



Cooperative Extension Program
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Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century:

ISOTURE: A Model for Volunteer Management

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Volunteers are vital to Texas AgriLife Extension Service, which has the largest volunteer program of any agency in the state. Mobilizing and organizing a strong volunteer base is essential to Extension's mission. Because volunteers are used in every program area of the agency, every county Extension agent is a manager or administrator of volunteers.

ISOTURE model. The ISOTURE model is a set of seven steps that a manager can use to help volunteers become more involved and effective. The steps are **I**dentification, **S**election, **O**rientation, **T**raining, **U**tilization, **R**ecognition and **E**valuation.

ISOTURE was first developed as a leadership model by Robert Dolan, a professor at North Carolina State University. In 1971, it was introduced as a strategy for managing volunteers by Milton Boyce, the national program leader for 4-H Youth Development. Boyce said that the most effective way to increase the impact of Cooperative Extension's youth development efforts is to increase the number of volunteers in the 4-H program. To do this, county Extension agents must be committed

volunteer administrators. The ISOTURE model can help county Extension agents lead volunteers more effectively, Boyce said.

Leadership development vs. volunteer development.

Leadership development is a systematic approach to teaching people how to influence others' behavior more effectively. Volunteer development focuses on leading people toward a common goal. Thus, a successful volunteer administrator must be an effective leader. Maintaining an effective volunteer staff is a large, continuous task. The ISOTURE model's processes need not be completed in order; however, each component is important.

ISOTURE Model

- I** – Identification
- S** – Selection
- O** – Orientation
- T** – Training
- U** – Utilization
- R** – Recognition
- E** – Evaluation

Identification

Identification is the process of finding the right people to fill specific volunteer positions.

Volunteers have many reasons for giving their time and resources, including the opportunity to help others, give back to the community, learn new skills and meet new people. Volunteers appreciate knowing that their time is well spent, that their work is meaningful and that their commitment is flexible. When identifying the need for volunteers, the manager should recognize these benefits and expectations.

The volunteer manager should assess the needs of the program and identify the types of volunteers available, then develop a description of the expectations and responsibilities of a specific volunteer position. Once this information is prepared, volunteers can be recruited.

Two marketing approaches can be used to identify potential volunteers:

- *Targeted marketing*, which involves looking for people with specific skills and/or subject matter knowledge.
- *Non-targeted marketing*, which involves looking for people with general skills. This approach may also involve recruiting people who are already active in the community and may be willing to volunteer with Extension.

Anyone interested in volunteering—whether officially recruited or not—should complete a Volunteer Interest Form, which is available at <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/vol-curriculum.htm> or from the county Extension agent. This form can help determine the potential volunteer's availability, previous experience, interests, skills and motives for volunteering.

When identifying and recruiting volunteers, the county Extension agent should clearly state Extension's mission and programs and the need for these programs.

Checklist for county Extension agents to consider when identifying volunteers

- Identify the needs of the program and volunteer roles to meet those needs.
- Identify the type of volunteer(s) needed.
- Develop a position description that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of that position.
- Recruit volunteers for specific roles through targeted marketing.
- Identify potential volunteers.

- Share the volunteer position description with the potential volunteers.
- Introduce the potential volunteer to the program and explain the role of the volunteer.
- Have the potential volunteer complete a Volunteer Interest Form.

Tools

- *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Roles Volunteers Play in Texas Extension*, Extension publication D-1451, which contains:
 - Volunteer Administration Checklist
 - Volunteer Interest Form

Selection

Selection is the process of studying the backgrounds of potential volunteers and motivating them to fill selected positions.

After the potential volunteers have been identified, the volunteer manager should meet with and interview each one. The discussion should include Extension overall, the specific program area needing volunteer help and the volunteer's interests, strengths and potential. The manager should identify the volunteer's motivations for volunteering with Texas AgriLife Extension. No matter who recruited the potential volunteer, the county Extension agent should oversee and coordinate the interview.

The interview should also include a discussion of the position description, including:

- Title of the volunteer position
- Advisor
- Purpose of the position
- Benefits to the volunteer serving in this role
- Responsibilities of the volunteer
- Qualifications and skills needed (including potential volunteer training needs)
- Amount of time required
- Resources and support available

Place the right volunteers in the right positions based on their interests, talents and schedules. Selecting volunteers for a job in which they are truly interested promotes success for the volunteer and Extension.

Checklist

- Screen potential volunteers through background and reference checks.
- Review the volunteer interest forms and applications.
- Interview the potential volunteers to learn more about their skills, interests, motivations and attitudes.
- Match the volunteers' interests, talents and time available to the needed volunteer roles.

The Volunteer Background Check Form and Youth Protection Standards Rules and Guidelines can be found at <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/YPS.htm>. Extension publication D-1451, *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Roles Volunteers Play in Texas Extension*, includes the Volunteer Application Form. The publication is available at the Extension Bookstore, <http://agriflifebookstore.org/>.

Orientation

Orientation is the process of familiarizing volunteers with Extension and their new duties.

Orientation begins with the first contact between a volunteer and the Extension staff. The county Extension agent should focus on teaching about the agency and explaining the ways that volunteers fit into Extension's big picture.

Volunteers should learn each staff member's role in the program and their areas of expertise. Extension support staff and leading volunteers also should be encouraged to be a part of the orientation plan so they can provide support and resources as needed.

Further illustrating the importance of orientation is a 2007 study by Landry Lockett. It concluded that the main skill needed by Master Gardener volunteer administrators was the ability to articulate Extension's mission and goals. Volunteers need a sense of purpose to see how their work benefits the organization.

After the orientation, the volunteers should know:

- The mission of Texas AgriLife Extension: *"To provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing educational programs and services to the people of Texas."*

- The definition of Cooperative Extension: *Cooperative Extension is an organizational entity of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant University System created under provisions of the Smith-Lever Act (1914) and subsequent related legislation. Extension was created as an organic part of the Land-Grant University in each state to interpret, disseminate, and promote practical use of knowledge to improve the quality of life for all citizens.*
- The legislation that defined the Land-Grant University: *Smith-Lever Act of 1914.*
- The mandates of Cooperative Extension according to the Smith-Lever Act:
 - *Serve agriculture and the public*
 - *Define agriculture broadly*
 - *Enhance human development*
 - *Meet local needs*
- The roles and responsibilities of an Extension volunteer as specified in the volunteer position description.

Checklist

- Train and orient new volunteers on the county program and Extension.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to meet the entire Extension staff.
- Officially appoint the volunteer to his or her new position.
- Give the volunteer a copy of the position description and the resources needed to fulfill the duties.

Tools

- *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Preparing the Leadership Advisory Board for Success: Advocacy*, publication E-442. Even though this publication is intended for leadership advisory boards, it is an excellent resource for orienting volunteers to Extension.
- *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Preparing the Leadership Advisory Board for Success: Visioning*, publication E-452. Also written for leadership advisory boards, this bulletin can help introduce volunteers to Extension.

- “History of Cooperative Extension.” This slide show and script can help any new Extension volunteer. It is online at <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/vol-curriculum.htm>.

Training

Training is the process of helping volunteers develop the skills that will improve the quality of their work.

Training helps volunteers develop basic skills and confidence; it also provides support and opportunities for personal growth. Volunteers want to learn basic, relevant and meaningful skills that can be useful in their personal lives. Training also can help volunteers realize their potential and recognize the knowledge and skills they already possess.

The type of and need for training depend on the volunteer’s role, experience, skill level and current knowledge. To ensure that the training programs are effective for all volunteers, county Extension agents must develop educational plans that accommodate all learning styles.

It is also important to provide subject-matter training specific to each program area. For example, 4-H volunteers need training on youth development, and Master Gardeners should be trained on gardening and horticulture.

Each volunteer brings experiences, knowledge and skills to the program. Volunteer managers need to be aware of each volunteer’s ability and knowledge, as each has a different set of skills and rate of growth.

Checklist

- Give the volunteer(s) appropriate subject-matter training.
- Offer ongoing training opportunities through a variety of methods, formal and non-formal.
- Provide volunteers with the resources needed to fulfill their responsibilities.

Tools

Training tools are listed in the table below.

Utilization

Utilization is providing opportunities for volunteers to put their knowledge and skills into appropriate action.

After the training, volunteer managers should give the volunteers opportunities to put their new skills into practice, regardless of the positions held, and allow them to work in areas where they are comfortable and can be successful. A successful volunteer effort provides a personal feeling of worth.

Volunteer group	Resource
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Teaching Volunteers to Teach: Learning Styles</i>. Publication D-1457 • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Teaching Volunteers to Teach: Delivery Methods</i>. Publication D-1458 • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Roles Volunteers Play in Extension</i>. Publication D-1451 • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Understanding and Managing Direct and Episodic Volunteers</i>. Publication D-1455 • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Managing the Risk Associated with Volunteer Services</i>. Publication D-1456 • http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/
Leadership Advisory Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Leadership Advisory Boards</i>. Publication D-1452 • http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/LABmaterial.htm
Program Area Committees / Youth Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Program Area Committees/Youth Boards</i>. Publication D-1453 • http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/PACmaterial.htm
Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Volunteer Associations and Groups</i>. Publication D-1454 • Master Gardener: http://www.texasmastergardeners.com/ • Master Naturalist: http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu/
Club Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Texas 4-H Program Management System</i> http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/adults/mgtguide/index.html

The use of volunteers also involves delegation. Give the volunteers challenging tasks that are not too easy or too hard. Effectively used, volunteers can extend Extension's services to clientele, serve as advocates for Extension and concentrate their time and effort to a specified project. However, overusing volunteers can result in burnout and resignations.

Because volunteers need guidance and supervision, county Extension agents should provide feedback, whether through praise or constructive criticism. (See the Evaluation section for more detail.) Expectations should be made clear in the volunteer position description.

Delegating responsibilities to volunteers sometimes causes county Extension agents to fear a loss of contact with clientele. A county Extension agent may also worry that the volunteers have more information than the agent does, which can result in the agent withholding information and limiting the volunteers' effectiveness.

However, to be successful, volunteers need to have current information to share with clientele. Volunteers can often relate better to clients and foster closer relationships than the Extension professional can. County Extension agents must overcome any resistance to using volunteers and continue to provide them with opportunities to serve.

Checklist

- Support volunteers in carrying out their responsibilities as outlined in the position description.
- Provide them with opportunities to use their skills and talents and follow their interests.
- Train them, and give them opportunities to apply knowledge and skills.
- Foster mentoring from other volunteers as well as professional staff.
- Supervise volunteers, providing feedback on their efforts.

Tools

- *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Roles Volunteers Play in Texas Extension*, publication D-1451

Recognition

Recognition is acknowledging and rewarding sound volunteer efforts. Recognition helps motivate volunteers to stay involved in the program. Recognition is best built on respect and appreciation.

Recognition comes in two forms: formal and informal. Formal recognition includes being honored at a dinner or banquet, being mentioned in news articles and/or being given special pins, certificates and thank-you letters.

However, volunteers may think of a dinner as just one more meeting to attend; these volunteers also appreciate informal recognition such as a pleasant work environment, timely information about new developments, paid attendance at a training or opportunities to mentor new volunteers.

Recognition is also provided through feedback on the job a volunteer is doing, challenging work assignments and opportunities to take on new responsibilities.

Building relationships with volunteers is vital to the recognition process. When Extension professionals build a relationship of trust and respect for the volunteer, the rewards become more valuable. However, over-honoring a favorite or two can cause the recognition process to become meaningless.

Checklist

- Recognize volunteers through formal and informal methods.
- Build relationships with the volunteers.
- Provide feedback and support to the volunteers.
- Be careful not to over-recognize.

Tools

- *Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: A Little Recognition Goes a Long Way—Strategies to Recognize Volunteers*, Extension publication E-416

Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of determining the results of volunteer performance by informal or formal methods and by giving feedback. Evaluation helps volunteers obtain the *desired* results.

For an evaluation process to be effective, the volunteers and county Extension agents should approach it with a positive attitude. Although not all volunteers need to be evaluated, at times evaluation is a necessity.

To effectively measure volunteer performance, county Extension agents should use evaluation techniques just as for any outcome program. In *The Volunteer Management Handbook*, Tracy Daniel Connors suggests five steps for effective evaluation:

1. Know the questions that need answers. Do not evaluate just for the sake of evaluating. Have clearly defined objectives to measure.
2. Plan the information-gathering process. Develop the evaluation method early in the process to provide support for the items to be measured.
3. Meet with the volunteers to update them on their progress. This could include one-on-one meetings, group meetings, phone conferences or other communication.
4. Develop an evaluation report that includes the results.
5. Share the results with stakeholders to show them the progress and successes of the volunteers' efforts.

Three types of evaluations are commonly used when working with volunteers:

- **Process evaluation** allows the volunteer administrator to evaluate the volunteer's experience. This type of evaluation measures satisfaction, the hours provided and the resources needed by the volunteer.
- **Outcome evaluation** measures the changes the volunteers have implemented based on what they have learned or practiced. These include teaching others, using the appropriate teaching methods, practicing proper parliamentary procedures and managing other volunteers.
- **Economic impact** shows the monetary value that volunteers offer to communities. Most of the time, this is what their wages would have been if they had been paid for their work, but it could be more. For example, during a countywide cleanup day, volunteers clean trash and litter from highways. What does that save the county in terms of hiring individuals to clean the community?

Tools

- "Introduction to Evaluation of Volunteers," <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/vol-curriculum.htm>
- *Questionnaire Design: Asking Questions with a Purpose*, Extension publication E-227.
- *Keys to Education that Works—Texas AgriLife Extension's Program Development Model*, publication E-345.

Summary

Managing volunteers can bring stumbling blocks. The volunteers might feel burdened by multiple roles or the lack of funding or resources to fulfill their duties, or frustrated because of "grunt work," lack of communication and recognition, inappropriate placement, underused skills, talents and interests, and lack of training. However, the ISOTURE model can help county Extension agents build and strengthen a volunteer program. Volunteers help expand Extension outreach and programming into many Texas communities.

As managers of volunteers within Extension, county Extension agents must become volunteer administrators. Volunteer development is a continuing process. Extension cannot achieve its goals without a strong volunteer program.

For more information on volunteer management in Extension, please visit <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/>

Resources

- Boyce, V. Milton. "A Systematic Approach to Leadership Development." Presented to county and area 4-H youth agents conference (PA and MO). Publication: Extension Service, USDA (4-H-5), 1971.
- Connors, Tracy Daniel. *The Volunteer Management Handbook*. John Wiley & Sons, 1995.
- Fisher, James C. and Kathleen M. Cole. *Leadership and Management of Volunteer Programs: A Guide for Volunteer Administrators*. Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Lockett, Landry. "Competencies, Benefits and Limitations for Master Gardener Coordinators: A Delphi Technique Involving County Extension Agents in Texas." Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2007.

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Extension publications can be found on the Web at: <http://AgriLifebookstore.org>

Visit the Texas AgriLife Extension Service at <http://AgriLifeextension.tamu.edu>

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ISOTURE

Write the ISOTURE step beside the correct definition.

1. _____ The process of acknowledging and rewarding sound volunteer efforts.
2. _____ The process of stimulating and supporting volunteers' efforts and developing the skills that will improve the quality of their work and enable them to be successful.
3. _____ The process of familiarizing volunteers with Extension and their new duties.
4. _____ The process of determining the results of volunteer performance and giving feedback.
5. _____ The process of finding people who have the skills essential to fill specific volunteer positions.
6. _____ The process of providing the opportunity for volunteers to put their knowledge and skills into appropriate action.
7. _____ The process of studying the backgrounds of the potential volunteers and motivating them to fill the volunteer positions.

Word bank

Identification Selection Orientation Training Utilization Recognition Evaluation

Don't look at the answers until you're done!

Answers:

1. Recognition
2. Training
3. Orientation
4. Evaluation
5. Identification
6. Utilization
7. Selection