

Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers Course Impact Study



Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers (AEMTV) is a national online cohort course developed for Extension professionals. Participants in the course engage with content to increase volunteer leadership and management competencies. Since 2015, nearly 500 Extension professionals from 26 states representing multiple program areas have taken the course.

In 2019, the AEMTV Impact Study was conducted through an electronic survey of 379 course participants. **One hundred-thirty** individuals from **17 states** (IL, IN, KS, ME, MI, MN, MO, NE, NM, NC, ND, OH, SD, VT, WV, WI and WY) **completed the survey for a 34% response rate.**

Study Purpose:

- Document the volunteer systems knowledge gained
- Assess to what extent participants applied what they learned
- Assess the impact of a cohort-based online learning experience

Extension Experience:

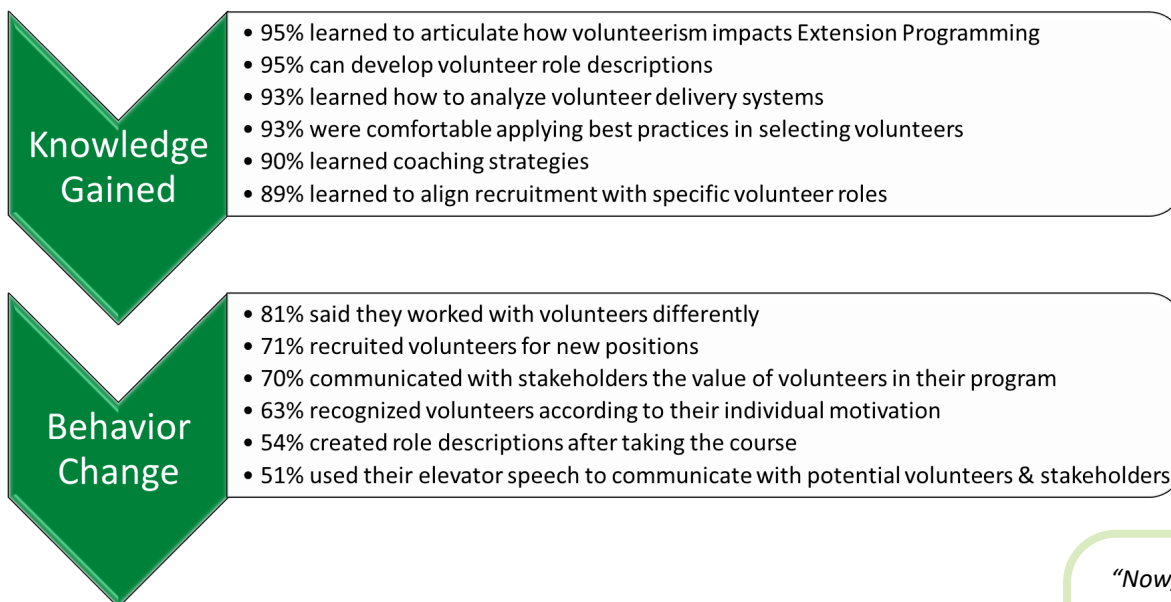
- < 1 year – 15 participants
- 1-3 years – 33 participants
- 3-5 years – 22 participants
- 6-10 years – 11 participants
- 11-20 years – 30 participants
- > 20 years – 7 participants

(The course) "provides a solid framework to approach volunteer management. It is the only course like it for Extension professionals. It gives great ideas and a great path for colleagues to follow as they work with volunteers at many stages. It professionalizes aspects of this work in an important way." - Wisconsin

Primary Program Area Participants:

- Family Living / Health & Well-Being – 6
- Natural Resources – 2
- Agriculture – 23
- Positive Youth Development / 4-H – 86

AEMTV is making a difference! Extension professionals are increasing both their knowledge and ability to work with volunteers.

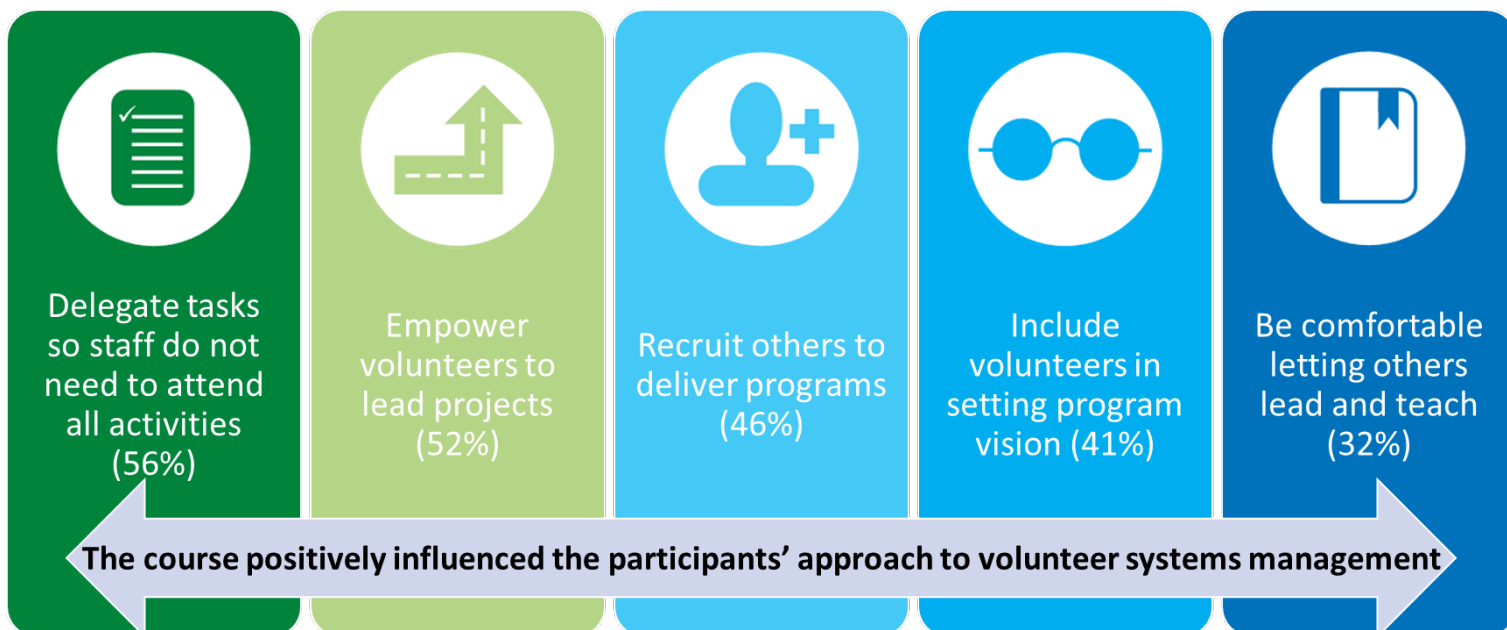


Application:

The course positively influenced how professionals work with volunteers to build capacity in Extension programs. After taking the course, participants described a shift in their leadership to:

- Give volunteers responsibility to teach programs
- Engage volunteers in dialogue and program decisions
- Empower volunteers to lead major programs

"Now, I give myself permission to step back to allow others to lead. I used to feel guilty because I thought it was my job alone to lead." - North Dakota



Impact of Online Professional Development:

The online cohort-based learning environment is an effective platform for Extension professionals to develop their skills in managing volunteer systems. The design consists of self-study and group learning opportunities, including video presentations, articles, educational activities, webinars, and discussion boards.

"This course opened my eyes to things that I had forgotten when I first started my work in Extension, it reminded me to look at the whole picture and gave me a lot of brand-new information. The lessons were amazing in teaching, repeating and practical experience."
- Vermont

Two key aspects emerged that support the cohort online learning environment:

1. Access to learning. Online learning reduces barriers many Extension professionals experience with limited funding, distance to training, and time away from work responsibilities.
2. Networking. Participants benefit from learning and sharing with colleagues across program areas and Extension systems.

Participants increased knowledge and applied volunteer systems practices as a result of their involvement in the Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers online cohort course. Extension professionals are working with volunteers in new ways to build capacity in Extension programs.

"The course design, along with information through the online platform provide a valuable opportunity to learn around volunteer systems and key dimensions, with others who are working with volunteers to gain additional perspectives and a broader network of colleagues." - Minnesota



- Kandi O'Neil, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Rachelle Vetter, North Dakota State University
- Rebecca Harrington, University of Minnesota
- Sarah Maass, Kansas State University
- Kari Robideau, University of Minnesota
- Patricia McGlaughlin, University of Illinois
- Josset Gauley, University of Wisconsin - Madison