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Situation Analysis Report

Northumberland County

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Northumberland Extension Staff

Tara Brent, 4-H Youth Extension Agent
Trent Jones, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent

Northumberland Extension Leadership Council

Faye Andrashko
Pim Montgomery
Lee Pulling
Chris Jett
Camden Cooke
Susan Christopher

Introduction

Northumberland County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the summer and fall of 2013. The process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and unit extension faculty. It involved the creation of a Northumberland County unit profile as well as gathering community input on issues in the county. Data and information from these activities were analyzed and priority issues were identified.

The ELC met twice during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was covered. The unit profile was developed using the data from the VCE Situation Analysis Resource website, the Virginia Employment Commission Community Profile, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Community Profile. The ELC determined that the best way to gather perspectives from residents was to conduct a community open forum and solicit input through electronic and paper surveys. Finally, key findings from the unit profile, community forum, and surveys were discussed and the top priority issues for Northumberland County were identified, including those that could be addressed with current VCE resources and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources.

Unit Profile

Northumberland County is located in the eastern portion of Virginia at the northeastern tip of the Northern Neck peninsula. The county is 223 square miles, bounded on the north by the Potomac River and on the east by the Chesapeake Bay, with 556 miles of shoreline. Northumberland County is positioned halfway between the Washington, D.C. and Hampton Roads metropolitan areas. The county is located 70 miles northeast of Richmond and 112 miles southeast of Washington, D.C. The port of Hampton Roads is 94 miles south.

Based on 2010 census data, the overall population of the county has decreased by 5.8% since 2007 (12,330 residents). However, the percentage of Hispanic residents has doubled to 3% (382 residents). 40% of the county population is age 60 or older, while only 18% of the population of Northumberland County is under age 19. The median age of residents is 53.

Data on household composition indicated that 31% of children live in single parent households. Another significant factor affecting the youth in Northumberland County is that 28% live in poverty, up from 23% in 2010. The state percentage is 16%.
Health data shows that the teenage pregnancy rate has decreased by 11% since 2010, but the adult obesity rate has increased from 29% to 33%.

The unemployment rate is 1 percentage point higher than the state average. The top three employers are Northumberland County School Board, Manufacturing Techniques Inc., and County of Northumberland. A note to keep in mind is that 45% of working age residents commute outside the county for employment. The per capita gross income is $36,011, which is well below the state rate of $44,762.

Educational attainment rates have greatly increased from 2010. The high school graduation rate has increased by 28%, while the rate of adults attending post-secondary education has increased 54%.

The number of farms in Northumberland County has remained constant since 2010. The number of acres of farmland has increased by 9.6% and the market value of products has increased by 3.7%.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Community surveys were distributed via several means to reach as many residents as possible in all segments and demographics of the population. Distribution was through email, social media promotion, and US Mail. Surveys were also completed face to face during client budgeting sessions.

Specific issues identified were aging issues, health care, internet accessibility, positive youth activities, availability of higher education options, poverty, agriculture sustainability/preservation, community services, horticulture, teen leadership and community involvement, K-12 education, and economic development.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data, the following top priority issues were identified for Northumberland County.

Issue 1: Poverty

Poverty was identified as the top issue facing Northumberland County. Based on the unit profile, several factors contribute to the high incidence of poverty in the county: 40% of the population is age 60 or older, more than a third of households are led by single parents, and there is a high percentage of children living in poverty. VCE has partnered with The Link, a faith-based community outreach program, to provide budget counseling to county residents in need of emergency funds to pay necessary bills. Since 2012, over 550 citizens have received assistance from The Link, with 50% of those participating in budget counseling with the VCE Family and Consumer Sciences agent and/or trained VCE Master Financial Education volunteers.

This issue is currently being addressed with current VCE unit resources. Based on the situation analysis, VCE sees a need to continue to collaborate and partner with other agencies to make more financial education opportunities available.

Issue 2: Positive youth development and education

Positive youth development and education was identified as the second most pressing issue in Northumberland County. A need exists to develop youth activities that promote positive youth development where youth grow into successful adults. In light of current poverty levels and the

number of single parent households in the county, many youth lack strong parental involvement and positive role models.   Since 2008, the Northumberland County YMCA has increased opportunities with children. Enrichment and after school opportunities in the public school system have decreased significantly due to funding and administrative issues. The average age of farmers in Northumberland County is 58 years old, and with this increase in age, there are many job opportunities for young adults from farm management to technology in agriculture. However, there is a lack of educational opportunities in agriculture for youth.

This issue is currently being addressed with current VCE unit resources. The VCE 4-H Youth Development agent, with assistance from other unit faculty and volunteers such as the Northern Neck Master Gardeners, will continue to collaborate with the school system to provide more in school enrichment programs, develop after school programs, and partner with agencies such as the Northumberland County Library to provide more day camp and other 4-H programs. The Agriculture and Natural Resources agent will work with the Northern Neck Vo-Tech Center and STEM Academy to increase the number of youth in agriculture programs and bring agriculture enrichment programs to the public school system.

Issue 3: Health Care across the Life Span

Health care across the life span was identified as the third most pressing issue in Northumberland County. Chronic disease and health risk factors plague Northumberland County and affect all ages, segments, and income levels. The county's risk factors (i.e. obesity) are higher than the state average due to many reasons, including the high concentration of residents age 60 and older, the high percentage of residents living below the poverty level, and the lack of transportation to health care facilities and healthy food options. There is no long term care facility or hospital in Northumberland County.

This issue is currently being addressed in part by current VCE resources, as well as other agencies, such as the Northern Neck Food Bank. The FNP program assistant provides summer nutrition programming in local churches. However, due to budget restraints, our FNP program does not have the resources available to adequately serve the entire county population. A portion of this issue is outside the scope of VCE to address but should be addressed.