

# Marketing and Branding 4-H in Urban Communities

## Introduction

Consistent marketing and branding is vital to the long-term success of 4-H Science programming. Marketing and branding “. . . is not about getting your target [audience] to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the *only one* that provides a solution to their problem (L. Lake).” The problem for out-of-school time (OST) youth programs (e.g., afterschool programs, summer camps, etc.) is that they need informal science education resources. The solution is 4-H Science! 4-H Science has unparalleled expertise and resources (backed by the land grant university system) available to develop and deliver informal science programming – within the context of positive youth development (PYD).

Introducing 4-H Science into urban communities also provides a golden opportunity to shape the kinds of programming this audience will think of when they hear “4-H Youth Development.” Urban residents often do not have preconceived ideas about who 4-H is, or what 4-H offers. Therefore, what people observe 4-H “doing” determines how they will think of 4-H. Intentional program design, coupled with enthusiastic marketing and branding practices allows 4-H to positively influence community perception from the start! The purpose of this chapter is to provide 4-H professionals with the information needed to effectively market and brand 4-H Science programs in urban communities.

## Promising Practices

The promising practices for *Marketing and Branding 4-H in Urban Communities* are subdivided into four categories: (a) General, (b) Partnerships, (c) Program Planning, and (d) Program Marketing and Promotion.

### General

1. *Develop a written, personal 4-H marketing/branding philosophy.* Take some time to reflect on the importance of promoting the 4-H brand in all 4-H Science program materials. Examine any personal fears or hesitations that may have prevented this in the past, and commit in writing to being proud of the heritage that is 4-H, and of the 21st century opportunities 4-H is embracing (see *Wagoner* in *Case Studies* below).
2. *Be intentional when communicating about 4-H.* Take advantage of every opportunity to communicate the breadth and depth of 4-H programs.
  - Create a brief summary that explains the history of 4-H, as well as future directions. Practice articulating what unique opportunities and strengths 4-H brings to the table. In particular, be sure to relate that 4-H Science is *science in the context of positive youth development* (PYD). This sets 4-H Science apart from programs that are strictly science education.
  - Use the phrase “4-H Youth Development,” the 4-H mission mandates (Science, Healthy Living, Citizenship),





and the *Essential Elements* of 4-H (belonging, independence, mastery, generosity) in your communications.

3. *Emphasize the connection between 4-H and the state land grant university system.* Create a program name/logo combination that intentionally connects the 4-H brand (and 4-H Emblem) to the land grant university system (e.g., *4-H – The Youth Development Program of the Land-Grant University*). This will help consumers understand who is offering the program, especially important in urban areas with multiple colleges and universities, thus avoiding confusion regarding program affiliation.
4. *“Brand” 4-H Science programs consistently.* It is imperative that *all* 4-H Science programs (and all 4-H programs), use the 4-H Emblem at all times. Educate others about what it represents. *Failure to display the 4-H Emblem out of fear of what “others” will think is detrimental to building awareness of 4-H Science.*

### **Partnerships**

1. *Market yourself to potential (and current) partners.* Make it a point to “be at the table.” Attend community-wide youth development meetings, summits, boards, and so forth. Provide updates and one-pagers. Share the 4-H story with everyone.
2. *Reach agreement with partners on 4-H signage and recognition opportunities.* When working in partnerships, always co-brand materials. Negotiation and compromise are keys to success when marketing 4-H youth development programs and branding options to potential partners. Reaching an acceptable marketing and branding relationship relative to program components, evaluation strategies, and reports to stakeholders makes it easier for partners to work side-by-side while still having their individual needs met.
  - There is no question about whether the 4-H Emblem should be included on program materials, but do discuss or clarify how it should be used (see *4-H Emblem* in *Resources* below). Also discuss inclusion of appropriate verbiage recognizing Extension and the Land Grant University in all marketing materials.
  - As part of the MOU, both parties should agree on the level of recognition each partner will receive on respective publications, signage, websites, and other media (see also *Create a Memorandum of Understanding* in the *Section Introduction to Partnerships, Resource Development, Program Growth and Sustainability*).
3. *Participate in partner events.* Partner events are the perfect opportunity to support the partner while also promoting 4-H Science programs (e.g. activity stations, information booths, etc.).
  - Bring plenty of branded promotional items as giveaways, as well as branded marketing materials (see *4-H Mall* in *Resources* below).
  - Bring a laptop computer and showcase the 4-H Science PSA Campaign (see *Program Marketing and Promotion* below) or an automated PowerPoint presentation about current 4-H Science program offerings.

### **Program Planning**

1. *Choose program topics based on the needs and interest trends of urban youth.* Use program planning to create opportunities for 4-H to look relevant (for people to say “WOW, that’s 4-H? I didn’t know 4-H did that”) by offering current, engaging programs. Some topics may be perennial favorites. Other topics may have a shorter shelf life, but are needed to attract new audiences and provide fresh content for returning program participants.



**I PLEDGE**  
my **HEAD**  
to clearer thinking,  
my **HEART**  
to greater loyalty,  
my **HANDS**  
to larger service, and  
my **HEALTH**  
to better living, for  
my club, my community,  
my country,  
and my world.

4H Science  
Today we are designing  
What's Working  
B Rubber bands keep wheels steady  
G Straws allow

covered  
too tight  
wheels not



2. *Charge program fees where appropriate.* Strategic program fees are part of a marketing plan. Clientele and program partners often associate quality with fee-based programs. Understanding the local market is crucial to developing the most effective pricing structure. Use sliding scales and scholarships for those with financial need.
3. *Include program showcase events.* Culminating events, program showcases, and recognition events are excellent opportunities for community-wide promotion (see [\*Recognizing Youth and Showcasing Programmatic Efforts\*](#)).

### **Program Marketing and Promotion**

1. *Understand cultural beliefs.* Key informants and cultural guides can help Extension staff understand the cultural beliefs of specific urban audiences. Highlighting how 4-H principles relate to a community's cultural beliefs establishes common ground to discuss how 4-H Science can meet their needs as an urban population.
2. *Utilize 4-H marketing and promotion resources.* Be familiar with the resources currently available to help effectively market/brand 4-H Science programs. These resources were developed by professionals. They include sound ideas and are of excellent quality. The following web pages contain invaluable resources.
  - [4-H Science Research](#). This web page includes links to the brochures for the YEAK Report (Youth Engagement, Attitudes, and Knowledge) and the 4-H Science Implementation Study (see *Resources* below).
  - [4-H Promotional Toolkits](#). Look for The 4-H Science PSA Campaign, *One Million New Scientists. One Million New Ideas™*, which has excellent videos (see *Resources* below).
  - [4-H National Youth Science Day \(NYSD\)](#). This web page contains information about the national experiment as well as event planning resources (three-month planning timeline, customizable flyers, newspaper and web banner ads, and even an NYSD graphic for a Facebook page). There is also an event archive for 2008-2010 NYSD materials (see *Resources* below).
3. *Develop and use high quality marketing materials that appeal to urban audiences.* Collaborate with university and Extension communication offices. They will give professional polish to marketing materials. Continually feed communication offices stories, photos and videos so they can share and promote 4-H Science programs! Be sure to:
  - Reflect current and diverse 4-H Science curricular offerings (e.g., robotics, GPS/GIS, aerospace, etc.).
  - Include photographs and video of a diversity of participants, staff, and volunteers.
  - Eliminate the use of clip art and word art. Use high quality, 21st century graphic images.
  - Engage a cultural interpreter from the community to help translate materials into the relevant dialects. Do not assume a “one-size fits all” approach to any language. For example, there are variations in the Spanish language that reflect the country (or even locale) of origin. Be mindful of average literacy levels regardless of language spoken.
  - Create a *4-H Science* web page within your county and/or state 4-H websites. Showcase program successes and evaluation results. Web pages should be fresh and up-to-date with current information. Avoid juvenile

animations. Photos should represent diverse audiences engaged in exciting activities.

4. *Engage in strategic marketing.* Use targeted promotional strategies. Know where to find youth of the appropriate age to fill participant slots.
  - Contact previous participants via mail or email.
  - Post flyers in kid-friendly (and age appropriate) locations.
  - Post program information in schools' electronic backpacks.
  - Send flyers to appropriate grades in schools and afterschool programs.
  - Share current program results and photos with participants – *and* with youth who did not attend to let them know what they missed.
  - Partner with the municipality to include your program in recreation booklets.
  - Participate in camp fairs and directories.
  - Post electronic flyers on partner websites (e.g., nature camp flyer on home page of Nature Center).
  - Leave brochures with relevant science centers and museums.
5. *Market program evaluation results.* Tell your story to stakeholders. It is important to conduct program evaluations in order to share program successes with current and prospective volunteers, participants, funders, program partners and other supporters (see [4-H TRY STEM Report](#)).
6. *Provide branded items to everyone.* There are countless ways to promote 4-H Science (and 4-H). Accept the challenge to locate and/or create properly branded, meaningful, appealing items to give to everyone connected with the program. For example:
  - Program staff should wear university/4-H clothing and name tags when engaged with the public (implementing programs, attending meetings, coordinating events, etc.).
  - Facilitators (youth and adult) should wear appropriately branded clothing and name tags.
  - Partners, funders, and guest presenters appreciate receiving branded t-shirts or shirts, pens/pencils, coasters, paperweights, key chains, and so forth.
  - Youth enjoy receiving lanyards, t-shirts, hats, pins, balls, pens/pencils, plastic cups, key chains, and so forth.

## Case Studies

**Wagoner - Personal Marketing Philosophy.** Through work in multiple urban areas, I have refined my philosophy and approach when working with program partners. Holding a personal 4-H marketing and branding philosophy equips me to be consistent in my outreach to new audiences unfamiliar with 4-H. My philosophical statement explains how I work to *educate* partners and *adapt* programs to jointly meet clientele needs.

The green and white 4-H Emblem is one of the most well-known brands in the world. It has existed for over 100 years. The 4-H Name and Emblem is a highly valued mark within our country's history, and it has a special status.





It is in a category similar to the Presidential Seal and the Olympic Emblem, with a patent and guidelines for use. Our federal partner, the United States Department of Agriculture, considers all Extension-sponsored and administered youth development programs 4-H. 4-H clubs, special interest groups, short-term programs, Cloverbud groups, and camping programs are all 4-H delivery modes. It is important we *educate* our constituents about the variety of programs the 4-H brand signifies.

As Extension professionals, we respect the 4-H brand when we educate our partners about the diversity of the 4-H Youth Development Program, and help them adapt 4-H programs to their unique situations. Each opportunity we have to clarify the broadest view of 4-H with our *partners* is a teachable moment. If we do not accept that opportunity, we miss the chance to clarify who we are, how our program is different from other youth programs, and how opportunities we provide youth, families, and communities today are real solutions to important issues in their lives. Working with partners to choose the delivery mode, determine the duration and intensity of the program, identify subject matter, outline roles for adults in the program, and develop evaluation plans allows those partners to adapt the model for their audience and their educational setting. Regardless of how the program looks, where it is held, or who the participants are, it is still 4-H and should be identified as such.

When all our youth development programs carry the 4-H brand, clients recognize our successful history, see the diversity and flexibility of our programs, and realize today's 4-H youth development programs address their issues in ways other programs cannot. They see 4-H Youth Development as a "one of a kind" program that meets their needs. —**Steve Wagoner, University of Illinois**

## Resources

**4-H Name and Emblem** – a fact sheet on the proper use of the 4-H Name and Emblem. Available at <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4-Hguidelines-v4-26-04.pdf>.

**4-H National Youth Science Day** – site includes a three-month planning timeline, customizable flyers, newspaper and web banner ads, and even an NYSD graphic for your Facebook page. Get started with the 4-H National Youth Science Day event planning timeline, and a brief overview of how to make the most of the materials in the kit. Available at <http://www.4-h.org/4-h-national-youth-science-day/nysdhome.aspx>.

**4-H Promotional Toolkit** – an online set of resources including the 4-H Science PSA Campaign *One Million New Scientists. One Million New Ideas™*. Available at <http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/promotional-toolkits/>.

**4-H Science YEAQ and Implementation Study Brochures** – Available at the 4-H Science Research page <http://www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-research/science-program-research/>.