



## ▶ 4-H SERVICE LEARNING STANDARD

The 4-H Service Learning Standard outlines the critical elements of a 4-H service learning project. The Points of Light Foundation created this model to bridge the gap between the community and the classroom to create service learning opportunities for young people (Points of Light Foundation, 1997). This model serves as the framework around which 4-H youth can learn and enjoy. For a more detailed explanation of each standard, please visit the University of Tennessee Extension Service Learning Standard website at: [www.utextension.utk.edu/4H/sos/SLstandard/index.htm](http://www.utextension.utk.edu/4H/sos/SLstandard/index.htm)

### 1. Youth Voice and Planning

With a little help from adults, there's nothing you as 4-H youth can't do. You can plan projects, do the service, evaluate the program, celebrate your efforts – everything! As a leader, you can learn more and you feel like you have more to say in the project. So, gather your ideas, find some friends, an adult volunteer leader, and your 4-H agent and start planning!

### 2. Community Need and Voice

The first step in your planning is to take a good look at your community. Is there a nursing home or day care nearby? Does the park have a lot of litter? Do the neighborhood children have a playground? By looking at the world around you, you can learn more about your community than you ever thought you could. Now, what can you do to help?

### 3. Learning Objectives

After you have picked your project, think about what you may learn from doing it. Will you learn to work as a team with your fellow 4-H'ers? Will you learn more about a certain issue, such as homelessness or Alzheimer's disease? Will you learn leadership skills or maybe practice some of the things you've been learning in your 4-H project manual? Through discussion with your adult leaders, decide on a couple of things you want to focus on learning.

### 4. Orientation and Training

You've planned the projects and recruited other volunteers. What should they know about the service? Tell them about the problem you're trying to solve and why you chose the project you did. Teach them about where you're going to be serving and the people they'll be meeting there. Then tell them the other important things: date, time, place, transportation details, and anything else you think they should know to be prepared. Also, make sure the 4-H'ers' parents know what's going on and that they have signed the 600a form.

### 5. Meaningful Service

The day of service has arrived. What can you do to help things go well? You can set goals for what you want to accomplish that day. Make sure you have the supplies you need. Anticipate barriers, such as bad weather or not enough volunteers. Map out who's doing what job and who's working where. And, always, expect the unexpected. If something goes wrong, don't give up. Learn from it and keep going!



## 6. Reflection

During and after the actual service, think about why you're doing what you're doing. Ask yourself: "What?" "So what?" "Now what?" Why is the service important? What have you learned from it? Has it taught you a new skill or changed your attitude about something? And, now that you've learned it, what are you going to do with it? The great thing about reflection is that you can do anything – writing, talking, dancing, acting, whatever – that will get you thinking about these things.

## 7. Evaluation

Look at your program to see what's working and how you can improve it. You can do this anytime, but especially after you do the actual service. Talk to the volunteers, the people you served, adult leaders, and anyone else who was involved. See what they have to say about your service learning project. You can even plan, *before* the service, who and what you're going to ask *after* the service.

## 8. Celebration, Recognition, and Reporting

You and the other volunteers have worked hard helping your community and learned something along the way. You deserve a reward! It can be anything from a simple "thank you" to a party. When possible, include the people you have served. They'll want to thank you, too.

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## What Is Community Service Learning in 4-H?

Community service learning is a perfect blend of organized community service and established learning goals. It is more than just volunteerism. The main difference between community service and community service learning in 4-H is that community service learning intentionally links service that meets community needs to specific learning objectives that positively develop 4-H youth. Community service learning in 4-H also involves the important aspect of reflection, which is a careful review of what was learned from conducting the service (this will be discussed in greater detail later!) (Points of Light Foundation).

Community service learning projects can be used with any 4-H project to teach a variety of skills to 4-H'ers. Ultimately the project should support the four-fold model of 4-H youth development – development of the head, heart, hands, and health. Below are some important elements to include.

Important elements to consider when conducting a 4-H community service learning project:

1. Closely involve youth in ALL aspects of the project experience – identifying a project goal, determining how to accomplish the goal, meeting specific learning outcomes, and becoming engaged with adult mentors.

(For example: Allow 4-H'ers to be involved during the planning stage rather than presenting them with a project and expecting them to carry it out)

2. Select a project that 4-H'ers think is important and real to them as members of the community. It is important that 4-H'ers feel they are doing something that will benefit the community.

(For example: You feel your 4-H Club should focus on a project that consists of writing to legislators about a local community initiative. Your 4-H'ers may feel it is more important to develop pamphlets for a local school on the hazards of drinking and driving.)

3. Set project goals that are clear, but not too challenging.

(For example: The resources available within your community and the age of the 4-H'er might make it easier to create posters and presentations for the local schools on air quality than to develop a school-based program on “invasive species control.”)

4. Plan a project that is appropriate for the age level (Wilis, S., 1993).

(For example: If your 4-H club consists mostly of Cloverbuds, focus on a simple project that they can complete with little frustration.)



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