



4-H Leader Training Series

10 Steps to a Successful Service Learning Project

A Planning Guide for 4-H Club Leaders



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Service learning is an important function of all 4-H clubs. It enables youth to gain personal knowledge and skills in the process of performing service for others through an organized program, followed by personal reflection. A service learning project can take many forms. The form it takes in your club depends on your club. Whatever is decided, it benefits the community as well as your 4-H members. Following are some hints in making your service learning project both successful and fun:

1

Determine what is needed in your community/county.

- Ask club members and families.
- Ask other community groups. Develop partnerships with those who have common goals. By collaborating, you won't have to do the project alone!
- Talk with community officials.
- Find out what types of service projects have and have not been done in the recent past.
- Ask your county 4-H staff.

2

Determine what types of activities your members have interest in, and abilities to do.

- Consider the size of your club and ages of members.
- Consider the skills possessed by club members and their families.
- Determine how much time your club would like to devote to community service activities. (Would members rather do one, ongoing community service project that may last several months or more—or several short-term activities?)
- You may wish to start small and build on small successes.

3

List all of the activities that have been suggested.

4 Ask your club to discuss the possibilities and rank them in order of importance and interest, based on what was considered in steps #1 and #2. Reach consensus or use a vote by majority rule to determine the activity your club will do. If this isn't practical (especially if your club is large), consider forming a committee to develop priorities. Then, the club can simply accept or vote on the committee's recommendations.

5 After your club has decided what community service project to focus on first, develop a plan. Your members will learn organizational skills in developing such a plan. A plan doesn't have to be overly detailed and formal, but should include the following:

- Identify exactly what will be done. Determine both the overall goal and the specific tasks involved. Remember the time frame for the project: dates/times for beginning, completion.
- Obtain necessary permission in advance.
- Develop a financial budget for the project, if appropriate. Obtain funding needed for the project. If not available from club funds, seek a community sponsor. Your county 4-H staff may know of sources of grants-in-aid for such projects, especially if you plan far enough in advance. A decision to use club funds should be voted on by the club membership.
- Obtain needed equipment or supplies.
- Determine how many people will be needed. What is the minimum required to do the job correctly and what is the optimum number? Be sure you have at least the minimum before proceeding!
- Ask members to volunteer for specific duties and get a commitment from them. Consider teaming up less experienced members with more experienced workers to maximize the learning experience.
- Encourage members to report progress on their assigned duties.
- Make safety a priority!
- Alert mass media representatives and your county 4-H staff concerning your plans. Publicize the efforts of your club and the 4-H program.



6 Carry out the project as planned!

7 Record your club's efforts with photos, videotape, or written notes.

8 As you work on this project, monitor the activities taking place and make adjustments as needed. Especially when the project has been completed, allow time for your club to discuss the successes and shortcomings of the project and ideas for improvement. This reinforces the learning experience! Refer to *Learn by Doing the 4-H Way* for tips in using the do-reflect-apply experiential learning process.

9 Develop a summary report of your club's experience when the project has been completed. Share it with mass media representatives and your county 4-H staff. A scrapbook is also a nice way to present the project's success. Include a written description, photos, news clippings, etc. Such activities might be assigned to the club reporter, secretary, vice president, chair of the project, or other club member.

10 Feel good about your club's contribution to the community and members' positive learning experience!

Other Reminders

Remember that planning, conducting, and evaluating a community service project (or any other 4-H activity) is a great opportunity for 4-H members to learn by DOING. Therefore, DO encourage members to get involved in all phases of the project, including planning. DON'T do it all for them.

Remember that 4-H'ers learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. The role of a club leader and other adults working with the club is to guide members in the right direction and provide needed support and encouragement.

MAKE IT FUN!

See the next page for ideas for community service projects.

Ideas for Service Learning Projects



The following is a sampling of many possible ideas for community service projects, compiled from a variety of sources, that your club might consider doing.

- Assist local fund drives such as American Cancer Society, Heart Association, Association of Retarded Citizens, March of Dimes, etc.
- Adopt a grandparent
- Sponsor a child to attend summer camp
- Donate dog/cat food to a local animal shelter
- Donate books to a library, or magazines to group homes
- Collect food/clothing for needy families
- Furnish baby-sitting on Election Day.
- Entertain nursing home patients
- Clean a park or roadside
- Build/donate benches for a park
- Prepare holiday food baskets to shut-ins
- Paint or repair playground equipment
- Plant trees/flowers in vacant lots
- Donate bird seed to a park
- Serve a highway “coffee break” on holiday weekends
- Produce/purchase and donate 4-H placemats to a restaurant
- Sponsor a needy child
- Provide pet therapy for patients at hospitals or nursing homes

Take it Further

Service learning curriculum materials from 4-HCCS provide an in-depth approach to service learning for middle school and high school youth. For more information, go to www.n4hccs.org.

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