

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 Cumberland 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 Cumberland County. Many of you were closely involved with the project on a regular basis, and much of the information provided 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 how 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 Cumberland Board of Supervisors which helped to make Cumberland 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 Cumberland First web site <http://www.cumberland.first.net> 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 at Virginia Tech,

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 Van Petty about the participation of Cumberland County in the TOP project. Van brought the TOP opportunity to the attention of Cumberland County government officials who expressed strong support for the project and pledged the \$6,000 required.

Cumberland County leaders informed of the project at that time included:

Cumberland County Board of Supervisors

- Juanita M. Urban, Chair
- Ray Wooten, Vice Chair
- L. Tom Murray
- R. Phil Scarborough, Jr.
- Elbert R. Womack

Cumberland County Administrators

- Judy Hollifield, County Administrator
- Sherry Swinson, Assistant County Administrator/Economic Development Director

Based on this local commitment Cumberland County was included in the grant proposal submitted to the U.S. Department of Commerce in Spring 2001. In Fall 2001 Virginia Tech was notified that the grant was funded with a start date of October 1, 2001. (The letter of commitment from the Cumberland Board of Supervisors can be found in Appendix A.)

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 Larrowe 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 Mathai, 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 Larrowe 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 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 indicated that each 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.

Efforts to Recruit a Technology Leadership Team

Retired Extension Agent Van Petty met with Cumberland County Administrator Judy Hollifield and Economic Development Director Sherry Swinson to develop a list of potential members for the TLT. They selected people based on knowledge of their interest in county activities. Potential members were contacted by telephone and personal visits, and received a letter of invitation from the County Administrator's office. Eighteen people accepted the invitation and became members of the initial Cumberland County TLT.

A complete list of Cumberland County Technology Leadership Team members can be found in Appendix B.

Beginning Activities of the Technology Leadership Team

The Cumberland County TLT under the leadership of Retired Extension Agent Van Petty began to meet regularly and move ahead on the next steps in the Implementation Plan. Major tasks at this time were building awareness of the project among Cumberland residents and planning for *Take Charge*. The meeting minutes summarized below document on-going activities, issues discussed, and decisions made.

Technology Leadership Team - October 13, 2002 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland Courthouse (C.H.) – 7:00 pm

Present: 8 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Gary Larrowe, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

This initial meeting of the Cumberland County TLT provided an opportunity for members to meet VCE Area Specialists Gary Larrowe and Jon Johnson who provided a general overview of the project scope and identified the nine participating counties. The TLT also developed a list of immediate tasks for getting started.

TLT representation: Assistant County Administrator Sherry Swinson was asked to help with getting a representative from the Farmville Area Chamber of Commerce to attend the next meeting. Participation from the Town of Farmville office and the School Board was also needed.

Development of web site content:

Possible items to include on the county web site:

- Calendars
- Elected officials
- Contact information
- County code
- Employment applications
- County office locations and brief description of duties
- Building inspection fee schedule
- Tax deadlines
- Board minutes

Obtain a list of civic organizations, government organizations, faith-based groups and businesses in the area

County technology survey: Check with County Administrator Judy Hollifield about the possibility of a county-wide technology survey, possibly using churches or non-profit organizations.

Broadband access: Check about the possibility of running lines in conduit with the water project

Publicity about TOP: Talk to Meade Jones (*The Cumberland Bulletin*) about the possibility of a free ad

Finally, everyone was encouraged to visit the TOP web site for more information about the project.

Technology Leadership Team - November 14, 2002 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 6 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Gary Larrowe, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

Technology survey: The TLT will conduct a business survey. TLT member Aaron Hickman agreed to draft the survey and mail it to the team for their input. The Extension Office will mail the surveys to the business community in the month of December. It also would be helpful to know how many Internet service providers there were in Cumberland County, and if any provide high-speed connections.

TLT membership: VCE Area Specialist Gary Larrowe stressed the importance of having broad community support for the TOP project and suggested that members be recruited from unrepresented sectors of the community.

Take Charge: The three *Take Charge* sessions will be held at Cumberland High School during February or March, 2003.

Technology Leadership Team - February 24, 2003 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 7 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

At this meeting, TLT members received their Community Networks training from VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson. TLT members were also asked to fill out their permission slips so they can be listed on the TOP web site.

Take Charge: The following actions were planned for the upcoming *Take Charge* program:

- Media promotion via The Farmville Herald and The Cumberland Bulletin newspapers, as well as WFLO and WVHL radio stations
- Development of a promotional flyer for schools and the community
- Mail invitation letters and brochures to all elected and appointed local government officials, churches and civic groups, businesses, and other community leaders
- TLT member Doris Seal and Van Petty agreed to ask three local restaurants from the northern, central, and southern parts of the county to cater the meetings. Suggestions included Vito's, Merk's Place, and Ollie's Restaurant
- TLT member Jill Matthews agreed to provide folders for the session handouts
- Van Petty agreed to contact TLT members to serve as facilitators
- TLT member Doris Seal and Van Petty will contact civic groups to serve as hosts for registration. Suggestions included the Cumberland Woman's Club, Cumberland Ruritans, and the Redbud Garden Club
- Get a local historian to speak at Session I "Where are we now," and ask Sherry Swinson to speak on economic development

Meals and supplies for *Take Charge*: The TLT discussed charging participants \$5.00 per session to attend *Take Charge*, to offset the cost of the meals. Van Petty told the group the Board of Supervisors has offered to cover the cost of meals and materials for up to 40 participants. Although the exact cost is not yet known, it was hoped that it would fall within the \$1,000 range. The Cumberland County Extension Office 4-H program agreed to provide the break refreshments and supplies.

Technology survey: The team decided to conduct a survey of churches and civic organizations similar to the survey taken of the business community in December. TLT member Aaron Hickman again agreed to draft the survey, and TLT member Jill Matthews offered to mail it to identified churches and civic organizations. The results will be presented at the *Take Charge* session on March 20, 2003.

Web site name contest: The TLT will conduct a “Name the Web Site” contest similar to the contest held in King & Queen County. Van Petty said he would find a \$100 sponsor for the contest and conduct a promotional program. One purpose of the contest is to let county residents know about the upcoming web site.

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

Cumberland County's *Take Charge* Sessions

Cumberland's first *Take Charge* session, "Where are we now," took place on March 20, 2003 at the Cumberland High School. There were 25 people attending.

Van Petty welcomed the participants and introduced the guests. Sherry Swinson, Assistant Cumberland County Administrator, discussed economic development activities in the county and goals for the future. Following these speakers, Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist, led the group through a series of slides illustrating the educational level, economic situation, and employment opportunities in Cumberland County as compared to Virginia as a whole. Several trends were immediately apparent including a lower educational attainment, a high level of poverty, and a rising proportion of individuals of retirement age. Using these facts the group compiled a list of strengths and weaknesses of their county and ranked the weaknesses.

Cumberland County strengths and the weaknesses in rank order are listed below.

Strengths

- Public parks
- Youth activities
- Strong technology training in school
- Diversity of churches
- Good work ethic

Weaknesses	Number of Votes Received
Low numbers of manufacturing industries to generate revenue	20
Few employment opportunities	13
Lack of job skills	9
Inadequate space for student enrollment	8
Lack of leadership	6
Low college enrollments	6
High school & middle school complex	6
Secondary roads	6
Sludge being spread in the county	6
No school agricultural or vocational training	6
Low high school graduation rates	4
People resisting change	4

No public water supply	4
High poverty	3

Session 2 of *Take Charge* “Where do we want to be,” was held on March 27, 2003 and 23 residents attended. After reviewing the strengths and weaknesses compiled at the first session, they divided into working groups. Each was given a map of Cumberland County and asked to describe their Dream for Cumberland in the Year 2020.

Their shared vision included:

- Having a regional industrial park
- Airport expansion
- A by-pass around the courthouse with pedestrian access to the courthouse complex
- Historic colonial style facades on businesses in the Cumberland Courthouse area
- Broadband access and improved technological infrastructure throughout the county
- Land use planning for housing development, recreational areas and facilities, and services and promotion of controlled development
- Public water and sewer throughout the county
- Fire and rescue services at John Randolph Community Center
- Promotion of festivals, antique shows, outdoor concerts, etc.
- Health care facilities, such as hospitals and nursing and retirement homes
- A reservoir in the northern portion of the county
- New high/middle schools
- Public golf courses
- Development of the horse industry
- Zoning for large lots and homes
- A visitor’s center
- Water parks

This activity completed the work accomplished in Session 2.

Session 3 of *Take Charge*, “How are we going to get there,” took place on April 3, 2003 at Cumberland High School. Twenty one people attended.

After reviewing the vision and goals developed at Session II, they explored ways to bring about the community involvement and resources that would be needed to attain these goals. The ideas that were suggested included:

- Greater use of local newspapers, churches, bulletins in local stores, radio, and development of a community web site to increase awareness of public appointments and requests for civic participation
- Utilizing the TOP initiative to develop a community technology plan that could be shared with local leaders and planners (this technology plan can be found in Volume II of this

- document)
- Utilizing technology and technology planning as a component for economic growth and retention of existing businesses
- Recognize that successful economic and social growth is a step by step building process
- Use the community web site as a mechanism to improve communication among citizens and local leaders
- Refine the business survey of local businesses using computers and the Internet to include information about residential usage
- Distribute a survey about home computer and Internet usage through the student population of the county school system
- Prepare for grant funding opportunities that pay for infrastructure improvements

Session 3 closed with the TLT reporting on the computer and Internet survey that they conducted with the businesses and churches and civic groups in Cumberland.

Survey of Businesses

Questionnaires were sent to 300 businesses and 75 were returned. The responses were as follows:

- 67% used dial-up
- 1% used broadband
- 1% used satellite
- 68% used their computer for e-mail
- 45% used their computer for purchasing
- 49% used their computer for research.

Survey of Churches and Civic Groups

Questionnaires were sent to 60 churches and civic groups and 13 were returned. The responses were as follows:

- 85% owned or used computers
- 23% planned to purchase one
- 69% had Internet access
- 54% owned a website
- 31% were interested in having a website hosted
- 54% used dial-up
- 8% used DSL

- 7% used E-mail
- 31% used their computer for purchasing
- 8% used their computer for bill paying.

The group discussed the need to attract a high speed Internet Service Provider to Cumberland County. Van Petty is working with the County Information Technology Director and the Assistant Superintendent of the Cumberland Public Schools on this issue.

Follow-up to *Take Charge*

Cumberland County has continued to build on the results of their *Take Charge* by dedicating a section of their web site to some of the issues raised. The “County Concerns” section on the Cumberland First site highlights these items:

- A study to assess the feasibility of developing a raw water supply reservoir
- Grants that have been awarded to the county to focus on improvements along the Route 60 corridor in the Cumberland Courthouse area
- The inclusion of Cumberland County in the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail
- The upcoming construction of a public water system in the Cumberland Courthouse area

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE WEB SITE

Following the completion of *Take Charge*, the TLT moved on to developing plans for the home page, content pieces, and marketing of their site. Their highly productive meetings through the summer of 2003 prepared their site to go live that October.

Technology Leadership Team - May 15, 2003 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 6 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone

Name contest: Van Petty gave the results of the Cumberland Patriot Day voting by county residents for the web site name. The winning selection was “Cumberland First for Independence,” by a 50 vote margin. The runner-up was “Patriot Place.” Jovan Petty, an eighth-grader at Cumberland Middle School, submitted the winning entry and received a \$100 gift card donated by the Farmville Walmart store.

Web site development: Jaime Shetrone and Jon Johnson led the TLT through the steps for designing the county’s web page. After reviewing examples of several community sites and considerable discussion, the following content topics were identified:

- People
- Village Mall
- Community
- Government
- Education/Libraries
- Recreation/Leisure Services
- Discussion Board
- Emergency Services
- Calendar

The following items were chosen as Quick Links for the front page:

- Weather
- Obituaries
- Newspapers
- Directions
- Horoscope

The site color scheme will be blue/gold and pictures of government buildings, schools, agriculture, and historical interest, etc., will rotate on the site.

User agreement: TLT member Bruce Robinson offered to put together a User Agreement statement for community groups and individuals wishing to post a web page on the community site.

Domain name: Van Petty will work with BEV to get a domain name for the Cumberland web site. Everyone agreed upon the domain name Cumberland First.net. The names Cumberland First.com and Cumberland First.org may also be registered. There are costs associated with registering domain names, and Van said he would discuss the cost with the County Administrator, Judy Hollifield.

Community readiness workshops: Workshops will be held in the fall on the use of the community web pages and how to design a web page for businesses.

Technology Leadership Team - June 17, 2003 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 13 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

User agreement: A copy of the User Agreement drafted by TLT member Bruce Robinson was reviewed. There were no additions or corrections to the draft. A copy will be sent to the university lawyer at Virginia Tech for review.

Web site development: The TLT reviewed the test web site and suggested the following changes:

- Remove the “Photos” tab and insert photos throughout the web site
- Change “Village Mall” to “Local Business”
- Change “Villagers” to “Members” and remove all references to “Villagers;” change the “Become a Villager” tab to “Become a Member”
- Remove “Community Groups” from the Quick Links section and replace with “Clubs”
- Remove “WRSC-TV” from the Quick Links
- Change “Things to Do” to “Sights & Attractions”
- Add “Youth” and “Seniors” tabs

Volunteering TLT members were assigned the following topics to gather content:

- Marty Shute – research on-line web sites for sources of local obituaries
- Augustus Harper – Health
- Yvonne Earvin and Lois Lee – Calendar and Community Groups
- Linda Eanes, Jeremiah Heaton and Mary Lee Dimmie – Youth and Seniors
- Sherry Swinson and Jill Matthews – Government
- Van Petty, Jill Matthews and Anita French – Local Business
- Jo Smith and Gayle Thompson – Sights & Attractions
- Liz Jamerson, Doris Seal and Bruce Robinson – Education & Libraries

A deadline of July 8th was set for gathering this information.

Technology Leadership Team - July 16, 2003 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 5 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

Web site development:

All web site assignment committees reported and gave an update of their progress:

- Youth and Seniors – TLT member Jeremiah Heaton forwarded a copy of the youth directory. It contained useful information; however, it needed to be put in a format that could be used for the web page. TLT member Doris Seal agreed to format this information.
- Health and Emergency Services – TLT member Agustus Harper forwarded his completed assignment. TLT member Jo Smith gave an update on the list of doctors. Van Petty said he would inform TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone of the corrections.
- Education and Libraries – Doris Seal reported that their committee needed only to add the web links to their assignment. TLT member Bruce Robinson was working on getting the links.
- Sights & Attractions – Jo Smith and TLT member Gail Thompson gave an outline of their assignment. After discussion of the information needed, Gail and Jo agreed to continue working. TLT member Yvonne Earvin agreed to join this committee.
- Calendar and Community Groups – Yvonne Earvin gave a report on their assignment. Van informed Yvonne that the web page is designed for organizations and groups to input their own information, and apologized for not letting them know sooner.
- Local Business and Government – TLT member Anita French gave Van mailing labels for all businesses with a business license in Cumberland County. TLT member Jill Matthews has agreed to mail a letter with an application to county businesses and community groups to determine if they want to be listed on the county web site. Van asked Jon Johnson for an update on the status of the user agreement being reviewed by the Virginia Tech attorney. Jon suggested that Van follow up with the VCE TOP Project Coordinator Eleanor Schlenker.
- Local Obituaries – Van stated he would contact TLT member Marty Shute to get his report.

Overall, it was determined that there was still work to be done to complete the assignments.

User policies: The TLT adopted the following policies for web site users:

Community web site members must post their information by a set date (to be determined) before it will be listed on the community calendar. On a motion by Doris Seal and seconded by Gail Thompson, all web site members must be pre-approved prior to posting their information on the county web site

Community readiness workshops: In June, the TLT discussed conducting workshops for local businesses and community groups who want a web site. The team also wants to sponsor awareness workshops and promotions for the community web site. Jon Johnson agreed to assist with getting speakers and also suggested that the TLT members with computer expertise conduct a workshop. Workshop topics suggested were:

- Introduction to the County Web Page
- Introduction to the Basic Computer
- Designing a Web Page
- Business Marketing

- Ag/Tourism (working with the Farm Bureau)

All TLT members are encouraged to suggest workshops they feel will help county residents become familiar with the computer and the use of the Internet. They were also asked to consider being an instructor for a workshop if they have the expertise.

Technology Leadership Team - August 27, 2003 – Cumberland County High School, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 10 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson, Blacksburg Electronic Village Staff Member Robert Roberts

Site update: Van Petty gave an update on the progress of the web site. The “Government” and “Seniors” information will be forwarded the first week of September, and TLT member Doris Seal agreed to find information for the “Youth” topic. Once this is provided, the site will be ready to go public.

TLT training: Robert Roberts conducted a training session on how to use the Community Calendar and Discussion Forum sections of the web site. This was a hands-on training that gave TLT members a chance to try out each tool.

Community readiness workshops: A workshop will be offered this fall to help residents learn more about using the computer and making a web page. Jon Johnson agreed to conduct this workshop with the help of others to be named later. The workshop was planned for September 18, 2003 at 7:00 pm, in the “Log Cabin” computer lab at Cumberland High School. This “Introduction to the Computer and Web Page Workshop” will target small business owners, churches, and civic groups with limited computer and web page skills. TLT members were encouraged to contact business owners, civic groups, or churches they know and invite them to the workshop. Space is limited to 15 participants.

Future workshops will be planned to make the county aware of the web site and how to use it.

TLT member Linda Eanes was thanked for providing refreshments, always a big hit with the TLT members.

Technology Leadership Team - September 30, 2003 – Cumberland High School, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 12 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai, John Nichols with Network Infrastructure and Services at Virginia Tech

TLT training: Mathew Mathai conducted training on how to use the three web site directories, People, Local Business, and Community Groups. TLT members practiced inputting information into the different directories. It was a very informative training and especially useful for the TLT members who will serve as web site administrators. TLT members Bruce Robinson, Jill

Matthews, Linda Eanes, Marty Shute, Doris Seal, Yvonne Earvin, and Van Petty agreed to serve as web site administrators.

Discussion with TOP Project Director:

The following were key points of the community web site discussion with Mathew Mathai:

- Virginia Tech's support of the Cumberland County web site will end in June 2005
- Jaime Shetrone's position with the BEV as TOP Project Coordinator will end March 30, 2004
- User fees cannot be charged until after the grant ends
- Use of the Cumberland County web site directories by those outside the county must be approved by the TLT
- Grant funding is available for rescue squad buildings to have Internet access to support Homeland Security and Disaster Planning
- Technology should be replaced every five years
- Community groups can have a web site hosted by BEV at no charge during the grant phase (the grant will end on June 30, 2005.)
- Businesses with five or fewer employees can have a web site hosted by the BEV at no charge during the grant phase

Technology Assessment and Master Plan: John Nichols of Virginia Tech gave an overview of the vision, benefits, goals, and strategies for the Technology Assessment and Master Plan that is a part of the TOP project. Each participating county will be responsible for gathering information for these pieces. The TLT's first assignment was to gather existing planning information and identify associated decision-makers. The following TLT members agreed to be contacts:

- Elizabeth Jamerson – Education
- Jill Matthews – Government
- Van Petty – Community Groups

Van will identify people in the county to serve as contacts for the remaining positions.

The Cumberland web site will go public in the first week of October.

Technology Leadership Team - October 15, 2003 – Cumberland High School, Cumberland C.H. – 6:00 pm

Present: 6 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty

This meeting was specifically for those TLT members who volunteered to be web site administrators.

The following work schedule was established:

- Weekdays – Jill Matthews
- Weekends (November) – Linda Eanes
- Weekends (December) – Bruce Robinson
- Weekends (January) – Marty Shute
- Weekends (February) – Doris Seal
- Weekends (March) – Van Petty
- Weekends (April) – Yvonne Earvin

A policy was developed to answer who is eligible for web site membership:

- All Cumberland County residents aged 14 (?) and above
- Any person who lives outside of Cumberland County but has a county-based business, organization, or church

Reasons for denying membership:

- Failing to follow the Cumberland web page agreement
- Aged 13 (?) and under

The web site will be monitored for any other issues that need to be addressed.

Van Petty will forward these policy statements to the entire TLT for their input and approval.

Technology Leadership Team - December 2, 2003 – Cumberland High School, Cumberland C.H. – 6:00 pm

Present: 8 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty

Web site policies: The web site administrator schedule and web site policies established at the last meeting were approved. Two more items were added to the list of who is eligible to become a member of the Cumberland County web site:

- All Cumberland County taxpayers
- Any person with a Cumberland County address who has a temporary address outside of Cumberland, such as a student or a soldier

Web site content:

The following changes were suggested for the web site:

- Add the due date for county stickers to the calendar
- Add the Board of Supervisors' agendas and minutes to the community web page – Van said he would work with the county office staff to implement this request
- Add a Quick Link to the front page for the county map
- Add new user's comments to the front page

Community readiness workshops: TLT member Liz Jamerson stated that Southside Virginia Community College will conduct a web page design class for 13 or more people for \$64.75 per credit or non-credit. The TLT agreed to pursue this option for 2004.

The TLT also planned a four session workshop for interested businesses and community groups in the spring of 2004.

Marketing the web site: Van Petty stated that the public was not using the community calendar. TLT members will encourage organizations, churches, etc., to submit dates of upcoming events.

TLT members agreed to contact local civic groups and businesses and offer presentations about the web site. Liz Jamerson and TLT member Doris Seal were contacted by the Cumberland Ruritan to do a presentation on the Cumberland First web site. Van stated that the Red Bud Garden Club had invited him to do a web site presentation in January 2004.

Technology Leadership Team - February 11, 2004 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 8 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, Community Initiatives specialist Pamela Gibson, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone, Blacksburg Electronic Village staff member Carol Cornish

Staff update: TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone informed the TLT members that her position with the TOP project will end March 31, 2004. She introduced Carol Cornish as the county contact from BEV. Jaime also discussed the training for TLT members who will be responsible for the maintenance of the web site. Linda Eanes and Jill Matthews volunteered to serve and attend the training. TLT members thanked Jaime for her assistance and wished her well in her future endeavors. TLT members also welcomed Carol Cornish and stated they looked forward to working with her on the project.

TOP project evaluation: Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives specialist, conducted an evaluation of the TOP project in Cumberland County. TLT members answered questions relating to their involvement and experiences with the Cumberland Technology Leadership Team. Many members expressed the positive impacts of the web site on Cumberland County.

Web site update: Van Petty gave an update of the changes to the web site. He will contact County Administrator Judy Hollifield and get a list of the county appointed boards and commissions to post on the web site, which was a recommendation from the *Take Charge* sessions.

Marketing the web site: TLT members Doris Seal and Liz Jamerson made several presentations promoting the web site. The groups included students at Cumberland High School and the Cumberland Ruritan's Club. Due to snow in January, Van had to reschedule his presentation at the Red Bud Gardening Club.

Van expressed concerns that the county citizens were not using the web site to the degree he expected. TLT members made the following suggestions:

- Require students to post an assignment on the web site
- Put a scavenger hunt on the web site
- Post county-wide events and activities on the web site
- Conduct a contest that involves using the web site
- Put pictures of students who won awards, athletics, etc.
- Put school events on the web site
- List programs and activities for youth and seniors

Community readiness workshops: The Cumberland TLT, in cooperation with Cumberland High School and Southside Community College, is sponsoring a five week web page design class beginning March 8, 2004. Thirteen registrants are needed in order to have the class. The cost is \$64.75. The class will be held in the Cumberland High School Vocational Building from 6:30 – 9:30 pm.

Technology Leadership Team -May 3, 2004 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 7:00 pm

Present: 8 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone, Blacksburg Electronic Village Director Bill Sanders, Linda Staylor, Cumberland Public Schools

Grant project with Cumberland School District: Mrs. Linda Staylor of the Office of Special Services of the Cumberland Public Schools gave an overview of the “Learn to Serve” grant. The grant addressed several areas including setting up business and industry links to the Cumberland First web site, creating promotion materials for county economic development, training students to teach web page development to adults, and providing high school students with the opportunity to learn web page design. Mrs. Staylor expressed a desire to work with the Cumberland TLT to accomplish these tasks. The grant period is March 2004 through September 2007. This grant for \$30,000 was obtained from a private foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service administered by the State Department of Education.

TOP project update: Jaime Shetrone and Bill Sanders reviewed the activities for the third year of the TOP program. Jaime stated that she would be working with Eleanor Schlenker to complete the TOP county reports, due September 30, 2004. The final county report would be given to the Cumberland Board of Supervisors. Jaime mentioned that an e-mail survey as part of the TOP project evaluation would be sent to TLT members for completion in the near future.

Bill Sanders talked about what’s next for the TOP initiative. The following are ideas he shared concerning future TOP program efforts:

- The national TOP initiative involves legislation to solve “infrastructure territory” of technology companies and services
- Governor Warner is proposing a program to outsource technology business to rural Virginia

- Virginia Cooperative Extension's role with technology and involving people
- John Nichol's county technology report and how to use the good technology ideas that come from the county
- Grant sources for county TLT funding
- Job creation via the Internet
- What are Cumberland's future technology needs? – social, business, resources needed
- Technology pilot program for Cumberland High School which will involve Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Cumberland Public Schools

Increasing web site use:

The group developed the following list of suggestions for getting citizens to use the Cumberland First web site. Several TLT members volunteered to follow up with these ideas.

- Put the Cumberland First.net web address on web sites of other organizations and business web pages
- Put the Cumberland First.net web address in the local newspaper's weekly issues (TLT member Yvonne Earvin)
- List county events and activities on the front page of the web site (web site administrators)
- Put a feature news story on the front page of the web site (such as news at eleven)
- Charge a fee for weekly business ads
- Contact local restaurants to put the Cumberland First.net web address on their placemats (Board of Supervisors member Cliff White)
- Sponsor a contest via the web site
- Feature a cooking corner on the web site that gives recipes and food preparation tips
- Post events and activities on the community calendar
- Conduct a web page auction/silent auction where people visit items at the schools or elsewhere and place their bids via the Internet
- Post local job listings
- Put links to movie theaters and video stores
- Put the web address on county mailings such as tax bills and sewer bill (Van Petty)
- Put the web address on telephone bills
- Put Cumberland Public School events and activities on the web page (Van Petty)
- Recruit new TLT members at the closing ceremony of the Cumberland Youth League, June 18, 2004 (Yvonne Earvin)
- Create bookmarks with the web page logo and put in libraries (TLT member Linda Eanes)
- Put a "lifter" in local business billing envelopes (Cliff White)
- Put a student of the month on the front page of the web site – see Mrs. Rather-Terry (Van Petty)

Web page search engine: A suggestion was made to add a search engine to the front page of the web site. Jaime will investigate the possibility. TLT member Doris Seal recommended that a web page template for business and civic organizations be added to the web page. Jaime and Bill Sanders agreed to look at the possibility. Jaime reported that the help tab on the Cumberland First web site has instructions for helping design web sites. She encouraged each TLT member

to check it out. Linda Staylor noted that a map of Cumberland with voting districts would be helpful to citizens.

Web site training class: Van Petty reported that 11 people took the class offered by Southside Community College, and each person designed a web page. Ms. Kelly Cummings, business teacher with the Buckingham Public Schools, taught the class. Several students linked their pages from the Cumberland First web site. The remaining students will be posting their web pages shortly with Linda Eanes's help.

Technology Leadership Team - May 24, 2004 – Cumberland County Extension Office, Cumberland C.H. – 6:00 pm

Present: 6 TLT members, Retired VCE Agent Van Petty

TOP county reports: Van Petty reported that BEV and Virginia Tech are in the process of completing the final report of the TOP program. The Cumberland TLT has been asked to submit copies of all news articles, brochures, flyers, or other marketing pieces that have been developed to Eleanor Schlenker. Jaime Shetrone stated that they hoped to complete the report by the end of June 2004.

Follow-up on ideas to increase use of the site: The following actions resulted from the May 3, 2004 TLT meeting. TLT member Yvonne Earvin contacted the *Cumberland Bulletin* and *Farmville Herald* newspapers to get them to promote the Cumberland First web site by putting the web address in the paper. The *Cumberland Bulletin* has started, and will run the address for the next few months. Yvonne is working on a web page contest by having county citizens sign up for a drawing at the Cumberland Youth League baseball recognition ceremony on June 18, 2004. Yvonne said she would contact a local restaurant for a free dinner as a prize.

TLT member Linda Eanes gave an example of a brochure and bookmark she is working on to promote the Cumberland First web site. She is also working on a "lifter" to use as an insert for mass mailings.

TLT members designated several days this summer for sign-up at the public library to promote the Cumberland First web site. They tentatively agreed to make a presentation about the site to the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors in July.

Additions to web site content: TLT members discussed the use of the front page of the web site. They agreed to start posting county and school news items on the front page, similar to the BEV web page. Several ideas formulated were:

- A gardening questions/information section featuring lawn care, seasonal gardening tips, or recipes
- Holiday recipes/safety tips
- Community news
- School news
- Government news: public hearings, government meetings

Web site Discussion Board: TLT member Doris Seal encouraged TLT members to start using the Discussion Board. Her students at the high school were using it, but county citizens were not. Doris noted that the students were somewhat concerned that the county citizens were not responding to their topic posted on the Discussion Board.

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 needed to participate in 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

Training was offered to the TLT members with the expectation that they would share the concepts they learned with others in the organizations and communities they represented. At the meeting on February 24, 2003, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson delivered the Introduction to Community Networks training which introduced the group to telecommunications issues relevant to rural communities and how community networks can contribute to economic development.

BEV Staff Member Robert Roberts worked with the TLT on August 27, 2003 on the uses and management of the Community Calendar and Discussion Forum features. On September 30, 2003 TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai carried out a hands-on training for the TLT on the process for adding, approving, and deleting entries to the people, business, and community organization directories. Transition training to prepare TLT members Linda Eanes and Jill Mathews to administer the Cumberland First site and add and delete content was completed on March 8, 2004.

Training for the Community

The Cumberland TLT initiated several types of workshops and promotional events for community members. These included hands-on classes in web site development as well as informal activities to make Cumberland residents aware of the features and best use of the web site.

Workshop -Introduction to Computers and Web Page Development

The Cumberland County TLT conducted a four-session computer and web page workshop using the “Log Cabin” computer laboratory at Cumberland High School. The sessions were held on October 21, November 11, November 18, and December 2, 2003, and targeted small business owners and community organizations needing help with a web site. The workshops were guided by TLT member Bruce Robinson, with assistance from TLT member Liz Jamerson and TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone. Fifteen people took part, and twelve businesses and community group web pages were developed as part of the on-line Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections features.

Course – Web Design (one credit or noncredit)

A one-credit web design course was offered by the Cumberland County TLT in cooperation with the Southside Virginia Community College. The cost for the course was \$64.75 and it was held in the Cumberland High School computer lab. The class met one night each week from March 8, 2004 through April 5, 2004 and was taught by Ms. Kelly Cummings, business teacher with the Buckingham Public Schools. Eleven people took advantage of the class, and each person designed a web page. Several students have linked their pages from the Cumberland First web site. The remaining students will be posting their web page with help from TLT member and web administrator Linda Eanes.

Events to Market the Web Site

Public Meeting to Announce Cumberland First

The Cumberland County web site, Cumberland First.net was opened to the public on October 2, 2003 and response was very positive. A public meeting was held on October 15, 2003 to draw attention to the site. This event was advertised in the local newspaper and attracted government officials, educators, and representatives of civic organizations and clubs.

Presentations to local civic and school groups

In January 2004 TLT members promoted the Cumberland First web site by giving presentations to several community groups. These included students in the Cumberland Public Schools and the Cumberland Ruritans. The Red Bud Garden Club extended an invitation to Van Petty to provide them with a program describing the web site. A total of 75 people attended these meetings. Handouts used with these groups can be found in Appendix B.

Patriot's Day Festival

The Cumberland TLT sponsored a booth at the Patriot's Day festival on April 17, 2004. For this annual community event, both children and adults are encouraged to dress in colonial garb, and those who do not have access to costumes have the opportunity to be photographed standing behind a costume cutout that displays their faces. The TLT used a digital camera to photograph all interested children and adults, and gave them the disk with their photos along with instructions on how they could get them printed. On the disk was a sticker advertising the Cumberland First.net web site. This activity not only promoted the web site, but also helped build awareness of the benefits of technology.

Cumberland Youth League Recognition Ceremony

A booth advertising the Cumberland First web site was set up at the Cumberland Youth League Baseball Recognition Ceremony on June 18, 2004. Those attending were asked to sign up for a drawing for a free dinner donated by a local restaurant.

800 Number for Web Site Demonstration

An 800 phone number was established at the Cumberland County Cooperative Extension Office which is devoted to the demonstration of on-line opportunities.

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY EFFORTS

The following articles describing the TOP project and opportunities to participate were published in newspapers serving residents of Cumberland County. Copies of these articles and materials are located in Appendix C.

Norton, Jason: "Connection Selection: County Picked for Network Plan;" *The Farmville Herald*; December 5, 2001.

"Workshops to 'Take Charge' of Cumberland's Future;" *The Farmville Herald*; March 7, 2003.

Smith, Bill: "Cumberland to Become an Electronic Village;" *The Cumberland Bulletin*; March 13, 2003.

“Cumberland Seeks Name for Website,” *The Farmville Herald*; March 21, 2003.

Petty, Van: “Getting Rural Virginia Connected to the World,” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; June 26, 2003.

“Cumberland’s Electronic Village Named,” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; August 7, 2003.

Smith, Bill: “Technology Group Launches Cumberland Web Site,” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; October 23, 2003.

Norton, Jason: “Getting Connected: Cumberland Web Page Hopes to Link Citizens,” *The Farmville Herald*; October 31, 2003.

Cumberland First.net: Brochure promoting the Cumberland First web site.

Cumberland First.net Bookmark promoting the Cumberland First web site.

Posters and flyers distributed around the county.

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 interest of county residents in community issues, and their participation in local government and decision-making. Second, it was important that community members and groups participated in the web site by registering as a Villager, registering their organization on the Community Connections, or visiting the Discussion Forum. Finally, we hoped to contribute to local economic development and new business start-ups as measured by listings on the Village Mall and new accounts on the Virtual Business Incubator.

We also wanted to learn what seemed to go well along with suggestions on how we might have done things differently. 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 is available to us. Included are comments obtained from the TLT regarding the overall success of the project. We also have presented 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 Cumberland County ranged from 25 at Session 1 to 23 at Session 2 to 21 at Session 3. The Cumberland *Take Charge* sessions attracted the highest number of participants of any county carrying out this process. 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 announcements were used to attract individuals who may not have participated previously in a community issues forum. Of the 25 participants at Session 1, just about half (12) had received a letter; the others had read about the meeting in the newspaper or heard about it through word of mouth. A more prominent finding was that the majority of *Take Charge* participants completing evaluations had not taken part in any community planning process at any other time.

Reasons given for attending *Take Charge* centered on wanting to learn more about their county and how they might help it grow. People pointed to their positive interest and desire to become more involved. In the words of one participant, “My love for the people and the county, interest for all things, new and old.” (All comments can be found in Appendix D.).

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 Cumberland County by the Year 2020, developed through *Take Charge* will provide a basis for continuing discussion and community development. The tabulated responses from all *Take Charge* questionnaires can be found in Appendix D.

Thoughts from the TLT

To learn more about the local reaction to the project including its limitations and accomplishments, Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist, met with the TLT on February 11, 2004. The questions she asked and responses she received are listed below.

What are your general impressions of the project?

TLT members expressed that they were able to learn about the county. One said they appreciated the effort to include as many people as possible. Government, business, schools, etc. all had the opportunity to be involved. The community web site was well received by the board of supervisors, as well as the county administration and school system. The county administration and community supported the project by sponsoring meals and materials. Civic organizations and churches have been involved. Overall, the TLT felt there had been no negative feedback.

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

Cumberland County used the *Take Charge* process for their issue identification. The TLT felt that *Take Charge* provided an opportunity to probe lots of issues and opened up communication. Participants became informed about the county, many for the first time. The process included people from all over the county and gave everyone an opportunity to meet and communicate. The process helped the community define areas for the web site. In addition, the process defined issues such as economic development concerns that have continued to be pursued by the county and participants.

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

The introduction to technology has created an environment where people want to learn. The workshops have helped community members learn and there has been a realization that you can handle the computer technology even if you have never used it before. Even members who have very little association with technology have been able to work on the directory and calendar. They are learning how to use HTML and have attended classes to learn how to do web pages.

Additionally, everyone wants high speed internet service, but there is difficulty in trying to find providers.

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

The *Take Charge* program provided a forum to develop the topics to be included in the web page. In addition, the program provided a discussion forum on how technology could be used to address some issues.

What were some of the things that went well?

The facilitation of participants in the *Take Charge* program as they worked through the process worked well. Also, there has been great support from the community. There have been

volunteers for the technology positions and good support from businesses signing up for web pages. In fact, workshop sign-ups had to be limited because of logistics.

What were some things that didn't go well?

The educational process is slower than expected. The team would like to see more people using the web site by now, though linking to the newspapers has improved participation.

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

The web site is up and running, and a lot of people know about it.

What would you do differently?

The TLT felt that there should have been more “everyday” folks involved in the TLT, especially in the beginning. Churches and organization members, not just officers, should have been involved. All of the Cumberland County high school students have laptops, and could have been helpful, and business teachers may have been a good resource.

Overall, there needs to be more personal contacts made, and more hand-holding involved.

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

More grants based on technology and access to technology are being applied for. There has been great participation from TLT members, with volunteers for administration and training.

This process busted paradigms. For the first time, citizens, local government, educators, and other sectors of the community came together. They were willing to travel and meet in the middle of the county. This county typically doesn't want change, and they never expected it would work.

The process has provided a turning point in Cumberland County.

What collaboration has resulted from this project?

The school is working with local government. The business community has been supportive and has attended workshops. Churches and civic organizations have supported the effort and participated. The process has helped discover talents in the community they didn't know about before.

In the words of one TLT member, “The process has opened doors into the community.”

Additional comments

Additional comments were provided by Cumberland County TLT members by answering the following questions via e-mail. The email was delivered to all TLT members on the mailing list,

to give those who did not attend the meeting on February 11, 2004 a chance to give their feedback.

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

"The program drew together people from all parts of the county and from many different interest groups. It provided training in web design and exposure to the possibilities of technology. It also will lay the basis for future economic growth."

"I thought we had wonderful support from Va Tech and the Extension Office.

Also, I think the selection of team members in our county was good. We had a diverse group and they spread throughout the county, most also had experience working with group's like this before."

"The following contributed to Cumberland's success: Citizen participation; Local government support; Cumberland public schools cooperation; and involved TLT members. The local Extension Agent is the key to making the process work."

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

"The process seemed to be rather long and drawn out. We had some meeting where the prime objective sometimes got lost—and we lost a few people during this process. Some of the meeting were overkill—the information may have been important to somebody, but not to the people who were present. We should streamline."

"Sometimes, we found out the easy way to do something after..., but that is not so bad.

I would have liked to have more contact with the other teams. I did read the info on the internet, but I like to see people.

There should be some recognition of the team members, college credit, stipend, meals, coupons something.

The easy answer is that the locality should do it, but the grant writers should have some incentives for people who participate and contribute. The locality only recognizes the efforts now."

"There was no process for getting businesses and community groups to design web pages. Each county had to develop its own. A web design template with basic information about a business or community group and an IT person to input the information would have been great.

The constant changing of TOP personnel affected the continuity. I know this was a new program with a lot of unknowns. However, in the future a full explanation of the project requirements as it relates to time, local program cost, and citizen involvement would help the Unit Extension Staff."

What do you think are the most important things that need to be done to sustain and build upon the program going forward?

“We need to publicize. If we do this, I think many of the program will continue to grow. We must have participation and interest to make it successful. We also have to have someone with enough time and expertise to keep adding and improving the site—no one likes an old, never-changing site. Even if the information is current, if the page never has any new features or points of interest, it will die.”

“Our county is building on the program, the laptop initiative at the school has potential, the school grants that can coordinate.

Continued training for web development and uses by each group.

The use of the discussion board and calendar by community members.”

“Each county must have Virginia Cooperative Extension, Blacksburg Electronic Village and county support to go forward. The project must become self sufficient. It must have a revenue producing component, such as having businesses and community groups pay for web design and technical support. Each participating county must have a computer person with the skills to develop and maintain web pages.”

What are the major points you would like us to make in our report about what has happened in your county as a result of being part of the TOP grant?

“I think it should be made clear that small, rural counties that want to increase their Web presence and ensure economic success will need grants like this to help. Cumberland could never have paid for all the expertise, server space, etc. without this grant. I think that we have cooperatively created a Web page that county residents can be proud of.”

“The TOP grant has been a major incentive for our community to join the virtual business economy and the timing coincided with other initiatives in our school division.

There is a tremendous potential for our community to grow in the internet business/social/personal world because of this grant.

Without this initiative, the ground work would not have been established.

Thanks for everything, I have enjoyed being on this committee and meeting all of the wonderful and dedicated people who have worked on this grant. It has helped me both personally and professionally and I can only anticipate great things happening because of this grant!”

“The Cumberland TLT was successful in getting county businesses and community groups to design and post web pages to the internet. We were also successful in getting county citizens to become members of the community web page. Many positive comments have come from people who use the web page. It is becoming a way for citizens to communicate and keep up with county issues. Business interest has been awakened, also. Many business owners want to be

connected to the internet to market their products. We must find a way to make this possible, because many lack the computer skills to make this happen.”

Participation in the Cumberland First Electronic Village

VISITS TO THE CUMBERLAND FIRST VILLAGE SITE

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Month	Total Visits	Unique Visitors	Calendar Visits	Village Mall Visits	Organization Directory Visits
10/2003	506	205	129	201	159
11/2003	500	291	62	121	118
12/2003	372	263	66	84	78
1/2004	517	330	60	89	97
2/2004	684	365	116	133	93
3/2004	762	379	109	161	125
4/2004	561	302	84	139	114
5/2004	796	340	58	106	87
6/2004	819	448	98	162	102
7/2004	674	437	75	126	112
Grand Totals	6,191	3,360	857	1,321	1,086

LISTINGS ON THE CUMBERLAND FIRST ELECTRONIC VILLAGE DIRECTORIES

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Total Villagers	Total Businesses	Total Organizations
151	68	17

VIRTUAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS ACCOUNTS

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Virtual Business Incubator	Community Connections
10	11

EVENTS AND MEETINGS POSTED ON THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Government Meetings (recurring)

Cumberland County Planning Commission
Cumberland County Board of Supervisors
Cumberland County School Board
Chat with a Board Member (Board of Supervisors)

Government Notices

Estimated Income Tax Deadline
Cumberland Business License Deadline

Civic Organizations (recurring)

Bloodmobile
Cumberland Historical Society

Youth Events

Peak Experiences for Teens
4-H Fun with Foods
TRIAD Informational Meeting
Cumberland Youth League Opening Ceremonies

Other

Cumberland Christmas Parade
Cumberland Christmas Parade Chicken Barbeque
Cumberland Patriot Day
Valentine's Day Skating Party
Love for Shadasia – Fundraiser
Jump Rope for Heart

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Cumberland First.net was deployed on October 2, 2003. Since then, it has attracted over 3,000 unique visitors and increasing numbers of listings on the village directories and community calendar. The Technology Leadership Team (TLT) in Cumberland has established partnerships with several educational institutions to promote technology training that will help to ensure a core of trained citizens for continuing technology and economic development. Several community activities for marketing the Cumberland site have been put in place. The unique accomplishments of the Cumberland program are described below.

- The local leader of the Cumberland County program assembled a TLT comprised of committed, intuitive, and technologically competent volunteers. The Cumberland TLT represented a diverse group of members with differing skills and affiliations from many geographic areas and agencies within the County, and individuals have taken on important leadership roles. Cumberland was one of the first counties to assemble the content required for their site, a major accomplishment of the TLT.
- The Cumberland TLT established a major connection between the *Take Charge* process and the Cumberland First site. The overall goal of the TOP project was to prepare rural counties to move ahead in the Information Age, and in this light it provided not only the tools for technology, but also encouraged the use of that technology to develop leadership and community capacity for shared decision-making. The Cumberland project addressed this goal in several ways. First, the Cumberland *Take Charge* program attracted the greatest number of participants of any County who carried out this process, and the majority of those attending had not taken part previously in a community planning process. Second, Cumberland First.net has a location for Community Concerns where the Goals for 2020 developed through the *Take Charge* process are posted. Finally, the Discussion Forum on the Cumberland site has gone live, and invites the responses and input of County residents to various issues. At this time the Cumberland site is one of only two TOP sites with an active Discussion Forum. Recurring government meetings including the monthly meetings of the Cumberland Planning Commission, the Cumberland Board of Supervisors, and the Cumberland Public Schools are posted on the Community Calendar, along with the agendas.
- The Cumberland TLT has provided a model for future projects in the development of technology workshops for County residents that include both introductory and for-credit classes. Strong partnerships with the Cumberland Public School System, allowing use of the Cumberland High School computer lab, and the Southside Community College led to the offering of both credit and noncredit web design classes. Teaching the five session for-credit course in the convenient and familiar location of the high school likely added to the strong community response to the class. A four session introductory class on basic computer skills taught by TLT members assisted residents just getting started in technology. The goal of the TOP project at the time of its creation was to bring in people who had limited technology backgrounds at the start. Cumberland has enthusiastically endorsed this goal by assisting those for whom web site development is a new

experience. These workshops fulfilled the true purpose of promoting small family businesses and entrepreneurship.

- Several new enterprises are being established that will bring new business to the county through the marketing of their products or services on the Cumberland First web site and also help the county retain dollars that may currently flow elsewhere. Internet advertising can also reap economic benefits from new customers in locations outside of Cumberland or even outside of Virginia. Ten businesses have registered for Virtual Business Incubator accounts. Twenty-one business owners participating in the web design workshops completed web sites that are now linked to the Cumberland site. The TLT has established a web site template on their site to assist business owners in developing their web presence, and the web site administrator has assisted new web site owners in creating the link from their site to Cumberland First.net.
- Cumberland First has attracted the attention of local residents as well as Internet users from outside of the County. The total number of visits per month reached a high of 819 in June with a total of 6,191 since the site was opened to the public. The number of unique visitors has continued to grow steadily month by month, for a total of 3,360 over the past 12 months. This is rather significant for a county having a total population of about 9,000 (based on the 2000 census). The number of visits in June likely related to the Patriot Day celebration and emphasis on technology. The site location of greatest interest has been the business directory followed by the organization directory and the community calendar.
- The partnership established between the Cumberland TLT and the Cumberland Public School System has the potential for long term benefit to the residents and students of the County. The “Learn to Serve” program funded by a grant of \$30,000 from a private foundation will benefit the business community and provide important technology and work force training for high school seniors. The students will set up business links to the Cumberland First site and develop promotional materials to enhance economic development in Cumberland. They also will assist local businesses in developing a web presence describing their goods or services. Through these activities the students will develop their own skills in web design and receive training in how to teach others. This three year project will end in March 2007.
- The Cumberland TLT took advantage of some unique opportunities to publicize their web site and make others aware of how technology can be useful in everyday life. Patriot’s Day is an annual community event for which residents are encouraged to dress in period costumes. If adults or children do not have costumes available, they still can be photographed behind cut-outs of costumed figures that show their face. TLT members took digital photographs of both children and adults at Patriot’s Day. Each person received a disc to take home that contained his or her picture and also the web address of Cumberland First. Opportunities to sign up as a member or register a business or community organization on the appropriate directory were made available at local youth athletic events drawing large numbers of Cumberland residents.

- The Cumberland program encouraged the use of Community Connections accounts to support web sites for nonprofit and community service organizations. Currently, 11 groups have registered for a Community Connections account, the most of any county.
- The TOP program and Cumberland First network brought intangible benefits over and above the technology that was introduced. TLT members appreciated the opportunity to meet and work with people that they had not known before. One member mentioned that residents from all areas of the County were willing to come together in a central location to work on a common goal, a new paradigm for Cumberland County. In addressing the overall impact of the project in Cumberland one TLT member noted “the introduction to technology has created an environment where people want to learn.”

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The Cumberland Technology Leadership Team continues to look for ways to advertise and promote CumberlandFirst.net. New web content areas with news and features are being developed to attract more users. Efforts to recruit more local organizations to post events on the community calendar are underway. New ways of building awareness of the site through notices included in regular county mailings such as tax bills or reaching families through the schools are being explored.

The Cumberland Technology Leadership Team is continuing to develop partnerships with other agencies to support technology training and growth. A recent grant "Learn to Serve Virginia: K-12 School-Based Service-Learning Program" obtained by the Cumberland Public Schools has put in place a three year program in cooperation with the TLT. "Learn to Serve Virginia" will provide opportunities to high school students to receive instruction in web site development and obtain work experience by developing web sites for local businesses and community organizations. The promotional materials emphasizing the opportunities in Cumberland that will be developed by students working on this project will support the economic goals of the TOP program.

A major initiative in Cumberland is seeking access to high-speed Internet service and fiber optic capability. Community leaders are reviewing funding sources and grant opportunities that could provide resources to address this need. The Technology Assessment and Master Plan made available to the county through the TOP program will assist in the coordination of these activities.

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 TOP Counties by Blacksburg Electronic Village
- TOP Project Implementation Plan
- Letter of Commitment from the Cumberland 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 telecom 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 (jaime.dunton@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.

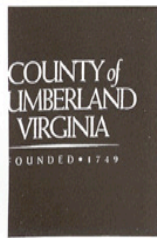
Appendix C: Significant Segments of the Community and Decision Makers

(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 CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



P.O. Box 110
Cumberland, Virginia 23040
(804) 492-3625 Phone
(804) 492-9224 Fax

March 16, 2001


Dr. John E. Dooley
Associate Director
Family & Consumer Sciences
232 Wallace Hall, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear Dr. Dooley:

I appreciate your letting us know about the "Getting Rural Virginia Connected: A Vision for the Future" program. Ed Hanes and Van Petty shared the preliminary information on this program with me. We feel that Cumberland County will benefit greatly by bringing the Cartersville and Court House communities together. Therefore, I will seek support from the local Board of Supervisors for their review and approval of this project and let you know as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of Cumberland County, and we look forward to participating in this program.

Sincerely,


Judy O. Hollifield
County Administrator

County Administrator
Judy O. Hollifield

Assistant Administrator
Sherry Swinson

County Attorney
Darvin E. Satterwhite

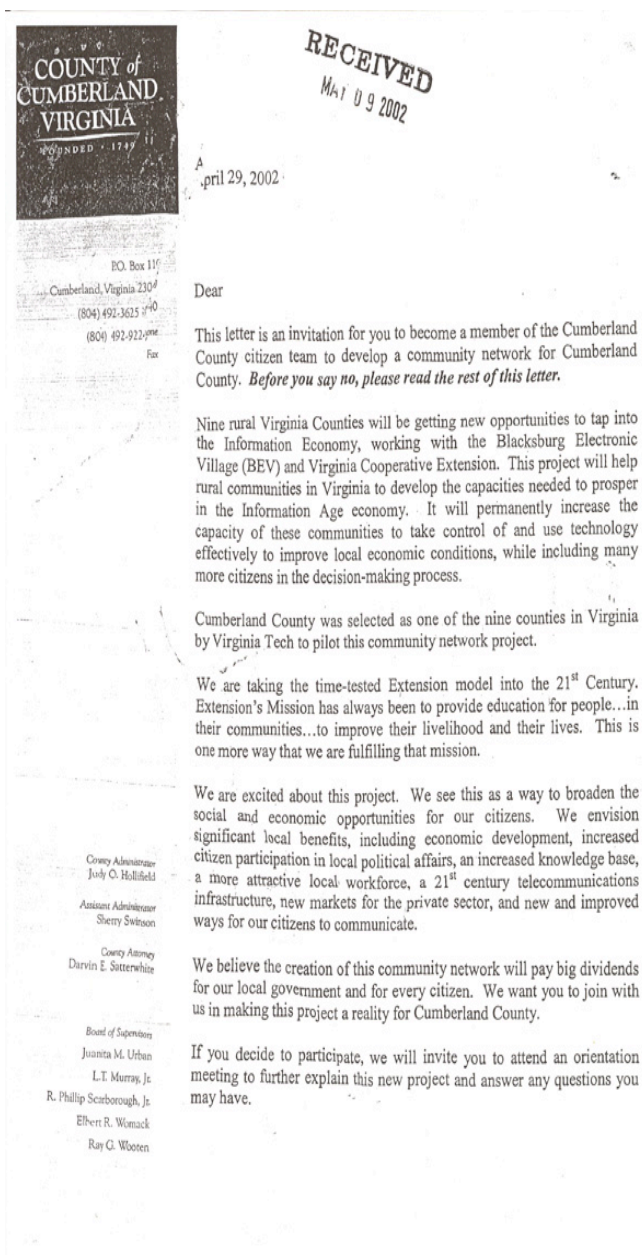
Board of Supervisors
Juanita M. Urban
L.T. Murray, Jr.
R. Phillip Scarborough, Jr.
Elbert R. Womak
Ray C. Wooten

Appendix B– Recruitment and Composition of the Technology Leadership Team

Contents:

- Letter of invitation to join the Technology Leadership Team
- List of members of the Cumberland County Technology Leadership Team

LETTER OF INVITATION TO JOIN THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP TEAM



If you decide to participate, we will invite you to attend an orientation meeting to further explain this new project and answer any questions you may have.

Please complete the enclosed post card and return to me by May 10, 2002.

If you have any questions regarding the team or the development of the community network, please contact Van Petty, Cumberland County Extension Office, at 492-4390.

Sincerely,

Judy O. Hollifield

Cc: Gary Larowe ✓

► Check out these two web sites: bev.org or chillsnet.org to get an idea of a community network.

Members of the Cumberland County Technology Leadership Team (as of October 16, 2002):

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Aaron B. Hickman	Cumberland	IT Manager, Cumberland County
Agustus Harper		
Anita H. French	Cumberland	Commissioner of the Revenue, Cumberland County
Anne D. Overby		
Barbara Davenport	Cumberland	Retired
Bill Osl	Cartersville	Retired Administrator, C&P Telephone Company
Bruce Robinson	Cartersville	Associate Professor, Piedmont Virginia Community College
Carol Blanchetti		Clerk of Circuit Court, Cumberland County
Dave Hooper	Farmville	Web Specialist, Longwood University
Donald Bishop	Cumberland	Farmer; President, Farm Bureau
Doris Brown	Cumberland	Retired Program Support Technician, Cumberland County Extension Office
Doris Seal	Cumberland	Teacher, Cumberland County Public Schools
Elaine Whitley		
Elbert R. Womack		
Elizabeth Jamerson	Farmville	Teacher, Cumberland County Public Schools
Gail C. Thompson		
Gail Swenson		
Henry Bradbury, Jr.		
Jeff Stimpson		Insurance
Jeremiah Heaton		
Jill Matthews	Farmville	Director of Accounting, Cumberland County
Jo Smith	Farmville	Retired, Cumberland County Historical Society
JoAnn Vaughan		
Juanita M. Urban		
Judy Hollifield	Cumberland	County Administrator, Cumberland County
Kevin Ingle		Businessman, Napa Auto Parts

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Laura Richmond		Secretary, Bear Creek State Park
Lee Pfeiffer	Cumberland	Treasurer, Cumberland County
Linda Eanes		4-H Program Associate, Cumberland County Extension Office
Lois E. Lee		
Major Thompson		
Martha Reid		
Marty Shute		Rabbit farmer
Mary Lee Dimmie		
Meade Jones		Owner, Cumberland Bulletin Newspaper
Nathan Branch		
Pat Bickel	Cartersville	Retired
Phil Scarborough	Cumberland	Teacher; Member, Cumberland County Board of Supervisors
Ralph Mulleins	Cumberland	Information Technologist, Cumberland County Public Schools
Roland Gilliam		
Sheldon Butler		Deputy Treasurer, Cumberland County
Sherry Swinson		Assistant County Administrator, Cumberland County
Ted E. Overby		
Van Petty	Cumberland	Retired Extension Agent, Cumberland County
William Bagley		
Yvonne Earvin		

Appendix C – Marketing and Publicity Materials

Contents:

Norton, Jason: “Connection Selection: County Picked for Network Plan;” *The Farmville Herald*; December 5, 2001.

“Workshops to ‘Take Charge’ of Cumberland’s Future;” *The Farmville Herald*; March 7, 2003.

Smith, Bill; “Cumberland to Become an Electronic Village;” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; March 13, 2003.

“Cumberland Seeks Name for Website;” *The Farmville Herald*; March 21, 2003.

Petty, Van: “Getting Rural Virginia Connected to the World;” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; June 26, 2003.

“Cumberland’s Electronic Village Named;” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; August 7, 2003.

Smith, Bill: “Technology Group Launches Cumberland Web Site;” *The Cumberland Bulletin*; October 23, 2003.

Norton, Jason: “Getting Connected: Cumberland Web Page Hopes to Link Citizens;” *The Farmville Herald*; October 31, 2003.

Petty, Van: “Web Page Design Class;” *The Cumberland Bulletin*, February 26, 2004 and *The Farmville Herald*, February 20, 2004.

Cumberland First.net: Bookmarks promoting the Cumberland First web site.

Cumberland First.net: Brochure promoting the Cumberland First web site

Posters and flyers describing the web site

Connection Selection

County Picked For Network Plan

12-5-01
Farmville
Herald

By JASON NORTON
CUMBERLAND
Cumberland will soon join eight other state counties in a new program meant to create community technology networks.

The Blacksburg Electronic Village and Virginia Cooperative Extension have received \$748,000 in grant funds to implement and support these networks in twenty-nine communities. Together, the two organizations will administer "Getting Rural Virginia Connected", a program funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program. Extension agents will combine their "Take Charge" planning process with the Blacksburg Electronic Village's "BEV in a Box" program to introduce a variety of technical expertise to participating counties.

The "Take Charge" program seeks to help communities reach consensus on development agenda. The program is proposed to provide ongoing support and resources for citizen-based planning.

"BEV in a Box" is a community network system that includes features such as: e-mail, Web hosting and design

assistance, mailing list, online directories. This system will also provide technical training for extension agents and citizen groups.

The BEV originated in 1993. It is part of Virginia Tech's Information Systems, and is one

(Continued On Page 3)

Network Plan Is Set

(Continued from Page 1)

King and Queen.

"We look forward to working with citizens of our county and with BEV to bring expanded technology capabilities into our communities," said 4-H Extension Agent Van Petty. "By using it with our 'Take Charge' program, we can make a significant impact on our future," Petty said.

Cumberland County Administrator Judy Hollifield said, "We believe the creation of this community network will pay big dividends for our local government and for every citizen."

An overview of the program will be presented at the December 12 Cumberland County Board of Supervisors meeting.

2A THE FARMVILLE (VA.) HERALD, FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2003

Workshops To 'Take Charge' Of Cumberland's Future

CUMBERLAND — The Cumberland Technology Leadership Team hopes that Cumberland County is ready to take its next step forward in vision, planning and marketing. Because over the next few weeks, they hope to encourage the County to do just that.

The Team will host three Take Charge workshops that are open to all members of the community who seek to implement positive action for the betterment of Cumberland.

"We want to develop a road map to determine where the county wants to position itself in the future," said Van Petty, liaison for the 18-member Technology Team, that consists of local business leaders, government officials, school teachers and retired citizens.

In 2001, Cumberland was selected along with eight other counties to participate in the Technology Opportunities Program, a partnership effort between Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village, to create new community technology networks.

Together, the two organizations will administer "Getting Rural Virginia Connected," a program funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program. Extension agents will combine their "Take Charge" planning process with the Blacksburg Electronic Village's "BEV in a Box" program to introduce a variety of technical expertise to participating counties.

The "Take Charge" program seeks to help communities reach consensus on development agenda. The program is proposed to provide ongoing support and resources for citizen-based planning.

Petty, a former Cumberland County Extension Agent, played a key role in steering the program to Cumberland before his retirement last summer.

The first workshop will be held on Thursday, March 20. This workshop will examine current county trends and implications for the future. It will assess economic and social opportunities by analyzing the county's strengths and weaknesses.

The second workshop, on Thursday, March 27, will organize a vision for the county's future by focusing on realistic achievement strategies.

The final workshop, on Thursday, April 3, will identify and analyze critical issues for advancing the county's progress

through technology. This workshop will also include the formation of a county action plan.

The workshops will be facilitated by Virginia Cooperative Extension Technology and Community Development Specialist Jon Johnson, Virginia Tech Research Assistant Pam Gibson, Petty and the Technology Leadership Team.

Petty hopes that the workshops will encourage local business owners to take advantage of the growing trend of internet sales. In a recent survey conducted by the Technology Leadership Team, some county business owners were selling their products on-line, but all were using dial-up systems.

"One of our wishes is that we can get a faster means of using the Internet. We need more in-

frastructure...to attract more industry, we're going to have to have those capabilities. Our county is going to have to improve its use of computers to get those industries to look at us," Petty said.

As a result of the Take Charge program, a community website will be constructed. The new network will also provide website hosting for local business owners for a fee of \$20 per year.

All workshops will be held at the Cumberland High School's Duke Cafe from 6-9 p.m. Dinner will be provided for participants. To register, call Jill Matthews at (804) 492-3251 or (804) 492-4390 before March 14.

To join the Technology Leadership Team, call Van Petty at (804) 492-4390.

3-13-03

The Cumberland Bulletin • Cumberland, Va. 11

CUMBERLAND TO BECOME AN ELECTRONIC VILLAGE

By Bill Smith

Groups, businesses and citizens of Cumberland are being offered the opportunity to turn the community into an "electronic village." Cumberland is only one of 9 Virginia localities to be selected for participation. The only other county in this part of the state is Louisa. The local effort is being spearheaded by retired extension agent Van Petty who is serving as the group's volunteer leader.

Funding for the project comes from a grant from the U. S. Department of Commerce to Va Tech. In Cumberland the project has been given the name of the TAKE CHARGE program. The project hopes to increase the level of participation in the community decision making process, expand the pool of leadership and entrepreneurial talent in the county, develop more support for crucial decisions on strategic county issues, and increase the utilization of local resources.

Some of these objectives will be enhanced by the development and utilization of a community webpage. Another benefit will encourage local businesses to use the Internet. To this end, business persons will be given some training on web pages and the volunteer members of the project's team will work with businesses to develop web pages. During the next two years of the grant period, the project will provide free web page hosting for businesses. Local community and church groups can join in for a low fee and all county interests can link to the web page for the county at no charge.

The core team organized last fall with 18 members. County residents who wish to participate and to receive training need to register for three upcoming workshops. A PHONE CALL TO REGISTER IS NEEDED BY FRIDAY, MARCH 14. Call Jill Matthews at 492-3251 or 492-4390. The workshops will be held at the Duke Café on Thursday evenings, from 6:00 until 9:00 p.m. Dinner will be served. The dates are March 20, 27 and April 3.

Cumberland Seeks Name For Website

Cumberland County residents are invited to propose a name for the soon to-be-developed community's electronic village web site. The site will host, among other things, a resident directory, business directory, civic and arts directory, on-line conferencing system and a message board. The individual or group submitting the winning name entry will receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Wal-Mart, and be recognized officially on the web site.

Cumberland County is one of nine rural Virginia counties selected by The Technology Opportunity Program (TOP) project grant, funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and will join in efforts to "Get Rural Virginia Connected."

Led by the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV), Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and a Project Team of Cumberland citizen volunteers, the TOP Program is designed to permit communities to take control of and use technology as a tool to improve local economic conditions and include more citizens in community decision-making processes.

"TOP provides technical expertise, network systems and leadership, but it is the citizens of Cumberland County who must support and sustain this effort through involvement at a grassroots level," notes Van Petty, Retired Extension Agent, VCE. "The first step residents of Cumberland County can take is to help the Project Team name the proposed community web site."

The deadline for name submissions is Friday, April 11. This allows time for the selection committee to choose ten (10) entries that will be displayed at Patriots Day April 22 so county residents can vote on the name they feel best reflects the county's heritage, history and uniqueness.

Submit your suggested site name by dropping it off at the Cumberland Extension Office located on Rt. 60 across from Cumberland High School, e-mailing it to vpetty@vt.edu or mailing it to: "The Name Game", c/o Van H. Petty, Cumberland Extension Office, P.O. Box 80, Cumberland, VA 23040. (Be sure to include your name, mailing address, telephone number and, if applicable, e-mail address.) 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.

*The Farmville
Herald*
3-21-03

GETTING RURAL VIRGINIA CONNECTED TO THE WORLD

Nine rural Virginia Counties are participating in a new opportunity to tap into the information economy by working with the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) and Virginia Cooperative Extension. This project will help rural communities in Virginia to develop the capacities needed to prosper in the information age economy. It will permanently increase the capacity of these communities to take control of, and use technology effectively to improve local conditions, while including many more citizens in the decision-making process.

In February of 2001, Cumberland County was selected by Virginia Tech as one of the nine counties in Virginia to pilot this community network project. The Cumberland Technology Leadership Team (TLT) is excited about this project. It is seen as a way to broaden the social and economic opportunities for our citizens. The team envisions significant local benefits, including economic development, increased citizen participation in local political affairs, an increased knowledge base, a more attractive local workforce, a 21st century telecommunications infrastructure, new markets for the private sector, as well as new and improved ways for our citizens to communicate.

A year ago, the Cumberland Technology Leadership Team was organized to begin developing the community web page for Cumberland County. Van Petty then as extension agent was selected to serve as the Cumberland Extension Office contact for Virginia Cooperative Extension, prior to his retirement on July 1, 2002. Due to budget cuts, no full time extension agent has been assigned to the Cumberland Extension Office. Knowing the importance of this project, Van Petty has volunteered his time to work with the Cumberland TLT to implement the Technology Opportunity Project (TOP) for Cumberland County.

Since July 2002, the Cumberland TLT has made a lot of progress toward getting Cumberland County connecting to the Internet. Thirty County residents have joined as members of the Cumberland Technology Leadership Team. The TLT meets monthly. Two surveys of local businesses and civic groups/churches have been conducted by the TLT to determine their computer use, type of internet service provider, and their interest in participating with the TOP's program.

The Cumberland TLT conducted a three-session "Take Charge" program this past spring. The "Take Charge" program is an educational program designed to enable leaders, decision makers, and residents in a small community to face the future. It will assist leaders in analyzing the community, think about alternatives, and plan an action strategy for community economic development. It will also help rural residents take charge of their community's destiny.

Fifty-one Cumberland residents, representing a cross-section of its citizens, participated in the "Take Charge" program. The Cumberland plan developed through this process included ideas for economic development, transportation, recreation, services, school construction and using the internet for communication. The completed plan is available on the web site, <http://top.bev.net>, under Cumberland County.

The TLT conducted a "name the web page" contest in April. County residents submitted twenty-five names. During Cumberland County Patriot Day celebration, county residents got to vote for the name that they felt best represented Cumberland County. The winning selection was "Cumberland: First for Independence." Jovan Petty, an 8th grader at Cumberland Middle School, submitted the winning entry. She received a \$100 gift card donated by the Farmville Wal-mart store.

The Cumberland TLT is working closely with Jon Johnson, Extension Specialist Information Technology, Pam Gibson from Virginia Tech, and Jaime Shetrone, Blacksburg Electronic Village, to develop the County web site. The Cumberland Board of Supervisors, the County office staff and Cumberland Public Schools have been very supportive of the community network project.

The Cumberland TLT goal is to have a community web page operational by this fall. The TLT plans to provide workshops for civic groups and churches that want

Information Technology, Pam Gibson from Virginia Tech, and Jaime Shetrone, Blacksburg Electronic Village, to develop the County web site. The Cumberland Board of Supervisors, the County office staff and Cumberland Public Schools have been very supportive of the community network project.

The Cumberland TLT goal is to have a community web page operational by this fall. The TLT plans to provide workshops for civic groups and churches that want to have their web sites hosted on the County community web page. They also plan to provide workshops for small businesses, with five or fewer employees, who want a web site.

The community web page will be an online directory of all businesses, civic groups, churches, government, education, services, etc. offered in Cumberland County. It will also have a "discussion board" for citizens to give their opinions on County issues and much more.

If you are interested and want to take an active role with the development of the community web page, give the Cumberland Extension Office a call at (804) 492-4390.

Contributed by: Van Petty

6-26-03

CUMBERLAND'S ELECTRONIC VILLAGE NAMED!



Jovan Petty

The Cumberland Technology Leadership Team (TLT) recognized Jovan Petty for submitting the winning name for the "village". Prior to Cumberland Patriot Day in April, name suggestions were submitted and then narrowed down to ten entries. At Cumberland's Patriot Day celebration, county residents voted on their preferences. The winning selection, by a wide vote margin, was "*Cumberland First for Independence*", submitted by Jovan Petty, an 9th grader at Cumberland High School. She is the daughter of Van and Joanne Petty. Ms. Petty received a \$100.00 gift card donated by the Farmville Wal-Mart Store.

Cumberland County is one of nine rural counties participating in the Technology Opportunities Program, *Getting Rural Virginia Connected*. Funded by the U. S. Department of Commerce, it is a project of Virginia Tech, the Blacksburg Electronic Village and Virginia Cooperative Extension, with the endorsement of local government.

The TLT hopes the basic site will be available to the public this Fall. Cumberland residents interested in assisting with this project should contact Van Petty at the Cumberland Extension Office (804)492-4390 or e-mail vpetty@vt.edu.

The Cumberland Bulletin
August 7, 2003

THE CUMBERLAND BULLETIN

10-23-03



Meeting participants were urged to go on line after the meeting and register as Cumberland "villagers." Some local politicians did not miss the opportunity. Cliff White and Elbert Womack got some help from instructor and team member, Bruce Robinson.

TECHNOLOGY GROUP LAUNCHES CUMBERLAND WEB SITE

By Bill Smith

CUMBERLAND – On Wednesday, October 15, the Cumberland County Technology Leadership Team held the public presentation of the new Cumberland Community web page. The event represented over a years work by a group of county residents who participated in a "Take Charge" project that funded by a federal grant administered by VaTech. The address for the web page which is up and running, is www.cumberlandfirst.net.

The local contact person for the project has been Van Petty who retired last year from the Extension Service. He introduced the program at the meeting and noted that the project has three directories for personal, business or economic interests. He said that 51 county residents had taken part in the development of the project. Another aspect of the project involved looking at the county's strengths and weaknesses, the resources that are available in the county, and the needs for the county.

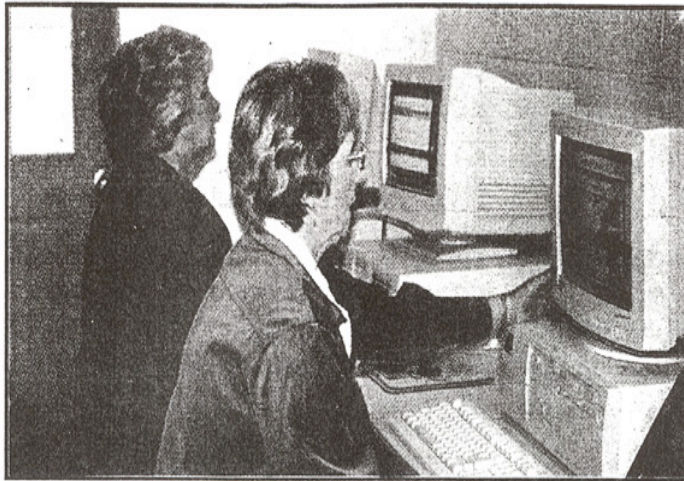
Cumberland teacher Doris Seal and a team member gave the overview of the "Take Charge" project. Team member and Technology Director for Cumberland Schools, Elizabeth Jamerson, gave a slide presentation to demonstrate the operation and features of the web page. She noted that the site is very user friendly and provides numerous links to many sources of information and resources both within and outside of the county. One feature is the "people" link. Once county residents register to become a "villager" in the network, they can contribute announcements and participate in discussions.

Ms. Jamerson pointed out that local businesses can set up web pages that are linked to the Cumberland page.

During a question and answer period, Mr. Petty said that the Cumberland Board of Supervisors had supplied the initial match money that made the project possible. The contribution was for \$6,000. He said that the project could and should become the beginning of a boost to local economic development. He noted that one identified need from the study was the development of internet infrastructure. This could lead to local "e-commerce" businesses. The county needs high speed connection to the internet and he said that this could be facilitated by a requirement that every time that excavation is done that fiber-optic cable is laid down. He also said that another help would be a change in building codes to require hook ups for the internet in every new house.

In other discussion, Mr. Petty said that future workshops would include information on business incubators. The meeting yielded information about a formal county web site that is being developed. This might include the capability of paying bills and obtaining county forms on-line. County businesses are being given the opportunity to receive the help that is needed to develop their own web site and to have it hosted during the grant period.

Mr. Petty can be contacted at 492-4390 or at vpetty@vt.edu.



Jo Smith (foreground) and Cumberland Commissioner of Revenue Aneta French browse the new Cumberland web page during its recent

unveiling ceremony at the county high school.
(Photo by Jason Norton)

Getting Connected

Cumberland Web Page Hopes To Link Citizens

By JASON NORTON

CUMBERLAND — Cumberland County, Virginia, will no longer hold its only address somewhere in the vicinity of State Routes 60 and 45. Cumberland may now also be found by traveling a new road—the information superhighway.

Recently, the official Cumberland County community web page was unveiled; a site

that will allow users all over the world to navigate their way through the county with the simple point and clicks of a mouse.

The web page is a project resulting from the combined efforts of Virginia Tech, the Blacksburg Electronic Village, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and local governmental support. It is funded by a U.S.

Department of Commerce TOP Grant.

The site is intended to increase County communication and to create new opportunities for small businesses.

Local civic groups, churches and businesses may use the site to host their own web pages.

Additionally, the site con-

(Continued on Page 12)

The Farmville Herald
10-31-03

Connected

(Continued from Page 1)

tains a number of links to county government, schools, libraries and attractions. Pages containing special topics for youth and seniors are also included, as well as links focusing on health issues.

A "county concerns" page lets citizens keep up with potential projects and initiatives such as the water system and reservoir.

An on-line interactive calendar lists County government meetings. Civic groups may also add their events to the calendar. The calendar allows users to search days, weeks or months into the future or past for events.

And a soon-to-be-activated discussion board will let citizens who register on the site to voice their input on local issues.

In late 2001, Van Petty, Cumberland's former Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, first began working with Virginia Tech to implement the "BEV in a Box" initiative into the county.

The core of this initiative was "Getting Rural Virginia Connected," a program that was also implemented into 28 other Virginia counties.

A number of the program's "Take Charge" workshops were held in Cumberland last year, allowing county citizens to discuss initiatives they'd like to see in the County, including those that could result from technological advancements.

A Technology Leadership Team of local residents was formed to lend guidance for the eventual design of the website. The TLT's input was forwarded to Virginia Tech, who actually developed and maintains the website.

Petty, who retired last year, still works as the information conduit between the County and Virginia Tech, passing along information to the college's web

technicians to post online.

The TOP will fund the web page for three years. The County has pledged to supply its match, \$2,000, during each year of the grant phase.

The County will have the option to continue to maintain the website after the grant phase has ended.

Petty and the TLT are hopeful that high speed internet service will eventually be encouraged for the county. During the recent forum to introduce the county website, Petty said fiber-optic cable installation would be a logical choice for implementing such an infrastructure.

Many localities have begun installing fiber optic cable in ditch lines when projects such as water lines are being constructed.

"Although it's not connected to anything, it's there and down the road, you can hook on. That's less expense than it costs to put that in later. And they say that's the cheapest part, is buying the fiber and putting it down...as opposed to hiring somebody to dig the trench," Petty said.

Additionally, some counties have established building code provisions requiring internet connections to be installed in all new homes and offices during construction.

Such ideas could someday be implemented in Cumberland, Petty said.

The continuing project will also provide a number of workshops for local business owners to educate them on the potential of online marketing.

Visit the Cumberland County community web page online at www.cumberlandfirst.net. For additional information, or to learn more about having a web page hosted on the County site, contact Van Petty at the Cumberland Extension Office at (804) 492-4390.

Web Page Design Class

Are you an individual, church, civic organization, or business who is interested in designing a web page? If you are, the Cumberland Technology Leadership Team, in cooperation with Cumberland High School and Southside Community College is sponsoring a Web Page Design Class. This class will begin on March 8th and meet for five weeks. The length will be three hours per week starting at 6:30 PM. Southside Community College is offering this one credit class for \$64.75. The Web Page Design Class will be held in the Vocational Building at Cumberland High School.

Participants who design a business, church, or civic organization web page will have the opportunity to register for free web page hosting through the Technology Opportunity Program.

If you are interested in taking this class, please call the Cumberland Extension Office at (804)492-4390 for more information by March 3, 2004.

Submitted by

Van H. Petty, Retired Extension Agent

The Cumberland Bulletin
2-26-04

Cumberland Web Page Design Class Is March 8

Individuals, churches, civic organizations and businesses interested in designing a web page are encouraged to attend a web page design class hosted by the Cumberland Technology Leadership Team in cooperation with Cumberland High School and Southside Community College. The class will begin on March 8 and meet for five weeks. Classes will run from 6:30-9:30 p.m. SVCC is offering this one credit class for \$64.75. The class will be held in the Vocational Building at Cumberland High School.

Participants who design a business, church, or civic organization web page will have the

opportunity to register for free web page hosting through the Technology Opportunity Program.





If you are interested in taking this class, call the Cumberland Extension Office (804) 492-4390 for additional information by March 3.

The Farmville Herald 2-20-04

Bookmark Promoting the Web Site



Bookmark Promoting the Web Site

<p>Visit the Web Site Today</p> <p>To find out how to become a member OR to host your own Web site, visit</p>  <p>For more information, call the Cumberland Extension Office</p> <p>804-492-4390 OR E-MAIL Linda Eanes at leanes@vt.edu OR Van Petty at vpetty@vt.edu</p>	<p>Visit the Web Site Today</p> <p>To find out how to become a member OR to host your own Web site, visit</p>  <p>For more information, call the Cumberland Extension Office</p> <p>804-492-4390 OR E-MAIL Linda Eanes at leanes@vt.edu OR Van Petty at vpetty@vt.edu</p>	<p>Visit the Web Site Today</p> <p>To find out how to become a member OR to host your own Web site, visit</p>  <p>For more information, call the Cumberland Extension Office</p> <p>804-492-4390 OR E-MAIL Linda Eanes at leanes@vt.edu OR Van Petty at vpetty@vt.edu</p>	<p>Visit the Web Site Today</p> <p>To find out how to become a member OR to host your own Web site, visit</p>  <p>For more information, call the Cumberland Extension Office</p> <p>804-492-4390 OR E-MAIL Linda Eanes at leanes@vt.edu OR Van Petty at vpetty@vt.edu</p>
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Brochure Promoting the Web Site

Visit the Web Site
Today

To find out how to
become a member

OR

to host your own
Web site, visit

www.cumberlandfirst.net



For more information, call the
Cumberland Extension Office

804-492-4390
OR E-MAIL
Linda Eanes at leanes@vt.edu
OR
Van Petty at vpetty@vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Knowledge for the Common Wealth


 Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University


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all, regardless of race, color,
religion, sex, age, veteran status,
national origin, disability, or
political affiliation.
An equal opportunity affirmative
action employer*



[Http://www.cumberlandfirst.net](http://www.cumberlandfirst.net)

Cumberland County, VA
Cumberland: First for Independence!

- Home People Local Business Community Calendar Government
- County Sign & Maps Services Health Youth Seniors
- Concerns Attractions

• About this site • Search • Help

[Http://www.cumberlandfirst.net](http://www.cumberlandfirst.net)

Business

- ♦ Register your business in the business directory
- ♦ Get help creating a Web page
- ♦ Get your Web page hosted free during the duration of the grant
- ♦ Find out about important county meetings and events
- ♦ Contact County officials online
- ♦ Expand your business in the global marketplace



Community/Civic

- ♦ Register your group in the community directory
- ♦ Post meetings and major events on the Community Calendar
- ♦ Get help creating a club/group Web page
- ♦ Get updates on issues of concern to the County



Personal

- ♦ Find out what's going on by viewing the Community Calendar
- ♦ Use the directory to identify local businesses, school information, and health care providers
- ♦ Discover sights and attractions near you
- ♦ Locate emergency service numbers rapidly
- ♦ Express your views on the County Discussion Board



Become a Villager today!



Flyers Promoting the Web Site

Egi TOPS Jan. 2004

Cumberland County Web Page

The screenshot shows the Cumberland County, VA website in a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays <http://www.cumberlandfirst.net>. The website has a blue header with the title "Cumberland County, VA" and the tagline "Cumberland First for Independence!". Below the header is a navigation menu with tabs for Home, People, Local Business, Community Groups, Calendar, Government, County Concerns, Rights & Issues, Emergency Services, Schools & Libraries, Health, Youth, Seniors, and About this Site. A red callout bubble points to these tabs with the text "Click Tabs for Easy Navigation".

The main content area includes a "Welcome to Cumberland: First for Independence" message, a "Cumberland County Calendar" section, and a "Did you know?" section. A red callout bubble points to the "Did you know?" section with the text "Changing Facts About Cumberland County".

On the right side, there is a "Quick Links" section with a list of links including "Home", "About the Cumberland", "Birth and Times Dispatch", "Farm the Herald", "Churches", "Local Weather", "Times Dispatch Obituaries", "Times Dispatch Obituaries", "Farm the Herald Obituaries", "Need a recipe?", and "Post your event". A red callout bubble points to this section with the text "Links to Useful Information".

At the bottom of the page, there is a "Get Involved In Community Discussions" section. A red callout bubble points to this section with the text "Get Involved In Community Discussions".

The footer of the website includes the text "This site was developed as part of a U.S. Department of Commerce... awarded to the Blacksburg Electronic Village and the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Comments or questions about NEV or a box should be sent to NEV@blacksburg.edu".

<http://www.cumberlandfirst.net>



Visit Your County Web Page!

Find out what's happening in the County by visiting the

Cumberland County Calendar

Share your views with the rest of the county by participating in the

Discussion Forum

Find out what issues are important in Cumberland by visiting

County Concerns

Find out how community groups or businesses can get a free web site, two email addresses, and a mailing list by visiting

Community Connections OR Virtual Business Incubator

Find out interesting facts about the County by visiting

Did you know?

Visit Quick Links

- ♥ Clubs
- ♥ Farmville Herald
- ♥ Email The Cumberland Bulletin
- ♥ Area Churches
- ♥ Local Weather
- ♥ Richmond Times Dispatch
- ♥ Need Directions?
- ♥ Post Your Event!
- ♥ Times-Dispatch Obituaries
- ♥ Farmville Herald Obituaries

<http://www.cumberlandfirst.net>

Appendix D – Program Evaluation Materials

Contents: *Take Charge* Evaluations

Take Charge Evaluation – Session 1

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: Cumberland

Session I

Date: March 20, 2003

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

12 – Received letter

4 – Newspaper

0 – Radio

10 – Word of Mouth

4 – Other (please specify)

- Substitute for person who couldn't attend.
- Letter to co-member of youth league.

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

6

7-7

8-2

9-6

Very Useful

10-10

3. Overall Reaction to this meeting

<i>Please check one box for each item below</i>	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
Purpose and goals were clear	21	4	
I learned something new about the community	22	3	
I felt like my ideas were acknowledged	22	2	
Participation in Small Group Assessments was fair	25		
Assembly Assessments were fair	25		
My overall reaction to this meeting is positive	23	1	

Have you participated in a community planning process before?

8 – Yes

17 - No

Reason for participation

- Keep up on what is going on.
- Well organized, interesting and executed.
- Interested about county.
- Interested in betterment of county as a whole.
- Citizen participation.
- Invited to participate.
- Change.
- Interested in our growth plans.
- We were invited.
- Identify needs/gaps in services for Cumberland.
- Invited.
- To learn more.
- Interested in county.
- Accompanied someone else.
- Curiosity.
- Want to get involved in the community.
- Interested in developing a long-range plan for the community, very interested in developing connectivity.
- My love for the people and the county, interest for all things, new and old.
- 4-H and TLT.
- To learn more about the county.
- County is growing, needs to grow in positive direction.

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

- Class is a little long. People seemed to lose interest in groups after 20 minutes.
- Good job.

Take Charge Evaluation – Session 2

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: Cumberland

Session II

Date: March 27, 2003

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

15 – Received letter

4 – Newspaper

0 – Radio

5 – Word of Mouth

2 – Other (please specify)

- County supervisor encouraged.

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

4-2

5

6-3

7-2

8-5

9-4

Very Useful

10-6

3. Overall Reaction to this meeting

<i>Please check one box for each item below</i>	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
Purpose and goals were clear	18	5	
I learned something new about the community	18	5	
I felt like my ideas were acknowledged	16	6	
Participation in Small Group Assessments was fair	19	2	
Assembly Assessments were fair	18	2	1
My overall reaction to this meeting is positive	20	2	

Have you participated in a community planning process before?

9 – Yes

14 - No

Reason for participation

- To learn more about our county.
- My love for the county.
- To learn how to better my community.
- Concern.
- To gain knowledge of the county.
- Learn different things.
- Interest in county.
- Try to help improve the county.
- Interested in the future development of Cumberland.
- Interested in improving the county.
- Would like to see Cumberland grow and get better.
- Proud of county and want to see it grow and succeed.
- Keeping up, like to see improvement.
- To learn.
- Speaker/very interested/committed to county and positive growth.
- I was asked by a friend.
- To involve my community agency and become more aware of this county to which I will become a resident.
- Learn more.
- Interested.

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

- I did not see the goals outlined at the beginning of the meeting in the book. A hard copy of this information would be helpful.
- Good food.

Take Charge Evaluation – Session 3

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: Cumberland

Session III

Date: April 3, 2003

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

10 – Received letter

3 – Newspaper

0 – Radio

7 – Word of Mouth

3 – Other (please specify)

- Friend.

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

4-1

5

6

7-1

8-6

9-4

Very Useful

10-7

3. Overall Reaction to this meeting

<i>Please check one box for each item below</i>	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
Purpose and goals were clear	14	6	1
I learned something new about the community	19	2	
I felt like my ideas were acknowledged	13	7	
Participation in Small Group Assessments was fair	14	2	
Assembly Assessments were fair	16	1	
My overall reaction to this meeting is positive	18	3	

Have you participated in a community planning process before?

10 – Yes

10 - No

Reason for participation

- Interested in growth of county.
- To learn.
- To learn more about the county.
- Want to know more about progress in the community (or lack of).
- Curiosity.
- Wanted to get involved.
- Interested in learning about the community.
- Interested as a senior citizen.
- Keep in the know.
- Knowledge.
- Knowledge.
- Interested in the county.
- On Board.
- Willing to help boost our county and its citizens to encourage growth in a positive direction.
- Want to know what is going on in the county.
- Youth development.
- I would like to add a web presence for our CSB.
- Want to see Cumberland County “connected/wired”.

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

- The goals at the end of the session could have been more clearly outlined. I do think this will be great for Cumberland.
- First 2 sessions were very informative. Last session was less focused. I really hope this grant is implemented.

Appendix E – 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	11/7/0
2 Obtain support from county leaders	3/9/01	3/13/01	3/16/01	3/3/01	3/19/01	3/12/01	3/7/0
3 Technology Team recruitment	11/17/02	6/5/02	1/21/03	7/16/03	7/22/02	12/20/02	11/26/0
4 Technology Teams formed	9/26/02	4/28/03	11/14/02	7/18/03	8/1/02	1/15/03	11/21/0
5 Technology Team training	11/20/02	4/28/03	4/28/03	7/18/03	11/19/02	1/15/03	11/21/0
6 Take Charge Mtg 1	2/5/03	N/A	3/20/03	N/A	1/9/03	N/A	1/15/0
7 Take Charge Mtg 2	2/25/03	N/A	3/27/03	N/A	1/16/03	N/A	1/22/0
8 Take Charge Mtg 3	3/4/03	N/A	4/3/03	N/A	1/23/03	N/A	1/29/0
9 Community Readiness Workshops	5/20/04	3/15/04	10/15/03	10/1/03	5/9/03	10/29/03	10/6/0
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	9/03-04/0
11 Initial web site development mtg	3/12/03	7/14/03	5/15/03	7/18/03	3/11/03	2/11/03	3/13/0
12 Transition training	N/A	2/10/04	3/8/03	3/10/03	3/24/04	3/17/04	N/
13 Web site deployment	N/A	10/1/03	10/1/03	10/1/03	6/10/03	5/27/03	N/
14 Technology Master Plans	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/04	6/30/0

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. They organized teams of leaders in the community to begin the initial process. Those leaders were instrumental in recruiting other members for the team.

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) Appoint and train 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.