

FOREWORD

As part of the implementation of the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) project Getting Rural Virginia Connected: A Vision for the Future, funded by the United States Department of Commerce, we would like to provide you with a detailed report of project-related activities that were undertaken in Accomack County. We hope it will be useful to local government leaders, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, Technology Leadership Team members, and all county residents with an interest in technology and economic development in Accomack County. Many of you were closely involved with the project on a regular basis, and much of the information included is well known. At the same time we thought it was important to provide background material along with a detailed description of how the project unfolded and decisions were made, for those learning about it for the first time.

We wish to again acknowledge the matching funds of \$6,000 provided to us by the Accomack Board of Supervisors which helped to make Accomack County's participation in this program possible. All of us in Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village have enjoyed working with you over the past two years. We hope the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal <http://www.easternshorevirginiaportal.com> will continue to make a difference in your community and that this report will be helpful as you continue to move ahead in the deployment of information technology to support the vision of your local leadership.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Blacksburg Electronic Village

INTRODUCTION

Getting Rural Virginia Connected: A Vision for the Future, funded through the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) of the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), had its beginning in Spring 2001. At that time Dr. John Dooley, Associate Director for Family and Consumer Sciences and Community Initiatives in Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), and Dr. Andrew Cohill, Director of the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) at Virginia Tech, learned of this funding opportunity. The TOP project was designed to help rural communities in Virginia develop the capacities needed to prosper in the Information Age economy. The underlying purpose of the project was to empower citizens with the knowledge and tools to become active participants in their economic futures. This was accomplished through a participatory process of education on trends in the county, visioning for an improved future, and ways to make that future a reality. Technology was identified as one of the tools to create the kind of future citizens wanted in their counties.

The initial step in each county was the formation of a Technology Leadership Team with a broad representation of citizens from across the county that served as a steering committee to provide on-going direction to the local project. The next step was the implementation of *Take Charge*, an educational program designed to enable leaders, decision-makers, and residents in rural communities to review their strengths and weaknesses and develop a vision for the future. One component of this vision focused on how technology could be used to address issues in their communities. A central piece of the TOP program was the development of a community electronic network and web site that would increase citizen participation in local government, promote community connectedness, and support economic development.

The community networks were modeled after the Blacksburg Electronic Village and provide various features to assist communities in meeting the goals described above. The Community Connections program supports web sites for civic, faith-based, and other community organizations to inform county residents of the services and opportunities for personal development available in their county. A Community Calendar keeps folks informed of government meetings, church or club meetings, or recreational events. Posting the meeting times and agendas of the local Board of Supervisors promotes citizen participation in local government, and the web site Discussion Forum encourages public conversation and dialogue on matters of importance to the county. The Village Mall lists individual businesses, and county residents needing a particular product or service can use this business directory to find a provider in their own community and support the local economy. Tourists planning to visit the locality can find the name of a local bed and breakfast. Finally, the Virtual Business Incubator helps start-up businesses develop their own web site describing their products or services. Technology training for local citizens was also part of the TOP plan so that residents could develop the skills needed to use the web site and volunteers would be prepared to administer the site after the grant funding was completed. (A detailed description of the network services made available to each county by the Blacksburg Electronic Village can be found in Appendix A.)

In addition to their visioning process and community networks, each county received a technology assessment from which a technology master plan was developed. John Nichols, Information Technology Manager for Network Infrastructure and Services, spent time in each

county interviewing and researching businesses and network providers to provide a custom report for each county. This individualized master plan can serve as a blueprint for future plans to acquire high speed Internet access or other technology development.

The TOP program presented an opportunity for two entities within Virginia Tech, VCE and BEV, to develop a working partnership that would benefit rural Virginia communities. VCE has expertise and experience in helping small communities plan for and take control of their future, and BEV brings expertise and experience in technology assessment and building community networks. With this in mind, Dr. Dooley and Dr. Cohill developed a collaborative proposal that targeted nine rural, economically challenged counties across Virginia. They targeted counties with lower education and income levels and higher outward migration rates as compared to Virginia as a whole, and a need for economic growth. Each participating county pledged a contribution of \$6,000 (\$2,000 per year over three years) to meet the technical costs associated with maintaining their community networks on the BEV server. At the completion of the project, counties would decide if they wished to continue to host their community network sites with the BEV, or move to another Web hosting service provider.

As the target counties were identified, Dr. Dooley approached the local VCE agent regarding his/her willingness to serve as the local leader of the county project. The local agent carried the project forward to representatives of county government to obtain their approval and financial commitment. The grant proposal was submitted in Spring 2001 with letters of commitment from Carroll, Dickenson, and Grayson Counties in the VCE Southwest District; Craig County in the VCE Northwest District; Cumberland County in the VCE Central District; Louisa County in the VCE Northern District; King and Queen County in the VCE Northeast District; and Accomack and Northampton Counties in the VCE Southeast District. In Fall 2001 Virginia Tech was notified that the proposal was funded, with a start date of October 1, 2001. (The project scope was modified in August 2003 to exclude Grayson and Carroll counties since they had completed many of the project objectives prior to the onset of this project, and there were not sufficient resources to implement a modified project plan for these two counties.)

Unfortunately, personnel turnover at Virginia Tech delayed the start of the project. First, Dr. Dooley, the project leader for VCE, was assigned a new set of responsibilities as Interim Associate Provost for Outreach. About the same time Dr. Cohill resigned his position with the BEV. Also, State budget reductions resulted in the loss of VCE agents in several of the TOP counties and new local leadership had to be identified.

The VCE agents with TOP responsibilities in each of the nine counties were brought together in Blacksburg for a two-day orientation in March 2002. Project policies and procedures were established and a time line was developed for moving the project forward. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Eleanor Schlenker took over Dr. Dooley's responsibilities with the project, and Mathew Mathai was appointed Director of the BEV and Project Director for TOP. Tabitha Combs who was hired as the TOP Project Coordinator resigned her position at the BEV and Jaime Shetrone took her place in May 2002. The new project team met for the first time in June 2002, and work on the project was finally underway – eight months after the funding was awarded.

The geographic separation of the target counties presented a tremendous challenge in communication. To keep everyone informed, the BEV set up a TOP web site on which meeting

minutes, publicity materials, PowerPoint programs, pictures of local meetings and activities, and a calendar of events for each county were posted on a regular basis (<http://top.bev.net/>). A comprehensive Project Implementation Plan developed by Mathew Mathai provided a step by step outline with benchmarks to measure progress and the completion of required tasks. A handout describing the BEV in a BOX features was made available for local distribution. These materials were also posted on the TOP site for use by BEV and VCE staff. The Project Implementation Plan is found in Appendix A.

GETTING STARTED

Securing County Support

Early in 2001, Dr. John Dooley spoke with Extension Agent Brenda Holden about the potential participation of Accomack and Northampton Counties in the TOP project. Brenda brought the TOP opportunity to the attention of the Accomack County government officials who expressed a strong interest in the project and pledged the \$6,000 required. (A copy of the commitment letter from the Accomack Board of Supervisors can be found in Appendix A.) In Fall 2001 Virginia Tech was notified that the grant was funded with the start date of October 1, 2001. On November 26, 2001 Brenda Holden sent a letter to Accomack County Administrator Keith Bull, informing him that the project would be going forward. In September 2002 Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne was assigned to lead the project in Accomack County.

Extension Agent Training

The first step in the Project Implementation Plan was orientation and training for the VCE agents who would be leading the county programs. Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Community Sciences, Food, Nutrition and Health, and 4-H agents were involved in respective counties. A two-day training held on March 6-7, 2002 at Virginia Tech provided an overview of the timeline and benchmarks for project tasks. Agents representing all nine counties along with their District Directors attended. Dr Andrew Cohill, the BEV Director, demonstrated the various options that would be included on the county sites. VCE Community Initiatives specialists Pamela Gibson and Gary Larowe described the *Take Charge* process and the preparation required for those sessions.

A second training took place on November 12, 2002 at the Virginia Tech Center in Richmond. Mathew Mathia, TOP Project Director, and Jaime Shetrone, TOP Project Coordinator, reviewed the basic concepts of telecommunications infrastructure and the issues that rural communities face in obtaining Internet access for their homes, schools, and businesses. VCE Community Initiatives specialist Gary Larowe explained the CSPP model to be used in evaluating current technology access and equipment in each county. (It was decided at a later time that John Nichols, Information Technology Manager with Network Infrastructure and Services at Virginia Tech, would carry out this assessment.) Finally, agents discussed the applications of community networks that could be helpful in their particular communities.

Forming a Technology Leadership Team

The next step in the Project Implementation Plan was recruiting a Technology Leadership Team (TLT). The TLT was the steering committee for the local project, and needed to include representatives from all geographical locations and population groups in the county. TLT members were expected to keep their local groups informed of on-going project activities and encourage their participation. The proposal submitted to the DOC had indicated that each participating community within the county would have its own TLT. However, as the project began to move forward, it became obvious that all geographic areas of a county had to work

together to support technology infrastructure and economic development, and all would be better served if there was one TLT providing leadership for the county. Ensuring broad representation from all areas of the county was a priority in recruiting TLT members.

Initial Efforts to Recruit a Technology Leadership Team

In early summer 2002, Extension Agent Brenda Holden began recruiting a TLT to oversee the project in Accomack and Northampton Counties. VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson attended the May meeting of the Networked Future Task Force (NFTF) at the Northampton County Extension Office to inform that group about the TOP project and its goals. (The Networked Future Task Force provides oversight to the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, the community network serving Accomack and Northampton Counties that was established some time earlier.) Following this, letters were sent to community leaders in both Accomack and Northampton Counties inviting them to attend an informational meeting on August 12, 2002 at the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce to learn more about the TOP project.

Residents of both Accomack and Northampton Counties attended the organizational meeting on August 12, 2002. After the welcome Jon Johnson introduced the TOP project and described the infrastructure required for Internet access and the issues faced by rural communities. At this time the group decided to go ahead with a combined TLT representing both Accomack and Northampton. However, before the TLT could be formed, the Project Management Team in Blacksburg raised concerns about having one TLT to cover both counties. The original project proposal was quite specific about a defined program in each county. With this in mind, the decision was made in August 2002 to treat Accomack County and Northampton County as separate entities, each forming a TLT of its own. Following this meeting Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne became the leader of the project in Accomack.

Establishing a Technology Leadership Team for Accomack County

In late summer Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne began to develop a recruiting plan for the Accomack TLT. When she reviewed the various geographic areas within the County, she discovered that one of the participating communities listed in the grant proposal was not easily identified. Locust Mount could not be found listed as a town anywhere in Accomack County. Further investigation indicated that 'Locust Mount' was the former name for the current community of Wachapreague. Based on this, Wachapreague was substituted for Locust Mount as a participating community.

In early September 2002, Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne sent a letter announcing the project to ten residents of Accomack County who had been identified as potential members of the TLT. This letter contained a brief description of the project and an invitation to the first Technology Leadership Meeting to be held on September 26, 2002. The recipients represented all three participating communities (Horntown, Onancock, and Wachapreague), and included retirees, church leaders, and county officials. An article advertising the upcoming meeting also was published in the local newspaper.

This organizational meeting of the Accomack TLT took place on September 26, 2002 at the Accomack County Extension Office in Accomac. Twelve members of the community attended along with Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne and VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson. Following introductions Jon Johnson presented an overview of planned TOP activities including the *Take Charge* process. He stressed the importance of recruiting more TLT members and folks were asked to e-mail any ideas about how to recruit people to Jon or Pauline. TLT member Frank Moore suggested that the Technology Task Force Committee be invited to the next meeting.

A training session for the TLT was tentatively scheduled for either November 18, 2002 or November 20, 2002 at Nandua High School. The next TLT meeting was set for October 16, 2002 at Nandua High School.

A list of the members of the Accomack TLT who attended on this date and were added thereafter can be found in Appendix B.

Beginning Activities of the Technology Leadership Team

Following the organizational meeting on September 26, 2002, the TLT began to meet regularly to develop plans for the *Take Charge* program and begin work on the Accomack web site. Their activities are summarized below.

Technology Leadership Team - October 16, 2002 – Nandua High School, Onley – 5:30 pm

Present: 14 TLT members, Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne, Unit Administrative Assistant Carla Woods, Extension Agent Jim Belote, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

Review of the TOP project: Jon Johnson reviewed the goals of the TOP project for those new members who did not attend the first meeting. The TOP program was intended to provide a technology-based tool to support economic development and build on the quality of life in rural communities. He introduced the group to the TOP web site (<http://top.bev.net>) as a source of information about the site to be developed for Accomack and outlined some of the issues relating to telecommunication services and Internet access in rural communities. The group discussed existing services in the area and how the grant could help communities evaluate and address these needs.

Focus for the TOP site: Discussion followed about the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal (<http://www.easternshoreportalvirginia.com>) already in place, and how it related to this project. Jon pointed out that the general focus of the Portal web site was local economic development and tourism, whereas the TOP site would include content relating to community issues and family interests. The group talked about holding a contest to name the community network and generate community interest in the project.

Schedule for *Take Charge*: The TLT shared ideas on how to encourage attendance at the *Take Charge* sessions. The three sessions will rotate among several locations so that all of the communities named in the grant can attend easily. The first session would be held at Nandua High School, the second at Arcadia High School, and the third back at Nandua High School. TLT member Evan Clements pointed to the need to reach service clubs, churches, and other community organizations to broaden participation in the *Take Charge* program. Suggestions for publicity included a local web bulletin board, the Eastern Shore Portal web site, the ESVA.net calendar, church bulletins, the local ministers' association, and continued radio and newspaper releases. TLT member Cynthia Holdren suggested that flyers be placed in high traffic areas such as grocery stores and the post office.

The dates chosen for the *Take Charge* sessions were February 11, 18, and 25, 2003.

Technology Leadership Team - November 20, 2002 – Nandua High School, Onley – 5:30 pm

Present: 11 TLT members, Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone

TLT Training: Jaime presented an Introduction to Community Networks and outlined how the Accomack web site would take shape. TLT member John Johnson commented that the TOP project seemed to duplicate the Eastern Shore Portal project. VCE Area specialist Jon Johnson stressed that the TOP project was not intended to duplicate or compete with the Portal project, but rather to complement it. The group talked about possible domain names for the site and the need to recruit volunteers and resources for its maintenance.

Take Charge Plans: The dates and locations of the upcoming *Take Charge* sessions were finalized. A subcommittee was formed to obtain the needed supplies and arrange for the supper meal. This subcommittee will meet on January 14, 2003 at 5:30 pm at the Accomack County Extension Office to review all details for the sessions.

IDENTIFYING COUNTY ISSUES AND SETTING GOALS

TAKE CHARGE

The *Take Charge* process led by Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives specialist, was the next step for the TLT. *Take Charge* is an educational program designed to enable leaders, decision-makers, and residents in rural communities to effectively address local problems and develop a vision for the future. It provides a process that empowers groups to be proactive in setting the course for their community. The program used in Virginia is adapted from "*Take Charge: Economic Development in Small Communities*" published by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

Objectives of the *Take Charge* Program

The objectives of *Take Charge* are to:

- Assemble a broad cross-section of people from the community with various positions and interests, and enhance communication among them.
- Help community residents explore short term and long term development strategies and gain a consensus vision for their own future.
- Gain broad community involvement and support through the empowerment of local citizens.
- Assist community residents in analyzing their strengths and vulnerabilities and choosing the most appropriate development opportunities.
- Develop strategies to realize community residents' vision for the future.
- Utilize and build upon existing assets (financial, physical, social, human, civic, and natural resources) to help realize the vision.
- Implement an action plan whereby the community can begin to *Take Charge* of its future.

The *Take Charge* Workshops

The *Take Charge* process begins with three, three-hour workshops designed to 1) foster collaboration among the citizens in the community, 2) move the group toward consensus, and 3) provide a framework for creating a vision for the future.

Workshop #1 - Where are we now?

The goals of the first workshop are 1) to examine historical and current trends and characteristics of the community and consider implications for the future, and 2) to conduct a self-examination of the community's strengths and vulnerabilities as related to financial, social, human, and natural assets.

Workshop #2 - Where do we want to be?

In the second workshop, participants develop a collective vision for the future of the community and assess the opportunities and threats to achieving that vision.

Workshop #3 - How do we get there?

In the third workshop, participants identify and frame overarching development issues, identify existing resources to help address the issues, and explore alternative ways to organize the community for action.

Expected Outcomes of *Take Charge*

The expected outcomes of *Take Charge* are to:

- Increase level of participation and ownership in the community decision-making process
- Increase the general level of understanding of the community and its strategic position in the global economy
- Expand the pool of leadership and entrepreneurial talent
- Increase support for crucial decisions on strategic community issues
- Enhance utilization of local resources

Accomack County's *Take Charge* Sessions

Accomack County's first *Take Charge* session, "Where are we now," took place on February 5, 2003 at Nandua High School in Onley. Eighteen residents attended. Miles Barnes of the Eastern Shore Public Library opened the meeting with an overview of the history of Accomack County with a particular focus on agriculture. Cynthia Holdren of the Virginia Employment Commission discussed labor and unemployment issues in the County. Jon Johnson provided participants with statistics describing education, income levels, and commerce in the region as compared to Virginia as a whole. At this time they divided into working groups to develop lists of County strengths and weaknesses in the areas of Financial Capital, Human Capital, Manufactured Capital, Environmental Capital, and Social Capital.

Session 2 of *Take Charge*, "Where do we want to be," took place on February 27, 2003 at Arcadia High School. There were 11 participants.

The strengths and weaknesses identified in Session 1 were reintroduced and participants had the chance to add others. At that point they ranked the importance of each strength and weakness.

Accomack County strengths and weaknesses receiving the highest rankings were as follows:

Strengths	Number of Votes Received
Poultry industry	8
Natural beauty, open spaces, waterfront	8
Churches	7
Eastern Shore Community College and Future Business Center	7
Eastern Shore people are neighborly with much tradition and roots	5
Vocational training in schools	4
Improvement in the public schools: new and remodeled schools	4

Weaknesses	Number of Votes Received
High number of dropouts and low educational attainment	7
Many workers lack higher skills—ability to be trained	5
Lack of industry diversity	5
Shortfalls in local and state budgets	5

High percentage of non-marital births	4
Lack of education and motivation	4
Old public buildings with poor functionality	4
Mixed messages to leaders from citizens	4

At this time they went back to their working groups to develop "Our Dream for Accomack County.....2020." The 2020 Goals included:

- Having the community web site up and running
- Having every home on the Shore equipped with computers and Internet access
- Increased selling of local products and services over the Internet to the global marketplace
- Developing a transit system that would serve all areas of the Shore
- Maintaining automotive programs and building business training centers
- Cleaning up fresh water reservoirs and developing surrounding parks
- Building a new facility for the Accomack Social Services Building
- Protecting the natural integrity of the Barrier Island system
- Having a modern, up-to-standards sewage system
- Continued support of NASA facilities
- Building a causeway to Cedar Island or another Barrier Island that could be developed as an ecologically friendly public facility
- Capitalizing on the unique and natural culture of the area

This activity concluded Session 2.

The third and final session of *Take Charge*, "How do we get there," was held on March 4, 2003 in Nandua High School in Onley. Five residents attended this session.

Jon Johnson opened with a PowerPoint reviewing the work of the first two *Take Charge* meetings. Participants had the opportunity to consider the Accomack strengths and weaknesses identified earlier along with their vision and goals for 2020. No additional items or changes were suggested.

Participants heard from Greg Manter, Director of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Commission. He spoke about favorable business activities taking place on the Eastern Shore. Eight new businesses have recently started up. He also made the group aware of resources to support small businesses and start-ups.

Then, the group brainstormed some ideas that would support the implementation of the 2020 Goals.

- Work through the Accomack County Vocational Advisory Committee to enhance vocational training for high school students and unskilled workers
- Establish a web site link to the NASA contractors and the Virginia Employment Commission to inform citizens about positions available
- Post on the web site the STAR Transit Schedule
- Investigate the availability of offshore drilling funds for use in developing natural spaces and areas; might capitalize on the Shore's unique and natural culture as they have at Martha's Vineyard
- Post on the web site a link to the Zoning Commission to review current zoning and any existing problems
- The Mayor and Town Council of Wachapreague might form a committee to address access to the Barrier Islands such as a ferry system; Parks and Recreation and the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District might also help with this
- Promote the area's agricultural environment as a tourist attraction

Jon Johnson suggested the group think about setting up committees to address some of these issues and asked for volunteers.

The goals of the four committees that were decided upon were:

- 1) Have the community web site up and running
- 2) Work toward computer and Internet access in every home on the Eastern Shore
- 3) Increase electronic commerce
- 4) Provide assistance to those who want to start their own businesses

Accomack and Northampton Counties previously had worked together using a different process to develop a Strategic Plan for Technology. The four goals identified by that process were to:

- Provide individuals with the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology
- Improve infrastructure and access to technology
- Expand the use of technology in the communities to conduct business and community activities on-line
- Increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world

The group thought these goals strongly complemented the goals developed from *Take Charge* and should be included in this report. The entire Strategic Plan for Technology for the Eastern Shore of Virginia can be found in Appendix C.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE WEB SITE

Following completion of *Take Charge*, the next step for the TLT was development of the Accomack web site. The Accomack TLT met several times to discuss layout and content for their site as well as its future. The minutes of these meetings summarized below document the options discussed and the decisions made.

Technology Leadership Team - March 12, 2003 – Nandua High School, Onley

Present: 6 TLT members, Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

Web site content: Jon Johnson introduced several examples of community web sites. TLT members brainstormed ideas on colors and layout for the Accomack County site, and how they would like it to look. The following topics were to be included:

- Home
- About Accomack
- Communities
- People
- Village Mall
- Community Groups
- Health
- Community Programs
- Discussion Board

Joint Meeting: Technology Leadership Team and the Accomack County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) - June 11, 2003 – Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce Building, Melfa

Present: 13 TLT and ELC members, VCE Agent Pauline Milbourne, Retired VCE Agent Jim Belote, VCE Unit Administrative Assistant Carla Woods, VCE Southeast District Director Lonnie Johnson, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai

Update by the TOP Project Director: After a brief ELC business meeting, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai used PowerPoint to describe how the TOP project will increase the capacity of rural communities to use technology to promote economic development. He demonstrated the BEV in a BOX features that will be active on the site and the various directories that will provide opportunities for county residents, businesses, and organizations to make their presence known to others. Accomack businesses with five or fewer employees and nonprofit organizations can

register to have their own web sites on the Virtual Business Incubator or Community Connections sections at no charge until the grant ends on June 30, 2005.

Web site administration: A volunteer administrator will need to be appointed to manage the site content when it is up and running. The local site administrator will manage the approval process for individuals, businesses, or groups who wish to post information. The group viewed the test web site for Accomack County and provided suggestions.

Technology Leadership Team - October 20, 2003 – Eastern Shore Community College

TLT Training: TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai conducted a training session by conference call on the use and approval process for the community directories offered as part of the BEV in a Box. Several members of the Accomack TLT who have agreed to serve as site administrators participated in the call.

Technology Leadership Team - November 4, 2003 – Virginia Employment Commission, Accomack – 10:30 am

Present: 7 TLT members, Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai (by phone)

Update on remaining tasks: Mathew Mathai, TOP Project Director, outlined the steps remaining for Accomack County to complete the project. Plans need to be in place for the advertising and launch of the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections programs. Pauline Milbourne announced that Jennifer Haycox, VCE Special Projects Coordinator in Northampton County, received training from the BEV staff in Blacksburg and will work with Accomack County in finishing the tasks remaining on the project.

Future of the Accomack Site: Discussion centered on whether work should continue on the Accomack County Electronic Village or if the Eastern Shore Portal should be adopted as the web site for Accomack. TLT members Jack Bonniwell and Amy Betit suggested a joint meeting of the Accomack TLT and the Networked Future Task Force (NFTF), the group responsible for the development of the Eastern Shore Portal web site.

In discussion with Mathew Mathai, the Accomack TLT was presented with two options:

1. If the TLT concluded that the Accomack Electronic Village more or less duplicated the Eastern Shore Portal and chose to adopt the Portal for the county's networking needs, attention could then be directed to the following tasks:
 - a. Assist home-based and micro businesses and community organizations in utilizing the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections services that provide web hosting, e-mail and on-line mailing lists. These services are currently not being provided as part of the Portal and therefore complement it.
 - b. Assist in conducting the technology assessment required for the master plan component of this project that can serve as a blueprint for further technology development in the County.

2. If the TLT concluded there was value in continuing with the development of the Accomack County Electronic Village, individual time and effort would be needed to complete the tasks that still remain (listed below). Although the TOP Project Team was committed to offering guidance and training to support these efforts, the TLT must complete this work. If the project is continued, the following tasks must be completed in addition to the two listed above (1a. and 1b.):
 - a. Gather content for the home page and all sections on the Accomack Electronic Village site
 - b. Designate individuals to administer the People, Business, and Community Organization directories
 - c. Designate individuals to administer the web calendar
 - d. Designate individuals to administer and moderate the on-line discussion forum (if a forum is to be offered on the site)
 - e. Publicize the community network through all available channels including word of mouth and the media.

Decision to Integrate the TOP and NFTF Community Networks

The fact that a web site focusing on the Eastern Shore was already in place (the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal) was a topic of conversation as early as June 2002. Although the Accomack County TLT made some progress in designing their web site, and a test site was available for review and discussion, very little information had been collected to supply content for the site. Extension Agent Pauline Milbourne encountered problems in finding volunteers to accept responsibility for web site administration or preparing listings for the directories. To resolve the questions posed above by TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai, a meeting was called for January 14, 2004 that included representatives from the Accomack County TLT, the Northampton County TLT, and the Networked Future Task Force.

Combined Technology Leadership Team and Networked Future Task Force Meeting – January 14, 2004 – Northampton County Extension Office, Exmore

Present: 6 NFTF members, 4 Accomack TLT members, 2 Northampton TLT members, Accomack VCE Agent Pauline Milbourne, Northampton County VCE Agent Brenda Holden, Accomack County Administrative Assistant Carla Woods, Special Projects Coordinator Jennifer Haycox, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai (by phone), TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone (by phone).

Decision to merge the network sites: After a lengthy discussion, the group decided that it made good sense to adopt the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal site

(<http://www.easternshorevirginiaportal.com>) as the community web site for both Accomack and Northampton Counties. To ensure the participation of both counties in future decision-making, all current members of both TLTs were invited to join with the NFTF to form one team. As to site content, the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal offered four of the six site features available on the proposed TOP site. The Community Connections and the Virtual Business Incubator programs from BEV were considered to be important for new businesses and nonprofit groups, and were added to the Portal. The domain name “esvp.bev.net” was chosen for the Virtual Business Incubator accounts to be hosted by BEV. The Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center will discuss the technicalities of implementation with the BEV staff in Blacksburg.

Update on community workshops: Jennifer Haycox gave an update on recent community education programs and forums related to technology and asked for suggestions for future events. NFTF member Barbara Schwenk suggested a community forum on broadband Internet connections. Mathew Mathai suggested adding a page to the Portal that provided tips on installing Internet connections.

Update on the Technology Assessment: Brenda Holden shared preliminary plans and goals for the upcoming technology assessment by John Nichols, Information Technology Manager, Network Infrastructure and Services, Virginia Tech. Barbara Schwenk announced the formation of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership’s Broadband Initiative set up to investigate the demand for broadband in Accomack and Northampton Counties. Information collected by John Nichols may assist with this project.

Committee business: The next meeting of the NFTF was set for Tuesday, February 17, 2004 at the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce in Melfa. Thom Henderson has organized a mailing list including TLT members from Accomack and Northampton Counties (nftf@esva.net).

The membership of the NFTF to which the representatives from the two TLTs were added is found in Appendix B.

Combined Networked Future Task Force Meeting - February 10, 2004 – Northampton County Extension Office

Building cooperation on the Eastern Shore: This meeting brought together representatives of the TOP program, the NFTF, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership’s Broadband Initiative to look at all broadband access-related projects on the Eastern Shore. They discussed the need for DSL accessibility in local towns and how they might work together on common goals and avoid duplication of effort. John Nichols will be visiting the Shore in the near future to complete his Technology Assessment. The group compiled a list of stakeholders that he will visit to compile the information needed. The information he collects will be held by the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal and NFTF and be accessible to all interested parties for future use.

Goal statement for the NFTF: The group developed a goal statement to guide the future activities of the NFTF and the expanded Eastern Shore Portal. The major intent was to keep a

focus on the well being of the communities served. *The mission of the NFTF is to improve the quality of life on the Eastern Shore of Virginia by enhancing communications services that will facilitate economic development, increase the vitality of civic and cultural discourse, and provide technological assistance to the local business community. Its main activities are to promote the Eastern Shore as a location for business and a destination for tourists, and teach the region's businesses how to increase sales and create jobs through the use of electronic commerce.*

COMMUNITY READINESS WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

The community readiness workshops described in the Implementation Plan were intended to help county residents develop the computer and technology skills they needed to participate in the web site programs such as the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections. Another goal for these workshops was to train TLT members or other local volunteers to administer the county site and assume responsibility for its content when the grant was completed.

Training for the Technology Leadership Team

Early in the project, training was offered to the local TLT members with the idea that they would share the concepts they learned with others in the organizations and communities they represented. On September 11, 2003 BEV staff member Robert Roberts trained the Accomack TLT on the use and administration of the Discussion Forum. Several Accomack TLT members participated in a conference call with TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai on October 20, 2003 about the role of the site administrator in approving listings on the People, Business, and Organization Directories.

Jennifer Haycox, Special Projects Coordinator with Northampton County, visited the BEV facilities in Blacksburg on November 18 and 19, 2003 to receive training on the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections. Jennifer assisted residents in both Northampton and Accomack Counties.

Training for the Community

Several types of workshops were initiated for residents on the Eastern Shore. These included information sessions to make people aware of the features and best use of the web site, and short courses on entrepreneurship. The workshops for those interested in starting a business or improving the stability of an existing business were offered by VCE in cooperation with other agencies. Most served residents in both Accomack and Northampton Counties.

Eastern Shore E-Business Training Series

The Northampton County Extension Office in cooperation with the Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center sponsored a six-week course in e-business. Classes met one night each week from October 6, 2003 through November 14, 2003 with nine persons attending. Topics included Introduction to the World Wide Web, Establishing a Web Presence, Internet Marketing, Advantages and Strategies of e-Commerce, Legal and Security Issues, and Government Contracting and Bidding. All participants indicated that they learned new information.

Suggestions for additional workshops included:

- Small business bookkeeping, inventory, and accounting (3)
- Selling on the Web
- Basic computer knowledge
- Web design
- Use of the web to help reduce costs

Prepare to be Your Own Boss

A seven week course entitled Preparing to be Your Own Boss was offered by the Business Advisory Committee of the Northampton County Extension Office in cooperation with the Eastern Shore Community College, the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, the Virginia Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation, and Experiential Consultants in Management. The class met one evening each week from October 13, 2003 through December 3, 2003 at the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce. Information presented included the legal requirements for starting a business, successful selling and marketing, developing a business plan, and what does it take to be an entrepreneur. Students also learned of other resources on the Eastern Shore that could support their business efforts.

Using Community Connections and the Virtual Business Incubator

Ten people participated in a workshop on May 20, 2004 at the Accomack County Extension Office to learn more about the Community Connections and Virtual Business Incubator. Three signed up for a Community Connections account and five signed up for Virtual Business Incubator accounts.

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY EFFORTS

To help inform county residents about the TOP program and the opportunities to participate, the following news articles were published in Accomack County. A brochure was developed to market the *Take Charge* program and encourage attendance. Copies of all materials are located in Appendix D.

“Technology program meeting set;” *Eastern Shore News*; date unknown.

Furness, Stephen: “Program will address rural needs;” *Eastern Shore News*; October 9, 2002.

“TOP program on shore;” The Portal Newsletter (Eastern Shore Virginia Portal); December, 2002

“*Take Charge* in Accomack and Northampton counties;” The Portal Newsletter (Eastern Shore Virginia Portal); March, 2003.

“Website help classes set;” *Eastern Shore News*; April 7, 2004.

Take Charge in Accomack County: Poster produced by the Accomack County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Take Charge in Accomack County: Brochure produced by the Accomack County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The TOP Implementation Plan included several expected outcomes that could be used to measure the success of this project. First, we hoped to increase the participation of community residents in local government and decision-making. Second, it was important that community members begin to use the web site by registering as a Villager, registering their organization or business on the appropriate directory, and visiting the Discussion Forum. Finally, we looked to contribute to local economic development and new business start-ups as indicated by listings on the Business Directory and new accounts on the Virtual Business Incubator.

We also wanted to evaluate the methods used in carrying out this project and learn from participants what might have been done differently to improve the project. As VCE and BEV continue our partnership, it is important for us to recognize how to better help individuals and rural communities take advantage of technology to spur their economic growth.

We were not able to obtain quantitative information on each of these outcomes, but we have presented below the evaluation material that was available to us. Included are comments obtained from the TLT regarding the overall success of the project. We also have given statistics describing the levels of participation in web site features and the number of individuals signing up for Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections accounts. Additional information is being collected by an external evaluator and will be available to each county.

Take Charge Program

Take Charge was intended to bring together people from all sections of the county to identify problems and set priorities for the future. Everyone who attended was asked to complete an evaluation at the end of each session. The evaluations were anonymous to ensure that comments could not be attributed to a particular individual.

Previous participation in a community planning process

Attendance at the *Take Charge* sessions in Accomack County ranged from 18 at Session 1 to 11 at Session 2 to 5 at Session 3. With *Take Charge* we hoped to attract not only people who had a history of attendance and participation in local government meetings, but also to encourage newcomers to become more active in community planning. Letters of invitation were sent to government officials and others whose title or affiliation with a local organization indicated their interest or role in the community. Newspaper and radio announcements were used to attract individuals who may not have participated previously in a community issues forum. Among those attending Session 1, eight heard about the meeting through word of mouth or other means. In Sessions 2 and 3, close to half of those attending had not received a letter, but learned of the meeting through a TLT member, the newspaper, or other means. Eight of the 18 Accomack residents attending Session 1 had not taken part in a community planning process at an earlier time.

Reasons given for attending *Take Charge* centered on wanting to become more involved in their community and wanting to learn more about the process. These individuals hoped to see

positive changes in their community and gain a better understanding of the community's needs. In the words of one participant, "It's time for advancement on the Eastern Shore."

Reactions to the Overall Process and Outcomes

Involving more citizens in community affairs brings new and diverse opinions to the table, and helps folks learn from each other. All of the people who came to *Take Charge* learned something new about their community. They felt their ideas were acknowledged, and the small group assessments and assembly assessments were handled fairly. Most reported their reaction to the meetings as generally positive.

The Goals for Accomack County by the Year 2020, developed through *Take Charge*, will provide a basis for continuing discussion on community and economic development.

(All tabulated responses from the *Take Charge* evaluations can be found in Appendix E.)

Thoughts from the TLT

To learn more about local reactions to the project, including accomplishments and limitations, Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist, met with the combined Accomack and Northampton TLTs and the NFTF on March 18, 2004. The questions asked and responses received are given below.

What are your general impressions of the project?

In general, the NFTF expressed positive feelings about the project; however, having joined TOP only recently, many members were not in a position to comment about the program in its entirety.

What are your feelings on the issue identification process you used?

Both Northampton and Accomack counties used the *Take Charge* issue identification process. The NFTF felt that the *Take Charge* program was good, and covered a lot of issues that were later presented to the county Boards of Supervisors.

How do you feel about the technology related to this project?

The NFTF members present weren't sure what the project provided to them, since they already had a web page in place before the project began.

To what extent did the issues identification process influence the development of the technology piece?

The NFTF didn't see how the issues identification process was linked to the technology provided.

What were some of the things that went well?

The *Take Charge* programs were good, and the issues uncovered were presented to the Boards of Supervisors in each county. The problem of sufficient numbers of jobs at living wages continues. The NFTF members present were unaware of the specific details of the web site and its benefits.

What were some things that didn't go well?

Participants expressed the need for more funding, as well as the need to reach more citizens. It was felt that key leaders were not involved. Also, the project and web site have not been marketed well. The project should be marketed in the churches and community centers. Many small businesses are not aware of the web site and its benefits. In addition, the concept was viewed as too complicated, and the Extension agents expressed that they did not have sufficient time to work on the project.

If you had to pick one major success as a result of this project, what would that be?

Merging the TOP project with the Futures Network Task Force was helpful. The combined project has promoted awareness of technology and the need for technology. It's positive that volunteers are still working on the project and doing something for the counties.

What would you do differently?

The members present felt that more people should have been involved from the very beginning, especially local leadership. Local government must “buy-in” before the project is launched. Spending more time on community-building up front and finding ways to energize communities in support of the project would lead to improved outcomes.

Also, there needed to be a full-time person dedicated to working on this project. The Extension agents didn't have time with their already full schedules to add this project.

Because the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal web site had already been launched, the need for a TOP web site had diminished. This led to a lack of tangible need to participate in the TOP project, as it seemed to be a duplication of effort.

Finally, the group did not understand the future of the project or how it should move ahead.

What additional or unanticipated things, positive or negative, happened as a result of this project?

The funding from the counties for participation in the TOP project was positive. There is a new awareness of technology and the need for technology.

What collaboration has resulted from this project?

The groups have collaborated with the local community college for training, as well as with the Virginia Center for Innovative Technology, the Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center, and the local school systems. A need was expressed for some e-business workshops, and a way to help businesses donate computers to potential users.

Additional comments

Additional comments were provided by Accomack County TLT members who answered the following questions via e-mail. The questions were delivered to all Accomack TLT members to give those who did not attend the meeting on March 18, 2004 a chance to express their opinions.

From your perspective, what were the program's greatest strengths, contributions, and successes?

“The *Take Charge* concept was good and probably worked best for those counties without a vibrant Planning Commission. Though a rural area, Accomack County conducts numerous sessions similar to *Take Charge*. Consequently, I felt that conducting the sessions in our locality was a bit redundant and did not result in much ‘new information’.

In your opinion, what were the program's weak points and how might they be improved?

“I do not think that the project included sufficient strategies to generate ‘grassroots involvement.’ Also, I do not know how communities identified for the project were determined. All of the Extension Agents identified for involvement in this project should have been involved in the selection of communities. In addition, the project is very time intensive. Consequently, there should have been project support staff—at least one half time person—for each locality involved. Also, I think that more time and thought should have been given to the selection of counties that already had web sites such as the Portal on the Eastern Shore. From the very beginning of the project this fact created a "stumbling block" for us. Thus, the impression was that the project was a duplication of efforts. Further, it seemed to me that the project was heavily depended on the success and participation relative to the *Take Charge* Sessions. In our case it was extremely hard to generate involvement in the project over and above *Take Charge*. Last, several members of the local TLT were also being asked to serve as key members of other local efforts such as the Portal. For us, this created confusion and further made it seem that the two projects were a duplication of efforts.”

Major project successes and concerns as expressed by all county TLTs will be addressed in Lessons Learned.

Participation in the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal

As of August 1, 2004, 10 new business owners have registered for Virtual Business Incubator accounts and 4 nonprofit organizations have requested Community Connection accounts.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The TOP programs in Accomack and Northampton Counties were formally merged with the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal in January 2004. Awareness of technology on the Eastern Shore is growing and public-private partnerships are being developed to make the best use of existing resources and avoid duplication. The Technology Assessment and Master Plan prepared by John Nichols of Virginia Tech will assist businesses and government agencies move toward the goal of high speed Internet access for all residents on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The unique accomplishments of the program in Accomack County and across the Eastern Shore are described below.

- The *Take Charge* process in Accomack County successfully attracted residents who had not participated previously in a community planning forum. Most participants learned something new about their county and had positive reactions to the process. The issues and action steps identified through *Take Charge* were passed on to the Accomack Board of Supervisors.
- The partnership established between the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal and the Blacksburg Electronic Village has combined both resources and expertise to support economic growth and quality of life on the Eastern Shore. It has made possible a community network with a breadth and depth that surpasses what either could have achieved working alone. In its early development, the Eastern Shore Portal focused on business and economic matters, with less content of interest to families. In the past year a Discussion Board was established to encourage community interchange and participation in local government and decision-making. A directory of community and service organizations, including faith-based groups, has been added to help meet the needs of youth and families. A community calendar keeps people aware of local educational, recreational, and service activities, and so enhances the quality of life on the Eastern Shore.
- Through a cooperative agreement, the BEV is hosting the Community Connections and Virtual Business Incubator programs that are helping community organizations and new businesses establish a web presence. Accomack County had one of the larger numbers of initial sign-ups for these programs (8), with three persons registering for a Community Connections account and five people registering for a Virtual Business Incubator account.
- The bringing together of the Eastern Shore Portal and the TOP project has strengthened the partnership between Accomack and Northampton Counties. The Portal has a regional focus in serving both Accomack and Northampton, and a joint approach to economic growth, the acquisition of resources, and the promotion of tourism benefits both counties. The merger of the Accomack and Northampton TLTs with the NFTF ensures that both counties will continue to have a voice in decisions relating to site content and policy.

- Establishing a community training model that included both Accomack and Northampton was another positive outcome of the project. Two workshop series, one focusing on e-business and the other on business management and entrepreneurship, drew participants from both Counties, making best use of the time contributed by busy speakers.
- New public and private partnerships have been forged that can support future economic initiatives for the region. Through the TOP project Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village have joined with the Eastern Shore Community College, the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, the Virginia Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation, and the Virginia Electronic Commerce and Technology Center in promoting community technology training and development.
- The Technology Assessment and Master Plan completed as part of the TOP project will be a valuable resource for the coalition working to bring broadband to all areas of the Eastern Shore. The Networked Future Task Force and the Blacksburg Electronic Village are participating in these efforts led by the Regional Partnership's Broadband Initiative.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

A group of concerned citizens and business leaders have formed the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership's Broadband Initiative. Their goal is to determine local demand for broadband on the Eastern Shore and generate interest from potential providers. A meeting on February 10, 2004 brought together representatives from the Blacksburg Electronic Village, the Networked Future Task Force, and the Regional Partnership's Broadband Initiative to discuss access-related projects on the Shore and how to avoid duplication of effort. An important part of this discussion was the need for DSL accessibility in local communities and how this group can work together to make this happen. As part of the TOP project, John Nichols, Information Technology Manager from Network Infrastructure and Services at Virginia Tech prepared a Technology Assessment and Master Plan for the Eastern Shore. This Plan will be a valuable resource in helping the Broadband Partnership make future decisions. The policy that all data collected as part of this or any future Technology Assessment will be retained by the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal will assure its accessibility for use in the future.

LESSONS LEARNED

The TOP Project was developed to bring a new vision of prosperity through technology to seven rural Virginia counties. Although previous experience provided a basis for the TOP project, counties are different just as individuals are different, and methods successful in one situation may not be successful in another. With this in mind, we have looked back across all counties and developed a series of “Lessons Learned”— things that might have been done differently and would have contributed to overall project success. These lessons could be guideposts for future projects, assisting both counties and implementation teams as they develop new approaches to bring technology to rural communities.

Conduct a Situation Analysis

Identifying competing projects

In several TOP counties community networks had already been established under public or private sponsorship. Although the TOP project was intended to complement, not replace these existing networks, on-going questions about duplication of effort hampered progress and prevented the community from seeing alternative benefits.

Recommendation: Implement new technology projects in counties or communities where the concept of a community network is brand new.

Focusing on counties rather than individual communities

The TOP proposal defined the working unit for the project as individual participating communities within a county, rather than the county as a whole. In some rural counties there are no incorporated towns, and units within the county are actually “settlement areas” or voting districts. Also, local government leaders became concerned that working with individual communities would promote the idea that one area of the county was being targeted and not another. The driving force for this project was economic development and the growth and support of new micro and home-based businesses. Funding for small business incubators and overall initiatives for rural economic development are more effective when launched as part of a county-wide rather than an individual community effort.

Recommendation: In rural areas focus on the county rather than on individual communities to provide stronger support for the development of technology infrastructure and overall economic growth.

Ensuring availability of sufficient volunteers

Individual communities with very small populations present a limited number of volunteers to support the project. Agents in all counties were having trouble recruiting Technology Leadership Team members from participating communities with few residents. To illustrate this

point, a table containing the grant-listed participating communities and their populations appears below.

Populations, Based on U.S. Bureau of Census Estimates (2000)

County	Community	Population
Accomack County		38,305
	Onancock	1,525
	Locust Mount (Wachapreague)	236
	Horntown	No data
Craig County		5,091
	New Castle	179
	Sinking Creek Valley	No data
	John's Creek Valley	No data
	Paint Bank	No data
Cumberland County		9,017
	Cartersville	No data
	Cumberland Courthouse	No data
Dickenson County		16,395
	Clintwood	1,549
	Haysi	186
Louisa County		25,627
	Mineral	424
	Bumpass	No data
King & Queen County		6,630
	King & Queen Courthouse	No data
	Newtown	No data
Northampton County		13,093
	Cheapside	No data
	Cape Charles	1,134
	Bayview	No data
	Nassawadox	572
	New Road	No data

Recommendation: Select a unit of organization, either a county or a combination of counties, with a large enough population to provide the necessary number of volunteers to carry out the tasks required.

Seeking an enthusiastic leader

When the project leader is overburdened with too many competing responsibilities or lacks commitment to the project, for whatever reason, progress is slow. An enthusiastic leader keeps people interested and the project moving ahead. Moreover, the leader doesn't necessarily have to understand all the technical details as long as he/she has a good idea of the general breadth of the project and its goals.

Recommendation: Actively seek a volunteer to lead the project, rather than assigning an individual who may not have a true interest in the project or bring the enthusiasm necessary to recruit others. The county leader may be paid staff or a community member who is willing to donate his/her time.

Arranging for training facilities

Several counties did not have a local facility for hands-on computer training. When a computer-equipped facility was not available, both TLT members and the general public did not receive the same quality of training as in those counties with an accessible computer laboratory.

Recommendation: Identify and secure a suitable technology training facility when the project is in the planning stage. If none can be found in the county, arrange for a site nearby, and include fees for facility use and travel in the budget.

Plans for Project Implementation

Conducting *Take Charge*

Several participating counties had completed a community planning forum and developed a county comprehensive plan within two years of the start of the project, and chose to use that plan to guide their vision, rather than carrying out *Take Charge*. In these counties there tended to be less direction as to the potential benefits of technology in support of economic growth, and the project had less momentum to move it forward. *Take Charge* not only provided a means to identify issues in the county and specifically relate them to technology, but also attracted people to the TOP project in general and helped to build a sense of community that supported future activities of the TLT. Even among those counties that carried out the *Take Charge* program, the

connectivity between the community network and economic development and community participation became less clear as the project continued.

Recommendation: Complete *Take Charge* in all counties. Schedule follow-up sessions to *Take Charge*, about every six months, to link the issues and goals identified by the community and the emerging technology.

Recruiting a Technology Leadership Team

In some counties the TLT was recruited primarily through letters of invitation to county leaders holding office in local government or in civic or community organizations. People who already are very active in county-based projects or programs may not feel that they have the time or energy for yet another monthly meeting. A broad mix of people including youth provided a source of energy and enthusiasm for technology that helped to keep a project moving forward.

Recommendation: Develop a broad-based strategy to assemble members for the TLT, using newspaper and radio advertising, letters to the faith-based community, and flyers or posters in public places such as stores, the post office, and theaters.

Attracting volunteers both with and without technical skills

The use of the term Technology Leadership Team to designate the local steering committee may have implied that members were expected to have a high level of technical proficiency. Overall, rather few residents with limited technology background volunteered to serve on their TLT. When this project was first conceived, it was based on the idea that volunteers would not have to be technically proficient in order to participate. We still hold this belief to be true. A variety of skills added strength to the team, especially when participants were willing to learn and move outside of their established comfort zone. Sometimes those who are very technically adept are less experienced at marketing or presenting. There was room for and need in this project for people with a variety of skills, abilities, and interests.

Recommendation: Select a name for the local steering committee that is more inclusive, and will attract not only those with technical expertise, but others who bring skills in communication, group facilitation, and marketing.

Scheduling meeting times

Technology Leadership Teams that met during the work day or at noon had lower attendance. People often find it difficult to attend a voluntary meeting during the work day, especially when they have a long commute as was true for many of the people in these rural communities.

Recommendation: Schedule meetings in the evening, possibly with a supper option, to encourage people to attend.

Estimating time commitment

The time commitment required of local leaders turned out to be more than was expected when the project was conceived. The project became a burden on the team leader, and there was no provision for a back-up person to assume responsibility when the team leader was called away because of personal or work issues.

Recommendation: Provide funding to support a paid, part-time person in each county to assist the local agent or volunteer leader with project tasks.

Setting web site policies and procedures

Web site security was an issue with all of the county projects.

Examples of questions forwarded to the BEV team included:

- What security measures are/will be in place to protect the county sites?
- How is content regulated during the life of the grant? For instance, can a local witchcraft shop be prevented from listing its address on the village mall?
- How can links to porn sites or other sites not supported by the community be prevented?
- What kinds of policies should be in place after the grant is completed and the county site continues to operate?

Recommendation: 1) Develop security and operating procedures before the project starts, so questions can be answered in a timely manner. 2) Make available a resource on web site policies, because volunteers do not feel qualified or able to create policy. 3) Involve the university attorney or other qualified person in developing web content policy.

Appendix A – Project Implementation Materials

Contents:

- Services Provided to the TOP Counties by the Blacksburg Electronic Village
- TOP Implementation Plan
- Letter of Commitment from the Accomack Board of Supervisors

SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE TOP COUNTIES BY THE BLACKSBURG ELECTRONIC VILLAGE

BEV IN A BOX

Community Web Site Hosting

Each community received web space and server administration for a community web site. This is a full service, permanent site with nightly backups, complete statistics reporting, full text search engine, and 125 megabytes of space.

Community Web Site Design

BEV web design staff designed a community web site in collaboration with the Technology Leadership Team. The BEV elicited input from the committee, developed an overall site design, developed pre-coded HTML templates for all content areas on the site, and provided training to the committee on how to update and maintain the pages.

Community Village Mall (Business Directory)

The BEV provided an automated online business directory (identical in functionality to the BEV Village Mall) for each community to help local businesses gain more recognition online, especially from local customers. The BEV Village Mall is the most popular part of the BEV web site, and use continues to rise steadily. Local businesses can create and edit their own entries/links--no manual support is needed. The look of the pages will be fully integrated into the community web site.

Online Community Directory

The BEV provided an automated online directory (identical in function to the BEV Community Directory). The directory allows individuals and organizations in the community to create and maintain their own directory entries, which include their name, e-mail address, and URL/link to a web site (if one exists). Directory entries can also include telephone numbers and addresses if the person/organization wants to share that.

Online Community Calendar

The BEV provided each community with an online, interactive community calendar. The community web site committee will be able to add, delete, and update events as needed. The calendar will be integrated into the main web site.

Online Discussion Forum

The BEV provided a complete online forum system for use by community and civic groups and local government. Online conference systems make it easy to talk about and organize community projects and initiatives, to hold town meetings about important issues, or just to help people meet and learn about their neighbors.

Community Connections (Community Group Web Sites)

The BEV is providing community and civic groups with the same web site hosting services that the BEV provides in Blacksburg. Currently, over 150 organizations use BEV Community Connections services.

The BEV will set up an online registration system so that no local technical or setup support is required, and will provide the community a URL (e.g. civic.ourtown.org, or whatever is requested).

Groups receiving a Community Connections account get:

- A web site (up to 20 megabytes of text and graphics)
Sample URL: *http://civic.yourcountyaddress.net/yourgroup/*
- Two permanent email addresses for group use (with forwarding, if needed), and webmail access.
Sample address: *yourgroup@civic.yourcountyaddress.net*
- A broadcast mailing list that makes it easy to send messages to your members (up to 100 subscribers).
Example: *yourgroup@civic.yourcountyaddress.net*

Please note: This package does not include web site design and development. Community groups are responsible for the development of their own web site.

Virtual Business Incubator

BEV provides a virtual business incubator service to help home-based and microbusiness enterprises (businesses with fewer than 5 employees) get started. This service is similar to the Community Connections service.

Groups receiving a Virtual Business Incubator account get:

- A web site (up to 20 megabytes of text and graphics)
Sample URL: *http://vbi.yourcountyaddress.net/yourgroup/*
- Two permanent email addresses for group use (with forwarding, if needed), and webmail access.
Sample address: *yourgroup@vbi.yourcountyaddress.net*
- A broadcast mailing list that makes it easy to send messages to your members (up to 100 subscribers).
Example: *yourgroup@vbi.yourcountyaddress.net*

Participating businesses also receive marketing and business management assistance to help understand how to successfully integrate the Internet into their business.

Please note: This package does not include web site design and development. Businesses are responsible for the development of their own web site.

Implementation plan for the "Getting Rural Virginia Connected" TOP grant funded project

Goal

To allow counties listed below (also referred to as "participating communities" in this document) to use technology effectively to improve local social and economic conditions while including as many citizens as possible in each community's decision-making process.

Counties

- Accomack
- Craig
- Cumberland
- Dickenson
- King and Queen
- Louisa
- Northampton

Key Outcomes

1. Increased attendance at public meetings on key community issues by 15% per year.
2. A technology plan for each community with measurable milestones that directly address at least four serious social and/or economic issues identified by the community itself.
3. Increased Internet use in each community by 15% per year.
4. A fully functional, community network using local community members to manage content.
5. At least three new home-based and small business startups in each community each year.
6. At least six civic groups and organizations online in each community each year
7. An Information Technology Master Plan for each community
8. Permanent increased capacity in each community to use technology and the
9. Identification of and planning for regional technology corridors linking multiple communities

Implementation Task List

1. **Conduct Extension Agent Training**
Extension agents will be briefed about the proposed implementation plan for this project. They will also receive training in the following areas:
 - a. **Introduction to telecommunications infrastructure**
Help extension agents become familiar with the telecomm infrastructure issues facing rural communities. Agents will learn how to help communities become more independent in setting local agendas for telecommunications.
 - b. **Community assessment**
Extension agents will learn how to conduct community assessment, with a special focus on telecommunications. An Extension specialist will lead this section, with assistance from Information Systems staff. The CSPP model will be used as a starting point for technology assessment.
 - c. **Introduction to community networks**
Extension agents will learn how community networks make local communities more effective in solving problems, engaging citizens in local issues and creating a stronger sense of community.

In addition to these training sessions, agents will also be informed about the evaluation component of this project and their role in collecting relevant data for the evaluation process. See [Appendix A: Evaluation Plan for Key Outcomes](#) for an overview of the evaluation process.

2. **Obtain support from county administrators and leaders within the county**

For this project to be a success, administrators and other leaders within each of the nine counties must support this effort in their respective counties. Extension agents will contact county administrators and leaders (preferably with a personal phone call) to explain project goals and outcomes and request their support for the project. The list of people to be contacted includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Board of Supervisors
- County administrator
- Chamber of Commerce
- Representatives of Industrial/Economic Development groups
- Superintendent of Schools
- School Board
- Extension Leadership Council

Agents will also request these leaders to provide names of citizens that they know especially within participating communities who they think might be willing to serve on the technology leadership teams.

3. **Identify Local Technology Leadership Teams**

Each **participating community** will have a citizen team, referred to in the grant document as the Technology Leadership Team. Using the process described in the section titled Recruiting members for the TLT, agents will recruit ten to twelve citizens from each participating community. These individuals will have a strong interest and commitment to the effort and willingness to contribute time and energy to provide leadership and direction. This group will include representatives from local governments, business and agribusiness, industry, public education, the faith community, civic organizations, youth, and seniors. **Technology Leadership Teams will play a pivotal role in the overall success of this project.**

These teams will perform the following functions:

0. Serve as the core group for planning and implementing the *Take Charge* program that will reach out to the entire community. In their capacity as the planning committee for the *Take Charge* process, they will undertake the preparatory tasks needed to facilitate this process successfully within their communities. These tasks are listed in [Appendix B: Getting Ready for the Take Charge Process](#)
1. Advise and coordinate local program planning and to communicate and advocate the process to all segments of the community.
2. Work with project staff and Virginia Tech faculty to perform an assessment of current technology in the community using the CSPP model and other instruments.
3. Serve as facilitators in community workshops and forums to enhance the understanding of the general public on the potential of technology.
4. Work with project staff to identify and secure the resources necessary to fulfill and sustain the strategies of the local plan.
5. Remain in place after the end of the TOP funding with a commitment to continuing to provide technology leadership in the county.

Recruiting members for the TLT: Extension Agents are fundamental to the process of recruiting these members because they know their communities and the members that represent the power base. They will use the following process to recruit members for the Technology Teams *in each participating community*:

6. Begin by inviting members of the local government board or council. This is usually best accomplished by a personal phone call explaining the process and intended outcomes. Agents should get a firm commitment from at least one member of the board or council in each of the participating communities.

7. Create a list of other leaders in the communities using [Appendix C: Significant Segments of the Community and Decision Makers](#) as a guideline. Every effort should be made to include as many sectors as possible. Inform these individuals about the project and invite them to join this effort.
8. Contact individuals identified by local leaders as most active and likely to champion the process. Request these individuals that if they cannot participate that they recommend likely individuals who could then be invited to serve on the leadership team. In most cases, several follow-ups may be necessary to fill all segments of the community.
9. Publicize the project and the need for participants from within the general population using a combination of the following suggestions:
 1. Plan an informational meeting to collect interested parties
 2. Meet and make informal presentations to local groups to generate interest
 3. Run advertisements for the informational meeting in the local papers
 4. Distribute and flyers place posters within the community
 5. Send out personal invitations to groups such as, but not limited to:
 - Clubs and organizations in the community
 - Fire/Rescue
 - Service organizations
 - NAACP
 - Churches
 - Principals and staff of all schools
 - Historical societies
 - Business heads that have shown support for progress in the county
 - Private residents that have shown interest in economic growth
 - Senior Citizens groups

This process is designed to provide an opportunity for citizens from all walks of life within participating communities to volunteer for this project. Standardizing on a recruitment process ensures that all interested parties have the same opportunities for volunteering for this effort. It also allows the project management team to document and report efforts made within each community to the Department of Commerce (the organization that's funding this effort).

Selecting team members for the TLT: TLT members will be selected based upon the following criteria:

10. They have a personal commitment to using technology to improve the community
11. They are willing to participate actively in both training and ongoing citizen team training
12. They represent a broad cross section of the community
13. They remain in place past the end of the grant period in order to help their communities with their ongoing technology needs

As part of the selection process, **agents will inform each member that unless otherwise requested, their names and the community they are representing will be displayed on the TOP Website and also supplied to the Department of Commerce for record keeping purposes.** *No other personal information will be displayed on the Web site or provided to the Department of Commerce.* Members have the freedom to list other information in the community directory if they choose to do so.

Agents will email the TOP Coordinator (jaimedunton@vt.edu) the following:

14. A summary of the steps they took to recruit the team
15. A list of its members selected including name, occupation (specific companies are not required)/segment of society they represent, and community they are representing.

Note: Where appropriate, activities of the various community citizen teams will be combined and coordinated at the county level in order to simplify the logistics of providing training and related information to these teams.

4. **Train Technology Leadership Teams**

TLT members receive training in three areas:

• **Introduction to telecommunications**

Team members will become familiar with the telecomm infrastructure issues facing rural communities. Team members would learn how to help their communities become more independent in setting local agendas for telecommunications.

a. **Take Charge**

Team members will learn how the *Take Charge* program works, key aspects and phases of the initiative, and how to participate effectively in *Take Charge*. During this session, responsibilities for finding suitable locations in three areas of the county, establishing dates for the community meetings, finding sponsors for food, notebooks, copying, workshop materials, and establishing a plan for advertising the *Take Charge* program will be divided among various team members. See [Appendix B: Getting Ready for the Take Charge Process](#) for details.

b. **Introduction to community networks**

Team members will learn how community networks make local communities more effective in solving problems, engaging citizens in local issues, and creating a stronger sense of community. Team members would also receive training in how to use email and the Web (if needed), and how to use online tools effectively to support communication within the community.

5. **Conduct Take Charge Workshops**

Extension agents will facilitate the *Take Charge* program that includes three, three-hour workshops. These workshops are designed to foster collaboration among the citizens of each community, to move the group toward consensus, and to provide a framework for creating a vision for the county. *All participating communities within a county will come together for these workshops.*

Workshop #1 - Where Are We Now?

- Examine historical and current trends and characteristics of the community and consider implications for the future.
- Self examination of the community's strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of financial, social, human, and natural assets.

Workshop #2 - Where Do We Want To Be?

- Develop a collective vision for the future of the community. Findings for each community will be combined to develop a collective vision for the future of the county.
- Assess the opportunities for and threats to achieving that vision.

Workshop #3 - How Do We Get There?

- Identify and frame overarching development issues
- Identify existing resources to help address these issues
- Explore alternative ways to organize the community for action

Issues identified by the Technology Leadership Teams during the Take Charge process will be highlighted on each community's Web site.

6. Hold Community Readiness Workshops

These workshops are open to citizens at large and local community teams. Topics include:

- . Why community networks and technology investments help communities make the transition to the Information Economy
- a. How community networks increase worker job skills and expand the pool of high tech workers
- b. How technology can help rural communities retain traditional "small town" qualities and remain active, vibrant communities
- c. What communities have to do to attract high tech companies
- d. How to set up and run a community network

7. Perform Community Technology Assessments

Extension agents work with TLT members to perform an assessment of current technology in the community, using the CSPP model and other instruments developed by Virginia Tech. These assessments will be used to guide the development of technology master plans for the community.

8. Deploy Community Network

Each community will receive professional support and all systems needed to have a complete local version of the Blacksburg Electronic Village services referred to as **BEV in a Box** customized for the community. Design team meetings will be held with each community team to design the community Web site and services. This deployment of BEV in a Box will be done in stages and will include the following activities:

- 0. Meeting to discuss and finalize design issues
- 1. Training on the use of the various components of BEV in a Box i.e. discussion forum, community calendar, community directory, community village mall
- 2. Training on maintaining the Community Network and Community Connection accounts.

9. Develop Technology Master Plan

BEV staff and Extension agents will meet with community leaders over a nine month period to develop Technology Master plans for each community. They will also develop regional Master Plans that will help develop regional technology corridors.

10. Conduct Citizen Team Meetings

Each community team will have ongoing meetings with the project coordinator and the local Extension agent. Community teams will also participate in cluster meetings and quarterly project meetings (all communities) to ensure constant communication and the development of regional technology corridors.

11. Prepare Report for communities

A comprehensive report will be produced in partnership with local teams and disseminated to all project partners within three months following the completion of the 24 months of TOP funding.

12. Prepare Public Report

Write, edit, review, and print the final public report on the effort. This report will document the model used throughout the life of the effort, include all relevant assessment data, will document the impacts of the program, and be oriented specifically to be useful by other communities and regions.

13. Perform Assessment Research

The assessments conducted for each community will be used as the basis of an ongoing research effort during the two years of the project to document differences and similarities in the communities related to technology needs and impacts. BEV staff and VCE researchers will seek to discover common issues among these communities, try to identify common strategies that worked across multiple communities, and document this work in technical reports and published papers, including peer-reviewed journals.

Appendix A: Evaluation Plan for Key Outcomes

Outcome 1: Increased attendance at public meetings on key community issues by 15% per year.

Evaluation plan: Attendance lists and agendas of all public meetings will be maintained and examined through the project (this will include any public meetings that take place to address issues identified in the *Take Charge* Program). This tracking should begin with the *Take Charge* public meetings. Items will include: meeting topic, date, location, agenda items, and total number of participants.

Outcome 2: A technology plan for each community with measurable milestones that directly address at least four serious social and/or economic issues identified by the community itself. An information technology master plan for each community.

Evaluation plan: A format for the technology master plan will be developed by project personnel. A panel of experts will be formed to review the technology master plan for each community. The panel will critique the master plan for appropriateness and practicality using a review sheet that will be developed. Once the measurable milestones have been identified, the evaluation team will work with the community to determine measurement strategies.

Outcome 3: Increased Internet use in each community by 15% per year.

Evaluation plan: Once the community website is developed and online, usage statistics will be monitored on a monthly basis to determine change in Internet use over time.

Outcome 4: A fully functional community network using local members to manage content.

Evaluation plan: Establishment of a functional and operating technology team will serve as evidence that this outcome has been achieved.

Outcome 5: At least three new home-based and small business startups in each community each year.

Evaluation plan: The community web site will be monitored for new business presence (e.g., Virtual Business Incubator, Village Mall). A survey may be developed and administered to the new startups to determine the extent to which the web presence affected their business.

Outcome 6: At least six civic groups and organizations online in each community each year.

Evaluation plan: The community web site will be monitored for civic groups' and organizations' presence (e.g., Community Connections, Organization Directory).

Outcome 7: An Information Technology Plan for each community.

Evaluation plan: The Information Technology Plan for each community will be reviewed to ensure that it contains the outcomes of the Technology Assessments conducted in each community.

Outcome 8: Permanent increased capacity in each community to use technology and the *Take Charge* planning process to address community needs well beyond the end of the grant period.

Evaluation plan: The *Take Charge* process will be evaluated at each of the three meetings as well as a follow-up survey/interview with members of the planning committee.

Outcome 9: Identification of and planning for regional technology corridors linking multiple communities.

Evaluation plan: Evidence to document this outcome will be contained in the technology master plan.

Appendix B: Getting Ready for the Take Charge Process (Pam Gibson)

Before the three community-wide meetings can take place, a planning committee made up of a cross-section of the community leadership whose activities will be coordinated by the county extension agent will have to perform the following preparatory tasks to ensure the success of this process:

1. The planning committee should reflect the various interests of the community. Please see the checklist in [Appendix C: Significant Segments of the Community and Decision Makers](#) for use as a guideline. Getting commitment from community sectors to work on the *Take Charge* program will help to guarantee that those sectors of the community will come to the community meetings. For success, there needs to be community wide buy-in by every sector in the community.

It is imperative that members of the county board and town council participate. They control the budget and will have the power to implement the changes the community identifies.

2. The three community wide meetings typically occur one night a week for three consecutive weeks for three (3) hours. Typically the meetings run from 6pm to 9pm or 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. The meeting dates should be established. Every attempt must be made to publicize these meetings at least two weeks in advance.
3. The meeting locations should vary according to the community. By varying the location, it makes at least one meeting very accessible to one portion of the county. The meeting room should accommodate 50 to 100 people with tables for work areas, room for food set up, accessible restrooms. School lunchrooms have worked well.
4. Once dates and locations are established, it is time to find some sponsors to prepare food for the three evenings. Many people have to come directly from work to attend the meeting and don't have time to eat dinner, so having things like sandwiches available makes it easier for them to attend.
5. There will need to be commitments by the planning committee to purchase or find sponsors for notebooks, create notebooks, photocopy materials, stuff notebooks.
6. Participants will need to be registered for each meeting, given name tags and notebook materials.
7. The meeting locations need to have numerous flipcharts with paper, overhead projector or other audio visual aids.
8. After dates and locations have been established, the planning committee can begin to identify how to ensure that every member of the community knows about the meetings. Pam Gibson has a brochure in MS Word that can be adapted for each county. Putting ads in the newspaper, community newsletters, hanging posters in prominent places, sending notices home with school children are some of the ways to reach members of the community. It is also important that the identified movers and shakers attend the meetings and invite their constituencies.
9. As it closer to the time of the community-wide meetings, facilitators will want to enlist others to help work with the break out groups.
10. Facilitators may also want input from local historians for the first meeting. In the past, it has been popular to have the community history prepared for the notebooks on the first night and have the local historian(s) talk about the founding of the community.
11. Someone has to agree to take notes, collect information and have it ready for the notebooks the following week.

Appendix C: Significant Segments of the Community and Decision Makers

(Reproduced from the Take Charge Manual, Appendix A Page 81)

- Agriculture
- Banks/Financial Institutions
- Chamber of Commerce/ Commercial Clubs
- Churches
- Civic Organizations
- Community Improvement/ Betterment Groups
- Educational Organizations
 - Schools
 - Extension Service
 - Other
- Elderly

- Health Care
- Industry
- Local Development Organizations
- Local Government
 - Town Board or City Council
 - Park Board
 - Zoning Board or Planning Commission
 - Economic Development Commission
- Professionals (Attorneys, Accountants, Architects, Marketing Specialists)
- Real Estate
- Retail Businesses
- Unions
- Utility Companies
 - (Electric, Gas, Railroads)
- Youth

LETTER OF COMMITMENT FROM THE ACCOMACK BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



R. Keith Bull
County Administrator

COUNTY OF ACCOMACK
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
23296 COURTHOUSE AVE.
ROOM 203
P. O. BOX 388
ACCOMACK, VIRGINIA 23301
(757) 787-5700
(757) 824-5444
(757) 787-2468 FAX

March 9, 2001

Dr. Andrew Cohill, Director
The Blacksburg Electronic Village
840 University City Boulevard, Suite 5
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

Dear Dr. Cohill:

As County Administrator of Accomack County, I am providing this letter of support for the "Getting Rural Virginia Connected" program. The Accomack County Board of Supervisors will receive a presentation on the program at its regular meeting on March 21, 2001. I expect the Governing Body to support this cooperative effort between the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and the Blacksburg Electronic Village to work with underserved, rural communities to acquire and effectively use the technological and telecommunications systems needed to enhance economic well-being and maintain the traditional high quality of life in rural America.

Accomack County agrees to consider appropriating \$2,000 in the FY 2002 Budget process and further consider that appropriation in the FY 2003 and FY 2004 budgets. I anticipate that the Accomack County Board will pledge its support and agree to work with the Extension Service on this worthwhile project.

If I may provide further information, please do not hesitate contact me.

Sincerely yours,

R. Keith Bull
County Administrator

RKB:ssb

Appendix B – Recruitment and Composition of the Technology Leadership Team

Contents:

- Letter of invitation sent to Accomack County leaders
- List of Accomack County Technology Leadership Team members
- List of Networked Future Task Force members

LETTER OF INVITATION TO JOIN THE ACCOMACK COUNTY TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP TEAM

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PAGE 02



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Knowledge for the Commonwealth



Accomack County Office
23203 Front Street
P.O. Box 60
Accomack, VA 23301-0060
757/787-1361 Fax: 757/787-1044
<http://offices.ext.vt.edu/accomack>

September 16, 2002

TO: Accomack County Extension Leadership Council
Brian Smith
Bruce Paone
Joe and Amy Betit
Paul Berge
Eveline Conquest
Jim Carey
Rev. Purcell James
Berlie Shields
Jesse Poulson

FROM: Pauline M. Milbourne
Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences

Attached find information about an exciting initiative by Virginia Cooperative Extension that could potentially provide many opportunities for local citizens in Accomack County. TOP (Technology Opportunity Program) is funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce and seeks to help rural communities in our state to get connected to information resources via electronic communications, etc. As part of the grant proposal, three communities have already been identified to participate in the project. They are: Onancock, Locust Mount (Wachapreague), and Horntown. Depending on the availability of resources, other locations may be added in the future. Consequently, this initial invitation is to residents and other interested parties representing the towns named. In addition, members of the Accomack County Extension Leadership Council, local government officials, school systems, county agencies and others are highly encouraged to participate.

As the first step in this process is the organization of a Technology Leadership Team, please consider an invitation to attend an information session on next Thursday, September 26, 2002, 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. at the USDA Accomack Service Center located at the Accomack Office Center just off of Route 13 in Accomack. For your convenience, lunch will be provided free of charge.

Find enclosed general information pertaining to this project. Also, in order to get a lunch count, please RSVP by Friday, September 20, 2002 by calling 757-787-1361, ext. 16 or ext. 10. Please accept my apologies on the late notice for this meeting. Hopefully, the opportunity that this project may bring will make up for the delay in getting the information out.

Hope you can attend.

Enc.
cc: ✓ Jon Johnson
Brenda Holden
Clifton Slade
Dr. Eleanor Schlenker

www.ext.vt.edu
Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.
Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Initial Members of the Accomack County Technology Leadership Team (Effective October 16, 2002):

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Amy Betit	Pungoteague	University teacher
Betty Parks	Onley	Interviewer
Bill Bowen	Wachapreague	Charter Captain
Bryan Smith	Accomac	Accomack County Administration Office
Carla Woods	Accomac	Accomack County Extension Unit Administrative Assistant
Christianna Reed	Accomac	Medical Transporter/Nurse
Cindy Holdren	Onley	Manager of Virginia Employment Commission
Cynthia Wallop	Onley	Member of Accomack County Extension Leadership Council, Registered Nurse
Eric Banks	Horntown	Agape Center
Evan Clements	Onancock	Business owner, Technical person for Eastern Shore Rural Health System
Eveline Conquest	Horntown	HELP Project coordinator, Accomack County School Board member
Frank Moore	Onley	Management Consulting
Iris Gunter-Smith	Onancock	Retired, Accomack County Schools
Jack Bonniwell	Onley	Virginia Employment Commission
Jesse Poulson	Onancock	Teacher
Jim Carey	Accomac	Accomack County School Information Technology Specialist
John A. Johnson	Wachapreague	Town of Wachapreague
Johnnie Goodman	Atlantic	Computer Scientist & Computer Network
Joseph Simpkins	Accomac	
Julia Major	Wachapreague	Accomack County Board of Supervisors
Laura Belle Gordy	Onley	Accomack County Board of Supervisors
Lynn Bowen	Wachapreague	Sales Assistant
Margaurite Moore	Horntown	Retired
Pastor Moore		

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Paul Berge	Accomac	Executive Director, Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission
Pauline Milbourne	Accomac	Accomack County Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences
Peggy Kellam	Accomac	Accomack County Extension Agent, 4-H
Rev. Charles Bates	Onancock	Pastor
Stephen Furness	Temperanceville	Staff writer, Eastern Shore News

Networked Future Task Force Members:

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Barbara Schwenk	Accomac	Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development
Brenda Holden	Exmore	Extension Agent, Chair NFTF, Northampton County
Dianne E. Dawson, M.A.	Machipongo	Business Development Coach, Dawson Resources, LLC
Dr. Mary English	Machipongo	Superintendent, Northampton County Public Schools
Dr. Richard Jenkins	Melfa	President, Eastern Shore Community College
Greg Manter	Accomac	Director, Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development
Jack Bonniwell	Onley	Office Manager, Virginia Employment Commission
Jeff Gayle	Newport News	Client Services Specialist, Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center (VECTEC)
Jeffrey L. Davis	Onancock	Area Manager, Verizon
Jim Carey	Accomac	Technology Coordinator, Accomack County Public Schools
Keith Bull	Accomac	County Administrator, Accomack County
Lance Metzler	Eastville	County Administrator, Northampton County
Lee Mapp	Nassawadox	Executive Director, Virginia Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation
Lonnie Johnson	Petersburg	District Director, Southeast District Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Mary Walker	Melfa	Director of Workforce Development, Eastern Shore Community College
Michael Hoy	Salisbury, MD	Conectiv
Mr. W. Richard Bull, Jr.	Accomac	Superintendent, Accomack County Public Schools
Paul Berge	Accomac	Executive Director, Acc-North planning District Commission
Reed Ennis	Accomac	Finance Director, Accomack County

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Rose Rulon	Melfa	Executive Vice President, Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Sarah Bernart Gromow	Melfa	Business Analyst, Small Business Development Center
Steve Parker	Nassawadox	Director of Economic Programs, The Nature Conservancy
Thom Henderson	Nassawadox	Owner, ESVA.net
Vicki Underhill	Machipongo	Northampton County Public Schools

**Strategic Plan
for Technology**

**Eastern Shore
of Virginia**

Introduction

The following document discusses the Strategic Plan for Technology for the Eastern Shore of Virginia as submitted by the Technology Strategic Planning Committee of the Networked Future Task Force of the Eastern Shore Regional Partnership. For the purpose of this document, the term "technology" is used to encompass that set of disciplines, knowledge, and interests associated with the increased use of the Internet in all aspects of our society.

The Vision and Mission are stated followed by the Strategic Direction and the four goals:

- ❖ Provide individuals the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology.
- ❖ Improve infrastructure and access to technology.
- ❖ Expand the use of technology in the communities to conduct business and community activities online.
- ❖ Increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world.

Strategies to attain these goals are next discussed followed by Priority Projects:

- ❖ Portal Maintenance
- ❖ Community Outreach
- ❖ Community-Oriented Connectivity
- ❖ Research & Funding

A diagram of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership and lists of members of the Partnership, Networked Future Task Force, and Technology Strategic Planning Committee are listed in Appendix 1. However, special recognition is given to the following members of the Technology Strategic Planning Subcommittee who, as a result of participating in an intensive strategic planning seminar, generated the vision statement and the goals of this Plan:

Althea Ball, NASA	Paul Berge, Accomack-Northampton PDC
Joseph Betit, Old Dominion University	Amy Betit, Old Dominion University
Bonnie Bonniwell, A&N Electric Coop.	Keith Boyd, Eastern Shore RC&D
Mike Carpenter, 76 Market St. B&B	Robert F. Check, Jr., ESCC
Terry L. Cropper, Sr., Accomack PTA	Dianne Dawson, Dawson Resources, L.L.C.
John Downing, Northampton Cty Schools	Reed Ennis, Accomack County
Marvin O. Giddens, Shore Mem. Hospital	Bob Good, Resident
Jeff Harlow, Old Dominion University	Brenda Holden, Virginia Cooperative Ext.
Cynthia Holdren, VA Employment Com.	Tim Holloway, Eastern Shore SWCD
Robert E. Johnson, CBBT	Adelaide Lane, RPI
Julia Major, Accomack County	Greg Manter, ES Economic Dev't
Frank V. Moore, VA SFA	Rose Rulon, ES Chamber of Commerce
Barbara Schwenk, ES Economic Dev't	Terry Thompson, The Nature Conservancy
Mary Walker, ESCC	Shirley Zamora, Town of Onancock

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Background

The chain of events that has initiated the development of a Technology Strategic Plan for the Eastern Shore of Virginia began in January of 1997 when Accomack County, Northampton County, and the Town of Chincoteague endorsed the implementation and appointment of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership. The Partnership is a diverse membership in compliance with the 1996 Regional Competitiveness Act of Virginia that was enacted to provide economic incentives for regional cooperation and planning including partnerships between the public, private, education, and civic sectors throughout the Commonwealth. It is comprised of members representing business, civic, education, and government groups.

Within the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership, there were six original projects that were funded and overseen by members of the Partnership with the overall goal being Economic Competitiveness for the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Those six original projects were:

- **Resort Hotel and Conference Center**
To recruit or develop facilities to attract large state, national, and international groups to hold meetings and training activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.
- **Business Development and Workforce Training Center**
To expand current workforce development services and to assist existing and proposed businesses of the Eastern Shore of Virginia to enhance their economic competitiveness in the regional, national, and global economy.
- **Sustainable Water Recovery and Reuse System**
To design and develop a sustainable wastewater treatment system for the Cape Charles/Northampton County Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park with capacity to meet potential needs of park tenants, including a value-added food processing facility.
- **The Spaceflight Academy on Virginia's Eastern Shore**
To attract state, national, and international students to NASA Wallops Flight Facility to develop their aerospace technology skills, and to enhance awareness of aerospace technology opportunities among our youth of the Eastern Shore of Virginia.
- **Networked Future Project**
To improve the quality of life on the Eastern Shore by expanding Internet promotion and marketing of the region, and by training businesses to enhance their competitiveness via the World Wide Web.
- **Wholesale Seafood Farmer's Market**
To develop a wholesale seafood "farmers" market at the Eastern Shore Farmers Market in the Accomack Airport Industrial Park.

The Technology Strategic Plan is a result of the Networked Future Task Force. The members, after reviewing the current status of the Eastern Shore with regards to technology capacities and funding opportunities to support digital development in this rural community, realized that a technology strategic plan would be needed for the Eastern Shore to move forward. The Plan gives the Networked Future the direction that it will need to move forward with programs that will systematically "bridge the digital divide."

The first step that the Networked Future Task Force took to develop the technology strategic plan was to recruit a volunteer group of members of the community who would be able to coordinate the development of such a plan. This group was called the Technology Strategic Planning Committee. They consisted of 15 members of the community from business, education, civic, and government groups. They, in turn, invited the public to participate in two brainstorming sessions that were held in the summer of 2001. Forty-five community members took part in the sessions and formed the Technology Strategic Planning Subcommittee. They developed the Strategy, the Vision, and the Goals for the Plan.

The result of this process provides the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership-Networked Future Task Force with an organized approach to meeting the goals set forth in their mission statement. It also allows other community leaders involved in separate projects to "be on the same page" with the efforts towards technological advancements. As a partnership, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership members support every project being undertaken by the group. They are all related to the betterment of the Eastern Shore of Virginia through economic competitiveness, preservation of a rural lifestyle, improvement of the quality of life for residents, and utilization of technology to accomplish these ends.

See Figure 1 for a diagram of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership

The Vision

By 2010, the Eastern Shore of Virginia will have an easily usable and accessible digital technology infrastructure, which is universally available for web capable residents to reach and be informed by government, education, health, business and community organizations. Quality education and support for the use of the infrastructure will be available. Technology will be used to advance business, personal and community goals by providing information for life-long and community-wide learning, enhancing quality of a rural lifestyle, involving residents actively as informed citizens in government, and supporting sustainable economic development. The infrastructure will provide for local businesses to increase their operational functionality and, if applicable, competitiveness, plus be a link to the world supporting new residents, potential residents, potential businesses and tourists.

The Mission

The Regional Partnership – Networked Future Task Force’s mission is to improve the quality of life on the Eastern Shore of Virginia by enhancing communications services that can facilitate economic development, increase the vitality of civic and cultural discourse, and provide technological assistance to the local business community.

The Strategic Direction

The Networked Future Task Force will use technological advancements to directly improve the economic competitiveness of the Eastern Shore of Virginia by:

- ❖ Teaching businesses exactly how to use e-commerce to improve productivity,
- ❖ Installing a broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care and public safety services,
- ❖ Promoting the Eastern Shore of Virginia as a location for businesses and as a tourist destination, and
- ❖ Helping the local communities improve their quality of life through education and accessibility to technology.

The Goals

There are four major goals that have been identified by the Technology Strategic Planning Subcommittee for the Eastern Shore.

Goal #1 - Provide individuals the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology.

Goal #2 - Improve infrastructure and access to technology.

Goal #3 - Expand the use of technology in the communities to conduct business and community activities online.

Goal #4 - Increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world.

The Objectives

Goal #1 - *Provide individuals the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology.*

- ❖ To inform the public of opportunities for general training education, degreed higher education, and entrepreneurial education on the Eastern Shore.
- ❖ To increase opportunities to make a sustainable income by expanding the infrastructure to attract, then support, technology-based careers.
- ❖ To increase citizen input in local government processes.

Goal #2 - *Improve infrastructure and access to technology.*

- ❖ To compile and maintain on the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, an inventory of the kinds of connections currently available to Eastern Shore residents and businesses, including where the high-speed lines and wireless connections are located.
- ❖ To develop a plan to expand the range of options for affordable public and residential access.
- ❖ To develop a funding plan to support the expansion.

Goal #3 - *Expand the use of technology in the communities to conduct business and community activities online.*

- ❖ To increase the capabilities of business, government, and individuals to support web-based business operations.
- ❖ To use the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal for business information and community activities.

Goal #4 - *Increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world.*

- ❖ To continue developing the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal.
- ❖ To educate businesses, community groups, and government in the effective development of websites and use of the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal.
- ❖ To develop a technology-based marketing strategy for the Eastern Shore.
- ❖ To support the Eastern Shore's Chambers of Commerce in promoting social, cultural, and all other events on the Eastern Shore through technology.

Provide individuals the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology.

- To inform the public of opportunities for general training education, degreed higher education and entrepreneurial education on the Eastern Shore.
- To increase opportunities to make a sustainable income by expanding the infrastructure to attract, then support, technology-based careers.
- To increase citizen input in local government processes.

Why is this important?

As the industrial economy of the last century relied on railway and roadway to move raw materials and finished products, the new economy requires high speed "bandwidth" to move its information-based products. Unconnected or under-connected communities face the same prospect as towns that were passed over by the railroads. In order to develop true competitive advantage, regions like the Eastern Shore must accelerate growth to just keep up.

How are we doing?

The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal is an ideal outlet for the posting of educational opportunities and for access to local town & county websites. E-Commerce forums are being held regularly, as well as basic computer classes through the Eastern Shore Community College and both county school systems. The Networked Future Project is also constantly evaluating its programs through participant evaluations to determine what other classes/workshops are needed. Additionally, both Accomack and Northampton Counties are working with the Networked Future Project to either revamp or initiate e-gov websites.

What needs to be done?

- The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal needs to be regularly updated to include all government, education, health care, public safety, and businesses websites, events, and general information.
- The general public needs to be informed of the resources found on the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal and needs to be educated on how to use them.
- Classes & Workshops on how to use computers in business & everyday life need to continue to be offered to the public.
- Government entities need help to create and maintain web sites where the public can be informed and conduct business with that government office.
- A broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care and public safety services must be developed.

Improve infrastructure and access to technology.

- To compile and maintain on the Eastern Shore Portal, an inventory of the kinds of connections currently available to Eastern Shore residents and businesses, including where the high-speed lines and wireless connections are located.
- To develop a plan to expand the range of options for affordable public and residential access.
- To develop a funding plan to support the expansion.

Why is this important?

For the residents of the Eastern Shore to benefit from the technology that is changing the face of global society, there is yet one more barrier to overcome; access. There are currently three local Internet Service Providers: ESVA Net, Delmarva Online, and Visinet. However, there is no affordable high-speed access available or infrastructure to support one. There are few options for those who want to get connected. For those who are already using the World Wide Web, the quality of the connections available here create many frustrations. For those who do not yet own a computer, there is limited public access.

How are we doing?

ESVA.net is the Internet service provider that is hosting Accomack County's school system and administration. A double conduit designed for fiber was installed to link administration and the clerk's office. Old GIS tax maps are in digital format, and the entire county system has been hooked up to an intranet. Northampton County is working with VECTEC and CIT to upgrade its capabilities, but only has a small intra-office network that is not compatible across the departments. ESVA.net has installed a high-speed wireless antenna on the hospital roof in Nassawadox to transmit data for the Rural Health System, and residents within that 3-mile radius have access to high-speed Internet through ESVA.net. Also, cable and satellite companies are offering high-speed Internet services, but line-of-site (trees) and the cost has been a dilemma.

What needs to be done?

- A broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care and public safety services must be developed.
- Publicly accessible sites need to be identified to support community centers offering Internet access.
- Funding sources need to be identified that will help support initiatives to increase public access to technology.
- The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal needs to be seen by cable, television, phone, ISPs, and satellite companies as an instrument for promoting Internet options.

Expand the use of technology for the communities to conduct business and community activities online.

- To increase the capabilities of business, government, and individuals to support web-based business operations.
- To use the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal for business information and community activities.

Why is this important?

Business organizations are a very integral part of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership and, by definition, to the Eastern Shore area itself. Without a solid commerce industry, a locality simply stagnates. Therefore, with the amount of talented artisans, producers, and sharp business minds, the Eastern Shore has ample resources to compete in the global economy. However, without the technological resources needed to reach the global population, our products and services can only be appreciated by a few.

How are we doing?

The introduction of the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal provides opportunities for local businesses to advertise over the Portal's free business directory or to purchase banner ad space. Through the Networked Future Task Force, local businesses are also being offered e-commerce consultations, website development assistance, and regular forums/workshops. To inform the public about community activities, the Portal also features an interactive calendar and pages that are dedicated to Agencies/Organizations, Online Community Calendars, and Leisure Activities. Newspaper ads and radio spots have been used to inform the public about the availability of community information on the Portal.

What needs to be done?

- A Marketing Strategy needs to be developed for promoting the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal's Community Calendar as a resource for local groups to market community events.
- A broadband service that fosters economic growth and delivers enhanced educational, health care and public safety services must be developed.
- The community needs to be involved in local technology programs, thus more public access is needed for those without private computers.
- The Portal needs to expand to also offer online community features: bulletin boards, chat rooms, email, etc.

Increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world.

- To continue developing the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal.
- To educate businesses, community groups, and government in the effective development of websites and use of the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal.
- To develop a technology-based marketing strategy for the Eastern Shore.
- To support the Eastern Shore's Chambers of Commerce in promoting social, cultural, and all other events on the Eastern Shore through technology.

Why is this important?

The backbone of the efforts towards putting the Eastern Shore "on the map" regarding technology and economic competitiveness is marketing and promotions. The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal is a wonderful reference point, but people need to know it is there. The E-Commerce Forums are excellent informative outlets, but people need to know they are available. The Networked Future Task Force is working on the cutting edge of worldwide opportunities, but people need to know that it exists. Regardless of what is available to a community, the message must reach their eyes and ears or it will go unused. The potential is undoubtedly here, but it needs community involvement to reach the ultimate goal.

How are we doing?

Citizen buy-in has been an integral part of increasing the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world. The ESVA Regional Partnership is promoting various aspects of the Eastern Shore through its six projects, and is making plans to initiate new projects in 2003. Also, with the development of the strategic plan and a marketing plan, plus the continued additions to the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, the future will hold more opportunities for exposure.

What needs to be done?

- Ongoing upgrade of the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal needs to be a priority.
- A Technology-Based Marketing Strategy needs to be developed.
- Citizen involvement is a priority, thus public access is needed for those who do not have private access to Internet-capable computers.
- Training opportunities need to be available.

Eastern Shore Virginia Portal Project

Overview

The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, at <http://www.easternshorevirginiaportal.com>, connects residents to an online community of local businesses, organizations, health care resources, educational opportunities, government agencies, and cultural entities. The goal of the Portal is to encourage residents of the Shore to interact and use resources online, and to encourage off-Shore visitors to buy from our local merchants or to relocate to the Shore.

Partners

To ensure that the Portal remains up-to-date with accurate information about every resource available on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, the Networked Future Project has partnered with the Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Education Center (VECTEC), Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership, and both Accomack and Northampton Counties to provide the following services:

- Hire and train a staff member to:
 - Research information to include on the Portal.
 - Review existing pages for working links.
 - Make changes, additions, and updates to the Portal.
 - Send out a quarterly email newsletter.
 - Market the Portal to Shore businesses.
 - Generate funds using banner ads and grants to support the Portal.
 - Keep track of monthly summary reports of Portal traffic.
- Develop a searchable database for the Portal to allow visitors to search the site for specific information.
- Create a non-profit entity, under which the Portal will operate, with a Board of Directors consisting of local government and community leaders.

Accomplishments

The Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, created to provide a gateway to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, was launched in November 2001. Since then, the Portal has been constantly changing to reflect the growing number of businesses and organizations that see the value of having a regional website. "Hits", individual visits to pages on the Portal, have grown at an average of 550, or 13%, each month since its launch. During the month of July 2002 alone, there were an average of almost 300 hits per day, or 2,000 per week. All in all, in its first full year in operation, there has been a 150% increase in traffic to the Portal; from 5,145 hits in December 2001 to 12,769 hits in October 2002.

Evaluation of Project

To keep track of the traffic on the Portal, VECTEC has provided this project with monthly Summary Reports detailing hits, specific pages that are most frequently used, referring domains, search terms, duration of visits, and entry & exit points. From these summary reports, it is apparent that the Portal is having a positive economic development impact on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Reports show that the second most requested page (after the Home Page) is the "Real Estate" section, followed closely by "Accommodations". This suggests that people are using the Portal to locate both long and short term housing on the Eastern Shore.

Community Outreach Project

Overview of Project

The Community Outreach Project is a combination of both individual and group training opportunities designed to educate the local community about basic computer skills and e-commerce. This approach takes into account the fact that, for people to get the most out of the Internet and other online opportunities, they not only need access, but also knowledge of how to best utilize these tools. Also, with a business community consisting of 75% entrepreneurial or small businesses, e-commerce skills are necessary for economic growth. To meet the needs of businesses and consumers, the Networked Future Task Force has sponsored regularly held e-commerce forums featuring speakers from Virginia's top e-commerce experts. These forums provide participants the opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs, gain valuable contacts across Virginia, and obtain educational materials about having a successful online business. The Task Force has also sponsored other events, including Basic HTML classes and an all-day E-Commerce Conference.

Partners

Since all forums and classes are offered at low costs, the Networked Future Task Force has partnered with other organizations to help offset the costs of providing meeting spaces, meals, educational materials, speaker accommodations, and marketing. These partners are the Northampton County Cooperative Extension, Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership, Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology, and Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Education Center. Other contributions made by these partners include help in planning forum topics and offering knowledgeable staff members as guest speakers.

Accomplishments

Since the Fall of 2000, the Networked Future Project has offered twelve e-commerce forums at a cost of \$5-\$10 each to approximately 350 people on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, two HTML classes, one e-commerce conference, and has been constantly available for one-on-one basic computer assistance. Additionally, there are 12 more e-commerce educational workshops planned for the 2002-2003 year, including 5 forums and 5 informal "round table discussions", as well as another e-commerce conference in the Spring of 2003.

Evaluation of Project

Every forum or class is concluded by asking participants to complete an evaluation form. These evaluations ask the questions, "What was helpful?", "What was not helpful", and "What suggestions do you have for future topics". Evaluations are summarized and used in the planning phase of the next event. In the past, results of the evaluations have been favorable, and show a client-reported increase in knowledge by an average of 75% or more.

Community Connectivity Project

Overview of Project

The goal of the Community Connectivity Project is to increase high-speed telecommunications options for residents of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. According to the Vision Statement, by the year 2010, the Eastern Shore should have affordable access to digital technology. This project works with local and state agencies & businesses to help the Eastern Shore overcome technological barriers, such as a lack of broadband towers and fiber cables, that prevent full inclusion with the "Information Age".

Partners

The Networked Future Task Force has partnered with the Eastern Shore Broadband Consortium, an informal group of concerned citizens, and both Accomack and Northampton Counties to achieve its goals. The Networked Future Task Force, funded by the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership, researches possible local, state, and federal funding to support the creation of an infrastructure on the Shore for high-speed telecommunications. With the expertise of the Eastern Shore Broadband Consortium, available grants are discussed and evaluated for possible application. Local government officials support this project by participating in committee meetings and by offering the availability of matching funds.

Accomplishments

With the help of the Community Connectivity Partners, Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology, and Continental Broadband of Norfolk, Virginia, the Networked Future Task Force is able to identify the location of every usable tower on the Shore, and can estimate the steps needed to meet connectivity goals for every town. A proposal has been designed by Continental Broadband outlining what is available, what is needed, and what it will take to get there (See Appendix 3). And, since this project is designed to gain community involvement in efforts to improve high-speed options, the Networked Future Task Force sponsored an open, public forum in November 2002 with panel members from telephone, cable, Internet, digital satellite, and local government participating.

Evaluation of Project

As it was for telephone and electricity in rural areas, the inclusion will not happen overnight. The Community Connectivity Project will not cease to exist until every home on the Shore has access to high-speed Internet. However, the first goal is to equip critical community facilities, such as schools, health care, and public safety entities, to communicate instantly via high-speed digital connections. The safety and quality of life for each individual on the Shore is affected by these organizations' ability to effectively provide services.

Research & Funding Projects

Overview of Project

The Research and Funding Projects constitute the "behind-the-scenes" work associated with the Portal, Community Connectivity, and Community Outreach Projects. A large amount of time is dedicated to researching various aspects associated with the Networked Future Project. These items include (1) The effectiveness of existing projects, (2) Examples of programs such as ours in other areas, (3) Availability of state, federal, foundation, and corporation funds to support projects like ours, (4) Community Research of computer knowledge, and (5) Other potential projects to address computer literacy & access needs on the Shore. The data that is gathered from the Research Project is used by the Funding Project to secure monetary support based on documented need.

Partners

Many members of the Networked Future Task Force are community leaders in education, telecommunications, employment, and public interest. These members support the Research Project in their individual capacities, including in the Virginia Employment Commission, Eastern Shore Community College, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Accomack and Northampton County Public School Systems, Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, Accomack and Northampton County Governments, Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center has offered its help in formulating research about local businesses. These individuals also offer their expertise in the creation of grant proposals.

Accomplishments

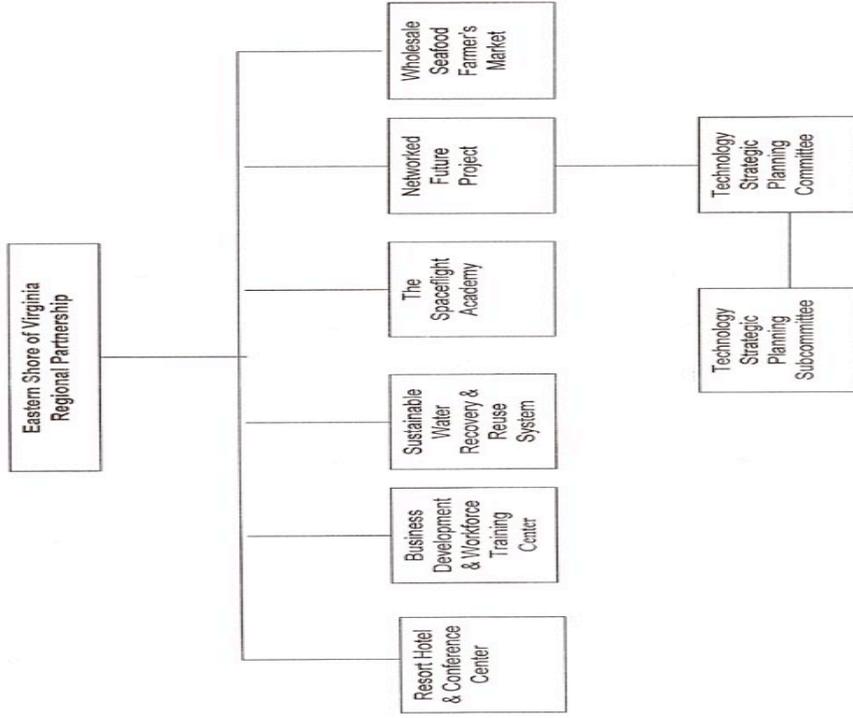
The Research Project, with the help of Old Dominion University's Social Science Research Center, successfully completed The E-Commerce Business Survey in the summer of 2000. This survey was used to target local businesses as potential users of e-commerce. Other research projects planned for the future include an all-inclusive computer literacy survey and a targeted survey of local farmers' use of the web.

The Funding Project has successfully secured funding from Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology to provide e-commerce forums, and from both Accomack and Northampton Counties to operate the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal Website. Plans for future funding include finding federal funding to create a wireless network of broadband for Eastern Shore health care, education, and public safety entities.

Evaluation of Program

The Networked Future Task Force, in the course of budget analysis and project planning phases, evaluates this particular project. Success is determined by the appropriateness of new projects and by the Task Force's ability to financially follow through with those plans.

Appendix 1 Original Projects of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership



Members of the Networked Future Task Force have overseen all of the program coordination of the Networked Future Project, including the development of the Strategic Plan for Technology.

1. Brenda Holden, Virginia Cooperative Extension Chair
2. Paul Berge, Accomack-Northampton PDC
3. Ray Binis, Eastern Shore Small Business Development Center
4. Keith Bull, Accomack County Administrator
5. W. Richard Bull, Jr, Accomack County Public Schools
6. Jim Carey, Accomack County Public Schools
7. Jeffery L. Davis, Verizon
8. Dianne Dawson, Dawson Resources, L.L.C.
9. Reed Ennis, Accomack County
10. Dr. S. Dawn Goldstine, Northampton County Public Schools
11. Thom Henderson, ESVA.net
12. Cynthia Holdren, Virginia Employment Commission
13. Michael Hoy, Conectiv
14. Richard Jenkins, Eastern Shore Community College
15. Greg Manter, Eastern Shore Economic Development
16. James McGowan, Accomack-Northampton PDC
17. Lance Metzler, Northampton County Administrator
18. Steve Parker, The Nature Conservancy
19. Rose Rulon, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce
20. Barbara Schwenk, Eastern Shore Economic Development
21. Cliff Slade, VCE Southeast District Director
22. Vicki Underhill, Northampton County Public Schools
23. Mary Walker, Eastern Shore Community College

The Technology Strategic Planning Committee, as part of the Networked Future Project, has directed the efforts towards the development of the Plan.

1. Paul Berge, Accomack-Northampton PDC
2. Joseph & Amy Betit, Old Dominion University
3. Bonnie Bonniwell, A&N Electric Cooperative
4. Keith Bull, Accomack County Administrator
5. Jim Carey, Accomack County Public Schools
6. Jeffery L. Davis, Verizon
7. Dianne Dawson, Dawson Resources, L.L.C.
8. John Downing, Northampton County Public Schools
9. Reed Ennis, Accomack County
10. Jeff Harlow, Old Dominion University
11. Cynthia Holdren, Virginia Employment Commission
12. Michael Hoy, Conectiv
13. Lance Metzler, Northampton County Administrator
14. Frank V. Moore, VA Space Flight Academy
15. Rose Rulon, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce
16. Mary Walker, Eastern Shore Community College

Definitions

The following terms appear throughout this document. These definitions are provided to help the reader make distinctions.

CIT – Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology

Community – A group of people who reside in a specific locality, or a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests.

Cyberlaw – Laws that govern the use of the Internet.

Double Conduit – A medium to transmit data via fiber optics.

Eastern Shore's Chambers – Eastern Shore, Cape Charles, and Chincoteague.

E-Commerce – (Electronic Commerce) The interchange of goods or commodities by way of the Internet.

Fiber – (Fiber Optic Cable) A physical transmission medium that uses light to transmit data.

GIS – (Geographic Information System) Device for accurately surveying an area.

Government Comprehensive Planning – The process by which laws and potential laws are discussed and planned.

Infrastructure – The basic, underlying framework or features of a system.

Intranet – A computer network with restricted access, as within a corporation, that uses software and protocols developed for the Internet.

ISP – Internet Service Provider

Portal – A website that functions as a point of entry to resources on the web.

Quality of Life – Average standards within a community.

Sustainable Economic Development – A stable expansion of opportunities and resources within a community.

Technology – That set of disciplines, knowledge, and interests associated with the increased use of the Internet in all aspects of our society.

Telecommuting – The act or practice of working at home using a computer terminal electronically linked to one's place of employment.

VECTEC – Virginia's Electronic Commerce and Technology Center

World Wide Web – A system of extensively interlinked hypertext documents: a branch of the Internet.

Appendix D – Marketing and Publicity Materials

Contents:

Milbourne, Pauline: “*Take Charge* meetings continue in Accomack;” Press release.

Furness, Stephen; “Program will address rural needs;” *Eastern Shore News*; October 9, 2002.

“TOP program on shore;” The Portal Newsletter (Eastern Shore Virginia Portal); December, 2002

“*Take Charge* in Accomack and Northampton counties;” The Portal Newsletter (Eastern Shore Virginia Portal); March, 2003.

“Website help classes set;” *Eastern Shore News*; April 7, 2004.

Take Charge in Accomack County: Poster produced by the Accomack County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Take Charge in Accomack County: Brochure produced by the Accomack County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

EASTERN SHORE NEWS – PRESS RELEASE

'Take Charge' meetings continue in Accomack

BY PAULINE MILBOURNE

The first "Take Charge" session in a series of three planned for citizens of Accomack County was conducted at Nandua High School on Feb. 11.

"Take Charge" is a process to involve residents in issue identification and the development of a vision and realistic strategies to address critical concerns that impact upon quality of life. Miles Barnes, in a presentation on the historical perspective of Accomack County, said, "The great value of history is to help us understand how we as people, as a community, and as individuals arrived at this place in time. A knowledge of history should help us better to understand and cope with things as they are."

Other items cited by Barnes concerning Accomack included these: The Census of 1910 revealed that Accomack County had the highest per capita income of any rural county in the United States; In 1920, Accomack and Northampton counties led the nation in value of crop per acre. In other words, he said, "Accomack and Northampton were the richest agricultural counties in the United States."

Further, during 1924, the

Eastern Shore produced 13,000 bushels of Irish potatoes. The Produce Exchange receipts for 1920 was a whopping \$10 million. During this same period, 1920, 4,000,000 barrels of potatoes and oysters were shipped from this area.

The population of Accomack County for 1870 was 28,500. By 1910, the population of Accomack had climbed to 53,000 and dropped to around 46,000 by the year 2000. According to census data, the current population of the county is 38,305.

There are three workshops or sessions involved in the "Take Charge" program. The 28 residents who attended the first session were charged with the question: "Where Are We Now?" To answer this question, the participants examined current trends and characteristics of Accomack County and implications for the future. Also, they assessed economic, social, and other opportunities for the county's future through analysis of county's strengths and weaknesses.

The second "Take Charge" session will be on Tuesday, Feb. 25 at Arcadia High School. The last session is scheduled to be conducted at Nandua High

School on Tuesday, March 4. Any interested residents of Accomack County may attend.

Accomack and Northampton counties are two of nine selected from across the state to participate in the Technology Opportunity Program (TOP); a three year grant project as part of an overall effort called Getting Rural Virginia Connected funded by the Department of Commerce. Specific communities for project emphasis include Wachapreague, Onancock and Horntown.

In the end, communities involved in this project will receive a complete turnkey community network system including email, Web hosting, listserv, online discussion forums, and database to Web publishing.

Each community will have a main community Web site designed with assistance from the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV).

Support for this project is provided by the Accomack County Technology Leadership Team (TLT) which includes participants from Accomack County Schools, the Virginia Employment Commission, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, County of Accomack, Town of Onancock, Town of Wachapreague, HELP, Inc., and Accomack County Cooperative Extension.

For more information about this project, please contact the Accomack County Cooperative Extension Office at 787-1361, ext. 16.

African American history program Feb. 25 at Northampton High School

Northampton High School will be observing its annual African-American History Program on Feb. 25 at 9:45 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.

This year's theme will be "The Souls of Black Folk: Centennial Reflections." The University of Maryland-Eastern Shore Concert choir will be the featured guests.

The public is cordially invited.

*Program will address rural needs

BY STEPHEN FURNESS

COPY

ACCOMAC — The Accomack County Cooperative Extension held a meeting Thursday with local civic leaders to discuss the introduction of the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP), a federally funded initiative designed to systematically address many of the needs of rural Virginia communities.

The Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) and Virginia's Cooperative Extension (VCE) Service are working together to help rural communities in Virginia move into the "information age." BEV will provide technical expertise and community network systems, while VCE provides extension agents in each community for leadership and institutional support. Accomack is one of nine counties in Virginia selected for this process.

The evaluation plan for TOP encompasses a wide array of goals. Attendance lists and agendas of all public meetings will be maintained and examined through the project, with hopes that there will be an increased attendance at public meetings on key community issues by 15 percent per year.

Once the community website is developed and online, usage statistics will be monitored on a monthly basis to determine change in Internet use over time.

Organizers hope to establish a fully functional community network using local members to manage the content. Also, they plan to have at least three new home-based and small business startups in each community each year. The community website will be monitored for a new business presence.

At present, the project is in de-

velopment. The educational program is designed to enable leaders, decision-makers and residents of rural communities face the future. It helps them to objectively analyze their community, consider alternatives, develop and maintain consensus, make strategy and take action for community development.

Jon Johnson, area specialist for Community Technology Development, was present at the meeting to present the basic structure of the program.

Johnson, in partnership with other Virginia Tech faculty, will provide training and staff development support to the community teams associated with the project.

Following completion of community action plans, Johnson will assist the local teams to identify, cultivate and solicit the resources necessary to sustain the project.

The Portal Newsletter, December, 2002



The Portal Newsletter December 2002

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Interactive Calendar Available on Portal:

Visitors to the Portal can now browse community events and add their own items to the Portal's new interactive calendar! Registration is simple and free! Just follow the link to the [Community Calendar](#), log in or click "Register me as a new user", and follow the on screen instructions. Some of the uses of this calendar can include:

- ◆ Yard sales,
- ◆ Church bazaars,
- ◆ Birthdays,
- ◆ Community meetings, and
- ◆ Educational opportunities.

Keep checking back to see what has been added. If you are having trouble adding events, please contact the [Northampton County Extension Office](#) for more information.

What's New on the Shore?

Business:

First Meeting set for Shore Entrepreneurs

The growth of the Eastern Shore is dependent on small businesses and entrepreneurs. Throughout the nation, but especially on the Eastern Shore, small business plays a vital role in our economy. To encourage this growth the SBDC is helping to organize a Small Business Network.

A network provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to meet, share, discuss and help each other, Entrepreneurs in business, those starting out or those just planning a start, have ambitions, drive and dreams of success. At times things happen and they are faced with situations, problems or successes. This will be an opportunity to share with some one who will understand what they are going through.

The first meeting will be December 3 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the [Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce](#), Melfa. The speaker will be Lance Metzler, Northampton county Administrator. His topic will be, "The growth that is taking place on the Shore, the need for small businesses, the important role small businesses play in that growth."

Call Ray Binis at 789-3418 if you are attending and want to be part of this sharing, caring, power group. There is no cost to attend this network meeting.

Community:

A rare monetary prize for two priceless educators

The Virginian-Pilot

© October 24, 2002

Sometimes, the good guys win.

Doreatha B. White and Subrina Owens Parker are each \$25,000 richer and not because they mastered a television game show or won the lottery.

They're richer because their contributions to public education are exemplary and because someone, [The Milken Family Foundation](#), has the good sense to reward what counts.

White, principal of Roberts Park Elementary in Norfolk, and Parker, a fifth-grade teacher at the [Kiptopeke Elementary School](#) on the Eastern Shore, were among 100 winners nationwide of the 2002 National Educator Awards bestowed by Milken. There is, some would say, no higher honor.

White was recognized for leadership at a school that faces all the problems of urban poverty, but managed last year to reach a full accreditation level on the state Standards of Learning exams. This year, scores slipped at Roberts Park, but that may be because White decided to concentrate on the school's younger grades. That investment ought to pay dividends for those children as they advance.

Parker was praised for hands-on teaching that results in frequent home visits and telephone calls to encourage students. A Northampton County native, Parker translated her own struggle to achieve into a commitment to the children who share her roots. Staying on the Eastern Shore was not the easiest path, but she was determined to give back to her community.

What's New in Technology?

N.C. links Internet, economy

BY Diby Sarkar, Federal Computer Week
Nov. 21, 2002

Every North Carolina resident will have high-speed access to the Internet by the end of 2003, according to an ambitious timetable set by a public/private organization.

Led by the Rural Internet Access Authority, the e-NC initiative — started in 2000 following a state report that linked broadband deployment to the state's future economic health — is targeting mostly rural counties where many economically distressed areas lie.

The deadline is reachable, representatives said. Previous national and state statistics showed that North Carolina homes — mostly in rural regions — were near the bottom in being connected to the Internet, but new statistics are encouraging.

More than a year ago, local dial-up service became available statewide. By the end of this year, 75 percent of residents will have some type of high-speed Internet access. And a new state survey shows that 52 percent had home Internet access in 2001, up from 36 percent in 1999.

Providing entrepreneurial and educational opportunities are prime reasons for the initiative, said James Leutze, chairman of the authority. In 2001, there were 63,000 layoffs in the manufacturing sector, and in January 2002, unemployment payments totaled about \$135 million. But he also said entertainment, such as communication among family members, provides an added value.

Backed by reports, statistics and surveys, the initiative is pinpointing areas with the greatest need, plowing two-thirds of its investment into rural areas. (Of the state's 100 counties, 85 are considered rural — and are home to half the state's population.)

MCNC, a local nonprofit corporation based in Research Triangle Park, has contributed \$30 million; the Commerce Department's Technology Opportunities Program has contributed \$700,000; the Appalachian Regional Commission has awarded \$200,000; and 80 other organizations have given in-kind and cash support to the initiative.

The state is approaching the issue systematically, addressing supply, demand and content, said Leutze, who is chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. But he emphasized that the initiative is fundamentally grass-roots, building commitment and participation among local leaders and governments to extol the benefits of the Internet and technology as well as drive local projects. The initiative has more than 2,800 volunteers statewide, providing expertise and training as well as hosting hundreds of forums about the issue.

Focus on Shore Folks

With a large grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, and in-kind support from local cooperative extension agents, the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) is planning to "Get Rural Virginia Connected". This program, named the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP), is helping 25 rural communities in 9 counties across Virginia, including Accomack and Northampton Counties, develop citizen teams, identify community goals, and incorporate community websites into small-town life.

Accomack County Extension Agent, Pauline Milbourne, and Northampton County Extension Agent, Brenda Holden, have been working in their respective communities to build technology leadership teams (TLTs) and to plan for the 3 community planning meetings that are the essence of the Take Charge curriculum for identifying community strengths, weaknesses, and goals. For Accomack, those meetings will be held on February 11, 18, & 25, 2003. In Northampton, the meetings will be on January 15, 22, & 29, 2003. All residents are not only invited, but are encouraged to attend these meetings in order to give voice to plans & hopes for a better Eastern Shore.

In addition to the Take Charge meetings, another primary component of the TOP Program is the development of community websites for various organizations, including towns. Email accounts, discussion boards, and site design & hosting is included in the plans.

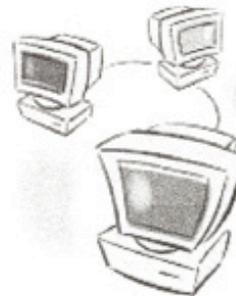
For more information about the TOP Program in your area, contact Brenda Holden in Northampton County at 757-414-0731, or Pauline Milbourne in Accomack County at 757-787-1361.

More sites of interest:

<http://www.ecorridors.vt.edu>

<http://www.bev.net>

<http://www.top.bev.net>



The Portal Newsletter, March, 2003



The Portal Newsletter March 2003

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Portal Spotighting Local Organization:

Each month, the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal will be spotlighting a different organization or unincorporated town. February's spotlighted organization was the Northampton Alliance Against Trash (N.A.A.T.). NAAT has served Northampton County for more than 10 years, keeping our area clean and providing residents with a safe and fun way to get involved in the community. Read the excerpt below from the feature article.

"What started in 1992 as an organizing committee of VESEHC (Virginia's Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation), has taken on a life of its own. With the help of over 40 dedicated volunteers and the beloved leadership of Mr. Mapp, NAAT has blossomed into a model project, exemplifying the power of teamwork. They were nationally recognized in 1997 in a ceremony in Houston, Texas, by Keep America Beautiful. The group has also received awards from Keep Virginia Beautiful, Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, VESEHC, Northampton County Schools, the Accomack-Northampton Advisory Council, and the Men of Metropolitan United Methodist Church."



Keep checking back to see what has been added. Next month's feature will be the Foodbank of the Eastern Shore/Kids Café.

What's New on the Shore?

Business News:

Wind farms off the Eastern Shore?

Virginia Business Magazine – January 2003

Smith Island off Virginia's Eastern Shore is a hauntingly beautiful and remote spot marked by acres of green salt marshes and bright blue creeks. In a few years, however, some 221 electricity-generating windmills, each at least 358 feet tall, may twirl in the ocean about three miles off offshore.

At least that's the dream of Winergy LLC of Shirley, N.Y. which plans to erect the windmills in a 45-square-mile site off of Northampton County. It plans similar projects in 21 other East Coast sites, modeled in part by dozens of such wind parks off the coast of Europe.

Getting permits for the projects from the Army Corps of Engineers, state and local authorities could take three years, says Bob Link, the company's compliance officer. Constructing the windmills could take a year, with a total cost of about \$900 million. "We have an opportunity to set up a renewable base that cuts down oil dependency," says Link. "It'll go to a utility or anybody who wants to buy it. Will it be clean? Yes."

The Eastern Shore is an ideal spot because of its constant breezes and location away from major shipping lanes. Energy companies that need to offset the emissions from polluting power plants will need the wind-generated power, Link says.

Improved technology makes wind-generated power plants possible; there are already land-based wind farms in states including California, Wyoming and Vermont but nothing off shore. Dominion Virginia Power is considering building a 40-turbine wind farm near its Mount Storm coal-fired power plant in West Virginia, about 50 miles west of Front Royal. The U.S. Department of Energy wants wind power to provide 5 percent of the nation's energy by 2020. Europe is far ahead of the U.S.; its market is growing at 40 percent a year. The first offshore windfarm was built off the coast of Denmark in 1992.

There is some opposition to wind-energy projects. A proposal by another company to erect windmills near Cape Cod drew opposition from locals who didn't want the view obstructed and from environmentalists who said birds and marine life would be harmed. There's also little policy controlling the placement or number of windmills. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., wrote a letter last summer to the Secretary of the Army questioning the project.

Warner's office didn't respond when asked if he would oppose the Winergy plan.

Community News:

Accomack and Northampton County Take Charge

As part of the Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program (TOP), representatives of the Blacksburg Electronic Village have been assisting both Accomack and Northampton Counties in implementing the Take Charge community planning curriculum. These strategic planning sessions are designed to help communities analyze the current state of their educational, economic, and governmental operations, and develop methods to address needs. This is done in three sessions titled, "Where Are We Now?", "Where Do We Want To Be?", and "How Do We Get There?"

In Northampton County, the Take Charge workshops took place on January 15, 22 & 29, 2003. Residents identified both the strengths and weaknesses of the county, and worked together to envision ways to effect some positive change. Some of the major issues that the participants discussed were: limited employment opportunities, lack of affordable/quality housing, high level of poverty, poorly accountable education system, lack of diversified industries, need for more sharing of resources, poor personal management skills/work ethic, need for more reliable vocational & technical training, need for greater protection of natural resources, limited tax base, high number of underemployed citizens, poor management of local markets, need for a communications infrastructure, and need for more public/private partnerships.

Participants agreed that public involvement in local politics is important to strengthening the county. Therefore, the Blacksburg Electronic Village and the Technology Opportunities Program will be sponsoring two public workshops aimed at developing a community network and identifying local organizations or towns that need an online presence.

For more information about the Take Charge Program, the Technology Training, or to join the Northampton County Technology Leadership Team, contact Brenda Holden, Unit Coordinator, Northampton County Extension, at 757-414-0731.

The first two Accomack County Take Charge workshops took place on February 11 & 25, 2003. Issues that were discussed by participants included business/industry, workforce, education, county buildings, agencies, organizations & services, natural and urban environment, people & families, transportation, and county government processes.

The identification of strengths and weaknesses for each category prompted attendees to thoroughly analyze Accomack County's economic and social status. The final workshop, "How Do We Get There", will be held on Tuesday, March 4th, at Nandua High School. The workshops are open to the public. For more information about the technology team, or to attend a workshop, contact Pauline Milbourne, Extension Agent FCS, at 757-787-1361.

Ninth Annual Child Care Conference May 1st

On March 1, 2003, the Eastern Shore Child Care Task Force and the Northampton County, Virginia Cooperative Extension will be sponsoring the Ninth Annual Eastern Shore Childcare Provider Conference at Nandua High School from 8:30am-2pm. The theme for this year's conference will be "Building a Commitment for Quality Child Care". The cost is \$15 per person, and those who attend will be eligible for five contact hours and Continuing Education Units (CEUs) from the Eastern Shore Community College.

Some of the topics to be covered this year include "Guiding Child Behavior", "ADD-ADHD", "Asthma and Allergies", "How to train and keep good employees", and "How to have a good working team", "USDA Food and Record Keeping", "Child Care Contracts and Policies", and "Licensing Family Day Homes and Centers." The keynote speaker for this event is Zakia Shabazz, author of "A Child is a Terrible Thing to Waste", and Founder/Director of the Virginia chapter of United Parents Against Lead (UPAL).

For more information about the Child Care Conference, contact Brenda Holden, Unit Coordinator, Northampton County, Virginia Cooperative Extension at 757-414-0731.

Come out and SEE Health Fair 2003

This year's Health Fair will be taking place at Nandua High School on Saturday, March 29, 2003, from 9am-3pm. And, on Sunday, March 30, 2003, an expanded dental program will continue through that day as well. Health Fair 2003 will include many of the previous years' booths, including FAMIS, the blood drive, and health heart. A new addition this year will be a Site Van sponsored by the Lion's Club that will be available for eye exams and to make glasses.

For more information about the 2003 Health Fair, contact Eastern Shore Rural Health at 757-414-0400.

Agriculture News:

Governor Warner to Address Virginia Agriculture Summit

January 30, 2003

Contact: Marion Horsley, 804/225-3820

Governor Mark Warner will welcome attendees at the opening session of the Virginia Agriculture Summit, scheduled for March 4 - 5, 2003 in Richmond. The Governor's remarks will kick off two days of speakers, panel discussions and workshops exploring the theme "Managing the Risks of Dynamic Change."

Dr. J. B. Penn, Undersecretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, will present the keynote address, "Trends in U.S. Agriculture: How to Position Ourselves for the Future."

The conference will investigate a variety of topics including the location of future markets, risk management, entrepreneurial development, cooperative development, agricultural development, adding value

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Website help classes set

The Virtual Business Incubator is part of a Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) Grant project as part of the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) offering a basic package of web space, email, and mailing list service to help home-based and small businesses establish a presence on the web.

Sessions for this group will be conducted on Monday, April 26 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Accomack County Extension Office in Accomack or 6 to 8

p.m. at the Northampton County Extension Office in Exmore (former Hare Valley Elementary School). The third session will be on Tuesday, April 27 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Accomack County Extension Office.

To register for either of these sessions, contact the Accomack Extension Office at 787-1361, ext. 16 or the Northampton Extension Office at 414-0731.

The registration deadline for the sessions is April 19.

TAKE CHARGE POSTER FOR ACCOMACK COUNTY

“Take Charge” **In** **Accomack County**

What is “Take Charge”?

- ◆ Three workshops designed to help local citizens gain a vision for the future.

Objectives of “Take Charge”

- ◆ To enhance communication among people from various backgrounds and areas of the community.
- ◆ To help communities explore short- and long-term strategies and vision for the future.
- ◆ To gain broad community involvement and support.
- ◆ To assist communities in analyzing their strengths and weaknesses.

Workshop #1: Where Are We Now?

Nandua High School – Tuesday, February 11, 2002, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

- * Community identity, strengths, weaknesses
- * Open communication channels and build trust
- * Identification of common values and concerns

Workshop #2: Where Do We Want to Be?

Arcadia High School – Tuesday, February 18, 2003, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

- * Vision for the future – hopes, dreams, fears, values
- * Explore community economics development strategies

Workshop #3: How Do We Get There?

Nandua High School – Tuesday, February 25, 2003, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

- * Identify critical issues to reach vision
- * Determine next steps

To Register For “Take Charge”

TAKE CHARGE BROCHURE FOR ACCOMACK COUNTY

Accomack County is one of nine counties involved in the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) of Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village.

Take Charge is one component of TOP and was developed by:

Janet Ayres, Purdue University; Robert Cole, Iowa State University; Clair Hein, Iowa State University; Stuart Huntington, Iowa State University; Wayne Kobberdahl, Iowa State University; Wanda Leonard, University of Nebraska; and Dale Zetocha, North Dakota State University.

The program development was funded in part by the North Central Rural Development Center.

The 3 sessions will be facilitated by:

- Jon Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension Specialist, Technology & Community Development,
- Pam Gibson, Virginia Tech,
- Pauline M. Milbourne, Extension Agent, FCS&CI, Accomack County
- The Technology Leadership Team for the TOP program in Accomack County

If you would like to join the Technology Leadership Team in the development of the "electronic village" for Accomack County, call Pauline M. Milbourne, Extension Agent, FCS&CI, Accomack County Extension Office at 757-787-1361, ext. 16.

Sponsoring Agencies

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission
Accomack County Public Schools
Virginia Employment Commission
Town of Onancock
Town of Wachapreague
HELP, Inc.

A light dinner will be provided for participants. In order to properly plan for the food and resource materials, please call Pauline M. Milbourne, Accomack County Extension Office at 757-787-1361, ext. 16 by February 3, 2003 to register.

All interested persons are invited to attend.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact the Accomack County Extension Office at 757/787-1361, ext. 16 during business hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations five days prior to the event.

Take Charge In Accomack County

*A Program to Build Vision,
Collaboration, and Action
for the Betterment of
Accomack County, Virginia*

Dates and Locations

Tuesday, February 11, 2003
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Nandua High School

Tuesday, February 18, 2003
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Arcadia High School

Tuesday, February 25, 2003
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Nandua High School

Take Charge in Accomack County

The **Take Charge** program will provide residents of Accomack County the opportunity to come together to collaboratively develop a roadmap for the future.

The **Take Charge** process provides a framework for identifying and addressing a wide variety of community development issues.

Objectives of the Take Charge Program

- Assemble various interests within the community and enhance communication among these interests.
- Provide a framework for analyzing the county's strengths and weaknesses
- Develop strategies to implement Accomack County residents' vision for the future.
- Utilize and build upon existing financial, physical, social, human, and environmental resources to help realize the vision.

The Workshops

The **Take Charge** program starts with three, three-hour workshops. These workshops are designed to foster collaboration among the citizens of Accomack County, to move the group toward consensus, and to provide a framework for creating a vision for the county.

Workshop #1 – Where Are We Now?

- Examine current trends and characteristics of Accomack County and implications for the future
- Assess economic, social, and other opportunities for the county's future through analysis of county strengths and weaknesses.

Workshop #2 – Where Do We Want To Be?

- Develop a vision for the future of the community by focusing on the most realistic strategies.

Workshop #3 – How Do We Get There?

- Identify and discuss the critical issues that will enable Accomack County to move forward.
- Organize Accomack County for Action.

Benefits of the Take Charge Program

- Increased level of participation and ownership in the community decision making process
- Increased understanding of Accomack County and its strategic position
- Expanded pool of leadership and entrepreneurial talent
- More support for crucial decisions on strategic county issues
- Enhanced utilization of local resources

Appendix E – Program Evaluation Materials

Contents: Evaluations from *Take Charge* sessions

TAKE CHARGE SESSION 1

Take Charge Evaluation

Your input in the Take Charge process is important for the future direction of your community. In addition, your responses to this survey will help to make the Take Charge process more useful for future meetings.

Thank you in advance for your assistance!

County: Accomack

Session I

Date: February 11, 2003

1. How did you learn about the Take Charge program?

- 11- Received letter
- Newspaper
- Radio
- 3- Word of Mouth
- 5 - Other (ELC meeting, TLT meeting, invited, email, work)

2. How useful do you feel that the Take Charge program will be for the future of your county? (please circle appropriate number)

Not Useful 1 2 3 4 5-2 6-2 7-3 8-3 9-4 Very Useful
10-5

3. Overall Reaction to this meeting

Please check one box for each item below	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
Purpose and goals were clear	16	1	1
I learned something new about the community	17	1	
I felt like my ideas were acknowledged	16	2	
Participation in Small Group Assessments was fair	17		
Assembly Assessments were fair	18		
My overall reaction to this meeting is positive	18		

Have you participated in a community planning process before? 11 - Yes 8 - No

Reason for participation

- Interested in improving community and county
- To gain information/ideas to pass on to others
- Interested in the future of the shore
- Very interested in community development and progress of the community
- It's time for advancement of the Eastern Shore
- I want to see positive change in my community
- Learn more on the process
- Want to contribute for betterment
- Interested
- Concerned Citizen
- Wanted to provide labor exchange information

- Eastern Shore should move forward
- Wanted to take in a community planning process
- Interested in electronic growth
- To gain better understanding of community needs
- Work related
- Concerned citizen, parent, county employee
- Stakeholder in community

Additional Comments: (feel free to continue comments on back of page)

- Felt the passion was valuable—lots of good ideas
- Very Timely, i.e. planning
- Great!
- I would like to participate in all three sessions but three night commitment does not work with my schedule

- In my role as School Health Coordinator for Accomack County Schools, I feel I need to be aware of community related events and opportunities to enhance community resources
- Learn to Take Charge in my community
- Want to help shape direction of community
- Making a difference in my community
- To find out how I can help the Eastern Shore with growth into the 21st century

Additional Comments: (feel free to continue comments on back of page)

This is very educational for me. It helped me to know what is going on in the community and how I can put my information to help the community.

Appendix F – Benchmark Report

Benchmark Report

Prepared by

Pamela Gibson
Community Initiatives Specialist
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Early in the process, specific benchmarks were identified as necessary for successful completion of this project. The following table lists the fourteen benchmarks identified in the project. While each of the counties included in the study satisfied completion of these benchmarks, there were differences among the localities. This report includes some of the notable differences.

TOP Benchmarks							
	Accomack	Craig	Cumberland	Dickenson	King & Queen	Louisa	Northampton
1 Extension agent training	11/7/02	11/7/02	11/7/02	11/7/02	11/7/02	11/7/02	11/7/02
2 Obtain support from county leaders	3/9/01	3/13/01	3/16/01	3/3/01	3/19/01	3/12/01	3/7/01
3 Technology Team recruitment	11/17/02	6/5/02	1/21/03	7/16/03	7/22/02	12/20/02	11/26/02
4 Technology Teams formed	9/26/02	4/28/03	11/14/02	7/18/03	8/1/02	1/15/03	11/21/02
5 Technology Team training	11/20/02	4/28/03	4/28/03	7/18/03	11/19/02	1/15/03	11/21/02
6 Take Charge Mtg 1	2/5/03	N/A	3/20/03	N/A	1/9/03	N/A	1/15/03
7 Take Charge Mtg 2	2/25/03	N/A	3/27/03	N/A	1/16/03	N/A	1/22/03
8 Take Charge Mtg 3	3/4/03	N/A	4/3/03	N/A	1/23/03	N/A	1/29/03
9 Community Readiness Workshops	5/20/04	3/15/04	10/15/03	10/1/03	5/9/03	10/29/03	10/6/03
10 Technology Assessments	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04	9/03-04/04
11 Initial web site development mtg	3/12/03	7/14/03	5/15/03	7/18/03	3/11/03	2/11/03	3/13/03
12 Transition training	N/A	2/10/04	3/8/03	3/10/03	3/24/04	3/17/04	N/A
13 Web site deployment	N/A	10/1/03	10/1/03	10/1/03	6/10/03	5/27/03	N/A
14 Technology Master Plans	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04

Extension personnel from each of the participating counties attended a day-long training program in Richmond, VA on November 7, 2002. The program provided introduction to the TOP team from Extension and BEV who would be in each county, the process involved to complete the project, and the commitment needed from agents in each county. This program was taped so that others working on the project could review information.

For the second benchmark, support from county leaders was identified. The date in the table represents the initial letter of intent from each of the participating counties. This information was important to assure that the \$6,000 required from each county would be committed. It was hoped that the support would include participation by local leaders in the project. Participation by local leaders in the Technology Leadership Teams and the *Take Charge* meetings was not consistent across the seven participating counties. Extension agents were given guidelines for recruitment that included securing participation of key local leaders. In some counties, participation was active in the beginning of the project but waned months later. Several counties have had consistent participation from a variety of local leadership throughout the project. Cumberland county maintained consistent participation from local leaders, and Van Petty won a seat on the Board of Supervisors.

Technology Team recruitment was the third benchmark. The dates in the table reflect the beginning dates for this process. In some cases, the recruitment process went much slower than expected, suffered lapses because of personnel turnover, and often did not meet the expectations of the recruitment process. The process for recruitment stressed the need to attract members of all segments of the community, but there was a perception that one needed to be technologically savvy to participate. For a few counties such as Craig and Dickenson, this perception created a significant roadblock in recruiting the number of members needed for the longevity of the project. All of the counties found the necessity to have members of all sectors of the community to do things such as information gathering, speaking to clubs and organizations, and general brainstorming. Northampton and Accomack counties had unique problems. First, they had a competing website for the eastern shore and didn't see the need for a duplicate site and being next door to one another had difficulty determining whether it was best to work on the county level or as a shore (regional) basis. Initial efforts were on a county level with each county recruiting members but later folded membership into the Networked Futures Task Force that served the shore technology efforts. Many of the members of the TLTs were already active in this task force and found it useful to put energy into one organizational effort.

Formation of Technology Leadership Teams was the fourth benchmark. This process involved getting commitments from those members of the Technology teams who would be responsible for the updating and maintenance of the websites. In the counties of Accomack and Cumberland, this phase took place before general recruitment took place.

For all of the counties, team recruitment has continued to be part of the process to keep the project alive. Counties having the most difficulty with this step were those who didn't advertise broad base recruitment. By limiting team membership to only those known to have technical

skills, participation by the community became significantly restricted and left all of the work to a few.

The Technology Team training was an ongoing process during the course of the project. The date in the table reflects the first major training opportunity for technology team members. The BEV team gave each county as set of job titles and descriptions for TLT members who will be needed to maintain the website:

- 1) Web Site Administrator-responsible for managing the content on the Community Web site
- 2) Directory Administrator-responsible for People, Business, and Organization Directories:
 - a) Approves or blocks requests of individuals who register using the “Become a Villager” link on the County Web site.
 - b) Add, modify, delete or reassign business entries as needed if individuals who created them can’t do so (for some reason e.g. forgot their password.)
 - c) Reset passwords for individuals, community connections and virtual business incubator accounts.
- 3) Calendar Administrator-responsible for Online Calendar:
 - a) Approve calendar entries sent in by individuals in the community.
 - b) Add, modify and delete entries from the Online Calendar
- 4) Discussion Forum Administrator-responsible for Online Discussion forum:
 - a) Create moderator
 - b) Stop discussion forum
- 5) Discussion Forum Moderator-monitor Discussion Forum
 - a) Ensure appropriateness of posts
 - b) Hide or delete threads
- 6) Registrar-responsible for BEV Incubator Services
 - a) Verify credentials for community connections accounts
 - b) Verify credentials for virtual business incubator accounts

For a small county such as Craig, identifying willing volunteers to take these positions became a challenge and took some time. Because Accomack and Northampton chose not to develop their unique websites, they needed fewer volunteers to maintain the elements that would be incorporated into the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal website.

The three *Take Charge* meetings comprise benchmarks 6-8. This program provided a bone of contention from the very beginning. Extension Agents said that they were not aware that they had to go through this program in order to be part of the TOP project. In order to compromise on the considerable time this program would require of agents, the TOP leadership agreed to use comprehensive plans if they were up-to-date or a comparable community visioning process. Craig and Louisa used their comprehensive plan to identify community issues for their TOP site. Dickenson county was part of another study in which community focus groups were organized to identify issues and used the data from this project for the TOP program. The four remaining counties used the *Take Charge* process to involve citizens in issue identification and action plans. Of those four counties, Cumberland and King and Queen counties embraced the project enthusiastically and followed the guidelines for success. Agents in Northampton and Accomack had little time to devote to the project and did not make its success a priority. They did not

publicize and invite attendees and had fewer participants than anticipated and fewer attendees participating in all three meetings. Evaluations from the *Take Charge* meetings indicate that the programs were well received by participants and led to further involvement in the TOP project and community activities. Even the two less successful counties, found that this community empowerment program resulted in new involvement for citizens and their communities. In addition, this process provided improved membership in the TLTs.

The next benchmark is Community readiness Workshops. These workshops provided a great opportunity for communities to share with citizens all of the things technology and networks could do for them. Members of BEV traveled to communities and provided demonstrations. Several counties readily took advantage of this opportunity to use experts to share the technology and held several of these workshops, with the initial workshop date appearing in the Benchmark table. A few counties such as Accomack and Dickenson devoted little attention to this process and held only one meeting for citizens. The workshops not only informed citizens of opportunities but gave county extension agents and TLT members models for future demonstrations throughout their counties after the BEV support ended.

Technology assessments were performed by John Nichols toward the end of the funding period. The TOP team was fortunate to have this expert join the project and perform this process. John began meeting with counties and doing assessments in the Fall of 2003 and completed the process in April 2004.

The initial web site development meeting was enthusiastically attended by TLT members in most of the participating counties. Because of the existing website in Accomack and Northampton counties, some issues had to be settled. It was ultimately decided that the unique Bev-in-a-box tools could be added onto their existing site, thus eliminating two competing websites. This website development meeting helped TLT members select those elements that would make the site personal for their particular county. This is where counties could plug in the issues identified in their issue identification meetings, determine methods for naming their site, and particular pictures they wanted to showcase. For many of the TLTs, this meeting sparked renewed enthusiasm for the project.

The twelfth benchmark was the transition training meeting. This meeting served the purpose of training the responsible TLT members to take over particular duties for website maintenance. Volunteers for the specific positions were either trained at Virginia Tech or in their communities and were given reference materials to keep for the continuation of their site. Because Accomack and Northampton opted to use the Portal Website, this step and the deployment were not needed in these counties. Appropriate county members were trained to do the selected components of BEV to the existing Portal website.

Web site deployment is probably the most significant benchmark as identified by a number of counties in their focus group evaluations. The fact that they actually got a site up and running was seen as a big step. Several counties had celebrations to mark the unveiling of the county website. Cumberland and King and Queen counties had articles in the local newspapers and community meetings to demonstrate their new sites.

John Nichols used the information he gathered doing the Technology Assessments in each of the counties to develop a Technology Master Plan. The Technology Master Plans are the 14th and final benchmark for this project. These plans will be completed at the end of the funding cycle and will be shared with the counties.