



## CHARTERS: THE KEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

4-H Charters, either in certificate or letter form, provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture's designated representative are the only documents that officially recognize a 4-H Club or Affiliated 4-H Organization and authorizes its use of the 4-H Name and Emblem for the conduct of 4-H Youth Development programs. The USDA 4-H Charter may be obtained from the National 4-H Headquarters-USDA in any of three formats: Electronic version (most widely used), Ceremonial Charter (for special occasions or recognitions), and a Letter version.

As formulated under Title 18 U.S.C. 707, Federal regulations state "The Cooperative Extension Service, land-grant institutions, local 4-H Clubs and groups and other officially affiliated 4-H organizations **recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture...**are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem." USDA 4-H Charters are the documentation of that recognition. State and local charters that do not include a USDA signatory, can not be considered official charters.

A Charter is required for any 4-H entity for it to: 1) use the 4-H Name and Emblem; and 2.) be included under the Tax-Exemption Group Ruling for 4-H. State 4-H offices should maintain documentation on the issuance of Charters to 4-H entities within their respective States. Charters should be issued when establishing a 4-H entity. For those 4-H Clubs and Affiliated 4-H Organizations that have been long established and verification of a valid Charter is not available, issuance of a new Charter is recommended.

### Examples of Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. How can I obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter?

A. State 4-H Offices may obtain as many copies as needed of the USDA 4-H Charter, in the official formats through the National 4-H Headquarters – USDA. Contact the Headquarters at (202) 720-2908.

Q. Is there an expiration date on the Charters?

A. No. The USDA 4-H Charter, once issued, would be valid for as long as the 4-H entity receiving the Charter existed. If the 4-H entity disbanded, separated into multiple entities, or changed its name, a new charter would need to be issued. States may elect to use an expiration date on the USDA 4-H Charter prior to issuance, however, USDA does not mandate the use of an expiration date. Additionally, even with a change in the USDA designated representative, the USDA 4-H Charters remain valid until new ones are made available from the National 4-H Headquarters – USDA.

Q. How does not having a valid USDA 4-H Charter affect the tax-exempt status?

A. In order for the IRS to verify the tax exempt status of individual 4-H clubs and affiliated 4-H organizations, these entities must obtain a Federal Tax Identification Number or EIN; and submit a request in writing to the IRS for inclusion under the 4-H Group Exemption Number. To use the GEN, you must be an officially recognized 4-H entity. The USDA 4-H Charter provides that recognition.



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