

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

Doing It Together

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The 4-H team is a group of persons, each a unique individual, who choose to use the gifts and abilities which each person brings to accomplish a larger purpose which all of them have chosen. The life of the team is characterized by cooperation.

Involvement Is the Key

4-H teamwork is built around the involvement of each person in the life and tasks of the 4-H club. The team approach to leadership and program development assures that 4-H belongs to all the persons who belong to 4-H. Involving each person assures that the activities of the club are relevant to the interests and needs of the 4-H club members and the 4-H team members. Involving each person also assures that there is opportunity for that person to grow as the tasks of the team are shared.

Teamwork Is a Process

4-H teamwork is a process. To become a team is a long-term goal. A group of 4-H leaders begins where they are and works toward becoming a team. A single leader of a club may begin to develop a team by inviting one or two others to share the leadership. Persons learn to work together by working together, sharing hopes, planning together and enjoying success. The growth of a team is gradual over time. The effective team evolves by processes of give and take, trial and error, feed-back and evaluation, and starting over again.

Teamwork Involves Belonging and Accomplishing

4-H teamwork is a way of working together which cares for each person as the tasks are being accomplished. The teamwork process has two basic components: belonging and accomplishing.

- Each person must feel welcome and important to the team: *belonging*.
- Each person must have opportunity to contribute to the work of the team: *accomplishing*.

Belonging is the beginning of motivation for leadership and the source of commitment to accomplish the necessary tasks. A sense of community, built of personal caring, is the essence of the team. Belonging deals with the basic human need for security and meaningful relationships with others. Team building begins with the nurture of open and supportive relationships among team members.

Team members share the tasks which enable them to carry out their plans. A team builds on the strengths of each of its members. Teamwork does not make fewer tasks, it redistributes tasks so that all who belong may be equally involved. The leader of the team does not add tasks while subtracting persons; the leader builds the team by dividing tasks and multiplying persons.



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A Team Is Two (or More) Persons Working Together

Each individual is unique, bringing to the team personal ideas, feelings and skills. Each person brings strengths and needs for growth. A team has diversity. Persons choose to become part of the team because they share values and concerns. Because each person is unique, every group is composed of individuals who function differently. Persons who are different may complement each other, or they may come into conflict with each other. A mature team will build on personal strengths and utilize personal differences to develop new ways to accomplish tasks.

Team Members Are Persons Who Share a Commitment to “Big Ideas”

“Big ideas” point to the purpose or mission of 4-H youth development. 4-H volunteers believe in the growth of boys and girls through informal education, in learning by doing, in lifelong learning and in the importance of the family unit.

Team Members Are Persons Who Set Specific Goals for Themselves

Goals are ways of putting “big ideas” into action. Team members plan together, choose goals and set long-term directions for their 4-H club. Their plan-of-action is the bridge between where-they-are and where-they-want-to-be. The plan-of-action provides steps to guide the work of the team. The plan belongs to the team; each team member feels a commitment to support and carry through the plan which all helped to design.

Team Members Are Persons Who Know Which Part of the Plan Belongs to Each of Them

Each person must have a clear understanding of the task and how it contributes to the life of the 4-H club. Clear understanding of roles and relationships is a must. Job descriptions clarify understandings about who will do what. It is important:

- That the skills and interests of the person match the requirements of the job.
- That the job provides opportunity for the person to grow.

- That a person with advanced ability or skill has the opportunity to try a more responsible or complex task.

Teamwork seeks a good match between the person and the task.

Team Members Are Persons Who Communicate

Communication is the lifeblood of the team. Communication begins with caring; it flows in a climate where each person is certain of being wanted and participates fully in the process of planning and decision making. Communication continues with listening, with being sure that the concerns of each person are heard. Communication is transmitted through clear verbal messages and adequate well-timed information. Communication is verified through feedback (by checking to be sure that what was heard was the message which was originally intended).

Communication must occur within the team, and between the team and the larger 4-H system and the local community.

Team Members Are Persons Who Grow Together

Team members grow together as they work together. Over time they become a unit, a cohesive group. Because they like each other and work well together, the work of the team is greater than the sum of the work of the individual team members. The team enhances the contributions of each of its members.

A mature team has openness and flexibility; it is adaptable. Its team members like each other and stimulate each other to greater creativity and greater productivity. A mature team can generate many alternatives from which to do its planning and problem solving. The mature team copes with change by changing itself. A mature team is open to innovation.

Team Members Are Persons Who Thrive on Change

Teamwork is a process. Life is continually changing. Team members grow and change. To work with a team is to be always involved in becoming.

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