Maryland 4-H Club and Authorized Group Charter Requirements

I. Background

A. The University of Maryland Extension (UME) 4-H Youth Development mission is to provide a supportive setting for all youth to reach their fullest potential. Achievement of this mission will result in Competent, Caring, Contributing, Capable Youth. A 4-H Charter indicates that a 4-H Club or Authorized Group is organized in accordance with objectives of the 4-H Youth Development program. UME grants 4-H Charters which formally authorizes the 4-H Club or Group to use the 4-H Name and Emblem for educational purposes in accordance with laws and regulations established by Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

B. All 4-H Clubs must be chartered.

C. All 4-H Authorized Groups (including committees, boards or other organizations) that hold any financial accounts outside of the local Extension Advisory Board/Council or other separate incorporated non-profit organization approved by UME must be chartered.

D. The 4-H Charter allows the Club or Authorized Group to use the 4-H Name and Emblem for educational purposes in accordance with laws and regulations established by Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

E. The 4-H Charter process also enables the Club or Authorized Group to be eligible for federal tax exempt status as a Maryland 4-H Club or Authorized Group under the IRS General Exemption Number (GEN) held by the Maryland 4-H Foundation, Inc. for that purpose. Please note: The GEN does not provide exemption from state or local taxes.

F. To receive a 4-H Charter, a new Club or Group must complete the applicable 4-H New Charter Application form and file it with the local 4-H Youth Development Educator. 4-H Charters must be renewed annually. For Charter renewal, 4-H Clubs and Authorized must complete the applicable 4-H Charter Renewal Application. Annual Renewal Application packets are due to the 4-H Youth Development Educator by January 31st or an earlier date as determined by the Extension Educator.

G. Both the initial granting and the renewal of 4-H Charters lie in the sole discretion of UME.
II. **General Requirements for Maryland 4-H Chartered Clubs and Authorized Groups**

A. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups may not discriminate on the basis of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, or national origin, marital status, genetic information, or political affiliation, or gender identity and expression or on any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, Maryland or local laws, or by University of Maryland and/or UME requirements.

B. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Group must operate for nonprofit educational purposes and for the promotion of 4-H and 4-H objectives within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

C. Any funds raised must be used to sustain the activities of the Club or Authorized Group and/or to support Maryland 4-H. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups may not pay any funds, above reimbursements for Club or Authorized Group expenses, to any of its members or officers.

D. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups may not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. No substantial part of the activities of any Club or Authorized Group may involve carrying on propaganda or attempting to influence legislation. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups may not engage in any other activities not permitted to be carried on by an organization exempt from federal tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

E. 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups are expected to meet and abide by the guidelines and requirements of UME and its 4-H Youth Development Program including, but not limited to, these Maryland 4-H Charter Requirements and the Maryland 4-H Financial Guidelines, as applicable. Any use of the 4-H name and emblem is forbidden if it exploits the 4-H programs, its volunteers, 4-H youth participants, the USDA, the UME, or the associated employees.

F. 4-H Clubs or Authorized Groups are required to complete and file any required 990 information return forms (e.g., 990, 990-N, or 990-EZ) with the IRS as required by law. A copy of the confirmation of filing must be submitted to the local Extension Educator by January 31st.

G. If a 4-H Club or Authorized Group loses its 4-H Charter or is otherwise dissolved, disbanded or ceases operations, any funds remaining after payment of any Club or Authorized Group obligations must be transferred to the local Extension Advisory Council/Board. All property belonging to the Club or Authorized Group must be turned into the UME Office.

H. If a 4-H Club or Authorized Group wants to change its name, the 4-H Club or Authorized Group will be considered ending or dissolved. The subsequent 4-H Club or Authorized Group must complete all the required steps within the chartering process.

I. If a 4-H Club or Authorized Group divides, both 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups will need to meet charter requirements to be chartered. If the new club or authorized group name(s) is (are) different, the old charter is void and the club/group(s) will have to apply for a new charter.
III. Maryland 4-H Club Charters

A. All Maryland 4-H Clubs including, without limitation, community clubs, project clubs, after-school clubs, military clubs, and clover clubs, must be chartered. New Clubs seeking a 4-H charter must complete and submit the UME 4-H Club New Charter Application. Existing 4-H Clubs must complete the UME 4-H Club Charter Renewal Application on an annual basis.

B. All 4-H Clubs must satisfy the following:

1. The Club must have at least five members from three different families. Members must be between the ages of 8 and 18 as of January 1st of the year of application or renewal, as applicable. Clover Club members must be between the ages of 5 and 7 as of January 1st of the year of application or renewal. The list of members must be attached to the application and include the following information for each member: complete first and last name, date of birth, mailing address, phone number, and email address.

2. Club Membership must meet the Affirmative Action guidelines for 4-H Clubs according to the UME Plan for Compliance and other anti-discrimination laws and guidelines. The Club must complete the Public Relations Efforts by Clubs Form AA-4H/HE4.

3. The Club must have at least two adult UME Volunteer leaders. The list of leaders must be attached to the application and must include the following information for each leader: complete first and last name, mailing address, phone number, and email address. All UME Volunteer leaders must be screened, approved, and receive appointments through the UME Volunteer Policy Screening and Appointment Process and have a signed Volunteer Appointment Agreement on file with UME.

4. The Club must adopt bylaws. Club bylaws must incorporate and comply with UME and 4-H Youth Development requirements, as applicable. A copy of the bylaws must be attached to each Charter application. Bylaws must be approved by the local UME office as part of the 4-H Club Application process or the 4-H Club Annual Renewal Application process. Any modifications made throughout the year must also be approved. An Outline for 4-H Club bylaws can be found at the local UME 4-H Office or on the Maryland 4-H Website.

5. The Club must elect and train youth officers. The list of officers must be attached to the application and include the name and position of each officer.*

6. The Club must have at least six or more regularly scheduled club meetings per year.

7. The Club must have a written, planned educational program that provides a variety of learning experiences. A copy of the educational program must be attached to the application.

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* Clover Clubs are exempt from this requirement.
8. The Club must apply for and receive an EIN from the IRS. Applying for an EIN is free and can be achieved online, by phone, by fax, or by mail. The online EIN application is the quickest and preferred method, and can be accessed on the IRS website. The paper form, IRS Form SS4 can also be found on the IRS website. Please review the fact sheet, How to apply for an EIN, to assist in this process. The fact sheet may be found on the Maryland 4-H website.

9. The Club must complete the Maryland 4-H Foundation Affiliation Agreement for 4-H Clubs.

C. To renew their charters, 4-H Clubs must remain in good standing and complete and submit an annual UME 4-H Club Charter Renewal Application no later than January 31st each year. The following filing requirements must also be met:

1. The Club must complete a Financial Report and 4-H Property Inventory by October 1st. The reports must be submitted to the local Extension Educator subject to Financial Audit.

2. The Club must complete and timely file the appropriate 990 or 990N with the IRS and must submit a copy of confirmation of filing to the local Extension Educator by January 31st.

D. Both the granting and renewal of Charters for 4-H Clubs lie in the sole discretion of UME.

IV. Maryland 4-H Authorized Group Charters

A. All 4-H Authorized Groups that handle money outside of the local Extension Advisory Council/Board, or other separately incorporated non-profit organization approved by UME, must be chartered. New Groups seeking a 4-H Charter must complete and submit the UME 4-H Authorized Group New Charter Application. Existing 4-H Authorized Groups must complete the UME 4-H Authorized Group Charter Renewal Application on an annual basis.

B. All 4-H Authorized Groups must satisfy the following:

1. Authorized Group Membership must meet the Affirmative Action guidelines for 4-H groups according to the UME Plan for Compliance and other anti-discrimination laws and guidelines. The Authorized Group must complete the Public Relations Efforts by Clubs Form AA-4H/HE4.

UME approved military clubs or afterschool programs in which certification for tax purposes is obtained through other entities are exempt from this requirement.
2. The Authorized Group leadership consists of UME Volunteer leaders. The list of leaders must be attached to the application and must include the following information for each leader: complete first and last name, mailing address, phone number, and email address. All UME Volunteer leaders must be screened, approved, and appointed through the UME Volunteer Policy Screening and Appointment Process and have a signed Volunteer Appointment Agreement on file with UME.

3. The Authorized Group must adopt written operating guidelines, bylaws and/or constitution approved by the members to govern its activity. Such documents must comply with UME requirements, as applicable. A copy of the written operating guidelines, bylaws, and/or constitution must be attached to each Charter application. Operating guidelines, bylaws and/or constitution must be approved by the local UME office as part of the 4-H Charter Application process or the 4-H Charter Annual Renewal Application process. Any modifications made throughout the year must also be approved. An Outline for Authorized Group Bylaws can be found at your local UME 4-H Office or on the Maryland 4-H Website.

4. The Authorized Group must meet on a continuing basis.

5. The Authorized Group must have a written educational plan that meets the purposes of the 4-H Program. A copy of the Summary of 4-H Authorized Group Activities must be attached to the application.

6. The Authorized Group must apply for and receive an EIN from the IRS. Applying for an EIN is free and can be achieved online, by phone, by fax, or by mail. The online EIN application is the quickest and preferred method, and can be accessed on the IRS website. The paper form, IRS Form SS4 can also be found on the IRS website. Please review the fact sheet, How to apply for an EIN, to assist in this process. The fact sheet may be found on the Maryland 4-H website.

7. The Authorized Group must complete the Maryland 4-H Foundation Affiliation Agreement for 4-H Clubs and Authorized Groups.

C. To renew their charters, 4-H Authorized Groups must remain in good standing and complete and submit an annual UME 4-H Authorized Group Charter Renewal Application no later than January 31st each year. The following filing requirements must also be met:

1. The Authorized Group must complete a Financial Report and 4-H Property Inventory by October 1st. The reports must be submitted to the local Extension Educator and are subject to audit.

2. The Authorized Group must complete and timely file the appropriate 990 or 990N with the IRS and must submit a copy of confirmation of filing to the local Extension Educator by January 31st.

§ All 4-H Authorized Groups that handle money outside of the local Extension Advisory Council/Board, or other separately incorporated non-profit organization approved by UME, are exempt.
D. Both the granting and renewal of Charters for 4-H Authorized Groups lie in the sole discretion of UME.

Developed by Claudia Payne & Martin Hamilton -1998

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The University of Maryland, College Park, (AGNR), (UME), (AES) programs are open to all citizens and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, or national origin, marital status, genetic information, or political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.