



IMPLEMENTING 4-H PROJECT EXPERIENCES: PREPARING FOR EXHIBIT

Intended Audience:

- 4-H youth and adult project leaders

Learning Objectives:

Project leaders will:

- Understand the role of the project exhibit from a positive youth development perspective
- Understand how to help members and parents prepare for project exhibit.

Target Essential Elements:

Exhibiting their projects helps members develop and practice a *mastery* of project-related knowledge and skills and develop a sense of *independence* as they make decisions about what to exhibit. Members also gain self-esteem when their project achievements are recognized by judges and the general public.

VRKC Taxonomy:

Volunteers will increase their expertise in *educational design and delivery* as they develop skills in *implementing* learning opportunities that effectively promote positive personal development.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Goals of the Fair or Other Public Exhibition Activity

- Easel paper
- Markers

Scavenger Hunt Activity

- Fair premium books, show bills, other exhibit information

BACKGROUND

The opportunity to exhibit a completed project at a show, fair, mall, or other public exhibition is often the highlight of the year for 4-H members. Members develop self-esteem as they show off their accomplishments to the public. A fair or similar event provides members with opportunities to display completed project work and to receive valuable feedback on their accomplishments from adult experts. Shows provide opportunities for members to demonstrate newly acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Fairs or other public exhibitions provide opportunities for member recognition and provide an avenue for youth to practice the life skills of teamwork, cooperation, communication, sportsmanship, and club pride and unity.

WHAT TO DO

Introduction

Among the many roles of a 4-H project leader is that of “coach.” Leaders serve in this role as they help members prepare to exhibit their projects. Leaders should take an active role in encouraging members to participate fully in the fair, show, or other public exhibition of their accomplishments. To do so, leaders need to understand the goals of the event, as well as know the entry requirements, event procedures, and ways to prepare members and their families to get the most from their experience. Often the member’s work will be evaluated or “judged” during the event. Practicing for this experience ahead of time is one way to help members have a positive and valuable learning experience.



Activity: Goals of the Fair or Other Public Exhibition

What are the goals of an event such as a fair? Brainstorm these with the leaders, recording their answers on easel paper:

- Evaluate project work and recognize accomplishments of members
- Serve as a showcase for the public to observe 4-H projects – on display and in action
- Educate the public about 4-H in general and about specific projects or subjects
- Recruit new members and leaders
- Provide opportunities for youth and adults to develop and practice life skills (leadership, teamwork, decision making, communications, etc.) as they take part in planning and implementing the event
- Provide the community with a family-oriented, fun, and educational event
- Raise funds for 4-H events

A fair or other public exhibition has many goals. Preparing members and their parents in advance will maximize the value of their involvement in this positive youth development experience.

Successfully preparing members and their families for the fair or other public exhibition is a key responsibility of 4-H leaders. To be successful, you will need to help members:

- Prepare exhibits early. Work with members to set goals and establish a timeline for completion, so that there’s no last minute stress. Help members identify pre-fair project requirements, such as mandatory project meeting attendance, quality assurance meetings, etc.

- Prepared questions

Handouts

- Judging Systems
- Preparing Youth for Individual Conference or Face-to-Face Judging
- Evaluation

Do Ahead:

- Have supplies and handouts ready.

Sources:

- Developed by Carolyn L. Belczyk, 4-H Youth Development Educator, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program.
- Wayne Brabender, Wisconsin 4-H Distance Learning Specialist, "Participant Packet, County Fair Training," 2000.
- "The County 4-H Fair: Showcase of the Year," *New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series*, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, <http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/319-322.pdf>.
- "Helping Leaders Be 4-H Savvy," University of Illinois Extension, <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/4hfacts/fair.html>.

- Learn the standards of excellence for the project or item they will be exhibiting. Refer to project curriculum materials and activity guides, set up sample judging of similar items, etc., to help members recognize the ideal project or exhibit. Emphasize that members are expected to do their own project work.
- Understand the importance of precisely following the entry rules and requirements and meeting entry deadlines. Give members and their families the correct information and appropriate tools, such as fair premium books or show bills, and emphasize the importance of including everything asked for with each entry, such as recipe cards, exhibit entry tags, etc. If possible, review and approve a member's entry form before it is submitted. (Leader's signature may be required on entry forms.)
- Prepare for judging. Review the process with members and provide practice opportunities if possible. Some clubs have a club achievement show prior to the fair or other event, which provides a great opportunity to rehearse the judging process.

Activity: Scavenger Hunt

Prepare in advance a list of commonly asked questions that members and their parents have as they prepare to exhibit project work at a fair or show. Many of these questions can be answered by carefully reading the rules and requirements listed in the fair premium book, show bill, or other exhibit information. Questions might include any/all of the following:

- What is the deadline for entry?
- How old (what grade) must exhibitors be for this event?
- What special equipment, if any, is required? (Protective headgear for a horse show, for example.)
- When is judging for the foods projects?
- What judging style will be used for my child's woodworking exhibit?
- What if the exhibitor can't be there for the scheduled judging?
- When can we remove our children's artwork from the fair?
- Can we enter a photograph the member took on our family vacation more than a year ago? (We didn't get the photo printed in time for last year's fair.)
- Can we enter an exhibit in a class if the member isn't enrolled in a related project?
- Is there a class for the member's Angus heifer born last September?
- The member made a ceramic dog. Is there a class for this?
- My daughter has 12 rabbits. Can she bring them all to the fair?

Split the participants into small groups, using any technique, such as counting off. Challenge each group to find the answers to the "Scavenger Hunt" questions using the fair premium book, show bill or other exhibit information you've provided.

Follow up the "Scavenger Hunt" with a discussion of ways leaders can help members and their families with the entry process. Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the member's exhibits are entered correctly?

Discussion: Preparing for Judging

4-H exhibits are usually evaluated using one of three systems: Danish, Individual Conference or Face-to-Face Judging, and Group Conference Judging. Each of these systems has strengths and weaknesses. Define each system using the handout, "Judging Systems," and lead a discussion with the leaders, emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses of the systems and how each is used at your county's fair or other event.

Members will put their best foot forward during project judging if they've had the chance to practice. Just like participants in a horse show practice their riding, equitation, or gymkhana skills in a show ring prior to the big day, participants in individual conference judging need to practice the process, as well. Distribute the handout, "Preparing Youth for Individual Conference or Face-to-Face Judging," and discuss how a club or project group might give youth an opportunity to practice judging through role play, using the sample questions provided in the handout.

Practice judging could be part of a club achievement show or other similar event, held prior to the fair judging. Encourage those playing the role of “judge” during the practice to provide members with honest and constructive feedback that will help them prepare for the real thing!

Closing

Positive youth development and member recognition should be the focus of any public exhibition of 4-H project work. Leaders need to help members and their families prepare their projects for exhibition and learn what to expect from any judging or evaluation component of the experience. Preparation and practice, combined with honest and constructive feedback from judges and adults, will help ensure a positive development experience for members.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- Why is exhibiting a completed project an important part of the project experience for members?
- Why is it important to help members and their families prepare their projects for exhibition?
- Why is it important to provide opportunities for members to learn what to expect from the judging experience?

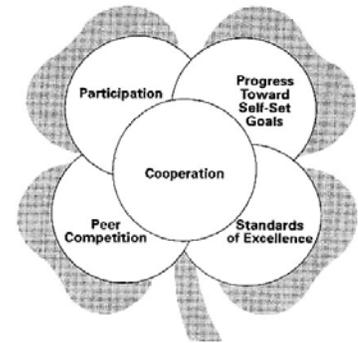
Apply:

- What other types of opportunities to exhibit their projects might we provide for members who are unable or unwilling to participate in the county’s primary project exhibition opportunity, such as the county fair?
- In addition to project exhibition opportunities, what other opportunities might we provide for recognizing members’ project accomplishments?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance:

- Discuss the National 4-H Recognition Model with participants, available at http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4h_recmo.pdf. The model presents and defines five components of member recognition in 4-H: participation, progress towards self-set goals, achievement of standards of excellence, peer competition and, overlapping the other four, cooperation. The model is part of a comprehensive plan that rewards positive learning behavior in youth. Using a comprehensive recognition program can lead to more youth being recognized and can provide a way to say to every youth: “You are a valued and important member of the 4-H program.” Where does project exhibition and judging in our county’s 4-H program fit into the National 4-H Recognition Model? Check out the project leader lesson, “Implementing 4-H Project Experiences – Managing Competition,” available at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/volunteersproject.cfm>, for more information on the peer competition component of the model.
- For more information on specific types of exhibits and the judging standards for each, review Barbara Ado’s publication, “Learning through Exhibiting” (University of Idaho Cooperative Extension, #91404), available at http://www.4h.uidaho.edu/Curriculum/Admin/learning_through_exhibiting.pdf. This publication also features some information on exhibiting etiquette and sportsmanship for exhibitors.



Simplify:

- Omit the “Scavenger Hunt” activity. Focus on helping leaders understand the importance of helping members and their families prepare for project exhibition and the related judging or evaluation component.

EVALUATION

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation provided at the end of this lesson plan can be modified to meet your needs. An option to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection question discussion. Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

- “National 4-H Recognition Model,”
http://www.national4-Hheadquarters.gov/library/4h_recmo.pdf.
- “Learning through Exhibiting,” University of Idaho Cooperative Extension,
http://www.4h.uidaho.edu/Curriculum/Admin/learning_through_exhibiting.pdf.

Finalized by the Strengthening the Vitality of 4-H Community Clubs Work Team, March 2007.

Judging Systems

Danish Judging

Under the Danish judging system, the judge reviews an entire lot at a time. Judges are limited in how many of each placing (first, second, third or fourth) or ribbon (blue, red, white or pink) they can give. A blue shows exceptional effort, red excellent effort, white good effort and pink adequate effort. They'll give approximately 25% blues, 25% reds, 25% whites and 25% pinks under this system. When the county fair says a lot is to be judged Danish, judges *must* follow the guidelines for the distribution of awards (ribbons and premiums).

The pluses of judging Danish are many. Judges get to see the whole lot at one time. By seeing all the exhibits in a lot, they can compare the overall quality of work in the lot before making placings.

Danish also gives the judge some flexibility. Judges always have the option of not awarding blues if they think the exhibits in a lot don't merit that placing based on their criteria and standards. They could, for example, give just four reds, two whites and one pink in a lot of seven exhibits if they think that's deserved. If they think there aren't any blues or reds in the lot, they could even give six whites and one pink.

Usually, the department superintendents will encourage exhibitors and the public to listen to the judges during the process. If there is an audience, judges will explain their placings or give oral reasons to the listeners. This is a teachable moment.

Among the minuses of the Danish System is that judges will know nothing about the exhibitors. They won't know their names, where they live or their grade in school. They won't know how much help the exhibitors had or what they were thinking when making their exhibits. Judges will make decisions based solely on the exhibits in front of them.

Individual Conference or Face-to-Face Judging

At some county fairs, judges will be judging exhibits with individual exhibitors present. This is called individual conference, face-to-face, or interview judging, depending upon the county. The judge will be sitting at a table as each exhibitor comes with all of his or her entries in a particular department or class. The judge will then have a five to 10 minute semi-private conversation with the exhibitor, evaluating his or her work and placing each entry.

The pluses of this type of judging are many. Judges get to meet the exhibitors, find out how much they know, how much help they have received, what kinds of resources they have access to, why they took the project, why they entered these exhibits, what are their favorite subjects, and much more.

They also have lots of flexibility in placing their exhibits in individual conference judging. Judges are not required to follow the Danish formula of so many blue, red, white and pink ribbons. Judges will probably give more blues and reds than they would in Danish judging because youth can tell them what they know and what they learned.

Group Conference Judging

Another judging situation, perhaps best for teaching, is a combination of face-to-face and Danish judging. Generally it's called group conference judging, where the judge evaluates and places the whole lot at one time (like Danish), but all the exhibitors are present for the judging (like face-to-face). It combines the best of both judging systems when the judge takes time to talk with each exhibitor about their entry and gives oral reasons to explain the placings, but not many fairs do group conference judging because it is hard to coordinate. Exhibitors on fair entry day are usually very busy. They are often entered in several different project areas. Conference judging time in one department may conflict with conference judging time in another. Most counties choose individual conferences so exhibitors have more flexibility with the judging schedules.

If you have questions or are unclear about the judging system used in your county or for a specific project or department, ask your project leader, organizational leader, Extension 4-H youth development educator, or an older, more experienced exhibitor before judging day arrives, so you arrive on time, well prepared for the judging experience.

Adapted from Wayne Brabender, "Participant Packet, County Fair Training," 2000.

Preparing Youth for Individual Conference or Face-to-Face Judging

Help members prepare for individual conference or face-to-face judging through role play with a leader, someone else's parent, or a youth leader.

This type of evaluation has six distinct phases. There are a number of questions that judges may ask in each phase. Usually, judges have from 5-10 minutes with each exhibitor, depending upon how busy they are and how many exhibitors are waiting in line. No member will be asked all of these questions, but they should be prepared to answer questions from each of the phases.

Phase 1: Get Acquainted – The judge will usually invite the member to sit and then will introduce him/herself, smile, and shake hands. H/she will then ask some basic get-acquainted questions such as those that follow:

- What's your name?
- What grade are you in school?
- What got you interested in this project?
- How many years have you taken the project?
- How long have you been in this project unit? Which other units have you taken?
- Have you ever had your exhibits judged at the county fair before?
- Tell me what you like most about this project.

Exhibitors should make eye contact with the judge and answer the questions as clearly as possible, with enthusiasm. Coach them to hold their heads up and to avoid answering with a nod or a shake of the head. Encourage them to SMILE.

Phase 2: Share – The second phase is simply a chance for the exhibitor to share information about the exhibits h/she's brought for judging.

- Tell me about this exhibit.
- Where did you make this exhibit?
- How did you . . . ?
- When did you . . . ?
- What type of tools or equipment did you use?

If the member has more than one exhibit item, the judge may ask which is his/her favorite item, and why. Or, if there's only one item, the judge may ask the member what was his/her favorite part of preparing the exhibit or completing the project, and why.

Phase 3: Process – Answers to the sharing questions naturally leads the judge into the third or "Process" phase of judging. This is when the member analyzes what h/she did and reflects on what's important. Here are some examples of the types of process questions that the judge may ask. There is never enough time to ask all of them, of course.

- How much did your exhibits cost?
- What problems did you have?
- What worked and didn't work?
- What was the most difficult part?
- Why is it important to . . . ?
- Where did you find the information on . . . ?
- Where did you get the idea for . . . ?

- What were you trying to communicate with this exhibit? What did you hope people would notice about your exhibit?
- Do you have someone at home or a project leader or helper in your club that gives you advice on your project? Have you had any project meetings or field trips? (Hint: Judges usually try to avoid questions like, “Did someone *help* you with this exhibit?” It’s an awkward question under the circumstances because the member might think the judge is implying that it’s not the member’s work, which is required by county fair rules.)
- If you could make this exhibit again, how would you change it?

Phase 4: Generalize – This is a time for the exhibitor to generalize about what h/she has learned and to connect the learning to other situations. It’s also the time when the judge will start to talk about the best things h/she sees in the exhibits and some ways to improve the things that need work. In general, the judge will try to be specific and will avoid meaningless or exaggerated praise (“This is a *perfect* display!”). This is also the phase in which the judge gives his/her placings. Encourage the member to really listen as the judge gives reasons for his/her placings.

- What did you learn while . . . ?
- Where/how did you learn to make this kind of exhibit?
- What are some new things you learned by making these exhibits?
- What was the *most* important thing that you learned?
- When did you learn the most?
- I really liked . . . because . . .
- I thought this exhibit was really effective because . . .
- I thought you made a good decision when . . .
- I wasn’t quite sure about . . . Could you explain . . . ?
- That’s coming along nicely. What if you tried this? What would happen?
- I would like to see you try this the next time you make your exhibit. What do you think would happen?
- What are some characteristics that make a good project exhibit?
- Have you ever tried . . . ? What do you think might happen? You might try . . . because . . .
- Have you thought about . . . ? You might experiment with . . .
- Keep working on . . . See if you can . . .
- You’ve just about mastered . . . One more time and you’ll have it!

Phase 5: Apply – This is the time when the exhibitor can reflect on what h/she learned *today* and thinks about how to apply it in the future. Some samples:

- What are some new things that you learned today?
- What are some new things you *could* learn in this project in the future? What else would you *like* to learn?
- What are you planning to make or exhibit next in this project?
- How might you use your new exhibit or project skills to help your 4-H club? Your family? Your school? Your community?
- How could you help someone else learn your project skills?
- What exhibits will you enter in next year’s fair?

Phase 6: Wrap up – Usually, the judge will end on a positive note. A smile, a call for final questions, a thank you and a word of encouragement to enter again next year usually work. This helps to leave the exhibitor feeling good about the judging experience.

Implementing 4-H Project Experiences: Preparing for Exhibit Evaluation

1. Please rate the following: How useful will this information be in helping you prepare youth to prepare to exhibit their projects at the county fair or other events?

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. Please answer the following: Do you feel better prepared to help members prepare for the judging or evaluation component of project exhibition as a result of your participation in this lesson?

Yes No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?