



4-H's Public Partnership: USDA & Land-grant Institutions

Legislative Overview

The legislation establishing the land-grant system, the Department of Agriculture, and the subsequent legislation establishing the State Agricultural Experiment Stations and the Cooperative Extension Service, have proven to be some of the most significant legislation passed in improving the quality of life in the United States. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created the Cooperative Extension Service as a partnership between USDA, the land-grant university system and local governments. This unique federal-state-local partnership has functioned effectively for almost 100 years.

4-H youth development is an integral and essential part of the total Cooperative Extension System's educational program. From the very beginning it was intended that the Cooperative Extension Service would provide for the teaching of youth. In 1912 the USDA administrators sent a letter to states indicating that the regular emblem for all labels relating to youth clubs would be the four-leaf clover. The term 4-H Club was first used by USDA in 1918 and the four-leaf clover emblem was patented in 1924. Thus, it became the official trademark of the USDA, land-grant extension education for youth audiences. In 1948, the 80th Congress legislated the 4-H Club name and emblem as the legal title.

The legal basis for 4-H work is set forth by the intent of the United States Congress as its members drafted the original Smith-Lever Cooperative Extension Act. The Act was amended to include the words "and subjects relating thereto" in 1953. The amendment is explained in the report of the House Committee on Agriculture.

The phrase "and subjects relating thereto" is added to the new language of the Smith-Lever Act to make certain that the new legislation will authorize all those extension activities, such as 4-H Club work, education in rural health and sanitation, and similar aspects of the manifold extension program heretofore authorized and now being carried on under existing law.

The 1981 Agriculture and Food Act, Public Law 97-98, amended the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act (NAREPTA). NAREPTA includes 4-H in its official language when describing Extension activities. This act helps to clarify that youth development, including 4-H clubs, is a program area of concern to Congress and that it has been identified as a responsibility of the USDA in cooperative research, extension, and teaching efforts. 4-H is Extension's education program for youth.

4-H Clubs

4-H clubs receive their official designation and the legal right to use the 4-H Name and Emblem through the 4-H Charter. 4-H Charters, issued by the USDA and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture's authorized representative, are managed within each state through the land-grant university Extension office. 4-H Charters are agreements by the club with 4-H National Headquarters (USDA/NIFA) on the proper use of the 4-H Name and Emblem; and it is an agreement by the club with the land-grant university state and local 4-H Extension office to follow and abide by all state and local 4-H policies, procedures, and other requirements. This process, and all usage of the 4-H Name and Emblem, is defined in the federal regulations, 7 CFR 8. Furthermore, the use and integrity of the 4-H Name and Emblem is federally protected under 18 USC 707.



4-H National Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225;
Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The 4-H youth development program effectively contributes to broadly define human development goals. The variety of specific educational programs available provides young people with a broad spectrum of potential educational experiences supported by a strong subject matter base. Experiential learning is included in all aspects of programming. Youth learn in a practical atmosphere from awareness to understanding to application.

Partnership Uniqueness

The uniqueness of the 4-H program is its interrelatedness to all facets of the local, state, and national communities. The program is multi-aged, vocationally and professionally diverse, and co-educational – reaching from the USDA through the land-grant universities and state Extension services, to the local office, then through volunteer staff to the youth in the community. The Cooperative Extension program, including 4-H, continues to exert a strong influence on the development of people, as well as on what people do or produce. To provide continuity to society, one's country, the world, and to life itself, each generation is obligated to provide information, educational opportunity, responsibility, and inspiration to the next. This is why 4-H exists.

KEY POINTS

1. The 4-H Name and Emblem is federally regulated and protected.
2. Land-grant universities, through the cooperative extension system, are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem and, on behalf of the USDA, serve as the delegation authority for use of the 4-H Name and Emblem within their state.
3. The 4-H Charter, signed by USDA and issued through the land-grant university cooperative extension system, is the only document that officially recognizes a 4-H club.
4. Recognized 4-H clubs are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem. Unrecognized club or groups may not use the 4-H Name and Emblem.
5. Legal action can be taken against any person or entity engaging in unauthorized use of the 4-H Name and Emblem.

Resources:

Boyce, Milton V. (1988). *Experiential Education and Legal Justification for Cooperative Extension, 4-H.*

4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet (2011). *4-H Charters: The Key to Official Recognition.*