

Nevada County 4-H Project Proficiency Program



A Leader's Guide

Dear 4-H Project Leader:

A recognition and incentives structure such as the 4-H Youth Development Program Incentives and Recognition can only provide part of what some 4-H members need to inspire the to "Make The Best Better." We, as adults, have the responsibility and the privilege of providing the other part—the human element. At no time can a trip or a medal compete with understanding, patience, love and respect as inspiration for exploring the unknown and aspiring to learn.

Each person develops at different rates and times. If we are aware and accepting of this fact, and if we take the time to get to know a person's individual needs, we will be better prepared to help that person grow more naturally and gracefully toward his/her human potentials for responsible achievement.

To more fully present the educational opportunities of the 4-H Youth Development Program, all involved staff and volunteers are encouraged to:

- View all recognition as a means to an end, not the ultimate goal
- Be familiar with the objectives of each program
- Be familiar with the recognition that is available and understand the guidelines governing eligibility
- Maximize motivation by nominating 4-H members for recognition as opposed to asking them to apply
- Provide instruction in compiling records and completing reports

The Nevada County 4-H Project Proficiency Program is a new look at Incentives and Recognition. County Incentives and Recognition Programs are undergoing major revisions and are conforming with the State and National Guidelines. California 4-H has adopted the National 4-H Recognition Model and is requesting that the county 4-H programs work to revise their incentives and recognition programs to fit this model.

The purpose of the National 4-H Incentives and Recognition Model is to encourage and support the efforts of young people to increase their knowledge and develop their life skills. The model emphasizes five areas:

- Participation
- Progress toward self-set goals
- Achievement of standards of excellence
- Peer competition
- Cooperation

The 4-H Project Proficiency program assists youth in measuring themselves against "standards of excellence" in a project area. Each Project Proficiency is comprised of five skill levels which increase in scope and difficulty. Furthermore, each Project Proficiency meets the objectives for the project and project cluster as described in the California Incentives and Recognition Handbook. In the Project Proficiency Program, youth strive for mastery of a subject and receive recognition as each level is completed.

Youth members are not the only ones who benefit from this program. The Project Proficiency Program can assist you as a leader in organization of the project material. It also encourages you to infuse new ideas within specific curriculum in a sequential manner.

Good luck with your project!

Sincerely,

Nevada County 4-H Youth Development Advisors and Program Representatives

Leader Tips for Utilizing the 4-H Project Proficiency Program

The goal of the Nevada County 4-H Proficiency program is to give members recognition and rewards in a timely manner and in a variety of ways to meet the diverse needs of today's youth.

It is also designed to assist youth in measuring themselves against a "standard of excellence". Each proficiency level is comprised of four skill levels and should be designed to increase in scope and difficulty. The levels are:

- Level I – Explorer
- Level II – Producer
- Level III – Consumer
- Level IV – Leader

The proficiencies are three-fold in purpose

1. to provide youth opportunities to sample a broad array of experiences, measure personal progress, and become self-directed learners.
2. to provide a standard of excellence where members are recognized for knowledge and skills they have mastered.
3. to provide guidelines for leaders to enhance and expand project content and experiences.

The Proficiency program is **not** designed to be an award, or a prize for the best in a competition. Instead, members are **rewarded** for their personal progress. The intent of the proficiency program is to increase performance, while allowing members to be motivated, to be creative and to take risks.

The proficiencies are not a test. Youth should not be quizzed at the end of each 4-H year to determine how much they have learned. The proficiencies should be given to each youth member as a set of goals that they, as individuals, can work toward over one or more years. Completion of all four levels of a proficiency program indicates "mastery" of a subject.

The proficiency program is voluntary. Not all youth will find this type of activity rewarding. Many youth enter projects with their own agendas. They join to learn a specific skill or group of skills, but not to achieve mastery of a subject. Additionally, not all project leaders will choose to go into such depth for each subject area. Completion of Level I – **Explorer** may be all that is offered by a particular project leader.

We encourage leaders to give proficiency guides to members sometime during the first or second year in a project. At this point, the leader allows the member to determine which skills and/or knowledge areas he or she wants to master. Youth members can work on skills in several levels at the same time. The leader's job is to check each item in a level when the member has completed it.

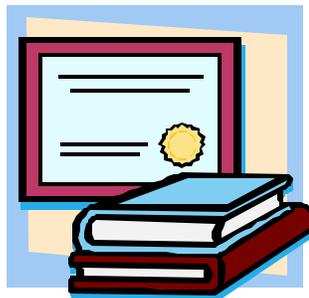
For the skill areas which require demonstration, youth members may demonstrate individually to the leader (project or teen), the group, or the club at a local meeting. Members are not required to demonstrate in front of a group as we are measuring mastery of a subject, not bravery. Some leaders leave time at the end of each project meeting for members to work on their proficiencies. This gives the youth some one-on-one time with their leaders (adult & teen) as they demonstrate acquired knowledge and skill mastery.

Leaders are cautioned not to accept a questionable answer. This indicates as incomplete mastery of the particular skill or body of knowledge. If the youth member is unsure of the correct method or term, use this time to teach the individual and allow member a month to think about it and review. The youth member will return with the knowledge learned and present it with confidence.

Allow a significant amount of time (one month) to lapse between when a skill is taught and when a member demonstrates mastery. This allows time to practice and achieve mastery, not merely reflect on a newly learned skill.

Reward immediately! Recognition is most meaningful when it is presented immediately following a learning experience. Sign and date the worksheet each time a member completes a level on skill task. Inform the county proficiency coordinator each time a level is reached. The county coordinator will then inform the 4-H office of the results.

Each level of the proficiency program includes a certificate that can be completed and awarded to the member immediately upon successful completion. At the year-end Achievement Night, the member will then receive a medal and a year pin for Level 1 and then a year pin for each level completed after that. After successful completion of Level IV, the member will receive a silver belt buckle engraved with the program name.



**The Nevada County 4-H Project Proficiency Program
by California Incentive & Recognition Clusters**

1. Citizenship and Civic Education
- Citizenship

2. Communications and Expressive Arts
- Creative Arts & Crafts

3. Consumer and Family Services
- Clothing and Textiles

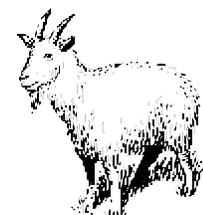
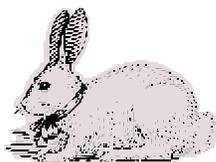
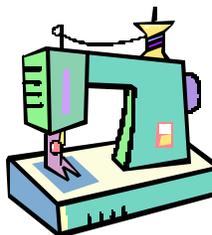
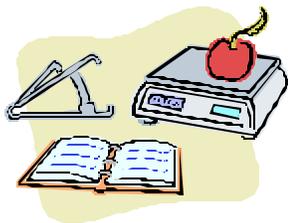
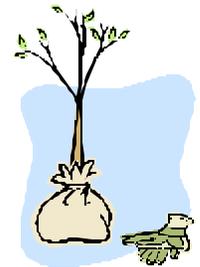
4. Environmental Education and Earth Sciences
- Marine Biology and Oceanography
- Wildlife

5. Healthy Lifestyles Education
- Foods and Nutrition
- Camping and Outdoor Adventure

6. Personal Development and Leadership
- Leadership

7. Plant Sciences
- Plant and Soil Science

8. Animal Sciences
- Covers all animals



RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT PROFICIENCY

The Project Proficiency program has been created utilizing a specific rationale, based on certain accepted and/or adopted principles of the 4-H program.

- The Goals of 4-H, California 4-H Policy Handbook
- The National 4-H Recognition Model for Life Skills
- Cluster and Project Objectives from the California 4-H Incentives and Recognition Program
- University of California Cooperative Extension 4-H Rabbit Advancement Program

California 4-H Youth Development Program

Mission: to help youth develop into responsible, self-directed, productive citizens of the world, and to improve the well-being of youth and society through the use of research-based learn-by-doing, educational experiences.

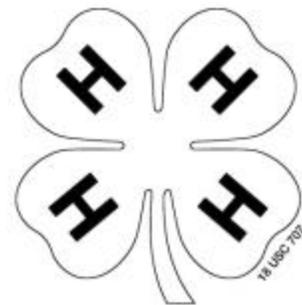
The 4-H Youth Development Program Educational Goals are:

- Acquisition of life, leadership and problem-solving to enhance individual development and well-being
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills in the production and wise use of food and fiber, and the conservation of the world's natural resources
- Understanding of and responsible participation in community affairs

The National 4-H Recognition Model for Life Skills:

Life skills involve learning specific information for completing a task and understanding how to apply the basic principles or techniques learned to other situations. The primary life skills taught in 4-H include:

- Understanding of self
- Relating with others (interpersonal)
- Communication skills
- Problem solving
- Acquiring, analyzing, using information
- Managing our resources
- Working with others (in groups)



The California Incentives and Recognition Program Objectives:

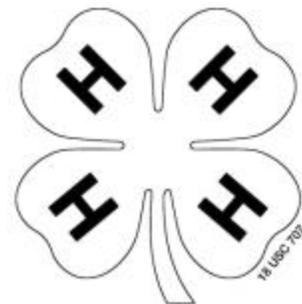
- Practice leadership skills and roles, take part in community affairs, and demonstrate citizenship responsibility
- Explore career, job and productive opportunities. Develop skills, knowledge and attitudes for lifelong use
- Learn to use accepted practices for mental, physical and emotional health, and to respect yourself and others
- To develop integrity, sportsmanship, cooperation, and ability to speak in public through participation in related activities, such as demonstrations, talks, judging events, tours and exhibits

The National 4-H Recognition Model Objectives:

The National 4-H Recognition Model includes five types of recognition. It is important for adults who work with 4-H'ers to provide appropriate recognition to all participants.

- Recognition of 4-H'ers for **participation** in educational experiences acknowledges involvement as a first step in building a positive self concept.
- Recognition of **progress toward personal goals** enables youth to gain experience in goal-setting and realistic self-assessment.
- Recognition of the achievement of generally recognized **standards of excellence** gives youth an external, pre-determined target for their learning experiences.
- Recognition through **peer competition** is a strong motivation for some but not all young people. It is not appropriate for youth under age eight.
- Recognition for **cooperation** helps youth learn and work cooperatively, preparing them for living in today's inter-dependent, global society.

The Nevada County 4-H Project Proficiency Program is designed to meet the goals and objectives stated above by encouraging and supporting the efforts of young people to increase their knowledge and develop their life skills utilizing a comprehensive recognition model.



TEMPLATE FOR CREATING PROJECT PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

Level I Explorer

The Explorer level is the most basic of all the levels. Here the youth member begins to explore the boundaries of the project area, touching on many of the skills and knowledge areas that will be expanded upon later. Objectives to accomplish at this level:

- Learn the basic knowledge and skills needed for the project
- Learn about the equipment and materials that are usually associated with the project
- Learn the basic vocabulary associated with the project
- Explore conformation (shape, form and/or patterns)
- Learn to follow directions
- Learn to do basic analysis
- Begin record keeping skills
- Learn to practice the safety and courtesy issues associated with the project
- Share the project with another youth member (this is the first step toward learning public speaking skills)
- Do at least one demonstration in a non-threatening environment

Level II – Producer

The Producer level builds and expands on the knowledge and skills learned in Level I – Explorer. Objectives to accomplish at this level:

- Learn more specific information needed for the project
- Explore texture and color as it relates to the project area
- Record keeping – more advanced than in Level I
- Learn to analyze and evaluate (compare and contrast) in the project area
- Learn to problem solve as it relates to the subject
- Learn advanced safety and/or sanitation issues
- Use creativity in the project area
- Display some aspect of the project outside of the immediate group
- Participate in a community service/citizenship activity related to the project
- Identify resources by visiting someone in the community who is involved in this project area

Level III – Consumer

The Consumer level takes the member beyond the immediate project, out into the community, as they explore the project area in depth. Objectives to accomplish at this level:

- Explore some historical aspect of the project
- Explore career and industry related options
- Learn to speak in public
- Learn courtesy by inviting and introducing a speaker on a project related subject
- Explore the science of the project
- Explore the local, state and/or national affiliations associated with the project
- Learn advanced record keeping skills
- Explore consumer education by developing a display, demonstration, talk, etc. on the subject
- Design some aspect related to the project
- Gather resources by starting a reference library (books, magazines, etc.) related to the project
- Learn about sportsmanship through competition
- Participate in, or organize a community service or citizenship activity related to the project

Level IV – Leader

The Leader level focuses on acquiring leadership skills through the project activities. Objectives to accomplish at this level:

- Complete one year of Junior or Teen Leadership in this project
- Learn to prepare teaching materials to be used in the project
- Learn to assist younger members in design of project, needed materials and/or equipment
- Learn to assist younger members in a specific, project related, topic
- Learn how to prepare and give a speech (talk) outside of the project group
- Learn how to organize an event (the focus here is on learning the process of organization)
- Learn how to assist at a community event
- Learn to develop their own special activity, create the plan, chart progress, analyze successes and/or problems and report results

