

Why are changes being made in the way volunteers participate in TEMG program planning and administration?

1. We want to expand the opportunities for volunteers with a range of interests and skill sets to contribute to regional and state planning and projects. There is an amazing array of talent across the state and wider involvement will make all of our programs stronger. Also, we want to focus on regional planning and networking to enable better sharing and planning across counties to advance local programs and their impact.
2. The entire UT Extension system is reconfiguring the way programs are planned, goals are set, and impacts are measured. The goal is to make sure that all our efforts benefit local and county programs. We need to make sure that our TEMG program administration fits in this plan by integrating agents, specialists, and volunteers in planning. To accomplish this, we need to make adjustments to the current structure.

How are we increasing involvement of TEMG volunteers in planning and resource development at the state level?

We are instituting focus area teams that will enable a larger number of volunteers from around the state to collaborate on specific areas of need that match their interests and skills. The technology and communications team was begun in 2015 to assess needs in website design, database integration and communications. We are now developing resource team that will identify and develop educational materials that will be used for Master Gardener outreach across the state. These teams will be open for all interested volunteers across the state and open calls for those interested will be made in the coming weeks through agents, presidents and our state newsletter and listserv.

How are we increasing the number of volunteers involved in TEMG at a regional level?

Through a renewed focus on regional planning and events. These efforts will build upon the previous Alliance structure but are aimed at simplifying the terminology and process. All interested volunteers in each region will meet twice per year and hold Regional Planning Meetings. The focus of these meetings will be on planning regional activities including tours and workshops as well as networking and supporting each other in horticulture outreach and volunteer leadership.

How are we making sure that TEMG volunteers are involved in the TEMG program administration at a state level?

Regional representatives will be elected at the Regional Planning Meetings to serve a 3-year term. On one of these three years they will be a full-time member of the Master Gardener workgroup (see application for full explanation). Regional representatives working with the Master Gardener workgroup will replace the current Advocacy board structure.

What is the next step - How exactly will elections work?

1. Application forms for regional representatives will be sent to all coordinating agents, presidents, and posted on the state website. These forms explain the duties of the representative and have an application for interested volunteers.
2. Each local or county group can nominate one volunteer for regional representative. Applications will be due to the Master Gardener workgroup (in care of the state coordinator) by May 15th for all three regions.
3. Applicant information for each region will then be sent out to the presidents of each group by the end of May. Each local group will have two votes (one for primary and one for alternate). Votes will be cast by association presidents, but the expectation is that they will gather input from their local groups or boards in making voting decisions.
4. Voting:
 - In the Eastern region, votes will be cast through a Qualtrics survey that will be sent to all presidents on 6/30. Voting responses will be due back by 7/7.
 - In the central region, votes will be cast by paper ballot at the central region workshop planning meeting on 6/30. Each county group in attendance will be given a ballot to indicate primary and alternate selections.
 - In the western region, votes will be cast by paper ballot at the planning meeting on 7/14 held before Summer Celebration. Each county group in attendance will be given a ballot to indicate primary and alternate selections.