



Merced County 4-H Service Star Program

Overview

The Service Star is an award given to a 4-H member for planning and implementing an advanced leadership activity. The Service Star is separate from any star rank. Service Star is not a 4-H rank. It has been designed to encourage members to plan and execute a goal outside the member's Community Club. The Service Star is for experienced 4-H members who have been in 4-H for at least two years and are at least 13 years old, as of Dec. 31st of the current program year. Each Service Star application will be evaluated for its value to the Merced County 4-H Program, value to the community, practicality and feasibility. The review will be conducted by the Merced County 4-H Incentives Committee and the Merced County 4-H Office.

The Merced County 4-H Service Star program replaces the state Emerald Star program of the past achievement system. When the state Emerald Star program ended on June 30, 2024, Merced County 4-H started developing its Service Star program, which is basically a copy of the former state Emerald Star program, giving Merced County 4-H members a chance for advanced leadership opportunities

Purpose of the Service

- Encourage 4-H members to develop higher levels of leadership and organization skills through an individual program of planning, action and reflection.
- Promote the development of mentoring relationships between individual members and leaders
- Encourage 4-H members to be creatively involved in projects or events beyond the Community Club.
- Be involved in a leadership opportunity without requiring a previous star rank.
- Prepare members for experiences at the county, state and national levels in the 4-H program.

Your Service Star Advisor

The Service Star Program is run through the Merced County 4-H Incentives Committee with a designated 4-H volunteer acting as the service star advisor for your project. Your advisor may not be a relative but must be a 4-H volunteer leader. It is your responsibility to secure an approved County Service Star Advisor. The Advisor will work with you to make sure that your project will qualify as a Service Star project and that its scope is manageable and will offer advice on how you should proceed. The Advisor advises but does not do any of the work on the project. Your advisor will meet with you at least twice: first, to go over your Project Plan and, secondly, to review your Final Report/Reflection, more meetings are encouraged based on the scope and length of the project.

The Service Star Project

Important considerations in choosing an advanced leadership Service Star project include:

- Does it meet a need in the community or in the area or countywide 4-H program (not your club)?
- Is it useful and does not duplicate existing programs?
- Does it provide a chance for you to demonstrate your leadership beyond the project and club level?
- Is the scope (cost, time, skills and other resources needed) manageable?
- Is the timeline scheduled feasible?

Your Service Star project can cover virtually anything. It may be something that has never been done before, or it may be something that has been done before but needs to be repeated. Generally (though not necessarily), topics fit into the following categories: projects, events, and publications/educational resources.



Examples of past Service/Emerald Star projects include:

Projects:

- Be a junior/teen leader for a project group that involves several clubs.
- Lead a countywide project.
- Conduct an independent research project and make results available to 4-H members throughout the county (such as lamb feed studies).

Events:

- Lead an area or county event committee.
- Plan, organize and conduct an area event such as a horse show, dog show, learning day, judging contest, field day or presentation day.
- Present a series of programs or talks about 4-H.
- Hold a fundraiser for a nonprofit organization.
- Organize meals for homeless.
- Plan and conduct a recreational activity or event that helps members socialize and build friendships with other clubs.

Publications/Educational Resources:

- Develop educational brochures or a booklet for leading a project for which existing 4-H materials are inadequate.



Service Star Application Checklist
Use this page to keep track of your project

Date Completed:

1. Have an idea or plan for an activity or event beyond the local club level.	<hr/>
2. Contact the county office and the incentive committee prior to the date you intend to begin work on your project to discuss your ideas or plan.	<hr/>
3. Fill out and send the Service Star Project Plan to the county office and the incentive committee. Save a copy for your records.	<hr/>
4. Secure a Service Plan Advisor and discuss your plan with them.	<hr/>
5. After your planning meeting with your Advisor, make any revisions necessary to your Project Plan and submit a copy of the revised Plan to your Advisor. Repeat this step until Advisor approval is received.	<hr/>
6. Present your plan at your Incentive Committee meeting and have the Incentive Committee Chairperson sign your project plan indicating that the presentation was given.	<hr/>
7. After presenting your Service Star Project Plan to your Incentive Committee make any revisions necessary to your Project Plan and submit a copy of the revised Plan to your Advisor.	<hr/>
8. Upon receiving notification from your Advisor that your Project Plan has been approved, begin implementing the Plan.	<hr/>
9. Within 60 days of completing your project, fill out the Final Report and Reflection form. Send it to your Advisor. Contact your Advisor to schedule an evaluation meeting to complete your project.	<hr/>
10. Present your final report at your county Administrative Oversight Committee meeting and have your Incentive Chairperson give final approval and sign your final report.	<hr/>
11. Service Star medal is awarded to you.	<hr/>

Note – A Service Star project can be started and/or completed at any time during a 4-H program year. The project may start in one 4-H program year and end in another 4-H program year.

Note – You can do any number of Service Star projects, but each project is separate and earns you a separate Service Star medal.

Note – The Service Star Advisor will notify the county 4-H office and the Incentive Committee when a 4-H member is considering doing a Service Star project. This should be done before the project plan is approved for starting.



Service Star

Project Plan

To be submitted to and approved by the Service Star Advisor and presented to the Incentive Committee before beginning the project.

Attach additional pages if more space is needed for this plan.

Name _____ Todays Date _____

Estimated Start Date _____ Estimated Completion Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Club _____ Age _____ Years in 4-H (incl. this one) _____

Advisor _____ Date for planning mtg. with advisor _____

Project Description. Include measurable, realistic and attainable goals

Why do you want to do this project? How will you and others benefit from this project?

Estimate of time, effort, human resources and funds required. Source of funds. Include budget requested.



Possible Obstacles	Possible Solutions

Specific Action Steps for Achieving Goal: Timeline	Target Date

How will you track your project's progress?

Signatures/Approvals	
This is my plan of action for the Service Star project. I have read the Service Star information and understand my responsibilities for completing this project. I understand that this proposal must be approved, as signified by having the Service Star advisor and District President sign below, before I begin working on the project.	
_____ Applicant's Name (Print)	_____ Applicants Signature

As parent/guardian of the Service Star Applicant I understand what is expected of my child. I understand that my role is to support and encourage my child with the project, not to perform any of the work. I understand that by performing any of the work for my child, the project may be disqualified, and no Service Star awarded.	
_____ Parent/Guardian Signature	_____ Date



I nominate this 4-H member to be considered for the Service Star Program.

Signature of Club Community Leader

Date

***Service Star Project Plan Approval:**
I approve this Service Star Plan.

Signature of Service Star Advisor

Date

This plan was presented at an Incentives Committee meeting on _____(Date)

Signature of Incentives Committee Chair

Date

Signature of Community Education Specialist

Date



Service Star Final Report

Final Report and Reflection

To be submitted to and approved by the Service Star Advisor.

Name _____ Todays Date _____

Estimated Start Date _____ Estimated Completion Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Club _____ Age _____ Years in 4-H (incl. this one) _____

Advisor _____ Date for planning mtg. with advisor _____

Attach additional pages if more space is needed for this report.

Were the goals for your project met? (Be specific) Did your project meet your expectations of success?

Who benefited from this project? How and why?

What were the costs of this project in time, effort, human resources and funds?



Problems Faced	Solutions Used

Were the specific action steps and timeline you proposed realistic? How well did they work?

Suppose you could go back to the beginning of this project and start fresh. What changes would you make to your plan or action steps?

I certify that this Service Star project has met the requirements for the Service Star Award.	
Service Star Advisor Signature _____	Date _____
I certify that this Service Star Final Report was presented at an Administrative Oversight Committee Meeting on _____(date).	
Incentives Committee Chair Signature _____	Date _____