#### **TEXAS 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

# SELF-DIRECTED PROJECT GUIDE TO SUCCESS 2025-2026



Revised: 7/2025

Want to learn more about a specific subject or interest you may have, but cannot find a project to go with it? Self-directed projects might be for you! With the guidance of your 4-H leader and county Extension agent, you can turn your interest into a self-directed 4-H project.

A 4-H Self-directed Project is an opportunity for members to explore a new topic which may not fit into the current project offerings. A 4-H Self-directed project may not be supported with resources from the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program.

Step 1: PROJECT GUIDELINES

# **Project Guidelines**

- 1. Make an inventory of your interests or something you would like to learn more about. Identify a topic for your project.
- 2. Discuss your ideas with family, friends, and your county Extension agent. Decide what it is you want to do and learn.
- 3. Set a goal. Decide what the end goal of your project will be and necessary steps to achieve your goal.
- 4. Gather information about your topic using credible resources. The web address can help you identify the kind of organization responsible for the website:
  - · An educational institution is indicated by .edu
  - Those with .gov are funded by a government agency
  - Professional organizations, such as scientific or research societies, are identified by .org
- 5. List all the things you want to learn about your topic.
- 6. Complete at least six experiential learning experiences. Experiential learning includes activities, research, programs, or other experiences where learning takes place. The National 4-H Experiential Learning Fact Sheet indicates this type of learning occurs when:
  - Youth experience the activity—perform or do it.
  - Youth share the experience by describing what happened.
  - Youth **process** the experience to figure out what was most important and identify common themes.
  - Youth generalize from the experience and relate it to their daily lives.
  - Youth apply what they learned to a new situation.
- 7. Plan and complete at least two leadership/citizenship activities.
- 8. Share and report your project accomplishments to your club, community, and county agents.



# **Learning Experiences**

Choose at least six learning experiences from the example list below (or create your own).

- Participate in a clinic, or workshop related to your topic
- Attend a demonstration, or speech on a topic related to your project
- Research your topic online using credible resources
- · Interview an expert in the field
- Tour a facility, agency, or business related to your topic
- Participate in online learning sessions



### Leadership/Citizenship

Choose at least two leadership/citizenship activities from the list below (or create your own).

- Help in setting up and/or cleaning up for a show or event
- Help someone with his or her project
- Provide leadership at a workshop or program related to your project
- Encourage a friend to join 4-H and choose a project
- Teach someone something that you learned about 4-H or about your topic
- Invite someone to talk to your club about your topic
- Give advice to a member who is a preparing a project for the fair
- Prepare an exhibit or display promoting your topic or 4-H
- Prepare a public service announcement for school, radio, television, or social media on a topic related to your project
- Help organize a club activity on this project
- Prepare your own demonstration, illustrated talk or exhibit



#### **Record your Experiences and Success**

Record keeping is a valuable life skill. Record keeping is a way to develop the skills necessary to set goals, work toward achieving those goals, reflect on experiences, and set new and higher goals. Record keeping can be done through a variety of ways, either formally in a 4-H Record Book or informally through personal journaling.

- Record keeping keeping a history of one's activities such as financial dealings or life events by entering data in ledgers, journals, calendars or putting items into a file system; an essential life
- 4-H Record Book the competitive event where 4-H members assemble their records into a specified document and submit those for evaluation against other 4-H members. However, one may choose to complete a record book just for the skill learned and not choose to submit for competition

#### Adapted From

- Ohio State University | https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/books\_resources/Curriculum/365-Self-Determined-Project-Guide.pdf
- Iowa State University | https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/projects/selfdetermined
- Penn State | https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h/leaders/resources/publications/m9800a
- University of Florida IFAS Extension | https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h243