

“How to Fund a County MG Program Rep Position” Ideas from a Survey.

Ten California counties have fully or partially funded Master Gardener Program Rep positions, ranging in support from 0.2 to 1.0 FTE. There are various strategies and action steps that resulted in securing this funding, but many strategies involved the identification of areas where UCCE core strengths and regional/county/city mandates were in alignment. Here, county funding plus UC skills and knowledge resulted in “win-win” programs.

Most of these positions are now line items in budgets and are coming from the counties’ General Funds, but may not have begun that way. At least three are funded through monies in support of AB 939, the legislation regulating land fill sites. One county position staff through support related to EPA 503D and NPDS water protection program funding. Two program reps are funded for 4 years, one to be renewed for an additional 4 years. One position requires annual reapplication for funding.

What agencies have helped establish this funding over the years?

Tuolumne County, an early innovator, began with funding for a coordinator, from the County Air Quality District, the Solid Waste Division and the Water Utility. Master Gardeners in this county lead demonstrations to reduce burning, reduce solid waste to landfills and to maintain water quality. Today, this program is funded partly by UC and partly through the County Solid Waste Division.

In Calaveras County about 20 years ago there was a need for a MG program to help the local gardeners, but no UCCE staff to manage it. Initially the Calaveras Water District funded a water-conservation-focused MG program for three years. Once the MG program was established, the justification and support had already been created by the good works and success of the focused program. The county funded a 50% Coordinator’s position and the program expanded beyond the narrow but important original focus.

Placer/Nevada Counties used the composting-focused approach to reduce landfill materials and burning for better air quality. This benefited the county leaders who were seen as helping to train and empower MGs who had good skills and UC resources to teach the county residents. The supervisors liked being seen as protectors of the environment and supporters of volunteers.

Most lately, funds have been won for a full time MG coordinator FTE through San Joaquin County under AB939 to reduce impact of solid waste in landfills and storm water runoff issues.

In Orange County funds for the MG coordinator position have come from the county through the California State Water Resources Control Board which enforces the EPA regulations regarding water pollution, surface runoff and groundwater. Master Gardeners provide the mandated educational component for the county government to the county residents (the Advisors are providing the educational component to the public employees)

Shifting focus of established positions

In other counties there was already support for Ag Technician or a Field Technician positions which were informally converted to MG Program Rep positions. After the MG program value and success had become recognized, changing the job descriptions formally with the county was easy.

Some county positions evolved from clerical or office manager slots to a MG Program Coordinator. These evolutions were seamless as in the example above; county governments were very “pro” UCCE MG Programs because their constituency really liked the programs offered by MGs.

In one county there was some ‘found’ money in the budget and so it was fairly easy to justify using the already-allocated funds to hire a volunteer coordinator position for an established program. Justification arguments included just how the volunteers’ efforts could even more greatly serve the county residents through the efforts of a MG Program Coordinator. It was also helpful that this coincided with the county government’s efforts in establishing a volunteer coordinator classification.

How UCCE can assist the local agencies

Several counties found areas where they could provide great expertise in helping local agencies meet their mandates in the following areas: education about IPM and reduced use of pesticides for government workers and home gardeners and residents, water conservation, reducing surface water runoff, urban storm water issues, protection of impaired water bodies, protection of watersheds, reducing landfill materials and improving air quality (composting instead of burning). What mandates and issues exist in your county where UCCE knowledge and problem solving skills can be used (and greatly appreciated)?

What advice do County Directors who manage these locally funded positions have for others who may also want county funding?

1. **Understand the mandates** of the local agencies (cities and special districts, too) and identify areas where UCCE knowledge base and expertise can assist them. Counties and cities may not have the knowledge base and skills they need to carry out their charge. Explain how you can assist when you have the required funds to support the education and outreach activities for them.
 - a. One idea is to visit www.swrcb.ca.gov and click your region, then click on “TMDLs and Impaired Water Bodies” for specifics in your region. You may find you can help out your county meet its education component to reduce pollutant fertilizer and pesticide runoff if they can fund a coordinator.
2. **Set the stage.** Let decision makers know you have future plans to ask for such funding and why it makes sense. Let them know how other counties have benefited.
3. **Develop relationships** with County Administrators and their staff members. Several County Directors won approval at this level and let staff sell the Board of Supervisors. In other situations the support came originally from the Board, especially in one county where a MG was actually a member of the Board of Supervisors. In another case, MGs are acquainted with board members and do much of the legwork for the Co. Director.

4. **Tell the MG volunteer program story.** Let the MGs educate the county and city staff members about how their programs are already serving the supervisors constituencies. Invite staff and supervisors to MG events. Make sure the program is visible. It is a tremendous benefit and of great value to the county and city governments and residents. MGs carry tremendous political support. Use it.
5. **Ask for a full time FTE right away,** don't settle for less than you need. Counties may have more disposable resources than UCCE. Explain how much more could be done with greater FTE to manage and support the volunteers.
6. **Use success stories from MG programs in counties where there are county funded positions.** Have a description of what an MG program can achieve for a county and how it benefits the county government and residents. Make it available for anyone who asks (Our statewide office is currently developing a MG brochure that may be useful for this purpose).

Table 1. County Funded MG Program Rep Positions

County	FTE	Funding Source(s)	Line Item	Funding Period	Plans for more
Amador	0.20		yes		no
Calaveras	0.60	General Fund	yes		no
Fresno	0.50	General Fund	yes		will ask for 1.0 total 2007
Madera	0.25	General Fund	yes		don't know
Napa	0.75	General Fund	yes		will ask for 1.0 total 2007
Nevada/Placer	1.00	General Fund & Dept Transportation	yes	Department of Transportation, renew in 4 years	Renew at same level.
Orange	0.60	EPA, NPDS permit funding, 303(d) funding; via Orange County	no	5 year funding period w/annual audit. Renew each 5 year period.	Renew this and supplement with various grants.
San Joaquin	1.00	Public Works, AB 939	no	4 years, renew for 4 more	After 8 years, maybe all from General Fund.
Solano	1.00	General Fund	yes		no
Tuolumne	0.80	Solid Waste Div./UCCE	no	annually	