The mission of 4-H is to empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

Everything we do in 4-H should work toward fulfilling the 4-H mission. The chartering process, appropriate bylaws and state policies are all designed to support the work we do to empower youth to reach their full potential - fulfilling the 4-H mission.

The 4-H Educator is responsible for assuring that all programs bearing the 4-H name and emblem are consistent with the mission, goals and policies of UW Extension’s 4-H program state-wide and nationally.

A group is officially recognized as a 4-H club once the following steps are completed:

- Complete the 4-H Club Charter Application
- Receive approval from the University of Wyoming Extension 4-H Educator
- Develop appropriate 4-H club bylaws to outline how the 4-H club will operate using the template provided

Requirements to receive a 4-H Club Charter include:

- Membership must include a minimum of 5 youth from at least two separate households/families.
- At least one screened adult volunteer leader to supervise the organizational needs and programs of the club.
- An identified team of youth officers to provide leadership for the club.
- Appropriate 4-H club bylaws.
- A calendar of planned educational activities (i.e. meetings, workshops, community service, etc.) for a minimum of six months.
- Club members and volunteers who are prepared to support the 4-H program above the local club level (i.e. participation in county council and program activities).
- Comply with and sign the UW Affirmative Action form.
- Approval of the chapter application/renewal from the University of Wyoming Extension 4-H educator.

The chartering process also requires annual renewal.

The purpose of this document is to help guide leaders and members in developing appropriate bylaws for their 4-H club. Bylaws define how the club is going to function, how you will operate as a group. Here are some tips to consider when writing bylaws:

- Use a balance between structure and flexibility – include enough structure to give direction for how the club will be governed, but allow enough flexibility to meet the changing needs of the club.
o For example, in the Article about Meetings, using a statement like “annually the club will determine how group decisions are to be made” allows for flexibility so that meetings can be conducted in an age appropriate manner and gives members an opportunity to choose a different group decision making process. (i.e. action agenda, modified parliamentary procedure, consensus, etc.)

- Avoid using 4-H jargon – select words that anyone, even someone with no 4-H experience, would understand
- Most groups include too much in the bylaws – the bylaws should address how the club is going to govern itself.

A set of bylaws generally contains the following articles. Two types of information have been included under each article:

1. Statements required through Wyoming 4-H Policies and/or National 4-H Headquarters Policies. These statements cannot be modified and are identified with (required) at the end of the statement.
2. Decisions that are determined by the 4-H club membership. Questions have been included under each of these articles/sections to help your group think through the most effective way to operate in instances where club decisions are appropriate.

**Article 1 – Name and State/National Affiliation**

**Section 1:** Club Name (determined by the 4-H Club Membership)

Questions to consider:

✓ Does the club name reflect a positive image of 4-H to the public?
✓ Does the club name encourage inclusivity? Would a girl want to join a club with this name? Would a boy want to join a club with this name? Would someone who lives in the city think they could join a club with this name?
✓ Does the club name foster the character-building purpose of 4-H?
✓ Is the name sustainable over time?

**Section 2:** (Required) The 4-H Club will annually complete the chartering process for permission to use the 4-H name and emblem as authorized by the University of Wyoming Extension on behalf of National 4-H Headquarters at the United States Department of Agriculture.

**Article 2 – Mission and Purpose**

**Section 1:** (Required) Reference to the 4-H Mission and the essential elements of positive youth development is included under the purpose in the template. The Essential Elements include Belonging, Independence, Generosity and Mastery and more complete definition is also included in the template.
Section 2: The structure of this 4-H club will be: (determined by the 4-H Club Membership)

- Community 4-H Club
- 4-H Club with a project focus

If the 4-H club has a project focus it shall be ___________________________
(determined by the 4-H Club Membership)

- Examples of a project focus could include: livestock, small animals, family living projects, clothing, shooting sports, natural resources, etc.
- If the club identifies a project focus, how will members who choose to enroll in projects outside the club’s project focus be handled?
  - Clearly communicate the level of support the member/family could expect.
  - Members enrolled in a project outside of the club’s project focus are encouraged to seek out other educational opportunities to learn about that project.
- If the club adds additional purposes to those already stated in Article 2, Section 1, how do they help achieve the mission of 4-H?

Article 3 – Membership

(Required – Section 1 and 2) Membership must include a minimum of 5 youth from at least two separate households/families. The following membership criteria as established in the Wyoming 4-H Club Policies will be adhered to by the 4-H Club.

Section 1: Adult leaders:

- The membership must consist of at least one adult, who is an official 4-H volunteer, to supervise the organizational needs and programs of the 4-H Club. Adults that are 19 years of age prior to January 1st of the current year may apply to be an official UW 4-H volunteer.
- Recruitment of adult leaders to organize and lead project meetings so that youth may learn and develop specific skills is encouraged. Those leaders must also be official 4-H volunteers.
- Chaperones for overnight stays must be at least 21 years of age.

Youth members:

- All youth, between the ages of 5 and 18 prior to January 1 of the current year, may enroll in the 4-H Club.
- Youth may be a club member of 4-H in only one state and one county at any time.
- Youth and their parents/legal guardian must agree to and sign a Wyoming 4-H Code of Conduct.

Section 2: The 4-H club must comply with all federal and state laws including those regarding non-discrimination. The University's policy has been, and will continue to be, one of nondiscrimination, offering equal opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment on the basis of their demonstrated
ability and competence without regard to such matters as race, sex, gender, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, genetic information, political belief, or other status protected by state and federal statutes or University Regulations. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact their local UW CES office. To file a complaint, write to the UW Employment Practices/Affirmative Action Office, University of Wyoming, Department 3434, 1000 E. University Avenue, Laramie, WY 82071.

The 4-H Club may identify duties which can be expected from club members and determine the club size that best meets their needs. (Section 3 and 4 are determined by club membership)

Section 3: Duties of Members are identified by the club. Suggestions of membership duties could include…..
- Understand the expectations for members, leaders and families
- Complete enrollment materials
- Attend meetings regularly
- Participate in club decisions
- Support club activities (educational goals, community service, project meetings, fundraising, etc.)

Questions to consider:
- ✓ If additional duties of members are included, do they encourage participation in the club?
- ✓ Do the duties outlined create barriers for participation?

Section 4: Member and Adult Leader Recognition

The Wyoming 4-H Achievement Program is a state-wide program designed to recognize youth members’ continued involvement in Wyoming 4H. Recognition categories are outlined below:

Membership Recognition:
- Member has turned in all required enrollment materials
- Member has behaved in an appropriate manner at all 4-H activities, events, and meetings they have attended
- Member is enrolled in at least one project
- Member is enrolled in at least one club or has approval of County 4-H Educator
- Membership Certificate is provided

Silver Recognition:
- Member has attended an minimum of 3 club meetings
- Member meets Membership Recognition criteria outlined above
- Member has exhibited what he/she has learned at some point in the current 4-H year
• Member provides documentation of setting goals, knowledge/skills gained, and participation in project.
• Silver Level Certificate is provided

Gold Recognition:
• Member has attended an minimum of 6 club meetings
• Member meets Membership Recognition criteria outlined above
• Member has exhibited what he/she has learned at some point in the current 4-H year
• Member provides documentation of participation in ALL essential elements of positive youth development: setting goals, knowledge/skills gained, recognition, leadership, community service and participation.
• Gold Level Certificate is provided.

Wyoming 4-H Honors Club:
• The ultimate achievement a 4-H member can obtain is induction into the Wyoming 4-H Honors Club achieved by receiving 19 points over the course of the members’ involvement
• A member receives three (3) points for years in which Gold Recognition is achieved
• A member receives one (1) point for each year Silver Recognition is achieved
• Points are evaluated and recorded through the local County 4-H Program
• Wyoming 4-H Honors Club Certificate and a Wyoming 4-H pin/charm is presented to the member and state-wide recognition is provided

4-H clubs may provide additional recognition for members and adult leaders. When a 4-H club provides additional recognition the criteria to receive the recognition must be clearly outlined so that everyone understands what they have to do to receive the recognition.

Questions to consider:
✓ What additional recognition would benefit your club? (i.e. 100% attendance, Character Counts! Pillar awards, project work, record book or portfolio awards, outstanding member and/or leader award, etc.)
✓ What type of behavior do you want to encourage through recognition?
✓ What type of recognition is there that encourages participation, progress toward club goals, leadership, cooperation and teamwork, project meetings or other educational activities?
✓ What criteria must be met to be eligible for the recognition?
  o Recognition for participation might be a t-shirt or cap with the club’s name on it. Because you are encouraging participation and creating a sense of belonging, every member of the club would receive the item regardless of how often they are able to attend.
  o Recognition for 100% participation would be presented to members who attended a pre-determined number of meetings. Is it 100% of the club meetings, 100% of the club meetings and community service activities? The club membership would need to determine what would be reasonable.
  o Recognition for leaders who conduct a pre-determined number of project meetings to help youth master a skill.
Section 5: Club size

As long as the 4-H Club membership does not implement a maximum number of members to discriminate against a specific individual or family, it may be appropriate to limit the size of the club. Some reasons the club might choose to limit the number of members include the size of the room which is available for meetings, the number of adult volunteers to help supervise and/or chaperone club activities, capacity to manage the required paperwork, etc.

Questions to consider:
- What is the ideal number of members needed to accomplish the educational goals, community service, leadership experiences, etc?
- Does it make sense for the 4-H club to have a maximum number of youth who can join the club?
- What about setting a maximum number of families who can make up the membership of the club?

The membership will determine the number of members the 4-H club can accommodate.

Article 4 – Youth Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

Section 1: Annually the club shall determine the process to identify members to hold officer positions. (determined by the club membership)

The purpose of having youth in officer positions is to provide youth an opportunity to learn about and develop skills in all the aspects of managing a team or group. Youth officers learn how to conduct effective meetings, how to facilitate group decisions, how to delegate and work with committees, as well as how to manage and account for public money.

A 4-H club typically has four officer positions: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. To meet the needs of the club, additional leadership positions may also be identified and filled. Other leadership positions may include reporter, historian, recreation leader, pledge leader, technology communications officer, etc.

There are many ways the officer and other leadership positions can be used to enhance leadership experiences in the 4-H club. Historically the most common has been to elect one individual for each officer position for the 4-H year. There is nothing that dictates the officer and other leadership positions have to be fulfilled in that way. Take into consideration the number of members, the age of the members, and their interest in learning about the officer roles. Due to the financial responsibilities it is recommended that the treasurer be identified for a full one year term.

Questions to consider:
- How does the age of the members in the 4-H club affect the process to identify youth officers and other leadership positions?
Does it make sense to rotate the officer positions so that everyone has a chance to be in all of the officer positions?

Are there youth in the 4-H club that are also very involved in a seasonal activity in school (football, soccer, volleyball, track, debate, theater, etc.) but would benefit from an officer position in the club? What about setting up the officer terms to be 6 months, instead of a year, which would allow those youth to do both?

If the 4-H club has many members, what about identifying a Jr. and Sr. member who work together and act as co-officers?

Section 2: Duties of the individual Officer Positions:

The President shall preside at meetings, preserve order, appoint committees, call special meetings when necessary and perform other duties as necessary for the benefit of the 4-H club.

The Vice President shall perform the duties of the President if the President is absent. The Vice President should assist the President in leadership of the club and be active at all times.

The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all meetings, send minutes to the County Extension 4-H Educator, keep an accurate record of attendance and carry on all official correspondence for the club.

The Treasurer shall follow the financial recommendations in the Wyoming 4-H Treasurers Handbook. To provide a youth treasurer, and youth members in the club, the full experience of handling money with limited risk, the following recommendations are made:

- A 4-H club should have only one checking account with an ending balance not to exceed $1,000
- A 4-H club should have only one savings account with an ending balance not to exceed $2,000
- If a long term fundraising effort would exceed these limitations its purposes must be clearly identified in the budget and club minutes.
- All excess funds should be spent on club functions or managed through a county 4-H Council or 4-H Foundation.

Additional leadership positions would be listed and their duties described in the template in this section.

Section 3: The youth officer team shall determine the most appropriate process to make group decisions (determined by the club membership).

There are several common methods used to make decisions for a group. The type of decision to be made can determine the best process for the group to use.

- Unilateral – this is when a decision is made by one person for the entire group. This may be an appropriate method for simple, minor decisions that need to be made
right away. In a 4-H club, this type of decision making method would be discouraged since it eliminates the group experience.

- Decisions by minority – This would be when the officer team or a committee makes a decision for the entire group. Again, this may be an appropriate method when it is not possible to wait for the next regularly scheduled club meeting. If a decision is to be made by the minority, consider how input might be gathered from the entire membership.
- Majority rule – This would be used when the entire membership is involved in making a group decision. It is often associated with parliamentary procedure, where a vote is taken after discussion. If the membership is not in agreement during the discussion, there will be “winners” and “losers”.
- Consensus of the group – This would also be used when the entire membership is involved in making a group decision. The decision is discussed and negotiated until everyone understands and agrees with what will be done. This means that different possibilities are offered and options discussed until all members genuinely agree that the decision is acceptable.

Section 4: (Required) At the beginning of the 4-H year, club leaders and youth officers will work with the membership to determine the club’s educational program (i.e. identify the educational goals, community service goals, develop the budget around club goals and programming, etc.)

Questions to consider:
- How will the club’s educational and community service goals be developed?
- What methods/techniques will be used to gather input from the membership and plan the yearly program?
- How much money and/or how many other types of resources will be needed to carry out the club’s annual goals?

Remember, the purpose is to provide youth the chance to learn how to be effective in leadership roles so that when they are elected to those positions as adults, they know what they are doing and can be successful.

Article 5 – Committees

Two kinds of committees are most common: standing committees that operate and support the club on an ongoing basis and special committees that are created for a specific purpose. The club membership would determine the need for committees.

Section 1: Standing committees – committees that do not tend to change from year to year

Questions to consider:
- What committees does the club rely on to complete its purpose every year? (budget, fundraising, nominations, community service, recruitment, recognition, etc.)
When will the standing committees be established (at the beginning of the 4-H year, as needed throughout the year, etc.)

How will the membership on standing committees be determined? (election, appointment, ask for volunteers?)

How will leadership on the standing committee be determined? (election within the committee membership, appointment by club president, ask for a volunteer to fill the needed leadership roles – chair, secretary, etc.)

Section 2: Special committees – committees organized to conduct a special task and only function until the task is completed

Questions to consider:

What short term, annual events would be served better by a special committee rather than a standing committee? (a specific community service activity, recognition, family and club social outings, etc.)

How will the committee membership be determined? (appointment, ask for volunteers, etc.)

How will leadership on the committee be determined? (election within the committee membership, appointment by club president, ask for a volunteer to fill the needed leadership roles – chair, secretary, etc.)

Section 3: Committee Responsibilities and Scope of Decision Making (making and/or advising on decisions, communication, reporting back to the 4-H Club)

Questions to consider:

Will committees have the freedom to make decisions for the entire club membership?

Will committees act as an advisory group to the 4-H club?

How and when will the committee report to the entire club membership?

Article 6 – Meetings

Section 1: Meeting Schedule

- (Required) The 4-H year begins October 1 and ends September 30.
- How many meetings will be conducted over the year? (to create a sense of belonging and provide opportunities for leadership a minimum of 6 meetings is required)
- It is often easiest for club members and families if the club members identify a set meeting date (i.e. 7 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month)
- If the club’s meeting schedule will not be a set meeting date/time, create an annual calendar that includes all the club’s meeting dates/time.
- Additional meetings may be arranged to address specific issues that arise outside of the regularly scheduled club meetings.
Section 2: The 4-H Club Meeting
- What activities will make up the traditional club meeting?
  - The business meeting will consist of a call to order, roll call, approval of the minutes, old business, new business and adjournment.
  - Additional activities can be conducted along with the business meeting to incorporate the essential elements. Ice breakers and get acquainted/teambuilding games help create a sense of belonging. Presentations/demonstrations by club members give individuals a chance to develop public speaking skills and share what they are learning.
  - Would having time dedicated to committee meetings either before or after the business meeting be effective for the 4-H club?
- What activities beyond the traditional club meeting might be planned?
  - Community service activities
  - Social activities (end of summer picnics, softball games, holiday get together, etc.)
  - Educational activities (club tour to share and learn about member’s projects, business or career tour, a presentation day, etc.)

Section 3: (Required) Decisions for the 4-H Club will be made by the majority of members in attendance at the club meeting.

Article 7 – Funds

Section 1: (Required) Federal regulations governing the use of the 4-H name and emblem require annual financial reporting/accountability of all 4-H organizations. Funds will be managed following the financial recommendations in the Wyoming 4-H Treasurers Handbook.

Section 2: (Required) As a group, the membership is responsible for developing an annual budget and making decisions about expenditures for the 4-H club.

Section 3: (Required) Fundraising to support club activities will be determined by the club membership.

Questions to consider:
- What types of club activities require additional funds? (club t-shirts, social outings, club trips, club signs for the County Fair, club float for the community parade, purchasing equipment for the club, etc.)
- What type of fundraising projects will the club members be involved in?
- Does the fundraising project require manpower to be effective? For example, a haunted house would require many members to plan, build and conduct a safe and fun experience for the participants. Are there enough members willing to volunteer so that the project is successful?
- Does the fundraising project raise money and not necessarily need manpower to be successful? For example, selling candy bars.
- Will annual club dues be collected from 4-H members to help cover the cost of club activities?
If club dues are collected, will the club dues be paid per member? Will there be a maximum amount set per family?

What options are available for 4-H members to choose from when being asked to participate in fundraising projects? Possible options could include:

- Participating fully in the fundraising effort if it requires manpower to be successful.
- Dividing up the tasks necessary for the fundraiser and allowing members to choose which task they would like to help with rather than expecting them to be actively involved in the whole project. For example, if the club is having a bake sale, the tasks could be: advertising, baking the goods, set up and selling. A couple of families could be responsible for advertising ahead of the bake sale and even making signs for the day of the bake sale; different families could be responsible for baking an assortment of products; another set of families could sell the baked goods.
- Being allowed to make a financial donation to the club rather than physically participating in the fundraising project if manpower is not needed.
- Setting minimal club dues to help financially support club activities.

Section 4: (Required) Funds raised in the name of 4-H are publicly accountable and must be used only for 4-H purposes. All property purchased by the 4-H club is the property of the UW 4-H program.

Section 5: Funds will be distributed to individuals as follows:

When a 4-H club distributes funds to individual members for scholarships, financial support to attend county events, or state wide events, etc. the criteria and procedures necessary to access the funds must be clearly outlined.

Questions to consider:

- What type of funds are available to individuals? (scholarships, financial support to attend county/state/national events, etc.)
- What criteria must be met for an individual to be eligible to receive funds?
- How do individuals access the funds? (complete a form/application, attend a meeting in person to request funding, etc.)
- What expectations are there for accountability? (report back to the organization)
- How will the funds be distributed? (check written up front, individuals pay up front and get reimbursed, require receipts, etc.)
- How will requests for items that are not in the budget be addressed?

Section 6: (Required) Special fundraisers conducted as a community service project or for a specific cause not associated with the 4-H program must be advertised accordingly. For example, Chris Clover 4-H Club is raising money to support the American Cancer Society or Chris Clover 4-H Club is seeking donations to help Jimmy Smith cover his medical bills, etc.
Section 7: (Required) Solicited donations and grants are coordinated on a county wide basis. The 4-H Educator should be consulted prior to contacting local businesses for a donation or submitting a grant application.

Section 8: (Required) The 4-H Educator shall have oversight authority on all county 4-H financial and investment accounts.
- All bank accounts associated with the 4-H program must have a unique EIN number that is on file with the county 4-H Educator. The EIN number must be linked to the UW Group Exemption number (GEN) which establishes a club, committee, or group as a subordinate entity of UW 4-H.
- All bank accounts associated with the 4-H program must have at least two UW Employee’s names on the signature card.

Article 8 – Amendments

Section 1: The parts of the by-laws which are determined by the 4-H club membership may be amended with the following conditions:

Questions to consider:
- At which meetings can the by-laws be amended? (regular meeting, annual meeting, special meeting, etc.)
- What percentage of the vote must be affirmative to amend the by-laws? (simple majority vote, 2/3 vote, etc.)
- How will the membership be informed of the proposed by-law amendment? (posting in public location, notification by e-mail, announcement at 2 consecutive meetings prior to the vote, etc.)
- How much advance notice must the membership have regarding a meeting where the by-laws might be amended?

Article 9 – Dissolution

Section 1: (Required) Upon Dissolution, 4-H funds and property, must be relinquished to a 4-H affiliate with a charitable educational purpose such as another 4-H club, the County 4-H Council, County 4-H Foundation, or the Wyoming State 4-H Foundation for future use in 4-H programming. Distribution options must be discussed and approved by the County 4-H Educator.

Article 10 – Additional Procedures and Policies of the 4-H Club

Sometimes 4-H clubs put procedures and policies in place that are specific to their 4-H club. If your 4-H club creates additional procedures and policies think about how they can be developed so that the behavior you want is encouraged. Procedures and policies that are reward based create an atmosphere that encourages positive youth development rather than an environment that is punitive and discouraging.
Sources:


National 4-H Council, *Mission of 4-H*, [http://4-h.org/4history.html](http://4-h.org/4history.html) downloaded April 2010

University of Wyoming 4-H Youth Development, *Wyoming 4-H Constitution and Club Bylaws*, 4-H Secretary Book, [http://4-h.uwyo.edu/Wyo4H/4-HWebsite/Publications/Organization_Kit_Main.htm](http://4-h.uwyo.edu/Wyo4H/4-HWebsite/Publications/Organization_Kit_Main.htm) downloaded April 2010


Ohio State University, *Written Documents for Community Groups: Bylaws and Standard Operating Procedures*, Community Development Fact Sheet, [http://ohioline.osu.edu/cdfact/co-bl.html](http://ohioline.osu.edu/cdfact/co-bl.html) downloaded April 2010