Steps to Success in 4-H FAQ

1. Why was the Steps to Success in 4-H created?

   There are four main reasons the Steps to Success in 4-H was needed:
   1) *To make sure that every youth has the same opportunities for success in 4-H. For example, now being a member in good standing means the same thing in each club and in each county, and youth who earn a year stripe and pin all did the same thing to get it;*
   2) *To make 4-H easier to understand for new families. The program is complex and this is one of the reasons new families leave 4-H;*
   3) *To remove barriers for youth and families to participate in 4-H, such as attendance requirements, and develop pathways for them to deepen their 4-H experience; and*
   4) *Provide progression within the recognition system:*
      - *Project meeting attendance + completion of the Annual Project Report (APR) Form = year pin and stripe;*
      - *100% club attendance = 100% attendance pin;*
      - *80% project and club attendance = Record Book requirement for any achievement rank;*
      - *Completion of the Record Book = star ranking system and county/state Record Book awards.*

2. Are the Steps to Success in 4-H required by policy or optional?

   The Steps to Success in 4-H are required by policy. The document summarizes several 4-H policies. These policies are: member in good standing, project completion, club participation, meeting attendance, and eligibility to show at fair (see the 4-H Policy Handbook, Chapter 5 and 7).

3. Do the lower steps have to be met before a youth can do the higher steps?

   Sometimes, but not always. When the lower steps must be meet first this is stated in the Steps to Success in 4-H. For example, to complete a project a member must be in good standing. However, project completion is not always required for event participation.

4. Why is the Personal Development Report (PDR) Form and/or Record Book not required to earn a year stripe and pin?

   Recordkeeping is an important part of 4-H and we want to encourage youth members to practice this skill. Only the Annual Project Report (APR) Form is tied to project participation. The PDR is tied to other learning experiences both in and outside of 4-H. As such, only the APR is required for project completion and to earn the year stripe and pin. The PDR is part of

the Record Book and, as such, is tied to the star ranking system and county/state Record Book awards.

5. Can counties be stricter than the state?

   No, the 4-H policies in the [Steps to Success in 4-H](#) apply to all 4-H projects, units, clubs, programs, and counties.

6. Can we have other requirements for project completion such as a demonstration or presentation?

   No, as mentioned in #5 above, counties cannot add other requirements. In addition, every youth should not be required to do a demonstration or presentation to be in 4-H. However, it is great to offer youth opportunities to demonstrate or present in each project.

7. Can the Annual Project Report (APR) be required to earn the 100% attendance pin?

   No, the 100% attendance pin is awarded for perfect attendance at all 4-H club meetings (in addition to being a member in good standing). See [List of Achievement Pins](#).

8. How will [Steps to Success in 4-H](#) make a 4-H club stronger?

   As mentioned in #1 above, one goal of the [Steps to Success in 4-H](#) is to remove barriers for youth and families to participate in the 4-H YDP and create pathways for them to deepen their 4-H experience. This should help grow 4-H membership.

   If youth cannot attend a club meeting because they have other obligations (school, family, work, sports, etc.) and we require them to attend 4-H meetings to be in the club then they will either leave the club or not join at all. Youth should be able to participate in these other activities AND be part of 4-H.

   California 4-H will decline in membership if we require more and more of youth and families. The best strategy for providing a high-quality youth development experience that serves today's youth and families is to have fun, engaging and valuable club meetings and an incentives and recognition program that motivates attendance.

9. What can we do to encourage youth to attend club meetings?

   80% attendance in project and club meetings is a Record Book requirement for any achievement rank and the 100% attendance pin is awarded for perfect club attendance. County incentives and recognition committees may come up with other ways to motivate attendance, such as attendance points and drawings for prizes (see https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC4-H/files/19864.pdf). For more information on the use of incentives and recognition to motivate youth and help them reach their goals, see the [4-H Policy Handbook, Chapter 13](#).

10. What resources are there to help club leaders make club meetings more fun, engaging and valuable?

    Some resources are currently available on the State 4-H website under [Club Leader Resources](). Face-to-face and virtual workshops are offered occasionally that equip leaders to engage youth in the program. These workshops are announced in the monthly newsletter, on the website, and through social media when they are offered.

11. Why is there no attendance requirement for clubs?

    Attendance at 4-H club meetings is designed to be a valuable learning experience for youth. If youth are not attending, we should ask WHY? rather than add attendance requirements. To motivate participation create a fun, enjoyable, and valuable club experience so that youth and families choose to attend versus feeling like 4-H is just another thing they have to do.

    It is important to recognize that some youth join 4-H just for Shooting Sports, livestock, or cooking projects for example. As a youth development organization we should nurture their sparks. We need to be flexible in how 4-H programs are offered in order to meet the needs of today's youth and families. If youth are participating in project meetings great, if they are also participating in 4-H club meetings even better, and if they are also participating in 4-H events and activities even better! The goal of the [Steps to Success in 4-H]() is to remove barriers for youth and families to participate in 4-H and develop pathways for them to deepen their 4-H experience.

12. Can we require club attendance for 4-H officers?

    Yes, club officers are not able to fulfill the responsibilities of their office if they do not attend meetings.

13. Can project leaders make club attendance a requirement for project completion?

    No. Participation in any single activity should not be tied to participation in another (see the [4-H Policy Handbook, Chapter 5](), IX). However, project leaders may determine the number of hours of project instruction necessary to achieve the goals of the project and, therefore, complete the project.

14. Why can project leaders require hours but not % attendance to complete a project?

    USDA requires at least six hours of project instruction for project completion, and that is why this is the minimum number of hours for project completion. The number of hours of project instruction is a better indicator of whether or not project goals will be met than the % of meetings attended.

15. When can attendance in 4-H be required?

    Attendance may be required when it is directly related to being able to meet responsibilities of a position/role or to participate safely in a related experience. For example, attendance at

club meetings may be required of club officers because they are not able to fulfill the responsibilities of their office if they do not attend meetings; attendance at camp counselor meetings may be required of camp counselors to be able to perform the responsibilities of their position/role; and attendance in the horse project may be required to safely participate in a horse show. See the [4-H Policy Handbook, Chapter 5](), IX).

16. Why can project leaders make requirements but club leaders cannot?

    Project leaders can make requirements for the number of hours of project instruction because they tie project work to safety and mastery of a skill. See question 11 for why there is no club attendance requirement.

17. Why can leaders of 4-H Community SPIN Clubs establish attendance as a requirement?

    For 4-H Community SPIN Clubs, the project work occurs during SPIN Club meetings. Because project meetings occur during the same scheduled meeting as the SPIN Club meeting, this is not mandating the project youth to any additional attendance requirements and is permissible. The project leader will continue to set the number of hours of project instruction necessary to meet the project goals and complete the project.

18. What is the best practice for Project Leaders to provide the Project Completion requirements to a 4-H member?

    It is a best practice that notification of 4-H project completion requirements should be provided to the member and their family upon enrollment. Ideally, project completion requirements and summary of project learning experience would be shared digitally to inform and help families plan and prepare. Any 4-H Project experiences must be developmentally appropriate for participants and appropriate for the delivery mode. 4-H personnel have responsibility to approve and evaluate all curricula for local, county use. A template has been created for 4-H Project Leaders to use and easily create a [4-H Annual Project Plan]() to support this.

    Additionally, there are certain 4-H projects that carry a higher risk, e.g., certain forms of water sports or equine activities, or any other project requiring specialized safety equipment use. In such cases, 4-H personnel should work with Project Leaders to review [Project Safety and Risk Management Planning Tool]() to help mitigate risk while planning the 4-H project.

19. Should there be opportunities to make-up missed project meeting or learning activity?

    It is important to recognize that there are many reasons that a youth member may need to occasionally miss a club/project meeting or other learning opportunity. This could include illness, family commitments, school activities, etc. Adult volunteer leaders should make reasonable opportunities for members to make up a missed meeting or learning activity. In promoting healthy communities, we must recognize that illnesses will occur among members and must reinforce the principle that anyone should stay home when they are ill or experiencing symptoms of illness. The principles of healthy communities have always applied to program delivery, but since March 2020, it has become even more important, as we

navigate the challenges and effects of emerging diseases and a global pandemic.

Staff and volunteer leaders should be flexible to allow makeup opportunities where members can achieve the learning objectives in other ways or can demonstrate their competency, if they are not able to attend a meeting or activity in person. This could include a variety of measures, such as allowing the option of participating in a meeting or activity virtually (e.g., zoom, etc.), attending other similar learning opportunities, independently reviewing information and demonstrating mastery of the learning objectives, etc.

20. How do we handle quorum requirements?

    The 4-H club bylaws may define a quorum as the number of persons present at the meeting (see Robert's Rules of Order).

21. If club meeting attendance is not required but there are limitations on the number of people that can meet in the facility due to space or fire code standards how do we handle it?

    Club enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis. If only 30% of the members attend monthly club meetings or the club leader knows how many people tend to participate based on past experience then the club can enroll more youth than the meeting space permits. If more families show up than the meeting space can accommodate then those that arrive after capacity is reached will not be able to attend. Another option is to find a meeting space that has a larger capacity.

22. What options are available to county 4-H personnel to establish county requirements to exhibit at fair?

All additional requirements are determined by 4-H personnel. The chart below shows what 4-H personnel can require, what may be required with approval, and what cannot be required. When determining the need for additional requirements, consider the [4-H Thriving Model](#), and especially developmental context.
- *Does the requirement enhance youth learning about their Spark?*
- *Does the requirement increase members' feelings of belonging?*
- *Does the requirement improve developmental relationships with caring adults?*

If it is not apparent how a requirement is directly related to a positive youth development strategy, and/or relevant to the specific fair exhibit, it should not be included as a requirement to exhibit at fair.

NOTE: VMOs and county 4-H staff may discuss ideas and options. Final approval for all 4-H requirements to exhibit at fair is determined by county 4-H staff. County 4-H VMO's may not establish any additional requirements beyond what county 4-H staff has approved.

What County Staff CAN Require (Optional)	Requirements County Staff may set. Must be approved by Statewide Coordinator or Regional Supervisor designee	What County Staff CANNOT Require
• 4-H Annual Project Report (APR) related to the exhibit • Enrollment deadlines specific to exhibiting an animal species at fair. • Forms indicating intent to exhibit.	• Showmanship demonstrations/interviews as optional practice sessions for the experience exhibitors will have at fair. • Clinics, events, practices that are species-specific to the fair exhibit experience.	• Enrollment deadlines for all youth that are unrelated to exhibiting requirements. • Presentations, talks, interviews, or demonstrations. • Record Books and any parts of the Record Book other than the APR. • Attendance at 4-H events and activities at any level, unrelated to exhibiting at fair.