

Supporting the Development of Entrepreneurial Skills & Mindset in Youth

A guide for integrating the development of entrepreneurial skills into club programming.



CANADA



Introduction

Entrepreneurship isn't new to the 4-H program or its youth members. From raising and selling market animals to setting up a stall at a local farmers market, 4-H has woven entrepreneurship into programming for a long time. However, the integration of these skills into programming, with careful thought and intent, will help ensure maximum benefit for members.

While definitions vary somewhat, **entrepreneurship** is generally about someone who produces something of economic value by starting a business, investing in a business, or selling something of value to consumers. In each of these instances, the entrepreneur holds a specific mindset and specific skills to be successful. The same mindset and skills are increasingly valuable for career success across sectors.

“The future belongs to the innovators and leaders.”¹

Integrating an entrepreneurial mindset and skills into regular 4-H club activities and projects can be easy to do. 4-H programming is the perfect opportunity to model this mindset and skills for members in natural ways. Based on feedback received in the 2021 Careers on the Grow survey, 4-H members in Canada indicated they could benefit from additional opportunities for skill-building in this area to feel career-ready.



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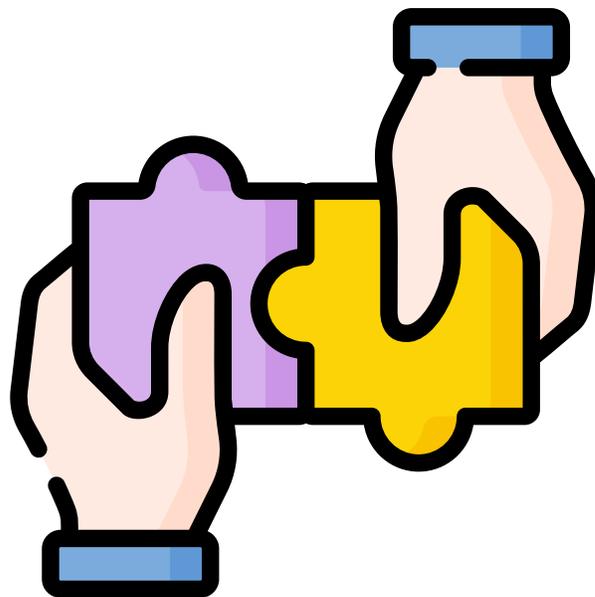
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The COVID-19 global pandemic has shifted the world of work, creating a new “normal” that requires individuals to be agile, creative, problem solvers and have a willingness to try, fail, and try again.² Empowering members to build an entrepreneurial mindset supports the development of knowledge and skills that will support them in this new “normal” regardless of their career path.

Aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset and skills are already part of many 4-H club activities and projects in many ways. They may, however, look different from one project to another. The best way to begin is to recognize that members will bring different levels of knowledge, understanding, experience, and comfort with entrepreneurship to the club.

Start with what they know and where they are, not where you think they should be.

In this resource, you’ll find ideas for talking about an entrepreneurial mindset and its associated skills, as well as tips to integrate both into routine club activities and projects. This resource provides the basics, but don’t stop here! Look for other available resources to keep building knowledge and competencies in this important area.



How the Positive Youth Development Formula Supports Members' Future Careers

At 4-H, everything we do centres around ensuring youth are strengthening and developing skills and abilities through the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach. This globally recognized and research-based approach considers youth an asset and partner in the community. This general approach and philosophy are incorporated into all of our programming, including career development. The 4-H PYD formula, or “honeycomb,” supports youth in becoming responsible, caring, and contributing individuals who are empowered to be successful!

The 4-H honeycomb identifies key assets that youth build through 4-H programming. In career development, assets are often referred to as transferable skills. Transferable skills, like those identified in this resource, support success in all areas of life, including work, volunteerism, and even leisure activities. Including career preparedness in regular club activities ensures youth can improve skill mastery in transferable skills, and are supported in planning and preparing for their future, which enhances their sense of purpose. The connection between PYD and future career success is one that shouldn't be overlooked.



What is an Entrepreneurial Mindset?

A **Mindset** is an underlying process that can help with uncovering opportunities and sparking ambition. It can engage parts of a person that allows them to flourish and thrive. It is a “cognitive belief system consisting of interrelated beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge that we use to process information, inform decisions, and guide behaviour.”³ A mindset can either build a person up to opportunities or stop them from growing and learning.

An **Entrepreneurial Mindset** is a specific set of beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge that drive entrepreneurial behaviours. An entrepreneurial mindset is a **growth mindset** in which an individual would usually have abilities such as:



- *Taking ownership* – belief in oneself and the ability to succeed and influence personal outcomes.
- *Self-directed, action-oriented, highly engaged* – keeping goals future-focused and tapping into intrinsic motivation.
- *Highly resilient, resourceful, and solution-oriented* – optimistic in challenging situations, and can see opportunities rather than problems.
- *Curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking* – knowledge seeker who focuses on everything as a learning opportunity.
- *Follow-through* – is very reliable and understands that simple solutions can lead to opportunities.
- *Value creation* – human-centered outlook with drive to solve problems people face.
- *Critical guidance* – will surround themselves with a chosen community of positive influence.

Growth Mindset – belief that your talents and intelligence are not set, develop over time, and have the ability to grow and develop. The opposite is a **Fixed Mindset**, which is the belief that intelligence and talents are fixed at birth and can't develop past what a person was born with.

An entrepreneurial mindset is vital to future entrepreneurs, but is beneficial to all members regardless of the career path they choose. Embedded in this mindset are skills, behaviours, and approaches to challenges that employers look for more and more, including those below.

<p>Critical Thinking - applying high-level, process-oriented thinking and considering issues from multiple perspectives to inform decisions.</p>	<p>Flexibility & Adaptability - changing actions and plans to overcome challenges now and in the future.</p>
<p>Curiosity - being able to engage with the world, observe current trends, and understand how things work or don't work.</p>	<p>Ability to Pivot - being attentive and quick to re-evaluate new approaches when factors out of personal control change or shift.</p>
<p>Communication & Collaboration - clearly expressing ideas effectively to intended audiences, including the ability to persuade others towards a common goal.</p>	<p>Comfort with Risk- ability to move forward with decisions despite uncertainty and challenges.</p> 
<p>Initiative & Self-Reliance - taking ownership of projects without input and/or guidance, and working through obstacles independently.</p>	<p>Future Orientation - optimistic aspiration with a focus on getting the skills and knowledge needed to transition to a chosen career.</p>
<p>Confronting Self-Doubt - individuals can act as their own coach and cheerleader, control their thoughts, and manage self-doubt effectively which supports the ability to deal with failures and disappointments when they happen.</p>	<p>Accountability - accepting responsibility for outcomes and actions while avoiding excuses and taking action to resolve challenges.</p> 
 <p>Resilience - ability to bounce back from failure and a willingness to keep moving forward and inspiring others.</p>	<p>Willingness to Experiment - willingness to try new things, consider new ideas and perspectives, accept advice from trusted advisors, and abandon ideas when they don't work.</p>
<p>Opportunity Recognition - seeing and experiencing problems as opportunities to create solutions, looking for new and improved ways of addressing problems, and asking questions.</p>	<p>Creativity & Innovation - thinking of ideas and creating solutions to problems without clearly defined structures.</p> 

The skills that make an entrepreneur successful are the same ones that are most in demand across career sectors. Employers look for potential employees with entrepreneurial skills and mindsets to drive innovation, relevancy, and their competitive advantage. These in-demand, **transferable skills** support youth in being career-ready in the ever-changing world of work, and ready for the careers of the future.

The value of including an entrepreneurial mindset and skills into club programming holds benefits for members, such as:

- ✓ Teaching basic life skills like resolving real-world issues, financial literacy, communication, and more.
- ✓ Enhancing creativity through innovating to solve real-world problems and considering how to bring these ideas to market.
- ✓ Building problem-solving and identification capacity by honing the ability to identify problems before they happen.
- ✓ Boosting leadership qualities in youth who strive to make a difference in the world, and because of this, often need to pave a different path to do so.
- ✓ Preparing youth for uncertainty in the future, such as careers that don't yet exist, and the precariousness and changes in how work is carried out

Transferable Skills are abilities and qualities that can be applied and used in multiple environments, such as work, volunteerism, and leisure activities. They're skills you can use regardless of the specific job or context. Transferable skills are often referred to as "soft skills".



How to Support the Growth of an Entrepreneurial Mindset

For 4-H'ers who choose entrepreneurship as their career path, having this important mindset early in their journey will give them a strong advantage. For those who choose other career paths, this mindset will allow them to become **intrapreneurs** – champions of creativity and innovation. In addition, daily life is filled with failure, and therefore the need to reframe setbacks and seize all learning opportunities. “As the world changes, so do the skills students need to build their careers – and to build a better society.”⁴

Supporting the development of an entrepreneurial mindset is easier than you might think. Here are some strategies to try with members of any age.

- 1. Set clear and specific goals.** Have 4-H'ers communicate their goals to other members. They now have accountability to their peers for their actions to achieve goals.
- 2. Practice being decisive.** Overcoming option paralysis or indecision is easier when there is less on the line. Use low-risk decisions to support members in practicing how to analyze the situation, absorb the information, and make decisions with confidence.
- 3. Redefine failure.** Help members turn failure into something positive by practicing failure dialogues and analyzing why things turned out the way they did. Encourage members to be honest in their consideration of the failure. Remind 4-H'ers that true failure is not trying at all; failing means you tried.
- 4. Facing fears.** Support members in considering what's hard or scary for them, and planning to challenge it. Hard work and a change of mindset can make a big difference and offer new opportunities.
- 5. Remain curious.** Model the value of continuous learning, asking questions, and seeking out new people, experiences, and ideas.
- 6. Informal discussions.** Ask members open-ended questions. When a problem arises, ask 4-H'ers how they would solve it, thereby providing space for problem-solving and encouraging them to ask questions for more information.
- 7. Create a safe space.** Welcome all ideas, and encourage safe risk-taking and failure.

Things to Talk About

- Have members share their experiences with entrepreneurship. Discuss what an entrepreneurial mindset is, why members think it's important, and how it can help them.
- Brainstorm things entrepreneurs need to be good at and why.
 - Encourage members to share when they've used these skills and approaches in their own life. What was the outcome?
- Challenge members to consider new ways of doing things rather than the way "it's always been done." Afterwards, talk about how it went, what they learned, and what they'd do differently the next time.
- Have members consider how self-doubt affects them.
 - Provide time and space for members to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a safe and encouraging environment.
 - Support members in brainstorming strategies for changing their mindsets and becoming their own cheerleader when self-doubt strikes.
- Allow 4-H'ers to make a list of entrepreneurial mindset skills to work on during meetings and/or a project.
 - Model initiative, self-reliance, and accountability for these decisions.
- Encourage members to talk openly and honestly about failure.
 - Provide a safe space for discussions on why failure is hard, the feelings and emotions it can cause, and how to deal with failure, including strategies to reshape their mindset to accept failures as opportunities.



Incorporating an Entrepreneurial Mindset and Skills into Club Projects

A good place to start incorporating an entrepreneurial mindset and skills is to include conversations and real-world examples that are natural and meaningful within the context of club activities and projects. When examples apply to the lives of members in your club, the learning becomes authentic. When members see and understand how an entrepreneurial mindset works, they're more likely to naturally integrate it into their lives. Here are just a few ideas on how to incorporate an entrepreneurial mindset in club activities and projects.

Community Engagement & Communications



- Choose a way to get involved or give back to the community that has risk (e.g., selling something to raise funds). Develop a plan for managing uncertainty and challenges.
- Experiment with new forms of communication in your club and how to share information with the community. Seek advice from groups and individuals who are successful in this area.
- Brainstorm skills and knowledge needed to act on a local issue, considering what outcome members would like, how to get there, and what challenges may need to be managed in the process.

Science & Technology



- Take apart and reassemble a small appliance, piece of technology, or other item without instructions. Discuss how things turned out, learnings, and takeaways for next time.
- Choose an agriculture-related challenge. Brainstorm how STEM could help. Test one option on a small scale. Discuss results and opportunities to pivot depending on outcome.
- Plan and hold a club science fair. Have members share their curiosity about their subject, problem they want to solve, questions they asked, how they dealt with unexpected challenges, and where they think their project could go next.

Environment & Healthy Living



- Create a list of ways to manage failure and self-doubt during a club project. Create specific “check-in” times to talk about these feelings.
- Have several options for physical activities. Encourage members to be decisive about what activity to participate in.
- Connect with an entrepreneur doing things differently to support the environment through or with their business. Have them share their experience, their mindset, and how they’re making change for a better future.

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Security



- Interview a local farmer about how they use aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset in what they do. Discuss the impact this has on what they do.
- Try growing something in a new way, using a different method or practice that could help address food security for a person or family.
- Create clear goals for an animal project and a list of strategies for developing initiative for the work that needs to be done, and self-reliance when challenges arise.



Notes

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