



What Counts as 4-H in My Programs¹

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The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) has only one way to systematically aggregate and take credit for the scope of its efforts in youth development. It is called "CES Form 237", the annual 4-H Youth Enrollment Report. No matter what a youth development program is called, take credit for what is being done! All youth development efforts of CES in each county are reported on the county or state ES237. That includes (usually) collaborative efforts with other groups. However, if the effort (independent or collaborative) is a one-shot event then don't report it. In recent years CES has begun any number of wonderfully innovative, cutting-edge new youth development programs in various states. A 4-H experience should engage young people in six hours of education activities.

Unfortunately, in some places, the more innovative the program, the less likely that it will be called 4-H. Consequently, Extension does not get credit for being as innovative as we really are, and the image of 4-H continues to lag

behind reality. Often those uniquely-named CES youth development efforts don't get counted on the ES-237, so CES does not really get credit for them. Consequently, there is probably a huge undercount in 4-H.

The 4-H umbrella is big enough that it covers all CES youth development. **The official definition of 4-H, for some 30 years, has been: 4-H: The youth development education program of the Cooperative Extension Service.** Not "A" youth development program. Not "part of" the youth development program. But the sum total of youth development education provided by the Cooperative Extension Service. 4-H is a rich collection of delivery modes, ways of learning, subject specializations and unique local adaptations. Almost every club or group has its own unique name, but continues to be, and be reported, as part of overall 4-H. This is true for all youth development programs originating from the 1862, 1890, and 1994 land grant universities, Tuskegee University, and the universities in the territories.

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