



Unit 3: My Volunteer Role



Welcome to the unit on volunteer roles in 4-H. We hope this will be helpful as you consider how to use your skills as a volunteer.

My Volunteer Role



There are numerous opportunities to volunteer with the 4-H program. We want you to know what volunteer choices are available to you; how you can connect with your local 4-H Extension professional; and what strategies you can use to help create effective teamwork with youth and other volunteers.

Your experiences as a volunteer will be most successful when you are placed in a role you like, one that you know something about, or one that you want to learn about.

Questions to Ask



Ask yourself these questions: What projects or topics do I know well? Are there areas I want to learn about? What organization or management skills do I have or want to develop? How long do I want to be a volunteer--for a year, a month, a season, or just one activity or event? Once you have decided what role best fits your skills and interests, you can choose an area in 4-H that will fit you.

4-H volunteer roles can be grouped into four areas. Within each area there are choices of specific positions. Let's look at those four areas and explore a few of the options. Each of the areas could have positions at the local, county, regional, state or even national level.



4-H Organizational Volunteers



Organizational volunteers are needed to advise and manage 4-H clubs and committees. These volunteers serve as liaisons among 4-H staff, members, parents, and other volunteers. Leadership positions on various committees may include the chair, secretary, and treasurer, among others.

4-H has opportunities for organizational or management volunteers on all levels and for a wide variety of topics.

4-H Project Volunteers



4-H members focus on specific areas called projects. If there is a topic in which you have a special interest, becoming a project volunteer may be for you.

Project areas range from a wide variety of sciences, to healthy living topics, citizenship, and more. Guiding, teaching and advising youth on a specific area of interest is an exciting part of this role.

4-H Activity Volunteers



4-H engages youth in a wide variety of educational activities. An activity volunteer provides support and guidance in activity planning and implementation.

In many cases volunteers and youth work together to decide, plan and carry out activities like a family fun night, community service project, club fund raiser, camps, and other activities.



One-Time 4-H Volunteer Roles



4-H needs one-time volunteers to assist with various tasks such as event registration, tracking results, taking pictures, or chaperoning. These are usually short-term volunteer roles. Some may last a few hours, and others, several days.

Volunteer Roles



The role examples given in each of the four categories are just the beginning of volunteer possibilities. If your particular interest is not listed here, check with your local 4-H Extension professional. Positions and needs change and vary among clubs and counties.

Ask About...



4-H Extension professionals can help you find opportunities in clubs, afterschool programs, committees, camps and more. You can connect with staff by phone, e-mail or in person.

Go to the Purdue Extension Web site (<https://extension.purdue.edu/pages/countyoffices.aspx>) to find contact information for staff near you. Ask about position descriptions and task lists. The description will tell you how much time is needed and what specific tasks need to be accomplished.



Creating Team Work



Knowing how to choose the best role for you, knowing what volunteer opportunities are there for you, and connecting with your local 4-H Extension professional are significant pieces to helping you have a successful volunteer experience. One key to the success of the 4-H program and your volunteer experience is practicing strategies for effective teamwork.

Consider strategies to create, reflect on, and develop ongoing, significant, and effective teamwork with young people and other adults to make your experiences as a volunteer more meaningful. Learning the concepts of Youth-Adult Partnerships and the Shared Leadership Model on how to develop quality teamwork will help you achieve this meaningful experience.

Youth-Adult Partnerships



Youth-Adult Partnerships are all about intentional relationships. This type of partnership happens when both adults and young people are equally engaged in reaching a common goal. This partnership involves real youth participation.

According to a 2009 survey of Tenured Indiana 4-H members, self-responsibility, self-motivation, communication, social skills, and leadership are the five top skills that members gain as a result of the 4-H program. In Indiana 4-H we value quality relationships with adults as a significant opportunity leading to the development of these important life skills. As volunteers, you are called upon to make sure young people have a voice in the program.

Shared Leadership Model



Another strategy for effective teamwork is the Shared Leadership Model. All individuals in a group share a sense of responsibility for leadership instead of just one person leading the whole group to success.

The participants take a big-picture approach, not a top-down approach, to plan and accomplish their projects together. Lots of interaction and conversations happen during the shared leadership process.



Find an Extension Office near you!



<http://www.four-h.purdue.edu>

There are many volunteer roles that are available, and you are encouraged to have a conversation with 4-H program staff to find one that fits your interests, experiences, skills, and knowledge. Role-specific training is available as well.

The dynamics of volunteering with 4-H involve meeting and effectively working with young people and other adults. Be sure to visit the Indiana 4-H Web site to find further information and to identify the Extension professional nearest you.

This concludes unit three. The next unit covers stewardship and risk management in Indiana 4-H.