

Extension Forestry Program Models

This is the digital version of a handout developed in October 2018 by Eli Sagor, Ellen Crocker, and Jeff Stringer for the Extension onboarding course [Seeding Success](#).

An editable online version is at <http://z.umn.edu/programmodels>. We hope you'll add links to your programs and help us make a better reference.

Shortcourses (online or in-person)

Shortcourses include an extended period of instruction that might more closely resemble a (short) course offered on campus. In this regard they may be seen as similar to Master Volunteer programs, but without the volunteer component. Shortcourses may be more suitable for professional or paraprofessional learners able and interested in dedicating considerable time to learning and professional advancement. Examples include NC State's [Pulp and Paper and Biomaterials shortcourses](#), the [University of Minnesota's Agroforestry Institute](#), and Oregon State's [Basic Forestry Short Course](#). Shortcourses may be delivered online, in person, or in a blended online and in-person format.

Master Volunteer model

The Master Volunteer model is designed to get a group of committed volunteers up to speed to contribute as volunteers. Examples of these programs are Master Forest Stewards, Master Naturalist, and Forest Pest First Detector programs. The particular knowledge and skills learner / volunteers need depend entirely on what you hope they will do as volunteers. Maybe they'll answer other landowners' questions, or get involved in issue advocacy, or validate incoming reports of new invasive species, or something else.

Master Volunteer programs typically include between 6 and 40 hours of training followed by periodic refresher or continuing education programs. Importantly, they also require an ongoing commitment to volunteer support, management, and reporting. This commitment can be considerable, but is the key to Master Volunteer programs' long-term success and ability to achieve and report ongoing program impacts through volunteers' efforts.

Series of webinars

Several Extension Forestry programs offer statewide or regional webinar series. Cornell University, Penn State University, and the Southern Region Extension Forestry unit are all prominent examples. Webinars have a major advantage as low-cost and convenient learning options, but outcomes can be hard to measure and report. Learner engagement can also be difficult to track, although instructors and organizers that are intentional about building in (or requiring) learner engagement can expect better outcomes. Webinars have become a popular way for professional to obtain low-cost continuing education credits.

Series of workshops

Many Extension Forestry programs offer a number of classroom- or field-based workshops. By workshops, we are referring to anything from a symposium with a number of speakers to a field day with a number of field demonstration sites, or a combination of these. This is pretty straightforward. A challenge with this model is whether it adds up to a cohesive program that allows you to report outcomes and impacts, and that is grounded in a model of change. For that to be the case (in other words, for you to reasonably expect positive outcomes), you at least have to have a model of change in mind. You may, for example, plan your workshops to produce repeated contact with a targeted group of learners that builds community and deeper learning than a one-off event. Or you may have a communication plan before and after the workshop that is designed to support (and allow you to measure) the adoption of your target actions and outcomes. For this reason, programming based on a series of workshops may be best suited to local areas such as a county where particular landowners are targeted or to continuing professional education programs with annual credit requirements.

Peer learning models

Adult learners frequently see their peers as at least as valuable a source of information as the “sage on the stage” or the experts brought in to teach. A 2013 review of peer learning models in Extension found that this model was common across the country in Extension Forestry programs. How can you leverage peer learning and make it a more intentional part of your program? The Massachusetts Woodland Forum program basically invited conservation-minded individuals and representatives of local conservation organizations, started a conversation, then got off the stage and let participants lead the discussion. Peer learning doesn’t have to be the only approach though. You can also use small group discussions, longer breaks, and more extensive sharing of personal experiences, solutions, and lessons learned to supplement content presented by a more formal instructor.

These basic models can be modified, mashed up, combined, and twisted into any number of successful programs depending on your desired outcomes, instructional resources, and audiences. I encourage you to think creatively about how to deploy them rather than simply repeating what’s been done before. If nothing else, this creative thinking will remind you why you’re doing what you’re doing, and that’ll help you do it better.