

October 19th Master Gardener Advisory Meeting

Steven Eilers, Kaycie Waters, Sherry Ford, RoxAnn Rhoads, Chelsea Llewellyn, Doug Brightman, Sue Boettcher, Lori Scovel, Cindy Hutcheson, Kate Olson, Linda Schreiber, Sam Genson, Dan Fillius, Alicia Herzog

Absent: Cindy Haynes

Appointment Replacements:

Co-Chair: Steven Eilers passed co-chair responsibilities back to Chelsea Llewellyn after returning back from Maternity leave. Effective at this meeting. She continued out her duties as secretary for this meeting as well.

North West Vote: *Laura Ludgate*

Doug Motioned, Linda Seconded *All in favor*

Central Area Vote: *Sydney Christens*

Kaycie Motioned, Sam seconded. All in favor

South East Staff Vote: *Jolinda Eggers*

Sam gave a great reference in favor of her, in addition to her REED recommendation

Sherry motioned; Kaycie seconded. All in favor.

There was a suggestion to have an at large position on the advisory committee. Steven voted to create an at large position on the advisory committee, Linda seconded *All in favor*

NEW At Large Member: *Linda Brown*

REED Position: *Cindy Hall* was suggested by ISU Extension Administration overseeing REEDS to replace Sherry. Has more HORT experience.

Sam motioned; Sherry seconded. All in favor

Scholarships:

Iowa Total Care (ITC):

(\$100 for new trainees and \$75 for retrainers. We previously approved to earmark 3 spots per county per training period)

\$25,000 to use in 2023; only used \$6,500 (\$18,500 total left). Funds received fall 2023

105 total scholarships were applied for in 2023. We approved 66 requests from fall. 39 requests were prior to obtaining ITC funding. We approved 3 with prior scholarship funds.

\$100,000 kicks in for 2024; \$30,000 goes to Growing Together Iowa mini grants. \$70,000 goes to Master Gardener scholarships. Total scholarship balance available for 2024. \$88,500. Two-year spend on 2023 funding. Three-year spend on 2024 funding.

Will be asking if we can start using some scholarship funding for Class on Campus scholarships

ProHort Name and Description and Pricing?

Evaluation of surrounding and comparable state programs' pricing and requirements.

Motioned to lower the pro hort fee to twice the amount of Master Gardeners (\$300)

Kaycie motioned and Kate seconded. All in favor

How do we change the name to be less confusing and doesn't seem "more important"?

Suggestions: Horticulture Basics, Home Hort Basics, Foundations of Horticulture, Horticulture Fundamentals

We also need to make sure we don't make it seem like this is for people running or wanting to start a business commercially. This is for consumer horticulture.

Linda motioned to re name Pro Hort to Horticulture Basics. Motioned not carried.

Sam motioned to approve Horticulture Fundamentals; Kate seconded it. All in favor

Motion carried

How do we also start a new class that is a step down that helps gardeners start learning but not volunteering and is more basics?

Master Gardener platform (Canvas Use):

Discussion around comparison of possible platforms for training. Options: Stay with Canvas, move to moodle or vrs.

Can we utilize VRS to do the class? Would take approximately 6-8 months to build this would cost approximately \$1,000-\$3,000 more (but this would not be a barrier)

Quizzes might be a barrier; not a function that is available to VRS.

Instead of quizzes do we do more case study and discussion led by the coordinators

Would be ready by Fall of 2024

Pros: The training materials would be available to the older MG members (those that didn't take it through VRS); only one log in compared to the current system. This would get trainees comfortable with VRS early.

Switch to Moodle?

Moodle would be cheaper than canvas or VRS (initially)

We pay just \$50 a month to use it

It would take 4-6 to build out

Very similar to Canvas

Most of it can be transferred over from Canvas

Suggestions from the county staff at hort Inservice meeting was to do VRS

NO vote, giving Alicia permission to decide after hearing from Chris and RJ

Sue motioned to approve Alicia to make the decision for us and RoxAnne seconded. All in favor

Master Gardener requirements:

MG requirements “too much” some people say. The survey does say that most people think hours are just right.

Do we lower the hours at all? Hard to find other states numbers, but does look like we are around the ball park of other states as far as Alicia could find.

Statewide MG Survey Data:

23.21% replied to our survey (over 1,156 members)

This survey will be shared with the county coordinators

Alicia will continue to clean up the results and send out to advisory committee when completed

Literacy Pilot Program Update:

Planned to take 35 members, over 60 applied. 63 accepted) all who were in good standing.

Pilot runs on a quarterly system in compliance with ISU fiscal calendar.

Read a suite of resources and then answer a quiz/case study question

Do we utilize MG volunteers to read essays in the future?

Alicia planning to present findings from pilot study to peers nationally

Search for Excellence Application

Should we change the time frame to be with the rest of the Extension awards?

Is it too long/too complicated? Answer: we currently use the national award

Sam makes a Motion to do a sub committee of 5 people and the award aligns with the state extension awards , RoxAnne seconded (2 MG, 2 coordinators, 1 campus/state specialists). All in favor Effective now.

MG Services vs. Commercial Industry – Competition issue?

Generally we know that our MG members are not taking away competition and being professional

AI in Extension/MG

Do we need to train Master Gardeners on how to battle AI and miss information? How do we do this?

Scapify: taking extension resources using the Master Gardener name illegally. We cannot trademark "Master" and "Gardener" but "Iowa Master Gardener" can be. Extension materials are a public domain, what is wrong is selling our information and not giving it out for free.

Alicia waiting to see where other states end up in their legal battles and recommendations before taking further action with ISU legal. There is also an AI committee that Sam sits on. Waiting for more guidance from this committee's recent work.

Dealing with problematic volunteers

What kind of problems are we having? What do we need to do to train staff to deal with problematic volunteers?

RoxAnn discussed Madison County MG issues of recent. One issue: Spouses attending trainings (that are not signed up for the training) Second issue: Kids coming to trainings because no one else can watch the kids. Third issue (with a community member): community member not approving of the way MGs take care of plants in public areas and consistently vocalizing their disapproval to MGs, county staff, and public.

Problem solving ideas: Coordinator goes through Director, Council, then REED. General discussion around need for county council to take more interest and care in helping county staff/volunteers with county issues (establishing standard of care).

Other:

How do we support small counties/counties that have no MG presence?

One County Extension Council is disbanding the local Master Gardener program for various reasons and moving their MG volunteers to another county. What do we do in situations like these to guide counties, continue to strengthen and grow the program, and ensure support for volunteers at the local level.

Do we need to move to more of a regional training model to help in these areas?

Are there monies to support volunteer or staff members running the program? In the means of a grant or scholarships. Volunteers or staff attending conferences, staff wage help for approving hours for another county, etc.

Growing Together Iowa Mini-Grants:

Need more clarity from Katie Sorrell, who leads the program. Alicia and Katie work closely together. Alicia will report these concerns/questions to Katie and ask for clarification.

How are we advertising for this grant program?

We need to be telling coordinators and MG volunteers more about these opportunities.

Should we consider radio programming to increase marketing? Iowa Public Radio, Varsity Show podcast, ect.

Do counties need to be self-sustainable? Some counties thought they needed to be, but that does not seem to be the case. Need more direction from program administration on end goal of this funding.

How do we recognize and report numbers for poundage, volunteer hours, and success stories in gardens that previously received GTI funding to get started but are now self-sufficient (alumni gardens)?

Next Meeting Date:

March 28th, via zoom

Respectively Submitted,

Chelsea Llewellyn

Chelsea Llewellyn, Co-Chair and Secretary