**South Carolina 4-H Volunteer Handbook:**

An overview for adults working with youth on behalf of

Clemson Extension 4-H Youth Development

Created September 2024; T. A. Burns

A comprehensive 4-H Volunteer Handbook for South Carolina gives volunteers a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and the values they support as part of the 4-H community. Below is an outline, followed by a more detailed version for each section:

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**1. Welcome Letter**

Dear 4-H Volunteer,

Welcome to South Carolina 4-H! Thank you for dedicating your time, energy, and skills to enrich the lives of young people across our state. Our volunteers play a vital role in shaping the future of 4-H youth and creating opportunities for them to grow, learn, and thrive.

As a 4-H volunteer, you play a vital role in shaping the lives of young people. Your time, energy, and passion help create a supportive and engaging environment where youth can explore their sparks, develop leadership skills, and make lifelong connections. Your involvement will make a lasting impact, fostering resilience, curiosity, and a love for learning in the next generation. We are thrilled to have you join us in creating these positive experiences for youth, empowering them to reach their full potential, and strengthening our communities through the incredible work of 4-H.

We are here to support you every step of the way. Our team is ready to provide resources, training, and guidance to ensure you feel confident and prepared in your role. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or ideas as you start your work with our 4-H staff. Your insights and enthusiasm are invaluable to us!

Thank you for your commitment to 4-H. Together, we will continue to make a meaningful difference for our youth and community. Welcome to the team!

Warm regards,



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College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences

Cooperative Extension

Clemson University

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

**2. About South Carolina 4-H**

South Carolina 4-H operates under the land-grant university system, a unique educational framework designed to extend research-based knowledge and practical skills to the public. Established by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, land-grant universities support agricultural, scientific, and engineering education, particularly aimed at rural and under-served communities. The system’s foundation was expanded with the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which created the Cooperative Extension System and extended the reach of these universities into every county through local Extension offices. In South Carolina, Extension programs are offered by two land-grant universities: Clemson University (1862) and South Carolina State University (1890).

As the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension, 4-H benefits from a network of national partners by utilizing the resources, research, and expertise of land-grant universities, USDA, and National 4-H Council to provide practical, hands-on learning experiences. With program delivery at the local level, 4-H empowers youth to explore areas like agriculture, STEM, healthy living, natural resources, and civic engagement. This structure also allows 4-H to tailor programs to community needs while promoting a consistent standard of quality and evidence-based practices across the country, as well as ensures that youth have access to resources and mentors, fostering their growth as leaders and innovators within their communities. Through the land-grant model, 4-H bridges academic research with real-world application, cultivating skills that benefit both individuals and society as a whole.

* **Mission:**
	+ We serve South Carolina youth by providing quality experiential learning programs through youth-adult partnership and opportunities to build skills and promote behaviors for youth to become responsible, contributing members of society.
* **Vision:**
	+ We aim to set youth on a trajectory to thrive through challenge and discovery by cultivating growth and learning, instilling hope for a brighter future, and encouraging care and concern for others.
* **Core Values:**
	+ Head, Heart, Hands, and Health are the four Hs in 4‑H, described by the 4-H pledge, and they are the four values members work on through fun and engaging programs.
* **4-H Pledge:**
	+ I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
	My heart to greater loyalty,
	My hands to larger service,
	and my health to better living,
	for my club, my community, my country, and my world.
* **4-H Motto:**
	+ Making the Best Better
* **4-H Slogan:**
	+ Learn by Doing

**Key components of a 4-H program:**

1. Youth receive at least six hours of positive youth development programming annually.
2. Experiential Learning Model is utilized in the programming.
3. Educational content is research based and age appropriate.
	* We provide access to resources of the land-grant university system and Cooperative Extension to ensure 4-H programs, curricula, and procedures are based in research and are developmentally appropriate.
4. Impact and civil rights data are collected on the program.
5. The program is open to all youth ages 5-18 years.
	* Ages in 4-H are determined as of January 1st of the current 4-H club year. The club year runs from September 1st to August 31st.
6. Programs must comply with the Clemson University Youth Programs Policy.

**Definition of a 4-H member:**

A 4-H member is a youth who participates in any educational program or activity delivered by Cooperative Extension and/or receives Cooperative Extension-based curriculum. A 4-H member includes a youth who is ‘Individually Enrolled’ or ‘Group Enrolled’, regardless of the type of engagement/delivery method in which they are participating.

**Individual Enrollment:**

South Carolina 4-H uses 4HOnline as the enrollment software for individual memberships. Enrollment provides access to all 4-H programming and opportunities statewide. Youth enroll in clubs, projects, and sign a Code of Conduct annually. Parents/guardians provide essential consents, liability releases, emergency contact/health information, and more for the safety and protection of youth and adults participating in 4-H programs. Youth must be an individually enrolled 4-H member to participate in any custodial care program and statewide projects and competitions.

**Age Divisions:**

There are **three general age divisions** used in South Carolina 4-H. Again, all ages are in effect as of January 1st of the current 4-H club year.

1. Cloverbud: Ages 5-8 years old; this is non-competitive age division.
2. Junior: Ages 9-13 years old
3. Senior: Ages 14-18 years old

Occasionally, you may see the age division “Cloverleaf” used in reference to a specific program or event. Cloverleaf a subdivision of the “Junior” age division to target younger youth in that age division. Follow the age or school grade guidelines referenced by individual projects or programs to define this age division.

**3. 4-H Volunteer Role and Expectations**

As a 4-H volunteer, you are an ambassador of our mission and vision. Your role may involve leading club activities, helping with events, mentoring youth, supporting camps, or other service-based activities. **Expectations include:**

* Providing a safe, supportive environment for youth.
* Communicating regularly with 4-H staff.
* Committing to the agreed-upon schedule and responsibilities.
* Embodying the core values of 4-H in all interactions.

Each role or activity you engage with as a 4-H volunteer may have slightly different expectations. It is important to clarify the following, either formally or informally, in advance of any 4-H program:

* The 4-H program’s purpose, activities, and intended outcomes
* Your role as the volunteer
* Specific responsibilities
* Timeline of the role
* Resources provided by 4-H

**Benefits of Volunteering:**

The 4-H program would not be possible without volunteers like you. You enrich the 4-H program and youth. As a volunteer, you expand the capacity of our organization – allowing us to reach even more young people. You help youth learn new things, build confidence, and to become leaders. Communities are even stronger because of 4-H volunteers.

As a volunteer, you have the potential to gain professional development, leadership experience, networking opportunities, and the fulfillment of contributing to youth success. Therefore, in addition to benefiting the organization, you will reap benefits of your own by volunteer work with 4-H! Countless stories have been shared about the personal impact of the volunteer role. Research1 also demonstrates that adults who volunteer with 4-H develop skills, improve their well-being, and deepen their connections with others. Not only do adults that volunteer with 4-H feel a sense of belonging, but they also actively contribute to the culture and meaningful impacts of the organization providing a sense of satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment. We invite you to share your volunteer experience with us as well!

**4. Getting Started as a Volunteer**

**Application and Screening Process:**

Prospective volunteers must:

* Complete an application through 4HOnline (v2.4honline.com),
* Undergo a background check, and
* Participate in orientation and training with 4-H staff.

Volunteers must also agree to South Carolina 4-H’s Code of Conduct annually and new volunteers must submit personal references; both processes are included in the 4-H volunteer application in 4HOnline.

All screening and training requirements must be met before you start working with youth.

**Additional requirements and training are required for any adult taking temporary responsibility (i.e., custodial care) of youth on behalf of 4-H for the purposes of the youth engaging in a program or activity.** A youth is any individual under the age of 18 who is not enrolled at Clemson University or another university. Therefore, if a youth drives themselves to a 4-H club meeting or other activity/event and does not have a parent/guardian present, it is a custodial care situation and is subject to a higher level of requirements. In addition, there are requirements for anyone transporting youth on behalf of 4-H. These requirements are outlined and defined by the Clemson University Youth Programs Policy and Manual and monitored by the Clemson University Pre-collegiate Programs Office (a.k.a., PcPO; <https://www.clemson.edu/administration/pre-collegiate/index.html>). It is very important that, as a volunteer, you are aware of what constitutes custodial care and, if assumed, all requirements are met. Please work closely with 4-H staff to ensure expectations are understood.

**Orientation and Training:**

South Carolina 4-H and local staff offer training resources to familiarize volunteers with program expectations, youth protection policies, and positive youth development.

In addition, a comprehensive taxonomy of skills and associated informational resources exist at the national level to support volunteer development – Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency (a.k.a., VRKC; <https://4h-volunteerism-resources.extension.org/home/volunteer-research-and-knowledge-competency-vrkc/>)

* Domains covered in the 4-H VRKC taxonomy:
	+ Communication
	+ Organization
	+ 4-H Program Management
	+ Educational Design and Delivery
	+ Positive Youth Development
	+ Interpersonal skills

**5. Volunteer Code of Conduct**

All 4-H Volunteers that work with youth on behalf of Clemson University must read, agree to, and sign our 4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct through annual 4HOnline volunteer application/enrollment. Any action that contradicts any portion of this Code of Conduct is grounds for the suspension and/or termination of volunteer status with Clemson University 4-H:

“I accept responsibility to represent 4-H with dignity and pride conducting myself as a positive role model for program participants. Just as it is a privilege for 4-H to work with individuals who volunteer their time and energies to youth, a volunteer's involvement in 4-H programming is a privilege and a responsibility, not a right. To ensure the safety and well-being of all 4-H program participants, Clemson University 4-H volunteers will:

* Refrain from the possession or use of alcohol and illegal drugs. Misuse of prescription drugs is also prohibited.
* Prohibit the operation of motor vehicles by minors while attending and participating in a Youth Program.
* Not tolerate violence, sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, or harassment.
* Prohibit bullying and hazing of any kind. Bullying includes verbal, physical and cyber bullying.
* Not allow theft.
* Prohibit the use of tobacco. Clemson University is a “Tobacco Free” campus, therefore tobacco use is not allowed on University property. The use of any e-cigarettes or vaping products by minors is also prohibited.
* Refrain from misuse or damage of University. Costs will be assessed against individuals deemed responsible for damage or misuse University property.
* Avoid inappropriate use of cell phones, cameras, imaging, and digital devices, including use of such devices in showers, restrooms, or other areas where participants expect privacy.
* Uphold an individual's right to dignity, self-development, and self-direction.
* Accept supervision and support from professional staff while involved in the program.
* Participate in required training programs and use the recommended policies and procedures.
* Conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner, exhibit good sportsmanship and provide positive role models for all youths.
* Respect, adhere to and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by 4-H.
* Refrain from the use of inappropriate language while serving in the capacity of a 4-H volunteer.
* Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.
* Handle animals and operate machinery, vehicles, and other equipment in a responsible manner.
* Preserve the confidentiality of information about program participants.
* Refrain from using 4-H volunteer status for personal or business financial gain.
* I have read and understood the Volunteer Code of Conduct outlined above. I understand and agree that any action on my part that contradicts any portion of this Code of Conduct is grounds for the suspension and/or termination of my volunteer status with Clemson University 4-H.”

**6. Safety and Risk Management**

Ensuring the safety of youth and adults is a top priority. Youth need to feel safe in 4-H programs to be able to interact positively with others. In addition, parents/guardians need to feel that their children are participating in a safe environment to have confidence in the program.

Volunteers are responsible for understanding safety policies, including ensuring parents/guardians are present for non-custodial care programs or adhering to the Clemson University Youth Programs Policy and Manual requirements for custodial care programs, reporting of any suspected abuse, maintaining appropriate documentation as required by Extension, and participating in relevant training.

**No youth or adult should ever be one-on-one with another participant.** You should follow the “Rule of Three” where at least one other adult or parent/legal guardian or youth is always present whenever you are interacting with a youth. In addition, a youth should never be left alone with another youth. In situations requiring personal interaction with a youth, the meeting or activity must be conducted “out in the open” in view of other adults and in well-illuminated spaces or rooms readily observable, interruptible, and intrudable by another adult.

Risk management in 4-H is about protecting the safety of participants, sponsors, and the organization's reputation while still conducting educational activities. **Planning ahead and being prepared is one of the best strategies for risk management.** Here are some tips:

* **Identify possible risks** - What risks are participants exposed to? (e.g., Outdoor programs may come with a risk of sunburn or bug bites, while cooking programs may come with risk of injury from kitchen utensils or food allergies.)
* **Evaluate those risks** - What is the frequency and severity of the risk? How many different program functions could the risk impact? (e.g., Frequency and severity of sunburn will increase based on the time of year, weather conditions, sensitivity of individuals, length of the program, and availability of shade.)
* **Develop a risk management strategy** - What can you do to address the risk (reduce, transfer, avoid, or assume)? (e.g., For the risk of sunburn, you could reduce the risk by planning activities with the most sun exposure earlier in the day, instructing parents/guardians have youth pre-apply and/or bring sunscreen and/or sun-protective clothing, and conducting activities under shade when possible. Alternatively, if it does not eliminate the desired outcomes of the activity, you could avoid the risk by planning the event to take place indoors or during winter months with reduced sun exposure.)
	+ Program activities that contain risk of high severity of injury should be discussed with your 4-H staff before proceeding.
* **Monitor** - Not all risks can be eliminated. Continue to monitor the activity and implement changes as needed.

**7. Youth Development Principles**

South Carolina 4-H follows a positive youth development (PYD) approach, which values each young person’s unique interests, abilities, and strengths. Research shows that participation in high-quality 4-H programs fosters thriving in youth, leading to important developmental outcomes like academic motivation, achievement, and life skill development.

There are eight program quality principles2 that 4-H programs can use to have the biggest impact:

1. **Physical and psychological safety** - Youth need to feel safe in 4-H programs and be able to interact positively with others.
2. **Appropriate structure** - Whether it is a club meeting or leadership camp, 4-H programs must have clear and consistent rules and expectations, with clear boundaries and age-appropriate monitoring.
3. **Supportive relationships** - All youth need to feel warmth from and closeness to others in 4-H. Youth need to feel others care about and support them. They also need to receive clear guidance and communication from 4-H volunteers and staff.
4. **Opportunities to belong** - All youth need to feel included in a meaningful way in 4-H, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientations, or ability. Youth should have opportunities to share their culture and heritage with others and to forge a positive identify.
5. **Positive social norms** - Youth should experience clear rules and expectations for participating in 4-H, including the values, morals, and ethical expectations of being a 4-H member.
6. **Support for efficacy and mattering** - Youth in 4-H should be taken seriously and respected for their ideas and contributions. Youth should be given opportunities to develop responsibility and be challenged to set and achieve goals.
7. **Opportunities for skill building** - Youth need to develop physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and social skills as they grow and develop. 4-H provides opportunities for youth to develop these skills, skills that support a young person into adulthood and the workplace.
8. **Integration of family, school, and community** - Youth in 4-H do best when there is a connection to their 4-H experience with their family, school, and community. This is why 4-H programs begin at the local level, in the community where youth can practice their emerging leadership skills as they grow and develop.

As a volunteer, your role is to help strengthen these life skills by creating experiences that encourage learning and leadership. By planning activities that reinforce skills, you enable youth to apply what they learn in new situations, expanding their growth. Research tells us that youth join 4-H for learning, but they stay in 4-H because of the friendships and the club leaders.

Thank you for your commitment to making a lasting impact on young lives!

**8. 4-H Program Opportunities and Events**

South Carolina 4-H offers diverse programming across five **4-H Program Areas**:

1. Agriculture and Animals
2. Civic Engagement
3. Healthy Living
4. Natural Resources
5. STEM

We also use seven main **delivery modes** to reach youth with six hours or more of educational programming annually with content reaching across all the above 4-H Program Areas:

1. **Organized club -** An organized club of youth (community, in-school, or afterschool), facilitated by an adult, with a planned program carried on throughout all or most of the year.
2. **Special interest (SPIN)/Short-term program -** Groups of youth meeting for a specific learning experience that involves direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers, including teachers.
3. **Camp (day or residential) -** Youth taking part in an Extension planned educational experience for a group taking place in the out-of-doors over multiple days. To qualify for this delivery mode, a majority of the time must be spent outdoors. If a camp, for example a science day camp, spends a majority of the time doing indoor activities then the program is considered a Special Interest/Short-Term Program.
4. **School enrichment -** Groups of youth receiving a sequence of learning experiences in cooperation with school officials during school hours and to support school curriculum. Involves direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers, including teachers.
5. **Individual/Independent study -** Planned learning that occurs independently of a formal group setting such as a club. Experience is often self-directed as an individual, paired or in family learning effort.
6. **School-aged, child-care or afterschool -** Educational programs offered to youth outside of school hours, usually in a school or other community center and incorporating 4-H curricula and/or staff training by Extension professionals. The primary purpose of the program is to provide care, developmental and educational experiences for youth while parents are working or unavailable.
7. **Instructional media -** Youth-centered learning experiences through Extension via broadcast or closed-circuit television, including satellite transmission (or videotape replays of such series) and instruction delivered via the internet.

By volunteering with 4-H, you will be using your skills to help kids explore and discover what matters to them, enabling them to make a positive impact today and in the future. You will help them to set goals, foster a sense of belonging and independence, inspire a generous spirit, and master skills that will prepare them for their future.

You can find a comprehensive list of statewide 4-H programs, activities, and events on the 4-H website (clemson.edu/4h) and additional engagements by contacting your local 4-H agent.

**10 Ways to Volunteer**3**:**

1. **Help youth lead a club**
	1. Lead a 4-H Club (help youth organize meetings and speakers).
	2. Mentor a 4-H Volunteer who is serving as a project leader.
	3. Inspire other volunteers and 4-H’ers as a guest speaker or short-term instructor.
2. **Teach a skill**
	1. Share your skills by teaching a workshop.
	2. Organize a club devoted to your area of specialty.
3. **Judge projects**
	1. Serve as a judge for 4-H exhibits, speeches, or performances, providing encouragement and suggestions for improvement.
	2. Share your time, talent, and experience to inspire and/or challenge youth to master their skills.
4. **Plan or help at an event**
	1. Help plan and organize and event/program that will teach 4-H’ers.
	2. Give your time to help with a fundraising or 4-H awareness event.
	3. Volunteer at a county event; from set-up or clean-up to serving food or taking registrations, there are a lot of ways to get involved.
5. **Serve on an advisory board/committee**
	1. Sit on a local advisory or county governing board to promote program priorities.
	2. Serve as a County 4-H Foundation board member - help to organize and implement project(s) and expand the 4-H program to reach new audiences.
6. **Help with a specific 4-H project**
	1. Mentor a 4-H member in their project work: inspire them to set goals, create and implement a plan, and reflect on what they learned. Talk with youth about how you chose a school, your career path, and current associations.
7. **Assist with program delivery**
	1. Volunteer at an afterschool program, a summer program, camp program event or club meeting.
8. **Volunteer on a fair organizing committee**
	1. Volunteer at a local fair – be inspired by the talents and creativity of youth.
	2. Work in the food booth or help in the 4-H exhibit hall or at the 4-H show ring.
9. **Utilize your professional skills**
	1. Share your technical skills and knowledge to develop subject matter for curriculum/project sheets.
	2. Utilize your professional skills to assist with creating marketing tools, graphic art, word documents, webpages, videos, online training modules, etc.
	3. Intern at your local Extension office, a great resume builder.
10. **Share your experiences**
	1. Share your hobby/passion – inspire a young person as a guest speaker or short-term instructor.
	2. Share your career path – invite a 4-H’er to shadow you for the day.
	3. Share your educational path/give a testimonial – how did you get to where you are? (If you are a college student – how did you choose your school, what are you pursuing, what are you aspiring to do?)

**9. Working with Youth in 4-H**

**Mentoring youth:**

In 4-H, we use the 4-H Thriving Model to create a positive youth development environment where young people can explore their interests (i.e., “sparks”) and grow through supportive relationships. A key part of this approach is fostering a growth mindset—helping youth believe that abilities can improve with effort, rather than feeling limited by fixed talents.

Encouraging a growth mindset can build resilience, motivation, and openness to challenges. Here’s how to support this in 4-H activities:

* **Challenge them, but balance it** - Plan activities that stretch their abilities without overwhelming them. Offer guidance and encourage them to see setbacks as opportunities to try again.
* **Foster peer connections** - Pair youth with diverse skills to learn from each other and encourage reflection on their progress.
* **Focus feedback on effort** - Praise the hard work and strategies they used, rather than just the result (e.g., “Your effort really shows!” instead of “Great job on winning!”).

Your role as a volunteer helps youth develop a growth mindset, empowering them to take on challenges and thrive.

**Experiential Learning Model:**

The Experiential Learning Model4 in 4-H empowers youth to take ownership of their learning through direct experience. You can use this model help youth develop positive attitudes toward projects, acquire new skills, take responsibility for learning, enhance decision-making, and build confidence to share their knowledge. Most activities in 4-H curricula focus on hands-on learning and are centered around the Experiential Learning Model. This model can be simplified as "Do, Reflect, Apply," or expanded to five components:

1. **Experience (Do)**: Youth engage in hands-on activities like baking, raising animals, or presenting, which may be unfamiliar or challenging.
2. **Share (Reflect)**: Youth discuss their observations using their senses (what they saw, heard, touched, etc.).
3. **Process**: Youth reflect critically, exploring assumptions and cultural influences on their observations.
4. **Generalize**: They connect the experience to real-life examples or personal insights.
5. **Apply**: Youth identify ways to improve future activities and consider new approaches.

This model supports youth in linking learning to real-world situations and developing lifelong skills.

**10. 4-H Club Management**

**4-H Club Structure:**

Clubs are flexible to meet the unique needs of their members. Some 4-H clubs focus on a single project that everyone experiences together [i.e., project or special interest (SPIN) clubs], while others offer multiple projects that members can explore outside regular club meetings (i.e., general or community clubs).

However, 4-H clubs share core characteristics, including:

* An organized group of at least five youth from two or more families.
* A year-round or nearly year-round planned program.
* Guidance from two or more adult volunteers or staff.
* Elected youth officers\*.
* Meetings can take place anywhere.
* Allows for opportunities to develop leadership, citizenship, community service, and public speaking skills.

These common features define 4-H clubs and ensure that members experience meaningful learning and personal growth in a supportive environment.

\*Cloverbud clubs, designed for youth ages 5-8 years, do not elect officers. In fact, Cloverbud clubs differ from other 4-H clubs for older youth in several key ways:

1. **Meetings and Roles**: Cloverbud clubs do not hold formal business meetings or elect officers, as children this age need more adult guidance. Instead, meetings follow a structured routine with opening and closing rituals, roll call, and pledges, which introduce basic club structure. Members may be given a rotating “office of the day” to help with rituals.
2. **Activities**: Cloverbuds engage in activities rather than projects, focusing on single concepts or skills (e.g., planting a small garden to learn about sunlight and water).
3. **Non-competitive Environment**: Cloverbud activities avoid competition, providing a positive, supportive space where children can build skills without criticism or comparison.
4. **Developmentally Appropriate**: Activities are tailored to their developmental stage, focusing on safe, age-suitable tasks and equipment, with extra adult supervision.

These adaptations help Cloverbuds grow in a supportive, non-judgmental environment, preparing them for future participation in 4-H.

If 4-H clubs meet the above requirements, they are eligible to be “chartered”. A chartered 4-H club is an officially recognized group within the 4-H program that meets specific requirements set by the national 4-H organization and its affiliated land-grant university, like Clemson University in South Carolina. Work with your local 4-H staff to determine if you club has a charter or needs to apply for one to signify that the club is in good standing and follows 4-H guidelines.

**Financial Responsibilities:**

As a 4-H volunteer club leader in South Carolina, it is essential to follow Clemson University’s fiscal policies, as all 4-H clubs operate under the university’s financial authority. Here is what you need to know to stay compliant and protect yourself and your club:

* **University-Managed Accounts**: Volunteers and Clemson employees should **not open or associate with any external bank accounts** for 4-H purposes. Doing so removes Clemson's legal protections and can lead to tax liabilities and ethics violations.
* **Financial Needs**: For any financial needs—such as purchasing supplies, reimbursing members, handling travel expenses, or providing incentives—work directly with your local Extension staff. They will guide you through approved procedures, ensuring compliance and record-keeping for audits.
* **Chartered Clubs and Fiscal Responsibilities**: Chartered clubs have fiscal rights and responsibilities, managed through county-level Extension oversight. Chartered 4-H clubs may choose to have additional dues that are collected from the membership that support activities of the club (i.e., programming, activities/events, recognition awards, etc.).
* **Fundraising and Expenditures**: Fundraising proceeds and membership dues are deposited into university-managed 4-H club accounts, which can fund club activities, excluding alcohol, general-use gift cards, and gas cards.
	+ **Appropriate Fundraising** - Examples include car washes, product sales (e.g., candy, nuts, flowers), "Learn to Earn" projects, and fair booths.
	+ **Inappropriate Fundraising** - Avoid selling products that conflict with 4-H’s mission or are poor in quality or taste.
	+ **Appropriate Use of Funds** - Examples include educational trips, community service projects, member recognition, 4-H activity scholarships, and donations to the 4-H efforts.
	+ **Inappropriate Use of Funds** - Avoid unapproved expenses and activities benefiting only a few members repeatedly.

Contact your 4-H Agent or Extension staff for support with these processes to keep club finances compliant and smooth. In addition, you can request detailed account reports showing balances, revenue, and expenditures.

**Parts of 4-H Club Meeting:**

Creating a sense of belonging is one of the key components of the developmental context we are trying to foster in 4-H. In addition to greeting and welcoming youth and adults when they arrive, is to have consistency of structure and **helping people know what to expect**. You could even create a handout for first-time visitors describing the parts of your club meeting. Most 4-H events and all 4-H club meetings start with American flag salute, followed by the 4-H Pledge. Again, a printed copy of the 4-H Pledge may help new participants feel more included, as well as name tags, consistent and visible sign-in procedures, and experienced club members personally reaching out to them.

A 4-H club meeting5 consists of three main components (the approximate length of time each component should take in an hour and half club meeting):

1. **Group Decisions (15-20 minutes)** - Youth officers lead the meeting agenda. This is the traditional “business meeting” part of the club meeting. Members participate in roll call, introductions, and business discussions, making decisions on activities and ideas. Clubs often use parliamentary procedure or consensus for decision-making and may form committees to work on specific projects. Officer elections occur at the start of each 4-H year, offering leadership opportunities as members grow.
2. **Program (40-60 minutes)** - Members engage in hands-on activities to explore interests and build skills. This is the “Experimental Learning Model” part of the club meeting where youth will learn. Meetings often feature member presentations, guest speakers, field trips, service, or interactive learning experiences. Participation is encouraged through active listening and direct involvement.
3. **Group Building (15-20 minutes)** - Meetings include activities to foster belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity. This is the “recreational or social” part of the club meeting where youth can connect with each other in a less formal structure. Examples include songs, games, refreshments, celebrations, and team-building exercises.



**Example 4-H Club Meeting Agenda:**

1. Business Meeting:
	1. Call to Order - President opens the meeting.
	2. Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge - Led by designated members.
	3. Roll Call - Secretary calls roll; [members can respond with a pre-determined answer to make it more engaging (e.g., a favorite project or recent achievement)]
	4. Introduction of Guests - Members introduce any visitors or guests.
	5. Reading and Approval of Minutes - Secretary reads the minutes from the previous meeting. Members vote to approve the minutes.
	6. Treasurer’s Report - Treasurer provides a financial update on club funds. Members vote to approve the report if necessary.
	7. Committee Reports - Committee chairs provide updates on their projects or activities.
	8. Old Business - Discussion of any unfinished topics from the previous meeting.
	9. New Business - Members bring up new ideas or activities for discussion and decision-making.
2. Program/Education:
	1. Club members give presentations or lead hands-on activities related to 4-H projects.
3. Group Building/Recreation:
	1. Recreation Leader leads a game, song, or team-building activity.
4. Announcements - Reminders about upcoming events, deadlines, or meetings.
5. Adjournment - President closes the meeting.

**Common 4-H officer positions and their roles include:**

1. **President**: Leads meetings and sets the agenda. The president ensures meetings follow the planned order, calls for votes, and keeps the group on task. They represent the club in the community and work with other officers and leaders.
2. **Vice President**: Assists the president and steps in when the president is absent. Often oversees committees, ensuring they stay on track and report back to the club. In some clubs, the vice president may also organize programs and guest speakers.
3. **Secretary**: Keeps accurate records of meetings, including attendance and minutes. The secretary may also handle club correspondence, keeping members informed of upcoming meetings and events.
4. **Treasurer**: Manages club finances, including tracking income and expenses, maintaining a budget, and providing financial reports at meetings. The treasurer works with Extension staff to ensure funds are managed according to 4-H policies.
5. **Reporter**: Publicizes club events and accomplishments. The reporter may write articles for local media or the 4-H newsletter, take photos, and maintain social media pages to keep the community informed about club activities.
6. **Historian**: Documents the club’s activities throughout the year by creating a scrapbook or digital archive. The historian collects photos, news clippings, and other mementos that capture the club’s memories.
7. **Recreation Leader**: Plans and leads games and activities to promote team-building and fun at meetings. This role helps engage members and build a sense of community within the club.
8. **Parliamentarian**: Ensures meetings follow proper procedures and helps the club adhere to parliamentary rules during discussions and decision-making. The parliamentarian advises on rules if any issues arise during the meeting.

These officer roles help keep the club organized, foster leadership, and encourage members to take active roles in their club’s success. However, your club can expand or customize officer positions, in accordance with bylaws or making appropriate amendments, to best fit your club and its members.

**Sample 4-H Club Bylaws:**

These sample bylaws cover essential governance areas and can be adjusted based on specific club needs and Extension guidelines:

**Article I: Name**

The name of this club shall be the [Club Name] 4-H Club.

**Article II: Purpose**

The purpose of the [Club Name] 4-H Club is to:

1. Provide youth with opportunities to learn life skills, leadership, citizenship, and positive character traits.
2. Foster community involvement, teamwork, and personal development.
3. Support the mission of 4-H and adhere to guidelines provided by [County Name] County Extension and South Carolina 4-H.

**Article III: Membership**

1. Membership is open to all youth ages [5-18 or local age requirements] in [County or Area Served], regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status.
2. Members are expected to participate in club activities, follow 4-H principles, and demonstrate respect for others.

**Article IV: Meetings**

1. Regular meetings shall be held on [specific day, e.g., the first Monday of each month].
2. Special meetings may be called by the President with at least 48 hours' notice to all members.
3. A quorum (at least 50% of active members) must be present to conduct official business.

**Article V: Officers and Elections**

1. **Officers**: The officers of this club shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Reporter, and Recreation Leader.
2. **Duties**:
	* **President**: Leads meetings, prepares agendas, and represents the club.
	* **Vice President**: Assists the President and oversees committees.
	* **Secretary**: Records minutes, attendance, and manages club correspondence.
	* **Treasurer**: Manages finances, provides reports, and maintains club funds.
	* **Reporter**: Publicizes club activities and writes articles.
	* **Recreation Leader**: Plans games and activities for club meetings.
3. **Election of Officers**:
	* Officers shall be elected annually in [specific month] by a majority vote of active members.
	* Officers may serve one-year terms and are eligible for re-election.

**Article VI: Committees**

1. Committees shall be created as needed to support specific club projects or activities.
2. Committee chairs will report on their activities at each meeting.

**Article VII: Finances**

1. The club shall operate under the financial oversight of [County Name] County Extension in accordance with Clemson University and South Carolina 4-H fiscal policies.
2. All funds raised by the club must be used to support 4-H programs and activities.
3. The Treasurer shall maintain accurate financial records and report monthly to the club.

**Article VIII: Parliamentary Authority**

The club will follow Robert’s Rules of Order for decision-making, unless otherwise specified by these bylaws.

**Article IX: Amendments**

1. These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given at a previous meeting.
2. Amendments must be approved by the [County Name] County Extension office.

**Article X: Dissolution**

If this club disbands, all club assets shall be assigned to [County Name] County 4-H.

**11. Volunteer Recognition**

Please know how much your contributions of time, talents, and resources are appreciated! We could not achieve our mission in 4-H without the dedicated support and service of our volunteers. Thank you!

How do you like to be recognized for your efforts? Do you like to be **praised** (verbally or in writing)? Would you like to be rewarded with **quality time** spent together? Would someone lending a **helping hand** be of most benefit? Is it meaningful for you to receive **a gift** (money, trophy, plaque)? Or, is it simply a **high five** or proverbial ‘pat on the back’? Local programs celebrate volunteers in many different ways through annual events, awards, and recognition programs. Let your 4-H staff know what form of recognition means the most to you.

In addition, volunteers can also be nominated for the statewide Glen Krohn Award of Excellence.

The Glen Krohn Award recognizes outstanding volunteer leadership in the 4-H program. It is named for the late Dr. Glen Krohn, retired Assistant Director, Family and Youth Development. Dr. Krohn was a strong believer in volunteers throughout his career, having as one of his philosophical mottos the statement, “Volunteerism is the price you pay for the space you take”.

To nominate a volunteer, **submit a one-page overview of the volunteer’s accomplishments**. A one-page limit on nominations will be strictly enforced. (Please use one-inch margins and 12-point font of Times New Roman or similar.) Excerpts of the one-page narrative will be read at the State 4-H Awards Banquet at State 4-H Congress for each recipient of the award. **Nominations are due in the spring annually.**

The following criteria will be used to judge each entry:

* Impact on Youth 25%
* Program Responsibilities 20%
* Creativity of Program 15%
* Level of Involvement (County) 20%
* Level of Involvement (State) 10%
* Length of Service 10%

**12. Resources for Volunteers**

**References:**

1Worker, S.M. et al., (2020). Volunteer Outcomes and Impact: The Contributions and Consequences of Volunteering in 4-H. Journal of Youth Development. 15:4. DOI 10.5195/jyd.2020.847

2Eccles, J. and Gootman, J. (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

34-H Program Leaders Working Group – 4-H Volunteerism Committee. (2021). 10 Ways to Volunteer. <https://4-h.org/resources/professionals/volunteer-development/>

4Kolb, D. (1974). Organizational Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, MF: Prentice-Hall.

5Kansas State University. (2020). 4-H Greet Sheet. K-State Research and Extension Fact Sheet. 4H1123. <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4-h-greet-sheet_4H1123.pdf>

**Additional Resources:**

* Clemson University Pre-Collegiate Programs Office (<https://www.clemson.edu/administration/pre-collegiate/index.html>)
	+ Youth Programs Policy (<https://clemsonpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12239&PageId=460511>)
	+ Youth Programs Manual (<https://clemsonpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12217&PageId=459665>)
* 4-H Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency – Taxonomy of skills and associated informational resources (<https://4h-volunteerism-resources.extension.org/home/volunteer-research-and-knowledge-competency-vrkc/>)
	+ Communications
	+ Organization
	+ 4-H Program Management
	+ Educational Design and Delivery
	+ Positive Youth Development
	+ Interpersonal skills

**Contact Information and Support:**

The South Carolina 4-H website (clemson.edu/4h) provides access to resources like program registration, lesson plans, event calendars, and training materials. In addition, key contacts within South Carolina 4-H are provided, including local county offices and the state office. Extension staff can assist with questions, resources, and ongoing training needs.

This guide is an overview, and we can expand on any section based on specific county needs that reflect South Carolina 4-H’s unique offerings. Let us know if you want more details in any particular area or have specific policies you would like included!