



Selecting The 4-H Volunteer Role Right For You

Being part of the 4-H Youth Development program means not only that you help young people learn and have fun, but also that (as a volunteer) you find the best way to support 4-H with your volunteer efforts. This is a sampling of leadership roles available to you. Use the “Volunteer Interest Inventory” (later in this information sheet) to help you select the role best suited to your interests and talents. Once you select the role(s) of interest to you, contact your county 4-H office for more information on how to become involved!

Club Leader

For 4-H volunteers who like to work directly with children, being a local club leader is an excellent opportunity. The organizational club leader may organize the club and serve as liaison with your county 4-H office. Assistant leaders may help with certain events or activities. Project leaders may help the club with one or more projects or specific subjects. Teen leaders are older, experienced 4-H members who can complement the leadership team in a club.

School Enrichment/After-School Volunteer

Assist with 4-H programs within the classroom or in after-school activities. Approved curriculum and/or training may be provided to support your work. These programs may be subject (project) related, general information about 4-H, recreation, etc. Volunteers are needed all year long.

Mentor/Coach for Independent 4-H Project

Youth may opt to participate in 4-H through an individual study. An adult serves as a mentor or coach to this young person and his or her project. The adult may be an expert in the subject matter or just encourage the member in exploration, research, and discovery. This one-on-one role requires that volunteers complete the appointment process.

Judge for County Event

Adults are always needed to serve as judges for various 4-H events. These volunteers should be skilled in the subject (project) which they are judging, able to communicate with children, and understand the philosophy of 4-H and recognition. See *Understanding 4-H Judging*.

4-H Fair

Every county 4-H fair is a huge undertaking that requires the help of all adult volunteers, parents, and members. There are many opportunities to become involved in this major event. See *County 4-H Fair – Showcase of the Year*.



4-H Volunteer Groups

County 4-H programs function through numerous advisory and program support groups. 4-H leaders' association, 4-H expansion & review committee, and projected advisory committees may be opportunities for you to give input in your county. See *Becoming Involved in 4-H Volunteer Groups*.

Resource Person

You may have a special talent that you would like to share with youth. It may be related to your career or a hobby. You could volunteer to help at a club meeting or perhaps present a workshop at a county event. Examples are: sharing your experience as a veterinarian or giving a photography workshop.

Key Volunteer Roles

A key volunteer leader is a resource person who provides support to the 4-H program beyond the local club and community, and in particular, to other volunteers. Following are examples of a few volunteer roles beyond the local club:

- *County or area recruiter.* Volunteers know their local communities and can be excellent recruiters for other adult leaders.
- *County or area trainer.* If you have an interest in training other volunteers in their roles as club leaders, you may wish to become a trainer. In either a community or county-wide setting, you would be trained to assist new leaders as they organize new clubs.
- *Mentor to club leaders.* The mentoring process allows a new club leader to be paired with an experienced volunteer, usually in the same project area. An understanding volunteer who has had experience as a club leader can be very helpful to the new leader.
- *Activity or event coordinator.* If you have a strong interest in a particular 4-H activity, such as Public Presentations, you may wish to become a coordinator.
- *Project key leader.* In many counties with more than one club in a particular project area, there may be a project key leader who coordinates educational efforts within that project.

Volunteer Interest Inventory

Do any of these volunteer roles interest you? This inventory may help you select a volunteer role that is based on your interests and talents. **I like:**

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ meeting new people | _____ traveling |
| _____ working with 1st-3rd graders | _____ working with 4th-8th graders |
| _____ working with teens | _____ working with adults |
| _____ teaching | _____ leading a group |
| _____ helping, but staying in the background | _____ working with my hands (physical activity) |
| _____ organizing events and activities | _____ learning new things |
| _____ other (list: _____) | |



Special talents I would like to share with others:

Use this list of interests to match volunteer opportunities that best meet your needs. If you have many interests, don't be afraid to start in a small way and then build up your volunteer roles. Remember to take on new challenges and to keep growing!

Position Descriptions

Work closely with paid 4-H staff in your county to design a position description for that volunteer role especially for you! A position description is simply a tool to organize the general description of an assignment.

Key Factors

Key Considerations to Discuss Before Agreeing to a Position Description:

- Is the task reasonable?
- Is the task easily understood?
- Are duties and responsibilities clear?
- What resources are available to me for this assignment?
- Who will be my advisor or supervisor?
- Is an estimate of required time included?
- What qualifications do I need for the position?
- Will I enjoy this job and learn from doing it?



What to Include

A Position Description Should Include:

- *Position Title* – Include a general description of a position.
- *Time Requirements* – Is it a short-term or an ongoing position? List time requirements and length of commitment.
- *Supervisor* – Who will supervise you in this position?
- *Position Responsibilities* – The position description should include the duties of the position and special requirements, if any are needed.
- *Qualifications* – What qualifications does the position require?
- *Training* – Find out the type of training available and when it will be provided. Examples: regular training for a group of volunteers, or training on a one-to-one basis.

A Good Match

Matching your talents with your interests and availability is a primary function of a good job description. This agreement is designed to protect you, clarify your role within the program, and serve as a communication tool in defining your responsibilities on the 4-H team.

*Revised by Ginny Powell and Linda Strieter.
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References

Lindsey, Daniel E., *Designing and Developing Volunteer Leadership Systems*. University of Minnesota, 1983.

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

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.