

**Well-Connected Communities**

**Master Volunteer Program**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**As of January 22, 2020**

**This document should be used in tandem with the Strategies for Recruiting, Training, Implementing and Sustaining Master Volunteers. This FAQ has been updated to remove conflicting information but is geared towards the early days of the MV Program.**

**DELIVERABLES**

What are the deliverables for the Master Health Volunteer (MHV) program in each LGU? At the end of Wave 1:

*The* ***Community Engagement Logic Model*** *establishes goals for each community at the end of two years under Short- and Medium-Term outcomes. The Short-Term outcomes are based on Knowledge and Awareness but the Medium-Term expectations are the end of the two years are:*

* *Innovator Community:* MHV program formed with trained leaders (i.e. practical explanation-one round of training offered)
* *Implementer Community:* Concept of a MHV program has been explored (i.e. develop recruitment program)
* *Planner Community:* Youth and adult community members, representative of the population and multiple community sectors agree to explore the health of their community

At the end of Wave 1, the designations for kinds of communities were removed. The deliverable for Wave 2 is:

* By the end of Wave 2, each sub-grantee will have established a cadre of trained youth and adult volunteers who have completed 40 hours of training, 40% utilizing a core online national curriculum available on the Well Connected Communities online portal and 60% to be provided by the respective LGUs based on state health initiatives, community needs assessments and other areas of perceived need. They will work closely with professional Extension staff and extend CES reach through teaching and other meaningful volunteer leadership with 40 hours of give back volunteer hours before completing requirements to be designated as Master Volunteers.

**RECRUITMENT**

Will all volunteers be trained as MHVs?

*Not all volunteers will be MHVs. Only those with the interest and ability to complete will be needed to carry out the interventions for the health issue selected by the Community Wellness Council.*

When should recruitment and training be done?

*Our suggestion is to work on your planning and recruitment in spring and early summer with the goal of having training in late summer or early fall.*

What are some of the incentives local staff can employ to recruit volunteers to be a part of the Well-Connected Communities Master Health Volunteer (WCCMHV) program?

*Efforts such as t-shirts or name badge with logo and name of program may be helpful. Arkansas Extension Wellness Ambassadors receive name badges with one color for those who have met the basic training requirements (40 hours of training and 40 hours of give back) and a second color for advanced volunteers who have completed the basic training and ongoing education and a community project (10 more hours of continuing education and 20 of give back). The best incentive is the intrinsic value for the connection to the land-grant university (LGU) and high-quality education, and the desire to help improve health in their communities.*

*Arkansas also has a third level of Extension Wellness Volunteers, but no one has advanced to that level. More training does not necessarily equate to an improved MHV. Texas will pilot a similar effort in 2018 allowing Master Wellness Volunteers to “specialize” in a particular area, namely financial health utilizing Rutgers Small Steps to Health and Wealth curriculum.*

What tactics have been successful in recruitment?

*Arkansas and Texas have developed tactics from scratch. Arkansas has found that smaller counties have been successful in recruiting personally from face-to-face contact. New agents without such connections can approach existing groups whose missions align and can understand MHV as an opportunity to give back to their communities. For example, faith-based organizations with a health ministry work well if you recruit the leaders to be MHV to work with their organizations as a source of worker volunteers, while nursing or dietetic professors looking for practical experiences for their students are good candidates.*

*Andy suggests creating generic info-graphics to be used on Facebook, Twitter, other social media and publications. Newspaper templates are helpful for counties to personalize.*

*Both Texas and Arkansas have tried to integrate the MHV program with Master Gardeners as there is potential for overlap depending on the issue that the volunteer or community is working on. For example, there has been limited success with MHV teaching curriculum such as Learn, Grow, Eat, Go, a third-grade curriculum developed under an AFRI grant. There has also been limited success with reaching out to Homemaker Clubs for volunteers; success has been greater in attracting new volunteers.*

*However, there has been very successful cross promotion of programs/cross training of volunteers in agencies such as Area Agencies on Aging, Arthritis Foundation, Diabetes Prevention, Headstart teachers, Hospital Workers, nursing students programs. It’s a win-win. Regarding integration with existing evidence-based programs, such as Chronic Disease Self-Management Education, the goal is not to alter the fidelity of these other programs but rather to extend a warm handoff to other agencies so that Extension programming can provide supportive or wrap-around education.*

*Thought: engage the Community Health Council in helping to recruit MHV.*

How long do volunteers typically stay?

*In Arkansas, volunteers typically stay on after training and their first project. Most first year volunteers do double hours of give back. However, the stability of the volunteer seems to be tied to the stability of the county Extension Office. The county Extension office is the hub and is essential to keeping the volunteer engaged. Texas has calculated an attrition rate of 30% and agrees that the relationships with County Agents are the key to keeping volunteers engaged.*

**CURRICULUM and TRAINNG**

Has there been a determination that all states will need to go with 40 hours of training and 40 hours of give back, or do LGUs have flexibility in the amount of time?

*Forty hours is a national “standard” for “Master” designated programs such as Master Gardeners, etc. We plan to align with, that but will allow states to decide how to do 40 hours of training and give back. Both youth and adults will undergo 40 hours of training, but the emphasis will be on mastering key competencies. Foundational content will be provided from the Well-Connected Communities National Master Volunteer Leadership team for 18 hours of training around expected competencies; this is 40 percent of the 40 hours and all LGUs will be expected to incorporate this foundational information. LGUs will decide content for the remaining 60 percent, at home activities and a possible group project.*

*States have complete leeway in deciding what to count as training: online, face-to-face, experiential and home assignments. Arkansas and Texas use about 32 hours for training and eight hours of at home activities. Agendas for training will be shared by Arkansas and Texas. Think about what you can support with the resources in the state.*

*This program engages youth and adults together because the expectation is for CES to operate as a unit for RWJF rather than divide by departments. It also fits with the youth-adult partnership concept, and the training content is appropriate for both youth and adults. Operationally, the youth training may have to be at a different time from the adults, but the same content is appropriate as the goal is for adults and youth MHV to work together on same issue. Consider what is better for youth training and what is better for adult.*

Will curriculum and training materials be provided?

*There are training materials available from both Texas and Arkansas. Arkansas has been put in the Dropbox for this project at present; Texas is online at* <http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/master_wellness_volunteer.php>.

*For the Texas program, this online training represents 60 percent of the required education. The courses are open for enrollment and free, but the “opportunities for additional learning” associated with them are Texas-specific so before assigning them, get in touch with Andy to determine how to address this with trainees. Their respective manuals are infused with their state project—Texas in food, nutrition and health and Arkansas in fitness. Both are aimed at County Agents.*

*However, do not look at this manual as a Step 1, Step 2, etc. Look at your organization’s branding, volunteer recruitment strategies, health programming plan, identified issue, supervision, etc. and tailor the manual to your situation. Training agendas from both states will be included. What will make this work best is to use the generic manual (or even Texas and Arkansas as they are) as a template and plug in your own resources.*

*Their advice is to not stress over it too much as this is a pilot. Plug new resources into the training manuals and training agendas as appropriate.*

*Besides the modules, there will be additional resources provided so that LGUs can take a deeper dive into given subjects. For example, in Youth Adult Partnerships (YAP), the 4-H curriculum* ***Building Successful Youth Adult Partnerships*** *(Oregon) has detailed plans for a four-hour, eight-hour and a weekend face-to-face training. The University of Wisconsin offers an online 8 session YAP for individualized or group study featuring the work of professor emeritus Shep Zeldin.*

*USDA also has a Master Family and Consumer Science Volunteer training resource available at* <http://www.masterfcsvolunteerprogram.info/faq.html>

*which can be used as an orientation to the discipline, provide the history of Extension nationally and serve as a resource for marketing and advocacy for FCS as a profession*

What about continuing education credits, or some form of credentialing from the University for successful MHVs? Would there be opportunities there?

*Yes, that could be explored. When needed, Texas will work with the local community college that has a workforce or professional development division to offer credits or credentialing. Internally, training hours are certified for job training; for example, in Arkansas, training hours can go towards CEUs for teachers.*

**PROGRAM LOGISTICS**

How many trainees make sense for a first effort?

*Part of the fun and building a sense of community is to have more than one or two trainees; group dynamics is important. They feed off each other and begin to bond. Lisa advises to shoot for a participant number of 10. HOWEVER:*

* *Use virtual training to get started.*
* *If your communities are close enough even to another state (funded or self-funded does not matter), use a regional approach.*
* *The Texas statewide virtual training has been very successful. This has been done in 2018 and 2019.*
* *Again, use your Community Health Council with recruitment if possible (best for Innovator Communities).*
* *OR, if you are a Planner or Implementer Community, recruit and train MHV with their project being to organize the Community Health Council.*
* *If you do a regional training, shoot for two to three per county.*
* *Pull out the Texas and Arkansas training agendas and begin to personalize them to your communities/state.*
* *What other trainings are offered by partnering organizations in your community/county/state that can be integrated with MHV training?*

What are plans for allowances for Cultural Diversity training?

*Texas includes cultural and economic diversity in their training. Links to an eAcademy on Cultural Diversity and Inclusion provided through NIFA Leadership will be available for a deeper look at this topic.*

**COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

Would there be value in creating an interactive platform for all of us who are working to develop MHV programs so that we can hear success stories and learn from others?

*Yes, definitely. With eXtension, there are to be ZOOM meeting rooms where we can gather to collaborate. These ZOOM Office Hours, courtesy of Texas A&M, are a start. There is also a bi-weekly e-newsletter that goes to all PI’s to help share news. That e-newsletter can be distributed to everyone involved in the initiative, sharing success stories as well as challenges. A Community of Practice can certainly be available, possibly a blog.*