



# Starting a 4-H Shooting Sports Project

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  C1119E

## Purpose

The purpose of the 4-H Shooting Sports Project is to teach life skills that lead young people to become competent, confident, caring, contributing members of society. Through learning, experiencing, and leading, young people gain significant skills that will help them develop into community leaders. It is important that project leaders and parents understand that the purpose of the shooting sports project is the same as other 4-H projects—that is, teaching life skills—not producing Olympic shooters.

Shooting sports may also attract kids and adults who might not be interested in more typical 4-H activities and projects. The youngest participants may enroll in this program if they are eight years old and in third grade by January 1 of the 4-H year.

## Leadership Requirements

The 4-H shooting project is different from other 4-H projects in that, besides completing the 4-H volunteer training that is required by each county, potential leaders must be 4-H trained and certified in their disciplines of interest and also have the support of their county Extension office. Shooting sport disciplines offered include rifle (.22 or air), shotgun, pistol (.22 or air), muzzle loader, archery, hunting, and reload.

## Leadership Training

The leadership training requirements can be met through state 4-H trainings offered at various times and locations throughout Washington. Reciprocal agreements are also in place with Oregon and Idaho 4-H programs that provide additional training opportunities for leaders. Leadership training is also evolving into a combination of face-to-face range instruction and completion of online modules.

For more information, leaders or others seeking to start a county 4-H shooting sports project can contact the state 4-H office or their county Extension office, or visit the WSU 4-H website at <http://4-h.wsu.edu/>.

## Creating a Successful Program

Follow these steps to create a successful shooting program:

- Contact your county Extension office to obtain their commitment to support a shooting sports project area.
- Complete the application and screening requirements as specified by the county Extension office. (Background and reference checks will be done by the Extension office.)
- Complete online leadership training modules and/or other training required by the Extension office.
- Check with your county Extension office, the state 4-H office, or the 4-H website for training opportunities.
- Attend a qualified 4-H shooting sports training.
- Review the Washington State 4-H Shooting Sports State Plan: <http://4h.wsu.edu/projects/publications/shootingsports/StatePlan2007.pdf>.
- Organize a club with the youth who wish to participate.
- Enlist a qualified gunsmith to inspect any firearms to be used at a 4-H event or activity to ensure operational functioning and safety.
- Teach life skills through use of the shooting sports program.
- Teach and maintain a safety program.

## Start-up Costs

The cost of starting a shooting sports program depends on the disciplines involved and the availability of training and equipment. The registration fee for training can be \$50.00 or more depending on training locations, facilities charges, and instructors' travel expenses. The state does not cover these expenses, so they should be included in the cost of training. In addition, travel, meals, and lodging expenses are connected with attending a training session. The costs associated with equipment can be a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars depending on the number of participants and the number of firearms and targets needed.

## Funding and Grant Opportunities

Shooting clubs may require more financial support than other programs depending on the disciplines chosen and the type of equipment desired. For example, using air rifles and pistols is less expensive than using shotguns.

Funding may be acquired through local fundraising activities, grants, and donations. In some cases, the county 4-H program or 4-H leaders' council may be able to assist with the costs, and some gun manufacturers have programs or grants for beginning clubs. Local support for these shooting programs has been good, and therefore fundraising activities have worked well. Grant opportunities include Friends of NRA (National Rifle Association), Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, and other wildlife-supporting groups. When handling program funds, it is important to follow Washington State 4-H finance-handling guidelines (<http://4h.wsu.edu/handbook/Chap3-ProgMgmt.pdf>).

## Competition Opportunities

Opportunities for 4-H members to compete are available and encouraged. Currently, Washington State 4-H Shooting Sports has developed a statewide, progressive contest process for youth to compete at the county and district levels and culminating in a state competition. Members must compete at each level to qualify for the next event. Winners at the state level are then qualified to represent Washington state 4-H at the national invitational event. Participation in these competitions is at the participant's own expense.

Other competition opportunities could involve contests between counties or between clubs. Mail-in contests are also popular. This type of competition is where two "remote" clubs that are too far apart to meet for an in-person contest shoot equally qualified targets and mail in their scores to a central location for ranking. These events present additional challenges to shooting opportunities throughout the year.

## Summary

Starting up a 4-H shooting sports program is not difficult and the rewards can be many. There are many people throughout the state who are willing to provide assistance, advice, and support to achieve the goals of helping young people learn new skills and develop into community leaders.



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY



4-H Youth Development Program



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