

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Looking for Success

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"The only place to begin to build is with a strength."

The Importance of Strength

Nothing succeeds like success! A 4-H club which takes time to help its members and leaders feel good about the things which are going well will have members and leaders who are enthusiastic and proud to be a part of 4-H.

A sense of accomplishment and satisfaction is produced when persons know the good results of the efforts they have invested. Persons who are involved with planning and help carry out the plans have a stake in the results. The person who participates in something which matters while things are going well experiences satisfaction. This person will continue to work with 4-H.

The only good place to begin to build is with a strength. Helping a 4-H club to feel good about its strengths is like putting money in the bank; the process pulls together the resources on which the club can draw to move ahead.

- Evaluation is the process of identifying what is valuable.
- Evaluation is a way to find what is going well.

- Evaluation identifies strengths which indicate success.

What Is a Strength?

A strength is a property or characteristic of a person or group. Strengths are indicators of ability to cope and to survive. Strengths tell us what we can count on. To be strong is to be vigorous, alive, resourceful and competent.

Strength may be produced by a combination of factors. Members, parents, officers and leaders all contribute to the strength of a 4-H club. Each club will have its own combination of factors which produce strength. The fact sheets "Looking At Our Club" and "Strengthening Our Club" indicate some of the factors which produce strength.

When to Look for Strength?

We usually expect to look for success at the conclusion of a program, an event or the year for which the planning was done. This kind of evaluation helps to think about total accomplishments, to look back and to look ahead.



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Looking for strengths before planning begins is also helpful. This kind of evaluation tells us what resources the club has to work with and what the club can count on during the year. It helps the club feel good about where it is and to be realistic about choosing goals for itself.

Another kind of evaluation looks for indicators of strength along the way. By checking the process each time the club meets, a leadership team can know its progress toward a larger goal.

How to Look for Strength

All of us have some sense of whether things are going well. A leadership team can ask itself, "How are things going with our 4-H club?" Conversation will indicate where people feel good about what is occurring and where change would be helpful. The fact sheet "Looking at Our Club" might be used to guide this kind of conversation.

A more systematic way to look for strength is based on goal setting. Goals, like a map, indicate direction for the 4-H club program. Goals indicate changes which are desired. Goals and objectives with criteria allow a leadership team to gather data which provide a reliable picture of progress. This way of looking for strength begins with program planning. The fact sheet "4-H Club Program Planning" suggests the importance of identifying goals.

Goals

A goal is a broad statement of what the club wishes to accomplish or to change in a given period of time. These are examples of goals:

- Creating a significant role for each 4-H club member
- Involving families in planning the 4-H program
- Increasing parent participation in 4-H meetings
- Providing significant experiences for older 4-H youth

A goal is most likely to be accomplished when it has the following qualities:

- **Conceivable** – The change desired can be easily described.
- **Achievable** – The change can be accomplished with present resources.
- **Controllable** – The club is in charge of the matter which is to be changed.
- **Measurable** – The change can be counted or measured.
- **Believable** – The change is consistent with commonly held values.
- **Desirable** – The change is something which people really want to do.

Be realistic about goals. Choose one or two which seem most important. Work toward these goals for a given period of time. Watch the progress. Help the group feel proud of its accomplishments. When these goals have been achieved, choose another goal on which to work.

Objectives and Criteria

Objectives and criteria provide handles for taking hold of goals.

- A goal states a change the club wishes to have happen.
- An objective states the action which will help it happen.
- A criterion states how the club will measure results of the action.

For example:

Goal – To increase parent participation at 4-H meetings.

Objective – To introduce and recognize parents from one or two families at each 4-H club meeting.

Criterion – Introduce the parents of 80 percent of all 4-H club families at 4-H club meetings during the year.

A clearly stated objective indicates who will do what, when, where and how many, and why the action is being done. For example:

- (who) – Mrs. Jones
- (will do what) – Will invite, introduce and hostess Mr. and Mrs. Green
- (when, where and how many) – At the November meeting of XYZ Club
- (why) – In order to help them become acquainted with other 4-H families so they can choose whether to participate in the 4-H program

A criterion states how the results of the action will be measured:

- Two parents will be guests at each monthly meeting
- 80 percent of parents of 4-H families will be introduced to the club at monthly meetings during the year

The fact sheet “Strengthening Our Club” lists a number of criteria which can be easily measured.

What Is Success?

Success is an outcome or result produced by a cumulation of strengths. Some strengths will be indicated by goals achieved. Some strengths were present before the goals were ever set. In looking for success, remember all of the positive qualities which make your 4-H club strong and unique.

Strengths provide the building blocks for creating the future of your 4-H club. Plan to use those characteristics of your club which are good and strong to develop those aspects of your club which you hope to change. The only place to begin to build is with a strength.

About Celebration

When success has been identified, it can be used to help the group feel strong and proud. Celebration is a special way of remembering who we are and what we have been, of enjoying the success and taking it with us into the future. Traditions and festivities give meaning and pleasure to being together and doing what we have chosen to do.

Your club may celebrate membership with an initiation ceremony, officer election with an installation ceremony, project accomplishments with an achievement program or parent participation at a family festival. How will your club celebrate its strengths and its successes?

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