

CATEGORY: Technology Transfer

#### Chapter 4

## **Changing Management Practices of VCE Master Gardener Local Program Coordinators**

*Sheri Dorn<sup>1</sup>, Paula Diane Relf<sup>2</sup>, and Alan McDaniel<sup>3</sup>*

ADDITIONAL INDEX WORDS: Volunteer, Extension

#### SUMMARY

An assessment of current MG management practices in Virginia measured the change in VCE MG volunteer management, indicating that the MG management practices among local VCE MG coordinators have shifted to that of a more professional, long-term relationship that is committed to nurturing the volunteer, the MG program, and VCE educational programming. These changes are noted in areas of volunteer management, such as the role of the local coordinator, use of job descriptions, recruitment, volunteer evaluation, public relations, reporting and record keeping, and retention of volunteers. Although the improvements in management practices are slight, they are encouraging and they indicate areas where state MG management must provide additional training and support to local coordinators.

Annual assessment of local MG program management practices will continue to document the progress of local coordinators and determine necessary changes and training needed to achieve more professional, well-managed MG programs. The management survey used in this study will be modified to make the assessment process more efficient and to gain additional information, such as coordinators' attitudes about MG management. With continued work in addressing

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<sup>1</sup>Research Associate, Department of Horticulture, VPI&SU

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Horticulture, VPI&SU

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture, VPI&SU

Extension agents, local coordinators, MG volunteers, and all other paid VCE staff, it is anticipated that the positive changes documented in this survey will increase and that management practices of local MG programs will continue to improve.

## INTRODUCTION

At its inception in 1972, the MG program management philosophy revolved around a volunteer “payback.” Volunteers repaid a debt for horticultural training by returning volunteer hours for Extension, answering home owner questions on the phone or at plant clinics, for the equivalent number of training hours received. There was little thought given to nurturing volunteers once they completed their obligation; instead, new trainees were “paid” with their training. However, many MG continued year after year, building a cadre of individuals who could make significant contributions to Extension programs.

As MG programs have reached a critical mass over the program’s 25 year history, there has been a gradual change of management philosophy. This change has occurred as the role of the MG volunteer has changed from “answer(ing) repetitive, easily answered questions by phone or in person” to “involvement in proactive and community-oriented ventures” (Ruppert et al, 1997), and agents have experienced increasing pressures for educational programming with sustainable impact while ensuring that the basic need is met for answers and information to the community. MG program managers have begun to realize that this historic volunteer turnover is expensive in terms of time and energy spent recruiting and training and of educational program performance (Gamon, 1978). Experience has shown that MGs “make a greater contribution to the daily operation of the county offices as their experience and familiarity with the program and (Cooperative Extension) increases” (Ruppert et al, 1997). Three management philosophies have emerged as a result of this change in MG role.

### *MGs as Clientele*

In Florida, MGS have been considered as “customers of and very visible ambassadors for (Extension)” (Ruppert et al, 1997), and agents have taken efforts to satisfy this “vocal

constituency” that has the ability to restore budgets or gain additional financial support by generating public attention (Ruppert et al, 1997). This service to MG clientele philosophy has confused Extension agents, MG volunteers, legislators, and the general public in some cases into thinking that MG volunteers are a “club,” much like garden clubs sponsored and funded by Extension.

### *MGs as Autonomous Partners*

Other MG groups appear to have developed autonomy from Cooperative Extension, with connections to the University for information resources. In Texas, MG volunteers work “in partnership with Extension” and are seen as “close partners in water conservation programming,” but are organizationally separate entities. The MG association executive committee has complete control over the organization, and the local Extension agent negotiates grants and is a spokesperson for the MG program, but has no authority over the MG group. The MG committee reviews and approves MG projects proposed by Extension, MGs, and potential community partners. These project proposals “are rarely written and usually do not include job descriptions.” The MG association raises large sums of money to hire staff to manage the MG program who, according to bylaws, are to “serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors” of the MG association (Finch, 1997). This autonomy creates significant risk management arguments that leave volunteers and Cooperative Extension unprotected.

### *MGs as “Unpaid” Staff*

The third MG management philosophy that has emerged is the MG as “unpaid” staff in the Cooperative Extension office to support its mission. Today, in Washington State, Bobbitt (1997) points out that the MG program must express a clear mission of education. “MGS are trained to be grassroots educators,” serving many diverse audiences, and working with Cooperative Extension agents to address “the larger issues facing society—environmental quality, crime prevention, food security, strong neighborhoods, and healthy, capable children.” Without this purpose driving the MG program, the program would “be viewed as little more than a glorified garden club and not worthy of support” (Bobbitt, 1997).

### *Status on Virginia*

Legal and financial changes in governments have occurred simultaneously to this evolution of MG program philosophy. In Virginia, legislators have been unwilling to support garden club-like activities. Liability and risk management issues prohibit the autonomy some groups have developed, as university liability coverage applies only to “VCE-sponsored activities” (Jones, 1996). The model that is evolving in Virginia has elements of the three management philosophies:

- MG are considered to be essential, “unpaid” staff in the Extension office. Where possible, they are provided with office space, computers, and telephones. All volunteer-conducted educational programs must be approved by an Extension agent and be part of the state-wide Plan of Work (Table 1).
- MG training and program management (other than the educational programs conducted by the MG for the public) are under the direction of a locally funded technician, locally funded agent, or a volunteer coordinator. Coordinators work with state-funded agents to identify educational program needs and recruit and train to meet those needs. MGs are, in effect, the “clientele” of these coordinators whose job it is to prepare the MGs for (and in some cases supervise them in) VCE sponsored educational program implementation.
- MG state and local associations serve much the same role as professional or trade associations — providing opportunities for increased communication and social exchange; additional training beyond that conducted by their “employer,” VCE; and a forum for supporting Environmental Horticulture programming to their local and state government and the public in general. Associations are autonomous from Extension and their members are not covered by VCE liability when conducting non-VCE business. Extension agents serve as advisors to associations, but are not the educational program element or the manager.

The state MG coordinator has direct responsibility for providing management policies, training, and tools to the local MG coordinators. The state Extension Environmental Horticulture specialist has responsibilities for working closely with the state MG coordinator and providing educational

programming, Plan of Work, training, and support to the 22 Environmental Horticulture agents and the other 21 agents addressing residential horticulture audiences.

This change in volunteer management requires a cultural and attitudinal change of local coordinators, MG volunteers, and paid VCE staff. To accomplish this change, the state Extension specialist and the state MG coordinator are working throughout the state to develop a single, cohesive approach to local MG program management. This has involved the development of VCE MG program policies (1997) and new management guidelines (Dorn and Relf, 1998).

## MEASURING THE CHANGE

To measure the change in VCE MG volunteer management, an assessment was made of the current MG management practices in Virginia. Prior to training and use of the new MG management guidelines, VCE MG program coordinators completed an eight-page volunteer management survey that included open- and close-ended questions about volunteer management practices, such as use of job descriptions, recruitment, volunteer evaluation, public relations, reporting and record keeping, and retention of volunteers. The survey was administered to 33 coordinators in a meeting and was mailed to the 9 coordinators (3 agents and 6 volunteers) who did not attend. A total of 36 surveys (86%) were returned. The six nonrespondents included 5 mailed surveys and 1 survey from a pair of coordinators that co-manage a MG program.

Coordinators were trained during a two-day session on the new management guidelines presented in the *VCE Master Gardener Coordinator Manual*. After six months, the survey of MG program management was executed again using the Dillman (1978) method for survey management. The second survey was identical to the first with the exception of one additional question that would determine how many respondents had assumed their positions since the previous survey and thus had not received coordinator training. The follow up surveys were mailed to 47 current MG coordinators. A total of 42 surveys (89%) were returned, and 5 (11%) respondents reported having assumed their position since July 1, 1998, indicating that they had not participated in any MG coordinator training nor had they seen the first survey. Nonrespondents included two new

programs that were just getting started, two position vacancies, and one individual who does not respond to any VCE correspondence. This complete population survey was tallied and the results reported quantitatively and qualitatively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the management survey have been presented quantitatively and qualitatively where appropriate. Numbers in parenthesis represent the positive responses indicated per question in the initial and follow up survey, respectively, unless otherwise noted.

### **The Local Coordinator**

Information about local MG coordinators (Table 2) was obtained from the management survey. There are more than twice as many nonpaid coordinators as paid coordinators. Five individuals reported assumption of their position since July 1, 1998, indicating that they have not received MG coordinator training.

#### *Immediate supervisor*

Extension agents, either Environmental Horticulture, 4-H, Family and Consumer Science (FCS), or other, accounted for most coordinators' immediate supervisor. One-third (5) of paid coordinators were immediately supervised by district directors (most likely the agent positions), while the remaining two-thirds (9) were immediately supervised by agents (most likely the technician positions). Two-thirds (14) of nonpaid coordinators indicated that their immediate supervisor was an agent, while the remaining one-third (4) indicate that they were immediately supervised by a committee, usually of the MG association.

There was a large increase in coordinators indicating "other" as their immediate supervisor (3, 11). Initial survey responses in the "other" category indicated coordinators were immediately supervised by the local association or had no supervisor. Follow up responses changed to paid

VCE staff, such as the unit coordinator; an agent in conjunction with the local association; or none (no supervisor). Of respondents indicating “other” as their immediate supervisor in the follow up survey, there was one-third less indicating “committee” and four times as many respondents indicating paid VCE representatives. While this is a positive change toward recognizing paid VCE staff as supervisors, there is still indication that the nonpaid coordinators need further training and assistance in recognizing who they work for and by whom they are supervised.

#### *Direct responsibility*

Coordinators’ responses indicated that they were directly responsible to someone other than their immediate supervisor. While almost half of coordinators report being directly responsible to an agent (15, 19), the numbers indicated that these agents are not the same individuals who immediately supervised the coordinators, with the exception of the five individuals in the initial survey and the eight individuals in the follow up survey who indicated supervision by and direct responsibility to district directors. Although slightly decreased in the follow-up survey, these results indicated that there is still an undesired fraction of coordinators who feel they are directly responsible to committees (6, 5) or “other” (8, 10), such as local associations, executive committees, or other MG volunteers.

#### *Additional training needed by coordinators*

Coordinators indicated a need for additional training in motivation and volunteer job placement. This remained very important, especially for paid coordinators, in the follow up survey. Positive responses for this training (15, 18) were twice as high as any other request and increased in the follow up survey. Nonpaid coordinators indicated more initial survey responses in “other” areas, such as basic MG management, computers, and public speaking. In the follow up survey, training needed by nonpaid coordinators changed to motivation and volunteer job placement and communication with paid VCE staff. Additionally, four nonpaid coordinators requested “other” training to further explain their role as MG coordinator.

### *Agents working with local MGs*

There was an overall increase in the types of agents who are working with MGs in local horticulture education programs. This could be attributed to the revision of the Sustainable Landscape Management objectives of the VCE Plan of Work (POW) to work across educational program areas, including 4-H/youth and FCS. Paid coordinators indicate more Environmental Horticulture agents working with MGs, but nonpaid coordinators indicate more 4-H agents working with MGs. This is consistent with local funding support: those areas with paid coordinators have local funding support of environmental horticulture programming and have staff available with this expertise. MG programs managed by nonpaid coordinators are typically found in areas where there is no local funding support of Environmental Horticulture. These volunteers most often work with 4-H agents who have made the connection between MG skills and ability and the 4-H VCE POW objectives. Although the number of 4-H, FCS, and other agents working with MGS is increasing (4, 10), response to this question indicated that VCE agents are only beginning to see the educational program connections between VCE Plan of Work objectives, MGs, and horticulture education.

### **Job Descriptions**

#### *Use of written job descriptions*

A goal of the new MG management guidelines was to increase local coordinator use of written job descriptions in all aspects of MG volunteer management. Use of written job descriptions for implementation across all parts of volunteer management, such as recruitment, selection, review, planning, and retention, and establishment of volunteer jobs indicates that program managers are conscious of why volunteers are asked to join VCE as nonpaid staff and communicates to volunteers that VCE is serious about having them as part of the team. Survey results in this area (Table 3) indicate more than 25 percent increase in use of written job descriptions from the initial survey. Use of written job description consistently increased in the follow up survey, although the most dramatic increases were seen in nonpaid coordinator responses. Still, only half of

coordinators reported using written job descriptions. State MG management work will continue to focus on the need for and use of job descriptions in local MG program management.

#### *Determining volunteer jobs*

Respondents indicated a shift in the method of determining volunteer jobs. The overall number of respondents determining jobs based on an agent's POW nearly doubled (10, 19) and the increase was seen with paid (5, 10) and nonpaid (5, 9) coordinators alike. The use of a written job request for jobs (i.e., a project approval form), a practice encouraged by VCE management guidelines, increased by 25 percent overall (16, 21), with half "new" coordinators in the additional respondents of the follow up survey. Despite these advances, however, there was only a slight decrease in the coordinators indicating use of committees (usually MG association) to determine jobs, and there was an overall increase in coordinators indicating that the local MG association determine volunteer jobs (20, 22). The data indicated that there were fewer veteran (not new) coordinators using this method to determine jobs, but four new coordinators currently use this method. Twice as many nonpaid coordinators used these less desired methods of job determination as did paid coordinators.

On the follow up survey, free response questions about volunteer job determination revealed that volunteer jobs have been determined by requests from groups outside of VCE, such as homeowners and schools. Fewer paid coordinators reported use of this determination method in the follow up survey (3 of 6, 0 of 5), while nonpaid coordinators reported slightly more use of this method (2 of 5, 3 of 7). Other methods of job determination included established projects, local needs matched with VCE goals, MG determination (i.e., individually, through association, or by nonpaid coordinator), and some agent/coordinator and MG association working together to determine volunteer jobs.

### *Assignment of jobs*

Use of more direct methods for job assignment, such as advertising specific opportunities (21, 22), asking people to do jobs (27, 32), and using an annual interest survey to place volunteers (20, 25), increased with the follow up survey, with a slight decrease in reactive job assignment, such as waiting for MGs to ask for something to do (8, 6).

### **Recruitment And Selection**

Recruitment and selection of prospective MG volunteers (Table 4) has been an emphasized issue in the new MG program management guidelines. Coordinators have been encouraged to refine recruitment and increase selection practices so that the best possible matches are made between individuals chosen to volunteer as MGs and the volunteer jobs available in order to increase the success rate of individuals completing the full 50 hour internship (reduce the number of individuals taking the training but not completing the volunteer internship).

Newspaper ads (20, 24), press releases (26, 22), and word of mouth (32, 38) remained the predominant means of recruiting MG volunteers in Virginia. None of these methods has been successful at building volunteer diversity. The number of coordinators reporting recruitment of minorities has increased (16, 20), but their attempts have not resulted in increased numbers of minority MG.

Follow up survey results indicated that there is an increase in coordinators who review applications for the most qualified (17, 20) and invite the most qualified interviewees to sign the volunteer contract (14, 25) although there was not a change in the number of coordinators reporting use of interviews as a selection tool (14, 14). There was a slight decrease in the highly discouraged practice of accepting all applicants into the MG program (21, 19). Paid coordinators account for this decrease (10, 6), as the number of nonpaid coordinators accepting all applicants increased (11, 13).

## **Public Relations**

Practices of promoting the MG program accomplishments to the public affect recruitment of prospective volunteers and public perception of VCE educational programs. When asked which means of MG promotion were used locally, MG coordinators indicated high use of free avenues for public promotion (Table 5) of MG accomplishments, just as they did for recruitment. Word-of-mouth (27, 32), press releases (27, 29), and annual reports to county officials (20, 20) remain the primary means of promoting MG accomplishments to the public. Often, the content of these types of promotionals has been inappropriate in addition to having limited range and possible detrimental result. For example, many photographs of MGs working in public gardens have made it into local newspapers free of charge because of the pretty picture created. The impact the project is having on the local community due to VCE and MG leadership is rarely, if ever, discussed and the risk increases that the general public perceives MG volunteers as free garden labor. While such newspaper features can be good publicity, they may not always be good public relations. The best approach is to prepare and provide effective photographs and reports that clearly show the impact of VCE MG efforts. This promotional material should be distributed via appropriate avenues to avoid the negative publicity from highly photogenic opportunities, such as MGs involved in garden maintenance and noneducational activities.

## **Retaining Active Volunteers**

MG programs are strengthened by increased retention of skilled, trained volunteers from one year to the next. Coordinators are encouraged and instructed to use the new management guidelines to build programs of which people want to remain an active part. In the effort to establish a more professional volunteer program, VCE MG management guidelines advocated the use of formal volunteer review, recognition, and commitment to determine which volunteers intend to stay with VCE another year as a MG. These formal practices were to communicate to volunteers that the MG title must be earned by annual “renewal” based on service and training, rather than by taking a class and paying an association fee. This emphasis on active volunteers and jobs also demands

that coordinators be able to dismiss volunteers when circumstances justify it, and that MG volunteer rosters reflect only those individuals actively earning the MG title.

### *Volunteer renewal*

The management survey results indicated a 75 percent increase (4, 12) in use of volunteer reviews/evaluations (Table 6). Paid coordinators practicing volunteer reviews increased four-fold while the number of nonpaid coordinators doing this doubled. This increase was most likely due to increased attention to and use of written job descriptions that provided a basis for evaluation and review. While this is a significant increase in coordinators using this management practice, less than one-third of coordinators report conducting volunteer reviews. State MG management efforts must continue to develop coordinators' skills for evaluating and reviewing MG volunteers.

Informal methods for renewing volunteers, such as informal discussion or waiting to see which individuals stuck around, were used by more coordinators than were formal methods (i.e., letter of intent or recertification, contract, or evaluation). However, informal practices did decrease (35, 22) and use of formal methods more than doubled (8, 17) in the follow up survey. Paid coordinators indicated the greatest switch from informal (16, 9) to formal (4, 14) renewal practices, whereas nonpaid coordinators were not as dramatic in changing practices (4,5 formal; 19, 20 informal). Survey results showed a decrease in coordinators taking no action at all to recognize or determine those MGs who wish to remain with the program (8, 6; Table 2).

### *Dismissing volunteers*

A few MG coordinators indicated that they have had to dismiss volunteers (9, 9). Slightly more paid coordinators reported dismissing a volunteer than a nonpaid coordinator. This is most likely due to the difficulty experienced by volunteer coordinators in dismissing his/her fellow volunteers and/or peers, as opposed to a paid coordinator dismissing a volunteer. In future survey work, this number is expected to increase due to the use of job descriptions that makes it easier to document when a volunteer has gone above and beyond the call of duty and requires recognition for positive achievements or requires discipline for negative actions.

### *Purging inactive volunteers*

Survey results indicate an increase in the number of coordinators who purge inactive volunteers from local rosters (26, 32). Paid coordinators indicated a greater change in behavior (9, 13) than did nonpaid coordinators (17, 19), which is attributed to increased understanding that not everyone “deserves” the MG title but must “earn” it. More nonpaid coordinators purged inactive volunteers from the mailing list than paid coordinators. For the nonpaid coordinator, it is logical to purge individuals who are not fulfilling their commitment and pulling their weight, whereas paid staff find it difficult to reduce the numbers of volunteers which they oversee. There is concern that local coordinators who indicate they do not purge inactive volunteers from local MG rosters still operate with the misunderstanding that more warm bodies are better than fewer dedicated volunteers. Additional training, such as through role playing, will address the importance of this issue.

## **Reporting And Record Keeping**

### *Reporting*

Answers to questions about local reporting methods (Table 7) indicated that there were some MG programs that do not have a means of reporting MG accomplishments (4, 6), probably the very newest MG programs established within the past 12 to 18 months and individuals waiting on the state MG record keeping system designed by a team of volunteers, agents, and state MG staff and currently under development. Clearly, individual time sheets were the primary means of reporting MG accomplishments (26, 30), though coordinators indicated using other means of reporting, such as through communication between agents, MGS, and coordinators (22, 25); event summaries (14, 17); and word of mouth (9, 15). While there is a slight increase in reporting methods indicated, reporting MG accomplishments remains a significant weakness for VCE. Local coordinators indicate that they report time, but not impact. Currently, there is no real written mechanism for documenting the impact of MG volunteers’ actions upon our communities. It is anticipated that the state MG record keeping system will significantly reduce this reporting

problem, but it will require MGs, coordinators, and agents alike to become more involved in the reporting process.

### *Record keeping*

Coordinators indicated a moderate level of record keeping at the local level. Time sheets were reported as the primary records kept (34, 38), but coordinators have extreme difficulty documenting volunteer time when it is time to report annual service awards. There was a slight increase in the number of coordinators who retained archival information (22, 25), most likely due to increased attention to risk management, and a greater increase in the coordinators who reported keeping volunteer contracts (22, 30). Despite the small increases in record keeping practices, not all coordinators are keeping adequate and appropriate records and still need a better understanding of the necessary record keeping.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of these two surveys indicated that the MG management practices among local VCE MG coordinators have changed slightly to more professional practices that establish long-term relationships committed to nurturing the volunteer, the MG program, and VCE educational programming. These changes were noted in areas of volunteer management, such as the role of the local coordinator, use of job descriptions, recruitment, volunteer evaluation, public relations, reporting and record keeping, and retention of volunteers. Although the improvements in management practices were slight, they were encouraging and they indicate areas where state MG management must provide additional training and support to local coordinators.

### *Paid and nonpaid coordinators*

A comparison of the responses of paid and nonpaid coordinators indicated several differences probably most directly linked to the status of the position. Nonpaid coordinators indicated that they are primarily supervised by committees, associations, and Extension agents, and were directly responsible to committees and associations. Paid coordinators were primarily supervised by and

directly responsible to district directors. Paid staff did not indicate any supervision or responsibilities to committees. Similarly, nonpaid staff indicated no supervision by or responsibility to district directors. Efforts to meet a medium between these two extremes could result in increased program ownership by all players (paid and nonpaid) and an increase in credibility of the nonpaid coordinator.

Paid coordinators are more likely to use recommended management techniques than nonpaid coordinators. This is indicated in areas such as use of written job descriptions, use of formal recognition, volunteer evaluation/review, reporting of accomplishments to VCE, and volunteer dismissal. Additionally, paid staff retained more records than did nonpaid coordinators. This may have been due to paid staff having official work and storage space whereas nonpaid staff do not. Nonpaid coordinators have repeatedly indicated to the state MG coordinator more concerns than paid coordinators over properly storing and maintaining confidentiality of volunteer records.

Because of these differences, state MG program management must increase the attention to and training of nonpaid coordinators so that they become comfortable with the new program management expectations. A mentoring system between local coordinators with similar programs has been suggested as a means of support for all local coordinators. Pairing between paid and nonpaid coordinators could improve management practices. Additionally, paid VCE staff at all levels must be informed of the role and responsibilities of the nonpaid coordinator so that he or she is able to do the expected job.

#### *New and Not New Coordinators*

Five (12%) coordinators indicated on the follow up survey that they had assumed their position since the initial training and survey. Comparisons made between these “new” coordinators and the “not new” (those who had maintained their coordinator positions since the initial survey and had participated in training) indicated that new coordinators were implementing VCE recommended management procedures. New coordinators had low response rates in recognition, evaluation and reviews, and retention of volunteers as compared to veteran coordinators, but this is most likely

due to the time in their planning year at which they completed the survey. Having been in their positions for a maximum of four months, it was natural that they have not experienced the full spectrum of MG management.

Overall, it is encouraging that new coordinators have begun developing positive, desired MG management practices and that management practices were similar among new and not new coordinators. It is unknown how much of this similarity was due to the training of the new coordinator by the incumbent, advice sought from other MG programs, or the following of the management guidelines. It is important, however, for the sake of maintaining program continuity from one coordinator to the next that new program coordinators continue to understand what management behaviors are expected and to provide leadership to MG programs such that volunteer success is fostered.

## FUTURE EFFORTS

### *Volunteer Job Descriptions*

Survey results indicated that coordinators have increased their use of written job descriptions, and are using them across MG program management, such as in recruitment, selection, review, and retention. Training efforts will continue to address use of written job descriptions to increase the number of coordinators following these program guidelines such that volunteers remain a part and are recruited specifically for available volunteer jobs, retention of volunteers is related to getting “a new job,” and that each volunteer understands what is expected of himself or herself.

As paid representatives of VCE, agents must be active in the planning that determines volunteer jobs available according to the educational programming planned for the year, whether or not training of new volunteers is necessary, promotion of VCE impacts and accomplishments achieved by MG volunteers in local communities, and reporting the same to state and local officials. VCE agents must lead the educational program planning so that local MG coordinators

understand what is required of MG volunteers and thus of themselves as program managers. State management efforts will address these issues with paid VCE staff.

#### *Recruitment and selection*

In addition to developing and using volunteer job descriptions, more attention must be paid to the recruitment and selection of volunteers who will represent VCE. Coordinators indicated that they are improving their recruitment and selection practices by using job descriptions to define criteria for volunteers and screen applicants, interviewing to select most qualified candidates, and using signed contracts from selected individuals to indicate their commitment to achieve VCE goals. Additional training and practice to develop the skills of coordinators for conducting targeted recruitment and refining volunteer selection are expected to improve the completion rate of volunteer internships such that 85 percent or more of trainees complete the training and 50 hour volunteer commitment.

#### *Public relations*

Public relations and promotion of MG achievements must be carefully developed and executed in the best manner possible in order to achieve appropriate results, such as attracting skilled individuals interested in volunteering for VCE to improve their local community. In addition to training for developing a strategic promotion plan, coordinators need additional support from state MG program management to ensure that the correct message is being communicated about VCE and MG educational programs.

#### *Retention*

Additional training will be provided to coordinators to develop skills for working with different personalities and understanding how to recognize individual motivation factors so that the VCE MG volunteer program will meet individual needs and volunteers will remain a part of the program for many years. Coordinators are expected to develop a corp of skilled, motivated volunteers and reduce the incidence of inactive individuals remaining on VCE volunteer rosters.

### *Reporting and record keeping*

A total revamping of reporting for VCE MG accomplishments must occur so that impacts are reported rather than just time volunteered. It is anticipated that the new state MG computerized record keeping system will help resolve this problem.

By continuing to work with local MG coordinators to make these aspects of MG management given expectations of the volunteer program and exploring the purpose and interrelatedness of volunteer management tasks, it is hoped that this positive change in MG management practices will be viewed as less painful and bureaucratic. It is clear that this change in management expectations will need to be communicated to MG volunteers so that their attitudes and expectations are changed, as well as to VCE paid staff at all levels. These efforts receive reinforcement from VCE's Volunteer Administration System (VAST) that "aims to achieve a balance between the volunteer staff member's individual career and life needs and the personnel needs of VCE, in support of VCE education mission and program goals" by providing paid staff with training in basic volunteer management (Neilan, 1998).

Annual assessment of local MG program management practices will continue to document the progress of local coordinators and determine necessary changes and training needed to achieve more professional, well-managed MG programs. The management survey used in this study will be modified to make the assessment process more efficient and to gain additional information, such as coordinators' attitudes about MG management. With continued work in addressing Extension agents, local coordinators, MG volunteers, and all other paid VCE staff, it is anticipated that the positive changes documented in this survey will increase and that management practices of local MG programs will continue to improve.

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**Table 1. Sustainable Landscape Management Educational Program Objectives from the VCE Plan of Work (Relf, 1998)**

	OBJECTIVE	STATE GOAL
1	For residents, public and private landscape maintenance professionals, retail garden centers employees, state and local government employees, and professionals in impacted fields such as tourism and real estate development to increase awareness and knowledge of sustainable landscape management for the optimum use and protection of the environment, including: management of all aspects of the residential/urban public and commercial landscape (soil, plants, insects, diseases and wildlife); and, understanding and proper use of equipment, pesticides, fertilizers, and other landscaping inputs to have the greatest value with little negative impacts. Educational programs are targeted at water quality, yard waste management, erosion control, and more recently at air and noise pollution.	Virginia's natural resources will be enhanced.
2	For youth and the volunteers and professionals who work with youth: to increase awareness and understanding of the value of horticulture and landscaping to young people; to gain the knowledge and skills needed to conduct horticultural-based activities in such a fashion as to meet the goals of the individuals and professionals (i.e., SOL for teachers); and, to use horticulture as a tool to increase responsibility and leadership for youth. Note this objective should be addressed working in cooperation with the 4-H agents.	Virginia's youth will be educated leaders for the twenty-first century.
3	For residents, public and private landscape maintenance professionals, retail garden center employees, state and local government employees and agencies, and professionals in impacted fields such as tourism and real-estate development to increase awareness and understanding of the value of the landscape. For this same group to acquire knowledge and skill to insure the proper design, installation and maintenance of sustainable landscapes for economic benefit to the individual and community. For the members of the horticulture industry to use this information as a marketing tool for increasing the related impact on sale of Virginia grown nursery crops. This objective is directed to any horticultural activity that is focused on value and techniques within horticulture other than on environmental protection, 4-H, foods and nutrition, or human health and quality of life.	Virginia's agricultural, forestry, and agribusiness firms will be competitive and profitable.
4	For individuals (homeowners, renters, residents in halfway houses and health care facilities employees), organizations (civic, church, professional), and local government agencies to gain awareness of the benefits of home food production and to develop skill and knowledge in growing food, managing community gardens or contributing to food banks and kitchens. This programming should be conducted in cooperation with the FCS agent and the VCE Nutrition Education and Health Promotion Program (#85901).	Virginians will have a high quality, safe food supply.
5	For health care workers, horticultural industry members and residents of Virginia regardless of their income, physical or mental disabilities, age or other limiting factors: to gain the awareness of the value of the interior and exterior landscape to human health, well-being and quality of life; and, to acquire knowledge and skills that will allow them to utilize this information for personal health and a healthier work place and community. The development of horticultural therapy programs at nursing care facilities, rehabilitation hospitals and hospice all contribute to the quality of life of Virginians. Health related issues such as the use of toxic chemicals, proper protection against skin cancer, and safe use of garden equipment are included here. Work in this area such be conducted in cooperation with the VCE program area Families Across Life Cycles (#86601) and the FCS agents.	Virginians will enjoy a good quality of life.

Table 2. Information About the Local MG Coordinator

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>Position type</i>								
Volunteer coordinator	21	25	22	3	0	0	21	25
Locally funded technician (or equivalent)	8	8	7	1	8	8	0	0
Locally funded Extension agent	7	9	8	1	7	9	0	0
<i>Immediate supervisor</i>								
Extension agent	12	7	6	1	4	1	8	6
Environmental Horticulture	3	6	6	0	1	4	2	2
4-H	2	5	5	0	0	1	2	4
FCS	5	2	2	0	3	0	2	2
District Director	5	8	7	1	5	8	0	0
Committee	4	2	2	0	0	0	4	2
Other	3	11	9	2	1	3	2	8
<i>Direct responsibility to</i>								
Extension agent	7	6	5	1	2	1	5	5
Environmental Horticulture	5	6	6	0	3	4	2	2
4-H	1	6	6	0	0	1	1	5
FCS	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
District Director	5	8	7	1	5	8	0	0
Committee	6	5	5	0	0	0	6	5
Other	8	10	7	3	4	3	4	7
<i>Additional training needed</i>								
Conflict resolution	6	4	3	1	3	2	3	2
Motivation and volunteer job placement	15	18	17	1	10	11	5	7
Communication with paid VCE staff	7	10	8	2	4	3	3	7
Other	10	9	8	1	2	5	8	4
<i>Agents working with local MGs</i>								
Environmental Horticulture	19	17	15	2	11	12	8	5
4-H	17	22	19	3	8	9	9	13
FCS	4	10	8	2	1	2	3	8
Other	8	10	9	1	4	4	4	6

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results    <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results

Table 3. Use and determination of written job descriptions in local MG program management

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>Written job descriptions used in local unit</i>	15	21	18	3	11	11	4	10
<i>Local use of written job descriptions</i>								
In advertising volunteer opportunities	8	16	14	2	8	10	0	6
In selecting MG trainees	5	14	14	0	4	7	1	7
In reviewing volunteers	7	12	11	1	5	7	2	5
Other	10	13	12	1	5	2	6	11
<i>Method of determination</i>								
Agent's request based on POW	10	19	16	3	5	10	5	9
Committee	14	12	10	2	6	6	8	6
Written request from MG (i.e., project approval form)	16	21	18	3	7	11	8	10
Local MG association determines	20	22	18	4	8	7	12	15
Other	11	12	12	0	6	5	5	7
<i>Assignment of jobs</i>								
Advertise opportunities in local newsletter	21	22	20	2	10	11	11	11
Ask specific people	27	32	29	3	10	14	17	18
Annual interest survey of MG volunteers, MG picks own job	20	25	23	2	10	11	10	14
Wait for someone to ask for something	8	6	6	0	4	3	4	3

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results    <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results

Table 4. Recruitment and selection methods used for prospective or MG volunteers

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>Method of recruiting new MG volunteers</i>								
Newspaper ad	20	24	22	2	9	9	11	15
TV spot	3	5	5	0	1	2	2	3
Press release	26	22	19	3	10	8	16	14
Fliers	16	21	19	2	7	10	9	11
Word of mouth	32	38	34	4	13	15	19	23
Other	9	12	10	2	7	7	2	5
<i>Delegate recruitment responsibilities</i>								
	15	27	24	3	6	11	9	16
<i>Any of the following</i>								
Recruit minority trainees	16	20	18	2	8	12	8	8
Review completed application to select most qualified	17	20	17	3	7	11	10	9
Interview most qualified	14	14	12	2	6	7	8	7
Invite most qualified interviewees to sign volunteer contract	14	25	22	3	6	10	8	15
Accept all applicants	21	19	15	4	10	6	11	13

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results    <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results

Table 5. Public promotion of VCE MG accomplishments

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>MG accomplishments promoted to the public by</i>								
Word of mouth	27	32	27	5	13	12	14	20
Extension newsletter	8	14	11	3	3	8	5	6
Press releases	27	29	27	2	11	10	16	19
Internet site	5	7	5	2	4	5	1	2
MG-paid newspaper advertisement	2	4	4	0	1	2	1	2
Free newspaper advertisement	17	14	12	2	7	3	10	11
MG-paid public access advertisement	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Free public access advertisement	9	10	8	1	7	4	2	6
Local MG column in newspaper	10	8	6	2	5	2	5	6
Included in VCE press releases and annual reports	12	8	7	1	7	6	5	2
Annual reports to county Board of Supervisors	20	22	20	2	10	12	10	10
Other	10	13	10	3	8	8	2	5

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results    <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results

Table 6. Determination of MG volunteers who will remain an active part of the MG program

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>Volunteer evaluations/reviews conducted</i>	4	12	11	1	2	8	2	4
<i>Volunteers are renewed (confirm annual intent to volunteer 20 hours and seek 8 hours of recertification training)</i>								
Formal methods	8	17	16	3	4	14	4	5
Informal methods	35	22	25	4	16	9	19	20
<i>Ever dismissed a volunteer</i>	9	9	8	1	4	6	5	3
<i>Inactive volunteers purged from the local roster</i>	26	32	29	3	9	13	17	19

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results

Table 7. Reporting methods of MG accomplishments and MG records kept

QUESTION	Number of Positive Responses							
	ALL				PAID		NOT PAID	
	I <sup>z</sup>	F <sup>y</sup>	F <sup>y</sup> Not New	F <sup>y</sup> New	I	F	I	F
	n= 36	n= 42	n= 37	n= 5	n= 15	n= 17	n= 21	n= 25
<i>MG accomplishments reported to VCE</i>								
Time sheets submitted by individuals	26	30	26	4	13	15	13	15
Event summaries	14	17	14	3	9	9	5	8
Word of mouth	9	15	14	1	5	6	4	9
Communication between local coordinators and/or other MG with local agent at reporting time	22	25	23	2	10	12	12	13
We currently do not have a means of doing this	4	6	5	1	0	1	4	5
<i>Records kept</i>								
Archival information	22	25	23	2	9	11	13	14
Time sheets	34	38	34	4	14	15	20	23
Application	26	33	31	2	13	15	13	18
Contract	22	30	28	2	12	14	10	16
Other	11	15	14	1	6	8	5	7

<sup>z</sup> Initial survey results    <sup>y</sup> Follow up survey results