4-H Achievement Award (state awards application portfolio and interview)

Where

Applications for all 4-H State Awards Recognition Programs can be completed from your home, school or other computer. Interviews for senior finalists and presentations for groups will be conducted using video conference technology (Zoom). The culminating event for 4-H State Awards will take place during 4-H Exploration Days on Michigan State University's campus.



When

It is strongly encouraged to begin working on your application early (January or February), as it will take you time to complete it and have it reviewed before submitting it. This is a great opportunity to build your skills in goal setting and time management. Please be sure to communicate with your county 4-H Program Coordinator early in the application process. All applications are due by **April 1**. Completed 4-H State Award portfolios will be uploaded through the MSU Extension Events Registration system:

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/StateAwards26/>

Mark of Excellence entries are submitted to the county MSU Extension office by **May 1**.

The 4-H State Awards Recognition Celebration will take place at MSU on the afternoon of **Wednesday, June 24, 2026**. Junior, Senior, Group and Achievement 4-H State Award finalists will be invited to participate in this event where they will receive their recognition.

Cost to Participate

There is no cost for members to participate in the Mark of Excellence and 4-H State Awards Program. This program is made possible by generous donations and sponsorships to the 4-H State Awards Program. However, finalists invited to participate in the 4-H State Awards Program on campus are encouraged to register to attend 4-H Exploration Days. A \$50 registration scholarship is made available to finalists to help defray the expense of attending 4-H Exploration Days. Finalists should contact their county 4-H office for more details.



Form of Recognition

4-H State Award winners belong to an elite group of 4-H youth who have demonstrated the highest level of excellence. Mark of Excellence and 4-H State Awards Program winners will receive the following recognition.

Award division	Type of award
Mark of Excellence	Certificate and a medal. Essays are added to the Mark of Excellence history book at the Michigan 4-H Foundation and State 4-H office where essays may be used to promote 4-H programs. Winners may receive other recognition locally.
Junior, Senior, Group finalists	Certificate
Junior winners	Plaque and \$100
Senior winners	Plaque and \$300
Winning Group	Plaque for each group representative and (1) \$400 award for the group
4-H Achievement Award	Plaque and \$500

Supporting the 4-H State Awards Program

A gift of \$750 will provide full sponsorship (Gold Sponsor) of an award area. This sponsorship provides monetary awards to both the senior and junior 4-H State Award winner for that award area and supports the entire award area delegation's participation in the 4-H State Awards Program, interviews, and 4-H State Awards Recognition. If a full sponsorship gift is not feasible, support at any level is accepted. If you are interested in helping to recognize Michigan's best 4-H youth, contact the Michigan 4-H Foundation at 517-353-6692 or at <https://mi4hfdtn.org/>.

Mark of Excellence Contest

Theme

The theme is “4-H Beyond Ready...”

Eligibility

- Be a current 4-H member between the ages of 10 and 11 as of January 1, 2026. Enrollment in previous years is not required.
- Individuals may only be selected for this award once.
- Each county can select up to two (2) winners to receive the Mark of Excellence Award each year.



Submission Details:

- Contestants are asked to create either a video or a journal reflection focusing around the theme of “**4-H Beyond Ready...**”
- Entries should be legible, readable or easily viewable.
- Video submissions must be no more than 2 minutes in length. Videos should be in mp4 format or provide a YouTube Channel link.
- Journal reflections must be 500 words or less and can be handwritten or typed.
- Submission can be either video OR journal.
- Must include first name and county.

Submissions may be posted on the Michigan 4-H section of the MSU Extension website and promoted digitally in newsletters and social media.

Award

Selected winners will receive a certificate and medal.

Selection

Individuals may only be selected for this award once. Each county will have the opportunity to select up to two winners. Award winners will be forwarded to the State Coordinator for Mark of Excellence. Award recipients will receive a certificate and medal and may receive other recognition locally.

Mark of Excellence Timeline

January-April	Promote Mark of Excellence to 10 -11-year-old 4-H members
May 1	Mark of Excellence entries are due to county staff
May 1-10	County 4-H staff coordinate selection committee to select two winning submissions from their county
May 15	County 4-H staff submit the youth’s information and the winning entries
June	Youth will be mailed their certificate and medal
Summer-Fall	County may recognize youth locally via annual recognition programs, press release

Michigan 4-H State Awards Program General Guidelines for Individual & Group Applicants

Creating your 4-H State Awards application portfolio is an exercise in professionally communicating your experiences in a standardized format like a scholarship or employment application. The Michigan 4-H State Awards Application Portfolio includes the following components highlighting your 4-H experiences:

- A cover letter
- Résumé
- 4-H Experience & Impact Story
- Application questions



General Guidelines

- Members should read the instructions carefully before starting. It is strongly encouraged that members contact their county 4-H Program Coordinator before they begin their 4-H State Award application as the Program Coordinator can provide guidance and assistance throughout the process.
- Must be a 4-H member, enrolled in 4-H Online for the current 4-H year. Individual Award applicants must have 2 years of 4-H membership (can include the current 4-H year). Group Award applicants do not require enrollment in previous years.
- Members may only submit one application per year. They may submit EITHER an individual application or be a group representative. ****Please Note: there are different application forms for Individual and Group Awards. A group award application should be completed as a group effort, but only be submitted once on behalf of the entire group. Refer to the section labeled directions for Group Applications.**
- Applications for State Awards may be submitted in either a written or video format.
- A member may only win a 4-H State Award once in a category and age division. The member is welcome to apply in subsequent years in a different category or apply in the same category once they move from junior to senior age division.
- A member may only win the 4-H Achievement Award one time. Once the 4-H Achievement Award is won, a member may not apply for any other 4-H State Award.
- Information contained in the 4-H State Award Application should be factual and concise, yet fully representative of all your major accomplishments in 4-H. Concentrate on content. The judges are evaluating your 4-H career, much as an employer would evaluate your résumé.

Group Application Guidelines

- A group must consist of three or more 4-H members; do not all need to be from the same club or county.
- A group may be represented (application and presentation) by 2-5 youth. Group representatives may not apply for individual award recognition in the same year they are representing a group.
- Group award representatives must be ages 12-19 (4-H age). There are no minimum years of experience required in 4-H, project, or group to be selected as a group representative.
- A group may apply for the State 4-H Group Award annually. However, the group may not

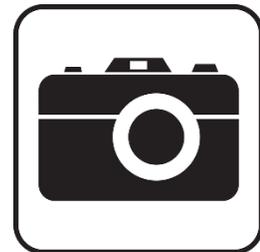


be represented by any youth who has previously been a representative of a winning State 4-H Group Award.

- There is one Group Award Recognition Area in the Michigan 4-H State Awards Program. The following are examples of potential projects for which a group may seek recognition (please note these are not separate recognition areas; nor is this an exclusive list): community service projects, citizenship projects, group learning in a project area, entrepreneurial or fundraising projects, a special activity held by the group, or a group representing the county at a state or national event or contest.
- The group application should reflect a current project, activity, or initiative or one that has been completed within 12- months of the 4-H State Awards application deadline.
- The Group Award application must be prepared by current group representatives to reflect their experiences in the group and as individuals. Some sections of the State 4-H Group Award Application request individual group representatives to each prepare an answer for the question. In these sections, begin each person's response with a new paragraph and their name bolded as following: **Suzy Clover:** (insert Suzy's response here)

Photographs

- Youth must submit two photos. The first photo needs to be a recent color photo of yourself or group. The second photo needs to be of you, and something related to your project area. Photos will be uploaded with the application in the Events Management system. Do not include or attach project reports, news clippings or letters. Answer the questions on the application and do not include supplemental items.
- For individual junior and senior applicants, the first picture should be a head-and-shoulder shot. We strongly recommend that you wear professional attire (such as you would for an interview) for this head and shoulder shot. Wear solid colors, when possible, to limit distractions. Do not submit a photo of you wearing a hat. The second photo should be of you, and something related to your project area, this could be an action shot or posed.
- For group applicants, the first picture should be a group shot that is posed, not in action. This photo may include the entire group or just the group representatives. We strongly recommend that you wear professional attire (such as you would for an interview). Wear solid colors when possible, to limit distractions. Do not submit a photo of you wearing a hat. An alternate option for the group photo could be a photo of the group in matching/coordinating shirts. The second photo should be of the group, and something related to their project, this could be an action shot or posed.
- The pictures you submit will be used during the 4-H State Awards Recognition Program, shared with donors and used to promote the 4-H State Awards Program and your accomplishments.
- Please be certain the pictures you submit are clear, high-quality resolution, and represent you in a professional manner. Please avoid selfies, fuzzy/blurred photos, and distracting backgrounds. Be mindful of glare, shadow, overhead light placement and red eye. Photos taken outside work well.



Naming and Submitting Your Files

- Applicants need to use a specific naming process when saving and submitting their application and photos. Your award application and photos must be named and sent as follows. File names that contain commas, spaces, or other punctuation will receive an error message while uploading.
- Applications must be submitted in Word (doc, docx) or PDF (pdf). Photo files must be submitted in one of these formats' jpeg, png, jpg, tiff.

Junior Applicants:

ProjectAreaJrCountyLastName

Senior Applicants:

ProjectAreaSrCountyLastName

Group Applicants:

GroupAwardGroupName

Achievement Applicants:

AchievementCountyLastName

- All applications will be submitted electronically through the MSU Extension Events Management Registration system: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/StateAwards26/>
- Applicants will complete the registration form in Events Management and upload their application and photo as attachments in the system by April 1.

Selection and Scoring of Applications

1. Once the applications, in either written or video format, are received on April 1, they will be reviewed and approved by your county 4-H Program Coordinator and the 4-H leader you identified on your application for verification of accuracy of the application. Your application will only be eligible for evaluation after these two individuals confirm that the information in your application is factual.
2. Each award area has a selection committee who will review the applications in their assigned award area. The selection committee will complete a 4-H State Awards Application Evaluation Form for each applicant.
3. Applications in either a written or video format will be evaluated together by the same selection committee using the same criteria. There will only be one winner by the project content area and age division; there will not be a separate winner for written and video applications.
4. Up to 12 applicants in each age division (junior and senior) and 12 groups may be selected to advance as State Award Finalists in their award area based on their scores.
5. All applicants will be notified by May 4 whether they have been selected as a finalist for their award area in their age division. All applicants are encouraged to register to attend 4-H Exploration Days.
6. Senior and Group Award finalists will be contacted in May to set up a video conference interview or presentation on June 2. During the assigned video conference time, senior finalists will participate in an interview with the selection committee in their award area and groups will present a prepared presentation for judges. The presentation may be in any format the group chooses (PowerPoint, poster, demonstration, oral speech, etc.). All group representatives must have a role in the presentation. The presentation should



be up to 10 minutes; followed by 5 minutes of questions. Presentations will be scored using the Interview Evaluation Form, with consideration for team participation.

7. The selection committee will complete a 4-H State Awards Interview Evaluation Form for each senior applicant and group.
8. State Award winners in all divisions will be announced at the 4-H State Awards Recognition Celebration Wednesday afternoon during 4-H Exploration Days. Selection for each division will be as follows:
 - a. Junior winner will be selected from the highest-scoring application; written or video.
 - b. Senior winner will be selected from the highest-scoring interview. In the event of a tied score, the winner will be selected from the highest-scoring application (written or video) between the tied individuals.
 - c. Group winner will be selected from the highest-scoring presentation. In the event of a tied score, the winner will be selected from the highest-scoring application (written or video) between the tied groups.
 - d. 4-H Achievement winner will be selected from the highest-scoring interview. In the event of a tied score, the winner will be selected from the highest-scoring application (written or video) between the tied individuals.
9. Following the 4-H State Awards Recognition Program, all applicants will receive feedback from both the application and the interview.

Scoring Criteria

The application evaluation in Appendix F will be used by each selection committee to assess and score each application. A minimum score of 36 is required to be eligible to advance as a finalist. The top eligible scores (maximum of 12) will be selected to advance.

The interview evaluation form in Appendix G will also be used by each selection committee to assess and score each finalist's interview. A minimum score of 36 is required to be named a 4-H State Award winner.



Using AI

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools when completing your 4-H State Award application is acceptable as long as it is done in the appropriate way. You can use AI to help you brainstorm, improve your grammar and spelling and suggest better ways to say something. AI can help fine-tune your application, but your ideas must come from you to reflect growth and integrity. Michigan 4-H has developed a [document \(https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/ai-guidance-for-4-h-youth\)](https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/ai-guidance-for-4-h-youth) to assist you when using AI.

Instructions for Completing 4-H State Award Applications

Preparing the Award Application

Applicants will need to decide the format in which they choose to submit their application. Options include written application or video application. Both options require the same information to be conveyed.

- To begin the written 4-H State Award application, create a Word Document using these parameters: a professional style 12 point, black-colored font, single spaced and use a 1-inch margin on each of the four sides (top, bottom, left, right). Your document should use similar formatting to a professional application such as a scholarship, college, or employment application. Applications must be typed.
 - Add the appropriate number of pages to your document based on your age division or group size. You may find it helpful as you get started to label each page as outlined in the instructions document for your division: Cover Letter, Résumé, 4-H Experience and Impact Story, Application Questions, and Autobiography. Do not include these labels in your final draft.
 - Please begin each portfolio component (cover letter, résumé, 4-H story and questions) at the top of a new page. In your final draft, do not need use the title/label to identify the page (at the top of the cover letter page do not type “Cover Letter” or include the word count; begin directly at 1-inch with the date).
 - The section containing your answers to the questions should not include the directions and word limit. You should start each question with the numbered question provided (“1. Choose four life skills...”), skip one line, and then begin your answer.
 - All the application components will be included in one Microsoft Word document.
 - Applications should be completed in full. Do not leave a question blank (per your age division).
 - Each question has a maximum word limit. It is important to stay within that limit. There is not a minimum word limit, however, to be certain to fully answer the question applicants are encouraged to provide an answer using at least ½ of the available word count. Most word-processing programs have a “word count” feature which can help you keep track.
 - Use correct grammar and spelling. Proofread your work for errors and have others assist you with proofreading.
 - After you have completed your 4-H State Awards Application, review all the sections carefully. Your application should be an organized presentation of what you have learned and accomplished in the 4-H program. When accurately kept and carefully assembled, it is a useful tool for determining your own progress and personal growth. Completing a 4-H State Awards Application will better prepare you to complete other professional applications, for example a job or scholarship application.
- Guidelines for the 4-H State Award video application option.
 - The cover letter, resume and autobiography will be submitted as written

document, only the 4-H Experience/Impact story and questions will be submitted as a video.

- It is an expectation that all video submissions will be edited for quality. The video does not need to be edited by a professional, however just as the written application has reviewers, the applicants are expected to utilize resource people (parent, teacher, 4-H volunteer, etc.) to help with editing.
- Applicants should plan to invest as much, if not more, time into the video as they would a written application.
- Applicants may find it helpful or encouraged to outline their responses the same as if they were preparing the written application. Some portions of the video will require the applicant to read their responses.
This video may include story board photos and/or background video with voice over, as well as youth on camera. The entire video must be narrated in the youth's voice. Try to make the video engaging to keep your audience captative. You want this to be natural, as if you are presenting this information to an audience in an engaging way, not like you are reading word for word off pieces of paper.
- Video portion-
 - 4-H Experience and Impact Story- tell the audience your 4-H story, you may write your story and read it, you may decide to use notes to help you.
 - Questions- state the question you are answering and provide a complete verbal response that fully answers the question.
- As with any movie or video it may require multiple takes to capture the content the way you would like it for each section. Just like you would for other videos, you may want to practice before recording the final version.
- The following are suggested video lengths, 10-20 minutes for junior applicants and 15-30 minutes senior/achievement/group applicants.
- The final completed video application needs to be uploaded to Events Managements as a single mp4, mpg, or wmv file along with your written portion.

Instructions for Completing 4-H State Awards Individual Applications

Your 4-H State Award application will be submitted as one complete word document or video containing the following pages (or content) in this order. Although the guidelines indicate maximum word counts, there is not a minimum word count for each response; however, you are encouraged to use at least ½ of the allowable space, time limits for videos are recommended but ultimately applicant should use adequate time convey their message as close to the maximum time mentioned above. Remember, this is the judges' only opportunity to learn about you and your project; your goal is to show them why you deserve this award.

**For video applicants' direction for each of the sections, directions were included above in the guidelines. Video applicants will submit a written cover letter, resume and autobiography, the video portion will only cover the 4-H Experience/Impact story and the questions.

	Junior	Senior & Achievement
Cover Letter (1 page, Maximum 500 words; do not title/label this page)	Page 1	Page 1
Résumé (1 page; do not title/label this page)	Page 2	Page 2
4-H Experience and Impact Story (1-3 pages, Maximum 1500 words. See Overview and Instructions document for directions to write your story.)	Pages 3-5	Pages 3-5
Application Questions (Maximum 500 words for each question) For the following questions, include only information that relates to the 4-H award area for which you wish to be recognized. Include the question in your application prior to your response. For 4-H Versatility and Achievement Award applicants this could be any 4-H projects or 4-H experiences.		
Identify up to four areas of content/project knowledge you have learned in your 4-H project. Describe what you have learned and how you learned it.	Page 6	Page 6
Describe how you have used content knowledge you have learned (from one or more areas identified in question 1) in your own 4-H project.		Page 7
Describe how you plan to use content knowledge learned in your project in your future outside of 4-H.		Page 8
Choose four life skills from the diagram included in this packet (one each of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) and describe how	Page 7	Page 9

you have learned or developed each life skill through your 4-H project.		
Describe how you have used any life skill (from the diagram) in your own 4-H project.		Page 10
Describe how you plan to use any life skill (from the diagram) in your future outside of 4-H.		Page 11
For the following questions, list information about your overall 4-H experiences. Information does not have to relate to the award area for which you wish to be recognized.		
Identify up to three 4-H leadership experiences you have had and describe their significance to your personal growth and development.	Page 8	Page 12
Identify up to three 4-H citizenship or community service experiences you have had and describe their significance to you and your community.	Page 9	Page 13
Autobiography (Maximum 150 words; Write an autobiography (in third person) that summarizes your application, life goals, and 4-H involvement. This summary will be used to introduce award winners during the 4-H State Awards Recognition Celebration)	Page 10	Page 14

Instructions for Completing 4-H State Awards Group Award Application

Section 1	Cover Letter (1 page, Maximum 500 words; do not title/label this page)
Section 2	Résumés (2-5 pages, depending on number in your group; maximum 1 page each representative of the group. Do not title/label this page)
Section 3	4-H Experience and Impact Story (4-9 pages, depending on number in your group; see Overview and Instructions document for directions to write your story. Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 maximum 2,000 words total; plus 300 words for each representative part 5)
Section 4	<p>Application Questions (6-14 pages, depending on number in your group) For the following questions, include only information that relates to the 4-H group award. Groups should answer the application questions from a group perspective unless otherwise noted, with emphasis on skill development in a group dynamic. See Overview and Instructions document for examples. Limit your response to no more than 500 words for each question unless otherwise noted; begin a new page for each question. Include the question in your application prior to your response.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify up to four areas of content/project knowledge your group learned in your 4-H project and describe what you have learned and how you learned it.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Choose four life skills from the diagram (one from each of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) and describe how your group has learned each life skill through your 4-H group experience. 3. Describe how your group has used any one life skill (from the diagram) in your 4-H experience. 4. Identify up to three 4-H citizenship and/or community service experiences your group has had and describe their significance to you, your group, or your community. 5. Each representative of your group (300 words for each representative)—Describe how you have or will apply skills learned in a team setting to a life situation outside of 4-H. 6. Each representative of your group (300 words for each representative)—Identify one 4-H leadership experience you have had and describe its significance to your personal growth and development.
Section 5	<p>Group Biography (Maximum 150 words; Write a biography (in third person) that summarizes your application, goals, and 4-H involvement. This summary will be used to introduce award winners during the 4-H State Awards Recognition Celebration)</p>

Tips for Completing Each Section of the Application



Cover Letter (1 page, Maximum 500 words; do not title/label this page)

The cover letter should introduce you or your group, tell the selection committee which award you are applying for and why you feel you are the best candidate for them to select. See an example in the appendix of this document. Find additional examples and

tips for writing a cover letter at:

http://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/resumes_and_portfolios

Résumé (1-page; do not title/label this page)

The résumé should be a maximum of 1-page. It should be a brief account of your personal, education, and professional qualifications and experiences. Your résumé should highlight your skills, training/certifications and may include both volunteer and paid work experience. See an example in the appendix of this document. Find additional examples and tips for writing a résumé at:

http://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/resumes_and_portfolios. Group applications should include an individual résumé for each representative of the group.

4-H Projects



4-H Experience and Impact Story

Your 4-H Experience and Impact Story adds warmth and depth to your application. Be creative and personal but avoid being “cutesy.” The 4-H Story should help the reader learn about your 4-H experience; it should answer questions such as:

- ▶ How did you get started in 4-H?
- ▶ What have you done? Describe your project involvement.
- ▶ What workshops and trainings have you attended?
- ▶ How has your project or group expanded in size or scope since you began?
- ▶ What makes your project involvement stand out from other members? What sets you apart?
- ▶ What have you done that other members have not?
- ▶ How do you feel about your 4-H experiences?
- ▶ How will your 4-H experiences help you in your future plans?

The following outline may help you develop your 4-H Story. It is divided into parts simply to help you outline what you want to say about yourself. **Do not** identify these parts in your 4-H Story.

Individual Application	Group Application
(1-3 pages, Maximum 1500 words)	(1-9 pages, depending on number in your group; parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 2,000 words maximum total; plus 300 words for each representative part 5)
Your story should focus on the award area in which you are applying and convey how your participation in 4-H contributed to your self-	Do not identify these parts in your 4-H Story, with

respect and concern for others, how it has influenced you in school, in your use of leisure time and in your career plans. Your 4-H Story is the place to expand on facts and figures by telling what your experiences have meant to you, how they have developed and affected your confidence, your attitude and other factors. This is an appropriate place to talk about the experiences and achievements you have had in your project area.

Part 1

Introduce yourself. Include information about your age, interests, family, where you live, where you go to school, when and why you became involved in 4-H.

Part 2

Tell about the project area in which you are applying, how 4-H helped you learn things about this area you didn't know before, how your project grew in size and scope, and some of your successes (and failures!) in the project area.

Part 3

Highlight your other 4-H projects and activities, including major learning experiences, special interests, and unusual situations you have encountered.

(4-H Achievement applicants may combine parts 2 and 3.)

Part 4

Explain how 4-H has helped you become a better leader and citizen, how 4-H has increased your interest and participation in community affairs, and what you have learned from your team or group involvement and efforts.

Part 5

Describe how 4-H participation has impacted the way you feel about yourself, influenced your school and career goals, and your use of leisure time. Tell about your future plans and the career you want to pursue.

the exception of Part 5—identify each representative as indicated in Group Award guidelines above.

Part 1

Introduce your group. Include information about who is involved in your group; where you are from; what your group does; how many total people make up your group; how long has the group existed; which members were selected to represent the group.

Part 2

Tell about the group project for which you are applying, how 4-H helped you learn things you didn't know before, how your project grew in size and scope, and some of your successes (and failures!) in the project area. What are the major goals of the group and/or project? Who helped in the learning process of your group and/or project—leaders, experts, teen leaders, others? What are/were the individual and committee responsibilities?

Part 3

Highlight your other 4-H projects, activities and experiences, including major learning experiences, special interests and unusual situations your group encountered. Example: Beef project may include information on leadership.

Part 4

Explain how 4-H has helped members of your group become better leaders and citizens, how 4-H has increased your interest and participation in community affairs, and what you have learned from your team or group involvement and efforts.

Part 5 (Individual responses from each group representatives)

Describe how 4-H participation has impacted the way you feel about yourself, influenced your school and career goals, and your use of leisure time. Tell about your future plans and the career you want to pursue.

Application Questions (Maximum 500 words for each question)

Here are the questions and the beginning of some sample answers.

Individual Application	Group Application
<p>For the following questions, include only information that relates to the 4-H award area for which you wish to be recognized. Include the question in your application prior to your response. In questions 1 through 6, frame your responses around the 4-H award area for which you wish to be recognized. In questions 7 and 8, think about all your 4-H experiences, not just those in the award area for which you are applying. Information should be presented and organized in a logical sequence. You get these results from careful planning, thorough reflection about all your 4-H experiences, and selection and emphasis of only the most important information. Submit a thoughtful response to each question. 4-H Achievement applicants may use any 4-H project or experience to answer the following questions, it does not have to be the same project area for each question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify up to four areas of content/project knowledge you have learned in your 4-H project. Describe what you have learned and how you learned it. <i>In my 4-H Goat project I have learned showmanship, hoof care, milk processing and nutrition. In the area of nutrition, I have learned the various feed stuffs, ration amounts and protein contents of each feed stuff . . .</i>2. Describe how you have used content knowledge you have learned (from one or more areas identified in question 1) in your own 4-H project. (Seniors only) <i>In my beef project, I kept records of my finances. From my records, I was able to create a budget for my project for the coming year and begin my savings account. I have put together a plan to save enough money to purchase a heifer to expand my herd next year...</i>3. Describe how you plan to use content knowledge learned in your project in your future outside of 4-H. (Seniors only) <i>In my Technology and Engineering project, I learned the scientific procedure to complete my science experiment on water quality. In my school science</i>	<p>For the following questions, include only information that relates to the 4-H group award. Groups should answer the application questions from a group perspective unless otherwise noted, with emphasis on skill development in a group dynamic. Limit your response to no more than 500 words for each question unless otherwise noted. Include the question in your application prior to your response.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify up to four areas of content/project knowledge your group learned in your 4-H project and describe what you have learned and how you learned it. <i>Our group learned content in many areas while planning and conducting our birdhouse fundraiser. We learned how to count back change, the importance of providing wildlife habitat, customer service, and how to use power tools to build birdhouses....</i>2. Choose four life skills from the diagram (one from each of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health) and describe how your group has learned each life skill through your 4-H group experience. <i>Our group learned teamwork, conflict resolution, service learning, and managing feelings through our community service initiative this year. When we volunteered at our community soup kitchen . . .</i>3. Describe how your group has used any one life skill (from the diagram) in your 4-H experience.

fair, I applied the same process to complete my science fair project . . .

4. Choose four life skills from the diagram included in this packet (one each of Heard, Heart, Hands, and Heath) and describe how you have learned or developed each life skill through your 4-H project.
Through my Healthy Lifestyles 4-H project I have learned personal safety, planning/ organizing, cooperation, and marketable skills. Cooking in the kitchen has taught me the importance of practicing safety including using care with hot surfaces while using the oven. I have learned safe handling of knives and sharp objects. Food safety is an important aspect of keeping safe in the kitchen . . .
5. Describe how you have used any life skill (from the diagram) in your own 4-H project. (Seniors only)
I learned planning/organizing in my Communications and Expressive Arts project. When I prepared my photography exhibit for fair, I reviewed the available options to enter and brainstormed ideas for photographs. I made a list of the photos that I wanted to shoot and planned times when I would take them. I planned photo shoots with friends and families and kept track of my appointments in my calendar...
6. Describe how you plan to apply any life skill (from the diagram) in your future outside of 4-H. (Seniors only)
I learned about disease prevention in my Healthy Lifestyles project. I have applied this skill to my cooking for my family. My grandmother has diabetes. Through my 4-H project I learned about this disease and learned how to prepare meals that are appropriate for my family. I made my grandmother a sugar-free pie for her birthday . . .

For the following questions, list information about your overall 4-H experiences. Information does not have to relate to the award area for which you wish to be recognized.

7. Identify up to three 4-H leadership experiences you have had and describe their significance to your personal growth and development.
One of the most significant leadership experiences I have had in my 4-H career was serving as a club officer. I have held the positions of secretary, vice president and president. The last two roles allowed me to learn parliamentary procedure and how to conduct a meeting. Being a club officer taught me how to make decisions as a group . . .

Our group learned planning/organizing when we planned a fundraiser to support our fieldtrip to the zoo. We had to brainstorm the steps we needed to take...

4. Identify up to three 4-H citizenship and/or community service experiences your group has had and describe their significance to you, your group, or your community.
Our group has worked in the community soup kitchen, organized a literacy campaign, and provided a petting zoo at our local Project RED event...
5. Each representative of your group (300 words for each representative)—Describe how you plan to use skills learned in a team setting to a life situation outside of 4-H or in your future.
I learned about teamwork in preparing for the State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest with my county judging team. I am also on my school's track team....
6. Each representative of your group (300 words for each representative)—Identify one 4-H leadership experience you have had and describe its significance to your personal growth and development.
One of the most significant leadership experiences I have had in my 4-H career was serving as a club officer. I have held the positions of secretary, vice president and president. The last two roles allowed me to learn parliamentary procedure and how to conduct a meeting. Being a club officer taught me how to make decisions as a group . . .

8. Identify up to three 4-H citizenship or community service experiences you have had and describe their significance to you and your community.
My favorite community service project in my 4-H club was learning about world hunger and raising funds to donate to the food bank in my community. Through this community service project, our 4-H club had a guest speaker who taught us about the issue. Our club members shared what we learned with many people in our community to raise awareness about the hunger issues locally and collect funds to meet this need . . .

Autobiography (maximum 150 words)

Write a short (150-word maximum) summary about yourself (or your group) and your 4-H involvement. You can include future ambitions, too. The text you provide will be used during the 4-H State Awards Recognition Celebration during 4-H Exploration Days and it may be shared with 4-H State Award Program donors. If you are a 4-H State Award winner, this will be the text used in the script and read during the awards program.

Application Review

Reviewers: To help you ensure that you are submitting the very best application possible, please be certain to ask at least 3 people to provide feedback to you before you make your final edits.

Approval: After you submit your application (written or video), the 4-H State Awards Planning Committee will send an electronic copy of your application to your county 4-H program coordinator(s) and your 4-H leader for review and approval. This step helps ensure accuracy. Therefore, provide correct email addresses for both your county 4-H program coordinator and your 4-H leader. Your application must be approved by both individuals before it is evaluated by the selection committee.



Events Management Registration System Submission

The following information will be requested in the Events Management system when you submit your application. You will upload your final award application and photos through the Events Management platform. Be sure to have all the information and your attachments (application portfolio and photos) ready when you submit your application.

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

Home Phone:

Email address:

County (where you are enrolled):

Years in 4-H: Grade in School: Age (as of January 1, 2026):

Name of 4-H Club or Group (can list more than one):

Project Award Area:

Age Division:

I previously won a State Award in

What age division were you in when you received the award?

Receiving a Michigan 4-H State Award is a prestigious honor. As such, it is encouraged that your application reflects your best work and represents you in a professional manner. It is recommended that you have your application reviewed by others (peers, parents, teachers, 4-H leaders, etc.) prior to final editing and submission.

Please list your reviewers:

A copy of your application will be emailed to your county's 4-H Program Coordinator and your

4-H leader to verify accuracy. Enter their information below.

4-H Program Coordinator's Name:

4-H Program Coordinator's Email:

4-H Leader's Name:

4-H Leader's Email:

Appendix A

2026 Michigan 4-H State Awards Committee Contacts

4-H State Awards Program Co-Chairs

Betty Jo Krosnicki
Sanilac County MSU Extension
nashbett@msu.edu
810-648-2515

Janice Zerbe
Van Buren County MSU Extension
rajzerj@msu.edu
269-657-8213

Mark of Excellence Coordinator

Kelly Stelter
Berrien County
grandtke@msu.edu
269-927-5674

Appendix B

4-H State Awards Recognition Areas

The following award recognition areas will be offered for the Michigan 4-H State Awards Program. Members may apply in either the junior or senior age division or as a member of a group. Youth may only win one time in each age division for each award area. These recognition areas reflect the National 4-H Mission mandates and align with the Michigan 4-H project codes. Examples of a few 4-H project areas and fields of study connected to each recognition area listed.

Award Recognition Area	Example Projects, Activities, or Programs
Beef Science	Beef science and management
Birds and Poultry Science	Birds, poultry science and management, embryology, emus, ostriches
Career Development	Business and entrepreneurship, career exploration and workforce preparation, college and independent-living readiness, communication, financial literacy, leisure education, life skill and character education
Civic Engagement and Service	Citizenship and civic engagement, global and cultural education, Folkpatterns, global and cultural heritage; Community Service/Service Learning
Companion Animal Science	Dogs, cats, small animals, pocket pets, lab animals, llamas/alpacas
Consumer and Family Science	Child development, childcare, clothing and textiles
Dairy Science	Dairy cattle, milk production and processing
Environmental Science	Entomology and bees, Environmental resource management, environmental science and natural resources, outdoor education/recreation, soils and soil conservation, wildlife and fisheries
Equine Science	Horse and pony, horseless projects, Proud Equestrian Program
Food, Nutrition, Health and Fitness	Food and nutrition, health and fitness, safety
Gardening and Horticulture	Horticulture, agronomy, crops, plant science, gardening
Goat Science	Goat science and management
Leadership	Leadership skills development
Rabbit and Cavy Science	Rabbit and cavy science and management
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)	Aerospace, aquatic science, biological science, chemistry, computer and digital technology, engines and transportation, GPS/GIS, mechanical sciences, physical science, robotics, technology and engineering, veterinary science
Sheep Science	Sheep science and management
Shooting Sports	Archery, Shooting Sports
Swine Science	Swine science and management

Award Recognition Area	Example Projects, Activities, or Programs
Versatility	Can encompass experiences from multiple project areas. Youth who have a board set of interests but not the depth a single project area.
Visual, Performing, and Expressive Arts	Expressive arts, visual arts, performing arts, photography, crafts, woodworking
Group Award	Community Service project, learning experience, exchange club, competitive team, or any other 4-H group
4-H Achievement Award	Summary of overall 4-H career including applicants' participation in all project areas and experiences.

Appendix C

Example of a Cover Letter for a 4-H State Awards Application

A cover letter is typically a brief, typed letter of introduction reflecting the candidate's individuality and interest in a specific opportunity. A sample cover letter appears below. Use your own knowledge, skills, experiences and creativity to show your unique personality and highlight your 4-H experience.

Additional resources:

- https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/resumes_and_portfolios
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/4_h_scholarships_and_recognition_program/4-h-awards-and-recognition-program/Youth-Recognition/state-award-application-resources

March 15, 2026

4-H State Awards Program Beef Science Selection Committee
Michigan State University
Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture
446 West Circle Drive
East Lansing MI 48824

Dear Awards Selection Committee:

I would like to be considered for the 2026 Michigan 4-H Awards program in the beef science area. I have been in 4-H for 6 years and the beef project for 4 years. My 4-H experience has taught me how to select a feeder calf, arrange financing for the purchase and upkeep of the calf, keep records of the feed, veterinary and other expenses related to raising a calf, and feed and prepare the calf for show at my county fair. I have also gained important life skills such as coping with the stress of preparing for and showing at the fair, decision making and problem solving.

The time management skills I learned in 4-H have helped me juggle my schoolwork, a part-time job at a local store and the vice-presidency of the 4-H Clover Beef Club. I have also been able to fit in two school plays this year and look forward to our county 4-H spring achievement day at the local mall.

Another ability I have developed through 4-H is public speaking. In addition to acting in school plays, I prepared and gave a demonstration on halter training a calf to a joint meeting of two 4-H beef clubs in our county.

In the future, I plan to attend college to study business and Polish. My experiences with the Polish-American 4-H exchange have inspired me to seek a career in international business.

Thank you for considering my application for the 4-H Beef Science Award.

Sincerely,

Sally Clover

Appendix D

Example of a Résumé for a 4-H State Awards Application

A résumé is typically a brief, typed overview listing the candidate's primary qualifications. A résumé should be a maximum of 1-page in length. It should highlight your skills, education, and personal and professional qualifications and experiences. A 4-H résumé may include both volunteer and paid work experiences. A sample cover letter appears below. Additional samples at:

- http://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/resumes_and_portfolios
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/4_h_scholarships_and_recognition_program/4-h-awards-and-recognition-program/Youth-Recognition/state-award-application-resources

Jenny Penny

PHONE: (909) 323-1010 ■ E-MAIL: JENNYPENNY@4H.ORG

SKILLS

Communication

- Special talent for delivering educational material in a fun way
- Columnist for monthly 4-H newsletter
- Excellent networking skills

Leadership

- Possess ability to work in group or individual setting
- Will take the initiative to prepare and maintain projects

Organization and Time Management

- Possess ability to plan and implement programs in a timely manner
- Will use allotted amount of time for programs to educate the public to the fullest

EDUCATION

Burgundy High School Burgundy, MI 2023-present

GPA: 3.8/4.0

Coursework: Ecology, Nature Writing, Landscaping and Design, Biology, Math

VOLUNTEER & WORK EXPERIENCE

Burgundy Nature Center Burgundy, MI 2023-2025

Trail Guide

- Identified trees and flowers during nature walks
- Guided guests through three miles of trails

Festival of the Trees Burgundy, MI 2022

Educator

- Implemented educational tree programs at a tree farm

ACTIVITIES

SADD Member 2 years

French Club 2 years (Vice President, 1 year)

Students for the Environment 4 years (President, 2 years)

Appendix E

4-H State Awards Sample Interview Questions

The selection committee may use the following list of questions during the interview. Additionally, the committee may ask questions about the information in your portfolio, the project area, industry or your leadership experience.

1. As you reflect on your 4-H involvement, describe an important change in yourself that has taken place as a result of 4-H.
2. Tell us about a leadership role you have fulfilled in this project.
3. Describe the most significant idea, technique or skill you have learned.
4. Describe the most unusual idea, technique or skill you have learned.
5. What have you learned from this project area that will prepare you for the future?
6. Talk about a disappointment you experienced in your 4-H project area. What did you learn from it?
7. What activities in 4-H have been your favorite and why?
8. What have you done to encourage others to participate in your project area? To participate in 4-H?
9. What was the most rewarding experience in your 4-H project?
10. Describe what you do to manage a stressful situation.
11. What have you done in 4-H to make a difference and get involved in your community?
12. Describe your most memorable 4-H experience.
13. Why do you feel you should be chosen for this award? What sets you apart from the other candidates?
14. In your opinion, what qualities make a good leader?
15. Describe a challenge or a problem you have faced and how you solved it?

Appendix F

4-H State Awards Application Evaluation Form (This is a condensed version)

Applicant's Name _____ County _____
 Award Area _____ Age Division _____

Application Section	Excellent 6	5	4	3	2	Needs Improvement 1
Cover Letter <i>A brief introductory letter reflecting the candidate's interest in the State Awards program, his or her project area and some key experiences or skills learned through 4-H.</i>						
Résumé <i>A brief account of your personal, education, and professional qualifications and experiences.</i>						
4-H Story <i>A brief, enjoyable format and insight into how 4-H has influenced the candidate's life. The 4-H story should add depth to the reader's understanding of the 4-H member's project work and overall involvement in 4-H.</i>						
Content Knowledge Learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 1 for juniors (ages 12-15) • Questions 1-3 for seniors (ages 16-19) • Question 1 for groups 						
Life Skills Learned (Questions 1-3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 2 for juniors (ages 12-15) • Questions 4-6 for seniors (ages 16-19) • Question 2,3,5 for groups 						
Leadership Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3 for juniors (ages 12-15) • Questions 7 for seniors (ages 16-19) • Question 6 for groups 						
Citizenship and Community Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 4 for juniors (ages 12-15) • Questions 8 for seniors (ages 16-19) • Question 4 for groups 						
Communication <i>Spelling, grammar, punctuation, word usage, word counts</i>						
Overall Impression <i>Is the application complete? Does the applicant provide adequate information and detail to assess? Was the judge able to get a clear understanding of the applicant and their 4-H involvement?</i>						

4-H State Awards Application Evaluation Form

Finalist's Name _____ County _____

Award Area _____

Reviewer's Comments

Strengths

Areas to Improve

Note to Reviewer: Scores from multiple reviewers are averaged together to form one overall score. For the applicant to be eligible to receive a 4-H State Award, the total score for the "Overall Average Score" line above must be 36 or higher. If the overall average score on this form is 35 or lower, the applicant is ineligible to receive a 4-H State Award.

Appendix G

4-H State Awards Interview Evaluation Form

Individual Senior Interviews & Group Presentations (This is a condensed version)

Applicant's Name _____ County _____

Award Area _____

Interview Criteria	Excellent 6	5	4	3	2	Needs Improvement 1
Personal Appearance <i>Clothing choice, tidiness, grooming</i>						
Greeting <i>Courteous, professional</i>						
Communication <i>Grammar, pronunciation, volume, articulation</i>						
Body Language <i>Eye contact, posture, no fidgeting</i>						
Content Knowledge <i>Knowledgeable about project, and conveys experiences and information in application</i> <i>**Group Presentation- group awards only</i>						
Life Skills <i>Understands life skills learned, and conveys experiences and information in application</i>						
Demeanor and Attitude <i>Confident, passionate, positive, engaged</i>						
Response to Questions <i>Thoughtful, responsive, prompt, perceptive listener, answered questions fully</i>						
Overall Impression						

Note to Reviewer: Scores from multiple reviewers are averaged together to form one overall score. For the applicant to be eligible to receive a 4-H State Award, the total score for the "Overall Average Score" line above must be 36 or higher. If the overall average score on this form is 35 or lower, the applicant is ineligible to receive a 4-H State Award.

Score _____
(Total scores from above)

4-H State Awards Interview Evaluation Form
Individual Senior Interviews & Group Presentations

Finalist's Name _____ County _____

Award Area _____

Reviewer's Comments

Strengths

Areas to Improve

Appendix H

Targeting Life Skills Model



Hendricks, P. A. (1996). *Targeting Life Skills Model: Incorporating Developmentally Appropriate Learning Opportunities to Assess Impact of Life Skill Development*. Ames: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Appendix I

2026 Program Timeline

January 2026	Revised applications posted to website. 4-H Program Coordinator training
January-March	Trainings offered for 4-H members. Training provided via webinar, county staff, or by members of the 4-H State Awards Committee. Counties will begin promoting the process by distributing information to eligible members and helping their 4-H members answer questions as they complete the application. State Award applicants will work with their 4-H leaders and county staff person to complete the application.
April 1	State Award applications and photo (individual and groups) must be submitted via Events Management System at: https://events.anr.msu.edu/StateAwards26/ Mark of Excellence essays submitted to county 4-H Program Coordinator
April	Applications confirmed Applications approved by 4-H PCs and Leaders Applications scored by selection committees
May 4	Applicants selected to move forward will be announced as 4-H State Award finalists. Email notifications will be given to both applicants and their county offices. Applicants not selected to move forward will receive notice and feedback from selection committees. County staff will also be notified.
April/May	Finalists may register for 4-H Exploration Days through their county 4-H office; not a requirement to participate in 4-H State Awards.
June 2	Senior and Achievement finalists and group presentations take place via video conference (Zoom) with selection committees.
June 24	4-H State Awards Recognition Program will be held at Michigan State University Wednesday afternoon during 4-H Exploration Days.
July	Wrap up: checks mailed, press releases and photos will be distributed to counties and donors.

Appendix J

Milestone Breakdown

Recommended breakdown for State Awards Application Completion

The following timeline is a breakdown of suggested milestones to complete the application for this program on time without waiting until the last minute. The final deadline for submission is April 1. The milestones along the way are not hard deadlines; if you fall behind, work to catch up the next week so you are ready to submit by the final deadline.

ASAP	Contact your local 4-H Program Coordinator and your 4-H club leader to let them know you are interested in submitting an application this year. This will allow them to be available to help you throughout the process. You do not require permission to participate, but staff and volunteers can support you in the process. Staff and volunteers will need to approve your application after submission.
January 15	Work on Project Area Content questions
January 25	Ask your 4-H leader, 4-H program coordinator, parent, a teacher, a friend to review your application
January 30	Work on Life Skills questions
February 4	Ask your 4-H leader, 4-H program coordinator, parent, a teacher, a friend to review your application
February 5	Work on Citizenship and Community Service question
February 10	Work on Leadership question
February 14	Work on 4-H Experience and Impact Story
February 20	Ask your 4-H leader, 4-H program coordinator, parent, a teacher, a friend to review your application
February 21	Work on resume
February 25	Work on cover letter
March 2	Deadline to register for resume and cover letter review day. Must submit copies with your registration.
March 9	Resume and Cover letter review day—time slot required.
March 9	Deadline to register for application review day. Must submit copy with your registration
March 12	Wrap up any loose ends of sections that are not yet complete
March 16	Application review day—time slot required.
March 19	Ask your 4-H leader, 4-H program coordinator, parent, a teacher, a friend to review your application
March 22	Write your autobiography as a summary of your overall application
March 24	Make necessary edits to your documents based on reviewers' input
March 25	If your application is ready, you may submit before the deadline date.
April 1	Final submission deadline for all applications

Appendix K

Tips for Videos

It is an expectation that all video submissions will be edited for quality. Before you get started you may want to think about the lighting, the background, the position of the camera, etc. As with any movie or video it may require multiple takes to capture the content the way you would like it for each section. Applicants should plan to invest as much, if not more, time into the video as they would a written application.

The following are suggested video lengths, 10-20 minutes for junior applicants and 15-30 minutes senior/achievement/group applicants.

Additional Resources:

- [MSU Tips for Taking Photos and Videos, https://www.canr.msu.edu/virtual-showcase/uploads/files/Virtual%20Showcase%20Tips%20for%20Taking%20Photos%20and%20Videos%207.27.pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/virtual-showcase/uploads/files/Virtual%20Showcase%20Tips%20for%20Taking%20Photos%20and%20Videos%207.27.pdf)
- [Best Practices and Tips for Shooting Smartphone Videos, https://teaching-resources.delta.ncsu.edu/best-practices-and-tips-for-shooting-smartphone-videos/](https://teaching-resources.delta.ncsu.edu/best-practices-and-tips-for-shooting-smartphone-videos/)

Make sure you have your video, photos and word document all stored/saved on the device that you are using to create your Events Managements registration.