FLORIDA 4-H: RECOGNITION FOR EXCELLENCE
Overview & Introduction

Recognition is an important part of the 4-H experience. Youth need to know how well they contribute to the group and learn new skills. Recognizing their individual and group efforts provides them with feedback. Youth development professionals must be skilled in providing recognition that supports growth and in training staff to understand and use recognition appropriately.

Basic Beliefs About Recognition in 4-H Youth Development Programs

Recognition for 4-H youth and volunteers is based on the following beliefs:

- Recognition is a basic human need.
- Recognition builds positive self-esteem (for competencies demonstrated).
- A balance between intrinsic (self-evaluation) and extrinsic (rewards given by others) recognition is essential.
- Everyone needs to be recognized at some time for their efforts.
- Recognition is more meaningful when it occurs soon after it is earned and is related to a specific task.
- Appropriate recognition for an individual varies depending on their age, past experiences, family lifestyle, community and cultural heritage.
- Recognition is more meaningful when given by someone closely related to the person.
- Recognition motivates people to excel and take worthwhile risks.
- Individual choices in learning and participation need to be allowed and recognized.

Recognition and awards programming in 4-H is a strategy for helping people become more capable and competent. Through the acknowledgement, affirmation and positive reinforcement of each person’s effort, feelings of competence and capability increase and participation continues.
The 4-H Recognition Model

The 4-H Recognition Model is a comprehensive plan that acknowledges positive learning behaviors in young people. The model is designed to meet the needs, interests, and aspirations of young people from different backgrounds and life experiences.

The 4-H recognition program includes five types of accomplishments or goals. Each goal is unique in the way it motivates young people and recognizes their achievements. The five types of accomplishments 4-H measures for recognition are:

1. Participation in educational experiences
2. Progress toward self-set goals
3. Achieving standards of excellence
4. Excelling in peer competition
5. Excelling in cooperation within a group

Participation in Educational Experiences

Participation includes attending, participating in, and successfully completing an experience or activity. Youth participation in any program needs to be recognized. Recognition of participation demonstrates that a young person was “there” and can take the form of names in the paper, event T-shirts, participation ribbons, etc. Recognition of participations is best received from someone the young person cares about and/or looks up to such as project leaders, camp counselors, teachers, etc.
Progress Toward Self-Set Goals

This form of recognition is more about the process than the outcome. Adults serve to help youth set realistic goals that are likely to result in successful outcomes. Ultimately goals are decided by youth they serve. Self-set goals:

- Are useful with all ages (early grades until later).
- Must be realistic and reachable.
- Are evaluated by both the youth and adult.
- Are a way to measure youth progress.

Answers to questions like “how are you coming along?” or “how is it going?” reflect one’s progress.

Several or more steps are involved in reaching a goal. Recognizing accomplishment of steps along the way can provide motivation to continue the effort.
Achieving Standards of Excellence

Recognizing accomplishments of self-set goals involves comparison of a product or behavior to a standard of excellence. This involves recognition of how accomplishments compare with set standards and is an external form of recognition. Accomplishments that are recognized include behavior, product preparation, skills, and/or knowledge.

1. The standard of success comes from an outside source or specialist and serves as a measuring stick. Recognition is determined by how closely performance matches set standards.

2. To use this form of recognition, standards must be clearly defined. Adults must ensure that youth are well-informed about them.

3. Recognition based on a set of standards is not a comparison of one person’s performance to another’s. Judges must be well-informed of the standards. They must be impartial and be diligent about not comparing work to that of other youth.

4. Standards measurement involves a judging system and rating categories are often used. 4-H uses a ribbon placement system in recognizing the achieving of a standard of performance. A blue ribbon indicates accomplishment. A red ribbon indicates a rank of “needs improvement” and a white ribbon indicates a “needs more effort” ranking.
Excelling in Peer Competition

The quest to be a champion can be a strong motivator for some youth. However, it is not a motivator for all youth.

1. Because youth under the age of 12-13 have limited ability to deal with the ambiguities that may accompany competitive judgment calls, and because they are maturing at very different rates, comparison to peers can negatively influence their concept of their own potential. Recognition based upon competition with peers is not recommended for youth under the age of 12.

2. The desire to win may overpower the desire to learn from the experience. It is easy to confuse the means with the ends when striving for recognition through competition! Youth development professionals must help youth remain focused on the experience rather than the competition and prepare youth for both winning and not winning.

3. Rules and procedures must be clearly spelled out so that everyone knows exactly what will be judged and how that judging will take place. Competition creates stress that can result in conflict, hard feelings, and disagreement. Negative stress and conflict can be reduced by making sure that everyone involved understands exactly what is going to be expected.

4. The positive side of competition is recognition by others and rewards such as trophies, scholarships, plaques, and publicity. Adults should remember that this form of recognition is designed to promote the development of youth rather than the success of their program.

5. Competition helps a youth’s sense of recognition but does not serve as a positive motivator for all youth.
Excelling in Cooperation within a Group

Because of the increasing interdependence of groups in today’s world, cooperation skills are a necessity. Recognition of cooperation relies on the following guidelines.

1. Cooperation must involve: all youth within a given group, opportunities to develop a group identity, and group-defined tasks such as coming up with ideas and solutions as a group.
2. Developing mutually agreed upon goals by looking at a variety of options.
3. Gaining understanding of the way a group works. Leadership skills that promote the involvement of everyone in the group are essential.
4. Knowing that ultimate goal of cooperation is not recognition. Recognition for cooperation is based on how group members work together rather than over who has accomplished the most as an individual.
5. The realization that everyone in the group is recognized when cooperation is measured.

Providing a Balance of Recognition Opportunities

The most important part of the 4-H Recognition Model is that it provides for balance across all types of recognition. The model is applicable to a variety of educational experiences for youth at the individual and group levels. The model acknowledges young people for their continuing development of life skills, as well as project accomplishments. It recognizes and rewards volunteers for providing effective leadership in the area of positive youth development, regardless of the role volunteers serve within the 4-H system.
Recognition: Recognition in 4-H is the acknowledgement and affirmation of the personal growth of an individual or group.

Awards: Awards are the things we give persons or groups to symbolize our recognition of the accomplishments or effort.
1.0 Participation in Educational Experiences

Overview

For some youth—especially beginners, low resource, or youth who are disabled—just participating in a 4-H educational program is a significant accomplishment. We only need to look at the pride with which you wear T-shirts provided at camps or at livestock shows to see that this is true. The T-shirt is a way of proclaiming, “I was there; I participated.”

Recognizing youth for participating tells youth that they are important, significant, people because they have been a part of a learning experience. It says, “We’re glad you are here.” This type of recognition can be a first step in building a 4-H’er’s self-esteem. Youth who are recognized for participating in a 4-H learning experience can show their friends, parents, and neighbors that they have participated in a 4-H program.

Young people should be able to earn this type of recognition relatively easily. The requirements should be simple and well publicized so youth know what they need to do to be recognized. 4-H’ers can be recognized as many times as they meet the requirements. The requirements for this type of recognition usually consist of attending, participating, and/or successful completion of an educational program.

Recognition for participation in educational experiences, while important for beginners is developmentally appropriate for all ages, for all levels of ability and opportunity, and in all types of activities. Individual awards need not to be costly, but they should be something that is appropriate for the 4-H’ers involved in the program, and above all, be valued by them.
Volunteers or staff responsible for the educational experience are the most appropriate presenters of recognition for participation. The recognition should be presented as a part of the learning experience. Some examples are T-shirts, caps, chevrons, stickers, certificates, and membership or participation cards. Publishing participants’ names in the local newspaper after the program is another way to recognize participants.

Participating in 4-H provides unique opportunities for young people to determine their own learning experiences. This opportunity enables 4-H’ers to have significant experiences that encourage them to feel valued and have control over their lives. Having the opportunity to make choices and develop individual learning plans helps 4-H’ers feel positive about their accomplishments and contributions.

Recognizing young people for participation in 4-H starts with volunteers who accept and affirm youth as capable and significant persons. By asking questions, listening, and using encouragement, volunteers help young people find meaning, purpose, and significance in their lives.

Above all, adults should not dominate the young person’s opportunities to learn. Adults who are able to talk freely about themselves, their feelings, dreams, accomplishments, and failures are modeling behavior that helps young people begin to understand how each person fits into this world.

When adults establish this type of environment, young people are more likely to participate in 4-H. By recognizing 4-H’ers, we enhance the likelihood of their continued involvement in learning experiences.
Appropriate recognition for participation adds to the learning environment for young people. A challenge for all adults (parents, volunteers, extension staff, teachers, etc.) who work with youth is to provide feedback that will enable young people to continue to grow and develop. Providing encouragement, rather than praise, is a key element in recognizing a young person’s growth.

Praise has been highly recommended as a way for parents, teachers, and volunteers to help young people gain a positive self-concept and improve the way young people respond. Recently, educators, child development specialists, and others have begun to question the effectiveness of praise.

It's easy and often effective to praise young people who are excelling and/or behaving appropriately. However, when they are misbehaving, not excelling, or not feeling good about themselves, praise does not always generate the response expected. It has been recommended to use a concept called encouragement.

Praise is defined as commending another person for behavior or a product you find exceptional. It depends upon the judgment of others instead of helping the recipient to use their own self-judgment. Continually using praise causes young people (and adults) to believe “I’m OK only if someone tells me I’m OK.”

Encouragement is different because it lets others know that what they do is separate from who they are. It conveys that they, as a person, are good enough as they are. It encourages the receiver to identify his or her own strengths.

The specific award we give to young people as a part of recognizing their participation is important. We tend to forget to look at the award through the eyes of the young person. It is easy to rely on our traditional awards because it is more
convenient; we have a supply on hand; donors expect to give the same award; or our schedules are too busy to select something different. In addition, it is a challenge to find more attractive and appropriate awards that use good design principles and are affordable. It is important to remember that the interests and preferences of young people change from generation and from one developmental stage to another. In addition, we are working with a broader audience of young people who have diverse needs.

The teaching-learning experience involves the volunteers in an assessment of the awards being given in your county and in their local, individual groups. It may not provide immediate answers, but it does identify awards that need to be given some attention.
1.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Participation?
Put simply, participation is taking part in an activity. In 4-H participation means attending, involvement in, and/or the successful completion of an educational activity or project. Learning experiences in which youth participate need to be positive, inclusive, and structured. Youth value being recognized for participating as a group, attending a meeting or workshop, or taking part in a special program. Creating learning environments that help a young person feel positive about their participation in an activity is crucial.

Why is Participation a Part of the 4-H Recognition for Excellence Program?
Recognizing a youth for participating tells them that they are important people because of what they have learned and contributed to a 4-H learning experience. Recognizing youth for their participation also gives them a sense of belonging and that the 4-H organization values their membership. Recognizing youth participation helps build a 4-H member’s self-esteem.

Who Receives Recognition for Participation?
Recognition for participation is especially important for young or new participants. However, it must be provided for all age groups, all levels of ability and in all types of activities. 4-H’ers can be recognized as many times as they meet the requirements for participation.

What Form Does Recognition for Participation Take?
A membership card will be provided to all 4-H members by the County Extension Office and the State 4-H Program. Recognition for participation may also be done during a meeting, or roll-call, with name tags, through certificates, or a celebration of individual successes that occur as a part of the meeting.
Who Awards the Members for Participation?
Volunteers responsible for the activities are the most appropriate presenters of awards. However, recognition for participation should occur at all levels of the 4-H program—club, county, district, state, regional, and national.

When are the Awards for Participation Given?
Recognition for participation should be a part of the learning experience, but can be presented at any time during the 4-H year.
1.2 Options For Recognition

4-H Members
- 4-H Membership Card – given to each member enrolled for the 4-H year.
- 4-H Folders – Some counties may provide such folders for new 4-H members
- Other types of recognition may include such things as listing new members’ names in the newspapers, providing special items for member participating in a club tour or workshop, certificates, special treats, verbal acknowledgement, etc.
- Certificates or Celebration Items (participation, good job, attendance, great presentation, emerging leadership, noteworthy special accomplishments, etc.)
- 4-H Logo Products for participating in 4-H events and activities.
- Participation ribbons for non-competitive events.
- 4-H Alumni Pin – pin available to present to 4-H members, completing their last year of eligibility for 4-H membership, according to age policies.
- Letter and Alumni pin to graduating seniors (county level)
- Senior pin to seniors attending State Congress
- Year Completion Stickers or Pins

4-H Volunteers
- 4-H Volunteer Card – given upon completion of application and screening.
- Volunteer appreciation letters-following an event or during a special season
- County recognition banquet/luncheon - for all volunteers
- Coupons – ex. for free ice cream cone for all who assisted
- Birthday cards to 4-H volunteers during appropriate month
- Year Completion Pins
- Volunteer Name Badges
- Newspaper Article during National Volunteer Week (April) listing all volunteers
- 4-H Logo products – given all volunteers during National 4-H Week (October)
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4-H Clubs
- 4-H Club Charter
- County Newsletters with accounts of club activities
- 4-H Logo products, flags, songs
- Participation ribbons for non-judged events & displays
- Club celebrations
- Club banners

4-H Groups in Alternate Delivery Modes
- Name tags for each youth/adult
- Poster in classroom – We Learn Through 4-H
- T-shirts
- Certificates (e.g. Tropicana, Ag Awareness)
- Event/ group certificates
- 4-H Logo products

Camp
- Nametags for each camper
- Group names for activity rotation
- Cabin recognition
- Evening programs (i.e. 1st time camper penny awards)
- Pledges / Flag Raising/ Lowering

Donors
- Verbal Acknowledgement
- Appreciation Notes, letters
- 4-H Logo Products
1.3 Resources

Membership Cards
When 4-H members submit their enrollment form to their local 4-H office annually, they will receive a membership card for participation in the program. Counties can acquire the template for membership cards through the 4-H Events office.

Recognition Examples
The appendix contains examples of certificates, bookmarks, etc. to use for recognizing for participation.

Events and Activities Listings
For a list of State Level Competitive and Non-Competitive Events see the Florida 4-H Events and Activities Handbook.
1.4 Teaching Outline

1.4.1 PowerPoint Presentation

1.5 Appendices: Participation Certificates
It is important to help youth learn to set goals, and work toward their goals. The second type of recognition is recognizing young people for the progress they are making toward meeting their goals. Youth should feel good about the progress they have made and be encouraged to continue working toward their goals.

Goal setting is an individual and personal matter. However, many youth are not experienced in setting their own goals and may need help. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. REMEMBER!! these are the young person’s goals, not the goals of volunteers or parents, nor the goals the program expects them to have.

Goals are motivators only when the person setting the goal owns that goal. When a goal is truly owned by a youth, it will be important to the 4-H’er.

When we review a youth’s progress toward a goal, we should do four things. Simply telling 4-H’ers they have done a good job is not enough. Together we need to:

- review the goals with each child
- identify what they have accomplished so far
- help them determine their next steps
- help them feel good about their accomplishments

We should recognize progress toward goals no matter how large or small the accomplishment. Age, ability, background and previous experiences are factors that affect what 4-H’ers plan and complete. Younger members will need to be challenged to think about “what they want to do.” Older, more experienced youth should be able to set and reach goals that are more challenging than the goals of younger or less experienced youth. Recognizing progress toward goals emphasizes individual growth and learning-by-doing.
Feeling good about having accomplished something that one has set out to do is a strong intrinsic motivator. Extrinsic awards, however, are a tangible way to recognize reaching a goal. Some Examples of extrinsic awards include positive comments, chevrons, 4-H memorabilia, certificates, and stickers. Extrinsic awards can be given in private or in front of other youth or parents. Be sure to be sensitive about how the youth feels about being publicly recognized; some young people prefer recognition to be given privately. Therefore, intrinsic recognition may be sufficient for 4-H’ers who make progress toward their goals. Also, the downside of public recognition is that youth may begin comparing themselves and their accomplishments to others’ – rather than to the standard of reaching self-set goals.
2.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Progress Toward Goals?
A 4-H member is expected to “learn by doing” in the 4-H program. Members should have a plan for what they want to do or learn in the 4-H program and work towards the accomplishment of that plan through step-by-step goals.

Why are Goals a Part of 4-H?
Goals help youth learn how to: (1) make a plan; (2) devise ways to achieve that plan; and (3) evaluate their progress toward that plan.

Who Helps with the Setting of Goals?
Many people can help youth set their goals. Goal setting should involve parent or guardian participation. 4-H volunteer leaders, project leaders, and older teens can also help by giving guidance. However, goals should not be imposed upon a member, but should reflect a youth’s own ideas.

Where Do Goals Come From?
Goals: (1) come from the wants and wishes of the 4-H member and what they want to accomplish; (2) are based on options from the 4-H project manual; and (3) are reflected in activities listed and described in project books.

How Many Goals Should a Member Set?
This depends upon the age and experience of the member. Fewer steps toward a goal are needed for younger ages. Older children and teens can incorporate several smaller goals and steps toward each goal within a project. When set goals are reached, youth should set additional goals. Tracking their own progress helps youth to see how the step-by-step, task-by-task process turns into an end product, such as a completed project.
What Should A 4-H Goal Look Like?
A goal should simply state what the member wants to do in that project area. All goals should be realistic and reachable in a set time period. It is also important to know who can or will help the member work towards that goal.

Who Receives The Recognition For Progress Towards Goals?
Every 4-H member who strives toward their goals should receive recognition. In the event a goal is not reached in the expected time, progress may have been rewarded and a valuable learning experience has occurred due to unforeseen challenges.

Who Awards The Members For Progress Toward Goals?
Parents/guardians and 4-H leaders recognize members through feedback and counseling. Feedback provides motivation towards continued work on a member’s goals. The 4-H volunteer may also obtain Certificates and Seals of Progress from the local Extension Office to present to members working towards their goals.

How Often Should Recognition be Experienced?
Recognition should occur as often as possible, but always at the end of each event, experience, or project completion. The Certificate and Seals of Progress may be awarded at the end of the 4-H year.
2.2 Examples of Recognizing Progress Towards Goals

4-H Members/Cloverbuds(5-7)/Junior (8-10)/Intermediate (11-13)/Senior 1 (14-15)/Senior 2(16-18)

- Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians (notes in record or project book)
- Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of goals
- Public reception at school, library, or community center
- Introduce members by proudest achievement
- Post members names in newspaper articles, on bulletin board
- Send letter of commendation to parents
- Select members to assist new members
- Plan a special party
- Certificates and Seals

4-H Volunteers

- A” Congratulations” card from club members or co-volunteers
- Newsletter articles about volunteer plans and goals
- Photo of volunteer in newspaper about achieving a goal
- Invitation to Strategic Planning/Goal-setting Workshop for volunteers
- Positive Feedback from other volunteers, Extension agents, parents
- Encouragement to apply for state Outstanding Volunteer Competition

4-H Clubs

- Club celebration
- Schedule a Show and Tell night for the club or community
- Present skit to outside group with members celebrating their achievement of goals
- Progress towards goals award
- Certificate and Seals
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4-H Groups in Alternate Delivery Modes
- Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians
- Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of goals
- Public reception at school, library, or community center
- Introduce members by proudest achievement
- Post members names in newspaper articles, on bulletin board
- Send letter of commendation to parents
- Select members to assist new members
- Plan a special party
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3.0 Standards of Excellence Overview

We encounter standards at all ages and stages of life. Most have been developed by experts. Sometimes the individual responsible for achieving or living up to the standards is involved in developing them. Some standards have developed over time and are generally understood and accepted, though not written down.

Many “rites of passage” can be called standards. These include religious and civil ceremonies that indicate a stage of life has been reached. Examples include marriage; bar mitzvah, confirmation or catechism; voting eligibility; and registering for military service. Other rites of passage include buying a house, moving out of parent’s home, and retirement.

Societal requirements that indicate a level of ability of skill can be called standards. They include a driver’s license, Red Cross life saving certificate, CPR certificate, etc. Some standards define a level of education or qualifications to perform a specific job. These include a high school diploma; post high school degree; or licensing for nursing, engineering, social work, or teaching certificates. The levels of achievement in the horse project are 4-H examples.

Expectations about personal behavior often are less obvious standards. Examples include ground rules for a youth group or family rules. In some situations, adults set standards for young people. In others, youth and adults together establish standards. In some situations, standards are determined by the individual or group of people who are working toward the standards. Examples are social clubs, behavior expectations for a field trip, or grade contracts for academic work. It is important to remember that standards for behavior set by adults may be very difficult for youth to understand, and these standards often fail to take into account personal standards set by the young person.
Standards relate to a socially accepted product or positive behavior. However, standards can encourage deviant behavior. Examples of deviant behavior are when rules are used by groups to promote racial hatred, gang violence, or hazing.

Standards may be used to include or exclude people. This occurs in both the workplace and in private life. Standards for hiring or promotion can be established so personal characteristics aren’t used inappropriately in the workplace. In the private sector, standards can be used to prevent people from buying real estate in a certain neighborhood or joining a country club, sorority, fraternity, or fraternal organization. Standards can be used so inequities do not occur.

In 4-H educational programs, standards are used in two ways. First, standards are established by subject matter and youth development specialists to provide a base for young people to use as they plan and work toward their goals. Examples are exhibit criteria, scorecards, and judging sheets, etc. Second, professional staff and/or volunteers and young people work together to establish standards. Examples are behavior desired at 4-H camp, expectations of 4-H’ers involved in meetings, and appropriate dress for 4-H events.

Teaching young people skills needed to meet or achieve standards has a lifelong benefit. 4-H has excelled in recognizing 4-H’ers who have achieved standards of excellence, but we need to continue to improve the way we use this type of recognition.
3.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What Are Performance Standards?
Performance standards are a set of guidelines for member participation; in Florida, there are several options for youth and/or clubs to work toward. As members or groups complete the levels of standard, they are presented an award.
What Is Expected of 4-H Members?

The various levels of standards are listed in each age category by the following levels: BRONZE, SILVER, GOLD, and EMERALD Clover Awards. The expectations become greater as the 4-H member matures through Cloverleaf, Junior, and Senior levels. There are four (4) levels of 4-H achievement recognition in each category. The levels of standards are based on participation in the 4-H program on the County, District, State, and National 4-H events, as well as Leadership, Citizenship and Community Service project areas.

Why Are Performance Standards a Part of the 4-H Program?

Performance standards make youth aware of the opportunities available in the 4-H program and to encourage members to become active participants.

Who awards the members for achieving performance standards?

The club’s volunteer leader will verify the achievement of the standard when the 4-H member has completed their work. Additional recognition will be given to members at the county or state level based on the performance standard achieved.

What is awarded to the members?

4-H members at each age level should have age appropriate awards. It is suggested that the County Office provide awards based on their ability to recognize youth. An easy way for counties to recognize youth might be to take the following suggestions:
BRONZE Clover
Member will receive a BRONZE Clover Certificate and name printed in the 4-H newsletter.

SILVER Clover
Member will receive a SILVER Clover Certificate, Clover points and name printed in the 4-H newsletter.

GOLD Clover
Member will receive a Gold Clover Certificate, Clover points, and name printed in the 4-H newsletter. An invitation to age specific activities may be included.

EMERALD Clover
Member will receive a EMERALD Clover Certificate, Clover points, name printed in the 4-H newsletter and name in a news article submitted to the local newspaper for publication. An invitation to age specific activities may be included.

When Are These Awards Given to Members?
These awards might be presented during a 4-H meeting or during a special recognition program.

Are Clubs Eligible for Performance Standards Recognition?
Clubs may strive to meet specific standards of performance just as many club members will work to achieve standards. Each of the four levels of standards are available for clubs to achieve.
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3.2 Options for Recognition

In addition to performance standards, 4-H members may also be recognized for Achievement of Standards through the preparation or demonstration of a product or behavior that is evaluated by an expert and deemed to meet the pre-determined standards for a quality product or behavior. These standards are often a part of the judging process seen at fairs and exhibits. Some examples of these pre-determined standards are the scorecards used for 4-H demonstration/illustrated talks, share the fun, public speaking or fashion revue. Copies of these standard scorecards can be found in the appendix of this module. Additionally, many 4-H programs provide the pre-determined standards use for products for exhibition.

There are several systems of recognizing youth against these standards, an often used one is the Danish System of blue, red and white awards. The Danish System of ribbons is usually interpreted to mean there is no special formula about the number of blue, red or white ribbons to be given. Quality, measured against product standards and fulfillment of exhibit requirements determine the ranking. An accepted standard for ribbons are as follows:

**BLUE** overall the work is of high quality. Excellent.

**RED** overall the work is of average quality. Good.

**WHITE** overall the work is below average quality. Fair or Needs Improvement.

The Florida 4-H website provides listing of all the rules and regulations for district, state and national competitive and non-competitive 4-H events and activities. Specific rules and regulations for National competitions are available from the Florida 4-H Events Coordinator.
3.3 Standards of Excellence Appendices

Performance Standards Applications: Use to apply for Performance Standards Clover Awards.

- Cloverbud
- Junior
- Intermediate
- Senior
- Club

3.4 Standards Certificates

- Cloverbud
- Junior
4.0 Competition Overview

From the very beginning of 4-H, competition has been used as a way to teach young people agricultural and home economics skills. As the program evolved to emphasize teaching life skills, 4-H and human development specialists examined the appropriateness of competition. They questioned whether it is a tool for helping young people develop into self-directed, productive, and contributing citizens.

The use of competition as a teaching tool varies widely from state to state. In some states, competition is used very little; while in others, like Florida, it is an integral part of most learning experiences, including local 4-H meetings. Nationally, the role of competition has been challenged for the last two decades.

The goal of competition in 4-H is uniquely different from the competition in many other programs in which young people participate. All 4-H teaching-learning experiences should contribute toward achieving the goal of helping young people learn life skills so they can become self-productive and contributing citizens.

Always keep in mind, we are using competition to teach life skills. In 4-H, we make competition educational.
4.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Peer Competition?
Competition is defined as a striving or vying with another or others for prizes, position, or profit. Peer competition is competing against one’s peers for the opportunity to be named the winner.

Why is Peer Competition a Part of the 4-H Program?
Many, although not all, young people enjoy competing against one another. Competition can be used as an effective teaching tool for teamwork and sportsmanship. Competition can be especially effective when all youth believe they have a reasonable chance to win and are cognitively able to discern standards of excellence; rules and procedures are clear; and 4-H members are aware of their progress and that progress of those they are in competition with.

What Levels of Peer Competition are Available through 4-H?
There are numerous levels of competition ranging from the local club through county, state, regional and national levels. If a member is successful at the county level he or she may choose to compete at the regional or state level. Members can participate in judging contests, speaking contests, exhibits, animal exhibits, and 4-H award applications, to name a few.

Who Receives Recognition for Peer Competition?
In competition, there are winners and non-winners. As expected, winners will receive most of the recognition; however, depending upon the type of competition, non-winners may also be recognized for their efforts.
Who Awards the Members for Peer Competition?
Recognition should be presented by the person or group holding the competition. This could range from the local club volunteers to Extension staff and/or to state officials.

What is Awarded for Peer Competition?
Awards will vary from competition to competition. However, some types of awards may include rosettes, money, certificates, medals, trips, or scholarships.

When are these Awards Given?
Some awards are presented immediately following the competition (i.e. trophies, ribbons). Other awards may be presented at some future time, depending upon the award and selection process (i.e. award trips, county medals, scholarships).
4.2 Options for Recognition

How can you recognize 4-H Members?
For Project Record Books:
- Give them a Project Medal
- Give the top 10% (by age category) of completed qualified project record books turned into County Extension Office a certificate, ribbon, public announcement or a patch

For “Best” or Placing Categories:
- Give them certificates, ribbons, public announcements, patches

For judging Contests & Teams/Demonstrations/Other Contests
- Give them their Individual/Team Performance Ranking
- Give them their Placing; name the champion, grand champion; ribbons, trophies, monetary awards, scholarships, jackets, etc.

For Project Exhibitions (Animal Shows, Fairs, etc)
- Announce their Exhibit Ranking

For completing a Project Award Trip Portfolio Applications & earning an Interview
- Give them a trip – county, state

How can you recognize 4-H Volunteers?
Volunteer of the Year - Certificate, Trip
Angel Volunteer - Pin, Certificate (county option)
Alumni of the Year - Alumni Pin
Hall of Fame - Certificate, Medallion, Web listing

How can you recognize 4-H Clubs?
County Club of the Year – County Certificate, plaque in County Extension Office
State Emerald Club Recognition (Top 10% of Emerald Clubs) – State Certificate, Web listing
4.3 Youth Opportunities for Recognition

Competitive Events for Peer Competition

4-H has a long history of offering competitive events as a part of the program, especially those associated with specific subject matter projects and activities linked to local county fairs. Florida 4-H supports an assortment of county-district-state-regional and national opportunities for youth to be recognized through per competition. The Events webpages of http://florida4h.org outlines all the competitive events scheduled through 4-H State Headquarters, providing staff, volunteers and youth up-to-date information and links to specific competitive events throughout the calendar year. There are specific participation criteria, rules and regulations that govern all Florida 4-H Competitive Events.

Peer Competition through Project Reports

One of the many ways 4-H recognizes youth is through their collected achievements in 4-H projects. These achievements can be exhibited in individual project record keeping activities, books, reports, as well as cumulative “Portfolios.”

Regardless of the terminology or descriptions used to identify these collected achievements, the goals for the young people are the same. They provide opportunities for youth to:

- Identify progress they've achieved toward a self-set goal;
- Provide feedback and reflect on their learning experiences for future decision-making or goal-setting; and
- Practices record keeping skills needed in life
Project reports provide a means to recognize youth through the previous levels of the 4-H Recognition Model by:

- **Participating** in completing and exhibiting a Project Report,
- Obtaining positive feedback from volunteer project leaders throughout their project work and **Progress Towards Goals**,
- Achieving a project medal by **Achieving Standards of Excellence**, or
- **Competing** with peers for Outstanding Project Report books, awarded in many county programs

Youth Project Reporting forms include several age-appropriate statewide reporting tools to help youth collect and record project experiences consistently from county to county and across all project areas of interest. These are:

- **My 4-H Cloverbud Project Summary** [4H GCM 11 on EDIS] is designed for youth ages 5-7 years of age. This Report Summary requires these youngest 4-H members the opportunity to summarize all completed projects for the year for club and county recognition.
- **My 4-H Junior Project Report Form** [4H GCM 12 on EDIS] (ages 8-10 years old)
- **My Intermediate Project Report Form** [4H GCM 13 on EDIS] (11-13 years old)
- **My Senior Project Report Form** [4H GCM 14 on EDIS] (ages 14-18 years old)

This report requires youth to complete a summary report for each completed project for recognition. The report includes the completed 4-H Project book/Manual, photos of their project work, and a short written story about their experience.
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Summary of Awards Program Opportunities Requiring an Awards Portfolio

The process is designed as a learning experience preparing youth for life. The process includes completing a 4-H Awards and Recognition Portfolio (including application, resume and narrative statement and other items as defined) and participating in a personal interview, if selected during the initial Portfolio screening.

The Building My Portfolio tool should be used to prepare for the Senior Portfolio. This is a form that can be expanded and added to every year to store a 4-H member’s entire 4-H career. When the senior level is reached, this form will allow for the easy transfer of the member’s highlights to a shorter, condensed form that is easier to judge.

Awards & Recognition Programs Using This Process

The three award categories below use this Portfolio Screening and Interview Process described in the 4-H publication (4HGCR30) Marketing You! Guidelines for Completing a Florida 4-H Recognition Portfolio for selection of award winners.

- National 4-H Congress
- National 4-H Conference
- Florida 4-H Scholarships

4-H’ers eligible to compete in the various awards and recognition categories must complete and submit a 4-H Awards and Recognition Portfolio to their county 4-H agent by the county’s deadline. Upon review and approval by the county 4-H agent, it is then submitted to 4-H State Headquarters by the annual deadline.

To see what this portfolio includes and additional information on the portfolio process, visit: http://florida4h.org/youth_/awards-and-recognition/portfolio/
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4.4 Project Report Appendices
  • Cloverbud Summary
  • Junior Project Report
  • Intermediate Project Report
  • Senior Project Report
  • Project Financial Summary
  • Member Portfolio – ages 8-13

4.5 Portfolio Appendices
  • Portfolio Completion for National Trips
  • Portfolio Completion for Florida 4-H Scholarships

4.6 Group Award Appendices (Cooperation Through Competition)
  • Community Pride

4.7 Adult Award Appendices
  • Awards information forthcoming

4.8 Teaching Outline
5.0 Excelling in Cooperation Overview

Many falsely believe that the United States was built on competition. From coast to coast, graveyards are filled with tombstones from the early settlers who tried to go it alone and failed. American history has many examples of people working together cooperatively to establish our country. Examples include beginning colonies, wagon train pioneers, the Underground Railroad, the Cooperative Extension Service, total quality circles, and today’s community coalitions that are reclaiming their neighborhoods from crime.

Cooperation is also highly valued in other cultures. From the kibbutz in Israel to the Mixtecans of Mexico, cooperation is prized and competition is mostly avoided. Cultures in which competition is virtually unknown include the North American Zuni and Iroquois and the Bathonga in South Africa.

From its early beginnings, 4-H has encouraged young people to work together to learn. Today, cooperation is receiving added emphasis as an appropriate teaching method to help young people develop life skills for today’s society.

Goal Structures

Public and private school educators have been advocating cooperative learning as a viable concept to enhance classroom instruction. To accomplish learning goals, a teacher organizes or structures learning experiences to achieve desired goals, i.e. they develop a goal structure. Teachers can structure their classroom in three ways:

- cooperatively,
- competitively,
- individualistically
David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson in their book, *Learning Together and Alone* (1994), identified cooperation as the appropriate goal structure for most instructional situations. They emphasize that the greatest need is for learners to be able to learn in a carefully planned cooperative goal structure that becomes the essential framework on which competitive and individualized learning is added.

They emphasized that successful learning experiences are first based on cooperation and only then competition may be introduced. Learning to work together, getting to know each other, sharing in successes, and developing collaborative skills are essential for ensuring that competition will produce positive results. Johnson and Johnson used 80 of their own research studies as well as data from 150 other research studies as a base for their highly regarded work.

Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic approaches to learning are appropriate depending upon the specific goals and objectives. Johnson and Johnson said, “We aren’t against competition (although the literature and research on competition are damaging to its reputation). We are against inappropriate competition…” To add, “inappropriate competition does not increase motivation – it skills it.” They support the idea that achievement is the product of many people working together regardless of how much it appears to be a singular effort. They also said, “The research clearly demonstrated that cooperation is more facilitative of motivated effort and achievement than is competition.”

Studies of nearly 200 youth, aged 8-10, concluded that, “Enhancement of self at the expense of others is learned in competitive environments; enhancement of self and others is learned in cooperative environments; and enhancement of self with neither enhancement nor abuse of others is learned in an individualistic learning environment. (Bryant)
In a summary of nearly 40 of Johnson and Johnson’s studies, it was found that students in cooperative classrooms liked each other better; socialized during free time; had a higher regard for the school, subject matter studied, and teachers; and had more confidence in themselves (Kohn.)

Sufficient evidence is available to identify the following conclusions for 4-H.

- The three goal structures, cooperative, competitive, and individualistic, offer a range of appropriate strategies for 4-H learning experiences.
- Learning experiences should first use cooperative goal structures before introducing competitive and individualistic learning activities.

Questions to Think About

1.0 What is the ratio of cooperative, competitive, and individual learning experiences in 4-H?
2.0 How do you recognize excellence for learning cooperatively?
3.0 What needs to be done to increase the use of cooperation in 4-H?
5.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Cooperating to Learn?
Cooperation engages young people in group experiences that are interdependent; requires face-to-face interaction; demands group and individual responsibility; creates opportunities for small group skill development; and depends on group interaction.

Why is Cooperative Learning a Part of 4-H?
Cooperation skills are increasingly important in today’s interdependent society. The primary goals of 4-H are to help young people become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society. Recognition of young people who work cooperatively to learn and achieve goals is a natural part of our recognition model.

Who Helps with the Cooperative Learning Experience?
Learning to use cooperative activities effectively as a learning tool takes some additional skills on the part of adults. It is more than just getting a group of 4-H’ers together and giving them an assignment. All of us need to expand our skills in using cooperation effectively as a learning tool and set the example of cooperation in how we work with other adults.

Where Does Cooperative Learning Take Place?
When young people cooperate and learn together in groups, they examine and affirm their own differences and explore solutions beyond their own individual ideas. They also affirm their own individual self-concept as well as form a group relation. They are learning how to succeed in today’s world where business is turning to group efforts and production.
Who is Involved with Cooperative Learning in a Club?
Cooperation should involve all the youth in a 4-H group. It provides an opportunity to form a group-identity and problem solve in a group setting. Cooperation is measured by the degree to which groups form mutually agreed upon goals and examine a variety of options on how to reach those goals.

What Should Cooperative Learning Recognition Look Like?
Examples of extrinsic awards are ribbons, certificates, newspaper articles, community recognition like highway clean-up signs, pizza parties, picnics, etc. Intrinsic recognition may be given through individual feedback, personal comments focused on strengths of individuals in the group, age appropriate group discussions, and feedback to individuals in the presence of the group.

Who Receives Recognition for Cooperative Learning?
Recognition for cooperation gives attention to the way a group works. Leadership skills that promote the involvement of everyone in the group are supported. The ultimate goal of cooperation is not individual recognition. Recognition for cooperation is based on how well group members work together rather than over who has done the best work. Everyone in the group is recognized when cooperative efforts are evaluated.

Who Awards the Members for Cooperative Learning?
Most groups will be able to come up with the best ways to celebrate their successes and to discuss what they have learned. As the group discusses its goals and results, identifies their strengths, and discusses improvements, a natural outcome will be a celebration of the work. Recognition from team members and significant adults will help to solidify the cooperative learning activity.
How Should Recognition for Cooperative Learning be Experienced?
All young people need to be fully involved in the entire process of cooperative learning and the group needs to establish mutually agreed upon goals. Attention needs to be given to the way the group works as well as to the project. Discussions should be held throughout the planning and implementation meetings, allowing for suggestions, concerns and the development of relationships in a fun environment. Remember, the ultimate goal is not extrinsic recognition but the satisfaction of being part of a team effort. The team needs to decide how to celebrate its own success, working to recognize and value all members.
5.2 Recognition Examples

4-H Clubs/Groups

- Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians
- Picnics by families or volunteers for completion of the activity
- Public reception at school, library, or community center
- A special party
- Certificates and Seals
- Club celebration

4-H Volunteers

- Positive feedback from Extension agents
- Newsletter articles about volunteer efforts
- Recognize volunteers group efforts

4-H Groups in Alternate Delivery Modes

- Positive feedback from volunteers, parents, and guardians
- Picnics by families or volunteers
- Public reception at school, library, or community center
5.3 Teaching Tools

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