

# Montana 4-H Volunteer Excellence Webinar Series

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## Applying the 4-H Essential Elements *Activity*

### Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to enhance the learning after the webinar *Applying the 4-H Essential Elements* in the Montana 4-H Volunteer Excellence Webinar Series. Through this activity, you will explore your successes as a 4-H volunteer and discover ways to improve the use of essential elements in your 4-H activities (clubs, project meetings, camps, etc.) through a checklist.

### Activity

1. Complete the following Essential Elements - My Checklist. The purpose of the checklist is a self-reflection on your work in 4-H Youth Development. It is not designed to be compared to others. You will likely find areas of accomplishment as well as areas that have opportunity for growth and improvement.
2. Next, use a highlighter or another color of pen (if available), and go back through the checklist again. Highlight at least one area in each section that will become your goals to improve the use of essential elements throughout the next year.

### Reflection

- ✿ What essential elements have been strengths in your 4-H activities?
- ✿ What essential elements have an opportunity for growth in 4-H activities?
- ✿ What role do youth have in insuring that the 4-H activities consist of all the essential elements?

### Application

- ✿ What resources or materials do you need to reach your goals?
- ✿ How will the use of 4-H essential elements impact your 4-H activities?
- ✿ In what ways can the county 4-H program improve the use of essential elements throughout the year in all 4-H activities?

### Going Further

The *Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development* curriculum is a hands-on program for Extension staff and 4-H volunteers to get an in-depth experience in all of the essential elements. It also contain many activities and other checklists specific to certain 4-H activities such as shooting sports, camps, military programs or teen groups. It is free and can be downloaded [online](#). Activities could be used at Council meetings, countywide volunteer workshops or wherever else needed.



## My Checklist

## MY CHECKLIST

Use this Checklist to review your success in incorporating the 8 Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development into your 4-H program activities.

### How am I doing as the caring adult?

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do I encourage all of our members?			
2. Do I treat each member as a worthwhile human being and member?			
3. Do I expect members to treat each other with respect?			
4. Do I know the name everyone prefers to go by and how to pronounce or spell it correctly?			
5. Do I give members my full attention when they talk to me?			
6. Are all members treated equally and fairly?			
7. Do we set reasonable guidelines and insist that members follow them?			
8. Do members have a say in the things we do?			
9. Do I think positive thoughts about every member and encourage achievement from each of them?			
10. Do I share club, county, and state contests, camp, workshop, and award opportunities with all the 4-H members?			

### Does our group have an “inclusive” environment?

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do we use “ice breakers” at the beginning of activities or meetings to get everyone involved?			
2. Do we recognize members for a variety of things or just for events involving competition?			
3. Do we encourage group identity with hats, t-shirts, jackets, etc.?			
4. Do we have a plan to include new faces right away so they feel involved? (perhaps asking them to lead pledges, pass out papers, etc.)			
5. Do we seek diversity in our group?			
6. Do we encourage creative thinking from our members and show appreciation for their ideas?			
7. Do members get positive feedback from advisors and members regularly?			
8. Do we make time for adults and youth to become better acquainted?			
9. Do all of our members feel that their opinions are valued?			
10. Do we discourage new ideas with comments like, “That will never work”, “We tried that once,” etc.?			



**Is our group an emotionally and physically safe place for all of our members?**

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Does the group have clear and consistent rules and expectations for positive behavior?			
2. Are the rules communicated annually?			
3. Do advisors and members watch for hazards and eliminate them as they surface?			
4. Are there reasonable methods for dealing with misbehavior?			
5. Do we allow offensive language and gestures at meetings and functions?			
6. Do we encourage members to reflect upon what is to happen when we are at group functions?			
7. Are all of the adults working with our group familiar with the youth protection policy?			
8. Do adults and youth periodically discuss ways to improve the group environment?			
9. Are members closely supervised so that they feel physically and emotionally "safe" at all times?			
10. Are conflicts handled as they arise?			

**Members in our group want to grow; therefore we seek learning opportunities.**

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do youth have a sense of ownership of the group?			
2. Is the group program planned with a challenge in mind?			
3. Do members experience challenges, fantasy, curiosity, and control as part of our program?			
4. Can youth participate in our group and pursue their own interests?			
5. Do we take the time to relate what is learned to real -life experiences wherever possible?			
6. Do we work at connecting our program with youth issues and concerns?			
7. Do we allow youth to experience control of our activities?			
8. Do group expectations allow youth to make choices regarding level of involvement?			
9. Do the members design and participate in real projects that make a difference in the lives of others?			
10. Does our program appeal to the needs and interests of the youth involved?			



## How are we doing at providing opportunities for mastery of skills?

*Checklist*

*Almost Always   Sometimes   Hardly Ever*

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do we encourage everyone to do a demonstration or talk?			
2. Do we encourage members to set realistic yet lofty goals?			
3. Do we encourage members to help each other with project work and share their expertise?			
4. Do we make step-by-step plans so members can see successes?			
5. Do we celebrate successes along the way?			
6. Do we encourage members to reflect upon the successes?			
7. Do we periodically evaluate the plan, reviewing the setbacks and adjusting for success to be possible?			
8. Do we provide training/support for members when we expect them to do something, thereby increasing the odds of success?			
9. Do we provide opportunities for members to teach what they have learned?			
10. Are there opportunities for hands-on learning and for practicing new skills?			

## Do our members feel that they are active participants in the future?

*Checklist*

*Almost Always   Sometimes   Hardly Ever*

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do members feel qualified to take an active role in future events?			
2. Do members know how to set a goal and develop a plan to carry it out?			
3. Do adults give the members the power to set future goals for the group?			
4. Would our members someday consider taking a leadership role as adults?			
5. Do members have opportunities to hear from former members who have experienced success?			
6. Is positive thinking both practiced and encouraged in our group?			
7. Does our group offer members a chance to become active citizens by demonstrating the democratic process?			
8. Do we provide both inspiration and motivation for youth to strive toward their goals?			
9. Do members have a strong sense of the value of education and training in self-determination?			
10. Are our members growing in their understanding of personal, marriage, and family roles in our society?			



## Does our group allow members the opportunity for self-determination?

*Checklist*

*Almost Always   Sometimes   Hardly Ever*

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do members set group goals and determine its direction?			
2. Is our group environment flexible as unexpected things arise?			
3. Are members given the opportunity to plan, implement, and evaluate programs and projects?			
4. Do we encourage the group and members to do new things?			
5. Are the members involved in making rules and setting policies?			
6. Are members recognized for trying new things that challenge their abilities?			
7. Do one or two people control the direction of the group?			
8. Are members free to choose their level of involvement?			
9. Do youth believe that they have influence over the important decisions of the group?			
10. Are members allowed to solve problems for themselves and the group with minimal advice?			

## Do we value and practice service to others?

*Checklist*

*Almost Always   Sometimes   Hardly Ever*

<i>Checklist</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Hardly Ever</i>
1. Do members help select the service project themselves?			
2. Are members involved in planning service projects?			
3. Does our group get involved in a variety of types of service?			
4. Do members understand the relationship between community need and service?			
5. Do members seek creative ideas to address community needs?			
6. Do members demonstrate respect and concern for the needs of others?			
7. Do adults in the group demonstrate respect, concern, and sensitivity to the needs of members and other adults?			
8. Are the service projects we do appropriate for the age of the group?			
9. Do members get genuinely involved in the service projects?			
10. Does the group look for ways to help the community?			

Checklist created by Brenda Young, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development, OSU Extension - Wyandot County. Adapted from Kirk Astroth's "Critical Elements and Practices for 4 H". Peer-reviewed by Ohio V-8 Task Force.

For additional information on incorporating the essential elements into specific youth development programs, e.g., camping, afterschool programs, shooting sports, livestock, go to: [www.4-h.org/resources/essentialelements](http://www.4-h.org/resources/essentialelements)