



Orienting Extension Faculty that are Volunteer Administrators

Lesson Author(s) and Institutional Affiliation:

Landry Lockett, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Courtney Dodd, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Chris Boleman, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Abstract:

Transitioning into a new county Extension agent position is stressful even in the best situations. When the pressure of also becoming the newly appointed volunteer administrator of an Extension group or two is added, things can become overwhelming.

This module will explain the fundamental competencies needed by volunteer administrators, as given by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. It will further give practical items that supervisors and colleagues can focus on related to the new faculty member which will help them have early wins with their volunteers.

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to define in their own words the role of a volunteer administrator
- Participants will be able to explain what is a core competency
- Participants will be able to list and briefly describe the five core competencies required of volunteer administrators given by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration

Advance Preparation:

- Review the background, interest approach, PowerPoint and application information
- Make copies of the handouts for attendees

Materials Needed:

- Laptop computer and projector

Time Needed: 1 Hour

BACKGROUND

County Extension Agents as Volunteer Administrators

Many Extension county Extension agents are placed in the role of volunteer administrator for groups such as program area committees, advisory boards, associations and/or Master Volunteer groups. Most of these County Extension Agents have little to no formal training in managing volunteers, which is not an uncommon situation. Most leaders of volunteers are exposed to the profession of volunteer administration through on-the-job or previous volunteer experience (Fisher & Cole, 1993). In a study conducted in 2000 of the membership of the Association of Volunteer Administrators (AVA), it was found that 77.8% of volunteer administrators surveyed had received no formal training in volunteer administration prior to their first job experience as a volunteer administrator (Brudney & Schmahl, 2002). With these things in mind, as well as the realization that volunteers are vital to Extension, it is imperative that we do everything possible to help new Extension faculty members succeed in their role as a volunteer administrator.

INTEREST APPROACH

1. Place your audience into groups of about four or five people per group.
2. Begin the lesson by starting with the first PowerPoint slide, posing this situation and activity: "We've all seen leadership positions become filled by someone new. Think about some of those situations. Within your groups, give an example (either good or bad) of how that situation was handled by the new leader."
3. Give the groups a few minutes to discuss this topic, then ask the groups for some good examples that came up in their discussion.
4. Next, have the audience think about a time when they stepped into a leadership position, preferably within Extension. Within their groups, have them discuss examples of things they did well or things they would have done differently if they could go back. They could also tell about something someone did for them that was really helpful in their new position.
5. After some discussion within the groups, take time to hear some of the interesting items that came up in their discussion.
6. Use this discussion to transition into the lesson.

LESSON

The lesson follows the PowerPoint presentation. Commentary is given in the “notes” section of many of the slides. The following information will also complement the delivery of this module.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer administrator to make sure volunteers will be successful. Each of us who works with volunteers is a volunteer administrator. According to Fisher and Cole (1993), a volunteer administrator leads and manages individuals who are providing a service of their own free will. A volunteer administrator decides what needs to be done, creates networks of people and relationships that can accomplish a task, and then tries to ensure that those people actually get the job done. (Kotter, 1990).

Core Competencies Needed by Volunteer Administrators

A core competency is defined as the knowledge, skills and abilities required for competent/satisfactory practice in the field of volunteer resource management. Five Core Competencies serve as the foundation for the profession of volunteer administration, regardless of where or how it is practiced (these are the basis of certification by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration). They have been identified by topic experts in the field and are verified periodically through a survey of practitioners. They are as follows:

- **Ethics:** the ability to act in accordance with professional principles.
- **Organizational Management:** the ability to design and implement policies, processes and structures to align volunteer involvement with the mission and vision of the organization.
- **Human Resources Management:** the ability to successfully engage, train and support volunteers in a systematic and intentional way.
- **Accountability:** the ability to collect relevant data and to engage in meaningful monitoring, evaluation and reporting to stakeholders.
- **Leadership and Advocacy:** the ability to advocate for effective volunteer involvement inside of the organization and in the broader community it serves.

It is important that we evaluate ourselves and then work to develop the competencies we need to be effective volunteer administrators. It is also important, as veteran Extension faculty and volunteers, that we help new Extension professionals understand these competencies and grow in them.

Role of Extension Faculty in Leading Volunteers

The main roles of Extension faculty in guiding and supporting volunteer associations, committees, groups or episodic volunteers in meeting the mission of Extension are as follows:

- serve as advisors to the association;
- teach subject matter that supports the mission of Extension and the association;
- provide and coordinate supporting services to the group; and
- maintain a county office, with the cooperation of the County Commissioners' Court, where people can learn about the association and where information related to the program area can be recorded and distributed.

The primary roles of Extension faculty in guiding and supporting Master Volunteers in meeting the mission of Extension are as follows:

- recruit and select candidates for the master volunteer program;
- fund and conduct training for master volunteer candidates;
- certify and recertify master volunteers according to the appropriate guidelines;
- help determine what activities and projects the master volunteer candidates will carry out to support Extension's educational mission;
- approve, record and report the service of master volunteers;
- recognize master volunteers for their service and leadership; and
- facilitate communication between Extension personnel and master volunteers.

APPLICATION

Have your audience members go through the following activity and write down their thoughts:

- Think about Extension colleagues that are within your sphere of influence and are new to an Extension volunteer resource management position. List their name(s) as well as at least five action items that you can do in the near future to help them succeed in their new position.
- List each of the five core competencies given in this presentation for volunteer administrators. Next, write down action points as to how you can improve in each of these areas.

Tips for Using this with Veteran Extension Faculty and Volunteers

- Leave enough time at the end of your session for Extension agents and volunteers to consider and respond to the application activity questions.

REFERENCES

- Brudney, J. L., & Schmahl, S. L. (2002). Survey of volunteer administrators, 1992 to 2000: Trends for the profession. *Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 20(1), 6-14.
- Burkham, A. , & Boleman, C. T. (2005). Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Volunteer Associations and Groups. (Publication D-1454, Available from Texas AgriLife Extension Service).
- Fisher, J. C., & Cole, K. M. (1993). *Leadership and Management of Volunteer Programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

HANDOUTS

Handouts to be utilized within this module include:

- Sample Volunteer Application Questions
- Sample Items to be Included in an Extension Position Description Form

These handouts are as follows:

Possible Volunteer Application Questions

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Residence address: _____

City and zip: _____

Home phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Gender: _____

Place of employment: _____

Employment address: _____

Years as a volunteer: _____

Volunteer interests: _____

Race/ethnicity: _____

Prior criminal background screenings: _____

Social Security number: (if screening will be completed through Extension)

Date of birth: _____

Self disclosure of criminal offenses: _____

Maiden and alias names: _____

Possible Volunteer Position Description Items

Having volunteer position descriptions helps ensure that volunteers will be successful. Position descriptions make it clear what the responsibilities of a volunteer will be and what the expectations are for the volunteer's performance. Some standard position description items include the following:

Title: _____

Advisor: _____

Purpose:

Benefits to the volunteer:

Responsibilities:

Qualifications:

Time required:

Resources:

POWERPOINTS

See the attached PowerPoint presentation, "Orienting Extension Faculty that are Volunteer Administrators."

EVALUATION

See the attached evaluation form for this module.