

The Organizational Structure of the Washington State University 4-H Youth Development Program

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4-H is the youth education and outreach component of Cooperative Extension Services (CES) at land-grant institutions, and is implemented by CES as a means for land-grant institutions to carry out responsibilities funded under the [Smith-Lever Act, 7 United States Code 341](#). The 4-H Name and Emblem is a federal mark, protected by Public Law 18 U.S.C. 707, and is entrusted by Congress to the Secretary of Agriculture, with authorized use by 4-H clubs across the nation, the representatives of USDA, land-grant institutions, and persons authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture.

In Washington state, USDA has authorized Washington State University (WSU) to serve as the steward of the 4-H program, name and emblem. WSU identifies WSU Extension 4-H Youth Development as the administrative lead for the 4-H program.

In each county there are many entities that are included in the 4-H program. The main entities include county extension faculty and staff, councils, volunteers, members and member parents/guardians. This document seeks to explain the roles and responsibilities of these entities for better understanding of the organizational structure.

County extension faculty and staff

The responsibilities of the employed program personnel include ensuring all policies and procedures set forth by the state program are followed and practiced. This includes not only the Washington State 4-H Policy and Procedures Handbook but also policies and procedures of WSU including civil rights and nondiscrimination. The 4-H county personnel also have the responsibility of authorizing clubs and affiliates to use the 4-H name and emblem in their activities. For example, each 4-H club holds a separate authorize to exist as a 4-H club and any partner that wishes to display the 4-H emblem in their materials must agree to maintain the appropriate use of the name and emblem. County personnel in the 4-H youth development program also carry the responsibility to ensure best practices of positive youth development are implemented to provide the optimal environment in which youth can learn and achieve. Additionally, 4-H county personnel are responsible for ensuring all partner entities are committed to upholding the same civil rights and nondiscrimination practices and execute a statement of compliance prior to any partnership activities.

In those instances when policies, procedures, agreements and best practices are not followed, 4-H county personnel are required to provide guidance to assist whatever

entity towards regaining compliance. Should such guidance not produce the desired outcome of compliance, it then becomes necessary for 4-H personnel to implement further steps towards the most beneficial outcome for the individual entity, the 4-H program, and the WSU Extension program in that community.

County personnel also serve as the liaison between the local 4-H program and various departments within WSU. This relationship provides a conduit for departments that is effective and efficient; communicating with multiple individuals from thirty-nine counties and one tribal office would prove difficult and communication could become cloudy.

4-H Councils

Each 4-H Council (aka Leaders' Council) is granted authorization to participate in the 4-H program (and use the name and emblem) through the 4-H county personnel. The main purpose of a council is to assist and advise county 4-H personnel in the administration of local programs, competitive events and other 4-H activities, as well as, serve as the local fund raising organization of the program. Some councils are incorporated entities while others are not. However, each council must have an adopted constitution and by-laws to be included in the tax-exempt status of the 4-H program in Washington state. 4-H county personnel serve as an ex-officio officer and do not enjoy the right to vote on council matters. 4-H county personnel do have the responsibility to ensure all policies, procedures, best practices, etc. (stated previously) are followed. 4-H county personnel help advise council, work with the council in developing agenda items and support with the election of new officers.

The council serves in an advisory capacity to county personnel on 4-H programming. Best practices involve seeking guidance from council, committees, other local entities; while the council may hold a vote to determine their desired course of action, such vote directs the advice/guidance to 4-H county personnel. It remains the responsibility of 4-H county personnel to make the best possible decision while maintaining compliance with State and National policies, procedures, best practices, etc. There may be some instances where time does not permit seeking guidance and 4-H county personnel may choose to make decisions without enacting this process.

The council also serves as the voice of certified volunteers to the state program through the state council. This process includes providing a conduit for volunteers to request changes to the program, policies or procedures. The state council meeting is held once per year following the end of the 4-H program year, September 30.

4-H Certified Volunteer

A 4-H Certified Volunteer is defined as an individual who has submitted a volunteer application to their Extension office, has cleared a check with their references, undergone an interview with appropriate 4-H county personnel, cleared a nationwide criminal background check, and completed any required educational sessions. Upon certification, the volunteer is approved to work with youth in our program and assumes responsibilities for providing a safe environment for youth to learn, achieve and thrive.

Periodically, volunteers may be required to complete further education related to their roles within the organization and/or additional applications for volunteer roles. Supporting documents can be found on the county website, and/or through 4-H county personnel communications and meetings. At some point, many volunteers will be asked to assist in teaching specific skills and sharing knowledge they might have to other volunteers. Additionally, they may be asked to serve as a mentor to new volunteers.

Certified volunteers are responsible for providing leadership to 4-H clubs, teaching youth various project related skills and information, organizing and implementing various 4-H activities, events, shows, etc. Working in conjunction with 4-H county personnel, they assure all activities are implemented following all policies, procedures, best practices, etc. Certified volunteers are responsible for communicating program policies and procedures to members and members' parent/guardian.

These volunteers sign the "A Valuable Partnership" agreement and agree to the terms included in this agreement. It is recommended that each volunteer fully understand the terms of this agreement and acknowledge that violations may result in serious consequences.

Certified volunteers are encouraged to work with 4-H county personnel with any issues they might encounter. Interactions between volunteers, personnel and other entities should maintain a positive tone and work towards a solution for all parties involved. Manipulation, bullying, and team building for inappropriate purposes are not conducive to an amiable relationship and will be addressed.

All volunteer positions require volunteers to be in good standing.

4-H Members and their Parents/Guardians

Members and parent/guardian of members are encouraged to gain familiarity of 4-H policies, procedures, and best practices. Members are expected to make a commitment to the program and meet all requirements for participation in 4-H activities. These may

include appropriate age range, timely submission of registration/contest entries, and completing all duties/tasks required for participation.

The 4-H youth development program seeks to assist members in gaining skills that will assist them as they develop as a member of our society. Through experiential learning activities, youth are offered the opportunity to self-reflect on their achievements (this does not always include winning) and identify how to improve their outcome.

Parents/guardians are highly encouraged to accept outcomes and work with their youth to complete the self-reflection of their participation. Parents/guardians should also expect to be asked to assist certified volunteers in the implementation of the program; if you can identify certain areas you would like to assist, let your certified volunteers know.