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A GUIDE TO THE FLORIDA 4-H COUNCIL[1]

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County, District, and State Youth Councils

The 4-H Program utilizes many tools or methods to provide educational experiences for youth. The 4-H Council (or other relevant named group) at county, district, and state levels is one of these tools. A Council is an elected representative group of 4-H members who meet, discuss, plan, and assist in carrying out 4-H programs and activities in the interest of the total membership. The Council provides a link between local clubs or groups and County 4-H Programs, between County Programs and District 4-H Programs, and between District Programs and State 4-H Programs.

Why a 4-H Council?

Participation in a 4-H Council provides the means for the personal growth of 4-H members through citizenship and leadership activities. Many teens are looking for leadership roles and are interested in giving back to 4-H. Council participation gives 4-H'ers the opportunity to exercise their leadership knowledge and be of valuable assistance to 4-H Programs while youth further develop their leadership and citizenship skills.



Figure 1.
Credit: UF/IFAS

4-H Council Levels

In Florida 4-H, there are three levels of the council system: County, District, and State. The District level of 4-H councils use the thirteen 4-H Districts, rather than the five Extension Administrative Districts.

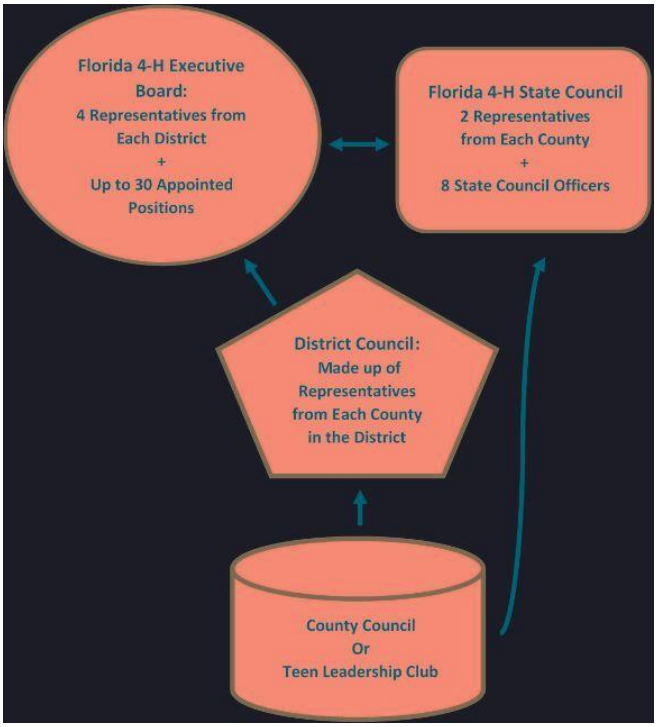


Figure 2.
Credit: UF/IFAS

County Council

The County Council is the voice of the 4-H'ers in the county. It includes representatives from the 4-H Clubs and groups in the county.

County Teen Leadership Club

The Teen Leadership Club is an alternative to the traditional council model. Rather than create a council with representatives from every club, some counties opt to create a special club for teens focused on leadership development. The club members still assist with planning county programs and events, and the club fills the role of a county council. Members do not serve as representatives from every club. Instead, members may be enrolled in other clubs in the county, or the Teen Leadership Club may be the only 4-H Club they are affiliated with.

District Council

District 4-H Councils are composed of youth representatives from each of the county councils within their geographic 4-H District.

State Council

The Florida 4-H Council is composed of two voting delegates from each county that have joined by paying dues and the eight State Officers. The annual meeting of the 4-H Council is held at the Florida 4-H University event. At this time, the business of the Council is conducted and new officers are elected.

State Executive Board

The State 4-H Executive Board is made up of the eight state council officers, four elected representatives from each of the thirteen 4-H Districts, and up to thirty appointed positions. The Executive Board plans and implements many of the Florida 4-H State level programs and events.

County 4-H Council

Youth Leadership and Governance

Organization of the County Council should be useful, flexible, and efficient. Youth should be involved, as they are in clubs, with determining the rules for self-governance. These may take the form of County Council bylaws/Constitution. The County Council bylaws and Constitution patterned after the state bylaws and constitution serve as the organizational base in many counties (see "Florida 4-H Constitution and Bylaws" in this guide). If you have a County 4-H Council, become acquainted with the governing documents.

The following leadership roles are suggested:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Reporter
- Parliamentarian
- Sergeant-at-Arms
- Historian
- Recreation or Social Chair

Responsibilities of the officers are discussed in the *Florida 4-H Officer's Handbook* (4HGM10; https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H049).

Annual Goals and Educational Programs at Council Meetings

The potential involvement of the County Council in the 4-H program is limitless. Suggestions are provided here to encourage ideas for additional involvement. One possibility is to assist in the planning and implementation of county 4-H programs. These programs might include

- County events
- National 4-H Week Observance and other marketing efforts
- Community Service, State Council Project, or the 4-H Community Pride Program
- Summer camps, day camps, lock-ins, and retreats
- Achievement and recognition programs
- 4-H Day at the Fair

County Council members can be involved in spreading the 4-H word to

- Civic groups and stakeholders
- Potential 4-H members/volunteer leaders
- Mass media, including newspaper, radio, and television

Conducting formal business should not take up the full meeting time. Time should also be allotted for recreation and an educational program. County Council meetings are an excellent opportunity to bring in a guest speaker, facilitate a leadership workshop, conduct a service project, etc.



Figure 3.
Credit: UF/IFAS

County Representatives to District and State Council

One of the roles of the council system is to provide representative youth voices in the district and state programming levels. Therefore, the county council has the opportunity to select youth to serve as representatives at the District Council and the State 4-H Council.

County Representatives to the District 4-H Council

Each District 4-H Council is made up of youth representatives from each of the counties within the geographic 4-H District. Refer to a copy of the appropriate District 4-H Council Constitution for the number of representatives each county should select for participation.

The delegates to the District have certain responsibilities, for example:

- Participating in the business discussions.
- Preparing an accurate reporting of the business and giving it to the Extension 4-H Agent and County Council members.
- Voting according to the desires of the county's 4-H members.
- Planning and implementing district level programs and activities.

County 4-H Voting Delegates to State 4-H Council

Each county selects two senior-level 4-H'ers to represent their county as voting delegates on the State 4-H Council. The State Council meets once each year in a business meeting at the Florida 4-H University. For county- elected delegates to be seated on the State 4-H Council, the county must pay its annual dues at the beginning of each 4-H program year to the Florida 4-H Council. An additional fee is assessed to counties paying dues after December 1.

District 4-H Council

Youth can gain valuable leadership skills as they represent their county and participate in the District 4-H Youth Council.



Figure 4.
Credit: UF/IFAS

Purpose

The purposes of a District 4-H Council include the following:

- Assisting with organizing and conducting district activities and events.
- Facilitating the distribution of information from the district and state councils to the county councils.

Membership

A District 4-H Council is typically composed of two to four council delegates from each of the counties in the 4-H District. District councils may require that youth representatives be Intermediate- or Senior-level 4-H members. Refer to your district constitution for membership requirements.

Leadership and Governance

The organization of the District 4-H Council is stipulated in the constitution specific to each District. As with county councils, the organization should be useful, flexible, and efficient.

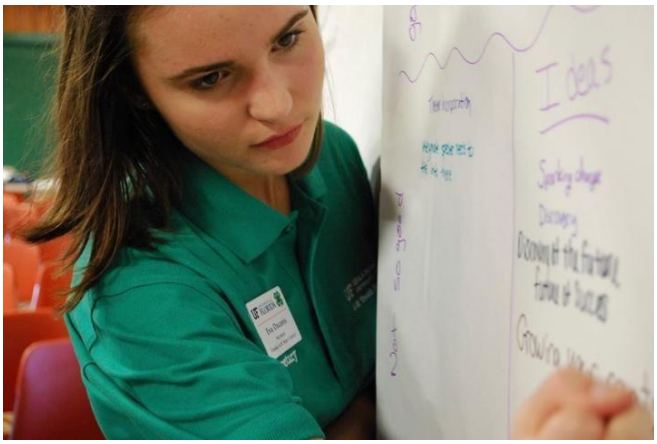


Figure 5.
Credit: UF/IFAS

Annual Goals and Educational Programs at Council Meetings

A primary role of the District Council is to voice youth issues and concerns as well to assist in the planning and implementation of District 4-H programs. These programs might include

- District level events and activities,
- National 4-H Week Observance, and
- Membership, media, and marketing campaigns to benefit all counties.

As with County Councils, conducting formal business should not take up the full District Council meeting time. Time should be allotted for recreation and an educational program. District Meetings are an excellent opportunity to bring in guest speakers, facilitate leadership workshops, conduct a service project, etc.

Role of a County Representative to District Council

Youth elected to represent their county on the District 4-H Council have certain leadership responsibilities. Duties as County Representatives include the following:

- Attending meetings of the District 4-H Council.
- Communicating with the county regarding the activities and actions of the District 4-H Council.
- Soliciting the opinions of the 4-H members in the county for input into District wide program decisions.
- Assuming responsibilities as delegated.

- Working with 4-H Agents and Council Advisors to keep them informed of district council involvement.
- Learning about other County Councils within the 4-H District.
- Participating in District 4-H activities.
- Updating the district on programs taking place in your county.



Figure 6.
Credit: UF/IFAS

Elected District Representatives to State 4-H Executive Board

From within its membership, the District Council elects four (4) youth who serve as District Representatives to the Executive Board of the Florida 4-H Council (do not confuse this with the two (2) State 4-H Council delegates who represent the counties directly at the State 4-H Council annual business meeting).

How the State 4-H Council Works

The Florida 4-H Council is composed of two voting delegates from each dues-paying county and the eight State Council Officers.

The Annual Meeting of the 4-H Council is held at the Florida 4-H University, generally the only meeting during the 4-H year. At this time, the business of the Council is conducted, and new officers are elected. The State 4-H Council Officers then represent the voice of youth on various statewide advisory boards, committees, and planning teams throughout the year.



Figure 7.
Credit: UF/IFAS

State 4-H Council Constitution

One of the key outcomes of the 4-H youth development program is empowering youth to learn self-governance. This begins with youth engaged in forming local clubs, planning educational programs, contributing to their community through service and establishing their own rules and bylaws. Likewise, the Constitution of the Florida 4-H Council and Bylaws serve as the base for the organization and work of the State 4-H Council. It is established and reviewed annually by the youth membership. The updated State Council Constitution and Bylaws can be found at https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/projects/citizenship--leadership/youth-voices-florida-4-h-youth-councils/state-council/.



Figure 8.
Credit: UF/IFAS

County Dues and Membership

The State 4-H Council consists of two (2) county youth representatives (commonly referred to as "voting delegates") from each county along with the eight State Council Officers. Each county to "seat" two voting delegates within the annual business meeting of the Council must pay annual dues. If the county does not pay the dues, they give up the right to vote on elected officers and any changes to the State Council Bylaws and Constitution. Dues are used to help support the State Council programs, which includes Executive Board. The counties are invoiced for their annual dues at the beginning of each 4-H program year.

State 4-H Officers

State Council Officers consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Reporter, Parliamentarian, Sergeant-at-Arms, and Historian. The first five are elected by the State Council at its annual meeting during the Florida 4-H University and the last three officers are appointed by the incoming president with advice from the other incoming officers.

The appointed officer candidates' applications are reviewed and interviews are conducted for each of these offices immediately following the election of the five new officers. The incoming president, advised by the other incoming officers, makes the final selection of the remaining three appointed officers during the Florida 4-H University and the newly elected/appointed officers are presented to the youth delegation before the close of the event. These new officers assume their responsibilities at the end of the Florida 4-H University.

Executive Board

The Executive Board of the Florida 4-H Council is the working group of youth leaders representing the district and county 4-H programs across the state. The Executive Board is composed of eight state officers, four representatives from each 4-H District, and up to thirty presidential appointees.

The Executive Board of the Florida 4-H Council meets three times per year at various Florida 4-H camps and has three functions:

1. Representing 4-H with other agencies and organizations and at various 4-H events and activities
2. Serving as a sounding board of 4-H membership
3. Assisting with plans and implementation of 4-H Program events and activities, including

   - Florida 4-H University, Florida 4-H Legislature, Intermediate State, Florida 4-H Day at the Capitol, and Constitutional Revisions

The Executive Board of the Florida 4-H Council has standing committees that make recommendations for

- Entertainment, Ways & Means and State Fundraising Projects, Service Project, Communication, and Council Support



Figure 9.
Credit: UF/IFAS

Role of a District Representative or Appointee to Executive Board

Four youth from each 4-H District are elected to represent their District on the Florida 4-H Executive Board. Additionally, up to thirty youth are selected to serve as Presidential Appointees to the Executive Board. This is a leadership position that carries certain responsibilities. Duties of a District Representative or Presidential Appointee are the following:

- Attending meetings of the Executive Board.
- Communicating with the counties in their 4-H District regarding the activities and actions of the State 4-H Council and Executive Board.
- Soliciting the opinions of the 4-H'ers in their 4-H District.
- Assuming responsibilities as delegated and agreed upon.

- Working with their 4-H Agents and Council Advisors to keep them informed of your Executive Board involvement.
- Clearing all appearances and travel as a representative of Florida 4-H through the State 4-H Office.
- Representing the entire 4-H District.
- Participating in District/State 4-H activities.
- Compiling District/State Reports to submit as requested by the State President/Reporter.

Council Delegates and Council Success

The success of 4-H Councils depends largely on how well council delegates fulfill their duties. To be chosen as a delegate is an honor and, like all honors, it carries certain responsibilities.

Will you be a good council delegate?

- Good delegates are honest, sincere, friendly, and loyal.
- They give everyone a chance to assist and share their opinions.
- Good delegates get things done right and on time. They are proud of their jobs and always try to do their best. They work with their 4-H Leaders to plan and carry out the council programs.
- Delegates to the 4-H Council are representatives, not only of the local club, but also of the entire 4-H organization.
- Council delegates represent 4-H to the people in the community, at school, and at events like service projects, public events, and fairs. This representation is one of the most important responsibilities, because to other people Council Delegates are a 4-H member all of the time—not just during a 4-H meeting.
- Serving as a 4-H Council delegate gives youth a real opportunity to develop leadership abilities that will be useful in any organization when they become an adult.



Figure 10.
Credit: UF/IFAS

Responsibilities of Council Delegates

To be successful, 4-H Council Members work with 4-H Leaders and Advisors to perform many duties, including,

- **Secure** new members and organize local councils.
- **Plan** the program for the year.
- **Arrange** for a meeting place and for the proper care of it.
- **Conduct** and take part in the meetings.
- **Follow through** on assignments given during meetings.
- **Keep** the council records and give them to the leaders as required.
- **Maintain** a good spirit, good attitude, and a good working relationship with all individuals and groups.
- **Help** every 4-H'er find a place in the council and an opportunity to contribute.
- **Maintain** contact with the council advisor.
- **Attend** training sessions of the council when held.

Qualities of Good Council Delegates

4-H needs council delegates who will

- **Serve** the council and stay involved all year.
- **Work** with all 4-H'ers and give everyone an opportunity to participate.
- **Share** leadership with many and thereby give others an opportunity to grow.
- **Represent** the best interests of the council to others.
- **Be** dependable.
- **Help** plan a program that the membership can support wholeheartedly.

- **Work** with the officers, committee members, and leaders.

Additional Resources to Support Organizing and Managing 4-H Councils

- Officer Development Tools & Resources

Florida 4-H's most current curated list of development tools and resources to support officers at any level. Go to https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/projects/citizenship--leadership/youth-voices-florida-4-h-youth-councils/officer-development-tools--resources/

- *Leadership Skills You Never Outgrow*, Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This series of four project books is designed to help adolescents learn the basics of leadership. Starting with *Individual Skills for Younger Members to Skills Leading Groups for Older Members*, the books are filled with leader led activities for a group setting. The curriculum focuses on seven main topics: (1) Understanding Self; (2) Communicating; (3) Getting Along with Others; (4) Learning to Learn; (5) Making Decisions; (6) Managing; and (7) Working with Groups. For more details, refer to https://eric.ed.gov/.

- *Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual*, created in partnership with The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, National 4-H Council, National Network for Youth, and Youth Leadership Institute

This manual provides activities and resources that guide experienced trainers and practitioners of all ages through the process of engaging youth and adults equally to create community change. Go to https://youthdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/resources/youth-adult-partnerships-a-training-manual/.

- *Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships*, created in partnership with The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development and National 4-H Council

This curriculum leads youth and adults new to group facilitation and youth-adult partnerships to build their capacity to work together in true collaboration. This step-by-step curriculum includes detailed scripts, activities, and evaluation material. Go to https://www.healthiergeneration.org/sites/default/files/documents/20181003/11311aeb/CreatingYouth-AdultPartnerships.pdf.

Advisors and Supervision

The State 4-H Council is responsible to the designated State 4-H Council Advisor. The State Council Advisor is a state staff member, designated by State 4-H Program Leader. Additionally, other faculty and/or volunteers may serve as State Executive Board Committee chairs. These adults work in partnership with State 4-H Council and Executive Board members to foster youth engagement and representative youth-adult partnerships throughout the Florida 4-H Youth Development Program.

The 4-H Pledge

Head, Heart, Hands, Health

I pledge ...

my Head

to clearer thinking

my Heart

to greater loyalty

my Hands

to larger service

and **my Health**

to better living

for my club

my community

my country

and my world.

The **HEAD** represents:

1. Thinking, planning and reasoning.
2. Gaining new and valuable knowledge.
3. Understanding the whys.

The **HEART** represents:

1. Being concerned about the welfare of others.
2. Accepting the responsibilities of citizenship.
3. Determining the values and attitudes by which to live.
4. Learning how to live and work with others.
5. Developing positive attitudes.

The **HANDS** represent:

1. Learning new skills.
2. Improving skills already known.
3. Being useful, helpful, and skillful.
4. Developing respect for work and pride in accomplishment.

The **HEALTH** represents:

1. Practicing healthful living.
2. Enjoying life.
3. Using leisure time wisely.
4. Protecting the well-being of self and others.

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

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