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W1NRG

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Motivating Amateur Radio Clubs to Open New Initiatives (MARCONI)

Program 0:

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Operational Guidelines

User's Guide to Implementing the MARCONI Program

Introduction

The MARCONI program is designed to facilitate collaboration and mutual support among amateur radio clubs, categorized into Higher Activity Clubs (HAC) and Lower Activity Clubs (LAC). As is quoted in the MARCONI introduction on the Web Page on the ARRL website (see: ARRL.org/Marconi), the MARCONI Program was developed by the Meriden Amateur Radio Club (MARC – W1NRG) in Wallingford, CT 06492, as part of a grant to MARC awarded through the ARDC-ARRL club grant program beginning in September 2022. The MARCONI Project has two components at present. MARCONI-I is designed to organize and assess **your** clubs activities to see what Elmering opportunities are available. MARCONI-II is designed as an **outreach program** for HACs to Elmer (assist) LACs, clubs that are less active. HACs, Elmering LACs in their area, is the essence of the MARCONI Project. Clubs helping Clubs. The name MARCONI references both the early radio innovator and inventor,

and it is an acronym for **Motivating Amateur Radio Clubs to Open New Initiatives**. It is hoped that this program will provide assistance to clubs that are looking to increase membership, increase activity, and to grow their amateur radio presence and influence in the hobby and in their community. **Strong local clubs form the backbone of the future of amateur radio.** Clubs helping clubs is basically one level up from hams helping hams.

As part of this program we have developed a series of Operational Guidelines (OGs) which are listed on the ARRL MARCONI home page (arrl.org/Marconi). There are currently 15 OGs listed. These concise pamphlets are intended to provide a reference library for clubs considering on becoming a part of the MARCONI Program. It lets them know what effort it takes to establish the various activities being discussed, along with benefits, equipment needs, limitations, pitfalls, costs and other considerations. This Guide outlines the steps that should be considered when your club is deciding if the MARCONI Program would be helpful to support amateur radio clubs in your area. The User's Guide (OG #0) spells out what a HAC club needs to consider when starting a MARCONI Program – it is a 'How To Guide'. There are 5 basic components to consider when starting a MARCONI Program: **E L M E R. Evaluation, Learning, Motivation, Education, and Rollout.** These components are outlined below. As we discuss various components of the Program we will reference the OGs that can provide assistance in helping the HAC to determine how much effort it will take to Elmer an LAC. For an LAC, it discusses what support they might be able to request from their local HAC. It's all about Clubs helping Clubs. See the Club Corner Column in August 2024 QST, for a description of the MARC MARCONI Program.

Categories and Steps

E. L. M. E. R.



EVALUATION OF THE HIGHER ACTIVITY CLUB (HAC)

Objective:

Evaluate the internal organization of the HAC, its nearby radio clubs, and determine the degree to which the HAC has resources, and how much outreach activity their members might be willing to provide and support.

Steps:

1. Take an Inventory of Your Clubs Activities to Determine What Your Club Can Offer Other Clubs:

Assess the scope of your club's activities (See a list of MARC's activities - Appendix I) - You should identify a Program leader for each planned outreach activity in your Club. The Program Leader is central to this effort. (See the Organizational Chart of MARC Activities – Appendix II).

2. Identify LAC Targets to Focus Your Clubs Outreach Efforts:

To start, use the ARRL's Affiliated Clubs list to identify potential target Lower Activity Clubs --- LACs), those clubs in need of members or those that are inactive. Bear in mind that some clubs may just need limited help with one area such as assistance converting from paper-based VE Sessions to Digital VE Sessions, or setting up POTA activities.

3. Catchment Area:

Define the geographical area your Club will cover. Are there other clubs in your area that can assist or join in with your efforts?

4. Seek Input From the ARRL:

Contact your ARRL Section Manager (SM), Affiliated Club Coordinator (ACC), or Division Director for recommendations on LAC Clubs in need of support. They are in a good position to know the status of clubs in your local area and should be a very valuable resource.

5. Analyze Needs:

Evaluate the number of target clubs and their degree of need. Do not try to "boil the ocean." When starting, limit your degree of commitment to what your club can likely follow through with; you can always provide more support later. Bear in mind the limits of your members' availability.

6. Evaluate overall membership interest in Elmering:

Not all club members will be willing to participate. Do you have a critical mass of members who can commit? Do not just ask for a sign-up list, you likely will need to speak personally to potential Program leaders in your Club, to get the most cooperation.

7. Assess available human resources:

Are adequate numbers of club members available; are there serious member mobility issues, health issues; other restrictions, etc.

8. Assess your Club's financial resources:

Does your Club have the financial resources to assist other clubs; does the LAC have 501(c)(3) designation; can the club apply for one or for reinstatement; should the club apply for grants from ARRL or other sources

9. Determine your Club's temperament and readiness to be an Elmer

Is your Club inner-directed or outer-directed; are they ready and willing to export their knowledge to other clubs and give of their time

10. Determine your club's infrastructure:

Is loaner equipment available; does your club have adequate gear for other clubs to share in the activity; will your members object to sharing?

11. Identify project leaders and program leaders:

Having a MARCONI Program Director and Leader for each Program chosen, is requisite; without leadership the effort will not likely be successful. If there are only a few such club leaders willing to commit, it is best to limit the extent of the MARCONI Program your club can offer. MARCONI needs a top-down effort, not bottom-up. The club's Officers need to be fully behind this initiative.

12. Develop an organizational chart and list of club activities.

As mentioned, see Appendices I and II that show MARC Programs that are available and note each Program has a named leader.

13. Evaluate Club Shack capabilities:

Is your club able to host a chosen activity either indoors or outdoors?



LEARN ABOUT THE LOWER ACTIVITY CLUB (LAC)

Objective:

Evaluate the INTERNAL environment of the LAC and determine any other (target) club's need(s); also analyze the scope of involvement the other LAC Club members are likely to be willing to accept. Is the LAC willing to cooperate?

Steps:

1. Contact LAC's Officers:

Reach out to the LAC officers through their listed contact details. Try a phone call, or introduce yourself at an event such as a POTA or Fox Hunt. A personal introduction, however, is far better than a phone call or e-mail.

2. Introduce the MARCONI Program:

Explain the MARCONI project and offer your Club's support. Bear in mind some LAC's may think you are really trying to "raid" their remaining members and might be quite dismissive of your offer of help. So, it's best to be polite and low pressure if you are first meeting a club with members you do not know. If you have a contact at the target club by all means involve that person who can attest to your genuine intention to be helpful. Offer to start by providing the Questionnaire (Appendix III)

3. Determine the LAC's Interest in MARCONI

Gauge their interest in participating. Perhaps initially ask if they are interested in being interested. (Again be low key – high pressure or know-it-all tactics likely will not result in a successful interaction). Do not demean the LAC – if they feel disrespected they will not want to participate. The saying "Only one chance to make a first impression" is applicable here.

4. Suggest They Fill Out a Questionnaire:

A key starting tool is the Club Questionnaire seen in Appendix-III. This is an excellent first step to determining if the HAC can assist an LAC. Using this survey tool, the HAC can assess the type and degree of help that an LAC might need and whether your club can provide assistance. If all the LAC wants is to set up a satellite program and your club does not have one, it is not likely to be a useful interaction, It is a good idea to start by sending the Questionnaire to the LAC leadership by email. They can then decide how to respond to your offer of support. If they do not send back the questionnaire in a timely manner – you might try one call to remind them. If they never respond – you have the answer to your question "are they interested in the Program"? Feel free to modify the Questionnaire as you see fit.

5. Review Club Governance Documents:

If the LAC is in disarray and if they are willing to share, obtain copies of their Constitution and By-laws to review and see if these documents might be useful in stimulating the LAC to “start up again”. Also inquire about their 501(c)(3) - not for profit status; there is an OG on legal and 501(c)(3) issues. Inquire if one of their members is an attorney who can assist with some of the legal paperwork needed to register with their Secretary of State or renew as a not-for-profit. For MARCONI to work the LAC must have a President or leader who can take responsibility for working with the HAC or at least be able to delegate this to another member or officer. LACs need elected officers if they are to progress and become active again.

6. Assess the LAC’s Infrastructure:

Determine the LAC’s resources. Do they have a shack or meeting space, a website, a newsletter, a logo, an active FCC license; review their current status --- are these items active. If they are lacking they should be updated – this may need help from IT savvy HAC club members. Do they have a Post Office Box (POB) to receive club (snail) mail. Do they have any Nets, what activities do they have. This is where the questionnaire is invaluable.

7. Workload Management:

As the HAC, do not try to assist too many clubs at once. Once word gets out you are helpful – you might be inundated with request for help and money. You must manage the workload effectively or you will antagonize your club members.

Motivating HAC's & LAC's to Stay Active in MARCONI

Objective:

Motivate both HAC and LAC to become active and stay engaged in MARCONI

1. Publicize Efforts:

Importantly, obtain permission from your HAC and the LAC to use the Clubs (and any members) names on social media, in club newsletters, on web sites, and in local newspapers to promote the MARCONI project. If you have any mass media contacts (local paper or TV or Radio stations, let them know what the MARCONI Program is about. Post signs in libraries to publicize the LAC to attempt to recruit new members. One activity to increase membership that works well is to send letters to hams in the LAC's catchment area inviting the to join the club. The names of hams in the area can be found on the FCC or QRZ.com websites. Emails or snail mails both work well. Postage can be expensive so emails might be preferred. If there is no email address- mail a letter to the ham.

2. Share Progress:

Present your achievements at Amateur Radio conventions and hamfests. Spread the word at flea markets. Update relevant ARRL officials, local Section Managers and Division Directors. Make the case that HAC's are doing their share to ensure the viability, activity and relevancy of amateur radio. Continue to promote MARCONI among other area LACs.

3. Publicize the equation:

Healthy Radio Clubs = Healthy Amateur Radio

4. Foster Gratitude:

Encourage the LAC to show gratitude to the HAC at meetings. In turn, the HAC should praise the LAC for its efforts. The HAC should foster camaraderie among existing and new LAC members.

5. Ensure the HAC shows the LAC they are committed to their success

The HAC should consider having a few of its members join the LAC as a show of support and encouragement for their growth.

6. Substantial Support the HAC Might be Asked to Consider:

Some LAC's near dissolution might need more than minimal support. The HAC might be asked to consider helping with a wide spectrum of assistance. Requests could include being asked to consider: assistance in finding a clubhouse or a shack; setting up a station to get the LAC back OnAir; assistance in obtaining financial support (helping with a flea market fundraiser, etc); helping in finding loaner gear; helping to set up VE sessions or guidance in switching from paper VE sessions to digital ones; sending e- or snail mail letters out to hams in the area to encourage new members to join the LAC – [bear in mind it only takes a few new (young) members to turn around an LAC and develop a nucleus of active members]; hold face to face or Zoom/Teams meeting to provide support for the LAC; help with establishing short and long term goals; inviting the LAC members to share activities with the HAC including POTA, Fox Hunts, VE Sessions; shared coverage of road race communications; CW classes; contesting; OnAir Nets; etc. The HAC needs to be aware of pitfalls that come with being an Elmer and decide which requests it can honor and which it needs to decline. Partial support is better than no support. A major concern is that the HAC not over-commit its members to providing support. If this happens, the LAC may lose any support and the HAC may develop discontent among its member. Again, no need to boil the ocean.



Educate your members and the Community on the importance of Clubs for the future of Amateur Radio

Objective:

Having a strong local radio club is the best way to preserve and ensure a vibrant future for amateur radio

Steps:

1. Educate and Publicize the MARCONI Program:

Use various social media platforms to report on your Club's progress and achievements; consider writing articles for your Club's Newsletter; upload progress reports on the Club's Website; promote the Club's MARCONI Program during OnAir Nets; notify ARRL via your Section Manager, ACC, or Division Director on how your Club is promoting MARCONI during 2026 – The Year of the Club; educate your members and the LAC's members via joint Zoom or Teams Meetings on how many activities and events they can participate in with the HAC and LAC clubs working together. Buy a table at your local hamfest or town Fair and promote your club's involvement; contact local mass media (radio/TV) and tell your story

2. Engage with your Community:

Specifically seek out Scouting programs and groups that foster women in STEM programs. Use the OG's on ARRL.org/MARCONI that relate to Scouts and Women in Amateur Radio to help with recruiting these two demographics for your club and the LACs:



Roll out the MARCONI project and maintain oversight

Ojectives:

Keep the MARCONI Program active and maintain oversight

Ways to Maintain MARCONI Momentum

Delegate Leadership: Allow LAC program leaders to take the initiative in leading projects. They need to be coached on how to grow their club so they can soon run their Club on their own. However you may need to ‘step back’ at some point –it’s their club.

Maintain Communication: Regularly check in with LACs through phone calls, Zoom meetings, emails, joint activites; joint club meetings.

Support Club Administration: . Provide administrative support for organizing meetings; sending updates; updating websites; publishing a newsletter, etc. Advise the LAC on how best to communicate with their (hopefully) increasing membership

Advertise your Club locally: Consider sending email or snail mail announcements offering inducements to local hams to join your club during its period of regrowth. Offering HT’s to new members is one relatively inexpensive way to attract new members.

Encourgage the LAC to obtain external funding: Help them apply for an ARRL Club grant (up to \$5,000); explore a direct grant application to the ARDC; seek out other sources of financial support for the LAC.

Coach the LAC on how to write a grant: Define need for funds; Plan a budget; prepare a justification for requested funds; discuss expected impact on amateur radio; discuss problems with the project; describe how the grant funds will help grow their club and the hobby in general.

Conclusion:

The successful implementation of the ELMER program hinges on thorough planning, effective communication, and continuous support. By evaluating needs, learning about target clubs, motivating participants, expanding the scope, and carefully rolling out the project, amateur radio clubs can strengthen their community and ensure sustained engagement and growth. NB: There is a degree of redundancy built to the answers to the questions in this OG. This is not due to a lack of proofreading. Rather, it is intentional in that many activities or administrative actions overlap. The 15 OG's on the MARCONI ARRL Page hope to stimulate local club activities and growth. Only through strong clubs and strong membership, can amateur radio continue to stay relevant and provide countless hours of OnAir joy for literally millions of hams, worldwide. The MARCONI Program hopes to support this effort.

The MARCONI Program is funded by a Grant to the Meriden Amateur Radio Club W1NRG, from the Amateur Radio Digital Communications Foundation, administered by the ARRL.

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MARCONI OG PROGRAM 0 User's Guide 01NOV2025

v1.3.6 .9