

**University of California**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
*Making a Difference for California*

*University of  
California  
Master Gardener  
Program*

*Strategic Plan  
2011-2016*

*Respectfully submitted by  
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Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator*



# Introduction

The Master Gardener Volunteers come from all walks of life and with a broad range of experiences and skills. They share several characteristics: a passion for horticulture and environment, an eagerness to learn, and a desire to serve their communities by supporting the outreach efforts of the University of California (UC) and its collaborating partners. With appropriate leadership, they can be valuable resources for UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) as educators, advocates and can link the residents of California to the ANR Strategic Vision.

The ANR Master Gardener Program (MG Program) was established in 1981 and enters its fourth decade in a strong position with over 5,000 certified Master Gardener Volunteers (MG Volunteers). Since its inception, MG Volunteers have donated 2.8 million hours, and in 2010, volunteered over a quarter of a million hours, an amount equal to 172 full time employees for one year and valued at almost \$6.0 million annually (\$23.29 per hour)\*.

The MG Volunteers service 44 counties in California. In exchange for their efforts, they collectively receive over 41,000 hours of initial training and 50,000 instructional hours of continuing education annually from distinguished UC and other experts in areas such as horticulture, soils, water, entomology, plant pathology, integrated pest management (IPM), plant problem diagnosis, sustainable landscape management practices, and plant propagation. Extending this knowledge and information to communities throughout California leads to the adoption of landscape and garden management practices that conserve valuable resources and protect the environment, improve health, contribute to sustainable food systems, and create functional and environmentally sustainable living space in and outside the home.

## Rationale

The MG Program has achieved great success over the last 30 years as an important outreach arm of ANR due largely to MG Volunteers serving as “Agents “ of the UCANR and the strong association with University Academics. These essential elements allow MG Volunteers to provide a unique service disseminating objective, research-based information to the citizens of California. The Statewide MG Program, county-based Advisors and MG Program Coordinators and statewide Specialists have worked diligently to develop and maintain high standards of excellence in program delivery and continuing education for our MG Volunteers.

Developing a strategic plan at this time presents an opportunity to improve our program efficiency and assure that the goals and structure of our program align with the Strategic Vision of ANR. Maintaining and improving an effective MG Program will require some redirection of ANR resources related to program management. These changes are needed to assure county governments and other stakeholders that local programming will not diminish under the new Multi-County Partnership (MC Partnership) system.

\*Independent Sector Report: [http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time)

# Strategic Planning Process

Two questions were posed to stakeholders of the MG Program including home owner clientele, MG Volunteers, Advisors, County Directors, paid and unpaid MG Program Coordinators: “What are the Critical Issues in Your Program?” and “What are the Critical Needs?” We studied the Strategic Vision, the current transitional organizational structure within ANR, and reviewed strategic plans from Kansas State University, University of Tennessee, Cornell, and University of Texas Cooperative Extension. We then focused on aligning our organizational structure, needs and financial constraints with those of the ANR Strategic Vision and to responding to the identified critical issues and needs pertaining to our program. This Strategic Plan document will guide the California MG Program from 2011-2016. A list of contributors is provided in the appendix.

## Mission

***“To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California and be guided by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources core values, strategic vision and initiatives.”***

## Vision

- Support and encourage healthy communities and ecosystems through sustainable landscape practices, including water conservation, maintaining water quality, green waste reduction and reuse, wildlife enhancement, and energy conservation.
- Enhance local sustainable food systems for families, neighborhoods and community.
- Prevent, detect and manage invasive and endemic species through education.
- Increase the science literacy of our volunteers and their clientele through quality education and outreach.
- Improve the quality and ensure the viability of local MG Programs.

## Strategic Goals

The following strategic goals support the MG Program vision and mission:

1. Provide consistent and standardized high quality training for MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators.
2. Enhance the UC research-extension continuum from the campus to the residents of California.
3. Establish new and strengthen existing collaborative partnerships that support the ANR Strategic Vision and Initiatives.
4. Increase gender/age and ethnic diversity within the MG Program and extend information to under-represented clientele.
5. Facilitate education and service of the MG Program in the single and/or MC Partnership and maintain and improve funding for MG Program.

# Goal 1

## ***Provide consistent and standardized high quality training for MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators***

### **Introduction**

Due to retirements and redirection of academic priorities toward research and specialization throughout ANR, there are limited resources within UC to provide high quality training for MG Volunteers. Efficient use of this limited resource base can be maximized by developing statewide online training modules, and regional web-based and face to face training to augment county-based training. Such standardized training will increase the consistency and quality of education that UC provides to MG Volunteers and thus also improve the overall quality of the MG Program and its outreach. Published literature on MG Volunteer retention indicates that motivation and retention are linked to the level and thoroughness of the training they receive. Currently, the statewide retention rate in California from 2006-2010 is approximately 45%.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a team of ANR Advisors and other professionals to create and extend core and advanced training to MG Volunteers utilizing:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Web-based modules.</li> <li>○ Regional live training using Adobe Connect.</li> <li>○ Traditional face to face regional classroom training.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain grants and develop other funding sources and partnerships that support the development of on-line web based modules.</li> <li>• Organize all programs into regions for training purposes where appropriate.</li> <li>• Prepare trainers on using Adobe Connect for training purposes.</li> </ul>
Develop and enhance appropriate training for MG Program Coordinator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer annual face to face training of MG Program Coordinator through a conference such as the Volunteer Management Institute (VMI) on topics such as volunteer management, program impact assessment, time management, and technology.</li> <li>• Offer monthly “brown bag” lunchtime on-line training for MG Program Coordinator.</li> </ul>
MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators take advantage of appropriate UC Cooperative Extension outreach efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate participation of MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators at UC Cooperative Extension programs gratis or at a reduced cost as appropriate (e.g. at clientele workshops, and conferences).</li> </ul>

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Core training for new MG Volunteers is standardized and of consistent high quality.
- Increased online, web-based and other non-traditional methods of outreach /core training modules are available for beginning and advanced MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators.
- Better educated volunteers
- More competent and professional MG Program Coordinators
- Increased training opportunities result in increased MG Volunteer retention (from 45% to 65% %) over a five year period.

# Goal 2

## *Enhance the UC research-extension continuum from the campus to the residents of California*

### Introduction

MG Volunteers are UC’s major conduit for extending research-based information to the residents of California. Their service is an efficient mechanism for meeting local needs while allowing ANR Advisors and Specialists to assist their primary commercial clientele. MG Volunteers should play a vital role in increasing the science literacy of California citizens and in providing support for ANR research and extension programs.

Objectives	Actions
More UC Academics provide training to MG Volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend proper recognition of service to MG Program in the Merit and Promotion process for Faculty, Specialists, Advisors and experiment station Academics.</li> <li>Encourage the inclusion of MG Volunteer training in position descriptions of UC Advisors, Specialists and, as appropriate, Experiment Station Academics.</li> </ul>
Increase awareness within the academic community of the abilities and availability of MG Volunteers to participate in and support research and extension programs as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide MG Coordinator personally engages Advisors, Specialists and other Academics to utilize MG Volunteers in their research and extension work.</li> </ul>
Broaden utilization of Academics from other institutions such as California State University and California Community Colleges, particularly in areas where ANR has limited resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize non-UC Academics in the education and outreach activities of MG Volunteers.</li> </ul>
Increase awareness by MG Program Coordinators of Academics available to provide training to MG Volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the “Expert Speaker Database” to reflect new hires in ANR and other available resources.</li> </ul>
ANR values the outreach efforts of MG Volunteers by recognizing their contributions in the annual reporting requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact data and outreach efforts of MG Volunteers reported in a meaningful way for ANR such as CASA/DANRIS X.</li> </ul>

### Anticipated Outcomes

- MG Volunteers will be better equipped to transfer knowledge from UC to the general public.
- MG Volunteers have a stronger sense of ownership and investment into ANR as an integral part of the research extension continuum.
- Impacts from outreach efforts of MG Volunteers will be measured and submitted to Academics for inclusion in Merit and Review.
- Affiliations with Non-UC Academics are strengthened and ANR resources are leveraged.
- Value of MG Volunteer service is recognized in the annual reporting process.

# Goal 3

***Establish new and strengthen existing collaborative partnerships that support the UC ANR Strategic Vision and Initiatives.***

## Introduction

MG Volunteers have traditionally functioned as extenders of research-based information in the area of consumer horticulture. There are many opportunities to enhance this outreach through partnerships with ANR programs such as UC IPM and the Youth Development/4-H program. Examples include working with adult 4-H leaders to develop school gardens; partnering with the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FESNEP) to extend gardening information to low income families; and extending local USDA “First Detector Program” efforts. Other present and potential partners include PlantRight, California Integrated Waste Management Board, Air Quality Control Boards, APHIS, CDFA, Dept. Pesticide Regulation, CSU and Community Colleges, California Center for Urban Horticulture, Ag Commissioners, etc. For instance, the Marin County MG Program partners with the Marin Municipal Water District in a highly successful program called “Marin Water Walks” that advises homeowners on methods to reduce water use. By duplicating such successful models throughout the state, we can further leverage our achievements. The associated funding and outreach potentials are enormous.

Objectives	Actions
Increase collaborations with internal University partners to enhance outreach.	Create ANR collaborations that align with the Strategic Initiatives such as with Sustainable Food Systems. For example, MG Programs, in partnerships with local water agencies, would focus on outreach projects that promote conserving water in urban areas with the goal of freeing up more water for agriculture systems.
Foster external collaborations in both County MG and Statewide MG offices.	Target and implement collaborations with specific agencies/organizations that can further leverage MG Program goals and resources.
Replicate successful collaborations/partnerships or programs throughout the state.	Compile information about the development and execution of existing successful MG programs/projects and then guide other MG Programs in their efforts to recreate those successes.
Encourage and promote collaborations with UC Academics and MG Programs.	Develop opportunities to officially and/or unofficially recognize and reward UC Academics for implementing appropriate collaborations.

## Anticipated Outcomes

- Fifty percent of counties with an MG Program have formed collaborations with at least three external agencies/organizations by 2014.
- Funding from collaborative agencies support at least 10% of MG Program Coordinators by 2014.
- Successful programs conducted in one county are repeated in many.
- The Statewide MG Program has formal collaborations with at least five internal or external agencies or groups that align with the ANR Strategic Vision.

# Goal 4

## ***Increase gender/age and ethnic diversity within the MG Program and extend information to under-represented clientele***

### **Introduction**

Increasing diversity within the MG Program is difficult. If it were easy, it would have been done by now. The MG Program only recently began to collect gender and ethnicity data of our clientele via reporting in the Volunteer Management System (VMS). In 2010, we reported over 600,000 face to face contacts. The actual number is significantly higher but because contact reporting is not required, this report is inaccurate. Also, we have not collected demographic data that describes MG Volunteers themselves. National surveys reveal that MG Volunteers tend to be similar across state boundaries. They are white (93%), women (74%), with a mean age of 51 and of a middle to high income. Even though this appears to be true in California, our outreach efforts have generally been effective at reaching underserved clientele. This has been particularly true in Los Angeles County, the largest county in California, where MG Volunteers reached more than 73,000 residents in 2009-10, of which more than 50% were Hispanic. (The Hispanic population in Los Angeles County is 48% of the total population). Nonetheless, actual contacts should be measured more closely at the local level to ensure that underserved audiences are served.

We believe that by diversifying the demographic mix of our MG Volunteers and clientele, we will greatly impact our outreach to a changing society. This issue was a primary interest to the MG Coordinators as reflected in the survey of their needs. We strongly believe that our program will benefit by the richness that diversity brings.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Diversify and broaden the demographics of both clientele and MG Volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically recruit MG Volunteers from areas under-served by ANR programs.</li> <li>Offer extension/MG Programs within the inner city in collaboration with local organizations.</li> </ul>
Expand the use of existing and create new, where appropriate, outreach materials in formats to reach non-traditional audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop more educational materials in languages other than English as appropriate.</li> </ul>
Increase knowledge of MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators in effective methods of recruiting underserved clientele as potential MG Volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide focused classes for MG Program Coordinators and/or MG Volunteers on recruitment and program delivery methods that better reach underserved clientele.</li> <li>Increase utilization of social media and other on-line resources for program delivery.</li> </ul>
Expand the use of the VMS program to improve contact reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train MG Volunteers on proper contact reporting and how to use VMS for that purpose.</li> <li>Require demographic data as part of contact reporting requirements within VMS.</li> </ul>
Evaluate the current demographics of the MG Volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require annual report of gender/age and ethnicity of current MG Volunteers.</li> </ul>

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Comprehensive demographic data reported for all current MG Volunteers by July 2011.
- Contact reporting, utilizing VMS, is adopted by all MG Programs.
- Gender, age and ethnic diversity of clientele and within the MG Program is increased by 2012.

# Goal 5

## ***Facilitate education and service of the MG Program in the single and/or MC Partnerships and maintain and improve funding for MG Program***

### **Introduction**

The most critical issue that jeopardizes the future success of the MG Program is the lack of consistent and appropriate funding for local MG Programs. Many of the goals described in this document will be difficult or impossible to achieve without adequate local staffing. This has become more important with the reorganization towards MC Partnerships to avoid deterioration in local program delivery. Traditionally, each county has been responsible for acquiring support for its MG Program. This has led to variable program development and management throughout the state. If we are to continue developing a cohesive Statewide MG Program whose signature is delivery of high quality, relevant and research based information, then stable funding is needed to support local and statewide staff.

### **Local Staff**

In a comparative study of funding sources and staffing, (*Regional Staffing report of 4H Representatives FY 2009/10*) the 4H Youth Development Program has ~15 permanently ANR funded county-based Program Representatives to support 4H programs. Similar support of the MG Program is warranted and would immediately improve program delivery, quality, and consistency among counties. It would also foster the development of other sources of funding with external collaborators, improve the likelihood of obtaining grants at both statewide and local levels, and increase contributions to the California Master Gardener Endowment. Finally, and most importantly, this would promote programs very clearly aligned with the ANR Strategic Vision because we would have greater consistency in training, leadership development, marketing, and program focus among counties.

Current funding support for MG Program Coordinators (at the Program Rep II or III level) comes from a variety of sources including:

- 2.25 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) from UC permanent budget sources
- 9.35 FTE from county government sources
- 2.00 FTE from Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment (Statewide Coordinator Office)
- 12 FTE unfunded (volunteer) MG Program Coordinators

The 26 FTEs are distributed over the 44 counties and most positions are 0.50 FTE or less. These funding sources do not include Advisors/County Directors (who account for about four additional FTE specifically dedicated to MG Program), nor county-based or UC administrative support.

### **Statewide Staff**

The Statewide MG Coordinator has been crucial in establishing the beginnings of a very successful unified statewide MG Program that has a shared vision and direction. She implemented consistent statewide policies, developed a reporting system for MG Volunteers, identified key training needs for MG Volunteers and MG Program Coordinators, developed MG websites, and facilitated greater program consistency around the state in areas such as hours reporting, logos, contact lists, etc. The Statewide MG Coordinator serves as the leader providing vision to the program and facilitating the academic connection that allows the extension of research-based information and knowledge. It is imperative that funding be continued to support this position. A full




time Program Representative is also needed to assist and support the Statewide MG Coordinator as well as an additional staff person to support the development and implementation of training modules, curricula, and web-based resources as outlined in Goal 1. These projects will require more focused effort than can be managed by current staffing levels.


Objectives	Actions
Manage MG programs more effectively by maximizing efficiency and consistency among programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for the allocation of 0.25 UC ANR paid MG Program Coordinator position to the 44 counties that have a MG Program. These 0.25 FTE positions may be aggregated to create a single FTE to manage programs and training within the MC Partnerships. They may also be leveraged with matching funds from other sources such as grants, external collaborations or county funds.</li> <li>• Implement consistent management procedures for local MG Programs (e.g. recruitment/application process, program fees, timing of core training for new trainees etc.).</li> <li>• Develop standard position descriptions for all MG Program Coordinators.</li> </ul>
Redirect Advisor and County Director FTE to focus more on academic/research activities rather than supervision of MG Programs or public service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegate local management of MG Programs to local MG Program Coordinator in each county or MC Partnership (as opposed to supervision by Advisor).</li> <li>• Authorize the Statewide MG Coordinator to have direct input in the hiring, supervision and annual evaluation process for MG Program Coordinators.</li> </ul>
Maintain support of the Statewide MG Coordinator by the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment or by a permanent commitment of UC funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew contract for the Statewide MG Program funded through the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment or through permanent UC funds.</li> </ul>
Aggressively promote and develop the California Master Gardener Endowment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a California Master Gardener Endowment Task force to further develop and promote the endowment.</li> </ul>
Divert a percentage of profit from the sale of Master Gardener Handbook to support outreach efforts of the MG Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support/encourage the sale of the MG Handbook and investigate methods by which some profit is redistributed to the MG Program.</li> </ul>
Increase cost recovery and fund development within the single or MC Partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train county-based MG Program Coordinator in proper and appropriate cost recovery methods and fund development.</li> </ul>
Develop other alternative funding opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer core and advanced Master Gardener training to non-volunteer clientele at a higher cost.</li> <li>• Develop funding sources through our collaborations that align with our current mission, goals and projects e.g. conduct the outreach requirements of other agencies such as Air Quality Control Boards on a MC Partnership basis (see goal # 3) in exchange for financial support of the MG Program.</li> </ul>
Establish standard fee for the initial volunteer core training program and a subsequent annual reappointment fee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a template and plan for collection and distribution of a standardized core training fee and an annual reappointment fee.</li> </ul>

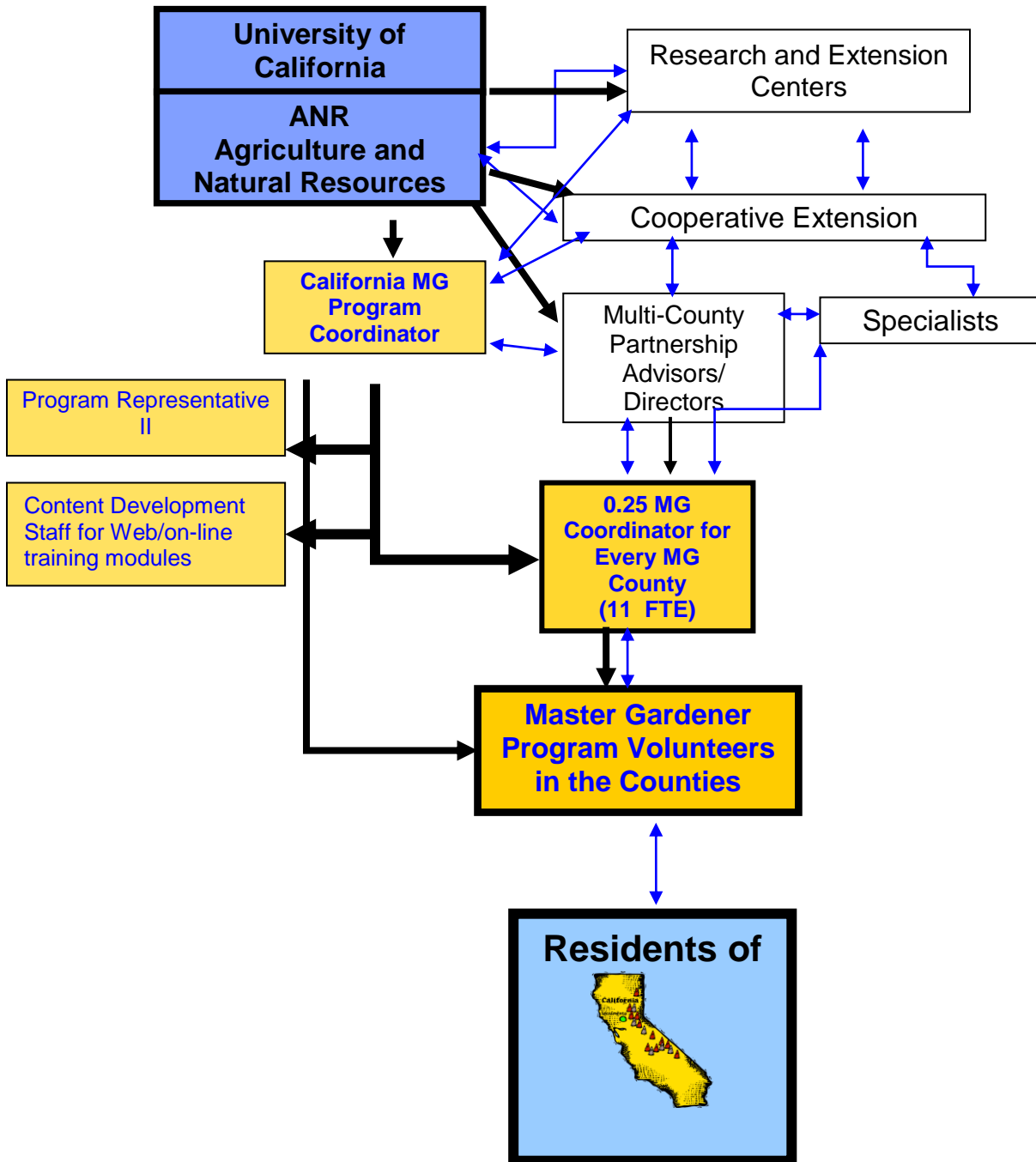
## **Anticipated Outcomes**

- 0.25 FTE is appropriated by ANR for MG Program Coordinator positions by 2012 in each county that has a MG Program. These positions may be aggregated from MC Partnerships into one full time FTE.
- Funding from ANR is leveraged to augment MG Program Coordinator employment from county and other sources.
- Advisors and County Directors redirect their time to support their program efforts rather than day to day management of MG Volunteers.
- The Statewide MG Program is supported by the Elvenia J. Slosson or permanent 19900 funds.
- Augmentation of 25% of total ANR FTE Budget for the 11 ANR MG Program Coordinators funded through external or non ANR funds. These funds may be acquired through the diversion of a percentage of profit from the sale of the MG Handbook, core program and annual reappointment fees, grants, agency collaborations, donations, and/or endowment funds.
- Program management statewide is improved, consistent and clearly aligned with the ANR Strategic Vision.

# Proposed Organization Chart for the California Master Gardener Program

Flow of supervision = 

Flow of knowledge and information = 



# *Contributors to the Strategic Plan*

## **Strategic Planning Committee**

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## **Special Thanks**

Vanessa Gomez, Principle Program Analyst who served as staff to the process.