



Building Welcoming 4-H Clubs

All young people want to belong and be members of groups. A welcoming environment allows young people to feel they are connected and valued in a larger social network. When youth feel accepted in a 4-H club, they are more likely to contribute to the club.

In a recent study of the Wisconsin 4-H program, youth who left the 4-H program were asked for the reasons they left 4-H. 29% of the respondents said that one of the reasons they left 4-H was “I did not feel welcome at club or project meetings.” It can be challenging for new youth and families to feel welcomed, especially if they do not know much about the 4-H program.

Looking at 4-H membership over time, the number of enrolled 4-H members in Wisconsin is declining. From 2005 to 2013 4-H enrollment decreased by 14.9%. These numbers may reflect a slow trend of youth choosing other youth activities rather than 4-H.

The “Building Welcoming 4-H Clubs” project is designed to help 4-H clubs strengthen their inclusive, welcoming environments. Positive club environments help with member recruitment, retention, and engagement.

Benefits for clubs participating in the “Building Welcoming 4-H Clubs” project:

- Have youth and adult volunteer observers visit your club meetings during the year. Observers will give feedback about your own unique club experience.
- Receive customized training and resources to build a welcoming environment. Training can be offered to the full club or your officer team, and can be designed to meet your club’s unique needs.
- Get new ideas for making club meetings exciting, fun, and welcoming by learning from clubs throughout the county. These ideas can help your club set goals and make an educational plan for the year.
- Receive facilitation items/tools for your club to use to help meetings be welcoming and interactive.
- Receive a certificate of completion after the observation, feedback, and training process.

Clubs interested in participating must be willing to:

- Complete a short self-evaluation of your club environment with the club leader(s) and youth officers/youth leaders.
- Welcome youth and adult observers to two of your club meetings during the year.
- Participate in follow up training to work on areas where your club could build its welcoming environment.

Sources:

Eccles & Gootman, 2002. Community programs to promote youth development.
Wisconsin 4-H Retention Study, 2012.

An EE/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. Please make requests for reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to educational programs as early as possible preceding the scheduled program, service, or activity.



Application for Club Participation in Building Welcoming 4-H Clubs

Club Name: _____

Club Leader(s): _____

Our club is willing to...

(check boxes below to indicate that your club will participate in each part of the program)

- Complete a short self-evaluation of our club environment with our club leader(s) and youth officers/youth leaders.
- Welcome youth and adult observers to two of our club meetings during the year.
- Participate in customized follow up training to work on areas where our club could build its welcoming environment.
- Explore and try new ideas for making club meetings exciting, fun, and welcoming by learning from clubs throughout the county.

Club Leader Signature

Date

Club President Signature

Date

Please return this application to the UW-Extension Washington County Office by June 10, 2016.