

LOCAL MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION HANDBOOK

A GUIDE FOR NEW ASSOCIATIONS
AND
PROCEDURES TO CONDUCT BUSINESS
FOR ESTABLISHED ASSOCIATIONS



By
ALABAMA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION, INC.
[AMGA]

Revised by the AMGA BOD Communications Committee June, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Definition of Terms	3
The Handbook's Guide	3
Alabama Cooperative Extension System relationship with AMGA	4
ACES Organization Flow Chart	5
ACES Alabama Master Gardener Program Steering Committee	6
AMGA and Its Relationship with Local Associations	7
Local Association Meetings (Sample Format)	8
Local Association Flow Chart	9
Duties and Responsibilities of Officers and Directors	10
- President	
- Vice President	
- Secretary	
- Treasurer	11
- Directors	
- State Advisory Council	
Duties and Responsibilities for Committee Chairs	12
- Chair for Communications	
- Chair for Finance	
- Chair for Programs and Projects	13
- Chair for Membership	14
• Volunteer Hours/Reach for the Stars Coordinator	
• Awards Committee Coordinator	
AWARDS Programs:	14
AMGA Awards Program including REACH FOR THE STARS	
ACES Master Gardener Search for Excellence Award Guidelines	
Appendix A: Preparation of Association Bylaws	15
Appendix B: Master Gardener Mentoring Models and Suggestions	16
Appendix C: Master Gardeners Service Hours Program	17
Part I – The Program	
Part II – Voluntary Hours Category Guide	18
Part III – Using the On-Line Service Report System	
Part IV – Volunteer Hours Coordinator: Duties and Responsibilities	19
Appendix D: Dues Tracker Database	20
Appendix E: Conflict of Interest Policy [suggestions]	21
Appendix F: Pathways and Website Criteria	22

Definition of Terms

ACES	Alabama Cooperative Extension System
AMGA	Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc.
Annual Business Meeting	In accordance with the Articles of Incorporation, AMGA must hold an annual business meeting to elect officers and conduct business of the association. This is held in conjunction with the AMGA Annual Conference
Annual Dues	Dues are paid at the state level [AMGA] as well as the local level [LMGA] on an annual basis
Certified Master Gardeners	Individuals who have completed the classroom training and have completed and reported to the Local MG Program Coordinator, the initial 50 hours of volunteer service
CEU	Continuing Education Units
LMGA	Local Master Gardener Association is a group of MGs within a county or multiple counties that form an association to support the Regional Extension Agent and Extension Service within that area
LMGA Coordinator	The Extension Agent who has responsibility of conducting Master Gardener training [intern] classes in their specific area and serves as an advisor to the local associations in that area
Master Gardener Interns	Individuals who are participating in the Master Gardener volunteer training and certification
Master Gardener Program Steering Committee	An ACES committee created to evaluate and give over-sight to the growth and development of the Master Gardener Program
Provisional Members	New LMGA members who have completed the classroom training and are pursuing the completion of the 50 hours of initial volunteer service
State Association	AMGA
State Master Gardener Program Coordinator	An employee of ACES who is responsible for the administration of the Master Gardener Program statewide

The Handbook's Guide

The LMGA Handbook is intended to help new associations as well as have answers/suggestions for established ones.

Look at the Table of Contents to get a good idea of what the Handbook includes. All important information is at your fingertips via www.alabamamg.org. Writing or revising bylaws? The AMGA Bylaws are found on the WEBSITE and a sample bylaws format is suggested in Appendix A of the Handbook.

The relationship between ACES/AMGA/LMGAs and a suggested organizational model for a LMGA are included.

Wonder what your duties include?

- Guidelines for AMGA *Pathways* submissions
- Advisory Council Standard Operating Procedure
- AMGA Awards with Reach for The Stars criteria
- AMGA Project Funding Program criteria
- ACES Search for Excellence Award criteria
- www.alabamamg.org criteria

A Volunteer Hours Coordinator is necessary for providing guidelines and expertise in documenting service hours. An Awards facilitator is required to manage the local and state awards and encourage nominations. A unique group, AMGA Advisory Council [AC] serves as a communications link between LMGA, AMGA, and ACES. Some LMGAs use individual websites, social media or the ACES website to post current events, documents, and happenings.

There are many tasks to be completed in associations of various sizes. In smaller LMGAs, a few people wear a lot of hats; larger associations can populate committees, even sub-committees. If you have questions, often your best source is asking another LMGA, having the AC representative initiate a discussion at the AC meeting, or contact an AMGA BOD member.

This GUIDE should give you more time to GARDEN.

ACES [Alabama Cooperative Extension System] relationship with AMGA

The Mission Statement of the Alabama Cooperative Extension Systems with respect to the MG Program is as follows:

“The Alabama Master Gardener Program is an educational program provided and administered by the County offices of ACES. It is a program to train and certify individuals who, in turn, volunteer their expertise and services in support of the Cooperative Extension effort related to the horticultural sciences.”

The State Master Gardener Program Coordinator is an employee of Auburn University with responsibilities for administering the program throughout the state. The state coordinator serves to facilitate all facets of the MG program and to make sure all components work together. The components that provide balance to the MG Program are:

1. State MG Program Coordinator
2. Extension Agents (coordinating MG Programs)
3. Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA) Board of Directors
4. Local MG association leadership

When all components of the Alabama MG Program work together respecting the others' roles and functions, a balance is achieved allowing the MG Program to function successfully and fulfill the mission and objectives of the program.

An [Organizational Flow Chart](#) [found on the following page] explains the relationships and the chain of command for AMGA and ACES. The solid lines display the chain of command and the broken lines display coordination and liaison between the two entities. AMGA is autonomous from ACES. As such, its responsibilities are to work closely with ACES and the local agents, but AMGA does not report to ACES as part of the chain of command. All of these work together to create the volunteers who serve in local communities across the state.

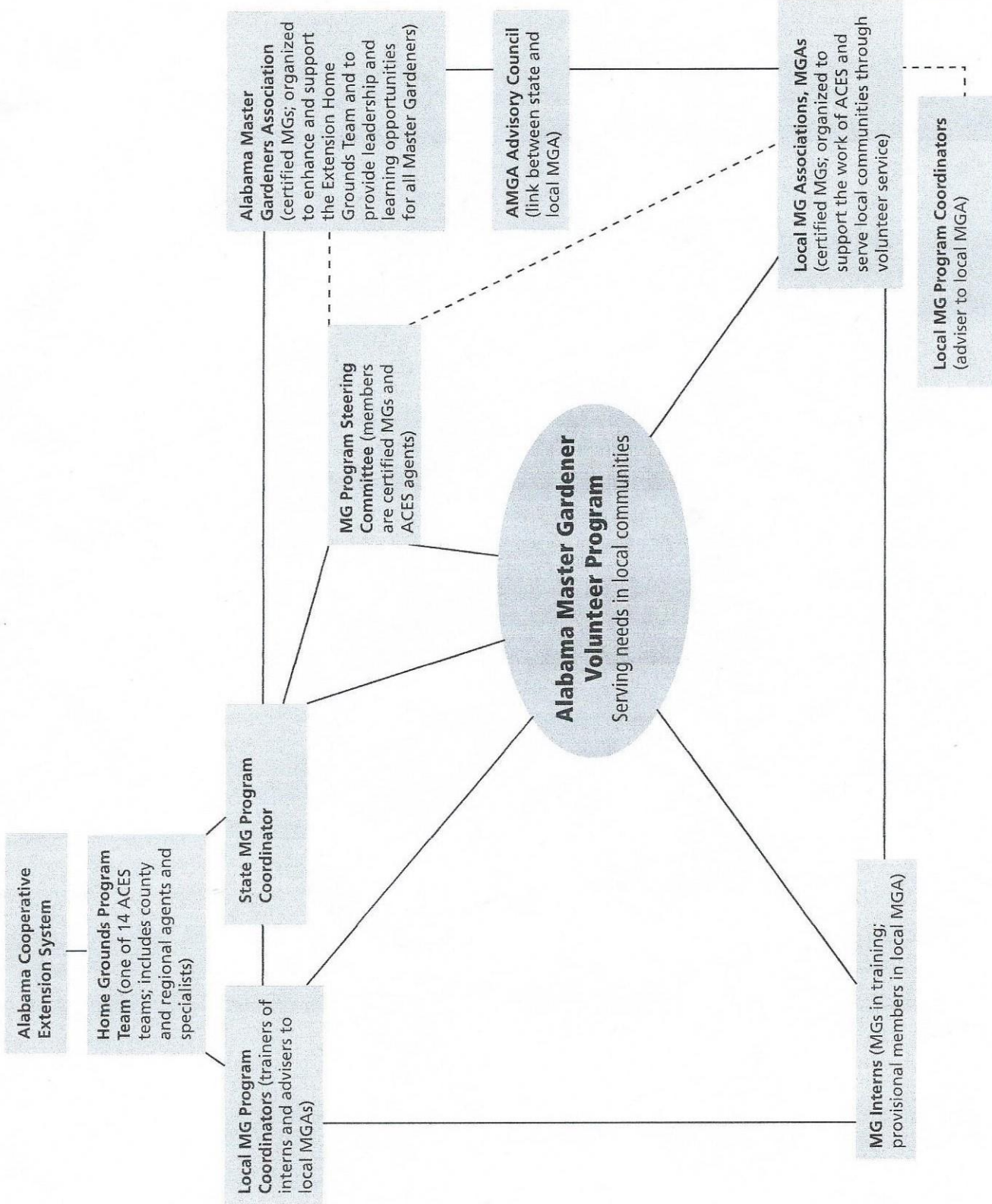


Figure 1.1 Flow chart of Extension, the Master Gardener program, and influencing entities

ACES continued:

ALABAMA MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM STEERING COMMITTEE

The State Master Gardener Program Coordinator formed the Alabama Master Gardener (MG) Program Steering Committee in 1996. This committee is an Extension committee whose members represent all facets of the Alabama MG Program: Extension Agents who locally support the program, certified Master Gardeners who are active in their local programs, Extension Specialists as available, and the State MG Program Coordinator who facilitates this committee.

The Alabama Master Gardener Program Steering Committee is charged to:

- Establish program policies
- Work with the State MG Program Coordinator to identify and develop new program information and materials and revise existing program information as needed.
- Evaluate and give oversight to the growth and development of the Alabama Master Gardener Program as we seek to accomplish its mission and purpose relative to Extension, Master Gardener volunteers, and Alabamians.

Members should be interested in and committed to doing the work required of this committee and able to attend the necessary meetings. Positions require a two- year term with members rotating off in alternate years. If you are interested in serving, please contact the State Master Gardener Program Coordinator. The Steering Committee meets 3-4 times per year or as determined by the committee.

AMGA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE AMGA

The Alabama Master Gardeners Program was a vision of Mary Lou McNabb who relocated with her husband, Bob, to Huntsville, Alabama, from New York in 1980. Mary Lou was active in the Master Gardener program in New York, and, in 1981, she asked Madison County (Huntsville) Extension agent Gary Murray if he could help get a Master Gardener Program started in Alabama. As they say, "the rest is history....."

In 1993, Master Gardeners established the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc. (AMGA), originally as a 501 (c)(5) non-profit educational organization to enhance and support the work of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Master Gardener Program and to provide ongoing opportunities for Master Gardeners to expand their knowledge of and interest in horticulture and related subject areas. In 2006, AMGA received designation as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization [the (5) was legally changed to a (3) at this point in time].

Today, there are more than 30 active local Master Gardener groups and associations throughout Alabama. They share common goals of meeting and sharing information about Master Gardener volunteer service opportunities, having common interests in making the community a better place to live, and learning more about their passion: gardening. These common goals encompass the stated educational, scientific, literary, and charitable purposes of the AMGA [AMGA By-Laws, Article II].

AMGA's role is to provide overall leadership for Master Gardeners in the State of Alabama through the local associations. AMGA's responsibilities also include providing educational opportunities through conferences, workshops, field trips and other appropriate programs.

The AMGA is governed by officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) and a seven-member Board of Directors. Both officers and members of the board are elected by the general membership at the annual meeting during conference. Officers are elected for a two-year term, and members of the board are elected for three-year terms. No more than two members, excluding the Association President and Vice President, from any one local association may be elected to the board. The board meetings are scheduled on a quarterly basis. Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the President and may be held at any time and on notice as the board may determine.

AMGA is responsible for providing a clear and critical line of communication between themselves and LMGAs via the Advisory Council.

The State Master Gardeners Program Coordinator from Auburn University serves as Advisor to the AMGA Board of Directors and attends Advisory Council meetings to communicate ACES information to the AC members.

LOCAL MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Sample Format

Robert's Rules of Order provides a very detailed outline of the procedures for conducting Board and general meetings. Following this outline usually results in orderly, efficient meetings. For example, if an item is being discussed and not being resolved, perhaps "table" it for a later meeting; assign action items to appropriate committees to study/research further and report at a later meeting. It is suggested that several in each LMGA become familiar with Robert's Rules of Order. Remember, your LMGA will arrive at its own meeting format.

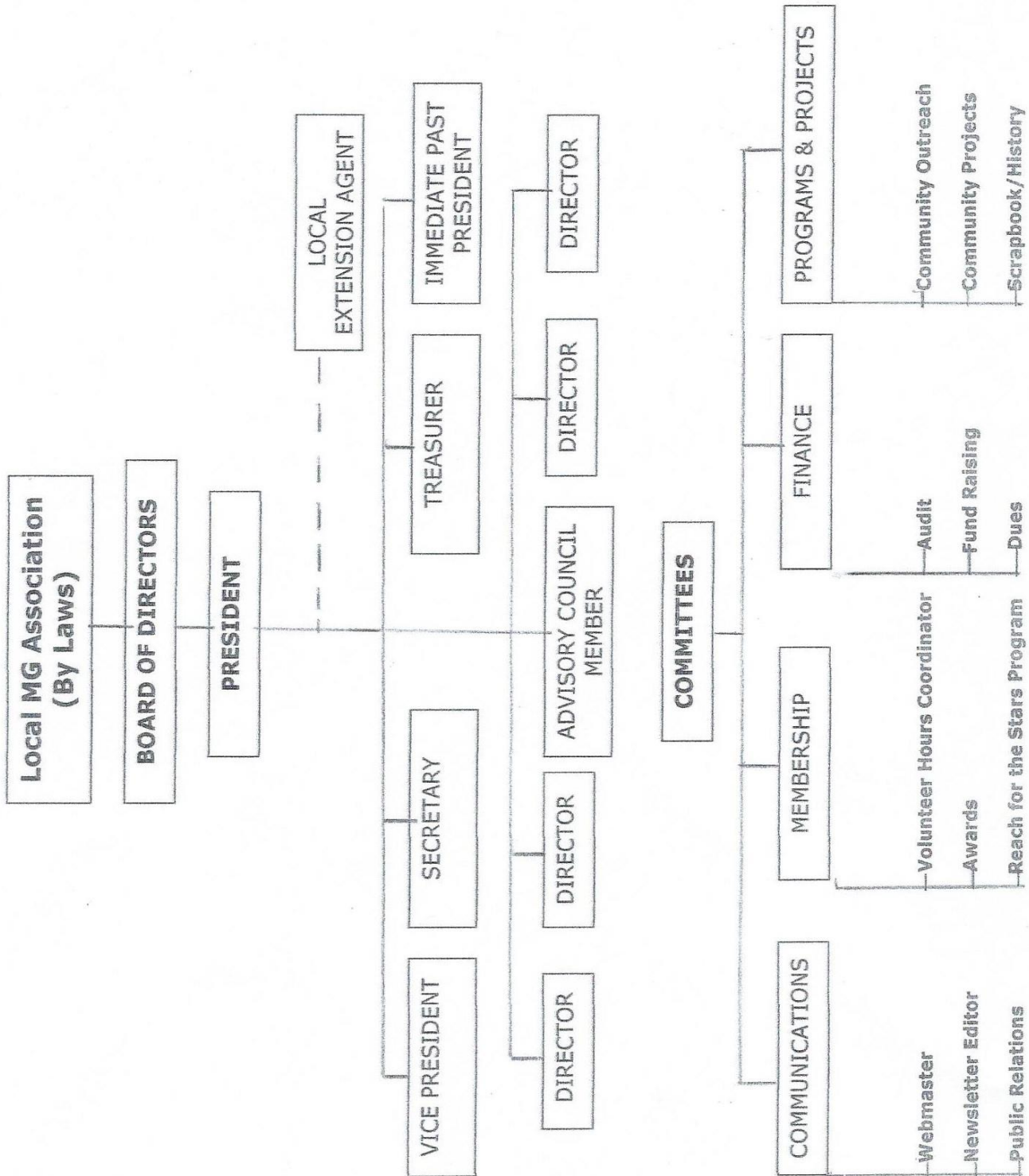
AGENDA

(Date, time and location)

- **Call meeting to order**
- **Reading of the Minutes** - Ask for approval of the minutes as read/emailed/posted in newsletter, or as corrected, if there are changes. Many LMGAs email the minutes prior to the meeting for review by members, which saves time. A simple vote is taken for approval of minutes.
- **Treasurer's Report** - It is important that a financial report be given at each board and general membership meeting to keep the membership informed. In addition, some LMGAs prepare a yearly budget. A monthly budget report keeps check of the prepared budget for the year
- **Report from local MG Extension Agent**
- **Committee Reports** - List each of your committees including committee chair name and contact information in case members have questions. If the committee chairperson does not have a report that month, give them an opportunity to be recognized especially in larger LMGAs.
- **Project Reports** - List each project including project leader's name and contact information in case members have questions. Even if the project leader does not have a report that month, give them an opportunity to be recognized especially in larger LMGAs.
- **State Advisory Council Representative Report** - AC meets on a quarterly basis so reports should be offered following each AC meeting and comments/questions solicited for next AC meeting. The report could be included in LMGA newsletter to save time.
- **Old Business** - Any outstanding action items from previous meetings
- **New Business** - Members may have some suggestions, ideas for new projects, and/or announcements that could be brought to the membership's attention. Discussion could ensue, assigned to appropriate committee, or delayed to the next meeting.
- **Adjournment**

[If the meeting includes a Program with a Speaker, this could come at the beginning of the meeting or you could plan a short break between the meeting and the Program/Speaker. For courtesy, a time frame should be set. Emailed agendas, AC reports in newsletter can save on the length of meetings when a Program/Speaker awaits.]

Local Association Flow Chart sample:



DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

General: The Board of Directors [BOD] of the local Master Gardeners Association could consist of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Past President. The remainder of the members on the BOD are the Directors. Terms for officers, directors, and appointed committee chairs are set in local association bylaws. Suggested terms are for two years. Caution: smaller associations may not have need for all of the duties listed below and may have many duties assigned to one officer. These are 'suggested' duties.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Officers:

President

- Preside at all meetings
- Serve as liaison with any outside persons or organizations
- Ensure that the association's operations reflect the bylaws, so all events run smoothly and the association maintains a good image
- Possess a working knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order and conduct meetings in accordance with those rules.
- Prepare or approve [if secretary is responsible for this duty] meeting agenda
- Provide an article for each newsletter the association publishes
- Appoint committee Chairpersons and serve as ex-officio of all committees
- Maintain copies of all pertinent information and transfer these records to the succeeding President at the end of his/her term
- Be a signatory on the association checking account bank signature card

Vice President

- Perform the duties of the President if the President is absent, unable to perform their assigned duties, or the office becomes vacant
- Possess a working knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order and conduct meetings in accordance with those rules
- Assist Provisional Members in achieving Active status
- Conduct an annual Bylaws review and present revisions to the Board
- Perform other duties as assigned by the President
- Serve on Programs and Projects Committees
- Maintain and be custodian of association property located at association office or any off-site storage areas

Secretary

- Possess a working knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order and local association bylaws
- Act as Secretary of the meetings of the Board and of the general membership. Record the proceedings of the meetings for historical and parliamentary reasons to include meeting attendance records
- Serve as custodian of all official records for the association and transfer these records to the succeeding Secretary
- Obtain a suitable location for association meetings. Notify all members of the association of the date, time, place and program (if any) of regular and special meetings or additional activities
- Provide copies of meeting minutes to officers, directors, and membership as required
- Distribute approved agenda to association members 5 working days before a regularly scheduled meeting
- Electronically disseminate annually an updated directory of members to include email address, mailing address and telephone number. This list should include list of association BOD committee chairs, and agents including mailing addresses, emails, and phone numbers. Keep on file the list of AMGA BOD. Contact information can be obtained by contacting AMGA Communications Committee at www.amgacommunications@gmail.com
- Notify AMGA Membership Chairman of changes in officers and directors
- Receive and file communications, correspondence, and committee reports, as directed by the President
- Keep list of local association officers, committee chairs, and agents as appropriate for your organization, including mailing and email addresses and phone numbers. This will need to be updated as it changes.

Treasurer

- Prepare and provide financial statements to the association and tracks all deposits, expenses and other financial dealings as required by association bylaws
- Pay all bills incurred by local association; Be one of the two names, Treasurer and President, on the bank signature card; Association by-laws determine number of signatures on the checks
- Administer the cash when the organization holds a special event for the public
- Serve as member of Finance Committee; Ensure that there are at least three persons in the association that are authorized to have access to the financial accounts
- Notify membership no less than 30 days before local and state dues are to be remitted; collect local and state membership dues. Remit records of paying members to association Membership Chairman
- Remit AMGA STATE dues [individual dues \$10 in 2019] that are to be recorded in the AMGA Dues Tracker database (see DUES TRACKER DATABASE APPENDIX D)
- Maintain and transfer records and books to the succeeding Treasurer following an internal financial review
- NOTE: if the association is a 501©3, the treasurer handles or oversees tax filings and maintains the organization's non-profit status.
- NOTE: Bonding of an association treasurer should be considered then the decision specified in the bylaws and policies.

The Directors

As stated in association bylaws The Directors are usually nominated and voted into office for a period as determined by association bylaws. These Directors may be appointed as various Committee Chairs [listed in the next sub-section]. As voting members of the BOD, the Directors are responsible for overseeing the organization's activities and upholding its mission, strategies and goals. The Board of Directors [Officers and the Directors] meet periodically to discuss and vote on the affairs of the organization. There should be a minimum of 3 board members; if association is a 501©3, the IRS requires a minimum of 3 board members.

State Advisory Council Representative

Duties listed on the WWW.ALABAMAMG.ORG at www.alabamamg.org →MGA PUBLICATIONS AND FORMS →
AMGA Advisory Council Standard Operating Procedures.

The State AC Representative is usually a non-voting member of a LMGA BOD. It is decision of the local BOD.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Committee Chairs:

The committees shown below may or may not be filled depending on the size and needs of your association. Directors may chair one or more committees, depending upon the size of the association. All BOD members have voting rights. Committee Chairs may have voting rights at BOD meetings, if mandated by association bylaws. There are several functions listed below that must be performed. Necessary functions can also be assigned to an association officer. Sub-committees may be formed in each area as needed. Standing Committees, in addition to those listed below could include: Nominating, Service Projects, By-Laws, Auditing, Sunshine, Communication, MG Intern, Membership, Program Committee, Newsletter Editor, Historian.

Chair for Communications

- Responsible for the functions of publicity [AMGA and LMGA programs/events, achievement, news], member communications, Pathway Happenings articles [www.alabamamg.org → **AMGA PUBLICATIONS & FORMS** → **AMGA Newsletter Criteria**], and historical records of the association. In a medium to large association, several of these responsibilities will be handled by different people/committees.
- Creates and disseminates publicity about association events, achievements, and news as directed by the president, project chairs, and/or committee chairs. Keeps association members aware of local and regional workshops and seminars that may be of interest.
- Acts as the webmaster or facilitator to the webmaster in the management of the website. Each county/regional ACES office has a Facebook page and/or website. Several LMGAs make use of their local ACES Facebook page and/or website. An association does not have to host their own website.
- Acts as the editor or a facilitator to the editor of the association newsletter. Newsletters can be as simple and as short as one page and emailed to the members. Makes certain that newsletters are archived.
- Ensures internal Public Relations by contacting members who have been absent from multiple meetings to encourage their return and sending cards/flowers to members who have experienced an illness or a personal loss.
- Maintain list of AMGA Officers and Board Members including mailing and email addresses and phone numbers. This can be obtained at the www.alabamamg.org or through amgacommunications@gmail.com. This will need to be updated annually following the state AMGA Conference
- Oversees any public LMGA social media pages or identities and established guidelines for content and messaging.

Chair for Finance

[These duties, except for audit, will be performed by the Treasurer, if a chair for finance is not appointed.]

- Prepare an annual budget for presentation to the association at the annual meeting. At monthly meetings present a budget update. Make certain of an audit of financial records annually at a time as stated in the association bylaws and when a change of Treasurer occurs; this is organized in association with the Treasurer and the President. This audit is conducted by a committee of two persons who are not Officers, Directors, or Finance Committee members. Report audit results to the association Officers and BOD for review, then subsequently forward to the association membership.
- Coordinate all fundraising efforts. Develop ideas and plans for fundraising. Make recommendations to the officers and board for fundraising events.

Chair for Programs and Projects

Depending upon size of the association, the following duties could be managed by 1 person to 4 or more people.

Programs:

- Responsible for arranging programs for monthly meetings and additional educational enrichment programs, seminars, and field trips
- Responsible for any tokens and notes of appreciation to speakers and outgoing president
- Maintain a record of program contacts and suggestions for programs. This list will show what programs have been in the past, plans for the present, and a list for the future topics/speakers.
- Determine the number and types of programs needed for the year with help from the BOD [number of monthly meetings that should have speakers].
- Schedule speakers for programs to include a reminder a week before the meeting.
- If needed, arrange for audio-visual aids for the program and a technician to operate them.
- Introduce the speaker or provide biographical information to the president if he/she will do the introduction.

Historical Records:

- Maintain the historical records for the association.
- Maintain a scrapbook documenting significant events in the association.

Master Gardener Speakers Bureau:

- Develop and maintain a list of persons in the association who are willing to speak if requests are received for their expertise
- Responds to request for speakers and promotes that speakers are available
- Identify and report on opportunities to promote the Master Gardener program to the community

Projects:

- Maintain project request forms used by the association
- Receive completed project forms and present them to the Board of Directors and the local sponsoring ACES agent for approval
- Ensure that an association member is designated as the point of contact for each project that is approved
- Ensure that all association members are afforded an opportunity to participate in projects
- Update ACES coordinator/agent of new projects
- Maintain a record of completed projects
- In coordination with the BOD, select one project annually that has made a significant difference in the community and write a story about it for the annual ACES Report, submit to ACES MG Search for Excellence Awards and to local and/or state newsletters.

Chair for Membership

- Obtain and distribute membership cards
- Contact members who fail to renew their membership
- Distribute membership lists/directories to association members as established by association procedures
- Prepare membership information/lists as required to verify meeting quorums and voting eligibility
- Maintain rosters of attendance at meetings and other events
- Work with local association board to encourage retention of interns for membership
- Assist with questions regarding membership requirements, status, etc.

Service Hours/Reach for the Stars Coordinator (or Membership Chair)

- Ensure association members are aware of the ACES online volunteer hours reporting system and provide instructions regarding reporting of volunteer and CEU hours
- Access ACES Service Report database and determine those members who are eligible for Reach for the Stars recognition at the end of each membership year
- Provide AMGA Awards Chair the number of stars required for local association distribution and a list of members who qualify for Reach for the Stars recognition; Provide AMGA Awards Chair the names of members who qualify for advanced stars or other volunteer hours recognition (such as top hours of the year and lifetime hours)
- Serve as the local association point of contact for volunteer hours advice and questions
- Encourage timely reporting of volunteer and continuing education hours
- Work with ACES Service Report super admin to identify members who have failed to achieve the volunteer hours required for continued Master Gardener certification

Awards Committee Chair (or Membership Chair)

- Chair local association Awards Committee with responsibility for soliciting and reviewing nominations for local association and AMGA awards
- Provide information to association members on projected awards and guidelines for submission of nominations for local association and AMGA awards
- Assemble nomination information for review by committee members and for determination of local association winners and those members who will be nominated for AMGA awards
- Prepare nominations for AMGA awards and submit to the AMGA Awards Chair
- Arrange for presentation of appropriate recognition of local association award winners

AMGA AWARDS

AMGA AWARDS categories, criteria, and forms are located on www.alabamamg.org → **AMGA PUBLICATIONS AND FORM** → **AMGA Awards And Criteria**

ACES AWARDS

MASTER GARDENER SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES (adapted for Alabama from the IMGC guidelines), Information and Guidelines concerning above are located on the www.alabamamg.org → **ACES RESOURCES** → **ACES'S MASTER GARDENER SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD**

Appendix A - Preparation of Association Bylaws

It is strongly recommended that each association prepare bylaws as appropriate to their stated purpose and size. The bylaws are the basic set of rules that guide the operation of the association. What follows is a sample of general association bylaws. If your association is a 501©3, there are certain things that you will need to comply with depending on Federal and State laws [number of meetings, minimum number of board members, etc.]; Check with Secretary of State to see what laws apply to your nonprofit.

Refer to the AMGA bylaws for ideas on what to include: www.alabamamg.org → **AMGA PUBLICATIONS & FORMS** → **AMGA Bylaws**. A few association websites have easily found bylaws: www.alabamamg.org → **LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS**. Some examples include Shelby County, MG of North Alabama, Chilton, and Central Alabama. There are many free bylaws templates on the internet that allow you to customize your own set of bylaws. Below is one basic example.

BYLAWS OF [_____]

ARTICLE I: Name and Purpose

Section A: Name and mailing address – the name of this association shall be _____. [If the name is not a county, add a sentence that includes county or counties.] Mailing address [local ACES office is suggested]

Section B: Affiliation – [as a member of the AMGA, a sentence like “the rules and regulations of the AMGA Bylaws shall be followed when not inconsistent with the rules and regulations of name of association.”]

Section C: Objectives – the mission of this association shall be: [make a numbered list]

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP & DUES

Section A: Classes of Membership. There are 5 classes of membership in the AMGA: Active, Provisional, Associate, Honorary, and Lifetime. Please read the descriptions of the classes of memberships in the AMGA Bylaws.

Section B: Dues – here stated separately are the local association dues and the state dues.

ARTICLE III: OFFICERS

Section A: Officer list

Section B: Election of officers – method of selection of candidates for the officer positions, voting process, term of office with any restrictions included, how vacancies are handled during terms of office

Section C: Officer duties – abbreviated descriptions for each office.

ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section A: The BOD will consist of the Officers at a minimum in small associations. As membership increases, other persons may be added to the BOD with specific committee responsibilities such as Membership, Programs and Projects, Past President, etc.

Section B: Wise to put a limit on the number of members of the BOD

Section C: A statement such as the following may be included in this section: The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the affairs of the association and shall bring recommendations to the membership.

ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

The various sections of this article should address: frequency of meetings, notification procedures for meetings, voting eligibility of meetings, use of proxies to vote, and what constitutes a quorum.

ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES

For new and smaller associations, the LOCAL ASSOCIATION FLOW CHART on page 9 of this Handbook could be used as suggestions for the initial committees. The sections might be listed as follows:

Section A: A list of the standing committees should appear first.

Section B: Usually the BOD gives power to the president to create or dissolve any committees as the need arises

Section C: Association member selected to be the AMGA Advisory Council Representative. Usually the president nominates this representative and approval is made by the BOD or the membership.

ARTICLE VII: FINANCE

Section A: Define the fiscal year for the association.

Section B: Write a statement as to the frequency of audit of the financial records along with how the audit committee will be selected.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

This might be a simple statement such as “These bylaws may be amended at any regularly scheduled meeting of Shelby County MGA by a majority vote, provided the membership has been notified at the last scheduled meeting and through the newsletter preceding the vote.” [from SCMGA bylaws] It is suggested that bylaws be reviewed every 2 – 4 years.

ARTICLE IX: RULES OF ORDER

Section A: The rules contained in “Robert’s Rules of Order”, latest revised edition, shall govern the business meeting unless in conflict with these bylaws.

Section B: Order of Business shall be: Call to Order, Welcome Guests, Approval of Minutes, Treasurer’s Report, Committee Reports, Project Reports, State Advisory Council Report (quarterly), Old Business, New Business, Announcements, and Adjournment

ARTICLE X: MISCELLANEOUS

Section A: All service shall be voluntary with no remuneration except for out-of-pocket expenses, if funds are available and approved by the Board of Directors.

Section B: Within the Association there will be no discrimination with respect to race, color, sex, age, creed, or national origin.

Section C: Local Master Gardener Associations throughout the State of Alabama shall be considered an extension of the AMGA thus ACES, and they shall maintain financial independence.

APPENDIX B - Master Gardener Mentoring Models and Suggestions

A mentor program is intended to provide support for the participants of each intern class. Each class member will have an active MG member to answer questions and guide them through the process of becoming a certified Master Gardener and subsequently a member of the local association. On the www.alabamamg.org → **ACES RESOURCES** → **Guide to Developing a Mentoring Program**. Two examples are SHOALS Master Gardeners and BALDWIN COUNTY Master Gardeners. Contact one of these associations with questions or for updated information.

Appendix C - MASTER GARDENER SERVICE HOURS PROGRAM

PART I – The Program

As a Master Gardener volunteer, you represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. As a representative, your goal is to help people improve their quality of life by sharing research-based, non-biased information. This might be done through Extension programs or through your own creative endeavors.

All volunteer service must be accepted or approved by the Local MG Coordinator [County Extension Agent]. Using the on-line service report <https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/mgmanager/login/> makes annual reports easier to accomplish.

Four questions for validating volunteer work:

- Will it benefit the community?
- Is it associated with a non-commercial group?
- Is it related to gardening, the environment, or an Extension program?
- Are you helping people learn?

If you can answer yes to these four questions, then the activity meets the mission of the Master Gardener program and you should count it in your annual service report.

Hours should be done through a variety of activities. You more effectively represent the program and its mission when considering a variety of audiences to interact with during activities. Examples: All documented hours relate to business meetings, or all hours relate to writing a single article in the quarterly newsletter, or all hours are in an annual bed at the botanic garden – these are one sided and perhaps miss the mission of the MG Program.

Following are examples for activities that count toward Master Gardener service hours.

Intern Master Gardener Volunteers

- Any activity accepted or approved by the Local MG Coordinator counts as volunteer hours. An Extension agent may request some of the Intern's time be done on a specific project or type of volunteer service. Interns are required to participate in and report a minimum of 50 volunteer hours to accomplish certification (2009 new requirement).
- Attendance at extramural educational meetings counts as volunteer hours.
- Travel time to and from a volunteer activity counts toward volunteer hours.
- Participation in Alabama Master Gardener association meetings (local and/or state) counts as volunteer hours
- Drive time to monthly MG association meetings ONLY counts when you are involved with a committee or have a specific responsibility at the meeting.

Certified Master Gardener Volunteers

- Any activity accepted or approved by the local MG Coordinator counts as volunteer hours. To encourage certified MGs to stay active in the program, it's required that they report a minimum of 25 volunteer hours annually.
- Time spent in Master Gardener Association business meetings counts as volunteer hours.
- Drive time to monthly AMG association meetings ONLY counts when you are involved with a committee or have a specific responsibility at the meeting
- Travel time to and from ALL other educational or volunteer activities counts as volunteer time.
- Time spent listening to an educational speaker or topic should be counted as CEUs. Certificates stating the number of CEUs are strongly recommended when organizing such events. Otherwise, a description of the location, speaker, topic presented, and amount of time can be included in the service report.
- Labor in your garden or someone else's in preparation for a program is volunteer time.
- Hours accumulated from one year to the next are called Lifetime Hours. The initial 50 hours earned upon certification are included in the Lifetime Hours total.

Using Volunteer Hours for Awards

To further give credit for volunteer time dedication, CEU hours and Volunteer hours should be combined for a gross total of volunteer time for the year (example: in 2009, Susie accomplished 20 CEU's and 180 volunteer hours for a total of 200 volunteer hours). This guideline began with hours earned in 2009.

Guidelines from IRS

[Due to the 2018 Federal Tax Law, the following is more than likely a moot set of instructions. Check with your tax advisor.]

Drive time: All drive time still counts for any and all activities if using these numbers in an itemized IRS tax deduction. Mileage expense for volunteers, as defined by the IRS, is deducted as a direct expense OR at the mileage rate. Mileage is a deduction for the vehicle on the owner's itemized tax form (see IRS publication)

Defining CEU's

These guidelines will help you decide if an activity should count toward CEU's:

- Does the activity have a specific learning objective?
- Is the speaker at the activity a recognized authority in the subject presented?

If you answer yes to these two questions, then count the activity toward your CEU's. If you are still in doubt, ask an Extension agent.

You should also count as CEU time spent researching a subject in preparation for presenting that subject to an audience be it through teaching a class, speaking as part of the speaker's bureau, writing an article for a publication, etc. Count CEU's by the number of hours present in the activity (example: you attend the Fall AMGA CEU workshop; there are three speakers giving a total of 3.5 hours of program; this equals 3.5 CEU's).

PART II – Volunteer Hours Category Guide

Examples of activities with explanations of Public Outreach, Educational Materials, Gardens, and MG Program Support can be found at:

www.alabamamg.org→AMGA INTERNAL→ACES Volunteer Hours Guide

This list is not all-inclusive. If you have questions about how your volunteer activity should be recorded, please check with your ACES Agent.

PART III – Using the On-Line Service Report System

The simplest way to enter your hours is on a computer at <https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/mgmanager/login/> If you keep a written log of your hours and the activities involved, when you have a monthly meeting, you can easily ask to use a computer in the ACES office or use a Help Line computer to enter your hours. If you are not a computer 'geek', just ask a MG friend who is comfortable using computers to enter your hours. If you have the documentation, the person who enters your hours can effectively 'clump' all of your hours, CEU's, etc. in less than 2 minutes for several months or the year. There is one rule that applies to all: backup paper documentation of your hours is a must!

In your intern classes you were instructed on how to create a Master Gardener Account and how to enter your hours once you become a Certified Master Gardener. Below are two videos that can help you out when it is just you and the computer and a memory lapse.

Videos:

How Do I Create A Master Gardener Account?

www.alabamamg.org → AMGA Internal → Master Gardener Service Report Log-in → How Do I Create a MG Account? → Follow the Directions that follow FIRST VISIT?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfr3e80FOnc&t=7s>

How Do I Enter My Volunteer Hours?

www.alabamamg.org → ACES RESOURCES → How Do I Enter My Volunteer Hours?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyfSvo8G-x0&t=7s>

PART IV – Volunteer Hours Coordinator – Duties and Responsibilities

A critical element in the Master Gardener Program is the recording and reporting of volunteer hours within the local association. It is important that an individual be appointed to develop a plan to encourage members to report volunteer hours; be familiar with the on-line report and assist local association members, in reporting hours, if necessary. This person's title is Volunteer Hours Coordinator [also known as 'the recorder'].

The Master Gardener Volunteer Hours reporting period is January 1 through December 31.

The Volunteer Hours Coordinator will:

- Outline a plan for members to record and report their volunteer hours
- Communicate to the members the guidelines regarding calculating volunteer hours as suggested above in **Part I – The Program** and **Part II – Volunteer Hours Category Guide**
- Report on volunteer hours at the monthly meetings
- Ensure that members, without Internet access, keep hand written documentation of their hours [description of volunteering], CEUs [description of topic and format], mileage driven, and non-ACES [including MGs] contacts; Record hours of these members online via the Volunteer Service Report; Obtain local association "recorder" username and password from the administrator of the ACES Volunteer Service Report; As recorder, you will need to enter the individual master gardener's name in the description section; as the system only allows you to record hours for the association and not individual members. Therefore, you must record the individual's name in the description section for each entry.
- Provide a consolidated association report to the local MG Extension Agent by December 31; The Extension Agent is required to submit his/her report to the State MG Program Coordinator.
- Access online, the cumulative records of individual members' volunteer service hours.
- Coordinate with the local treasurer to order appropriate stars (if participating in the Reach for the Stars Program) to be presented locally and to order gold or platinum badges to be presented at the annual state conference; Order form needs to be signed by an extension agent
- Coordinate with the local MG Extension Agent to ensure that candidates for the Top Hours of the Year and the Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Awards are submitted to the AMGA Awards Committee Chairperson by January 31 of the award year
- View activity totals for the entire county, for individual users, and the break down by category
 - Log in with recorder user name and password
 - Select "Activities" from the Content box on the left-hand side of the page
 - Click "View annual report by county"
 - Select the appropriate year from the 'drop down' box at the top and click "Get Statistics"
 - View Lifetime Hours by User

APPENDIX D

Example 1 - DUES TRACKER DATABASE [USE OF]

Small association example: East Central Alabama Master Gardeners

A narrative approach, submitted by Sheila Bolen, 2019

Jack and I are members of an association with 25 dues-paying members. Like other organizations, a few folks wear a lot of hats. We are not incorporated and we do not have a 'Policy and Procedure' manual, much less one that is hundreds of pages! We have one person that handles Dues Tracker, STARS, Badges AND is our Treasurer. In January, we changed officers, so I asked the outgoing Treasurer/Dues Trackers what that job entailed. This was her reply:

"The Dues Tracker is used to maintain a record of members, both locally and at the state level. As I received yearly dues for each individual, I checked to be sure their status was "active". If someone didn't renew, I changed their status to "inactive". I printed off all "unpaid" members so we could follow up to determine their interest in continuing in our association. After all dues were received, I reconciled the dues amount collected with the number of active members listed in the database. This determined the dues amount owed to AMGA and the amount to stay in our local treasury.

Occasionally it would be necessary to change personal information for a member in the Dues Tracker. On occasion, it was necessary to change a member who accidentally showed up in our database to the correct county database. This usually involved getting Kerry Smith, State Master Gardener Program Coordinator, to verify the correct organization."

The hardest part was getting members to pay their dues to her so she could get all the numbers run and send a check to state by the required date. We start reminding membership in October that dues must be paid by December 1st and we were still "harping" on them mid-December to pay their dues!

Our outgoing Treasurer is a Super Admin, as am I. Everything she entered into the database is as we were taught. The new Treasurer is also a Super Admin. The outgoing Treasure added: "I was in the first group when the new database rolled out and we had a session at a state conference to learn what to do."

We try to stay on top of the techy side of things!

When Dues Tracker was first introduced there were classes offered at conferences. Now Dues Tracker knowledge is passed along from one member to another as their duties end/shift.

Example 2 - DUES TRACKER DATABASE [USE OF]

Instructions for ALL associations

www.alabamamg.org→AMGA INTERNAL→AMGA Dues Tracker Database [Use of]

Submitted by Mary Howe, MGNA, 2018

APPENDIX E

CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST POLICY

What is a Conflict-of-Interest Policy and why should we consider having one!

Nonprofits enjoy the public's trust, and therefore must comply with a diverse array of legal and regulatory requirements. Nonprofits should have a written conflict of interest policy and statement. These should be applicable to board members and staff, as well as volunteers who have significant, independent decision-making authority regarding the resources of the organization. The policy and statement should be executed by covered individuals, both at the time of the individual's initial affiliation with the organization and at least annually thereafter. The conflict of interest policy should identify the types of conduct or transactions that raise conflict of interest concerns, should set forth procedures for disclosure of actual or potential conflicts, and should provide for review of individual transactions by the uninvolved members of the board of directors. The conflict of interest statement should provide space for the board member, employee or volunteer to disclose any known interests that the individual, or a member of the individual's immediate family, has in any business entity which transacts business with the organization. Nonprofits should have at least one designated representative who is responsible for ensuring that the organization is complying with both the letter and the spirit of federal and state laws that require disclosure of information to the public.

Below is a link to Chilton County Master Gardeners 8-page Conflict-of-Interest Policy. It may/may not meet all standards set above by the Alabama Association of Nonprofits that adheres to the Alabama state and federal laws regarding nonprofits.

<http://mg.aces.edu/chilton/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/2014/05/Conflict-of-Interest-Policy.pdf>

APPENDIX F

Pathways and Website Criteria

These guidelines can be found on the www.alabamamg.org →AMGA Publications & Forms.

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