Iowa State University Extension Master Gardener Program

How do you conduct needs assessment to plan the activity?
The need for Master Gardener training in locations across the state is assessed through an on-going flow of information between the counties and campus. A call for training site locations, containing resources for promotion and recruitment, is supplied from campus several months prior to each fall and spring training season so counties can choose to opt in and plan to host a new crop of Master Gardener trainees. At the same time, counties are collecting information from interested individuals through constant promotion of the Master Gardener program. This concerted effort yields relatively consistent numbers of recruited Master Gardener trainees, depending on the location.

How is the educational material developed? Who develops it? How is it presented, archived, etc?
The educational material is developed by the ISU Extension specialists that deliver the material during the core-training program. The list of training session topics is available at: http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/training.html. Three quarters of the training is delivered at a distance using Adobe Connect sessions and the sessions are archived and distributed for later use. Additionally, one fourth of the training is provided as face-to-face, live training by ISU Extension specialists and an intensive, on-campus day-long laboratory.

How is promotion and recruitment handled?
A standard press release is issued from the state to the county offices to be tailored for local needs and distribution. A brochure is also available for counties to order and be distributed at events where Master Gardeners are present in order to recruit new trainees. Still, the most effective form of recruitment is word of mouth from existing Master Gardener volunteers.

Are there partners? Who?
The primary partners for Master Gardener training are the hundreds of county Extension staff as they are the ones that interact most often with the Master Gardeners in the counties. Their efforts are instrumental to the success of the program. Other internal partners for Master Gardener training are the ISU Department of Horticulture, ISU Extension Information Technology, Reiman Gardens, ISU Extension Field Staff, and ISU Extension Specialists on campus from the ISU Departments of Plant Pathology, Entomology, Natural Resources and Ecology Management (NREM), and Agronomy. An outside partner for Master Gardener training is the Iowa Department of Corrections. Beyond Master Gardener core training, there are numerous partnerships between individual county Master Gardener groups and local organizations or businesses.

Are there additional resources needed? Grants, sponsors, registration, etc?
The two things that are always in short supply for the Master Gardener program are speakers/specialists and financial resources. Currently, the demand is greater than the supply.
**How many people are reached?**
Since the program's inception in 1979 in Scott County, over 10,000 Iowa residents have been trained through the Master Gardener program. Each year between 400 and 600 new Master Gardener Interns are trained.

**How is the activity evaluated?**
Master Gardener trainees are asked to evaluate each training session through an official evaluation form built into their training materials. These evaluations are summarized and used to tailor future training sessions.

**What are the outcomes? Short-term? Longer-term?**
The primary outcome of the Iowa Master Gardener program is to train interested Iowa residents in the science behind gardening in order to help address the needs of the greater gardening public in Iowa through research-based information provided by Iowa State University Extension.