

Introduction to 4-H Family and Consumer Science Projects

Family and Consumer Science is an interdisciplinary field with a focus on relationships and integration of knowledge gleaned from the physical sciences, social sciences, art and philosophy. Family and Consumer Science deals with the relationship between individuals, families and communities, and the environment in which they live. The field represents many disciplines, including consumer science, nutrition, parenting, family economics, resource management, human development, interior design, textiles, apparel design and others.

4-H FCS projects expose young people to the academic disciplines through projects such as clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, housing and home environment, consumer education, family life, health and safety.

Goals of the FCS Program

- Strengthening the well-being of individuals and families across the life span
- Becoming responsible citizens and leaders in family, community and work settings
- Promoting optimal nutrition and wellness across the life span
- Managing resources to meet the material needs of individuals and families
- Balancing personal, family and work lives
- Using critical and creative thinking skills to address problems in diverse families, communities and work environments
- Exemplifying successful life management, employment and career development
- Functioning effectively as providers and consumers of goods and services
- Appreciating human worth and accepting responsibility for one's actions and success in family and work life

What Is a 4-H project?

Projects are tools 4-H uses to help members gain subject matter knowledge and develop life skills. In 4-H projects, members are learning by doing. Some key life skills 4-H projects help to develop are goal setting, character education, evaluation and record keeping.

A 4-H project is a series of educational experiences led by an adult volunteer. There are two broad categories of 4-H FCS projects: 1) club, county and state-supported projects and 2) self-directed projects. Club, county and state projects are supported by educational curricula from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and may include state-sponsored project experiences. Self-directed projects are projects 4-H members select and carry out themselves. Members do their own research and present what they have learned through presentations, speeches, workshops, field trips, recordbooks, etc.

A 4-H project is made up of four types of activities:

- **Hands-on activities:** making, producing, selling, practicing, observing, testing, interviewing, etc.
- **Organized activities:** demonstrations, speeches, workshops, camps, county judging contests, project activities, exhibits, etc.
- **Leadership/Citizenship activities:** conducting, planning, teaching, assisting, informing, organizing, etc.
- **Community service:** volunteering, serving, helping, collecting, reflecting, donating, etc.

Who can be a 4-H member?

A youth becomes a 4-H member when he/she completes an individual paper enrollment form, an individual on-line registration via 4-H CONNECT, or is included in a group enrollment form.

Young people are eligible to participate in the current 4-H year, which runs from September through August, if they are 8 and in the third grade or 9 years of age by August 31st of the current year, and have not reached their 19th birthday on or before August 31st of the current year.

The age divisions within the 4-H program make it possible to offer activities and experiences that are age and developmentally appropriate. More information on child growth and development is included on page 81.

- **Clover Kids** – Ages 5 to 8 (kindergarten through second grade). Children in this age division participate in project-related learning experiences and have forms of recognition that are age appropriate. Clover Kids are not eligible for recognition programs and competitive events.

- **Junior** – Ages 8 and in the third grade, 9 and 10
- **Intermediate** – Ages 11 to 13
- **Senior** – Ages 14 to 18

Selecting a 4-H Project

When guiding a 4-H member to select a project, start by asking questions such as:

- What do you most like to do?
- Do you have, or can you get, the necessary equipment and space?
- Do you have a way to finance your project ideas?
- Are your parents interested? Does it fit into their plans?
- Do you have the time you will need for this project?
- Is the project suited to your age and ability?
- Is there leadership to help you with your work?
- Does the project fit into your community?

Project Goals

Once a project has been selected, the 4-H member should **set a GOAL** (decide what to do and learn) for the project. Project goals are individual, even though several members may be working on the same project. Each member should talk about his or her ideas with project leaders and/or parent(s). Everyone should understand that it is okay to change the goal(s) or set additional goals during the year.

This tool can help members understand the goal-setting process. Good goals are measurable and have three parts.

Action – How you will do something?	Result – What are you going to do?	Timetable – When are you doing to do it?
I will learn I will give I will train	Make nutritious snacks A speech My dog	Before school starts Before May 1 st Before hunting season

Project goals should include the following:

- Knowledge goals – things you want to learn.
- Skill goals – things you want to raise, make and/or do.
- Leadership goals – things you want to do and to teach others.
- Community Service goals – things you want to do for others.

After writing a goal, a 4-H member should develop an action plan that outlines the steps needed to accomplish the goal. Examples include practicing, learning a special skill, and researching a topic. This may require “thinking backward” from what the member wants to accomplish to how it will get done.

Why Keep Project Records?

Record keeping is a vital life skill taught through 4-H. It helps a 4-H member develop goals and then see if those goals were met at the end of the project. It also helps record a member’s history with 4-H, such as leadership, community service projects, workshops participated in and those taught.

Record keeping should be presented in a fun, creative manner and members encouraged to develop systems that work best for them. Records can be kept with a calendar on the wall, a notebook, or a computer. The important thing is that members record their experiences.

Refer to the Texas 4-H and Youth Development record-keeping system for resources.