



## Volunteer Learning Modules: Welcome to MSU Extension

### Overview

In this module volunteers gain an understanding of Michigan State University Extension. The module explores the Land Grant System, Agricultural Experiment Stations, the origins of cooperative extension, how volunteers are vital to extension and policies that all volunteers must follow.

### Section 1: Land Grants and MSU Extension

As the outreach arm of MSU, our goal is to help people throughout the state improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to individuals, families, businesses, and communities. MSU Extension focuses on four key areas of importance: leveraging natural and human assets, enhancing agriculture and agribusiness, improving health and nutrition, and preparing children and youth for the future.

MSU Extension is organized into four institutes:

- **Agriculture & Agribusiness:** MSU Extension focuses on seven key areas: animal health and wellbeing, fruit production, vegetable production, field crop research and education, ornamental plant sustainability and profitability, consumer gardening, and farm management.
- **Health & Nutrition:** MSU Extension teaches individuals about healthy lifestyle choices in relation to food and physical activity, safe food handling and preparation, and overall care for their health and wellbeing.
- **Children & Youth:** MSU Extension's goal is to prepare every child in the state with the knowledge, tools and skills to lead a healthy and productive life. To accomplish this, MSU Extension's children and youth programming focuses on two core audiences: parents and caregivers of children birth to age eight and young people ages five to 19.
- **Community, Food, & Environment:** MSU Extension's community, food and environment programming seeks to leverage Michigan's natural and human assets to strengthen community vitality.

The first land-grant colleges were authorized on July 2, 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed the first Morrill Act into law. These *land-grants* took their name from the source of their federal support: the proceeds from grants of 30,000 acres of federal land to the Union states for each of their U.S. senators and representatives. Michigan was granted about 240,000 acres. Today, the nation has more than 110 land-grant colleges and universities (USDA, 2019). Michigan has four.

Resources:

- Bay Mills Community College: <https://www.bmcc.edu/>
- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College: <http://kbocc.org/>
- Saginaw-Chippewa Tribal College: <https://www.sagchip.edu/>
- Michigan State University: <https://www.msu.edu>
- Land-Grant Roots: <https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2018/land-grant-roots>

**To contact an expert in your area, visit [extension.msu.edu/experts](https://extension.msu.edu/experts) or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464)**

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.



## Section 2: Agriculture Experiment Stations

Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station were created in 1988 as part of the nationwide network of agricultural experiment stations that was authorized by the Hatch Act of 1887 to conduct research and development projects on behalf of farmers. In 1925, the Purnell Act added agricultural economics, rural sociology, and home economics to the experiment stations' mission.

Resources:

- MSU AgBioResearch website: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/research/index>

## Section 3: Origins of the Cooperative Extension System

In 1914, Congress passed the Smith-Lever act which was named for Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina. The act created the Cooperative Extension System and made land-grant schools responsible for overseeing Extension work in their states. From Extension offices in nearly every county across the nation, skilled and knowledgeable Extension workers began helping farmers and farm families apply the knowledge gained from research at land-grant schools to improve their lives.

MSU Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs, and opportunities. MSU Extension's connection to the university and the land-grant system is vital to our existence. With an MSU Extension presence in all 83 counties in Michigan we are committed to responding to the needs of Michigan residents.

Resources:

- The History of MSU Extension: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the\\_history\\_of\\_msu\\_extension](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_history_of_msu_extension)
- MSU Extension website: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/>

## Section 4: Volunteers are Vital

Volunteers—people who freely offer their time and talents to represent or perform services on behalf of MSU Extension—are vital to the work of the organization. MSU Extension volunteers play an essential role in our efforts to enhance the growth and development of the Michigan residents we serve through a multitude of programs. Volunteers act as something of an outreach arm of our staff.

## Section 5: MSU Extension Code of Conduct

Adult volunteers, within MSU Extension serve in a variety of activities, programs, and projects in informal and nonformal settings. MSU Extension volunteers are expected to conduct themselves and interface with others appropriately. The Code of Conduct outlines volunteer expectations and is signed by volunteers annually.

The MSU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct says:

As an MSU Extension volunteer, I promise that I will:

- Represent MSU Extension with dignity and pride and be a positive role model.
- Respect, follow, and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by local and state MSU Extension programs.

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- Conduct myself in a courteous, respectful manner, exhibit good sportsmanship, and demonstrate reasonable conflict management skills in dealings with other program participants and MSU Extension staff members.
- I will be mindful of the health concerns of myself and others by not attending meetings or events if I am sick, practicing good hygiene such as regular handwashing, wearing a mask when I feel necessary, respecting others desire to wear a mask and comply with social distancing when requested by others.
- Accept supervision and support from MSU Extension staff or designated management volunteers.
- Abstain from harassment or bullying of another volunteer, participant, or staff member (either in face-to-face interactions, through social media or other communication venues), on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. If I observe this behavior at any time, I will file a report with MSU police and any other authority required by the [university reporting protocols](#). I will also contact a MSU Extension staff person immediately. If it is an emergency, I will call 911.
- Use technology and social media in an appropriate manner that reflects the best practices and expectations outlined in the [“Social Media and Texting Expectations for Michigan State University Volunteers”](#) guide.
- Comply with MSU Extension's equal opportunity and antidiscrimination laws and policies, as well as all federal, state and local laws.
- Under no circumstances, provide alcohol or illegal drugs to any minor.
- Under no circumstances, attend or participate in an MSU Extension activity or event under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances, including marijuana.
- Refrain from the use of tobacco, tobacco products and vaping (including electronic cigarettes and other vaping devices), while serving in a volunteer capacity at MSU Extension activities.
- Not provide prescription drugs or any medication to any minor. I understand only individuals who are medical professionals specifically authorized by the parent or legal guardian as being required for the minor's care or emergency treatment are authorized to provide medication to minors.
- Not possess firearms on my person at an MSU Extension event or activity and will keep personal firearms in a secure location when hosting an MSU Extension event or activity on my property. The exception to this policy is when certified 4-H Shooting Sports program volunteers are using discipline-specific firearms (such as BB, air pellet, .22, shotgun, muzzleloader and air pistol) for educational, demonstration, and competition uses only and must comply with the policies and practices of the Michigan 4-H Shooting Sports program. This exception only applies during the period that the firearms are in use for 4-H Shooting Sports educational, demonstration and competition purposes, and does not allow 4-H Shooting Sports volunteers to possess firearms for other purposes in conjunction with MSU Extension-sponsored programs. For more information on the MSU Extension and MSU firearms policies, see the [“Firearms \(All Employees and Volunteers\)”](#) section of the MSU Extension Administrative Handbook and the [MSU Firearms Policy](#), respectively.
- Treat all animals with respect and obey federal, state, and local laws pertaining to animal treatment.
- Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a safe and responsible manner.
- Not make sexual materials in any form available to minors or assist them in any way in gaining access to such materials.
- Report violations of the MSU Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct and arrests (of yourself or of another MSU Extension volunteer) to an MSU Extension staff member or the person in charge of the program.

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- Not retaliate against individuals, including minors, families, parents, guardians, MSU Extension staff members or other volunteers, who report allegations of inappropriate conduct (including but not limited to abuse; neglect; assault; harassment; sexual assault, abuse, or harassment; possessing child pornography or providing it to a minor; furnishing alcohol, drugs, or sexual materials to a minor; and violations of the MSU antidiscrimination policy).

Michigan 4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct Addendum:

I promise that I will:

- Make reasonable efforts to avoid one-on-one contact between adults and minors participating in youth programs; make reasonable efforts to avoid communications with a single minor; and include MSU Extension staff members and minors' parents or guardians in communications with minors whenever possible.
- Under no circumstances, possess, sell or consume alcohol or controlled substances, including marijuana, at a Michigan 4-H activity or event.

Extension Master Gardener Program Participant Code of Conduct Addendum:

I promise that I will:

- Provide unbiased, research-based information consistent with MSU and other land-grant university recommendations.
- Refrain from possessing and using marijuana or advising on the cultivation of marijuana while serving as an MSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer.
- Abide by the Pesticide Recommendation Policy.
- Accept the MSU Extension Master Gardener Program Staff and Volunteer Agreement.

Health and Nutrition Institute Volunteer Code of Conduct Addendum:

I promise that I will:

- Respect the privacy of persons served by the organization and hold in confidence sensitive, private and personal information.
- Share only research-based information with participants, while keeping personal opinions and actions separate from those made as a representative of this organization.
- Not provide medical nutrition or nutrition therapy information, only information from approved curriculums.

Michigan Conservation Stewards Program Code of Conduct Addendum:

I promise that I will:

- Provide unbiased, research-based information consistent with MSU and other land-grant university recommendations.
- Abide by the Pesticide Recommendation Policy.
- Accept the MSU Extension Michigan Conservation Stewards Program Staff and Volunteer Agreement.

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#### Compliance:

It is expected that all MSU Extension volunteers comply with the MSU Extension Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with any component of the code or participation in other inappropriate conduct as determined by MSU Extension representatives may lead to dismissal as a volunteer from the MSU Extension program.

#### Resources:

- Michigan State University Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/volunteer-code-of-conduct>

### Section 6: Antidiscrimination Policy and ADA

As part of a land-grant university that receives financial support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, or NIFA, Michigan State University Extension is required to comply with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs, and Title VII prohibits discrimination in federal employment practices. Because volunteers help to extend the programming and work of MSU Extension, they must also comply with Title VI and Title VII.

Programs, activities, and events you work with as an MSU Extension volunteer must be open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status. This list of protected categories is slightly different from the federal list.

MSU Extension programming must be done in places that are open to all, including people with disabilities. This means that facilities must comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act, or ADA. To be ADA-compliant, sites must have features such as accessible parking spaces and entrances; ramps, elevators, or lifts as alternatives to steps; and wide doorways with accessible door openers for people who use wheelchairs or walkers. All promotion one does for an MSU Extension program must include the request for accommodation statement. Please work with your local MSU Extension office for this statement.

Beyond the federal requirements, it is our responsibility as MSU Extension staff and volunteers “to care about people, all people,” (Fields, n.d.) and to create inclusive environments for all people. “Inclusion moves beyond simply having diversity within a space—and toward creating an equitable environment where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed. Inclusion is the act of creating a space where each person is authentically valued, respected and supported. Creating an inclusive environment involves taking steps to think and act through a social justice lens.

These steps include:

- Opening our minds to reflect on our own identity and organizational culture
- Engaging with diverse communities in an inclusive way
- Positioning our youth and community members at the center of our programs
- Celebrating and valuing the diverse cultures around us
- Acknowledging and challenging the oppressive barriers that many groups face

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Complaints about bias-related incidents can be filed by the victim, by a person acting on behalf of the victim, or by a witness or bystander. MSU strongly encourages community members, including MSU Extension volunteers and program participants, to report incidents of bias and hate crimes to help ensure an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

To report or to talk with someone about a bias incident that you experienced, witnessed, or were informed of, contact the MSU Office of Institutional Equity by phone at 517-353-3922 or by email at [oiie@msu.edu](mailto:oiie@msu.edu). We also ask you to inform your local MSU Extension office of the incident.

Resources:

- Fields, N. (n.d.). *Increasing Cultural Awareness and Equity in Extension Programs*. Extension Campus. <https://campus.extension.org/enroll/index.php?id=1658>
- Office of Institutional Equity (OIE): (517) 353-3922 or [oiie@msu.edu](mailto:oiie@msu.edu)