Turning 4-H Project Experience into Mastery: 4-H Record Books

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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The goal of the Experiential Learning model is to support 4-H youth to achieve Mastery in their project content and in life skills. Intentional reflection is essential for turning activity into learning. Member Project Record and Member's 4-H Record books are tools to support the Experiential Learning Model (i.e. set goals, document what was accomplished and create intentional re

In homes where 4-H members live, likely since the inception of 4-H, there has been a common refrain said at the end of the 4-H year by a youth "Do I have to fill out the record book?" And, an exasperated parent or 4-H club leader saying "Yes, it's a requirement. Just put something down." Emphasizing the requirement misses the point, 4-H record books support a valuable stage of the Experiential Learning model, the reflection process (Kolb, 1984; 2014). Reflection is when a learner analyzes their performance and identifies the factors affecting their performance and identifies gaps in knowledge and understanding (Kornblith, 2012). This process is where learning takes place. The "doing" is a pre-requisite for reflection, and reflection is a pre-requisite for learning (Figure 1). When a
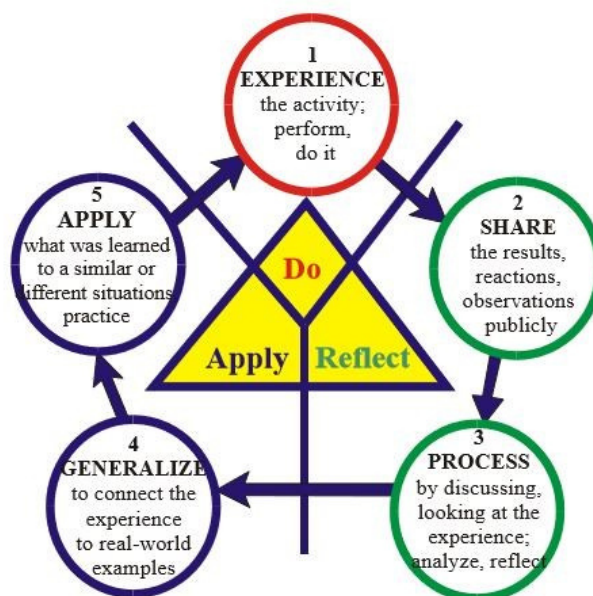
From "Using an Experiential Learning Model in 4-H," by A. R. Norman, and J. C. Jordan, 2019, University of Florida-IFAS, 4HSFS101.1.

cycle of this process in project work is established it supports the development of Mastery (Parrott et al., 2009; For more information see: Turning 4-H Project Experience into Mastery: Experiential Learning Model). The 4-H Project Record provides a framework to help youth implement the Experiential Learning model.

Record Books

Arizona 4-H utilizes two different 4-H record books to enhance reflection and ensure members are learning from the many experiences they have in 4-H.

Member Project Record

The Member Project Record (Project Record; UACE, 2014; AZ4H0903) is designed to:

-document 1 year of activity in a specific project.

-be completed by a member for each 4-H project they have participated.

-encompass the 4-H members development in the specific project.

For more guidance on filling out the Member Project Record refer to *For the Record: The Arizona 4-H Member's Guide for Completing 4-H Records* (UACE, 2014; AZ4H0901)

Member's Record

The Member Project Record (UACE, 2014; AZ4H0902) is designed to:

-document multiple years of activity in all projects completed

-one is completed per member, and is built on year-after-year

-encompass the 4-H members participation over their entire 4-H experience

For more guidance on filling out the Member's Record refer to For the Record: *The Arizona 4-H Member's Guide for Completing 4-H Records* (UACE, 2014; AZ4H0901)

Putting the Project Record into Practice for Mastery Development

For a project record to be used effectively in the process of reflection they must be viewed as a learning tool. As a tool, there are at least four components of the project record that support the Experiential Learning model. Youth can establish goals, keep track of what they have done in the year, write up what has gone well and what still needs work, and gives youth and volunteers opportunity to talk about what was accomplished.

Project Goals

Goal setting is an important stage for youth directed learning. A 4-H youth member's goals should be focused on the learning outcome they would like to achieve in the year ahead. For a project leader, asking a 4-H youth member to establish self-determined goals for the year do two things. First, the youth is establishing their own motivation for learning. Second, the youth is helping youth determine the educational objectives for the project for the year.

The Project Record asks youth to establish goals by asking the youth "What do you want to make, learn, or do in this 4-H project?" A goal is only as effective as the framing. Remember, a goal should be specific, measurable, realistic, attainable, and timebound (SMART; see Arizona 4-H SMART Goals Template). When a 4-H youth member is asked "What do you want to do next year?" they may respond "earn a Grand Champion ribbon." The youth stating, "earn a Grand Champion ribbon" is stating something they cannot control. To be awarded grand champion does take hard work and determination, yet, the 4-H youth member cannot control the competition or even the judge's assessment. What they can control is their attention to specific skills, learning opportunities, and effort. More effective goals, are: "I will practice walking my pig daily morning and night," "I will attend four public speaking contests and will have the speech fully memorized before the first contest," or "I will seek club office this year and I will communicate my club meeting schedule to my supervisor so that I can attend all club meetings." These goals are focused on both accomplishment and on skill building.

Record Keeping

During the 4-H year youth are engaged in specific learning experiences, these fall into three components (1) project meetings, that you as the 4-H Project Leader have created, (2) educational events and competitions they attend, and (3) the preparation work at home. Each of these are valuable components of "Doing" in a 4-H project. A youth will document each of these in their

Project Record in their "Project Activities," "Project Inventory," and "Project Income and Expense Record." Using these sections of the Member 4-H Project record the youth will keep track of the activity they are completing throughout the year. This will serve as a journal of the activities and help members see their progression through the project over the year.

4-H Story or Project Accomplishments
In the Member's Record, 4-H youth members are asked to complete a 4-H story. In the Member Project Record 4-H youth members are asked to complete Project Accomplishments. Both of these documents are designed to be completed as the 4-H youth member accomplishes the goals. Thus, these cannot be solely completed at the end of the project year. 4-H youth members in this process should be focused on four overarching questions:

1) When working towards my goal, what went well?
2) When working towards my goal, what didn't go well?
3) How did my actions contribute to my goal completion?
4) In the future, what needs to be done differently to achieve my goal?

Good Questions
Good questions are the tool to support reflection and are fundamental to successful Experiential Learning. The process of having youth complete the Project Record is a great opportunity for a 4-H Project Leader to ask appropriate open-ended questions. Asking open-ended questions is an artform, one that requires the asker to focus on the desired type of answer, and then intense listening. An open-ended question has no specific choices. For example, a close-ended question is "Do you like the color Green?" There are only three answers: Yes, No, or Maybe. An open-ended question could be "What is your favorite color?" The question could be an even better opportunity for the 4-H youth member to expand by asking them to explain why they like their favorite color. It is not good enough to ask the question, but it is necessary to listen for the explanation. In the explanation there may be needed follow-up questions when the 4-H youth member has drawn appropriate conclusions, missed the educational point, or remains confused.

How to Use Project Records in Your Meeting
The value the 4-H Project Record has now been established as an important tool in Project work. How does the volunteer or youth use it? There are several times where 4-H volunteers can use 4-H Project Records in their club and project meetings.

First Project Meeting of the Year
At the first project meeting of year, you could ask 4-H members to get out the prior years' Member

4-H Project Record and ask the youth to then read it over. Then ask each youth to then to establish their goals for the year. Using good questions, you can help ensure 4-H youth members are able to set S.M.A.R.T. and skill-focused goals for the upcoming year.

At Every Project Meeting
4-H youth members can update their project activity regularly (i.e. Project Activities, Project Income and Expense Record, and Inventory). At each Project Meeting you can ask 4-H youth members to report on what they have recorded. This provides you a chance to see where youth are putting energy, what challenges they are having in their work, and of course celebrate their successes.

End-of-Year
At the end of the year 4-H youth members will need to review their 4-H Record Books, pull their narratives together, proofread it, and submit it volunteers for review. In this process, volunteers can again use open-ended questions to foster good reflection and help youth clarify what they have learned and what they need to work on for the next year.
Note: The focus of 4-H Record Books is not completion or Awards, however, there are several recognitions connected to the 4-H Record Books. If a youth has put in the work, help them submit their 4-H Records for Club, County, and State Awards.

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Resources
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Google (2021). Arizona 4-H: Setting SMART Goals.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/14WMNOaZxa1oV6NOtaIZsPKIe5C_Dfs_ydh5CIp7c5b4/edit?usp=sharing

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AUTHORS
Jeremy Elliott-Engel
State 4-H Program Leader & Associate Director

CONTACT
Jeremy Elliott-Engel
elliotengelj@email.arizona.edu

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