



# SDSU Extension Volunteer Program

**Policy Guide**



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

## Welcome

Hello!

Thank you for your interest in serving as an SDSU Extension Volunteer!

Your time is a valuable asset. We know there are numerous opportunities where your time is needed. Therefore, we value the decision you have made to share your talents by contributing to the educational mission of SDSU Extension.

Our mission is important. As a Land Grant Institution, we are charged with the critical work of extending the opportunity of education, through the outreach of knowledge, to learners of all ages. As an SDSU Extension Volunteer, you will be empowered to deliver upon that critical mission. While your role will be defined to a certain extent by the organization, it will be more critically measured by your interests, passion, enthusiasm and commitment to serving the citizens of South Dakota – people that we call our neighbors and friends.

I am excited that you are joining our team and will be a partner with us in fulfilling our organizational mission.

Welcome to SDSU Extension!

With warm regards

Karla Trautman  
Director



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*Some content adapted with permission from University of Missouri Extension Volunteer Policy Guidebook.*

*Other sources: Corporation for National and Community Service; National Consortium for Justice Information Statistics*



# SDSU Extension Volunteer Program Policy Guidebook



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## About SDSU Extension

Welcome to SDSU Extension. We are South Dakota's source of un-biased, vetted, and relevant new knowledge generated from research. As a cornerstone of SDSU's land-grant university mission, SDSU Extension empowers citizens to be more competitive in a growing global economy through education and technical training or assistance.

Our purpose is to foster a learning community environment that serves as a lifelong network that provides farmers, ranchers, agribusiness, families, youth and communities with the research-based information and education needed to positively impact their quality of life, economic viability and environmental surroundings. In pursuit of this purpose, several core values support the mission of SDSU Extension and provide the foundation for the organization. They include:

### Educating:

- Hands On
- Research Based

### Engaging:

- All Citizens
- Community Central
- Service Ethic

### Empowering:

- Value Added Change
- Sustainable Growth

We accomplish our outreach mission by prioritizing efforts in the following program areas:

- Competitive Crop Systems

- Competitive Livestock Systems
- 4-H Youth Development
- Community Vitality
- Family, Food and Wellness

We actively seek partners who can help us accomplish what we cannot do alone. Our partners include state and federal agencies, peer education institutions, community-based groups, non-profit organizations, agricultural commodity groups, and volunteers. The benefits of these partnerships are better service for citizens, as well as efficient use of our state's precious and limited resources.

Our greatest resource is the people we employ to do this important work. SDSU Extension Field Specialists, based in one of eight Regional Centers across South Dakota, work directly with citizens. The SDSU Extension Regional Centers are located in Aberdeen, Lemmon, Mitchell, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Watertown, and Winner. In addition, SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisors, based in County Extension Offices, work directly with 4-H Youth Development programs. SDSU Extension Specialists support Field Specialists and 4-H Youth Program Advisors, based from the campus of SDSU or the West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City.

An important linchpin to our outreach and education efforts are the thousands of volunteers that help us educate and inform the public on a variety of important topics throughout the state.

## SDSU Extension Capstone Program Areas

### Agriculture and Natural Resources

SDSU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources

(ANR) staff provide educational opportunities and on-farm research assistance to South Dakota crop and livestock producers. Beyond production information topics and pesticide certification, ANR also focuses on the financial and marketing aspects of these agricultural operations.

### Community Vitality

SDSU Extension Community Vitality program offers research and evidence-based community development tools for building capacity in areas of entrepreneurial development, such as business plan writing and marketing, leadership skills workshops, community marketing for new resident recruitment, strategic planning for organizations and communities, community-based approach to workforce development, civic engagement processes, and non-profit board training.

### Family, Food and Wellness

SDSU Extension Family, Food and Wellness experts respond to some of the most pressing social challenges facing American communities and families through research-based educational programming. The Family, Food and Wellness Program provides leadership in the areas of Aging, Family Resource Management, Food Safety, Physical Activity, and Nutrition. This program also manages SDSU Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed); these programs provide health and wellness education to limited resource audiences across SD.

### 4-H

South Dakota 4-H is the youth development program for SDSU Extension. Through 4-H's educational mission, we help youth learn by experiential learning while developing life skills. 4-H helps youth become responsible citizens who lead healthy and productive lives.

### SDSU Extension Volunteers

The University defines volunteers as uncompensated individuals who perform services directly related to the business of the University, support the activities of the University, or gain experience in specific endeavors. By definition, volunteers perform services without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation, future employment or any other tangible benefit.

SDSU Extension volunteers must be formally registered with SDSU Extension. All individuals formally registered as SDSU Extension volunteers follow the same rules and have the ability to volunteer across SDSU Extension

program disciplines and throughout the state. Examples of coordinated volunteer programs within the SDSU Extension structure are:

**4-H:** 4-H volunteers help advance the many 4-H programs throughout South Dakota that help youth engage in experiential learning, advancing their ability to become responsible citizens who lead healthy and productive lives.

**Master Gardeners:** Through the SDSU Extension Master Gardener program, interested volunteers receive training in horticulture and environmental topics of special value to home gardeners. In exchange for their training, SDSU Extension Master Gardeners share their time and knowledge on current, research-based, consumer horticulture information within their communities.

**Better Choices, Better Health South Dakota:** SDSU Extension volunteers help mobilize this statewide effort to implement a chronic disease self-management program that is designed to help people gain self-confidence in their ability to manage their symptoms related to chronic conditions and understand how their health problems affect their lives.

**Master Health Volunteer Money Mentor:** This program will certify individuals to provide personal finance workshops in their communities for various workplaces, service organizations and other non-profit groups.

**Master Food Preserver:** A Master Food Preserver is a volunteer who helps extend SDSU Extension's food preservation educational workshops to individuals and communities across the state by teaching community classes, staffing displays at events and serving as a resource for food safety related questions.

For more information on SDSU Extension volunteer programs or opportunities, visit [extension.sdstate.edu](http://extension.sdstate.edu).

### Benefits of Volunteerism

Volunteers provide many benefits to the organizations and people they serve such as providing capacity-building services, strengthening communities and improving lives. But research indicates that volunteerism is good for the individual serving as well. Not only can an individual gain a sense of pride, satisfaction and accomplishment through volunteerism but they can also improve their health and enhance employment opportunities.

According to the Corporation for National and

Community Service's study, "Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment," volunteerism can aid an individual in advancing their career opportunities:

- Volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers
- Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher likelihood of finding employment
- Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher likelihood of finding employment
- Volunteering while searching for gainful employment can build skills and enhance personal networks, key elements positively related to employment outcomes.

Over the past two decades we have also seen a growing body of research that shows an association between volunteering and mental and physical health benefits. In particular, older volunteers report lower mortality rates, lower rates of depression, fewer physical limitations, and higher levels of well-being.

## Types Of Volunteers

Short term volunteers typically do not have time to commit to volunteering long term, but are a great resource to get a specific project or key project elements done (ex: help deliver a Clover bud lesson, prepare materials for a Master Gardener program).

Episodic volunteers will come and go based on the project and their involvement with it. These volunteers typically do not want to commit to a long-term project but are willing to help with a project if specific duties are outlined and they feel comfortable with the subject area (ex: Master Gardener farmer's market coordinator, dog leader, project day coordinator).

Long term volunteers are available to help in various areas of the program and are usually familiar with the program coming into the volunteer role; they are comfortable in leadership roles and can start to take over some of the operations of certain projects or clubs (ex. Club leaders, Master Gardener club president, and afterschool coordinator).

Prospective volunteers should be honest with SDSU Extension representatives about the type of volunteerism they are most comfortable with.

## Volunteer Eligibility

Any current or former employee, student, alumnus or other individual may volunteer for SDSU Extension, with the following restrictions:

1. In general, individuals under the age of 16 may not serve as University volunteers; however, the

University may authorize individuals under the age of 16 to serve as University volunteers at its discretion and in accordance with state law;

2. An individual who is under the age of 18 and authorized to serve as a University volunteer may only become a University volunteer with written parental consent and written approval from HR.
3. An employee may not become a University volunteer in any capacity in which they are employed by the University, or which is essentially similar to the individual's regular work at the University, or under circumstances that suggest the decision to volunteer is not made freely;
4. All volunteers must establish proof of identity and citizenship or permanent residency; and
5. If the individual is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, they must provide documentation of their visa status. An individual holding a temporary visa may not serve as a volunteer in a position where others receive compensation or perform the same services. An individual with a pending H-1B visa application to work at the University cannot serve as a volunteer. Volunteer status may not be used as a way to avoid or defer compliance with the employment eligibility requirements of federal immigration laws.

## Volunteer Selection and Enrollment Process

The purpose of the volunteer selection process is to help ensure the appropriate selection and placement of volunteers for SDSU Extension activities, and to provide documentation of volunteer selection and placement. This will help ensure a successful experience for both the volunteer and SDSU Extension.

**Identification:** Program needs that can be fulfilled by volunteers are identified. A volunteer role description will be created or updated. Staff may work with existing volunteers to recruit additional volunteers.

**Selection:** SDSU Extension requires all volunteer applicants to complete several steps in order to be considered for current volunteer roles. Going through the application steps does not guarantee placement. Once an individual identifies the volunteer opportunity to which they want to apply, the following steps should be followed.

- Apply to become a volunteer – note that Capstones may have different application processes to best suit the needs of their program.
- Interview with SDSU Extension Personnel and/or take volunteer training course that might require certification prior to service (e.g. Master Gardener training).

- Receive selection as a volunteer prospect from SDSU Extension Personnel
- Review and complete a volunteer work agreement form and submit it to the appropriate Capstones listed on the form. This is required to be considered an active SDSU Extension volunteer.
  - The Capstone will provide the volunteer with the link to the University “on-line” form, which they will need to complete. The Office of Human Resources will review the volunteer work agreement and other associated forms, conduct any applicable background checks, and notify the Capstone contact in writing whether the volunteer engagement is approved, denied or terminated and will also note any applicable restrictions on volunteer service.
- If required, complete a background check
- Receive notification from Capstone as to status of selection of a SDSU Extension volunteer
- If required, pay volunteer program or course fees
- Sign an assurance statement – required as part of the civil rights plan assuring volunteers will not discriminate.
- Participate in general and program-specific orientation as required by the Capstone for which you are serving.
- If required, register and report into any online systems required of the program for which you are volunteering

When accessibility is an issue for a volunteer prospect, staff shall provide alternatives to web-based requirements listed above (example: paper/written format)

## Policies

An SDSU Extension volunteer is considered an agent of the University while performing assigned duties and is expected to abide by the policies of the South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR), South Dakota State University (the University), and SDSU Extension as well as any state and federal laws and regulations which govern their actions. Policies are put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

## Code of Conduct

SDSU Extension strives to provide a safe, nurturing environment for youth and vulnerable adults participating in its programs. Therefore, SDSU Extension has behavioral expectations for adults who volunteer in its programs. These expectations are written in the code of conduct policy form and available to those who wish to be volunteers.

## Volunteer Work Agreement Form

As noted, a volunteer work agreement is required to be completed by each participating volunteer. Participants are not recognized as SDSU Extension volunteers until such time as a volunteer work agreement is received and processed by SDSU Human Resources and all other volunteer requirements are met. Per SDBOR Policy 5:14.C.1, volunteers will need to submit their 9 digit social security number at the time of registration.

## Background Check System

In many cases SDSU Extension volunteer roles will include one or several of the following: provide programs to vulnerable individuals, minors, or persons with a disability; operate a motor vehicle; have access to confidential or private data files; have access to substantial SDSU Extension financial resources; and have key access to facilities. Therefore, most SDSU Extension volunteers are required to submit to a background check, including a criminal history background check, prior to initiation of service. It is prudent to ensure that volunteers acting on behalf of SDSU Extension are vetted. If you are a parent, you have a legitimate right to assurance that your child is safe, whether at school or engaged in an activity sponsored by SDSU Extension. If you are the adult child of an elderly parent, you want to know your loved one is not a target for abuse if they are a participant in an SDSU Extension program administered by volunteers.

Criminal history background check procedures are handled professionally and confidentially through SDSU’s Human Resource office. Still, we understand that some volunteers might be uncomfortable with a criminal history background check. However, in order to protect all those we serve through SDSU Extension, it is a requirement to submit to a background check should the volunteer role require it.

## Civil Rights

As a land-grant university, South Dakota State University is a recipient of federal financial assistance. The United States Department of Agriculture is responsible for enforcing civil rights regulations for land-grant universities, and as such requires the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to perform periodic reviews to ensure that all Extension programs and activities are implemented in a manner that treats every customer and employee with equality, dignity, and respect.

SDSU Extension maintains a civil rights plan, which is a document consisting of all the necessary components used to help with the understanding of civil rights laws. This includes regulations, policies, statements,

procedures and other information that describe SDSU Extension's commitment to comply with civil rights laws.

As a publicly funded organization, SDSU Extension and all associated programs comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Educational Amendments, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The University and SDSU Extension follow all civil rights policies of the SDBOR.

### **Civil Rights Training**

All volunteers will participate in civil rights training within 90 days of their start of service with SDSU Extension. Training will be provided by the supervisor of the volunteer program in which the volunteer is enrolled or volunteers will have an opportunity to participate in a civil rights training via webinar.

### **Signing Assurance Statements**

Volunteers and leaders of SDSU Extension volunteer clubs will be asked to sign an assurance statement certifying that they will not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, gender identification, transgender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other status that may become protected under the law against discrimination. SDSU Extension volunteers and volunteer clubs must take care to ensure that any entity with which they enter into any collaborative work abides by these same standards.

### **Reporting Contacts**

The federal government requires that all Extension personnel report educational contacts for all programs and activities. It also requires that participation is balanced with minorities and other protected audiences. If this balance (parity) is not achieved, special efforts to include these audiences must be made. At the time of orientation, volunteers will be provided with training and tools that will allow them to properly report contacts throughout their service with SDSU Extension.

Under federal law, SDSU Extension cannot provide any service to or be associated with any club, organization, business or entity that knowingly practices discrimination. As such, SDSU Extension requires assurance statements to be signed by all clubs, volunteers, educational partners, cooperating organizations and entities in order to document the mutual commitment to federal civil rights laws, and to the policies of the SDBOR and the University.

## **Reporting Service Hours**

Volunteer service is valuable to SDSU Extension. Capturing specific service-hour information is important. This provides a means to promote the value of volunteerism for the institution and properly recognize the volunteer for their achievements through their work at this institution. As a result, volunteers might be asked to report their number of hours served through an online reporting system. Some SDSU Extension programs, such as Master Gardeners, have this as a requirement of their program while others simply request it as an optional item. Directions on how to complete this activity will be given to the volunteer after they become a recognized, active volunteer.

## **Accessibility of Services and Facilities**

Volunteers coordinating services or events on behalf of SDSU Extension are asked to be sure that facilities used for that purpose ensure equal access to persons with disabilities. If a facility is not accessible, and a location-change is not possible, programs and services must be provided through an alternative method or an alternative location. Accommodation requests should be accommodated as effectively as possible. Requests may not be rejected without attempting to fill them. Requests need not be in writing. All requests for accommodations should be documented.

If you or a member of the public you are serving in your role as volunteer for SDSU Extension requests accommodation, please immediately direct them to the SDSU Office of Disability Services or SDSU Human Resources so they can make the inquiry for special accommodation:

South Dakota State University  
605-688-4504  
[sdstate.edu/disability-services](https://sdstate.edu/disability-services)

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, SDSU Extension is committed to providing equal access to educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. SDSU Extension realizes that individuals with disabilities may need accommodations to participate in educational programs, activities and services. This includes educational materials and supplies as well as the physical facilities.

## **Reporting of Concerns**

The SDSU Office of Title IX/Equal Opportunity responds to reports, concerns, and inquiries about harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct, which includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. We assist



students, employees, program participants, and campus visitors, regardless of where the misconduct took place.

Federal regulations require the University to take immediate action to eliminate harassment, discrimination, or sexual misconduct, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. Universities are required to adopt and publish grievance procedures for students who complain of sex or gender discrimination.

If someone tells you about, or you overhear, information that may pertain to Title IX or Equal Opportunity, contact the Title IX/EO Compliance Coordinator immediately. Title IX/EO investigations are separate from a law enforcement investigation, even when a police report is filed. The University is required to conduct an independent investigation that is prompt, thorough and impartial.

### **Reporting Concerns**

If your concern requires immediate assistance, please dial 911 or contact the University Police Department at 605-688-5117 (111 from any campus phone).

To make an online report, go to: [lighthouse-services.com/sdstate](https://lighthouse-services.com/sdstate). You may also call the toll-free hotline at 1-844-880-0004. The online report and hotline are provided by Lighthouse Reports. You may choose to remain anonymous when providing information.

To make a report in person, please contact the Office of Title IX/EO at 605-688-4128 or visit us in Morrill Hall, room 100.

### **Using Research-Based Information**

Providing research-based information is at the core of Extension's work, purpose and mission. Extension volunteers are expected to uphold university research-based findings even when the information is new or different from a volunteer's personal experience or opinion.

While it is important to respect individual beliefs, Extension volunteers are expected to make recommendations based on scientifically defensible information from SDSU or other reputable sources.

If the program requires, volunteers should ensure that the information is relevant to South Dakota. For example, information obtained from a university in the southeast portion of the United States would likely be well-vetted information, however, it would not necessarily be relevant to South Dakota's climate, conditions or hardiness zones. Using common sense and academic-based sources should ensure accuracy. When in doubt,

feel free to contact your program sponsor for clarity.

### **Using the SDSU Extension Volunteer Title**

The title "SDSU Extension Volunteer" or any variation of an SDSU Extension volunteer title such as "4-H Club Leader" or "SDSU Extension Master Gardener" should only be used when doing unpaid volunteer work for SDSU Extension, when you are a registered volunteer with the organization, and when you have met all requirements of the specific program in which you are participating. It should not be used to imply that SDSU Extension is endorsing any product or place of business. Volunteers may accept unsolicited reimbursements or gifts, unless prohibited by SDSU or SDBOR policies, or state or federal law. A volunteer stops being a volunteer if they are able to use their volunteer status to actively obtain compensation or some kind of gift/tangible benefit. An unsolicited gift or reimbursement suggests no pay for performance.

SDSU Extension Volunteers should not advertise or promote their places of business while volunteering as an Extension volunteer nor solicit business while engaged in authorized SDSU Extension activities because of their training as a volunteer. When performing volunteer activities, volunteers are agents of SDSU Extension. Appearing at a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied university endorsement of any product or business is improper. SDSU Extension and all of its volunteer programs must be viewed as a source of unbiased, research-based information.

Some SDSU Extension volunteer programs require renewal of certification and/or completion of forms annually. If the participant fails to comply with SDSU Extension standards, they are no longer allowed to use the SDSU Extension title. An individual may nevertheless list his or her relevant volunteer education and volunteer service experience on a resume.

### **Using Logos/Branding**

When using the SDSU Extension brand or logo, volunteers and volunteer groups should ensure they are meeting the standards outlined in the graphic identity standards manual. See sidebar with SDSU Extension-specific standards. [sdstate.edu/university-marketing-communications/graphic-identity-standards/sdsu-extension](https://sdstate.edu/university-marketing-communications/graphic-identity-standards/sdsu-extension)

### **Liability Coverage**

According to University Policy 4:8, the University provides workers' compensation coverage to properly certified University volunteers acting within the scope of

assigned duties in conformity with applicable law. This includes volunteers for SDSU Extension.

In addition, the Public Entity Pool for Liability (PEPL) (see SDCL 47-23-29) covers volunteers who conduct activities under the supervision of SDSU Extension employees (exception: 4-H volunteers). 4-H volunteers are not covered by the PEPL fund, instead they pay annual dues to purchase excess liability coverage.

It is critical that the roles and responsibilities of volunteers be documented in written form before an accident happens. The documentation should show the role of the volunteer.

In the event of an accident, contact the SDSU Extension Director's Office at 605-688-4792 to initiate the claim process.

### **Vehicle Use**

Only SDSU employees, SDSU volunteers with approved volunteer status, and other state agency employees can drive or ride in a vehicle issued by Motor Pool. The intended use for the vehicle must be for purposes of the course and scope of employment or volunteer duties. In order to obtain Volunteer status, a volunteer work agreement must be completed with the SDSU Human Resources Department.

Prior to using a state vehicle, volunteers should obtain the express written permission of an SDSU Extension official.

Upon issuance of the vehicle, Motor Pool personnel will verify the driver's status as either employee or volunteer. A valid US drivers license will need to be displayed.

SDSU Extension Volunteers should NOT transport youth.

SDSU Extension 4-H staff should refer to the SDSU Extension 4-H travel policy regarding transportation of youth.

### **Volunteer Renewal**

Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the SDBOR and the University. Volunteer appointment may be renewed at the sole pleasure of the SDBOR and the University. If the SDBOR or the University elects to renew a volunteer appointment, it may do so under whatever changed or additional terms and conditions it chooses.



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

**SDSU EXTENSION**

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at [extension.sdstate.edu](https://extension.sdstate.edu).

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