

**Top Grant Initiative Meeting
Technology Leadership Team
Craig County
April 28, 2003**

Members present:

Paul Paradzinski, Jeff Boudreaux, Ken Wood, Reese Wood, Adele Morris, Chris Fisher, Debbie Snead, Jessie Paxton, Michelle Adcock, Robert Roberts, Jon Johnson

Michelle Adcock welcomed members and asked that members introduce themselves for the benefit of Jon and Robert. Michelle explained that early retirements had delayed TOP grant planning in Craig County, but was excited to get the process started again.

Jon Johnson provided an overview of the TOP Grant Initiative. Some of the key points to the presentation included:

- collaboration with US Dept. of Commerce, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV), and nine rural counties across Virginia
- leadership and technology training and development for citizens and local leaders
- virtual business incubator
- community web sites managed by the Technology Leadership Team
- web site availability for civic organizations (\$20 per year)
- county community web site designed with assistance from BEV
- home based and small businesses web sites designed with assistance from BEV with funding from the grant initiative
- features of county web site including an e-mail account, mailing lists, discussion forums, interactive calendars and directories, and virtual business incubators
- possible outcomes of web site including increased attendance at public meetings, a technology plan for future planning and technology corridors, and increased internet use
- examples of community web sites to review (example – www.bev.net)

Jon Johnson asked TLT members to sign permission forms. These forms grant permission for TLT members' names and localities to be published on the TOP web site and to be reported to the Department of Commerce for grant reporting purposes.

Jon Johnson provided an introduction to community networks. Jon gave this presentation in the absence of Jamie Shetrone (Blacksburg Electronic Village – BEV)

Some of the key points to this presentation included:

- features of BEV including services to Blacksburg and the New River Valley area, Village Mall, community connections accounts, and network neighborhoods services
- components of community networks including people, content, services, and infrastructure
- roles of a community network including information about education and training, public spaces in cyberspace, community technology resource, and economic development
- keys to success including emphasis on key groups and collaborative partners

- examples of network activities including community technology centers, micro-business incubators, outreach projects, community and civic group sites
- BEV in a Box services including 125 megs of server disk space and server administration, nightly backups, complete statistics reporting, and full text search engine
- the “Take Charge” community assessment tool

Discussion about infrastructure followed. Jon discussed the speed of traditional phone line service to access the Internet. Debbie Snead expressed satisfaction with her tds.net service and speed.

Jon asked if anyone in the county telecommutes. No one from the group knew of anyone who does this. He commented that 40-90% of jobs are created through existing companies and that infrastructure can allow workers to enjoy living in rural areas while being connected to larger metropolitan areas. Also, infrastructure can allow a rural community to be more competitive with other localities in business recruiting and retention as companies increasingly integrate technology into their daily operations.

Discussion about existing programs and computer access followed. Adele Morris commented on after school programming through Virginia Western Community College. She asked about the computer room at the Craig County Child Care Center. Adele mentioned that there is still a computer at the Senior Citizen Center (New Castle Commons) and at Craig Botetourt Electric Cooperative.

Debbie Snead had questions about non-profit community organizations and micro-businesses. Jon said that these would involve five, or less, employees. Debbie suggested that with so few businesses in the county, that to have those businesses included would contribute to economic growth.

Jon discussed micro-businesses and what TOP could offer to people wanting to start small businesses. He suggested that a community web site could be part of a business plan and would provide marketing benefits.

Paul Paradzinski had questions about who would maintain the sites and who would secure the sites from inappropriate content. Robert Roberts from BEV explained that BEV would provide security support.

Chris Fisher asked if representatives would be needed to maintain each individual community site (Lion’s Club, Scouts, etc). Jon responded yes. In addition, there is a need for a volunteer administrator for the community web site. This person would monitor the content of information posted to the sites.

Debbie Snead expressed concerns about the long-term outlook for this project – specifically about how the community web site would be maintained and sustained after BEV steps out of the picture.

Reese Wood suggested that this program was needed in our community and that we would need to find a way to implement it.

Jon reminded the group that civic groups would incur \$20 per year fee to develop and host individual sites during the course of the grant initiative.

Robert Roberts – BEV is for you and the community. Please visit www.bev.net to see what the grant money can provide.