

National 4-H Council: A Unique History, A Unique Legal Role

National 4-H Council's critical support to 4-H programs nationwide includes financial resources and significant collaborative activities. That support does not include employing or directing anyone working for the federal government, any state government agency or any land-grant college or university.

What is the 4-H Program? 4-H is the youth education and outreach component of the Cooperative Extension Service. First known as "4-H Boys and Girl Clubs", the modern day 4-H offers over six million young people opportunities in leadership, career development, communication, agricultural science, and STEM. 4-H's vision is a world in which youth and adults work together as catalysts for positive change. Participation in the 4-H program is open to all interested youth, regardless of race, color, gender, creed, national origin, or ability. Participants are primarily between the ages of 9 and 17 and reside in every geographic area, farm, city and in between.

What is the National Institute of Food and Agriculture? The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, part of the executive branch of the Federal Government. USDA-NIFA, through the Division of Youth & 4-H (DY&4-H), is responsible for the organization, supervision, and administration of the 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H) at the national level. 4-H is the only federally funded and protected-status youth development program of USDA-NIFA.

What is Extension? The Cooperative Extension Section (CES) is composed of organizations within the Land Grant Universities (LGUs) established by the first Morrill Act, second Morrill Act, and the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994. A publicly funded, non-formal collaborative national educational network, CES provides research-based information, non-formal educational programs, and technical advice directly to individuals, families, and communities, enabling them to be self-reliant and improve their lives. 4-H is the youth development program of CES. The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), a committee of the Cooperative Extension Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) Board of Agricultural Assembly, is the governing committee for the CES. ECOP represents CES for the purposes of setting policy, negotiating agreements, defining appropriate roles, establishing program direction, and evaluating collective program impact at the national level.

One Common Name and Emblem. The 4-H Emblem is the national symbol of the 4-H program. The 4-H Name and Emblem is a federal mark, protected by Public Law 18 U.S.C. 707, and is entrusted by the U.S. Congress to the Secretary of Agriculture, with authority to grant use by 4-H Clubs across the nation, the representatives of USDA, land-grant institutions, and persons authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture, including National 4-H Council. The 4 Hs are Head, Heart, Hands and Health and have been associated with a clover to form an emblem for Club pins and pennants since 1911. The Director of USDA-NIFA is responsible for authorizing use of the 4-H Name and Emblem that crosses state geographic borders. Authorization within a specific state is delegated to the CES office at each land-grant institution. The term "state" is

interchanged with “land-grant institution” (1862, 1890, and 1994) and is inclusive of U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia.

What Role Does National 4-H Council Play in 4-H? National 4-H Council’s mission is to “to expand opportunities for all of America’s youth through increased investment and participation in 4-H positive youth development. National 4-H Council is committed to providing leadership and resources so that 4-H programs are available to youth across the US. It is the only national organization that supports national and state 4-H programs through cause-marketing, fundraising, brand management, communications, and legal and fiduciary services. While Council provides this critical support to 4-H nationwide, it neither employs nor directs anyone working for the federal government, any state governments, land-grant colleges and universities or any contractors working for any of the above. Rather, National 4-H Council collaborates with the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) Cooperative Extension Section (CES) and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Board of Agriculture Assembly (BAA) as represented by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). While USDA-NIFA and CES have direct operational responsibilities for 4-H programming, National 4-H Council exists to support 4-H programs by doing the things the USDA-NIFA and ECOP cannot or chooses not to do for themselves, including, but not limited to, building and managing financial resources, and fostering national reputation and brand awareness for 4-H. In addition, National 4-H Council operates the National 4-H Youth Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and the National 4-H Supply Service. Since 1924, the Supply Service has been the authorized agent to sell items bearing the 4-H name and emblem as well as educational resources and course materials.

The Legal Status of National 4-H Council. Historically, there were two national private sector organizations, National 4-H Foundation (formed in 1948) and National 4-H Service Committee (formed in 1921) that provided fundraising and resource development support to land-grant universities for their 4-H programs. Both organizations were merged in 1977 into National 4-H Council. (formed in 1976). Despite its close working relationship with the Federal government and with the 4-H program, National 4-H Council is a wholly private, not-for-profit corporation that manages its own affairs. Headquartered in Chevy Chase, Maryland, National 4-H Council (Council) is an independent, not-for-profit (501(c)(3)), charitable organization incorporated in the state of Ohio, governed by an elected volunteer Board of Trustees, and described under Internal Revenue Code Sections 170(b)(1)(A), 170(c), 2055(a) and 2522(a).