

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Expanding Extension outreach through Money Mastery Mentors

### AT A GLANCE

To meet the demand for research-based programs, a three-semester "financial fun club" empowers volunteers to expand their financial knowledge to help Extension educators elevate their outreach.

### The Situation

According to a survey from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, one in three Americans making six-figure salaries are worried about paying their bills and future expenses. Now focusing on individuals earning \$40,000 or less, over 56% have experienced challenging financial disruptions in the last 12 months. With mortgages and rent, gas and food, and childcare costs all tripling or quadrupling in recent years, individuals and families are making tough choices regarding their stagnant paychecks. The current state of the economy is affecting most U.S. citizens. With this comes a greater demand for research-based Extension financial programming. Stakeholders are reaching out to trusted sources for significant solutions. With more interest than there are hours in the day, Extension educators are presented with an opportunity. How do we scale our impact without sacrificing quality? It's time to think bigger, innovate faster and find new ways to multiply our reach.

### Our Response

Empower. Educate. Elevate. Since cloning ourselves is probably not the answer, it does pose an interesting idea. Drawing from the Master Family & Consumer Sciences Volunteer Program by USDA/NIFA &

**EXPANDING EXTENSION OUTREACH THROUGH MONEY MASTERY MENTORS (M<sup>3</sup>)**

**The Extension Educator's Programming Dilemma**  
The demand for research-based Extension financial programming is skyrocketing, but there's a bigger challenge—we simply can't be everywhere at once. With more stakeholders eager to learn than there are hours in the day, we are presented with an opportunity.

**The Program Layout**  
**Semester 1:** Learning the essentials of Extension and financial literacy—covering budgeting, credit and debt management, banking, business marketing, and event planning.  
**Semester 2:** Gaining hands-on experience by volunteering in elementary and high school financial education programs, as well as at our yearly financial community conference.  
**Semester 3:** Leading classes and programs with guidance, applying newfound skills in real-world settings.  
Upon completion, those who wish to continue can officially become **Money Mastery Mentors**, ready to help spread financial literacy and support communities using the tools, materials, and knowledge they've acquired. Together, we're creating a network of financial leaders who are equipped to make a lasting impact.

**Initial Program Launch Outcome**  
Launching **Money Mastery Mentors** was slow. Early outreach to college students received little interest as many preferred traditional internships. However, the program's unique design focuses on building confidence through in-depth learning and hands-on training.  
In Fall 2024, I reintroduced it as a flexible "club" for internship credit and expanded it to the public, filling nearly all spots in the pilot. The first cohort starts in October 2024, with another planned for October 2025 to maintain momentum.

**How do we scale our impact without sacrificing quality?**  
It's time to think bigger, innovate faster, and find new ways to multiply our reach.

**Empower. Educate. Elevate.**  
Since cloning ourselves is probably not the answer, it does pose an interesting idea. **Money Mastery Mentors** was designed to extend the reach of financial literacy education while empowering volunteers with crucial knowledge about Extension, personal finance, and community and child development. Creating a ripple effect of positive change—where volunteers grow as mentors, communities thrive, and the next generation is equipped with the tools for financial success.

**Building Financial Leaders of Tomorrow**  
Why reinvent the wheel when we can innovate and expand on proven success? Drawing from the Master Family & Consumer Sciences Volunteer Program by USDA/NIFA & Montana State University Extension, I created a unique "mini" three-semester internship that empowers volunteers to become **Money Mastery Mentors**.

**Learned Leadership: Growth on the Go!**  
Launching a new program means securing buy-in from those involved. While the **Money Mastery Mentors** program is a longer commitment, it's not time-intensive each week. To attract college students and community members, I promote it as a fun and unique opportunity to learn, serve, and build your community.  
Success is the goal, but I'm ready to adapt as needed. The support of my Extension director, community members, and leaders is crucial to making this program thrive!

**Embracing My Growth and Adaptation**  
Persistence is key when nurturing good ideas, but it's equally important to recognize when something needs to change. I'm committed to the **Money Mastery Mentors** program, understanding that it requires a different kind of commitment. I'm willing to wait for volunteers who are truly ready to go the distance with me. Success comes from knowing when to adapt, and when to hold on to what truly matters.

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**SCAN ME**

Poster presentation from Western Extension Leadership Development Conference.

Montana State University Extension and the Montana Master Gardener Program, the educator created a unique "mini" three-semester "financial fun club" that empowers volunteers to become Money Mastery Mentors. This program is designed to extend the reach of financial literacy education while empowering volunteers with essential knowledge about Extension, leadership and training, marketing and program branding, personal finance, and community and child development while creating a ripple effect of positive change—where volunteers grow as mentors, communities thrive and the next generation is equipped with the tools for financial success.

Although this is a longer commitment than most programs, the mentors only serve 16 hours each semester

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making it easy for college and high school students as well as the community-at-large to participate. In addition, for college students wanting to earn internship credit, the program has the capacity to accommodate 40 volunteer hours per semester through the University of Idaho Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Money Mastery Mentors (M3) is designed to spread the learning experience over time. In the first semester, the cohort participates in eight two-hour sessions where they learn about Extension, our role in the community and financial literacy — covering budgeting, credit and debt management, banking, business marketing and event planning. In the second semester, participants gain hands-on experience by shadowing educator facilitation of events in elementary and high school financial education programs, as well as at the annual financial community conference. By the third semester, with educator guidance and support, mentors are leading the events that they observed and assisted with, applying newfound skills in real-world settings. Upon program completion, M3 will be called on (if they choose) to help reach additional classes and audiences in Latah County, in Idaho and in the region. The classes are scheduled through the University of Idaho Extension office and all the materials, supplies, program props and support will be shared with the mentors.

### Program Outcomes

The initial program launch in 2023 was slow. Early outreach to college students received little interest as many preferred traditional internships. However, the program's unique design focuses on building confidence through in-depth learning and hands-on training requiring the extended layout. In fall 2024, the educator reintroduced it as a flexible "club" for internship credit and expanded it to the public, filling all spots in the pilot with a waiting list. The first cohort started in October 2024 with seven club pioneers, with another cohort planned for October 2025 to maintain momentum.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Volunteers are crucial to programming and often hard to find. By offering the program every fall, M3 cohorts will continue to expand program outreach and will produce new volunteers each year. According to the Nonprofit Leadership Center, as of April 2024, the national value of each volunteer hour was \$33.49. This is a 5.3% increase from 2022. To put this into perspective, in the 2024-25 school year, there are over 346 volunteer hour opportunities. M3 has the potential this year alone to save over \$11,587 in manpower hours reaching those that need the information the most. Without volunteers, many of these programs would not be possible.

The investment in training this group is minimal compared to the prospective trained volunteer pool it will provide. The free pilot program in October 2024 is being offered in exchange for feedback and refinement of the program. In October 2025, a second cohort will be recruited to extend the volunteer pool with a \$75 charge for the program. This will cover the costs of materials and attrition if the participants choose not to volunteer in the future semesters. For those that complete the three semesters, they will be reimbursed \$50 for their volunteer time and new opportunities will be presented to them to ensure continued participation.

This project was developed in collaboration with the University of Idaho Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and the Western Extension Leadership Development (WELD) cohort. Working with FCS professors and recruiting students helped define necessary requirements and the value of the program. As a WELD project, the educator was able to collaborate with other UI Extension educators to polish this program for transferability and sustainability and presented a poster in September 2024 at the WELD conference on learned challenges and successes of developing this program.

### The Future

Although in its infancy, Money Mastery Mentors is already creating a network of financial leaders who are equipped to make a lasting impact on communities.