



# 4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

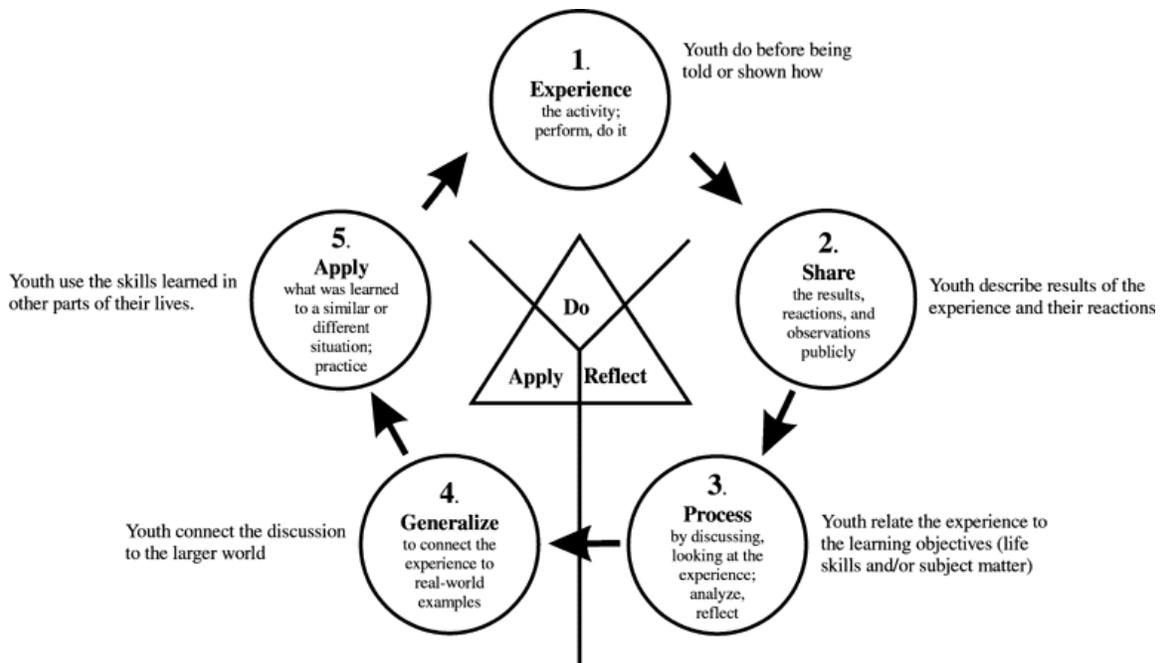
Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

## The Experiential Learning Process

It is important that youth are aware of the learning that takes place as they are involved in experiences. As they reflect on these experiences, they can identify what was most important and how that knowledge can be applied to other life situations. Through 4-H youth programs, adult volunteers can help youth develop these reflective skills. The Experiential Learning Model provides five steps to assist with this process.

The adult volunteer can begin by:

- Setting aside enough time for reflecting on the experience.
- Asking the right questions.
- Planning developmentally appropriate experiences that lead to reflection.
- Listening carefully.
- Supporting each youth’s unique learning.



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

**Step 1: Experience: The hands-on action step.**

- Youth do their project before they are shown or told how to do it.
- As leaders, “do you sit on your hands enough?” Do not rob youth of their discoveries.
- Youth experiment with new ideas, interests, projects, etc.

**Step 2: Share: Describe what was done.**

Questions to ask youth:

- What kinds of hopes and dreams did you have for your 4-H experience this year?
- What did you do?
- Where did you go?
- What was your goal for this project when you began?
- Tell me about your most favorite things about working on your project.
- Tell about your least favorite things about working on your project.
- What did you learn while doing this project?
- How did you feel?
- What was easiest?
- What surprised you?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- How did you share your project with others?

**Step 3: Process: Identify common themes and discover, what was most important, (the life skill), about project work.**

Questions to ask youth:

- What did you learn about yourself by doing this project?
- How did you make your decision? What steps did you take?
- What did you learn about making decisions?
- What were some of the common themes or thoughts you had?
- What problems came up over and over? How did you handle them?
- What would you do if \_\_\_\_\_?
- How did others help you?
- What was the most challenging part of your project? Why? How did you solve it?
- What did you learn from this project that you didn't know before?
- Why was this an important/useful thing to do?
- What suggestions would you have for someone else who wanted to do a similar project?
- What made this a good project?
- Why does it matter (to you or anyone else) that you did this project?
- What life skill(s) were you developing through your project?
- Why is the life skill you practiced important?
- What new questions do you have about yourself and others?
- What did you learn through sharing with others?

Step 4: **Generalize: So what?**

**Identify how to use what's been learned in real life.**

**These questions transition the experience or “product” itself to the skill being practiced in “real” life. They explore the nature of the life skill, reflect on how the life skill has been developed through their work and set the stage for application of the life skill in new situations.**

Questions to ask youth:

- What key points have you learned?
- What similar experience have you had throughout this project/activity?
- Where have you faced similar challenges in your life?
- How is this life skill important to you?
- Where might this situation occur in the future?
- When else have you had fun and learned new things at the same time?
- Why is it important to have plenty of information before making decisions?
- What did you learn about your decision-making skills?
- What did you learn about your own skill in communicating with others?
- What are some ways you like to learn?
- How would you describe your skill at \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you feel you need to be better at \_\_\_\_\_?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to learn about this life skill?

Step 5: **Apply: What's next?**

**These are the questions we've been building towards: You can help youth show that they have gained new knowledge and practiced the life skills learned rather than solely focusing on the subject matter or product development skills.**

Questions to ask youth:

- What did the project mean to your everyday life?
- What have you learned about yourself? Others?
- What principles or guidelines can you use in real-life situations?
- What other situations like this have you experienced before?
- How can you use these skills in different situations?
- In what ways do people help each other learn new things?
- How will you act differently in the future as a result of this experience?
- What can you do to help yourself keep learning?
- What are some ways you can learn new things?
- Why was this project important to your life?
- What are qualities that you think are important in a leader?
- If someone helped or mentored you in this project, what would you tell them you learned and the difference it has made in your life?
- What would you tell them in appreciation for how they helped you?