



4-H VOLUNTEER TRAINING SERIES

Recognizing Young People

Developing a sense of belonging is one of the Essential Elements of a positive youth development experience. Creating an inclusive environment in your 4-H club programs and activities can help you achieve this goal. Providing many forms of recognition for all youth, not just for those who excel in competition, supports this sense of belonging.

In Florida 4-H, there are five ways to recognize youth. A quality program tries to recognize youth in all five ways (Fogarty et al., 2013). These are:

- participation,
- progress toward goals,
- standards of excellence,
- peer competition, and
- cooperation.

Participation

Who Receives Recognition for Participation? Recognition for participation is especially important for young or new participants. However, it must be provided for all age groups and all levels of ability in all types of activities. 4-H'ers can be recognized as many times as they meet the requirements for participation.

What Form Does Recognition for Participation Take? Membership cards for all 4-H members are available from your Florida 4-H Youth Development Program at your local UF/IFAS Extension office. Recognition for participation may also be given during a meeting, or roll call, through name tags, certificates, or celebrations of individual successes that occur as a part of the meeting.

Who Awards the Members for Participation?

Volunteers responsible for the activities are the most appropriate presenters of awards. However, recognition for participation should occur at all levels of the 4-H program—club, county, district, state, regional, and national.

When Are the Awards for Participation Given?

Recognition for participation should be a part of the learning experience at any time during the 4-H year.

Progress Toward Goals

Who Helps with Goal Setting? Youth should determine their goals; however, parents, 4-H volunteer leaders, and older teens can also help by giving guidance. Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART).

Where Do I Define My Goals? Goals include the wants and wishes of the 4-H members and the things they hope to accomplish. Youth can discuss their goals with their family and Florida 4-H volunteer leaders/Extension agent. Once goals are determined, they can be recorded on the 4-H project report.

How Many Goals Should a Member Set? The number of goals depends on the age and experience of the youth. Younger children may only have one or two goals. Older children and teens can incorporate several smaller goals and steps toward each goal within a project. When the established goals are accomplished, additional goals may be set.

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS. © 2024 UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Who Receives the Recognition for Progress Toward Goals? All 4-H members striving toward their goals should receive recognition. If a goal is not reached in the expected time, then the progress toward the goal should be rewarded. Unforeseen challenges often become valuable learning experiences.

Who Awards the Members for Progress toward Goals? Any positive adult can reward and recognize a young person for achievement and making progress on their goals. Parents or guardians and 4-H leaders recognize members through feedback and mentoring to provide motivation toward continued goal-oriented work. The Florida 4-H volunteer may also obtain certificates and Seals of Progress from the local UF/IFAS Extension office to present to members who are working toward their goals. Fair judges, workshop coordinators, school volunteers, and others should be intentional in making efforts to award members for progress at county, district, and state educational programs.

Standards of Excellence

What Is Meant by a “Standard”? It is a level of quality or attainment established by experts in the field. Performance is based on project preparation, skills accomplished, knowledge gained, and self-reported behavior changes. Recognition is based on how closely each member’s performance matches the standard, not the performances of other youth.

What Type of Awards? 4-H members at each age level should have age-appropriate awards. Certificates and ribbons are available at the UF/IFAS Extension office for youth receiving recognition for standard-based achievements. The county office may provide additional awards.

What Do Youth Need to Know? 4-H professionals should utilize clearly defined standards and give youth access to these standards. Sharing the scorecards and rubrics with participants before

judging their products increases their chances of success. For example, the 4-H Project Reports provide a score sheet as part of the report to ensure youth are fully aware of the expectations for completion. See the Project Report links:

- Cloverbud Project Summary: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H032>
- Junior Project Report: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H033>
- Intermediate Project Report: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H034>
- Senior Project Report: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H035>

Are Clubs Eligible for Performance Standards Recognition? Yes, clubs may strive to meet specific standards of performance. The Florida Standards of Excellence for 4-H Clubs and Groups application form consists of 20 standards to achieve. Clubs will self-report this information, and then submit it to the UF/IFAS Extension 4-H agent to be recognized. Club awards are Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald based on the number of standards met.

Download this form at <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/media/florida4hifasufledu/docs/awards-and-recognition-docs/Club-SOE-2023-Updated-Form.pdf>.

Peer Competition

Who Receives Recognition for Peer Competition? In peer competition, there are youth who will receive recognition for highest placings within their age categories. Youth who place the highest will receive most of the recognition; however, depending on the type of competition, non-placing youth could also be recognized for their efforts. Florida 4-H also uses a “modified” Danish system to recognize youth effort. The “modified” Danish system is a method of evaluation against a set of standards (i.e., scoresheet, rubric) that are adjusted according to a member’s age and years of experience in the project. Recognition is then awarded based on the standards met by each

youth. Ribbons are traditionally awarded in different colors accordingly:

- Blue—for excellence, exceeding the standards
- Red—for good work that meets the expected standards
- White—for work that falls below the expected standards

National 4-H (NIFA/ 4-H National Headquarters, 2015) and Florida 4-H **do not support competition for children between the ages of 5 and 7.**

Children in this age group do not have the ability to understand vagueness that accompanies competitive judgment. This age of youth may not cognitively be ready for comparison to peers which may negatively influence their perceptions of their potential. They also see right and wrong as absolutes and cannot tell that they are being judged based on something they created, not on their personal worth.

For older youth, the *desire to win* may overpower the *desire to learn* from an experience. It is easy to confuse the means with the ends when striving for recognition through competition. National 4-H Headquarters strongly recommends that volunteers help youth remain focused on the experience rather than the competition and help youth prepare for both winning and not winning (National 4-H Recognition Model Design Team, 1993).

Benefits of youth taking part in competitive events include:

- opportunities for youth to master and demonstrate life skills that can be used in the real world.
- each youth working toward goals.
- teaching youth to work as a team.
- opportunities for youth to demonstrate sportsmanship.

Competition can bring both a feeling of achievement as well as a feeling of risk-taking. In addition to experiencing success, competition can also

bring stress, hard feelings, and disagreement. Negative stress and conflict can be reduced by making sure that everyone involved understands exactly what to expect (National 4-H Recognition Model Design Team, 1993). Rules and procedures should be clearly spelled out and communicated well in advance of an event. Rubrics, score sheets, or judges' sheets should be made available prior to the competition so volunteers and youth are aware of expectations and criteria for judging.

Who Awards the Members for Peer Competition?

The person or group holding the competition presents recognition. These entities may be local club volunteers, UF/IFAS Extension staff, or state officials.

Competition can help youth learn teamwork and sportsmanship all while generating publicity for your group. Helping youth prepare for competitions and reflecting with them afterwards will help them handle the potential stressors.

Cooperation

What Is "Cooperation"? It is learning and working together to reach goals. This combined effort helps youth develop a sense of responsibility and an understanding of teamwork. Recognition for cooperation draws attention to the way a group works instead of the way in which an individual performs. Recognizing young people for their collective actions is an important component of a quality program that helps young people become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society (National 4-H Recognition Model Design Team, 1993).

Who Helps with the Cooperative Learning Experience? Learning to use cooperative activities effectively as a learning tool takes some additional skills on the part of adults. It is more than just getting a group of 4-H'ers together and giving them an assignment. All of us need to expand our skills in using cooperation effectively as a learning tool and to set an example in how we work with oth-

ers. An example of cooperative learning could be working with a group of young people to identify a need in their community, providing opportunities for them to learn more about the need, and then coming up with a solution on how to address the need.

Where Does Cooperative Learning Take Place?

When young people cooperate and learn together in groups, they examine and affirm their differences and explore solutions beyond their individual ideas. They also affirm their individual self-concepts and form a group relation. They are learning how to succeed in today's world where business is turning to group efforts and production.

Who Receives Recognition for Cooperative Learning? The group receives the award with recognition of all its members or participants in the group (Fogarty et al., 2013). An example of this is the Community Pride Award given at the state level each year.

Who Awards the Members for Cooperative Learning? UF/IFAS Extension 4-H agents and club leaders are some examples of who might award a group for cooperative learning. Most groups will be able to come up with the best ways to celebrate their successes and discuss what they have learned. As the group discusses its goals and results, identifies its strengths, and discusses improvements, its members will naturally celebrate their work. Recognition from team members and significant adults will help to solidify the cooperative learning activity.

Through the acknowledgment, affirmation, and positive reinforcement of each person's effort, feelings of competence and capability increase, and participation continues. When properly used, recognition facilitates the development of positive self-esteem and self-reliance. All 4-H experiences must be structured so youth can develop positive self-concepts.

Recognition is also a significant incentive to further learning. It can accomplish the following:

- Provide opportunities for youth to find and practice their sparks.
- Provide opportunities for youth to share their 4-H project or spark with others. See the previous section, Standards of Excellence, for 4-H project report links.
- Motivate young people to thrive and explore in a safe space.
- Foster self-appraisal skills by providing a strong foundation for young people to engage in self-reflection and self-praise without the need for external awards.
- Encourage and support the efforts of young people as they engage in individualized learning.
- Recognition, when used in all its forms, provides a balance of appropriate feedback for young people.

Summary

Recognition helps individuals evaluate their progress in learning life skills. An environment that nurtures growth and development incorporates a careful, creative, and balanced use of recognition. It is a catalyst that enhances opportunities for youth to thrive for maximum growth and development (Arnold, 2018).

References

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Table 1. Five recognition types with examples for 4-H members and clubs.

Recognition Type	4-H Members	4-H Clubs
Participation	<p>4-H Membership Card—given to each member enrolled for the 4-H year.</p> <p>Provide special items for members participating in a club tour or workshop.</p> <p>Certificates or Celebration Items (participation, good job, attendance, great presentation, emerging leadership, noteworthy special accomplishments, etc.).</p> <p>Participation ribbons for non-competitive events.</p> <p>4-H Alumni Pin—available to present to 4-H members completing their last year of eligibility for 4-H membership, according to age policies.</p> <p>Year-Completion Stickers or Year Pins—County programs or clubs may decide to give these to every 4-H member who completes a year.</p>	<p>4-H Club Charter.</p> <p>County newsletters with accounts of club activities.</p> <p>4-H logo products, flags, songs.</p> <p>Participation ribbons or certificates for non-judged events and displays.</p> <p>Club celebrations, field day, or end of year party.</p> <p>Club banners.</p>
Progress Toward Goals	<p>Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians (such as positive notes in record or project book).</p> <p>Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of goals.</p> <p>Public reception at school, library, or community center.</p> <p>Introduce members by proudest achievement.</p> <p>Post members' names on bulletin board.</p> <p>Send letter of praise to parents/youth highlighting progress.</p> <p>Select members to assist new members.</p> <p>A special party to celebrate progress.</p> <p>Certificates.</p>	<p>Club celebration.</p> <p>Schedule a show-and-tell night for the club or community.</p> <p>Present skit to outside group with members celebrating their achievement of goals.</p> <p>"Progress Toward Goals" award.</p> <p>Certificate.</p>
Standards	<p>The Florida 4-H program has a set of standards for club learning called the "Achieving Standards of Excellence—Performance Standard Awards." Youth can receive Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald Clover depending on their level of performance against a set of standards.</p> <p>County, District, and State Fairs often provide recognition for performance in project learning based on a set of standards (e.g., Skill-a-tons, Educational Posters).</p> <p>You can set standards and award youth in your club for any number of things (e.g., cookie baking, canning, sewing) using score cards or rubrics.</p>	<p>County Recognition based on self-report.</p> <p>Standard of Excellence Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald certificate/sticker.</p>

Competition	<p>Project Record Books: Award youth completing a record book with a project pin, certificate, ribbon, public announcement, patch, and/or other special 4-H memorabilia.</p> <p>“Best” or Placing Categories: Give certificates, ribbons, public announcements, or patches.</p> <p>Judging Contests and Teams/Demonstrations/Other Contests: Give them their Individual/Team Performance Ranking. Award individual/team performance ranking/placing. Recognize champion and grand champion with award ribbons, trophies, scholarships, jackets, etc.</p> <p>Project Exhibitions (Animal Shows, Fairs, Photography/Graphic Design, etc.): Award ribbons, trophies, fair premiums, and recognition in the county 4-H newsletter.</p> <p>National 4-H Award Trips (some age restrictions for graduating seniors): Scholarship applications for 4-H National Award Trips are reviewed and scored using a rubric. Qualifying youth with an average score of 90% or higher are invited to interview at 4-H University.</p> <p>Scholarship Application (graduating seniors and some 4-H Alumni): Scholarship applications are reviewed and scored using a rubric. Qualifying youth with an average score of 90% or higher are invited to interview at 4-H University. Various scholarship requirements will guide the awards at competitions on the state level.</p>	
Cooperation	<p>Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians.</p> <p>Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of the activity.</p> <p>Public reception at school, library, or community center.</p> <p>Certificates and seals.</p> <p>Club celebration or fieldtrip.</p>	<p>State funding and completion of project recognition for Community Pride Grants.</p>