



# Illinois 4-H | Spark Ideas. Ignite Possibilities.

Have you ever noticed a problem or need in your community and want to do something to make it better, but you had no idea where to start? The 4-H Service Learning project can help. In this project, you will learn how to plan and implement activities that can change the world!



## Exploring 4-H Service Learning

### Spark Activity: Discover the Need

One of the first steps in a service learning project is identifying a genuine need in the community. To help you with this process, take some extra time at places you visit throughout the week to better understand the area in which you live. These places might include your school, a park, the library, a local restaurant – anywhere you spend time. When you're there, look around carefully, and think about these questions:

- What do I see?
- Why do people come here?
- Do they get what they need or want when they're here?
- What additional needs might they have when they leave?
- What condition is the facility in?
- How can I tell?
- What are the signs that something is in good or bad condition?
- What is the condition of the area around the facility?
- What are some assets (things that might be helpful, useful, or valuable) that I see?
- What are problems or shortcomings that I see?
- What other questions do I still have?



Write down some of your answers or other reflections in a notebook or journal. Do this again at 3 other places you visit this week, and compare your reflections for each. Do you see any similarities or themes? Why do you think that is? Did your reflections help you to identify potential issues or problems in your community?

## 4-H Project Levels and Goals

### Beginner

- Make observations in your community
- Recognize the value of serving your community
- Assist with a service learning project
- Reflect on your experience

### Intermediate

- Make observations on needs and assets in your community
- Research a need
- Plan and conduct a service project
- Reflect on your results

### Advanced

- Survey your community to determine needs
- Identify solutions to meet a need
- Plan and conduct a service project
- Create buy-in for your project and get others involved
- Evaluate your impact

## Put Your Project Into Action

### Show Your Skills

- Speak to local 4-H clubs, classrooms, community groups or City Council about the need you're addressing in your community
- Make a poster, infographic, or impact report showing information about the need you addressed and impacts made
- Create a portfolio of your project to show to future schools or employers

### Service and Leadership

- Food or clothing drives, or letters to the troops
- Volunteer as a reader at a local library
- Start an online tutoring program
- Serve on a community service committee for your 4-H club, county, or unit
- Join a community board or coalition
- Volunteer at a non-profit or civil service agency that you're passionate about
- Join a local service club

### Entrepreneurship

- Start a non-profit organization to continue the work of your service learning project
- Create fundraising strategies to help offset costs associated with service learning projects
- Contact a local Peace Corps or AmeriCorps recruiter to learn more about opportunities

### Technology Connection

- Design an app for a local non-profit
- Create an educational video or computer game that teaches about a community need
- Create a digital marketing campaign using social media to spread the word about your project

### Connecting with a Mentor

- Local non-profit employees
- Community service organizations
- Community foundations

### Events

- National 4-H Day of Service (last Saturday in April)
- National days of service
- Volunteer fairs
- Special events specific to your interest area



### Careers Related to Service Learning

Non-Profit Project/  
Program Manager  
Volunteer Coordinator

Peace Corps or  
AmeriCorps Volunteer  
Community Organizer

## Start a Conversation

Who is working to make things better? How are they doing this? How can you help them?  
How can you use your passion for (fill in the blank) to make a difference in your community?  
If you could do one thing to make the world a better place, what would it be?

## Want to learn more?

[go.illinois.edu/4Hservicelearning](https://go.illinois.edu/4Hservicelearning)

## Explore more at Illinois 4-H!

[4-H.extension.illinois.edu](https://4-H.extension.illinois.edu)



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**Credits:** University of California Extension, 2016, 4-H Project Sheet. Retrieved from <https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC4-H/files/141450.pdf>. | National 4-H Curriculum, Service Learning Curriculum - <https://shop4-h.org/products/service-learning-curriculum-set-of-3> | University of Illinois Extension staff that contributed to this resource include Emily Schoenfelder. | 4-H Spark Sheets are a collaborative effort of 4-H staff, volunteers, alumni and teens from across Illinois. A big thanks to the many contributors and reviewers!