



## Fundraising to Benefit Groups or Organizations by 4-H Units and VMOs Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Can 4-H members fundraise to support a particular 4-H member?

Funds should not be raised for a particular individual. When money is raised for 4-H it is for the group or team and not for individual members. 4-H values teamwork, collaboration and contributions to group effort and as such all funds raised should support these values.

### 2. Can 4-H members fundraise to benefit outside groups or organizations?

4-H groups may collect non-cash items (e.g., jackets, toys, food) or cash contributions (cash or checks) that are then used to buy supplies and materials to carry out their service learning activity. They may not donate cash to any group or organization outside of 4-H. **All fundraising conducted by a 4-H unit or VMO requires approval of the designated UC staff based on the current 4-H staffing plan.**

When a 4-H group engages in a fundraising activity to benefit another group (e.g., fire victims) or organization (e.g., Red Cross), they must post a sign or otherwise make clear to potential donors that the funds will be used to benefit the other group (e.g., fire victims) or organization (e.g., Red Cross).

See [Guidelines for Fundraising to Benefit Groups or Organizations by 4-H Units and VMOs](#) for additional information.

### 3. What is a service learning activity?

Service learning goes beyond community service. 4-H service learning combines service and learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service. For more information and helpful service learning tools for 4-H members and volunteers visit: [https://4h.ucanr.edu/Projects/CivicEngagement/service\\_learning/](https://4h.ucanr.edu/Projects/CivicEngagement/service_learning/).

### 4. Why can't 4-H units and VMOs fundraise and donate cash (or checks) to an outside group or organization?

4-H is an educational youth development program and as such it is appropriate for 4-H members to conduct fundraising activities in support of outside groups and organizations as part of a service learning activity. These activities are permitted because they provide a high-quality youth development experience as part of the mission and framework of the UC 4-H program. Giving cash contributions is a low service activity and as such not aligned with the goals of 4-H (see #3 above for more information).

**5. Are there any restrictions on the groups or organizations that 4-H can fundraise to support?**

Yes, the group or organization may not be religious or political in nature or purpose or discriminate in their membership on the **basis of race, color, sex, handicap, religion, age, sexual orientation or national origin**. All fundraising conducted by a 4-H unit or VMO requires approval of the designated UC staff based on the current 4-H staffing plan.

**6. Can 4-H Units participate in activities such as bell ringing for the Salvation Army?**

While we deeply respect the charitable efforts of organizations like the Salvation Army, 4-H units are not permitted to participate in activities such as bell ringing. This policy is in place for a few key reasons:

- a. Focus on Non-Financial Contributions:** 4-H emphasizes activities where members contribute their time, effort and skills rather than facilitating direct cash donations. This approach aligns with our goal of fostering hands-on learning and personal development.
- b. Neutrality in Charitable Activities:** As 4-H is committed to inclusivity and objectivity, we avoid activities that could be perceived as endorsing religious organizations. This ensures that all members feel welcome and that our activities remain universally accessible.
- c. Encouraging Enriching Service Learning:** We encourage our members to engage in service learning activities that offer high engagement, education and direct community impact. While bell ringing is valuable, 4-H focuses on activities that align closely with our educational goals and allow for more active participation and learning.

4-H units are encouraged to seek service opportunities that align with these principles, offering enriching experiences that contribute positively to personal growth and community well-being.

**7. Can 4-H members participate in fundraisers sponsored by an outside organization?**

Yes, 4-H members may participate in fundraisers sponsored by an outside organization as long as the organization is not religious or political in nature.

**8. Can 4-H units or VMOs donate to a church that then passes the donation onto a different group or organization that is not religious in nature?**

No. However, if the 4-H group wants to fundraise as a service learning activity to directly benefit the group or organization this is permissible (see #2 above).

**9. Can 4-H members participate in adopt-a-family programs?**

Yes, 4-H families may participate in adopt-a-family programs through collaborating with local organizations. As part of a service learning activity, 4-H groups may collect non-cash items or cash

contributions ***that are then used to buy*** supplies or materials (e.g., blankets, clothes, toys). The items may be given to the organization or family. However, cash contributions (cash or checks) may not be given to the organization or family (see #4 above).

**10. Can 4-H members fundraise for the benefit of a specific individual or family?**

4-H members may not fundraise for a specific individual or family. For example, it would be inappropriate to fundraise to help the “Smith family” who were victims of a wildfire. It would, however, be appropriate to fundraise for “fire victims” or for an organization that is assisting fire victims (*see #2 above and #9 below*).

**11. Can donations be solicited for the general purpose to help groups?**

Yes, as long as it is part of a service learning activity. If there is a fire in the area 4-H members could solicit non-cash items or cash contributions *that are then used to buy* supplies or materials *to carry out their service learning activity* to help fire victims (and they could limit it to 4-H victims). When fundraising to help groups the “class” of beneficiaries must be large enough to ensure that it is not deemed to be a gift to an individual. Alternatively, the 4-H members can give the non-cash items collected or materials and supplies purchased to an organization helping fire victims (such as the Red Cross) (see #2 above).

**12. Are donations solicited by 4-H to benefit other organizations and groups tax-deductible?**

It depends. If the contributions collected are donated to a non-profit or tax-exempt charitable organization the donor’s contribution is tax-deductible. If the donations are not given to an organization that is a non-profit or tax exempt the donor’s contribution is not tax-deductible. Also see [Guidelines for Fundraising to Benefit Groups or Organizations by 4-H Units and VMOs](#).

**13. Can 4-H units and VMOs use money collected through program fees or donations/gifts to carry out their service learning activity?**

Yes, 4-H units and VMOs may use money received from 4-H unit or county fees to *purchase supplies and materials to carry out their service learning activity*. Donations/gifts received by the 4-H unit or VMO must be used as the donor intended. 4-H unrestricted gifts (i.e., given to 4-H but not designated for a specific purpose) may also be used to carry out service learning activities.

The University of California Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources (UC ANR) is an equal opportunity provider.