



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, not just for those who excel in competition with other youth, also 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? A membership card is available to all 4-H members who contact the County Extension Office – 4-H Youth Development Department. 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).

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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.

Where Do I Define My Goals? Goals include the wants and wishes of the 4-H members and the things they hope to accomplish. There are suggestions in most project books to help with goal selection.

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.

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? Parents or guardians and 4-H leaders recognize members through feedback and counseling. Feedback provides motivation towards continued goal-oriented work. The 4-H volunteer may also obtain certificates and Seals of Progress from the local Extension Office to present to members who are working toward their goals. Fair judges may also award members for progress at county, district, and state fairs.

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. Certificate awards are available at the County Office with stickers for Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald based on the score achieved in the self-reporting. The County Office may provide additional awards.

What Do Youth Need to Know? Volunteers should establish 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.

Are Clubs Eligible for Performance Standards Recognition? Yes, clubs may strive to meet specific standards of performance. A Club Standard Application form consists of 20 questions on standards. Clubs will self-report this information, and then submit it to the county 4-H agent. Club awards are Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald based on the number of standards met.

Peer Competition

Who Receives Recognition for Peer Competition? In competition, there are winners and non-winners. As expected, winners will receive most of the recognition; however, depending on the type of competition, non-winners could be recognized for their efforts.

- National 4-H (NIFA/ 4-H National Headquarters, 2015) and Florida 4-H do not support competition for children between the ages of five and seven. Children in this age group do not have the ability to understand vagueness that accompanies competitive judgment, and are not cognitively ready for comparison to peers which can 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.
- Even for older youth, the desire to win may overpower the desire to learn from the experience. It is easy to confuse the means with the ends when striving for recognition through competition. 4-H National 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).
- Competition can be high-risk. It can bring with it stress, conflict, 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. Everyone needs access to rubric score sheets or judges' sheets prior to the competition so they are aware of expectations.

Who Awards the Members for Peer Competition? The person or group holding the competition presents recognition. These entities could 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 the example in how we work with other adults.

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).

Who Awards the Members for Cooperative Learning? County 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.

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

Type of Recognition	4-H Members	4-H Clubs
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-H Membership Card—given to each member enrolled for the 4-H year • Listing new members’ names in the newspapers, providing special items for members participating in a club tour or workshop • Certificates or Celebration Items (participation, good job, attendance, great presentation, emerging leadership, noteworthy special accomplishments, etc.) • Participation ribbons for non-competitive events • 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 • Year-Completion Stickers or Pins—clubs may decide to give these to every 4-H member who completes a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-H Club Charter • County newsletters with accounts of club activities • 4-H logo products, flags, songs • Participation ribbons for non-judged events and displays • Club celebrations • Club banners
Progress Towards Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians (such as positive notes in record or project book) • Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of goals • Public reception at school, library, or community center • Introduce members by proudest achievement • Post members’ names in newspaper articles and on bulletin board • Send letter of commendation to parents • Select members to assist new members • A special party • Certificates and seals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club celebration • Schedule a show-and-tell night for the club or community • Present skit to outside group with members celebrating their achievement of goals • “Progress Toward Goals” award • Certificate and seals
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • County, District, and State Fairs often provide recognition for performance in project learning based on a set of standards (e.g., Skill-ations, Educational Posters). • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Recognition based on self-report (Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald certificate/ sticker) • State Emerald Club Recognition (Top 10% of Emerald Clubs)—State Certificate, web listing
Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Record Books: Give them a Project Medal. For the top 10% (by age category) of completed qualified project record books submitted to the UF/IFAS Extension office, give them a certificate, ribbon, public announcement, or patch. • “Best” or Placing Categories: Give certificates, ribbons, public announcements, or patches. • Judging Contests and Teams/Demonstrations/Other Contests: Give them their Individual/Team Performance Ranking. Give them their Placing. Name the champion and grand champion. Give ribbons, trophies, monetary awards, scholarships, jackets, etc. • Project Exhibitions (Animal Shows, Fairs, etc.): Award ribbons, trophies, premiums (cash award), savings bonds, and recognition in the news. • Award Trip Portfolio (award trips not available to graduating seniors): Applicants’ portfolios are reviewed and scored with a rubric, qualifying with an average score of 90% or higher. They are invited to interview at 4-H University in July. • Scholarship Portfolio (graduating seniors and some 4-H Alumni): Applicants’ portfolios are reviewed and scored with a rubric, qualifying with an average score of 90% or higher. They are invited to interview at 4-H University in July. Various scholarship requirements will guide the awards at competitions on the state level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Club of the Year—County Certificate, plaque in UF/IFAS Extension office
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians • Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of the activity • Public reception at school, library, or community center • A special party or field trip • Certificates and seals • Club celebration 	

Summary

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

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:

- Motivate young people to excel and take worthwhile risks.
- 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.

References

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