Volunteer associations and groups are made up of volunteers with similar interests and education who come together for a common cause. Such groups support the mission of Texas Extension through their education and service. To be successful, these volunteers must receive training and support and their volunteer service must be put to the best possible use. These groups are separate from Extension, but partner with Extension to achieve common goals.

Associations are ideal for individuals who have shared interests and wish to meet regularly for education, social interaction and service. Associations can be a great source of help in raising money and finding other resources within community organizations, foundations and corporations. The funds they raise can help support the group’s educational projects and activities and fund scholarships.

There are three types of volunteer groups.

- A volunteer association shares common goals with Texas Extension. Examples are TEEA, Inc.; county, district and state 4-H Volunteer Leaders Associations; and county, district and state 4-H councils.

- A master volunteer association is connected with one of the master volunteer programs. Master volunteers differ from other volunteer groups in that individual members receive a specified number of training hours and commit to returning a designated number of hours in volunteer service. The minimum standards for Texas Extension master volunteers are 20 hours of training and 50 hours of service (or a combination of 80 hours). The resource Master Volunteer Programs: an Orientation for Agents is a great place to start in determining a county’s needs in relation to master volunteer groups. Examples include Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and TEEA Master Volunteers.

- The third type is master volunteer groups that are not affiliated with associations. Examples of these include Master Sewing Volunteers, 4-H Large Animal Master Volunteers, Shooting Sports Volunteers, and Sportfishing Volunteers.
Chartering

Each volunteer group will be chartered through the Office of Volunteer Development. The only exception to this is a group that has a memorandum of agreement with Texas Extension. The chartering process ensures that each group will meet the minimum requirements of an association partner with Texas Extension. Charter applications are submitted to county Extension offices and then forwarded to the appropriate department or unit. The minimum standards include

- by-laws, which must contain a dissolution clause;
- officers (at minimum a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer);
- committees that support the goals and purposes of the association; and
- a commitment to using best practices for financial management according to the guidelines outlined by Texas Extension (http://tce-employees.tamu.edu/frm/)

Role of Extension faculty

The main role of Extension faculty is to guide and support a volunteer association or group in meeting the mission of Extension. Extension faculty

- serve as advisors to the association;
- teach subject matter that supports the mission of Texas 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.

In the case of master volunteer associations, faculty

- 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.

Volunteer application and qualifications

The first step in recruiting volunteers is to gather the following information

- 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 done through Texas Extension)
- Date of birth
- Self disclosure of criminal offenses
- Maiden and alias names

If possible, prospective volunteers should be interviewed one-on-one, either by an Extension faculty member or by a member of the volunteer group the person is interested in joining. During the interview, the person should be asked if he or she has a current/valid driver's license and automobile liability insurance. The prospective volunteer should be asked to sign a statement authorizing a criminal background check. If there is a code of conduct specific to the volunteer group, the interviewee should be asked to sign it as well. Codes of conduct are encouraged.

The interview process ensures that the best applicants will be selected, which results in the best service for customers. If interviews can't be conducted, using an application form with key questions regarding the volunteers' objectives and needs can help in the selection process. Questions should probe their interests and abilities and not be in a format that simply elicits stock answers.
Youth protection standards
All volunteers 18 years of age and older who will have direct contact with young people must have a criminal background check. This is part of Extension’s Youth Protection Standards program, which was implemented to ensure a safe and positive environment for young people and adult volunteers. Details may be found in the Youth Protection Standards Reference Guide.

Position descriptions
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. The standard position description adopted for Texas Extension includes the following:

- Title
- Advisor
- Purpose
- Benefits to the volunteer
- Responsibilities
- Qualifications
- Time required
- Resources

Additional reading
Texas Master Gardener Management Guide.
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu


Other publications in this series on volunteer administration:
D-1451, Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century: Roles Volunteers Play in Texas AgriLife Extension Service
D-1452, Leadership Advisory Boards
D-1453, Program Area Committees and Youth Boards
D-1455, Understanding and Managing Direct and Episodic Volunteers
D-1456, Managing the Risk Associated with Volunteer Service
Chartering Application
Volunteer Association or Group
Texas Extension

County __________________________________________ District _______________________________________

All of the following criteria have been met by the members of our association or group.
(The group president or club manager must initial each of the following criteria.)

_____ Club or group name
Name __________________________________________________________

_____ Five or more members

_____ Meeting place (for at least the next 3 months)
Location ___________________________

_____ Elected officers to fill at least the positions of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer

_____ By-laws containing a dissolution clause

_____ EIN number obtained through the IRS

_____ Bank account
Name__________________________ Whose signatures are on the account? __________________________________________________________

Is there an annual budget? __________________________

_____ Copy (attached) of the annual financial review and report for all accounts

If the group or club has been chartered before, what was the date? __________________________

This form must be submitted to the county Extension office no later than September 30th.
President’s signature __________________________ Date ______________
Treasurer’s signature __________________________ Date ______________
Charter expires on August 31, __________. Year group began ________________ (If previously in existence)

For office use only

Approved: Group chartered _____ Yes _____ No Group renewed _____ Yes _____ No

Not approved because the following criteria (from the list above) were not met:
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Approved by:
County Extension Agent(s) __________________________ Date ______________
Department/Unit approval _______________________________________________________________________________ Date ______________
Office of Volunteer Development __________________________________________________________ Date ______________
Title: 
Advisor: 
Purpose: 

Benefits to the volunteer: 

Responsibilities: 

Qualifications: 

Time required: 
Resources and support available: 

______________________________  ________________________________
County Extension Agent                Volunteer
This material was developed by the Texas AgriLife Extension Volunteer Steering Committee, chaired by Chris Boleman and Angela Burkham. Extension faculty who serve on the committee are Dirk Aaron, Michelle Allen, Joyce Cavanagh, Nelson Daniels, Darrell Dromgoole, Linda Lynch Evans, Alma Fonseca, Pam Foster, Elaine Fries, Richie Griffin, Rick Hirsch, Kit Horne, Shirley Long, Rick Machen, Linda Mock, Carolyn Nobles, Susan Richey, Bob Robinson, Renee Sanders, Robert Scott, Doug Welsh, Neal Wilkins and Ron Woolley. Administrative advisors are Kyle Smith, Associate Director for County Programs, and Martha Couch, Associate Director for 4-H and Youth Development.

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