



Planning and Conducting a Successful Program or Activity

There is a popular saying that states, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” This is true with 4-H programs, events, and activities. If you don’t think ahead, they will fail miserably. The secret of a successful program lies in three words: plan, conduct, and evaluate. Here is an overview of a systematic process that will enable you to plan any type of function with ease and success.

Plan!

1. Determine what type of program you want to plan.

Consider the answers to these questions before you get started:

- Is it long term or short term?
- Who is the intended audience: youth or adults or both? (Be sure to involve them in the process.)
- Why are you planning this program?
- How was it determined that this program would be held?
- Is this program new or existing? If it is existing, what is its past history and success? Refer to *Learn by Doing the 4-H Way* for tips on using the do-reflect-apply experiential process.

2. Set goals for the program.

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- What will a person in the program learn or gain from participating?
- Write down this information: use it in planning, promoting, and evaluating.
- Make your objectives specific, measurable, and appropriate for the intended participants.
- Consider how you will evaluate the program so you will know what participants learned from it.

3. Divide the task at hand into sub-tasks based on the set objectives.

- How many people will be needed to do the work?
- How much money will be needed?
- What permission will be needed?



- Will facility, transportation, lodging, or food arrangements be needed?
 - Set realistic timelines. Build in flexibility but keep to deadlines.
4. Create a planning team.
- Involve people who will be participating or affected by the program.
 - Identify and involve the appropriate people and assign tasks that match program needs and people's interests.
 - Delegate authority along with responsibility. Set expectations of outcomes, and then let people perform tasks with their own styles.
 - Monitor progress and provide guidance and assistance as needed.
5. Determine what funds, supplies, and attendance will be needed.
- Determine a budget. Do you have the funds needed? If not, will admission/fees need to be charged?
 - Is there a minimum or maximum number of participants? How many participants will it take to break even financially?
 - If you don't have the proper equipment, can you buy, borrow, or rent it?
 - Is advance registration needed? Set registration deadlines.
 - If program involves travel, overnight stays, or potentially hazardous activities, 4-H Event Permission Forms must be used.
6. Promote the program.
- Use a variety of promotion methods that will be suitable for your intended audience.

Conduct!

7. Get things done on time.
- Set a schedule and stick to it. Start on time. End on time.
 - Plan for more than you need: have an alternative "emergency" plan in case something goes awry.
 - Keep even "serious" programs fun!
8. Promise what people want, and deliver what you've promised.
- Be organized and professional, and act it.
 - Make participants feel welcome. Greet them. Say hello and goodbye.
 - Give people more than they expect.



Evaluate

9. Evaluate the planning and conducting processes as well as the end results.

- Observe the program while it is happening. Listen to comments from participants. Make needed adjustments as the program is happening.
- How effective was the promotion of your program? How did people find out about it?
- Have the planning team evaluate how the planning process went. Was it efficient? How could it be improved?
- Follow-up with thank-you letters, notes, or gifts to people who helped make the program a success.
- Are all bills paid? Did you meet your budget?

10. Determine how well program objectives were met.

- The objectives are your destination. The program planned is your road map. Evaluation helps you determine how good your vacation spot was and how enjoyable was the drive to get there.
- Ask participants questions based directly on the objectives of the program, such as:
 - Did we meet our goals?
 - How successful was our event?
 - What could we do to improve it next time?
- Use a variety of evaluation methods that are appropriate for the program participants. Some ideas for evaluation methods include:
 - Written questionnaires
 - Face-to-face or telephone interviews
 - Suggestion boxes
 - Group discussion
 - Indicators of interest in program, based on number of participants or income generated
 - Casual observation
 - Knowledge or skills gained by participants based on before-after comparisons or testimonials of participants
 - Comparisons with past, similar, or competing programs
 - Would participants recommend program to others or attend next time?



- Is program worth repeating?
- Share the results of your evaluation with people who will want to know: planning committee members, sponsors, county 4-H staff, participants, etc.

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For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

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