



Working in Partnership with Youth Leaders

Youth and adult partnerships in 4-H provide an opportunity for sharing responsibility and ideas and developing leadership skills together. Youth leaders are involved in planning, teaching and leading projects, activities and events at all levels of 4-H.

Successful youth-adult partnerships

- Build relationships and a cooperative environment. Learn about each other before you start the project. This builds trust.
- Understand differences. Learn from one another what each of you needs and expects from the other (s). Everyone can contribute to the project. Understand that each person brings gifts/talents/resources to the partnership.
- Know your goals and focus on those you have in common. Youths need to be involved with decisions that affect them, and adults need to understand why this is important.
- Find a balance of power and find importance in working together. Try to maintain an equal number of youths and adults. Ensure that youths are decision-makers, not just participants or observers.
- Reveal skills and attitudes that will cultivate a successful partnership. Young people are capable of significant decision-making.
- Show genuine concern for issues addressed in the project. The issues should be real and relevant to members.
- Recognize and bring attention to the feelings of accomplishment. Acknowledge each person's contribution as a part of the team.

Youths and adults can work together to develop common goals. Start by developing (1) a job description that clearly defines each person's responsibilities, and (2) a plan of work that identifies the expectations of the youths and adults. Planning an activity on paper will help to identify all of the tasks involved. *(Try the Project Meeting Plan Worksheet)*

An adult project leader must be willing to share the project responsibilities and leadership role before he or she asks a youth to serve as an assistant.

Both adults and youths should agree to the following:

ADULTS

1. Recognize youths as equals in making decisions and accepting responsibilities.
2. Model good communication with youths.
3. Encourage and support youths on a continuing basis throughout planning, implementation and evaluation of the activity.
4. Understand that mistakes are opportunities to learn.
5. Ask for help when needed.

TEENS

1. Get along with younger 4-H members, peer group and adults.
2. Be sincere in helping others and working with groups.
3. Plan ahead and complete activities.
4. Be aware of abilities and limitations.
5. Ask for help when needed.
6. Share decision making and responsibilities with adults.

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