

County Level 4-H Advisory Committees

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THE 4-H ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE

4-H Advisory Committees play an important role in the county 4-H program. As the name implies, they provide advise and assist with planning, executing, and evaluating local youth development programming. Advisory Committee members represent their fellow 4-H advisors by bringing their needs, wants, ideas, and suggestions to the attention of Extension staff and peers. Although local 4-H Advisory Committees do not have direct, decision-making authority, they do offering valued input and advice when considering local practices around programming development and implementation.



4-H Advisory Committees are comprised of 4-H volunteer advisors and youth who have been appointed or selected to serve a term. They operate in collaboration with the 4-H Educator's staff who have final decision-making authority.

COMMITTEE MEMEBERSHIP

In Ohio, each county establishes their own 4-H Advisory Committee membership eligibility requirements based on local circumstances. Important considerations include ensuring that individuals being considered for service on the local 4-H Advisory Committee have served as active 4-H volunteer advisors for a minimum of 2-3 years; that members represent the diversity of the county; and that members are committed to achieving the OSU Extension mission.

Representation. Some counties allocate representation based on townships or school districts; while others do so for each chartered club. Regardless of the membership criteria, counties should require that there is an annual election or appointment of representatives to serve on the 4-H Advisory Committee.

Youth Voice. Many 4-H Advisory Committees also include youth representatives to bring the youth perspective and voice to the table. Youth members can be selected or appointed by their peers through teen peer groups such as Jr. Leaders or CARTEENS.

Term Limits. Member term of service are typically from 1-4 years. A critical requirement is a well defined term limit to ensure fresh perspectives can heard.

MEETINGS

Having regular meetings is essential to ensuring that the 4-H Advisory Committee membership has sufficient information and involvement in the 4-H program to be active participants in planning and evaluating key events and practices found in their county 4-H program. Across the state, 4-H Advisory Committees are organized differently; some committees meet quarterly, others bi-monthly, and others still meet monthly. There is also considerable flexibility regarding how committees meet; a few examples include traditional face-to-face, telephone conference calls, video-conferencing, and e-mail meetings. Some meetings take place in the evenings, some happen immediately before or after other key events, and some hold planning retreats.

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MEETINGS – continued

Regardless of the meeting frequency or format, all county 4-H Advisory Committee members should be required to attend a minimum number of, or a certain percentage of, meetings and events. This helps all Advisory Committee members stay involved enough to have valid perspectives based on lived experiences and associated insights to share. In this way, members help to make the 4-H Motto -- To make the best better -- an embedded practice of the overall county 4-H program.

EXAMPLE EXPECTATIONS FOR 4-H ADVISORY COMMITTEES

As we stated previously, there is considerable variability in the kinds of contributions 4-H Advisory Committee members make across the state. This list presents a few examples you might consider.

- Plan, conduct, evaluate and recommend hands-on, experientially based educational programs for youth and volunteers based on county needs.
 - Examples include: Project Judging, Quality Assurance, Skillathon
- Lead and assist with educational clinics, workshops, fundraisers, and promotional events for both youth and volunteers.
 - Examples include: Livestock clinics, countywide fundraisers, recruitment events
- Encourage participation from parents, members, families, and the community in 4-H programs and activities at the county and state levels.
- Share 4-H information communicated through the 4-H Youth Development website, social media, emails, etc.
- Proactively share training and resource needs of members or volunteers with county 4-H Professional(s).
- Assist in securing resources to conduct, promote, and expand the 4-H program.
- Promote a positive image of the 4-H program to the general public and be strong brand ambassadors.
- Participate in and endorse educational opportunities to further the development of knowledge and skills.
- Work with county 4-H Professional(s), volunteers, and youth in a positive manner in order to promote teamwork and collaboration within the 4-H program.
- Become familiar with and work within the philosophy, guidelines, and standards of behavior of Ohio State University Extension, Ohio 4-H, and the county 4-H program.
- Proactively help with philanthropic activities that supports the goals of the local program.
- Actively promote meaningful fundraising efforts to establish or build a county 4-H endowment.
- Assist with identifying and securing funding for school programming, project books, camp scholarships, awards, trips, advertising, annual accident insurance, etc.
- Support a vibrant county achievement awards application process.
- Help with campership, scholarship, and other awards selection procedures and processes.
- Be an advocate for 4-H and OSU Extension.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Visit these websites for more information:

- <https://ohio4h.org/volunteers/advisory-committees>
- <https://extension.osu.edu/sites/ext/files/imce/PPHandbook/Extension%20Advisory%20Committee%20guidelines-18Feb14.pdf>

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